

NEWSIN brief

Obama in Europe to reassure allies

Bats for Nato, says Trump soon to face sobering 'reality' check on polls promises



'Ape in heels'

Outrage over racist comment on Michelle Obama

Egypt court overturns Morsi death sentence

AFP, Cairo

An Egyptian appeals court has overturned a death sentence handed down against ousted Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in one of four trials since his 2013 overthrow, a judicial official said. The Court of Cassation ordered that Morsi be retried on the charges of taking part in prison breaks and violence against policemen during the 2011 uprising which toppled longtime president Hosni Mubarak.

Tourists evacuated in quake-hit NZ

AFP, Christchurch

Rescuers in New Zealand yesterday began airlifting relieved tourists stranded by a 7.8 earthquake that devastated parts of the South Island coast and sparked up to 100,000 landslides. Military helicopters started ferrying the first of 1,200 holidaymakers trapped in the seaside town of Kaikoura, which bore the brunt of a quake that claimed two lives when it struck early Monday.

India bans Zakir Naik's NGO for 5 years

TNN, New Delhi

The Indian government yesterday banned Islamic Research Foundation (IRF), the NGO of controversial Islamic preacher Zakir Naik, as an 'unlawful organisation' for five years with immediate effect. The ban has been enforced under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and approved at a meeting of the Union Cabinet.



The Nato alliance is "absolutely vital" to US interests, President Barack Obama said yesterday, as he flew in to Europe to reassure jittery allies concerned by Donald Trump's shock presidential election win.

Speaking in Athens on the first leg of his last foreign trip as leader, Obama stressed that a strong Europe was "good for the world and the US", after Trump appeared to downplay the importance of historic transatlantic ties.

Europeans, especially in eastern countries closest to Russia's orbit, have been shaken after Trump appeared to call into question Washington's near 70-year security guarantee by saying he would only help Nato allies if they paid their way.

But Obama stressed that the transatlantic relationship was the "cornerstone of our mutual security as well as prosperity" and that was the case regardless of who was sitting in the Oval Office.

"Across Democratic and Republican administrations there is a recognition that the Nato alliance is absolutely vital," he said.

As Obama touched down in Athens,

OBAMA ON TRUMP

Trump is pragmatic, not 'ideological'

Iran, climate deals would be difficult to unravel under Trump

Urges Trump to reach out to non-supporters saying 'gestures matter'

Nato head Jens Stoltenberg said he was confident Trump would live up to US commitments to the alliance.

Obama travels to Germany today, where he will speak with close ally Chancellor Angela



Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras (R) escorts US President Barack Obama prior to their meeting in Athens, yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Merkel as well as the French and British leaders.

He concludes his trip with a stop in Peru for a summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) where he is expected to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Speaking to reporters on the eve of the trip, Obama cautioned his brash successor that he faces a reality check if he tries to enact some of his more controversial campaign promises.

Trump's election win last week over Hillary Clinton has been met with euphoria among his supporters, but also with a wave of protests across the nation that are unusual for the world's leading democracy.

Obama said that deporting millions of

immigrants, tearing up mutual defense treaties with Nato and Japan, and unraveling global deals on Iran's nuclear program and the environment were not as simple as delivering tub-thumping rhetoric.

"Regardless of what experience or assumptions he brought to the office, this office has a way of waking you up," Obama said.

Obama said that during a meeting with Trump at the White House last week, he had told the president-elect that his actions could move markets, tanks and public sentiment.

"I emphasised to him that, look, in an election like this that was so hotly contested and so divided, gestures matter," Obama

said. "It's really important to try to send some signals of unity".

"Do I have concerns? Absolutely. Of course, I have concerns. He and I differ on a whole bunch of issues. But the federal government and our democracy is not a speedboat -- it's an ocean liner."

Amid dire predictions about the end of the republic and the global order, Obama said that Trump's inexperience in politics and lack of intellectual baggage could be an asset. "I don't think he is ideological. I think ultimately he is pragmatic in that way. And that can serve him well as long as he's got good people around him and he has a clear sense of direction," he continued.

Putin, Trump to 'normalise ties'

Chinese media praise Trump's ideology' after Xi-Trump call

AFP, Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump spoke on the phone on Monday evening and agreed on the need to normalise ties between Washington and Moscow, the Kremlin said.

The Kremlin also said that the two politicians agreed to "make provisions for a personal meeting."

The presidential transition team in Washington said in a statement that it was Putin who called Trump to "offer his congratulations on winning a historic election."

The Kremlin said that Putin and Trump noted "the extremely unsatisfactory state of Russian-US relations at present" and "declared the need for active joint work to normalise them."

Putin wished Trump success in carrying out his campaign promises,

and expressed his readiness to "create a dialogue of partnership with the new administration on the basis of equality, mutual respect and non-intervention in each other's domestic affairs."



They "agreed on the need to unite efforts in the struggle with the enemy number one: international terrorism and extremism," the Kremlin said, adding that in this context they discussed the "issues over resolving the crisis in Syria."

Trump's team meanwhile said more generally that the pair discussed "the threats and challenges" facing both countries as well as economic issues and "the historical US-Russia relationship that dates back over 200 years."

Meanwhile, Chinese state-run media lauded Trump yesterday after a phone call between him and President Xi Jinping, saying that the president-elect's emergence could mark a "reshaping" of Sino-American relations.

The pair spoke Monday, when Xi said that the two powers needed to cooperate and Trump's office said the leaders "established a clear sense of mutual respect for one another".

On the campaign trail Trump frequently demonised Beijing, but questions have been asked whether his conduct in the White House will match his promises as a candidate.

Chicago mayor pledges 'sanctuary' for immigrants

AFP, Chicago

Chicago on Monday joined several major US cities in affirming that it will remain a "sanctuary city" for immigrants, in defiance of President-elect Donald Trump.

Los Angeles, New York, Seattle and San Francisco have made similar affirmations since Trump's election on Tuesday, vowing to refuse to jail undocumented immigrants in jail for deportation purposes and pledging that public services will continue to be offered regardless of legal status.

"To all the children and all the families who are unsure of their place because of what happened Tuesday," Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel said at a press conference.

"You are safe, you are secure and you are supported in the city of Chicago."

Emanuel, a Democrat who was chief of

staff during President Barack Obama's first term, said young undocumented people in particular will still be able to go to school and qualify for free community college education.

"That speaks volumes to where our values are," he said.

Trump, a Republican, campaigned on a promise to deport millions of undocumented immigrants. In an interview that aired on the CBS "60 Minutes" news program over the weekend, Trump said he plans to immediately deport or jail as many as three million immigrants with criminal records, upon taking office.

Experts estimate there are as many as 11 million foreigners living illegally in the United States, many of them Central and Southern Americans long-established in the country.



Modi's mother at local bank queue

TNN, New Delhi

96-year-old Heeraben visited a bank branch in Gandhinagar to exchange Rs 4500 worth of currency notes that her son, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, had demonetized. The pictures of the monogenerian being helped to the counter come at a time when opposition parties have been criticising the Modi government for the inconvenience the demonetisation has caused to the public. Pictures show Heeraben being taken in a wheelchair, holding what looks to be Rs 500 notes. She then walked into the bank, with the help of two people. Once at the counter, she can be seen signing the form.



Iraqis carry white flags as they walk to an area held by the Iraqi Special Forces 2nd division in the Samah neighbourhood of Mosul yesterday, during an ongoing operation against Islamic State (IS) group jihadists. PHOTO: AFP

India, Bangladesh owe Pakistan Rs15.25b

Says Pakistan federal government

THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE ONLINE

The federal government has decided to demand its outstanding amount from India and Bangladesh.

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has written to all commercial banks and development finance institutions, asking for details of accounts of assets and other dues receivable from the two countries.

The purpose is to compile a final assessment of the amount due against India and Bangladesh.

According to SBP figures, India and Bangladesh have to pay Pakistan Rs15.25 billion. The value of assets occupied by India was Rs6 billion at the end of June 2016 while Bangladesh had to pay more than Rs9.21 billion in respect of transactions between the then Pakistan and East Pakistan government offices, loans, advances and papers.

A circular issued by the SBP to the heads of banks and financial institutions advised them to provide complete details of the dues that are outstanding against the governments or central banks of India and Bangladesh in terms of land, building, furniture and fixtures, office equipment and vehicles, government securities, papers, loans, advances and investment.

US must respect climate deal

Hollande tells UN meet

AFP, Marrakesh

French President Francois Hollande urged US President-elect Donald Trump on Tuesday to respect a global agreement to limit climate change, saying the deal was irreversible and inaction on global warming would be disastrous.

Hollande told a UN conference on climate change in Marrakesh, Morocco, that the 2015 agreement to limit emissions "is irreversible in law and in fact. In addition, it is irreversible in our minds".

"The United States, the largest economic power in the world, the second largest greenhouse gas emitter, must respect the commitments it has undertaken," he said, to applause from an audience of about 80 national leaders.

Trump has called climate change a hoax and has said he wants to withdraw from the accord, which seeks to phase out world greenhouse gas emissions sometime between 2050 and 2100.

Hollande, an architect of the pact, said he would work with Trump, and that the agreement was in the interests of the American people, as well as US companies and cities that were trying to combat climate change.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon earlier said action on climate change has become "unstoppable" and predicted that Trump would drop plans to quit the global accord aimed at weaning the world off fossil fuels.

At the meeting of almost 200 nations in Morocco to work out ways to implement the 2015 Paris agreement to limit greenhouse gas emissions, Ban said US companies, states and cities were all pushing to limit global warming.

Hate crimes against Muslims increased by 67pc in US: FBI

AGENCIES

Hate crimes against Muslims in the United States shot up 67 percent in 2015 to their highest levels since the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks, according to new FBI statistics.

Overall, 57 percent of the 5,850 reported incidents were motivated by race or ethnicity, while 20 percent of hate crimes were related to religious bias, the federal law enforcement agency reported on Monday.

There were 257 incidents of anti-Muslim bias in 2015, compared with 154 the previous year. The number is second only to the surge in hate crimes following the 9/11 attacks in 2001, when 481 incidents against Muslims were reported.

While there was a huge increase in crimes against Muslims, Jews remained the most

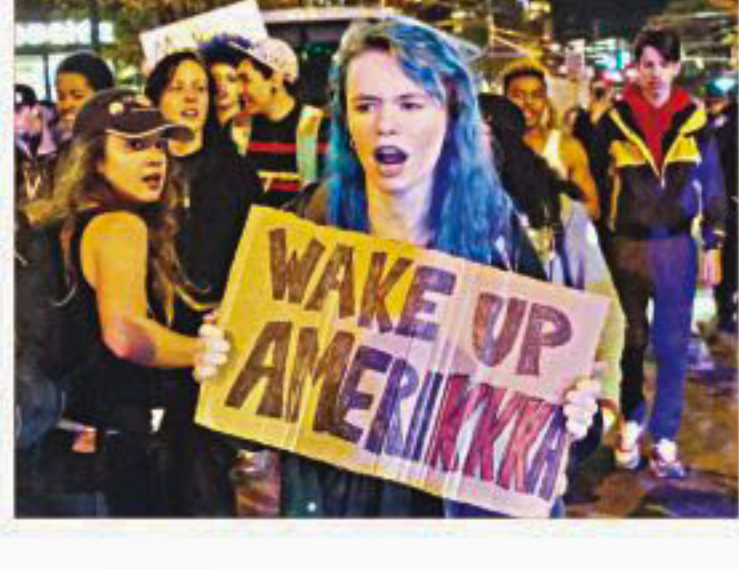
frequent target of religious-based hate crimes in the US, representing 53 percent of all those reported, the FBI said.

The bureau's report also listed 1,053 hate crimes regarding sexual orientation, 19 percent of which were committed against gay males.

The report came at a time of heightened racial and religious tensions in the US following last week's presidential election.

"I think these statistics are just a fraction of what we see on the ground right now," Ibrahim Hooper, from the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), told Al Jazeera.

President-elect Trump's campaign had heavily focused on minorities, immigrants and Muslims, routinely painting these groups as threats to peace, the economy, and homeland security.



Syria resumes Aleppo raids

AFP, Beirut

Syrian government air strikes and barrel bomb attacks hit residential neighbourhoods of rebel-held east Aleppo on Tuesday for the first time in nearly a month, a monitor said.

"Regime aircraft launched strikes and dropped barrel bombs on a number of neighbourhoods in the east of Aleppo for the first time since October 18," said Rami Abdel Rahman, director of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor.

An AFP photographer in the eastern side of the city said the Sakhur and Masakan Hanano neighbourhoods had been hit.

The bombardment of east Aleppo ended a period of relative quiet for more than 250,000 people living in the besieged rebel-held side of the city.

Farage will not be 'third person' in UK-US ties

Says Downing Street; leaked memo says UK has no Brexit plan

AGENCIES

Downing Street has slapped down Nigel Farage after his visit to see Donald Trump, by declaring there will be no "third person" in the prime minister's relationship with the President-elect.

After Farage became the first British politician to meet Trump, a No 10 spokeswoman said during a call the US leader told Theresa May he wanted their ties to be akin to Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher's.

The put-down came after an ecstatic Farage appeared in pictures with Trump following their meeting in New York and then did television interviews telling May it was time to "mend some fences" with the US leader. It also followed claims, not denied by Farage, that he had spoken with ministers about serving as intermediary to try and

improve relations with the new US leader. Meanwhile, according to a leaked memo seen by British media outlets, Britain is reported to have no overall plan for Brexit and the strategy for leaving the European Union.

Titled "Brexit Update" and dated November 7, the memo criticises May for her tendency of "drawing in decisions and details to settle the matter herself," the BBC and The Times reported yesterday.

May has promised to trigger Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, which kicks off two years of talks to leave the EU, by the end of March, but she has so far given little away about her plans for Britain's future ties with the bloc.

The UK's High Court ruled earlier this month that May's administration would not be allowed to trigger the country's exit from the EU without approval from parliament.

