

NEWSIN brief

UK junior doctors stage all-out strike

Junior doctors in England yesterday started their first ever all-out strike in a bitter, deadlocked row with Prime Minister David Cameron's government over pay and conditions. The strike will have a major impact on the National Health Service (NHS), which employs more than 50,000 junior doctors. An Ipsos Mori poll for BBC News found that 57 per cent of the general public supported the doctors.

Chile reburies poet Pablo Neruda

Chile reburied Nobel prize-winning poet Pablo Neruda's remains yesterday after exhuming them to determine whether he was assassinated by late dictator Augusto Pinochet's regime. Neruda, a celebrated poet, politician, diplomat and bohemian, died in 1973 aged 69, just days after Pinochet overthrew Socialist president Salvador Allende in a bloody coup. An international team of specialists who examined the remains are due to release their findings in May.

Support for Brexit camp grows

British support for staying in the European Union has fallen by two percentage points to 51 per cent according to a poll, a decline that may suggest US President Barack Obama's words in favour of UK membership had yet to have an impact. Support for leaving the 28-member bloc in a referendum has increased by 2 percentage points to 43 per cent in the past week.

Sushma Swaraj stable: doctors

The condition of Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, who was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) on Monday night with fever and chest congestion, was stable yesterday, the hospital said. "She is under treatment for fever, chest congestion with features of pneumonia," an AIIMS statement said.

Paternity test for Bolivia president!

Following a court order, Bolivian President Evo Morales underwent a paternity test Monday to settle a dispute with an ex-girlfriend whose child he denies fathering, his lawyer said. Morales had claimed the fathered a child with his ex-partner Gabriela Zapata which later died, before changing his story to say the child never existed.



A woman lays flowers at a memorial, dedicated to firefighters and workers who died after the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, during a night service in the city of Slavutych, Ukraine, yesterday. Ukraine marks 30 years since the world's worst nuclear accident at Chernobyl that killed thousands and forced a global rethink about the wisdom of relying on atomic fuel.

Visa deal only once 'all criteria met'

EU top diplomat tells Turkey

The EU's top diplomat Federica Mogherini said yesterday that Turkey would only get visa-free travel to the bloc once it has met all the required criteria. Turkey has demanded its citizens be allowed to enter the European Union's passport free Schengen zone without a visa by June, in exchange for it taking back migrants from Europe. But the EU insists that Turkey must meet 72 conditions before allowing visa-free travel, of which it is believed to have fulfilled about half. "On free travel, this will be done only once all the criteria are respected, as for all countries with which we negotiate free travel for a limited period," EU foreign policy chief Mogherini said on France Inter radio. "It was the case with Georgia, it was the case with Ukraine, it is a discussion we are having with Kosovo. There are very strict, technical criteria that must be put in place, a very severe verification must be carried out to apply this measure." The EU struck the deal with Turkey to send back all "irregular" migrants which arrive in Greece after March 20 in a bid to halt mass migration which has created enormous strain in Europe. Two sets of deportations expelling 325 migrants from Greece took place three weeks ago, but there has been no movement since. The operation has been hampered by last minute asylum applications and Turkey has also sounded the alarm several times against the EU failing to keep its side of the bargain. The accord is awash with legal and moral concerns, and critics have accused the EU of sacrificing its values and overlooking Turkey's growing crackdown on free speech in order to secure the deal.

Violence surges as talks tatters Five more US states vote

Aleppo death toll mounts; US to deploy rocket launchers in Turkey

The Syrian government yesterday said it had held a final session of talks with the United Nations mediator in a "useful and constructive round", but diplomats warned that an escalation of fighting around Aleppo threatened the shaky peace process.

UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura is struggling to keep negotiations alive after the main opposition High Negotiations Committee (HNC) left formal talks last week due to a surge in violence and stalled aid convoys, despite a two-month truce.

Fighting has intensified in Aleppo province in recent weeks as the partial truce brokered by the United States and Russia has all but broken down. De Mistura, who will brief the UN Security Council today, is expected to appeal to major powers to convene urgently a ministerial meeting of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG), diplomats said. Attacks by government forces and rebels killed at least 30 people, including eight children, in the last 24 hours in Aleppo, a monitoring group said. In Aleppo, divided between areas controlled by the gov-

ernment and by rebels, 19 people were killed by rebel shelling and 11 were killed by government air strikes, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

That adds to another 60 people killed over the weekend in Aleppo, Syria's largest city before the war, according to the Observatory. Air strikes were also reported in rebel-held areas near Damascus and in Hama province yesterday.

In a separate incident west of Aleppo, five Civil Defence workers - first responders in opposition-held territory where medical infrastructure has all but broken down - were killed by air strikes and a rocket attack on their centre.

Each side accuses the other of targeting civilian areas in the five-year-old war that has killed more than 250,000 people. Meanwhile, Turkey's foreign minister yesterday said the United States will deploy a rocket launcher system in Turkey near the border with a part of Syria held by Islamic State. Mevlut Cavusoglu was quoted by the Haberturk newspaper as saying that the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) would arrive in May near a part of southeastern Turkey that has repeatedly been hit by rocket fire from Syria.

Voters cast ballots in five northeastern states yesterday, with frontrunners Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump both looking to overwhelm their respective Democratic and Republican rivals in the race for the White House.

A very strong showing in primaries in Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island would Clinton on the cusp of Democratic victory, a monumental step in her quest to become the nation's first female commander in chief.

Trump also was expected to extend his formidable lead in the bruising race for the Republican nomination, even as rivals Ted Cruz and John Kasich mounted a hasty, and already fraying tag team effort to try to block him.

Kasich agreed to forego campaigning in Indiana, a winner-take-all state that votes May 3, and Cruz will return the favour later in New Mexico and Oregon. But within hours of the surprise deal, the Ohio governor was already playing it down, saying he was not telling his supporters in Indiana not to vote for Cruz. Yesterday's voting began at 6:00 am in Connecticut and one hour later in the other states. Polls across all five states close at 8:00 pm. Clinton was favoured to win all five state Democratic contests, with polls giving her a double-digit lead over rival Bernie Sanders in Pennsylvania, the biggest state of the bunch with 189 delegates. According to a recent CBS poll, Trump leads Indiana with 40 per cent of likely Republican voters, compared to 35 per cent for Cruz and 20 per cent for Kasich. A Trump loss in Indiana would make it much harder for him to gain the 1,237 delegates needed to win the nomination in the first round of balloting at the party's convention in Cleveland July 18-21.

You can't be in denial about terrorism

India tells Pakistan as top diplomats meet after months-long hiatus

India's foreign secretary S Jaishankar flatly told Pakistan yesterday that it can't be in denial about terrorism and terrorist groups in Pakistan targeting India.

He also said Pakistan can't be in denial about the impact of terrorism on relations between the two countries. "Terrorist groups based in Pakistan targeting India must not be allowed to operate with impunity," Jaishankar said.

Jaishankar also told Pakistan's foreign secretary Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry in a 90-minute meeting that India wants early and visible progress in the Pathankot terror attack investigation.

The two met on the sidelines of the annual Heart of Asia conference. Pakistan didn't mention the Pathankot terror attack once, but Chaudhry managed to tell India about his concern over Indian intelligence agency RAW's alleged involvement in Balochistan and also about Kashmir remaining the core issue for his country, according to a Pakistan High Commission statement.

"India's FS (foreign secretary) emphasised the need for early and visible progress on the Pathankot terrorist attack investigation as well as the Mumbai case trial in Pakistan," Indian foreign ministry spokesman Vikas Swarup said.

Sources told TOI that Jaishankar told Chaudhry that no spy agency will put their agent in the field with their own passport and without a visa.



Turkish policemen (L) disperse demonstrators during a protest of pro-secular Turks outside the Parliament in Ankara yesterday. The protest followed Turkey parliament's speaker's call to drop secularism from the country's new charter. But the head of parliament's constitution commission said no discussions were under way to remove secularism from the constitution.

US sends F-22 warplanes to Black Sea

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Two of the world's most advanced warplanes have touched down in Romania for the first time, near the shores of the Black Sea and just a short hop from Ukraine, the Crimean Peninsula and Russia.

The United States sent the F-22 Raptors to southeastern Europe two weeks after Russian fighter jets buzzed an American warship in the Baltic Sea.

Officially it was for a Nato training exercise, part of the Rapid Response program showcasing how effectively and quickly US fighter jets, crews and support can be moved to a forward operating base.

But it was also a show of strength for Nato allies on the Black Sea, where Russia is rapidly building up its military hardware.

The F-22s are known for speed and stealth -- able to travel at twice the speed of sound and hard to spot on radar.

The planes landed at Mihail Kogalniceanu Airport near the Romanian city of Constanta.

The transfer from RAF Lakenheath in Eastern England is strategically significant for NATO and its allies, because Constanta is on the Black Sea, close to the Ukrainian border, Crimea and Sevastopol, the home of Russia's Black Sea fleet.

Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and has continued military exercises in the area while saying it will spend \$2.4 billion to upgrade its naval capacity.

Russia has complained that it is Nato, and not Russia, that is responsible for the escalating tensions by pushing up against Russian borders.

BJP targets Sonia Gandhi in VVIP chopper scam

BJP yesterday used the conviction of Italian officials linked to the VVIP chopper scam to target Congress chief Sonia Gandhi and asked the then defence minister A K Antony to name the party leaders allegedly involved in the scandal.

The party wanted to know who were the bribe-takers after those who gave the bribe were convicted by an Italian court. BJP national secretary Shrikant Sharma said Congress chief Sonia Gandhi should come out with a clarification over the alleged mention of her name in the Italian court's order.

"Her government was the champion of corruption. She must issue a clarification over the mention of her name by the court," he said. Addressing a press conference, Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said Antony had in March 2013 said corruption had taken places in the purchase of VVIP choppers and that bribe had been taken. He

Canadian beheaded in Philippines

PM Trudeau expresses outrage

Islamic militants in the Philippines have beheaded a Canadian hostage, raising fears for more than 20 other foreigners held captive on remote islands, with troops and police vowing yesterday to hunt down the extremists.

The man's head was found Monday dumped outside city hall on Jolo, a mountainous and jungle-clad island in the far south of the Philippines that is a stronghold of the Abu Sayyaf Islamist group.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Filipino authorities identified the victim as John Ridsdel, a retiree in his late 60s who was kidnapped seven months ago from a yacht, along with another Canadian man, a Norwegian and a Filipina woman.

"This was an act of cold-blooded murder and responsibility rests with the terrorist group who took him hostage," Trudeau said in Ottawa. The four were abducted at a marina near the major city of Davao as part of a wave of abductions by the Abu Sayyaf -- a loose network of militants.



India makes panic key a must for all mobiles

All mobile phones sold in India will have to have a panic button from the start of next year, an official said yesterday, as the country grapples with large numbers of sex crimes against women.

The button would allow users to call emergency services by pressing a single key on their phone, a telecommunications ministry official told AFP. "No cell phones can be sold without the provision for panic button from January 1, 2017," he said, requesting anonymity.

The ministry said it was also making inbuilt GPS compulsory from January 1, 2018. The latest official figures show 36,735 rapes were reported across the country in 2014, although activists say the actual number is likely much higher with many crimes going unreported due to the social stigma they attract.

