

NEWS IN BRIEF

Finnish aid worker freed in Afghanistan AFP, Helsinki Finland yesterday said one of its nationals who was kidnapped in an attack on an international guest house in Afghanistan has been freed. A German aid worker and an Afghan guard were killed and a Finnish woman was abducted as gunmen stormed the guest house in Kabul in May.

20 dead as boat capsizes in India AFP, Lucknow At least 20 people died yesterday when a boat packed with labourers capsized in the Yamuna river in northern India. Twenty bodies have been recovered, Dharam Pal Singh, additional magistrate of Bahgat district in Uttar Pradesh state, said. "It appears the boat was crowded beyond its capacity," he said.

One dead, three injured in US school shooting AFP, Los Angeles A student shot and killed another student and wounded three others Wednesday at a high school in the southwestern state of Washington before being disarmed, authorities said. The shooting took place at Freeman High School in Spokane County, where a gunman opened a scene of terror as the heavily armed shooter stalked the halls.

World's oldest panda dies in China AFP, Shanghai The world's oldest captive giant panda has died at the ripe old age of 37 - more than 100 in human years -- after handlers in China said yesterday. The 37-year-old panda, Panda Research and Exchange Centre in south-western China, bid a farewell to the bear with a memorial service.



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (L) and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi press a button at the groundbreaking ceremony for a high-speed rail project in Ahmedabad, India, yesterday.

'Zero-tolerance approach' Modi, Abe agree to strengthen co-op against terror groups

TNN, New Delhi India and Japan yesterday called for a "zero-tolerance approach" to terrorism and committed to cooperate in the fight against terror, including the Pakistan-based groups Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Muhammed (JeM).

ISIS, JeM, LeT and their affiliates," said the two countries in a joint statement at the end of Abe's 2-day visit to India. Modi and Abe condemned in the "strongest terms" the growing menace of terrorism and violent extremism, their statement added.

named and shamed at international forums. Earlier this month, for the first time, BRICS countries slammed Pakistan without naming it, as they "deplored" terror attacks in member countries and the "violence caused" by Pakistan-based terror outfits.

In what appeared to be a reference to Pakistan, the two Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Shinzo Abe, in their joint statement, called upon all countries to work towards rooting out terrorist safe havens and infrastructure, disrupting terrorist networks and financing channels and halting cross-border movement of terrorists.

"They shared the view that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is a global scourge that must be forcefully and comprehensively addressed," the statement said.

The 'BRICS Xiamen Declaration' specifically named LeT and JeM, as well as the Haqqani network, the Taliban, ISI, DAWSI and Al-Qaeda.

When it came to the issue of perpetrators of terror attacks, including the 2008 Mumbai and 2016 Pathankot strikes, the two leaders didn't shy away from naming Pakistan, and called upon it to bring to justice those who carry out the attacks. "PM (Narendra Modi and PM (Shinzo Abe) look forward to complementing the 5th Japan-India consultation on terrorism and to strengthen cooperation against terrorist threats from groups including Al-Qaeda,

fully combated through concerted global action in the spirit of zero tolerance," the joint document said. Modi and Abe called upon all UN member countries to implement UNSC resolution 1267 and other relevant resolutions dealing with the designation of terrorist entities, the statement said.

Pakistan has been at the receiving end lately on the terror issue. Last month, US President Donald Trump roundly criticised it for "hosting terror safe havens". He also threatened to suspend aid unless Pakistan falls in line and cracks down on terror, which Trump said it is exporting to the region, including to Afghanistan.

YOUNG IMMIGRANTS ISSUE

Fairly close to deal with Democrats: Trump

REUTERS, Washington US President Donald Trump said yesterday he and lawmakers are close to a deal on protections for illegal immigrants brought to the United States as children, but stressed any such deal would need to include border security measures. The Republican president met with Democratic congressional leaders on Wednesday evening to discuss the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, a policy enacted by Democratic former President Barack Obama that protected so-called Dreamers from deportation and allowed them to stay and work in the United States.

Trump has previously appeared conflicted over the fate of the Dreamers and yesterday he indicated he did not want them deported. "The wall will come later," Trump said. "The wall is going to be built, it's going to be funded a little bit later."



Government soldiers from the Philippine Marines 1st Brigade patrol past damaged buildings as troops continue their assault on clearing operations against the pro-15 militant group in Marawi city, southern Philippines, yesterday.

Vietnam braces for strongest storm in decade 47,000 evacuated

AFP, Hanoi Vietnam yesterday ordered tens of thousands of people to evacuate its central coastal area as Typhoon Dokuri closed in, with officials predicting the storm could be the most powerful in a decade. Dokuri is expected to make landfall in Vietnam 12 noon today, packing heavy winds and rain. Officials ordered an off-shore fishing ban, while some 47,000 people in Ha Tinh province left their homes yesterday, according to an official from the Vietnam Disaster Management Authority who declined to be named. The storm is forecast to lash four central provinces with heavy rain and winds of up to 155 kilometres per hour (96 miles per hour), according to the Hong Kong Observatory. Panicked residents fortified their homes and huddled boats in from the water yesterday. "We have prepared sandbags to put on the roof so when the storm arrives, we won't be blown off," Nguyen Thi Que, a resident of Ha Tinh province, said on state-controlled news site Zing. "We have evacuated people, resolutely, even forcefully, to avoid any casualties when the storm arrives," Vietnam's Deputy Prime Minister Trinh Dinh Dung said yesterday, according to Zing. "Vietnam issued a category four 'danger' warning, the second most severe of its five-tier warning system for disaster management officials said it will be the worst storm to hit Vietnam in 10 years.

WAR IN SYRIA US-led forces hold two-thirds of Raqa

AFP, Beirut The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, an alliance of Kurdish and Arab fighters, now controls more than two-thirds of the Islamic State group's former Syrian stronghold Raqa, a monitor said yesterday. The SDF entered Raqa in early June, after months of fighting to encircle the city with support from the US-led coalition against IS. The militia "controls 70 percent of Raqa after taking the Al-Thakana district in the centre of the city," said Rami Abdel Rahman, director of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor.

Putin doesn't read Clinton's memoir: Kremlin

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK Vladimir Putin has no desire to read Hillary Clinton's newly released book on her failed presidential bid, the Kremlin has said. In her account of the 2016 election campaign, What Happened, Clinton laid blame on the Russian leader, among others, for her defeat to Donald Trump.

Consensus opinion in the US intelligence community is that the Kremlin backed a hacking campaign against the Democratic Party. There are also allegations the Russian agents colluded with Trump's campaign to work against Clinton, into which Special Prosecutor Robert Mueller is leading an investigation. Putin has denied both charges. In her book, Clinton expressed her disappointment at not being able to face down Putin from the White House. She said: "There's nothing I was looking forward to more than showing Putin that his efforts to influence our election and install a friendly puppet had failed."



Clinton also claimed Trump had a vendetta against her. But Peskov denied this was true, simply saying "no". Russian interference in last year's election has been a significant point of contention between the two countries.

DUTERTE'S WAR ON DRUGS Philippines church bells ring in protest

AFP, Manila Church bells rang across the mainly Catholic Philippines late yesterday as thousands rallied opposition to the "reign of terror" that has left tens of thousands dead in President Rodrigo Duterte's drug war. Police have reported killing more than 3,800 people to fulfil Duterte's vow to rid the country of narcotics, with the 15-month crackdown triggering wider violence that has seen thousands of other people found dead in unexplained circumstances. An elderly church sexton tugged on a rope to ring a 171-year-old bell atop the San Roque cathedral, its slow peals sweeping over the vast slums of northern Manila under the 211-year-old church. "Many of the drug killings had taken place in this diocese," Ryan Rezo, another church employee, told AFP. Church leaders said bells around the country would simultaneously ring for five minutes from 8:00 pm (12:00 GMT) to honour the dead and remind the living that the bloodshed must stop. The ritual will continue for 40 nights. "We cannot allow the destruction of lives become normal. We cannot give the nation by killing," Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle said in a pastoral letter last week launching the campaign.