

NEWSIN brief

Palestinian killed in Bethlehem raid

Israeli soldiers shot dead a 19-year-old Palestinian during a raid at a refugee camp in the West Bank town of Bethlehem yesterday, Palestinian medics said. According to the Israeli army, he was shot dead after soldiers entering Dheisheh were targeted with pipe bombs and Molotov cocktails. Since October 1, almost daily attacks and clashes between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers have killed 112 on the Palestinian side, 17 Israelis, an American and an Eritrean.

US 'lifts Myanmar shipping restrictions'

The United States has temporarily eased restrictions for six months on trade through Myanmar's ports. The policy shift comes after Myanmar held landmark polls last month swept by the pro-democracy opposition party of Aung San Suu Kyi and will make it easier for US companies to deal directly with the country's crucial ports and airports.

Lankan maid wins Saudi reprieve

Saudi authorities have agreed to retry a Sri Lankan housemaid, 45, sentenced to death by stoning for adultery, her country's deputy foreign minister said yesterday. Harsha de Silva told parliament in Colombo the government had secured a fresh trial for the woman after Sri Lankan diplomats visited her in a Saudi jail over the weekend.

Kerry beats Clinton!

Hillary Clinton often boasts of her record globetrotting mileage as US secretary of state, but she has been bested by an even more frequent flier: her successor John Kerry, officials said Monday. According to a State Department tally, Kerry has now traveled 957,744 miles (1,541 million kilometers) since taking office in February 2013. He has visited 77 countries. In her four years, Clinton crisscrossed the globe in a record 956,733 miles (1,540 million kilometers), according to the department. Kerry has until January 2017 when President Barack Obama's term ends to keep padding his new title.

US deploys P-8 spy planes to Singapore

The United States has deployed a P-8 Poseidon spy plane to Singapore for the first time. It is the latest in a series of US military actions seen as a response to China's increasingly assertive claims over territory in the South China Sea. The US says it will also base a military reconnaissance plane at Singapore's Paya Lebar air base. The P-8 was deployed on Monday, and will remain in Singapore until 14 December.

'No proof' Mansour is dead: Ghani

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani says there is "no evidence" Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour is dead, after reports of an internal gunfight. Some reports said Mansour had been seriously hurt, others that he had died, along with four Taliban gunmen in a gunfight near Quetta last week.

UN seeks record \$20b

Says 87m 'on edge of survival' will need aid in 2016

The UN has appealed for \$20.1bn (£13.3bn) to fund aid operations in 2016, with two-fifths needed to help those affected by the war in Syria.

UN aid chief Stephen O'Brien said suffering in the world had reached levels not seen in a generation, with 87 million people needing urgent help.

An unprecedented number of people have also been driven from their homes.

Alongside Syria, the crises in Iraq, South Sudan and Yemen are expected to remain top humanitarian priorities.

The UN also warned that humanitarian organisations were approaching the end of this year with less than half of the 2015 appeal funded by donors.

The record \$20.1bn appeal for 2016 is a stark reflection of just how many crises the world is facing, reports the BBC's Imogen Foulkes in Geneva.

Ten years ago, the UN asked for less than a quarter of that - just \$4.7bn.

The UN said more than 125 million people across the world needed humanitarian assistance and that aid organisations aimed to

provide urgent help to 87.6 million of the most vulnerable and marginalised in 37 countries next year.

"Suffering in the world has reached levels not seen in a generation. Conflicts and disasters have driven millions of children, women and men to the edge of survival. They desperately need our help," said O'Brien, the UN's under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and its emergency relief co-ordinator.

The UN believes that the conflicts in Syria, Iraq, South Sudan and Yemen will remain among the "greatest drivers of prolonged humanitarian needs" in 2016, fuelling new displacement within countries and across borders.

More than \$3.2b is sought to help the estimated 13.5 million people inside Syria who are in need of help, and a further \$4.8bn for the 4.7 million refugees from the country sheltering in neighbouring states. Worldwide, the number of people forced to flee their homes has already reached 60 million, a level previously unknown in the post-World War Two era.

The UN is asking donor countries to provide cash quickly, but our correspondent says that may be a vain hope, with last year's \$19.9bn appeal only 49% funded.



Iraq retakes large part of IS-held Ramadi

Iraqi security forces yesterday recaptured a large area on the southwestern side of Ramadi from the Islamic State group, which overran the city in May, officials said.

Retaking the Al-Tameem area from IS is a significant breakthrough for Iraqi forces, which have been fighting for months to secure territory around Ramadi, a major city west of Baghdad and the capital of the vast Anbar province.

Shifting parts of Ramadi, located 100 kilometres from Baghdad, had been held by anti-government fighters since the beginning of 2014. But IS did not succeed in completely overrunning it until May of this year.

Meanwhile, Syria's splintered opposition gathers in Saudi Arabia yesterday for a difficult bid to unify ahead of potential peace talks with President Bashar al-Assad.

The Saudi-organised talks mark the first time representatives of Syria's various political and armed opposition factions gather together since the outbreak of the country's conflict in mid-2011.

Saudi Arabia said it had invited all warring parties in the conflict. However, major armed groups such as Al-Nusra Front and the Islamic State were not invited. Kurdish groups were not invited too.

On the ground, the US-led coalition fighting the Islamic State group yesterday said it was "assessing the credibility" of reports its strikes killed at least 26 civilians, including 7 children, in the Syrian village Al-Khan in the northeastern province of Hasakeh on Monday.

Syria on Monday accused the US of "flagrant aggression", claiming that air strikes by the American-led coalition against IS had killed the Syrian troops and injured 13 others in the eastern province of Deir Ezzor on Sunday night. Washington rejected the charge, with officials suggesting instead that it was a Russian strike behind the deaths. Such an attack would be the first known instance of Syrian government forces being killed by the international coalition.

CRISES IN SYRIA, IRAQ
Syria Opposition in Riyadh for unity talks
US-led coalition denies strikes on regime forces, civilians

Migrant Crisis Six children drown off Turkey coast

At least six children died yesterday when a boat carrying Afghan migrants sank in Turkish waters while on its way to Greece, local media reported.

The Turkish coastguard recovered the bodies of the children, including a baby, and were still looking for two other migrants reported missing, the official Anatolia news agency said.

The inflatable dinghy sank in strong winds and high waves near the town of Cesme in western Izmir province, Anatolia said. It was apparently heading for the Greek island of Chios.

Eight other migrants, all wearing life jackets, were rescued, Dogan news agency said.

In a separate incident, the body of Sajida Ali, a five-year-old migrant girl, washed up on a beach in Cesme on Monday, Dogan said.

Turkey hosts more than two million refugees from the Syrian conflict and is the main launching point for migrants coming to Europe, via Greece.

More than 886,000 migrants have arrived in Europe by sea so far this year, according to the latest UN figures.

Meanwhile, France and Germany yesterday said they are "firmly convinced" of the need to reduce the flow of migrants into Europe, they wrote in a joint letter to the EU Commission seen by AFP.

They said Frontex should be able to call on "rapid intervention forces" in emergencies, and have access to EU security databases.

It may also need to carry out missions in countries outside the EU where necessary.

Germany announced this week that it has welcomed around 960,000 asylum seekers so far in 2015.

Biggest polluters back 1.5C target

The world's biggest climate polluters rallied around a stronger target for limiting warming on Monday, saying they were open to the 1.5C goal endorsed by the most vulnerable countries.

In the final push to a climate agreement, the US, Canada, China and the European Union declared they were now on board with demands from African countries to adopt an even more ambitious goal to limit warming.

Small island states say the current temperature goal of 2C would bring doom, drowning low-lying areas, and forcing mass migration.

In the last few days, the 1.5C target has become short-hand for reaching a more ambitious agreement that would keep pace with real-time changes already underway on the ground.

US and China said they were supporting a 1.5C target and for rich countries to accept the principle that they are responsible for long term and irreversible damage done by climate change.

Canada, regarded as a climate villain for the last decade, also came around with Catherine McKenna, the new environment and climate change minister, embracing 1.5C in closed door sessions. The EU spokeswoman Carole Dierckx said ministers were "open" to a 1.5C target.



Pedestrians wearing face masks walk along a walkway amid heavy air pollution in Beijing, yesterday. Half of Beijing's private cars were ordered off the streets yesterday and many construction sites and schools were closed under the Chinese capital's first-ever red alert for pollution.

Global CO2 emissions 'stall for second year in a row'

Scientists say that is not as good news as it sounds

Global emissions of carbon dioxide this year have stalled for the second year in a row, but scientists have warned that this does not mean the world has reached "peak carbon" with greenhouse gases set to fall year on year.

Latest figures on fossil-fuel emissions for 2015 show for the first time during a period of global economic growth that the amount of CO2 being pumped into the atmosphere has remained stable for 2 consecutive years.

Scientists believe however that the unprecedented decline is almost entirely due to the economic slowdown in China. India and other developing nations are also expected to increase the amount of coal they burn in the coming years. This is likely to feed in to an overall increase in the growth in global carbon

emissions globally, making the current slow-down a transitory "blip", the scientists said.

Carbon emissions for 2014 grew by just 0.6 per cent compared to an average annual increase of between 2 and 3 per cent since 2000. The latest figures for 2015 indicate 1.6 per cent decline in emissions compared to previous year.

The emissions figures, published in the journals Nature Climate Change and Earth System Science Data, show that China was the biggest CO2 emitter in 2014, releasing some 9.7 billion tonnes. Last year China experienced an increase in emissions growth of

1.2 per cent, compared to an annual growth rate of 6.7 per cent for the previous decade. The US was the second biggest emitter in 2014, releasing 5.6 billion tonnes, followed by the EU and India with 3.4 billion tonnes and 2.6 billion tonnes respectively.



Gandhis to appear in court

Rahul says it's 'vendetta' politics; Congress disrupts both Houses

Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul Gandhi will appear in a Delhi court on December 19 to face allegations that they illegally acquired property worth Rs 5,000 crore belonging to the National Herald newspaper, in what the Congress alleges is "persecution" of its leaders.



Goods and Services Tax (GST) bill. The Congress accused the ruling party of targeting its leaders through Subramanian Swamy, the BJP leader who filed the National Herald case.

"There is no political vendetta. Congress leaders should face the court," said Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley.

The Gandhis were to appear in a lower court yesterday, but were granted a new date on their request. "We told the court that the accused are extremely keen, ready and willing to appear before the magistrate at the earliest possible date," said Congress leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi, who is representing them.

The "National Herald case" is based on Swamy's allegation that Congress leaders gave Rs 90 crore as loan from tax exempted money to National Herald and acquired the newspaper illegally for just Rs 50 lakh with the aim of grabbing its properties in Delhi worth thousands of crores.

NOW, TRUMP WANTS TO BAN THE INTERNET

Donald Trump has called for the internet to be turned off so that children can no longer use it.

The US presidential hopeful said that "We've got to maybe do something with the internet," because it was being used to radicalise people. He said that he would "see Bill Gates" so that he could look into "closing it up".

Speaking at the same event where he called for a "complete shutdown" on Muslims entering the US, Trump laid out a rough plan for stopping the influence of IS.

Children in America are "watching the internet and they want to be masterminds", Trump said in a speech.

"We're losing a lot of people because of the internet," Trump said. "We have to see Bill Gates and a lot of different people that really understand what's happening."

"We have to talk to them about, maybe in certain areas, closing that internet up in some ways. Somebody will say, 'Oh freedom of speech, freedom of speech.' These are foolish people."

The rest of Mr Trump's speech went on to criticise the "incompetence" of the "stupid people" that are currently in power in the US.



THE TRUTH ABOUT MUSLIMS IN AMERICA

Donald Trump unleashed a firestorm of criticism from liberals, conservatives and those in between when he called for a ban on Muslims entering the United States. Indeed, the truth about Muslims in America is shocking -- but not in the way Trump and his supporters might think. Here's the reality of Muslims in America -- and how it smashes stereotypes:

They are a minuscule portion of the US population
It's difficult to come by hard numbers because the US Census doesn't collect religious data. But the fear of Muslims taking over and imposing Sharia law is unfounded. By some estimates, Muslims make up less than 1% of the US adult population.

They're better educated than most Americans
US Muslims have the second-highest level of education among major religious groups in the country; Jews have the highest. And a greater proportion of them have college degrees than the general US population.

They have more gender equality
While in many parts of the Muslim world, women are confined to second-class status, that's not the case among American Muslims. Virtually all of them (90%) agree that women should be able to work outside the home. American Muslim women hold more college or post-graduate degrees than Muslim men. And they are more likely to work in professional fields than women from most other US religious groups.

They've been here since the birth of the nation
Scholars estimate about a quarter to a third of the Africans brought to the United States as slaves were Muslims. Most were then forced to convert to Christianity.

They're as religious as Christians
The general perception of Muslims has one thing right: Most Muslims are very religious. About half say they attend the weekly Friday prayers. But that makes them similar to Christians: About 70% of Christians say religion is important in their lives, and about 45% go to a weekly service. Much has been made about fundamentalist Muslims and their strict interpretation of the Quran. But most American Muslims are different. A Pew religious landscape survey found that 57% of American Muslims say there is more than one way to interpret Islam's teachings. A similar number says many different religions can lead to eternal life.

Muslims terrorism in US
Since September 11, 2001, until the end of 2014, 109 Muslim-Americans plotted against targets in the United States. And terrorism by Muslim-Americans killed 50 in the same time period. Contrast that with the deaths from other mass shootings just last year: 136 - more than twice as many as all the deaths from 13 years of Muslim-American terrorism. A Duke University study found more terrorism suspects and perpetrators were brought to the attention of law enforcement by members of the Muslim-American community than were discovered through US government investigations.

THINGS TRUMP BELIEVES

Donald Trump is the frontrunner in the Republican race to be the presidential nominee for next year's election. What are his policies and beliefs?

- 1 Arab-Americans cheered the attacks on 9/11.
- 2 There should be surveillance on US mosques.
- 3 The US should use waterboarding and other methods of "strong interrogation" in its fight against the Islamic State.
- 4 He wants to build a "great, great wall" between the US and Mexico.
- 5 A mass deportation of the estimated 11 million illegal immigrants living in the US should go into effect.
- 6 He and Vladimir Putin would "get along very well".
- 7 The Black Lives Matter movement is "trouble".
- 8 Climate change is just "weather".
- 9 The world would be better off if Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi were still in power.
- 10 He would send back Syrian migrants seeking asylum in the US.