

IS lost nearly a quarter of its territory in 2016

AFP, London

The Islamic State group lost nearly a quarter of its territory in Iraq and Syria last year, according to a report released yesterday by research firm IHS Markit.

Between early January 2016 and the end of the year the Islamic State's self-declared "caliphate" fell from 78,000 to 60,400 square kilometres (47,500 to 38,500 square miles), IHS Markit said.

"The Islamic State suffered unprecedented territorial losses in 2016, including key areas vital for the group's governance project," said Colum Strack, head of IHS's Conflict Monitor.

The figures for last year demonstrate further decline of IS-controlled land, which the research group said dropped from 90,800 to 78,000 square kilometres in 2015.

Iraqi forces are currently fighting to recapture Mosul from IS which overran the country's second city in early June 2014.

IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared the so-called "caliphate" from Mosul and if gov-

ernment troops retake the city it would effectively end the group's claim of running a state.

The IHS Markit analysts estimate that IS fighters could be driven out of Mosul within months, ending the military operation launched on October 17.

"We expect Iraqi government forces to recapture Mosul before the second half of the year," Strack said.

The battle to regain IS's self-proclaimed capital of Raqqa, in northern Syria, will however prove more difficult, according to IHS Markit.

"Raqqa represents the core of the Islamic State and they are unlikely to leave without a fight.

"It would probably take a major ground intervention by one of the main external players, the US, Turkey, or Russian and Iranian-backed Syrian government forces, to expel the Islamic State from Raqqa in 2017," said Strack.

A US-backed Kurdish-Arab alliance has been battling since November 5 to drive IS from Raqqa, taking large areas of northern Raqqa province.



Gambia's new president sworn in in Dakar of Senegal

AFP, Dakar/banjul

Gambia's new President Adama Barrow demanded "loyalty" from the armed forces yesterday as he took the oath of office in Senegal in a standoff with Yahya Jammeh, the longtime leader refusing to step down after his election defeat.

Dressed all in white, 51-year-old Barrow waved to crowds before being sworn in at The Gambia's embassy in Senegal's capital Dakar.

"This is a victory of the Gambian nation. Our flag will now fly high among those of the most democratic nations of the world," he said.

The inauguration took place as a regional military force massed on the Senegal-Gambia border ahead of a UN Security Council meeting to vote on west African efforts to ensure a transfer of power.

"I command the chief of defence staff and officers of high command to demonstrate their loyalty to me as commander in chief without any delay," Barrow said.

"I command all members of the

armed forces to remain in their barracks, those found wanting or in possession of firearms without my order will be considered rebels."

Barrow, an opposition coalition candidate, won the December 1 election in a surprise victory over Jammeh, who had ruled the former British colony since taking power in a coup in 1994 and has rejected international pressure to leave office.

Nigerian jets overflew The Gambia, officials said in Abuja, as troops from Senegal, Ghana and Nigeria readied for a possible intervention against Jammeh, whose mandate expired at midnight (0000 GMT).

Shops were shuttered and streets quiet in and around the capital Banjul, and tour operators evacuated hundreds more tourists from the tiny country's popular beach resorts.

But Barrow supporters were jubilant.

"For the last 22 years we were living under a state of dictatorship," Corra Kah said in Banjul as he watched the inauguration. "Now we are free."

In off the cuff remarks, army chief

Ousman Badjie insisted his soldiers would not get involved in a "political dispute" or prevent foreign forces from entering the west African nation.

- 'Don't have to risk lives' -

Barrow, a real-estate agent turned politician, flew to Senegal on January 15 after weeks of rising tension over Jammeh's stance.

Jammeh initially acknowledged Barrow as the victor but later rejected the result.

He then attempted to block Barrow's inauguration with a court ruling and by declaring a state of emergency this week.

A senior member of Barrow's opposition coalition, Isatou Touray, welcomed the army chief's declaration.

"That's a very positive outlook from him, given that Jammeh's regime is done," Touray told AFP.

"We don't have to risk the lives of innocent citizens."

In remarks at a hotel restaurant late Wednesday, Badjie said he loved his men and would not risk their lives in a "stupid fight," witnesses said.

NEWS IN brief

Bush senior in ICU, wife also hospitalised
AFP, Washington

Former president George H W Bush was admitted to an intensive care unit Wednesday suffering from pneumonia, highlighting concerns about the health of a political dynasty's patriarch just as a new US leader prepares to enter office. Early Wednesday, Bush's wife, the former first lady Barbara Bush, 91, also was admitted to Houston Methodist Hospital.

\$460m initiative to tackle epidemics
AFP, Davos

As the world still reels from outbreaks of deadly Ebola and baby-deforming Zika, governments and charities yesterday launched a \$460-million initiative to "out-smart" infectious epidemics. The goal is to develop safe vaccines to contain outbreaks before they become global health emergencies, the creators of the CEPI announced at Davos.

N Korea preparing to launch new missiles
AFP, Seoul

North Korea is preparing to test new rockets, a report said yesterday, after its leader Kim Jong-Un said the country was in the final stages of developing inter-continental ballistic missiles. Pyongyang's missile programme and its pursuit of nuclear arms have seen it repeatedly sanctioned by the UN Security Council.

Orlando shooter's wife pleads not guilty
AFP, Los Angeles

The widow of the gunman behind the deadliest mass shooting in modern US history pleaded not guilty on Wednesday to charges she aided her husband in planning the attack. Noor Salman, 30, entered her plea at a hearing in federal court in northern California where she was arrested on Monday in relation to last year's assault by her husband Omar Mateen.

Rocket fire kills 9 civilians in Yemen
AFP, Aden

Twin rockets fired from the rebel-held outskirts of Yemen's third city Ta'ez killed nine civilians late on Wednesday, a medic and a loyalist military source said. A garrison loyal to President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi has held out in the city largely surrounded by the Huthi rebels and their allies who control the capital Sanaa.

Philippines communist peace talks open
AFP, Rome

The Philippines yesterday expressed hope of securing a permanent ceasefire deal with communist rebels waging one of Asia's longest insurgencies, as peace talks resumed in Italy. The communists have been waging a "national democratic revolution" since 1968 to overthrow a capitalist system in the country.

'No punishment' for Britain over Brexit

Says France after UK FM's comments

AFP, Paris

France has no intention of "punishing" Britain over Brexit, the French foreign minister said yesterday in response to comments from his British counterpart Boris Johnson.

Johnson said Wednesday he feared French President Francois Hollande wanted to inflict "punishment beatings" on Britain, comparing proposed trade tariffs to punishments meted out to prisoners who tried to escape in World War II movies.

Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault said Johnson's claim was an attempt to divert attention from the potential consequences of leaving the European Union.

"This is not about 'punishing' the United Kingdom, that is not France's stance," Ayrault told reporters.

Johnson's statement was a "smokescreen to allow those who supported Brexit to play down the impact on people, because they can clearly see the negative consequences", Ayrault added.

France has been particularly critical of the post-Brexit British government, with Finance Minister Michel Sapin saying this week it appeared to be "improvising" and had no real plan for an exit.

British Prime Minister Theresa May confirmed this week that Britain would leave Europe's single market and warned the EU against imposing harsh terms on its divorce from the bloc.

Britain's Supreme Court will rule Tuesday on whether or not Prime Minister Theresa May has to seek parliamentary approval to trigger Brexit, the court said Wednesday.



Smoke rises from a blazing high-rise, the 15-storey Plasco building, in Tehran, Iran yesterday. *Inset*, a firefighter consoles his comrade as many were feared trapped under the rubble of the collapsed building. Tehran mayor said more than 20 firefighters were killed and 75 people injured after the building fell. PHOTO: REUTERS

Racial bias confirmed in a heartbeat: study

AFP, Paris

A single heartbeat can cause a person to make a decision based on racial bias, said an unusual study Wednesday into the crucial organ's influence on snap human judgement.

White and Asian study participants whose heart rhythms were monitored were more likely to perceive an unarmed black man as threatening when shown his picture during a heartbeat than between beats, researchers in Britain said.

The finding may be useful in designing ways to tackle the high number of police shootings of unarmed black people in the United States, said the team.

"We can use it to think about ways to target this heart-brain communication to reduce the tragedies caused by racial bias," study co-author Sarah Garfinkel of the Brighton and Sussex Medical School said.

Scientists already knew that each heartbeat fires a powerful signal to the brain. Between beats, the signals are silent.

Also known from previous research is that racial bias often leads to harmless

objects being mistaken for weapons in the hands of black people, including by police who have been known to shoot as a result.

Not known was whether the heart may influence the head when it comes to perceiving threat.

It does, says the new study published in *Nature Communications*. Participants were shown pictures depicting either black or white men holding either a gun or a harmless object such as a wallet or mobile phone.

The volunteers were asked to "shoot" the individuals they believed to be armed by pressing a computer key.

When the image was flashed during a heartbeat, participants were about 10 percent more likely to perceive the object as a gun when held by a black person, the study found.

"The signals that come from the heart to the brain seem to be strong enough to change our perceptions," said fellow author Manos Tsakiris of the Royal Holloway University of London.



2016 deadliest year for Afghan journalists

AFP, Kabul

Afghanistan suffered its deadliest year on record for journalists in 2016, according to a report released yesterday which said the country is the second most dangerous for reporters in the world after Syria.

At least 13 journalists were killed last year, the Afghan Journalists' Safety Committee (AJSC) said, adding that the Taliban was behind at least ten of the deaths.

The committee also found 101 cases of violence against the media in 2016, a 38 percent increase on 2015, underscoring the threat against a small band of media workers who put their lives on the line to report events in their war-torn country.

"This increase in violence against journalists has turned Afghanistan into the second most dangerous country for journalists in the world, after Syria," Najib Sharifi, chairman of the committee, told reporters yesterday.

India school bus crash leaves 12 children dead

AFP, New Delhi

A school bus carrying dozens of pupils collided with a truck in northern India yesterday, killing 13 people, officials said.

Twelve of the dead were children aged between seven to 14 years, who were seated near the front of the bus, when an oncoming truck collided with it in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

The school bus driver also died in the crash, the latest deadly accident in a country with one of the worst road safety records.

"The death toll is 13 and some 11 people are in hospital undergoing treatment," Shambu Nath, the local district magistrate, told AFP.

"At least 28 were discharged after first aid." Uttar Pradesh's director general of police Javeed Ahmad had earlier tweeted more than 15 children were killed in the

accident.

Ahmad's spokesman Rahul Srivastava told AFP that the figure was a result of "confusion and chaos" that followed the accident.

Nath said authorities suspect the vehicles were speeding in foggy conditions. The driver of the truck is in critical condition, he added.

The authorities have also charged the school management with disobeying an official edict after apparently defying a government order to shut during an ongoing cold spell.

Road accidents killed nearly 150,000 people in India last year, around 400 a day, according to data from the highways ministry.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted his condolences to the victims' families, saying he was "angushed by the tragic accident".



edcl এসেনসিয়াল ড্রাগস কোম্পানী লিমিটেড
৩৯৫-৩৯৭, তেজগাঁও শিল্প এলাকা, ঢাকা-১২০৮।

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

দেশের একমাত্র ১০০% সরকারি মালিকানাধীন ঔষধ প্রস্তুতকারী পাবলিক লিমিটেড কোম্পানীর প্রধান কার্যালয়, ঢাকায় টেইলারিং পদে লোক নিয়োগ করা হবে।

০১। টেইলার (দজী)	নূন্যতম এসএসসি বা সমমান	০১। টেইলারিং পেশায় নূন্যতম ১২ (বার) বছরের বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতা সম্পন্ন।	বয়স সর্বনিম্ন ৩০ বৎসর
		০২। অধিকতর যোগ্যতা সম্পন্ন প্রার্থীদের ক্ষেত্রে শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা শিথিলযোগ্য।	

আগ্রহী প্রার্থীদেরকে ০৩ (তিন) কপি সত্যায়িত পাসপোর্ট সাইজের রঙ্গীন ছবি, শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতার সনদপত্র সমূহের সত্যায়িত কপিসহ আগামী ০৫ ফেব্রুয়ারী, ২০১৭ তারিখের মধ্যে জিপিও বক্স নং-২৪৪৭ এবং ১০০৫৪, ঢাকা বরাবরে আবেদন করতে বলা হচ্ছে।

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