

# NEWS IN brief

## Cladding fears spread after London disaster

AFP, London  
Around 600 tower blocks in England have similar cladding to the burnt-out Grenfell Tower, Downing Street said yesterday, while combustible cladding has been found on at least three public housing blocks. Prime Minister Theresa May said the government had arranged to test cladding on "all relevant tower blocks" following the deadly June 14 inferno.

## Indian forces kill 3 rebels in Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar  
Government forces killed three suspected rebels during a fierce overnight gunfight in Indian-administered Kashmir, the army said yesterday. Soldiers and special police counter-insurgency forces surrounded a residential area where they suspected armed militants were hiding out, triggering a fierce exchange of fire.

## Portugal brings fires under control

AFP, Gois  
The main forest fires raging in Portugal since the weekend, which have killed more than 60 people, were brought under control yesterday, the civil protection agency said. The giant blaze broke out initially at Pedrogao Grande and spread to adjacent areas including Gois, Pampilhosa da Serra and Arganil.

## Sri Lanka's fugitive monk surrenders

AFP, Colombo  
A radical Buddhist monk wanted in connection with a string of hate attacks in Sri Lanka surrendered Wednesday after four weeks on the run. Galagodaatte Gnanasara gave himself up before a magistrate and was then arrested in connection with arson attacks targeting the island's minority Muslim community in recent months.



Smoke billows after aerial bombings by the Philippines airforce on IS militants position in Marawi, Mindanao yesterday, as fighting between government troops and Islamist militants entered its fourth week. The military said militants have been cornered and their firepower is flagging.

## SUSPECTED ROHINGYA INSURGENT CAMP

# Myanmar forces kill three people in raid

REUTERS, Yangon  
Myanmar security forces killed three people while clearing a suspected Rohingya insurgent training camp in the mountains in the troubled northwestern state of Rakhine, the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar daily said yesterday. The authorities conducted "area clearance operation" over the last two days, uncovering a tunnel, homemade weapons, huts, rations, utensils and other items used by the militants in the training, the newspaper said.

More than a million Muslim Rohingya live in apartheid-like conditions in Rakhine, where many majority Buddhists consider their interlopers from Bangladesh. The insurgent group was not immediately available for comment. The insurgents attacked border guard posts in October, provoking a military crackdown in which hundreds were killed, more than 1,000 houses burned down and 75,000 people forced to flee to Bangladesh.

The United Nations has established a fact-finding mission to investigate crimes against humanity allegedly committed by the security forces during the counter-offensive. The administration of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi has rejected the allegations and opposes the mission. Photos published on the newspaper's front page showed materials found at the site, in the remote Mayu Mountain range, including 20 black skinning masks, gun powder and long wooden guns believed to have been used during the training.

# Turkey boosts Qatar support

REUTERS, Istanbul  
Turkey sent a first ship of food supplies to Qatar yesterday and was also sending a small contingent of soldiers, media reported, while President Tayyip Erdogan spoke with Saudi Arabia's leaders on calming tensions in the region.

Turkey has backed Qatar after Saudi Arabia, Egypt and other Arab states cut all economic and diplomatic ties with Doha this month, accusing it of supporting terrorism, a charge it denies. Ankara has also sought to keep up good relations with the rest of the Gulf and sources from Erdogan's office said he spoke by phone overnight with Saudi Arabia's King Salman and new crown prince Mohammed bin Salman, congratulating the latter on his promotion.

"Agreement was reached on increasing efforts towards ending tension in the region related to Qatar," the sources said in a statement regarding the phone calls yesterday. Turkey's parliament fast-tracked legislation on June 7 to allow more troops to be deployed to a military base in Qatar that houses Turkish soldiers under an agreement signed in 2014. According to the website of the mainstream Hurriyet newspaper, 25

soldiers and five armoured vehicles were being sent to Qatar yesterday to join 88 Turkish soldiers already there. Turkish officials were not immediately available to comment.

After the deployment, a joint exercise by Turkish and Qatari forces was expected following the Islamic Eid al-Fitr holiday, Hurriyet said. The number of Turkish soldiers sent to the Gulf

### GULF TENSIONS

ERDOGAN, SAUDI LEADERS DISCUSS EFFORTS TO END ROW

ANKARA SENDS 105 PLANES OF SUPPLIES TO DOHA

MORE TURKISH SOLDIERS, ARMOURD VEHICLES BEING SENT TO QATAR

state could eventually reach 1,000, it said, adding that an air force contingent was also envisaged.

Economy Minister Nihat Zeybekci said Turkey has so far sent 105 cargo planes of supplies.

"It is not economical or sustainable to send normal food supplies by airplane," he told state-run Anadolu news agency on Wednesday, adding that it

was beginning to send aid by ships and by road. He said that alongside food supplies, consumer durables and household goods would also be sent.

The first Turkish ship carrying some 4,000 tonnes of dry food supplies, fruit and vegetables set off from a port in western Turkey's Izmir province at dawn yesterday, Anadolu said.

It cited the head of the logistics company delivering the supplies as saying it was expected to arrive in Doha in around 10 days. The sources in Erdogan's office also said he and King Salman agreed to hold face-to-face talks at the G20 meeting in Hamburg next month.

King Salman made his son next in line to the throne on Wednesday, handing the 31-year-old sweeping powers as the kingdom seeks a radical overhaul of its oil-dependent economy and faces mounting tensions with regional rival Iran.

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu made a tour of Gulf capitals last week, including Riyadh and Doha, in the hope of finding a solution but his visit appeared not to bear any fruit.

Ankara has stopped short of directly criticising Saudi Arabia's actions, merely calling on Riyadh to take a lead role in solving the crisis.

# Indian 'spy' on death row in Pak seeks clemency

AFP, Islamabad  
An Indian national facing execution after being convicted of spying in Pakistan has sought clemency from the country's army chief, the Pakistani military said in a statement yesterday.

Kulbushan Sudhir Jadhav was arrested in the southwestern province of Balochistan last year and Pakistani officials claim he has confessed to spying for Indian intelligence services. He was found guilty in a closed hearing in April.

"Seeking forgiveness for his actions he has requested the Chief of Army Staff to spare his life on compassionate grounds," the statement said.

But India has maintained Jadhav is not a spy, and that he was kidnapped by Pakistan. It lodged a case against Islamabad in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague last month.

New Delhi has accused Islamabad of violating the Vienna Convention by denying him consular access to Indian officials. The ICJ has since ordered Pakistan to stay the execution until the UN court passes

final judgement in the case.

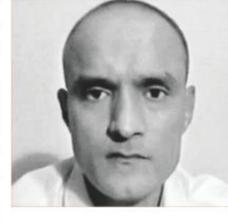
Pakistan claims its security forces arrested Jadhav from its restive Balochistan province on March 3 last year after he reportedly entered from Iran. However, India maintains that he was kidnapped from Iran where he had business interests after retiring from the Indian Navy.

The nuclear arch-rivals routinely accuse one another of sending spies into their countries, and it is not uncommon for either nation to expel diplomats accused of espionage, particularly at times of high tension.

However death sentences have rarely been issued in such cases in recent years.

In 2013 an Indian national on death row for spying in Pakistan was killed in jail after being attacked by fellow inmates. Sarabjit Singh had been on death row for 16 years.

Balochistan, Pakistan's largest but least developed province, has been battling a years-long separatist insurgency that the army has repeatedly characterised as "terrorism" promoted by hostile states such as India.



# Israel calls for Saudi Arabia ties, state visits

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

Israel's intelligence and transportation minister has called on Saudi Arabia's King Salman to invite Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Riyadh to establish full diplomatic relations.

Speaking at a conference in Herzliya on Thursday, Yisrael Katz also asked King Salman to send newly appointed crown prince Mohammed bin Salman to Tel Aviv after describing shared interest in countering rival Iran.

"I call upon Salman, the King of Saudi Arabia, to invite the prime minister of Israel, Netanyahu, to visit Saudi Arabia," Katz said at the annual Herzliya Conference, where Israeli leaders present national strategy initiatives.

"We saw what a wonderful host you can be ... when President Trump was there. You can also send your heir, the new one, Prince Mohammed bin Salman. He's a dynamic person. He is an initiator. And he wants to break through. Exactly this way ... they know who Iran

is. They know we have to create an access vis-a-vis Iran. You can send him for a meeting in Israel and I promise you, he's going to be a very welcome guest," Katz said.

Avigdor Lieberman, Israel's defence minister, also called for establishing "full diplomatic and economic relations" with Arab states.

In his speech at the conference, Lieberman said a peace deal must be reached with what he referred to as "moderate Arab Sunni countries" before a peace agreement could be made with the Palestinians.

"The only light at the end of the tunnel is a complete regional agreement," Lieberman, who has previously advocated paying Palestinians to leave Palestine, said. "Full diplomatic and economic relations. Not under the table, but on the table.

"I saw research on what the result of a regional agreement and full economic relations would mean between Israel, the Gulf countries and Saudi Arabia. This would mean an additional revenue of \$45bn for Israel. That's the potential. We have to clearly say what our priorities are."



Russian President Vladimir Putin stands in the rain in front of honour guards during a wreath-laying ceremony marking the anniversary of the Nazi German invasion in 1941, by the Kremlin wall in Moscow, Russia, yesterday.

## INDIAN PRESIDENT

# Meira Kumar is opposition candidate

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India's mainstream opposition parties yesterday decided to field former Lok Sabha speaker Meira Kumar against ruling BJP-led National Democratic Alliance candidate Ram Nath Kovind in the July 17 election for the top constitutional post of the country's president, setting the stage for a battle between two members of most backward castes.

The decision to put up 72-year-old Meira Kumar, a five-time Member of Parliament who was elected unopposed as the first woman Speaker of Lok Sabha and served from 2009 to 2014, was taken at a meeting of opposition parties which was attended by leaders of 17 parties including Congress chief Sonia Gandhi.



# Trudeau gifts former US embassy to tribes

AFP, Ottawa

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Wednesday gifted a former American embassy directly across the street from parliament to Canada's more than 600 tribes, in a symbolic rapprochement with indigenous peoples.

He also ordered that a nearby building housing his offices be stripped of its name, Langevin Block, which is associated with the "cultural genocide" of Canadian aboriginals.

The former embassy handover on a national day celebrating the country's aboriginal population "symbolizes a turning point in Canada's relationship with indigenous peoples," a statement said.

"It provides a concrete marker, in the heart of the nation's capital and facing Parliament Hill, of the importance of indigenous peoples to this country's foundation, to its past and, most importantly, to its future."

How indigenous groups will use the building is still undetermined. Suggestions include designating it as a public space for aboriginal art and cultural events, or as a base for lobbying the government.

The 1930s Beaux-Arts building -- designed by the same American architect who conceived of Washington's neoclassical Supreme Court headquarters -- has sat empty for 19 years, since diplomats moved to a new building a few blocks away.

A former Liberal government planned in 2001 to turn it into a portrait gallery, but that idea was quashed by a subsequent Tory administration.

# India slams UN, US for their collective inaction

TNN, New Delhi

In one fell swoop, and without once mentioning Pakistan or the US, India on Wednesday came down heavily on both countries, as well as on the UN, for their collective inaction on safe havens for terrorist groups in Pakistan.

However, Syed Akbaruddin, India's envoy at the UN, did make sure he mentioned the Taliban, the Haqqani Network, Al-Qaeda, Daesh, Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad, in his speech at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), on the security situation in Afghanistan.

And, by raising questions about how and why terrorist groups in Afghanistan continue to get away with their agenda of violence, Akbaruddin didn't need to name Pakistan and the US to make absolutely clear whom he was talking about. "Clearly, the international community is dealing in Afghanistan with an adversary who is not averse to flagrantly violating

international humanitarian and human rights laws; an adversary flush with resources, weapons and operational support; an adversary that has access to sanctuaries outside the sovereignty of Afghanistan and operational command of the international forces deployed there; an adversary that sees no reason or incentive to give up violence and participate in the creation of a democratic, united, stable, secure and prosperous state," Akbaruddin said.

Kabul has for long blamed Pakistan terror safe havens for the attacks on Afghanistan. The US has also acknowledged - many

times - the existence of such safe havens in Pakistan and various state forces' support to them. And yet, US military aid to Pakistan continues.

That's what Akbaruddin was alluding to when he said the situation in Afghanistan "can't change" when participants on the international stage "can't or are unwilling to see" the various state and non-state agencies roiling the situation there.

### TERROR SAFE HAVENS IN PAK

# No royal wants to be king: Prince Harry

REUTERS, London

Prince Harry said no one in Britain's royal family wants to be king or queen and criticised a decision to force him to parade behind his mother Princess Diana's coffin after her death in 1997, according to an interview with a US magazine.

"We are not doing this for ourselves but for the greater good of the people ... Is there any one of the royal family who wants to be king or queen?" Harry, 32, who is fifth in line to the throne, told the Newsweek magazine.

"I don't think so, but we will carry out our duties at the right time."

Queen Elizabeth, 91, has been on the throne since 1952 and is currently the world's oldest and longest reigning monarch. Harry said they wanted to carry on her work but her family would not be "trying to fill her boots".

"The monarchy is a force for good," he said. "We don't want to dilute the magic ... The British public and the whole world need institutions like it."

Harry, along with his elder brother William and William's wife Kate, has become a prominent mental health campaigner, citing his own anguish and emotional struggles following the death of his mother.

The opposition named its candidate two days after BJP and its allies chose 71-year-old Ram Nath Kovind, a hardcore BJP man and a Dalit, setting at rest speculation that NDA has put the opposition camp in a fix as it could find it difficult to oppose Kovind and accept him as a consensus nominee. However, cracks appeared in the opposition camp after opposition Janata Dal (United)'s surprise decision yesterday to back Kovind who is also a lawyer. A contest for the country's top constitutional post is now clearly on the anvil as a majority in the opposition sees it as an "ideological battle" that has to be fought.