

NEWSIN brief

Taliban attack Afghan base, kills 15 soldiers

At least 15 Afghan soldiers were killed when Taliban fighters attacked their base in Kandahar, officials said yesterday. The assault in Shah Wali Kot district late Thursday comes after hundreds of insurgents stormed other bases in the same area and Maiwand district earlier this week, bringing the death toll among Western-backed troops to around 60.

Turkey: 4,000 judges, prosecutors sacked

Turkey has dismissed over 4,000 judges and prosecutors accused of links to last year's failed coup after an investigation of the judiciary, the Turkish justice minister said yesterday. More than 100,000 people have been sacked or suspended from the public sector under the state of emergency imposed after the attempted putsch and renewed three times.



Ex-PM Greek hurt by letter bomb

Greek police yesterday scrambled to determine how a letter bomb wounded former PM Lucas Papademos despite security checks being beefed up after a wave of similar attacks in March. He sustained superficial injuries to the chest, abdomen and legs after he apparently opened his mail whilst riding in the car. The 69-year-old economist was in stable condition, doctors said.



German Chancellor Angela Merkel talks with US President Donald Trump as they attend the Summit of the Heads of State and of Government of the G7, the group of most industrialised economies, plus the European Union, at the ancient Greek Theater in Taormina, Sicily, yesterday.

Trump: North Korea crisis 'will be solved'

US President Donald Trump yesterday promised that North Korea "will be solved", as G7 powers opened a summit that will confront a series of missile tests by the nuclear-armed nation. Trump's tough talk came in a meeting with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, which along with South Korea is most immediately threatened by North Korean belligerence. But the isolated regime has also threatened to target places further afield such as the US West Coast, and Trump has called North Korea's young leader Kim Jong-Un a "madman with nuclear weapons".



US appeals court maintains block on Trump travel ban

A US federal appeals court on Thursday dealt a fresh setback to President Donald Trump's controversial travel ban, upholding a lower court's decision to block the measure targeting travelers from six Muslim majority countries. The government quickly announced its intention to appeal the decision -- the latest in a series of stinging judicial defeats for the Republican billionaire, who took office in January -- to the Supreme Court. At issue was the intent behind the measure -- whether or not it deliberately singled out Muslims by targeting nationals from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. The US Constitution forbids religious discrimination.

IS ATTACK IN PHILIPPINES

Foreigners part of 'invasion'

Foreigners are among Islamist gunmen battling security forces in a southern Philippine city, the government said yesterday as soldiers tore down black IS flags in retaken districts and the reported death toll climbed to 46. President Rodrigo Duterte imposed martial law across the southern region of Mindanao on Tuesday, hours after gunmen loyal to the Islamic State group rampaged through the city in response to a raid on one of their safe houses. Duterte appealed to Islamist militants yesterday to abandon hostilities and start dialogue in an effort to end the bloody occupation of the city, reported Reuters. Duterte said the presence of foreign fighters in street battles that have raged since Tuesday in Marawi City was proof that Islamic State had gained a foothold on the restive island of Mindanao, but there was still a chance for peace.

Threat remains critical

Britain's threat level will remain at its highest level while police hunt down the suspected network of a suicide bomber who killed 22 people at a concert in Manchester, interior minister Amber Rudd said yesterday. Top intelligence and security officials in Britain's Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) on Tuesday raised the threat level to "critical" - meaning an attack is expected imminently - the day after the attack. Britain's government came under fire for cutting police budgets as election campaigning resumed yesterday and investigators scrambled to bust a Libya-linked jihadist network thought to be behind the terror attack. Opposition Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn said it was the "responsibility" of governments to minimise the risk of terror by giving police the funding they need after cuts made while Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May served as interior minister, reported AFP. May and Corbyn had suspended campaigning for a snap June 8 election after Monday's suicide bombing at the pop concert.

MANCHESTER TERROR ATTACK Conservative's lead falls to 5 pct points as polls campaign resumes US takes full responsibility for intel leaks: Tillerson



INDIA'S LONGEST BRIDGE OPENS IN ASSAM The photo shows an aerial view of the Dholasadiya bridge across the River Lohit, a tributary of the River Brahmaputra. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, marking three years in power, yesterday inaugurated the country's longest bridge in the northeastern state of Assam. The 9.15 km Dholasadiya bridge will reduce travel times from Assam to the frontier state of Arunachal Pradesh whose territory is partly claimed by China.

TRUMP-RUSSIA PROBE



Kushner under FBI scrutiny

President Donald Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, a senior White House adviser, is under scrutiny by the FBI in the Russia probe, the Washington Post and NBC News reported on Thursday. Kushner is being investigated because of his meetings in December and other possible interactions with the Russian ambassador and a banker from Moscow, the Post reported, citing people familiar with the investigation. Kushner is the only current White House official known to be considered a key person in the probe, the newspaper reported. The FBI, several congressional committees and a special counsel appointed by the Justice Department are looking into allegations of meddling by Russia in the 2016 US election and possible ties between Trump's presidential campaign and Russian officials seeking to influence the election. The controversy has engulfed Trump's administration since he fired FBI Director James Comey on May 9. Moscow has repeatedly denied the allegations and Trump denies collusion with Russia. The interest in Kushner does not mean investigators suspect him of a crime or intend to charge him, the officials told NBC News. It is not known whether Kushner has received any requests from the FBI for records, NBC News said. One of Kushner's attorneys, Jamie Gorelick, said in a statement her client would cooperate with the investigation.

'Mom, I always told you I'd ... get my degree'

Thirteen years after dropping out of Harvard University to work on Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg on Thursday finally got his degree -- well, sort of. Zuckerberg returned to the university where he launched what would become the world's biggest social network, and basked in the spotlight by receiving an honorary doctor of laws degree and addressing the 2017 commencement. His speech capped a nostalgic visit for the 33-year-old billionaire, which included a visit to his old dorm room. "Mom, I always told you I'd come back and get my degree," read the caption of a picture he posted of him posing with his honorary diploma and his parents. Facebook -- now one of the biggest tech firms, with nearly two billion members worldwide -- grew out of a website he created on campus. In his address, Zuckerberg urged graduates of his alma mater to "build great things." "I'm here to tell you that finding your purpose isn't enough," he told the rain-soaked crowd in Cambridge, Massachusetts. "Our challenge is to create a world where everyone has a sense of purpose."



US-led strikes kill 80 Civilians, including IS relatives, among dead; UN says nations bombing jihadists failing to protect civilians

A US-led coalition air strike on the eastern Syrian town of Mayadeen early yesterday killed at least 80 relatives of Islamic State group fighters, a monitoring group said. "The toll includes 33 children. They were families seeking refuge in the town's municipal building," said Rami Abdel Rahman, head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. "This is the highest toll for relatives of IS members in Syria," Abdel Rahman told AFP. The latest strike came as the United Nations urged all nations bombing jihadist targets in Syria to better distinguish between civilian and military targets. UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said "all states" whose air forces are active in the anti-IS missions needed "to take much greater care to distinguish between legitimate military targets and civilians." The Britain-based Observatory gathered information from civilian and medical sources on the ground in IS-held Mayadeen, which was facing its third day of fierce bombing. According to the Observatory, 37 civilians were killed in coalition raids on the town on Thursday night, including 13 children, and another 15 had been killed in coalition strikes on Wednesday. The 68-member coalition began bombing IS targets in Iraq in the summer of 2014, and expanded their operations to Syria on September 23 of that year. This week, the Observatory reported the highest monthly civilian death toll for the coalition's operations in Syria. Between April 23 and May 23 of this year, coalition strikes killed a total of 225 civilians in Syria, including dozens of children. The US-led alliance is backing twin ground offensives against IS's last main bastion cities: Raqqa in northern Syria and Mosul in neighbouring Iraq. On Thursday, a Pentagon investigation concluded that at least 105 civilians died in an anti-jihadist air strike on an IS weapons cache in Mosul in March. Prior to the new revelation, the US military had said coalition air strikes in Iraq and Syria had "unintentionally" killed a total of 352 civilians since 2014.

WAR IN SYRIA

Indian army kills two Pak terrorists

The Indian army yesterday avenged the May 1 beheading of two of its security men by killing two terrorists of Pakistan's Border Action Team (BAT), even as it foiled an attack in Uri by the group that's been accused of raids, assaults and brutality on the Line of Control (LoC), reported PTI. "Alert troops foiled a BAT attack on our patrol party in Uri sector today. Two BAT terrorists were killed in the operation," an army official said here. "The BAT attack was effectively repulsed", the official said. According to police sources, the bodies of the two slain BAT terrorists were lying in "no man's" land along the LoC. BAT has attacked Indian personnel and posts several times and even beheaded and mutilated Indian soldiers' bodies.

INDONESIA SUICIDE BOMBING More arrests after IS claims attacks

Indonesian authorities have arrested three men in connection with a twin suicide bombing at a Jakarta bus terminal that killed three police officers, an official said yesterday, as the Islamic State (IS) group claimed the attack. The elite anti-terror squad working with regular police Thursday detained the suspects around Bandung in the west of Java island and searched their homes, authorities said. The arrests came as President Joko Widodo called for a plan to strengthen anti-terror laws to be pushed through, to give security forces in the world's most populous Muslim-majority country greater powers to combat a surge in militant plots. The two bombers attacked the busy terminal in the capital late Wednesday in a dramatic assault that sparked panic and left human body parts and shattered glass strewn across the street. Three policemen were killed, while several other officers and civilians were injured in the assault at the Kampung Melayu terminal. IS claimed responsibility through its propaganda agency Amaq late Thursday. Analysts have pointed the finger at local IS-linked group Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), which has been blamed for recent attacks and was recently listed as a terrorist organisation by the US. The bus station bombing was the deadliest attack in Indonesia since January 2016, when a suicide blast and gun assault claimed by IS in Jakarta left four attackers and four civilians dead.