

# NEWS IN brief

## Medan church attacker 'obsessed with IS'

AFP, Medan  
An Indonesian teenager who stabbed a priest in a church and tried to set off a homemade bomb was obsessed with the Islamic State (IS) group leader, a minister said yesterday. The 17-year-old attempted Sunday to set off the crude, low-grade explosive as the Catholic priest held mass in the packed church in Medan on Sumatra island, and then stabbed him with a knife.

## Xi reshuffles key party posts ahead of congress

REUTERS, Beijing  
Chinese President Xi Jinping has reshuffled three top provincial-level Communist Party posts as he seeks to place his men in key positions ahead of a once-every-five-years congress next year, and more new appointments are likely soon. The party congress, expected to be held next autumn, will see Xi further cement his hold on power by appointing close allies into the party's ruling inner core.

## Curfew lifted in Kashmir but fresh clashes erupt

AFP, Srinagar  
Authorities lifted a curfew in Indian-administered Kashmir after 52 days of lockdown amid deadly violence, but street clashes broke out again yesterday between protesters and security forces. Restrictions were lifted throughout most of the tense Kashmir Valley including the main city of Srinagar following improvement in the situation, police said in a statement late Sunday.

## Thai town attack linked to Muslim insurgency

AFP, Bangkok  
Two suspects in a spate of bomb attacks on Thailand's tourist towns have links to southern Muslim rebels, police said yesterday, the first time a clear link has been made to the insurgency. No one has claimed responsibility for the bombing and arson spree which hit popular resorts across the south this month, killing four and wounding dozens including European visitors.

## 300 reindeer killed by lightning in Norway

AFP, Oslo  
More than 300 wild reindeer have been killed by lightning in southern Norway, Norwegian officials said yesterday, in the largest such incident known to date. The 323 reindeer, including 70 young, were found on Friday by a gamekeeper on the Hardangervidda plateau, a national park where Europe's largest herd of some 10,000 wild reindeer roam freely.



**IS BOMBER KILLS 71 IN YEMEN** Yemenis inspect the site of a suicide car bombing claimed by the Islamic State group at an army recruitment centre in the southern Yemeni city of Aden yesterday. Yemeni security officials told AFP that the attacker drove an explosives-laden vehicle into a gathering of army recruits at a school in northern Aden, killing at least 71.

# India offers support to Myanmar peace effort

PTI, New Delhi  
As Myanmar sets out on a new path after decades of military rule, India yesterday promised whole-hearted support to it in "every step" of its journey as the two countries resolved to deepen ties and actively cooperate to combat terrorism and insurgent activities in the region.  
Prime Minister Narendra Modi held extensive talks with Myanmar President U Htin Kyaw, in first top level engagement with the new government of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, and conveyed India's full support to Myanmar's internal peace process. The two sides inked four MoUs to boost cooperation in areas of connectivity, medicine and renewable energy, besides resolving to deepen ties in a range of other sectors, including agriculture, banking and power.  
Reading out a statement to media, Modi later said both sides recognised that each other's security interests are closely aligned and that both countries agreed to work together to combat terrorism and insurgent activities in the region.  
"We recognised that our security interests are closely aligned. And, we agreed on the need to remain sensitive to each other's strategic interests and concerns."  
"To this end, President and I agreed to work together for the safety and security of our people. And, actively cooperate to combat the common challenges of terrorism and insurgent activity in our region," Modi said, with Htin Kyaw by his side.  
India has been raising with Myanmar the issue of several North East militant outfits having training camps in that country. Referring to new Myanmar government's agenda of ushering all round growth and development in the country, Modi said, "Let me assure you that at every step of the way 1.25 billion people of India will stand by you — Both as partners and as friends."

### TACKLING TERRORISM, INSURGENCY



# 'Vote against impeachment'

Brazil's Rousseff defends herself before senators  
AFP, Brasilia  
Brazil's suspended president Dilma Rousseff yesterday urged the Senate to vote against impeaching her, denying charges that she fiddled government accounts.  
"Vote against impeachment, vote for democracy... Do not accept a coup," the 68-year-old leftist leader said as she defended herself before senators who are widely expected to remove her from office.  
Rousseff -- Brazil's first female president -- was testifying for the first time at her trial, hours before senators were to start voting on her fate.  
All indications point to her being removed from office, ending 13 years of rule by the leftist Workers' Party in Latin America's biggest country.  
Branding accusations against her "a pretext for a constitutional coup," Rousseff called herself a fighter for democracy.  
"I've come to look your excellencies in the eye and to say that I did not commit a crime," Rousseff, 68, said in a calm, firm voice from the Senate chamber podium.  
"I did not commit the crimes for which I have been accused unjustly and arbitrarily."  
Rousseff is accused of having taken illegal state loans to patch budget holes.



# Libyan forces corner IS fighters in Sirte

AFP, Sirte  
Libya's pro-government forces yesterday cornered Islamic State group jihadists in their last holdouts in the coastal city of Sirte, after heavy fighting that left dozens of dead and wounded.  
The battle for IS's North African stronghold was launched more than three months ago by forces loyal to the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA).  
Loyalist forces have been backed by US air raids for almost a month, amid international concern over the jihadists' growing influence.  
IS overran the Mediterranean hometown of Libya's slain dictator Moamer Gaddafi in mid-2015, sparking fears the jihadists would use it as a springboard for attacks on Europe.  
Pro-GNA forces yesterday said they had encircled the jihadists in less than two square kilometres (0.7 square mile) of Sirte, after staging an assault the previous day on its last two IS-held districts.  
The anti-IS fighters "seized a little more than half of district Number Three and 70 percent of district Number One" in the downtown seafront area, they said.  
At least 38 pro-GNA fighters have been killed and 185 wounded since they began the "final battle" to retake all of Sirte on Sunday, the hospital for the loyalist forces in the nearby city of Misrata said.  
The pro-GNA field hospital in Sirte on Sunday called for blood donations. IS casualty figures have been unavailable.  
The jihadists deployed at least 12 suicide car bombs in a last bid to slow the loyalist advance, pro-GNA forces said.

# Brussels crime lab attacked; 5 detained

AFP, Brussels  
Several attackers yesterday rammed a car through the gates of Belgium's national crime laboratory in Brussels and then started a fire in what prosecutors said may have been an attempt to destroy evidence.  
Five people were arrested nearby and are being questioned, but there is no confirmed link to terrorism so far. No one was injured in the fire or by a large explosion which shook houses nearby, the city's prosecutors said.  
The incident comes as Belgium remains on high alert following suicide attacks on the city's airport and metro in March which were claimed by the Islamic State group.

# US condemns clashes Ankara warns Kurd militia of more strikes, bombs PKK targets in northern Iraq

AFP, Istanbul  
Turkey yesterday warned it would carry out more strikes on a Syrian Kurdish militia if it failed to retreat beyond the Euphrates River, as Washington condemned their weekend clashes as "unacceptable".  
Turkish forces pressed on with a two-pronged operation inside Syria against Islamic State (IS) jihadists and the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), shelling over a dozen targets.  
But strikes against the YPG are hugely sensitive as the Kurdish group -- seen as a terror group by Ankara -- is allied with Turkey's Nato partner, the United States, in the fight against IS in Syria.  
The Pentagon called the clashes "unacceptable" and urged an immediate de-escalation.  
In a statement sent to AFP, Pentagon spokesman Peter Cook condemned the fighting south of the Syrian town of Jarabulus.  
"We are closely monitoring reports of clashes south of Jarabulus -- where ISIL is no longer located -- between the Turkish armed forces, some opposition groups, and units that are affiliated with the SDF (Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces)," he said.  
Meanwhile, Turkish warplanes bombed Kurdish militant targets in northern Iraq yesterday, state media said.  
Turkish air force jets launched strikes between 09:30 and 10:55 GMT against targets of the "separatist terrorist organisation" in Gara in northern Iraq, Anadolu news agency said, referring to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The targets were "destroyed", Anadolu added.

### TURKEY INCURSION IN SYRIA



# Half-century-long war with FARC ends Colombia begins its first day of peace with insurgent group after ceasefire deal

AFP, Bogota  
Colombia yesterday began its first day of peace with the country's largest insurgency after a ceasefire between the FARC and the government went into effect, ending 52 years of warfare.  
The full ceasefire ordered by President Juan Manuel Santos and the head of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Timoleon Jimenez, began at midnight Sunday (0500 GMT yesterday).  
"This August 29 a new phase of history begins for Colombia. We silenced the guns. THE WAR WITH THE FARC IS OVER!" Santos wrote on Twitter one minute after midnight.  
A message from the official FARC account at the same time was more restrained: "From this moment on the bilateral and definitive ceasefire begins."  
In a declaration to reporters in Cuba, where peace talks were held, Jimenez said that he ordered all commanders and units, "and each one of our combatants to definitively cease fire and hostilities against the Colombian state" starting at midnight.  
Santos ordered the Colombian armed forces on Thursday to halt anti-FARC operations at midnight Sunday.  
The ceasefire is the first in which both sides are committed to a definite end to the fighting.  
"The ceasefire is really one more seal on the end of the conflict. It is the test of fire," said Carlos Alfonso Velazquez, a security expert at the University of La Sabana.  
Hundreds of thousands of Colombians have died since 1964 as rebel armies and gangs battled in the jungles in what is

### COLOMBIA AND THE FARC REBELS THE PEACE DEAL

**AGREEMENTS REACHED**

- An integrated agrarian development policy (05/2013)
- Political participation (11/2013)
- Illegal drugs (05/2014)
- Reparations for conflict victims (12/2015)
- Bilateral ceasefire and disarmament (06/2016)
- Final, full and definitive agreement reached on August 24, 2016

Must be confirmed by referendum on October 2

### THE CONFLICT IN NUMBERS

- DISPLACED: 6.8 million
- DEATHS: 260,000
- DISAPPEARED: 45,000

SOURCES: FUNDACION PAZ Y RECONCILIACION, COLOMBIAN DEFENCE MINISTRY, UNIDAD PARA LAS VICTIMAS, ACNUR

considered Latin America's last major civil armed conflict. Santos and Jimenez are due to sign a final, full peace agreement sometime between September 20 and 26. The end of hostilities will be followed by a six-month demobilization process. Starting yesterday, the FARC's estimated 7,500 fighters will head to collection points to surrender their weapons.



# Clinton aide splits from husband hit by sext scandal

WASHINGTON, Reuters  
Huma Abedin, one of US Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's top aides, yesterday said she was separating from her husband, Anthony Weiner, after a sext scandal similar to an earlier incident that led him to resign from the US Congress.  
"After long and painful consideration and work on my marriage, I have made the decision to separate from my husband," Huma Abedin said in a statement.  
Her announcement follows a New York Post report late Sunday that Weiner recently sent photos of his boxer-brief-clad genitals - one while he was in bed with their toddler son - via Twitter to another woman.  
Weiner resigned in June 2011 from Congress, where he represented a New York City district, following a sexting scandal in which he accidentally posted an explicit photo of himself on his public Twitter timeline instead of via a direct message to a woman, as he had intended.  
Weiner said he had undergone therapy after the first sexting scandal, according to media reports.  
Clinton's Republican rival, Donald Trump, said in a statement, "Huma is making a very wise decision. I know Anthony Weiner well, and she will be far better off without him."

# Anthropocene is here Planet Earth enters a new man-made epoch: experts

AFP, Paris  
"Our working model is that the optimal boundary is the mid-20th century," said Jan Zalasiewicz, a geologist at the University of Leicester.  
"If adopted -- and we're a long way from that -- the Holocene would finish and the Anthropocene would formally be held to have begun."  
Scientists refer to the period starting from 1950 as the "Great Acceleration", and a glance at graphs tracking a number of chemical and socio-economic changes make it obvious why.  
Concentrations in the air of carbon dioxide, methane and stratospheric ozone; surface temperatures, ocean acidification, marine fish harvesting, and tropical forest loss; population growth, construction of large dams, international tourism -- all of them take off from about mid-century.  
One of the main culprits is global warming driven by the burning of fossil fuels.  
The human impact on Earth's chemistry and climate has cut short the 11,700-year-old geological epoch known as the Holocene and ushered in a new one, scientists said yesterday.  
The Anthropocene, or "new age of man," would start from the mid-20th century if their recommendation -- submitted yesterday to the International Geological Congress in Cape Town, South Africa -- is adopted.  
That approval process is likely to take at least two years and requires ratification by three other academic bodies.  
But after seven years of deliberation, the 35-strong Working Group has unanimously recognised the Anthropocene as a reality, and voted 30-to-three (with two abstentions) for the transition to be officially registered.

