

# NEWSIN brief

## Twin blasts kill six in Pak train attack

Two explosions targeting military personnel on a passenger train killed at least six people and wounded 19 others in Pakistan's troubled southwestern Balochistan province yesterday, officials said. The attack, claimed by the separatist Baloch Liberation Army, came as the Rawalpindi-bound Jaffer Express was passing the town of Much, 55 kilometres east of Balochistan's provincial capital Quetta.

## 22 troops killed in Niger refugee camp attack

Twenty-two soldiers have been killed in an attack blamed on jihadists against a camp in Niger sheltering Malian refugees, a security official said yesterday. The attack against the camp in Tazalit took place in broad daylight on Thursday. No one claimed responsibility of the attack.



## Two charged for insulting Suu Kyi

A member of Myanmar's ruling pro-democracy party has pressed charges against two villagers for insulting Aung San Suu Kyi, a police officer said yesterday. The two men were charged for allegedly going on an obscenity-laced rant against her after a heavy evening drinking session in a village not far from the capital Naypyidaw. In July a local official in central Magway region was charged with defamation for referring to Suu Kyi with a slur on Facebook.



## Tony Blair hints at political comeback

Britain's former prime minister Tony Blair hinted that he wanted to make a political comeback in an interview released yesterday. Blair, 63, made the comments to Esquire magazine shortly after announcing he was winding down his controversial but lucrative government advisory business. But he remains deeply unpopular in Britain for his role in taking Britain into the 2003 Iraq war.



The aerial view shows the amount of destruction in the town of Jeremie, Haiti on Thursday. Hurricane Matthew killed more than 800 people and left tens of thousands homeless in its rampage through Haiti earlier this week before it lashed Florida yesterday. PHOTO: AFP



# Afghan peace lies in Kashmir resolution

Islamabad tells Washington; US says does not support declaring Pakistan a terrorist state

For the first time, Pakistan has linked peace in war-torn Afghanistan to the resolution of the Kashmir issue, saying a solution to both is required for peace and they cannot be "compartmentalised". "Road to peace in Kabul lies in Kashmir in the sense that when you talk of peace, you cannot compartmentalise peace, you can't segregate a section... ok you can have peace in Kabul and let Kashmir burn. That is not going to happen," Pakistan Prime Minister's special envoy on Kashmir Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed said here. "So you (US) talk of a comprehensive peace settlement, so let the people of South Asia not be hostage to the hostility of the past. Let them move forward," said Syed, chairman of the Pakistan Senate's Defence and Defence Production Committee said

during an interaction at Washington-based think-tank Stimson Centre. "Our core issue this time is Kashmir and no peace can prevail in the region, if this issue is not solved. It is an international dispute. It is not an internal problem. The stakes are very high now, we are nuclear neighbours so we need to have peace on the issue of Kashmir and then rest of the things can be solved," Mansab said. Meanwhile, the US yesterday said it does not support declaring Pakistan a 'terrorist state' but will continue to work with the governments in the region to eliminate safe havens which also pose a threat to India. The US also called for a "meaningful dialogue" between India and Pakistan to address differences including the Kashmir issue and to bring down the recent tensions.



Indian policemen stand guard as a girl watches an anti-India protest in Srinagar, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

## Indian star forced out of Hindu play



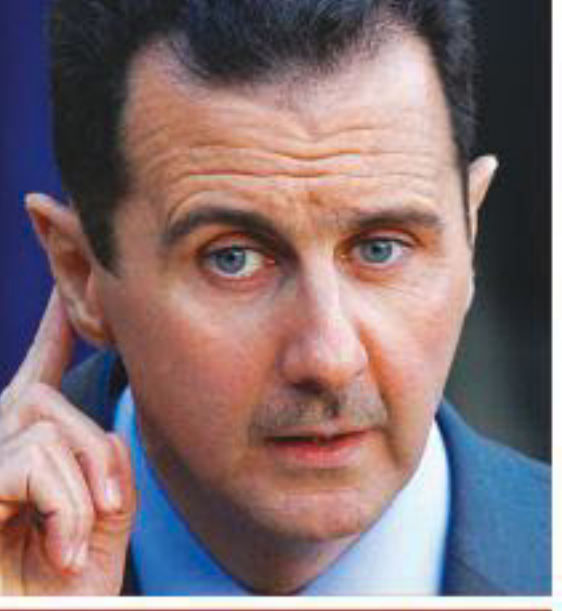
An Indian village had to cancel a performance of a traditional Hindu play moments before it was due to start after far-right activists opposed the participation of a Muslim Bollywood star, reports said yesterday. Nawazuddin Siddiqui had been due to perform in a theatre production based on the "Ramayana" in his home village of Budhana in Uttar Pradesh state. But organisers cancelled the event after activists from Shiv Sena said they were opposed to a Muslim actor taking part in the Hindu play. "My childhood dream could not come true, but will definitely be a part of Ramlila next year," Siddiqui tweeted late on Thursday. "Ramlila" -- meaning "Rama's play" -- re-enacts the life of Lord Ram over several nights, culminating in his defeat of a wicked king, a victory symbolising the triumph of good over evil in Hindu mythology.

# Moscow building up forces in Syria: report

Russia has built up its forces in Syria since a ceasefire collapsed in late September, sending in troops, planes and advanced missile systems, a Reuters analysis of publicly available tracking data shows. The data points to a doubling of supply runs by air and sea compared to the nearly two-week period preceding the truce. It appears to be Russia's biggest military deployment to Syria since President Vladimir Putin said in March he would pull out some of his country's forces.

The increased manpower probably includes specialists to put into operation a newly delivered S-300 surface-to-air missile system, military analysts said. The S-300 system will improve Russia's ability to control air space in Syria, where Moscow's forces support the government of President Bashar al-Assad, and could be aimed at deterring tougher US action, they said. Reports said 10 Russian navy ships have gone through the Bosphorus en route to Syria since late September, compared with five in the 13-day period before the truce -- from Aug 27 to Sept 7. That number includes The Mirazh, a small missile ship which a Reuters correspondent saw heading through the Bosphorus towards the Mediterranean yesterday. Two other Russian missile ships were deployed to the Mediterranean on Wednesday. Troops and equipment are also returning to Syria by air, according to tracking data on website FlightRadar24.com.

Since the collapse of the ceasefire in September, acrimony between the United States and Russia has grown and Washington has suspended talks with Moscow on implementing the truce. US officials told Reuters on Sept 28 that Washington had started considering tougher responses to the assault on Aleppo, including the possibility of air strikes on an Assad air base. As diplomatic pressure grows, Russia yesterday said that a draft UN resolution for a truce in the Syrian city of Aleppo was unacceptable. The UN Security Council was expected to vote today on a draft resolution that calls for an immediate truce in Aleppo, a no-fly zone and access for humanitarian aid. Russia is expected to use its power of veto. On Thursday, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad offered fighters and their families an amnesty to leave rebel-held eastern Aleppo under guarantee of safe passage to other parts of Syria held by the insurgents. However, rebels have told Reuters they do not trust Assad, and have said they believe such an agreement would be aimed at purging Sunni Muslims from eastern Aleppo. The offer follows two weeks of the heaviest bombardment of the 5-1/2-year civil war, which has killed hundreds of people trapped inside Aleppo's eastern sector and torpedoed a US-backed peace initiative. More than 250,000 people are believed to be trapped in eastern Aleppo, facing severe shortages of food and medicine.



**DEVELOPMENTS**

- Pressure grows on Moscow to stop Aleppo bombardment
- UN council to vote on Aleppo truce resolution
- Russian lawmakers ratify 'indefinite' Syria mission deal
- Assad announces amnesty to rebels if they leave the city

## ONE MONTH TILL THE VOTE

# US polls is Clinton's to lose

One month from today, Hillary Clinton is favored to make history as the first female US president. But with a resilient Donald Trump standing in her way, the Election Day outcome remains anything but certain. The possible pitfalls -- an "October surprise," a Clinton debate meltdown, damning revelations from her controversial private emails or an act of terrorism -- are unknowable now, but they have a potential to upend an already extraordinary 2016 campaign. The Democratic candidate has a 3.2-point advantage over her Republican nemesis, according to the RealClearPolitics national poll average, heaping pressure on Trump to make up ground in the closing weeks of their battle to succeed Barack Obama in the White House. She has the upper hand in swing states, too. Colorado, Florida, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin are tilting Clinton's way, polls show. Trump, 70, is leading in Iowa and the crucial state of Ohio, where he claims strong support among working-class white voters. But Clinton, 68, would not need those states if she can hold other battlegrounds. Campaign momentum had swung in Trump's favor ahead of his first debate with Clinton, on September 26. The provocative real estate tycoon had seized on Clinton's description of half of his supporters as "deplorable," and earned praise for acting more disciplined. But Trump -- whose incendiary rhetoric and propensity to go off script have been campaign hallmarks -- did not toe the line for long. "After the debate, the Republican momentum ended," Columbia University professor Robert Shapiro said. Not only did most analysts declare Clinton the debate's winner, but Trump's subsequent pre-dawn rant about a former Miss Universe raised doubts about his temperament as he seeks the world's most powerful job. Last week's revelations that Trump's declared loss of \$916 million in 1995 allowed him to avoid paying federal taxes for almost two decades have not helped. The real estate billionaire has insulted Muslims and Hispanics, and broken with tradition by refusing to release his tax returns. Yet he continues to surprise. Can he still bounce back with sharp performances in the second and third presidential debates on October 9 and 19? Zaino, political science professor of Iona College, predicted that would be difficult. "I think it is really an uphill battle for him."



# No more joint sea patrols

Philippines tells US in a first concrete break in defence cooperation; Duterte dares CIA to oust him

The Philippines announced yesterday it had officially informed the United States that joint patrols in the South China Sea patrols had been suspended, following orders from President Rodrigo Duterte. The move is viewed as the first concrete break in defense cooperation after months of increasingly strident comments by the country's new president, reports AP. "They have been suspended for the time being. They (Washington) know it already," Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana told reporters, adding he had relayed the decision to the commander of the US Pacific Command when he was in Hawaii at the start of this month. Still, Lorenzana indicated he was still not 100 percent sure of Duterte's final plans. "They will not be conducted anymore until we clarify if he (Duterte) means what he says," Lorenzana said. The longtime allies began planning joint patrols under the previous Philippine government, which had sought to attract a greater US military presence in the region to counter Chinese efforts to take control of the South China Sea, reports AFP. China claims nearly all of the sea, even waters close to the Philippines and other Southeast Asian nations, and has in recent years built artificial islands in the disputed areas that are capable of hosting military bases. Lorenzana said the United States and Philippines had conducted two "passing through" manoeuvres over the section of the sea claimed by Manila this year, but not actual "combat patrols". Meanwhile, Duterte yesterday dared the United States' CIA spy agency to try and oust him, as he branded Western critics of his deadly crime war "animals" and vowed many more killings. "You want to oust me? You want to use the CIA? Go ahead," Duterte said in a speech in his southern home town of Davao city, referring to the Central Intelligence Agency, while railing against US President Barack Obama and other critics. Last month Duterte accused the CIA of plotting to kill him, but gave no specifics.



# Russia mulls Vietnam, Cuba military bases

Russia is considering plans to restore military bases in Vietnam and Cuba that had served as pivots of Soviet global military power during the Cold War, Russian news agencies quoted Russian Deputy Defence Minister Nikolai Pankov as saying yesterday. Russia lowered its flag at the Lourdes signals intelligence base in Cuba and the deepwater Cam Rahn naval base in Vietnam in the early 2000s as part of a drawing down of Russia's military presence around the world after the demise of the Soviet Union. But since then, Moscow's foreign policy has become more assertive, leading to tensions with the United States and its allies over, among other issues, the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria, and the presence of Nato troops in eastern Europe.