

# NEWSIN brief

## India to charge Masood Azhar

PTI, New Delhi  
The Indian Union home ministry on Monday accorded sanction to National Investigation Agency to file chargesheet against the Pakistan based Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Maulana Masood Azhar and three others for the Pathankot terror attack in January this year. Seven security personnel were killed in the attack. Sources also said that the chargesheet will now come handy for Indian government to make a stronger case for declaring Azhar as 'global terrorist' at UN.

## UKIP names leader to replace Farage

AFP, London  
Britain's anti-EU party UKIP elected former history lecturer Paul Nuttall as its new leader yesterday to take over from Brexit firebrand Nigel Farage. Nuttall promised to unite the party -- a driving force behind Britain's vote to leave the EU -- which has been under threat from bitter infighting and a plunge in funding following Farage's departure announcement.

## Sikh separatist leader recaptured

AFP, New Delhi  
A top Sikh militant commander was recaptured by police in the Indian capital Delhi yesterday, a day after he was freed in a dramatic jailbreak by a gang wearing police uniforms. Harminder Singh Mintoo, who heads a Sikh separatist group, was arrested on the outskirts of Delhi some 200 kilometres from the high-security prison in Punjab where he had been remanded on terror charges.

## S Korea's Park refuses grilling

AFP, Seoul  
South Korean President Park Geun-hye will not answer questions from prosecutors over a snowballing influence-peddling scandal rocking her presidency, her lawyer said yesterday.  
Prosecutors describe Park and her secret confidante, Choi Soon-sil, as co-culprits in the scandal. They are accused of coercing top Seoul firms to donate over \$60 million to non-profit foundations, some of which Choi allegedly used for personal gain.  
Choi was charged last week with coercion and abuse of power.  
The scandal has sparked nationwide fury, with hundreds of thousands taking to the streets to call for Park's ousting.  
A parliamentary vote to impeach her could take place as early as this week as a growing number of ruling party politicians back the opposition-led campaign to oust the president.  
Park earlier vowed to cooperate "sincerely" with the legal probe but has rejected a series of requests in recent weeks by prosecutors to make herself available for questioning.  
Seoul prosecutors gave Park an ultimatum last week, saying today is the final deadline for questioning before a powerful independent team of investigators takes over the probe in December.  
As a sitting president, Park cannot be charged with a criminal offence except insurrection or treason, but she can be investigated and potentially charged once her term is over.



A religious officer canes an Acehnese woman (R) 100 times for having sex outside marriage, which is against Sharia law, in Banda Aceh on November 28, 2016. Aceh is the only province in the world's most populous Muslim-majority country that imposes sharia law. People can face floggings for a range of offences -- from gambling, to drinking alcohol, to gay sex. PHOTO: AFP

## 1,000 IS men killed in Mosul offensive

AFP, Bartella  
Iraqi special forces battling to clear Islamic State from eastern Mosul have killed nearly 1,000 militants but fighting has slowed as troops face a mobile enemy hidden among thousands of civilians in the city, a top commander said.  
Six weeks into a major offensive, Iraqi forces have captured nearly half of eastern Mosul, moving from district to district against jihadist snipers, suicide attackers and car bombs.  
Elite Iraqi troops, known as the "Golden Division", are the only brigades to have entered Mosul from the east, with Iraqi army, federal police and Kurdish Peshmerga units surrounding the city to the north and south. Shia militias are trying to complete the encirclement from the west.  
Iraqi authorities have not released estimates of civilian casualties but the United Nations says growing numbers of injured, both civilians and military, are overwhelming aid groups.

# Rebels suffer heavy defeats

### Lose all of northeast Aleppo; thousands flee regime assault

AFP, Aleppo  
Syria's rebels lost all of the northern neighbourhoods of their stronghold in east Aleppo yesterday, as the army made significant advances in its offensive to recapture the entire city.  
The regime gains have prompted an exodus of thousands of desperate civilians, some fleeing to districts held by the government or Kurdish forces, others heading south into areas still under opposition control.  
"The situation is disastrous," said Ibrahim Abu Al-Leith, a spokesman for the White Helmets rescue group in the Ansari neighbourhood.  
"There is mass displacement and morale is in the gutter," he said, his voice cracking with emotion.  
The loss of eastern Aleppo would be a potentially devastating blow to Syria's rebels, who seized the area in 2012.  
The opposition has steadily lost territory since Russia began an intervention to bolster President Bashar al-Assad in September 2015.  
Yesterday, government forces seized the Sakhur, Haydariya and Sheikh Khodr districts, and Kurdish fighters took the Sheikh Fares neighbourhood from rebels, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor said.  
"This is their (the rebels') worst defeat since they seized half the city in 2012," said Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman.  
The advances left all of northeast Aleppo under government control.  
On Sunday night, the Observatory said nearly 10,000 civilians had fled the east, with around 6,000 moving to the Kurdish-held Sheikh Maqsood neighbourhood and 4,000 to government-held west Aleppo.

The United Nations said it was "deeply concerned" about the plight of civilians in the east, which has been besieged for more than four months, with international aid exhausted and food stocks desperately low.  
The assault has been waged with heavy air strikes, barrel bomb attacks and artillery fire that has killed at least 225 civilians, including 27 children, in east Aleppo, according to the Observatory.  
Rebel fire into the government-held

west has also killed at least 27 civilians, among them 11 children, since November 15, the monitor says.  
Syria's Al-Watan daily, which is close to the government, said the next stage of the operation would be "to divide the remaining (rebel-held) area into... districts that will be easily controlled and to capture them successively."  
The advance would then "push the gunmen to turn themselves in... or accept national reconciliation under the terms of the Syrian state."  
Fabrice Balanche, a Syria expert at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said the regime retaking east Aleppo "would be a turning point" as it would then hold "the five largest cities in Syria".  
Assad's forces already control the capital Damascus, the central cities of Homs and Hama and the coastal city of Latakia.  
More than 300,000 people have been killed since Syria's conflict began with anti-government protests in March 2011.  
The war has also displaced over half the country's population, with millions fleeing across Syria's border to become refugees.

## WAR IN SYRIA

# Suu Kyi delays Indonesia trip amid Rohingya crisis

AFP, Yangon  
Myanmar's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi yesterday postponed a visit to Indonesia after protests there over her country's bloody crackdown on Rohingya Muslims and a thwarted plot to attack its Jakarta embassy.  
Thousands of desperate Rohingya have flooded over the border from Myanmar's Rakhine state into Bangladesh in the past week, making horrifying claims of gang rape, torture and murder at the hands of security forces.  
The Nobel laureate has faced a growing international backlash for what a UN official has said amounts to a campaign of ethnic cleansing.  
Suu Kyi's government has denied the allegations, saying the army is hunting "terrorists" behind deadly raids on police posts last month.  
Foreign journalists and independent investigators have been banned from verifying what is happening in the north of Rakhine state bordering Bangladesh.  
Hundreds of demonstrators took to the streets last week in Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, calling for the government to break off diplomatic ties with Myanmar.  
On Sunday Indonesian police said they had arrested a third Islamic State-linked militant accused of plotting to bomb Myanmar's embassy in Jakarta.  
Suu Kyi had been due to visit Indonesia after a trip to Singapore from November 30-December 2, but a senior foreign ministry official said the trip had been delayed.  
"We postponed the Indonesia trip because of the problems in Rakhine and also northern Shan State" where the army is fighting ethnic insurgents, said deputy director general Aye Aye Soe.  
Some 30,000 Rohingya have fled their homes in Myanmar, where even in normal times they are denied citizenship, healthcare and education and have their movements severely restricted.  
Dhaka says thousands more are massed on the border but it has refused urgent international appeals to let them in, instead calling on Myanmar to do more to stop people fleeing.  
On Monday border guards pushed back eight more boatloads of Rohingya who were attempting to cross the Naf River to southern Bangladesh.



People wait to pay their last respects to Fidel Castro kicking off a series of memorials in Havana, yesterday; a man reacts after paying tribute to the Cuban revolutionary icon; and a Mexican woman holds flowers to pay tribute to the late communist leader.



PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

# Eight hurt in Ohio State campus attack

AFP, Columbus  
At least eight people were injured in an apparent car-ramming and knife attack at Ohio State University yesterday, triggering an hours-long lockdown before authorities declared the campus secure.  
One suspect was shot and killed, the university said in a statement, while local television station WBNS reported that police had led two people out in handcuffs from a garage they surrounded on the campus in Columbus.  
Rebecca Diehm, spokeswoman for the city's fire department, said eight people were transported to hospital -- one in critical condition, and the rest stable. Media reports suggested as many as 10 were injured.  
A university statement said: "Victim injuries include stab wounds, injury by motor vehicle and other injuries that are being evaluated."  
One witness suggested that a suspect had ploughed into a crowd with a red SUV. The incident was called an active shooter situation, but it was unclear whether any of the victims had suffered firearm injuries.  
An unnamed student quoted by the local NBC affiliate said students had evacuated a building due to a fire alarm, and that a man had then "started slashing at them" with a knife or machete.

# Good bye 'father' Castro

### Throngs pay homage to Cuban revolution leader

AFP, Havana  
Throngs of Cubans began streaming to Havana's iconic Revolution Square to pay tribute to Fidel Castro yesterday, kicking off an emotional, week-long farewell to the divisive Cold War titan.  
Mourners, many of whom had lined up before dawn, began filling the square as soon as it opened with a salvo of 21 cannon shots from a colonial fort overlooking Havana harbor.  
They filed past a black-and-white picture of "El Comandante" as a young revolutionary, many clutching bouquets of flowers, many others in tears.  
"I got here at 6:00 pm yesterday. I don't know what to say," said Josefina Vayan Bravo, a 44-year-old housewife, before breaking into sobs.  
Castro, whose 1959 revolution toppled a dictatorship with the promise of bringing justice and equality to his Caribbean island, was a towering figure of the 20th century.  
While some saw him as a socialist hero who brought education and free health care to this country, others labeled him a "dictator" who caused economic hardship and sparked an exodus of Cubans to Florida seeking a better life.  
Hundreds of thousands of people are expected to swarm Revolution Square, where Castro would often rail against the US "empire" during his legendary, marathon speeches.  
Many mourners were dressed in state uniforms -- school children, soldiers, veterans, doctors and customs officers.  
Lourdes Rivera, a 66-year-old retired civil servant, was so overcome with emotion she sat on a curb and cried.  
"He's the father of all Cubans. My dad was my dad, but he couldn't give me what (Castro) gave me. He gave me everything. My freedom. My dignity," she said.  
"There will never be another like him," said 84-year-old Teresa Oquendo between sobs.  
After two days of commemorations in the capital, Castro's ashes will go on a four-day island-wide procession starting Wednesday before being buried in the city of Santiago de Cuba on December 4.

# Trudeau defends warm Fidel Castro remarks

REUTERS, Toronto  
Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, criticized for fondly remembering Fidel Castro without mention of his human rights record, defended his comments on Saturday and said the late Cuban leader had been a dictator.  
Trudeau sparked fury and online mockery after he referred to Castro as a "remarkable leader" and expressed his sorrow at the Friday death of "Cuba's longest serving president".  
Many were quick to point out that Castro suppressed dissent and there was no option for other leadership on the island nation under his regime.  
On Sunday, Trudeau said the statement was simply meant "to recognize the passing of a former head of state" of a country that Canada had longstanding ties with, and not to gloss over unflattering history.  
"The fact is Fidel Castro had a deep and lasting impact on the Cuban people," Trudeau told reporters in a televised news conference at a Madagascar Francophonie summit.  
"He certainly was a polarizing figure and there certainly were significant concerns around human rights, that's something I'm open about and that I've highlighted."  
Asked whether he thought Castro was a dictator, Trudeau said: "Yes."  
Trudeau's initial statement, which was markedly more positive than most Western leaders, sparked a backlash on Saturday, especially among some U.S. Republicans and Cuban exiles in the United States.

# FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY

## Fillon set to face Le Pen

AFP, Paris  
Francois Fillon, a conservative reformist promising to shrink the French state, on Sunday clinched the rightwing nomination for next year's presidential election with a resounding victory over his rival Alain Juppe.  
Ex-prime minister Fillon, 62, will now become a favourite to be France's next leader after winning the US-style primary to pick the nominee of the Republicans party and its allies.  
Near-complete results showed him winning 66.5 percent of the vote, with ballots counted from 9,915 polling stations out of 10,229.  
The French presidential vote is seen as a key test for mainstream political parties after the success of Donald Trump and the Brexit campaign in Britain, both of which harnessed anti-elite anger.  
Fillon will face fierce competition in the two-round election in April and May from

far-right leader Marine Le Pen, the anti-establishment candidate hoping to emulate Trump's shock victory in the US.  
Fillon said a win for the anti-EU Le Pen would spell "bankruptcy".  
Two surveys late Sunday put Fillon ahead of Le Pen in the first round of the election, with the left-wing candidates trailing further behind.  
But the race is seen as highly unpredictable after a year of political upsets and uncertainty about the impact of independents and the Socialist party candidate.  
Socialist President Francois Hollande has yet to announce whether he will try to defy his historically low approval ratings by running for a second term.  
Prime Minister Valls has not ruled out challenging his boss in a left-wing primary set for January, telling the weekly Journal du Dimanche he wanted to dispel the idea "that the left has no chance" of retaining power.

