

NEWS IN brief

UN chief holds first meeting with Trump

United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Friday held a brief first meeting with US President Donald Trump at the White House, ahead of a visit of Security Council ambassadors to Washington next week. Guterres, who took over from Ban Ki-moon in January, also met with the US national security advisor, General HR McMaster.

'IS attack' kills 2 at Russia FSB office

The Islamic State jihadist group has claimed responsibility for a deadly attack Friday on an office of Russia's main domestic intelligence agency, the FSB, in the country's far east, a US-based monitoring group said. Russian officials say two people were killed in the incident -- an FSB employee and a civilian.

Jew charged for threats to US Jewish centers

An 18-year-old Israeli-American man, in custody in Israel after being arrested there last month, was hit with US charges on Friday for making hoax telephone threats against Jewish centers. He is suspected of being behind a wave of threats to Jewish institutions in the US, Australia and New Zealand between January and early March.

IS leader behind Turkey nightclub attack killed

US forces operating in Syria have killed a senior member of the Islamic State group blamed for an attack on a Turkey nightclub on the New Year eve that left 39 dead, officials said Friday. Officials identified the slain militant as Abdurakhmon Uzbeki, and described him as a close associate of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, leader of the Islamic State.

Protesters hold placards and banners as they participate in the March for Science rally on Earth Day, in central Sydney, yesterday. Thousands of people rallied in support for science in Europe and Australasia yesterday ahead of a march in Washington, triggered by rising concern over populism and so-called alternative facts. The demonstrations have been organized in response to what is seen as mounting political pressure on facts-based evidence.



Police patrol near the Eiffel Tower after a policeman was killed and two others were wounded in a shooting incident in Paris on Friday.

German intelligence spied on Interpol

Report says thousands of ex-Taliban fighters may have entered Germany

Germany's BND foreign intelligence agency spied on the Interpol international police agency for years and on the group's country liaison offices in dozens of countries such as Austria, Greece and the United States, a German magazine said. No comment was immediately available from the BND, Interpol or Europol. Der Spiegel magazine, citing documents it had seen, said the BND had added the email addresses, phone numbers and fax numbers of the police investigators to its sector surveillance list. In addition, the German spy agency also monitored the Europol police agency Europol which is based in The Hague, the magazine said. Der Spiegel reported in February that the BND also spied on the phones, faxes and emails of several news organizations, including the New York Times and Reuters. Meanwhile, Der Spiegel magazine reported yesterday thousands of former Taliban fighters may have entered Germany over the past two years among an influx of more than a million migrants and refugees. Germany's Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) informed security officials that thousands of migrants had identified themselves as former Taliban insurgents during the asylum application process, the magazine said.





Paris attack boosts Le Pen's chance

By lunchtime on Friday on the Champs-Elysees, life seemed already to have resumed its course. The terraces were full, everyone enjoying the mild spring weather and a glimpse of sun. It is hard to imagine that the evening before, an attack claimed by IS caused the death of a policeman on the most famous road in Paris. The only signs were the police cars, posted at each corner of the street, and the policemen patrolling with weapons in their hands. Life seems normal. Is it the same for the presidential campaign? Can it recover as quickly? Three of the 11 candidates cancelled all their trips on what would have been the final day of canvassing votes: Marine Le Pen, leader of the Front National, François Fillon, for Les Républicains, and Emmanuel Macron, and his party, En Marche!, though all spoke from their headquarters in the morning. Le Pen was the first to speak, and struck hard, calling it a "war" with Islamist extremists and accusing "left-wing and right-wing governments" of doing "everything to lose it, for 10 years", indirectly accusing Nicolas Sarkozy and François Hollande and

their respective administrations. The Republican candidate, Fillon, also used the term "war": "We are at war, it is them or us," he said. "Our enemy has a name: radical Islamism. He has a face: hatred. He has only one obsession: terror," said the former Prime Minister under Nicolas Sarkozy. The current Prime Minister, Bernard Cazeneuve, promptly reacted, accusing both candidates of choosing "exaggeration and division". Emmanuel Macron more soberly declared: "The primary role of the President of the Republic is to protect the French. I'm ready. I will be relentless to protect you." He called on the French not to yield to division or intimidation. But if they feel like they can make political gains from this turn of events, Le Pen and Fillon are not mistaken, says Bruno Cautrès, a researcher at the Political Research Centre of Sciences Po. If there are two candidates "whom it cannot hurt, it is them", he says. Cheurfi had already had several dealings with the courts, for robbery and then three homicide attempts, and was the subject of a previous terror investigation. "This is the dream scenario for Marine Le Pen, it is

devastating," says Cautrès, who explains: "This gives credence to her speech about the judges who are looking for trouble with her when they'd better deal with the delinquents." "The wind can also turn in favour of François Fillon," says Cautrès. "Security is his usual playing field and as he was prime minister, he can put forward his experience and his stature," he explains. Voters on the right may end up closing ranks behind this message as they consider the future of the country today. That background in the government, however, means Thursday night's attack could really offer a double benefit to Le Pen's cause. On the one hand she used it to attack the Fillon, saying he participated in what she called a failure in the fight against terrorism. And on the other hand, "the electorate of Marine Le Pen, from a popular background, who feel helpless and abandoned, they are more likely to feel insecure and in need of protection", Cautrès says. "Voters for the Front National are very mobilised," he adds. "This attack can only strengthen the electorate of Marine Le Pen."

FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2017

 MARINE LE PEN Age 48 National Front	 EMMANUEL MACRON Age 39, On the Move!	 JEAN-LUC MELENCHON Age 65, Unbowed France	 FRANCOIS FILLON Age 63, The Republicans (LR)
Vote on a knife-edge The two traditional parties of government, PS and LR, are struggling		Key powers of the president Head of the armed forces Appoints the PM Has the last word on foreign policy Can dissolve parliament	
ELECTIONS IN FRANCE IN 2017		VOTERS STILL UNDECIDED	
Presidential 1 st round 23 April 2 nd round 7 May	National Assembly 577 members 1 st round 11 June 2 nd round 18 June	Senate 170 senators out of 348 (1/2) elected by electoral college 24 Sept	Sure to vote 72% Uncertain 28%
Final stages of campaign under shadow of terrorism April 20: Shooting in Paris kills 1 cop, 2 wounded. Claimed by IS group. April 18: 2 men suspected of planning an imminent attack arrested in Marseille. 50,000 police, 7,000 troops will be mobilized around voting stations.			



VENEZUELA PROTESTS

Looting, shootings leave 13 dead in one day

After weeks of violent protests that left at least 22 people dead, Venezuelans were expected to take to the streets yesterday dressed in white to pay tribute to those killed in anti-government demonstrations this month. The peaceful demonstrations planned nationwide come after at least 13 people were killed in one day in the capital of Caracas. Nine of the victims were electrocuted as they tried to loot a bakery Thursday during chaotic anti-government protests in Caracas, according to the nation's minister for communication. Three others were fatally shot and an additional death was reported in the city, but details were not immediately available. Six people also suffered gunshot wounds as several other businesses, including two liquor stores, were looted and attacks were reported in the city's metro system, he said. Within the first two weeks of April, six

people were killed during anti-government protests. Three others were killed Wednesday in a series of protests described by opposition leaders as the "mother of all marches." Violent clashes between supporters of the opposition and President Nicolas Maduro have hit Venezuela this month. The opposition is asking Maduro to step down, accusing him of eroding democracy. On March 29, the Venezuelan Supreme Court dissolved the parliament and transferred all legislative powers to itself. The court's decision was eventually reversed, but protests against Maduro had already begun. Tensions have risen as Maduro has called protesters "vandals and terrorists," and security forces used cannons and tear gas canisters. According to pollster Venobarometro, seven in 10 Venezuelans disapprove of Maduro, whose term does not end until 2019. The opposition is demanding elections to exit the crisis.

'Pak sheltering Qaeda's chief'

Reports Newsweek, says his last wish is big attack on US

Al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri is being sheltered by Pakistan's ISI, possibly in Karachi, and the Islamic terrorist's "desperate last wish" is a last, big, blowout attack on the US "before folding his eyes", multiple sources told Newsweek. As for Hamza bin Laden, he, Zawahiri's dead protegee's son, he, too, is in Pakistan, also being sheltered by the ISI, a former top Pakistani official said to Newsweek. The Pakistani intelligence agency being protecting al-Zawahiri since US forces evicted al-Qaeda from Afghanistan in late 2001, according to several sources that Newsweek terms "authoritative". And the US was likely in the know about his whereabouts, because last year in January, the Barack Obama administration went after him with a drone and almost got him.



"The drone hit next to the room where Zawahiri was staying," a "senior" militant from region told Newsweek. "The shared wall collapsed, and debris from the explosion showered on him and broke his glasses, but luckily he was safe," the militant added. In fact, al-Zawahiri, has survived "several" drone attacks since 2001, an Afghan Taliban leader told Newsweek. That's why the ISI - which the Afghan Taliban refers to as "the black leg" - moved al-Zawahiri to Karachi. The Pakistani port city "makes sense" as a sanctuary, the former Pakistani official told Newsweek. That's because the city has widespread sympathies for militant Islam, has congested 19th-century streets and a large Pakistani military presence. Several experts say that till today, Al-Qaeda remains a potent force with the ability to attack the US again and that the Donald Trump administration recognizes that.

TERROR THREAT IN INDIA 2,000 mosques madrasas, in under scanner

A day after five youths were held for allegedly being involved in a terror plot that would have targeted Delhi and UP, senior police officers told TOI that "some 2,000 mosques and madrasas in and around Bijnor are now under a security scanner". In a joint operation involving police of six states, four youths between 19 and 25 years were arrested on Thursday for allegedly conspiring terror strikes in Delhi and UP. Eight others had been detained. While six of them were interrogated by the UP Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS), two were detained in Maharashtra.

Peaceful outcome still possible

Says Pence, praises China role; armada to arrive in Sea of Japan in days

Denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula can still be achieved peacefully because of Washington's new engagement with China, US Vice President Mike Pence said yesterday, despite growing fears North Korea could soon conduct a new nuclear test. South Korea is on heightened alert ahead of another important anniversary in the reclusive North that could be the trigger for a new nuclear test or launch of ballistic missiles, with a large concentration of military hardware massed on both sides of the border. Tensions have risen sharply in recent months after Pyongyang conducted two nuclear weapons tests last year and carried out a steady stream of ballistic missile tests in defiance of United Nations resolutions and sanctions. US President Donald Trump has vowed to prevent North Korea from being able to hit the United States with a

TENSION IN KOREAN PENINSULA



nuclear missile but his deputy said in Sydney on Saturday a peaceful outcome was still achievable because of warming ties between Beijing and Washington. "We truly believe that, as our allies in the region and China bring that pressure to bear, there is a chance that

we can achieve a historic objective of a nuclear-free Korea peninsula by peaceful means," Pence said. "We are encouraged by the steps that China has taken so far," he said at a joint news conference with Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull. Earlier this week, Trump praised Chinese efforts to rein in "the menace of North Korea" after North Korean state media warned the United States of a "super-mighty preemptive strike". However, Trump has also ordered what he has described as an "armada" to waters off the Korean peninsula as a warning to North Korea. There was some confusion about the whereabouts of the USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier strike group earlier this week. While it was thought the carrier group had been steaming towards the Korean peninsula, it had in fact been completing a training exercise with the Australian navy. Pence said the carrier group was now expected to be in waters off the Korean peninsula before the end of the month, "within days". The North will celebrate the 85th anniversary of the foundation of its Korean People's Army on Tuesday and has marked important events in the past by launching missiles or conducting nuclear tests.