

'Terrorist' shot after stabbing Israeli soldier

AFP, Jerusalem

An assailant believed to be a Palestinian stabbed and wounded an Israeli officer in a West Bank settlement early yesterday before being shot by forces at the scene, the army said.

Both were evacuated to the Hadassah hospital in Jerusalem, which said the perpetrator was in moderate condition after suffering a gunshot to his head, while the soldier had been stabbed in his armpit.

It was the fifth attack on Israeli security forces or civilians since Friday after a three-week lull in a nearly year-long wave of violence.

The Israeli army announced on Saturday it was deploying an additional battalion to reinforce the Hebron area following the uptick in violence around the city.

The wave of violence since last October has killed 227 Palestinians, 34 Israelis, two Americans, one Jordanian, one Eritrean and a Sudanese, according to an AFP count.

Israel occupied the West Bank since capturing it in the Six-Day War of 1967.

Ceasefire teeters on brink

Russia, US wage war of words at UN; Moscow accuses Washington of aiding jihadists

AGENCIES

Syria's ceasefire was hanging by a thread yesterday, after tensions escalated between Moscow and Washington over a US-led coalition air strike that killed dozens of Syrian soldiers battling jihadists.

The truce saw violence drop across Syria for several days after it came into force Monday, but fighting has since erupted on several fronts and besieged civilians are still waiting desperately for promised aid deliveries.

The ceasefire's co-sponsors, Russia and the United States, have traded accusations over the fraying deal, with relations strained even further after the US-led raid killed scores of Syrian soldiers on Saturday.

Moscow stepped up its war of words with Washington yesterday, saying the air strikes threatened the implementation of a US-Russian ceasefire plan for Syria and bordered on connivance with Islamic State.

Russia has repeatedly called on the United States to push units of moderate Syrian opposition to separate from Islamic State and other "terrorist groups".

The Foreign Ministry said Saturday's incident was a result of Washington's "stubborn refusal" to cooperate with Moscow in fighting Islamic State, the Nusra Front - now renamed Jabhat Fatah al Sham - and "other terrorist groups".

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least 90 soldiers were killed in the strike. Moscow put the death toll at 62.

The Syrian army said the raid had allowed Islamic State group fighters to gain ground

around the key eastern airbase of Deir Ezzor, but a military source said government forces were back on the offensive yesterday and fought back control of area around the key air base.

Yesterday IS said it shot down a Syrian warplane near Deir Ezzor. Syrian state news agency SANA confirmed a plane had been shot down there and its pilot killed, but did not say who was responsible.

Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman said Russian warplanes pounded IS positions around Deir Ezzor late Saturday as fierce clashes broke out between IS and forces loyal to President

between criminal negligence and direct pandering to IS terrorists," it said.

It again called on Washington to force Syrian rebels to sign on to the truce, warning that "otherwise, the realisation of Russia-US agreements... could be put in danger."

An emergency UN Security Council meeting called by Moscow to discuss the attack ended early on Saturday after an exchange between the US and Russia reminiscent of Cold War-era verbal jousting.

Washington further unnerved Moscow when its envoy to the United Nations abruptly left her seat as the Russian representative took the floor to condemn the air strikes.

US ambassador Samantha Power said Washington regretted the loss of life, but that Moscow's request for the meeting was a "stunt".

And Russian ambassador Vitaly Churkin accused the US of violating agreements that it would not target Syrian army positions.

He called the strike a "bad omen" for the US-Russia deal on halting the war in Syria, which has killed more than 300,000 people since it erupted in March 2011.

"We are reaching a really terrifying conclusion for the whole world: That the White House is defending Islamic State. Now there can be no doubts about that," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in comments aired by state TV. Samantha Power retorted that Zakharova should be embarrassed by that claim.

The head of Fateh al-Sham Front, which changed its name from Al-Nusra Front after renouncing its ties to al-Qaeda, said late Saturday that "neither we nor rebel groups will allow the siege of Aleppo to continue."

SYRIA WAR

Monitor says 90 regime soldiers killed

IS shoots down Syrian warplane; pilot killed

Former Al-Nusra chief says rebels, jihadists mulling merger

Bashar al-Assad. At least 38 jihadist fighters were killed and clashes were ongoing, Abdel Rahman told AFP.

Hours after the coalition strike on Saturday, the Pentagon admitted US-led pilots may have hit Assad's forces but said that they "believed they were striking a Daesh (IS) fighting position."

A statement by Russia's foreign ministry yesterday said it was "deeply concerned" about the incident.

"The actions of the pilots -- if they, as we hope, were not taken on orders from Washington -- fall



KHAMENEI ON REGIONAL CONFLICT
Iran must stand strong against US

AFP, Tehran

Iran's supreme leader said the Islamic republic must stand strong against Washington on the region's conflicts, in an address to commanders of the elite Republican Guards force yesterday.

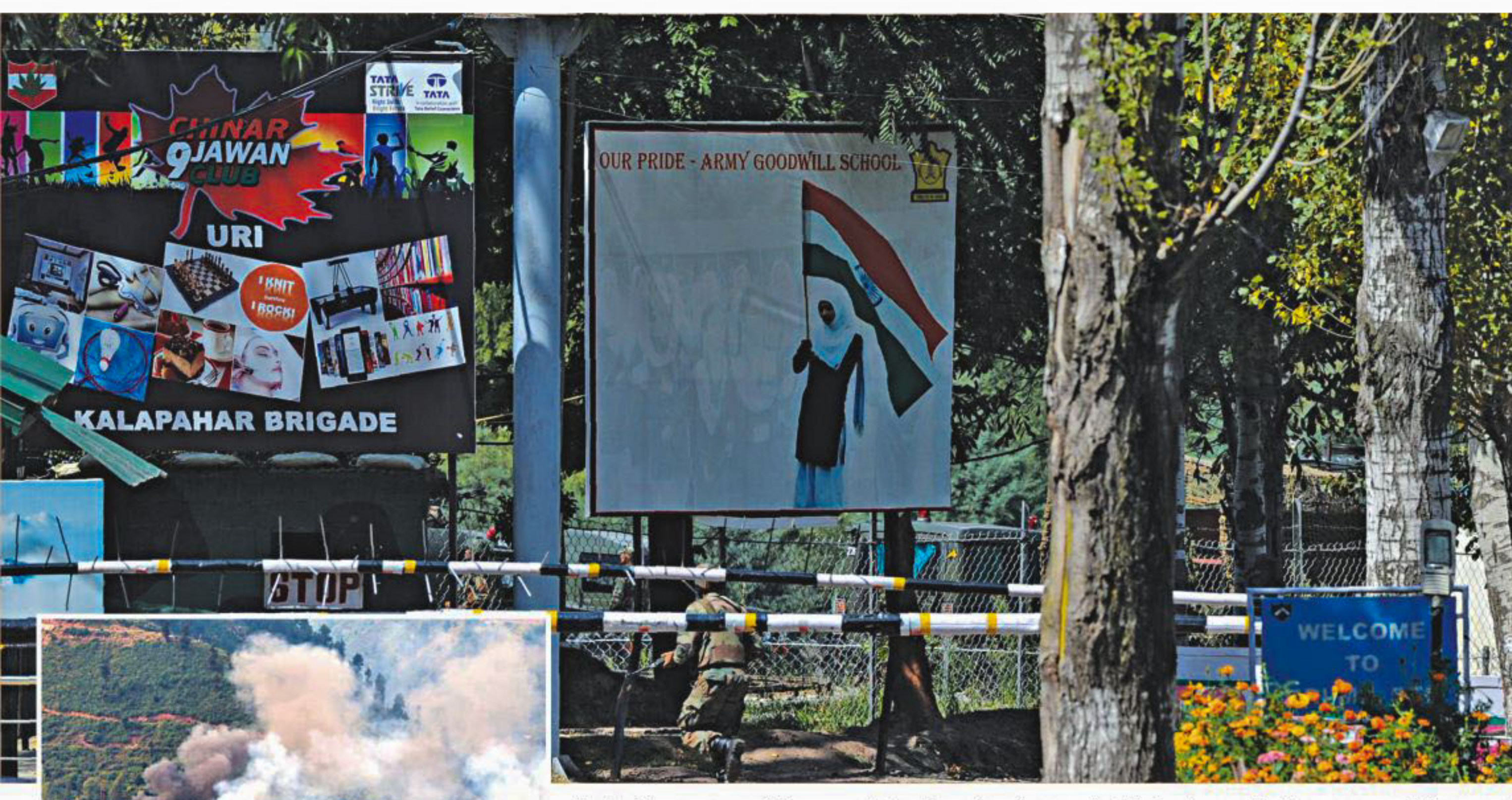
"The Americans insist we negotiate with them on regional issues, especially on Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in the speech published on his official website.

"What is their main goal for requesting these talks? They have no aim but to prevent the presence in the region of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the main factor of America's failures," said Khamenei.

Major generals Mohammad Ali Jafari, the Revolutionary Guards chief, and Qassem Suleimani, head of its foreign operations wing, the Quds Force, were among hundreds of members who attended the speech.

Khamenei, whose country has not had diplomatic relations with Washington since 1980, stressed that military power and intimidation were the most effective means to keep foreign threats at bay.

"In past years, some officials have said the removal of military threat and war were due to certain measures, but it's not true," he said.



An Indian army soldier runs into the site of a gunbattle between Indian army soldiers and rebels inside an army brigade headquarters near the border with Pakistan in Uri, yesterday. Inset, Smoke billows from the base. Militants armed with guns and grenades killed 17 soldiers in the attack.

PHOTO: AFP

CHAOS IN LIBYA
Rival govts clash for control of oil ports

REUTERS, Benghazi

Eastern Libyan forces said they had reestablished control over two oil ports where an ousted faction launched a counter-attack yesterday, briefly seizing one of the terminals.

The two ports, Es Sider and Ras Lanuf, were among four seized by forces loyal to eastern commander Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) on Sept 11-12 from a Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG) faction led by Ibrahim Jathran.

The fighting came as the state-run National Oil Corporation (NOC) prepared to restart oil exports from the ports, blockaded for several years.

LNA spokesman Ahmed al-Mismari said pro-Haftar forces had repelled an attack at Ras Lanuf with the help of air strikes, and were pursuing Jathran forces fleeing from Es Sider, where they had taken control earlier in the day. A Libyan oil industry source confirmed that the LNA controlled both the ports.

The clashes raise fears of a new conflict over Libya's oil resources. Jathran's PFG had aligned itself with a UN-backed government in Tripoli, while Haftar is a divisive figure whose opponents accuse of trying establish military rule.

Fighting and political disputes have reduced oil output in the North African country to a fraction of the 1.6 million barrels per day the OPEC member produced before a 2011 uprising.

NEWS IN
brief

Somali general killed in suicide attack

AFP, Mogadishu

A top Somalia general known for fighting the jihadist Shabaab group, was killed yesterday when a suicide bomber rammed an explosives-packed car into his vehicle, officials and witnesses said. General Mohamed Roble Jimale Gobale was killed along with four of his security guards in the attack in the capital Mogadishu that was claimed by the al-Qaeda linked Shabaab.

2 police shot dead in Saudi Arabia

AFP, Riyadh

Unidentified gunmen killed two Saudi policemen in the mainly Shia eastern city of Dammam late on Saturday, the interior ministry said, describing it as a "terrorist attack". The two officers were patrolling in a police car when they came under fire at around 11:30 pm, a ministry spokesman told the official Saudi Press Agency.



Jacques Chirac hospitalised

AFP, Paris

Former French president Jacques Chirac, 83, was admitted to hospital yesterday with a lung infection, his son-in-law said. Chirac, who led France from 1995 to 2007, is probably best remembered internationally for his opposition to the US military intervention in Iraq in 2003.

Central Africa militia kills at least 20

AFP, Bangui

Mainly-Muslim militia fighters in the Central African Republic have killed at least 20 people and wounded several more in attacks in the centre of the country, a police source said yesterday. Violence in CAR over recent years has claimed thousands of lives and prompted hundreds of thousands to flee their homes, even if the presence of French and UN troops has gone some way to improving security.

Pakblast toll hits 36

AFP, Peshawar

The death toll from a Taliban suicide bomb attack on a mosque in northwest tribal Pakistan has risen to 36, including eight children, officials said yesterday. The Friday attack targeted a mosque in the Mohmand tribal district bordering Afghanistan where the army has been fighting Taliban militants.

PARLIAMENTARY POLLS IN RUSSIA
Pro-Putin party expected to extend control

REUTERS, Moscow

The ruling United Russia party is expected to win even greater dominance over Russia's lower house in a parliamentary election yesterday, showing that support for President Vladimir Putin is holding up despite sanctions and a deep economic slowdown.

The election for the Duma, or lower house, is being seen as a dry run for Putin's expected presidential campaign in 2018.

It is also a test of how well the Kremlin can oversee trouble-free elections. It will be the first parliamentary vote since 2011, when allegations of ballot-rigging sparked big protests against Putin in the capital.

Voting got under way at 2000 GMT on Saturday on the Chukotka Peninsula opposite Alaska and will wrap up in Kaliningrad, Russia's most westerly point, where people can cast their vote until 1800 GMT on Sunday.

United Russia, led by Prime Minister

Dmitry Medvedev, a Putin loyalist, has 238 of 450 Duma seats, dominates the more than 80 regional parliaments, and is routinely depicted in a favourable light by state television, where most Russians get their news.

The party is able to draw on the support of the other three parties in the federal Duma, and benefits from its association with 63-year-old Putin, who after 17 years in power as either president or prime minister, enjoys a personal approval rating of about 80 percent. Putin does not belong to any party.

The liberal opposition hopes it can break through to win about two dozen seats. Pollsters say it will be lucky to snag a handful and may end up with none.

The election is the first time that voters in Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014, are helping decide the makeup of the Duma.

The first exit polls are due at 1800 GMT on Sunday.

MIGRANT ISSUE
Merkel party loses ground in Berlin polls

REUTERS, Berlin

Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives suffered their second electoral blow in two weeks yesterday, with support for her Christian Democrats (CDU) plunging to a post-reunification low in a Berlin state vote due to unease with her migrant policy.

The anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany (AfD) polled 11.5 percent, gaining from a popular backlash over Merkel's decision a year ago to keep borders open for refugees, an exit poll by public broadcaster ARD showed. The result means the AfD will enter a 10th state assembly, out of 16 in total.

Clinton 'putting the entire nation in grave peril'

AFP, Houston

Donald Trump took his campaign to Texas on Saturday, bashing Hillary Clinton's immigration policies as too lax, in a state still up for grabs on Election Day.

With polls showing a tightening race just over seven weeks before the November 8 election, the Republican candidate turned up the vitriol, saying that as president, his Democratic rival would virtually end border enforcement and place the country "in grave peril."

Trump was speaking a day after a much-hyped televised event in which, after years of questioning whether Barack Obama was an American citizen, he finally declared that the president "was born in the United States, period."

On Saturday, speaking before a sympathetic audience that included people who said their friends or family members had been killed by undocumented immigrants, Trump continued his sharp attacks on Clinton.

The immigration issue has been central to Trump's campaign since he said last summer that many Mexican immigrants were drug smugglers and rapists. The candidate made it clear Saturday that he is not about to give up on the attack line, even at the risk of offending many Hispanic voters.

Trump asserted that Clinton would "implement amnesty by executive order, violating our constitution and putting the entire nation in grave peril."

Clinton has called for a softening of immigration practices, saying she would deport only violent criminals and terrorists, a position in stark contrast to Trump's vow to build a border wall and deport huge numbers of the undocumented.

His suggestion that immigrants are disproportionately responsible for serious crime appears unfounded, according to several studies. However, Trump insisted on Saturday that Americans are being killed on a daily basis by the undocumented.

WARS AND REFUGEE CRISIS

World leaders are gathering in New York today for a major UN summit on tackling the refugee and migrant crisis. Conflicts and persecution have driven a record 65.3 million people from their homes.

Here are some facts:



> An average of 24 people worldwide were forced to flee every minute last year.

> At the end of 2015 there were 65.3 million forcibly displaced people. They included 21.3 million refugees, 40.8 million internally displaced and 3.2 million asylum seekers.

- > If they were a country they would be the world's 21st largest.
- > More than half of refugees come from just three countries: Syria (4.9 mln), Afghanistan (2.7 mln) and Somalia (1.1 mln).
- > Colombia has the highest number of internally displaced people (6.9 mln) followed by Syria (6.6 mln) and Iraq (4.4 mln).
- > Developing regions host 86 percent of refugees. Turkey has by far the largest number at 2.5 million.
- > Lebanon has the highest concentration relative to its own population with nearly one refugee for every five citizens.
- > Nearly one in 200 children in the world is a refugee. The number of child refugees has more than doubled in the last decade.
- > Growing numbers of children are crossing borders alone. Last year, more than 100,000 unaccompanied minors applied for asylum in 78 countries - triple the number in 2014.

SOURCE: UNHCR AND UNICEF



Iranian President Hassan Rouhani (L), Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro (C) and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas (R) wave hands during a photo session in the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Portlamar, Margarita Island, Venezuela, on Saturday. Maduro has warned world leaders at the summit that his country was being lashed by a US economic war aimed at toppling him.

PHOTO: AFP