

## G20 countries face calls for action to boost growth

AFP, Chengdu

The world's leading economies must do more to boost slowing global growth, the International Monetary Fund and Washington urged as G20 finance ministers gathered yesterday, with Britain's vote to leave the European Union threatening more disruption.

Central bank chiefs and finance ministers from the world's top 20 economies met in the southwestern Chinese city of Chengdu, and US Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew told journalists it was "a time of continuing uncertainty in the global economic outlook".

"When you look at the political developments around the world, most recently the referendum in the United Kingdom, it really reinforces the importance of concentrating on shared growth," he said.

Britain's new finance minister Philip Hammond yesterday met his German counterpart Wolfgang Schauble for the first time, and held talks with Chinese central bank chief Zhou Xiaochuan.

"In Chengdu for G20 -- will be reassuring world that Britain is open for business & will continue to be a competitive open trading nation," he tweeted.

According to a draft communiqué the G20 will seek to stress the impact of Brexit can be tackled, Bloomberg News reported.

"Members of the G20 are well positioned to proactively address the potential economic and financial consequences stemming from the UK referendum," it quoted the draft document as saying.

Just ahead of the meeting, the IMF called on key G20 nations to boost government spending.

"Global growth remains weak, and downside risks have become more salient," the Washington-based lender said in a report.

"Growth could be even lower if the current increases in economic and political uncertainty in the wake of the 'Brexit' vote continue."



An Afghan protester scream near the scene of a double suicide attack that targeted crowds of minority Shia Hazaras during a demonstration at the Deh Mazang Circle in Kabul yesterday. Inset, A wounded man reacts after the blasts.



PHOTO: AFP

## 54C: Hottest day ever recorded

MAIL ONLINE

Temperatures in Kuwait reached 54C this week, making Thursday the hottest day EVER recorded.

The blistering temperature was recorded in Mithribah, Kuwait, on Thursday.

And on Friday, Iraq was nearly as hot, as the mercury soared to 53.9C (129.0 degrees Fahrenheit).

Weather forecaster Nigham Mohammed expected temperatures to hover around 49 degrees Celsius in Basra yesterday and to decline in the coming days.

And weather historian, Christopher C Burt said the temperatures made them the hottest "ever reliably measured on Earth".

On Wednesday, temperatures soared up to 51C (123.8 Fahrenheit) in Baghdad and as much as 53C (127.4 Fahrenheit) in Basra.

## Turkey purge continues

Extends police powers, shuts 1,000 private schools

AFP, Istanbul

Turkey yesterday pushed with a sweeping crackdown against suspects accused of taking part in the failed coup against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, extending police powers to hold people in detention and shuttering over 1,000 private schools.

A week after renegade soldiers tried to oust him with guns, tanks and F16s, Erdogan's government has rounded up or sacked tens of thousands of perceived state enemies, including almost 300 officers of the guard shielding his Ankara palace.

But in its first major release of suspects amid global criticism of the crackdown, Turkey set free 1,200 low ranking soldiers in Ankara.

In a new development, Turkey yesterday detained a nephew of US-based preacher Fethullah Gulen, state-run media reported, the first time one of his relatives has been apprehended in the current crackdown.

Under heightened police powers, suspects can now be held without

charge for one month, up from four days, the official gazette announced on the third day of what Erdogan has said would be a three-month state of emergency.

Fears that the strongman will seek to further cement his rule and muzzle dissent through repression have strained ties with Western Nato allies and cast a darkening shadow over

education sector, 1,043 private schools and 1,229 associations and foundations will be shut down, said yesterday's Gazette statement.

The steps were just some of the seismic changes that have rocked Turkey since the shock of the July 15 coup attempt that claimed 246 lives.

According to the authorities, 10,410 people have been detained -- mainly soldiers, including 283 Presidential Guard officers, but also police, judges and civil servants. Of these, 4,500 have been formally placed under arrest.

The Turkish government has also cancelled over 10,000 passports, mainly of state officials, "due to flight risk with the holders either in custody or on the run".

Aside from the detentions, more than 50,000 other civil servants, down to the family and sports ministries, have been sacked or suspended -- in a purge whose speed and scale suggested to many observers that their names were on pre-existing lists.

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European Union.

After Brussels issued stinging criticism and warned Erdogan that bringing back the death penalty would end the membership bid for good, Erdogan fired back that the EU had taken a "biased and prejudiced" stance on Turkey.

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## Clashes rock Manbij as SDF deadline passes

AFP, Beirut

Islamic State group militants yesterday clashed with US-backed fighters in the Syrian town of Manbij, pursuing their fierce defence of the jihadist stronghold and ignoring a deadline to leave.

There are growing fears for the fate of civilians trapped in Manbij, formerly a key stop along IS's supply route from neighbouring Turkey into its self-styled Islamic "caliphate" in Syria.

The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) penetrated the town one month ago but have since been hindered by a bloody IS counter-offensive and concerns about the civilian population.

Yesterday, IS jihadists appeared to ignore a 48-hour ultimatum to leave issued by the Manbij Military Council, a key member of the SDF.

"The 48-hour period is over, and there will be no more opportunities like this one for Daesh (IS)," a commander from the council told AFP on condition of anonymity.

IS has "not responded" to the SDF's offer and had instead "attacked our positions",

he said.

The ultimatum came after at least 56 civilians, including children, were reportedly killed Tuesday in US-led coalition air strikes near Manbij.

The commander pledged that his forces would "intensify our attacks on their remaining positions" there while working to "secure safe passages" for civilians looking to flee.

Thousands of civilians have already fled Manbij, which lies in Syria's northern Aleppo province.

More than half of Syria's population has been displaced since the country's conflict erupted in 2011, and at least

280,000 people have been killed.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said SDF forces were advancing in Manbij, moving steadily north from districts they already control in the town's west and south.

The civilian deaths in Tuesday's raids sparked an intense backlash from activists and rights groups, as well as a call from a prominent Syrian opposition body for the coalition to halt its air campaign until a thorough investigation is completed.

**WAR ON IS IN SYRIA**

## China floods, landslides kill 87

Forces 16 million people from home; govt response sparks anger

AGENCIES

Heavy rain in China has killed at least 87 people and forced thousands from their homes, state media reported yesterday.

The flash floods and landslides in Hebei and Henan provinces destroyed thousands of homes and caused widespread damage to crops.

As many as 16 million people across China have been forced from their homes, Reuters news agency reported.

The Chinese authorities have said they will provide funds for flood-hit areas.

Many of the most recent deaths were in the northern Hebei province, where nearly 50,000 homes collapsed and more than eight million people were affected, said the Chinese state news agency Xinhua.

There were also power cuts and major problems with the communications and transport networks, Xinhua said.

In the central province of Henan, 15 people died in thunderstorms and high winds. About 18,000 houses were damaged and 7.2 million people were forced to leave their

homes, Reuters said.

Angry residents have blamed local officials for failing to warn them of the severe weather in advance.

Residents have also voiced suspicions that the sudden flood, which struck early Wednesday while villagers slept, was man-made -- the result of a release of water from a local reservoir, rather than the breaking of a levee in a nearby river, as officials have claimed.

Photos and videos of the aftermath showed the small, floating corpses of drowned children being pulled from the muddy floodwaters, as well as telephone poles toppled and homes completely collapsed.

The summer rains have been especially heavy in China this year and the government has said more than 200 people have been killed as a result of the

weather.

It has estimated that more than 1.5 million hectares of crops have been damaged and said direct economic losses exceed \$3bn (£2.3bn).



A woman hugs her husband who was shot dead by an unidentified gunman in Manila, yesterday. Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte swept to power in May on a promise to clampdown on drugs, and police have since confirmed killing nearly 200 people in a two-month crime blitz. There has also been a surge in killings by anti-drug vigilantes who leave victims' corpses on city streets wrapped in packaging tape with signs accusing them of being drug dealers.

PHOTO: AFP

## Russian balloonist sets world record

REUTERS, Moscow

Russian adventurer Fedor Konyukhov has landed safely in a field on a private property in West Australia after setting a world record for circumnavigating the world solo in a hot air balloon.

The 64-year-old Konyukhov emerged from the balloon's gondola after more than 11 days aloft expressing his appreciation for the smell of the earth, and "how wonderful it is", according to millionaire businessman and fellow aviator Dick Smith, who was on hand to assist with the landing.

Konyukhov, who embarked on his epic journey from Northam in Western Australia on July 12, set the record of just over 11 days when he passed above the township 100 km north east of Perth, Australian national broadcaster ABC reported earlier.

The Russian balloonist beat the previous record of 13-1/2 days set in 2002 by the late Steve Fossett. Smith completed the first solo circumnavigation of the world by helicopter in 1983.

## MILITARY PLANE MISSING OVER BAY OF BENGAL

## India steps up search mission

AFP, Chennai

India yesterday stepped up a major search operation for an air force plane that disappeared over the Bay of Bengal the day before with 29 people on board, as the defence minister headed to the region.

The AN-32 military transport plane was on a routine flight from the southern city of Chennai to Port Blair, capital of the remote Andaman and Nicobar islands, on Friday morning when it vanished from radar screens.

Twenty-one of the passengers on board were defence personnel, including six crew members, while eight others worked for the military in non-uniform roles, an IAF source told AFP.

On its official Twitter account the Indian navy said 18 navy and coast-guard ships were now deployed in the

search operation, along with six aircraft and a submarine.

"#SAROps 18 Naval & ICG ships (+1sm) deployed with various aircraft... to locate missing AN 32" the navy tweeted.

Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar



travelled to Tambaram air base on the outskirts of Chennai on yesterday morning, where he was briefed by military officials before departing for an aerial survey to monitor the ongoing operation.

"It lost contact with the radars approximately 150 nautical miles east of Chennai," IAF Wing Commander Anupam Banerjee told AFP.

Several reports said weather in the Bay of Bengal had been rough owing to the southwest monsoon.

An IAF source said Friday radar data from the missing aircraft showed it making a sharp left turn before rapidly losing altitude.

The Russian-built AN-32, equipped with navigational aids, is the IAF's workhorse aircraft and capable of flying for up to four hours without refuelling.

Experts have warned India's outdated fleet -- some of which dates back to the 1960s -- is a threat to national security, with some aircraft virtually on their last legs.

## Indian charity worker rescued in Afghanistan

AFP, Kabul

An Indian charity worker kidnapped from Kabul has been rescued, officials said yesterday, more than a month after she was taken at gunpoint in the latest abduction of foreigners in the war-torn country.

Judith D'Souza, a 40-year-old staff member of the Aga Khan Foundation, a prominent NGO that has long worked in Afghanistan, was abducted near her residence in the heart of Kabul on the night of June 9.

"I am happy to inform you that Judith D'Souza has been rescued," India's Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj said on Twitter.

"D'Souza is with us -- safe and in good spirits... I have spoken to Judith. She is reaching Delhi this evening."

An Afghan security official told AFP that D'Souza was rescued in an operation in a district of Kabul on Friday and no ransom was paid.

He added that a criminal gang, and not militants, were behind the abduction, which had prompted desperate pleas from D'Souza's family to Indian officials on social media.

Aid workers in particular have increasingly been casualties of a surge in militant violence in recent years.