

NEWSIN brief

Trump plans to visit Asia in November

US President Donald Trump on Thursday announced he intends to visit China, Japan and South Korea later this year. Trump said aboard Air Force One that a US delegation would likely make the trip in November, adding that he will "possibly" go to the APEC summit in Vietnam at the same time.

Blast hits foreign convoy in Kandahar

A suicide attacker driving an explosives-filled vehicle slammed into a convoy of foreign troops in southern Afghanistan yesterday wounding several soldiers, officials said. The Taliban claimed the attack which Kandahar provincial governor spokesman Fazal Bari Baryalai told AFP "totally destroyed" one of the vehicles carrying Romanian soldiers in Daman district.

Iraq attack death toll rises to 84

Gunmen and suicide bombers killed at least 84 people in southern Iraq in the deadliest attack by the Islamic State group since it lost second city Mosul, according to a new toll released yesterday. Another 93 people were wounded, many of them seriously.

Duterte may declare nationwide martial law

Philippine President Duterte may declare nationwide martial law if threatened protests by communists and other leftists against his rule turn violent or disrupt the country. Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana however said the nationwide move might be unlikely but said the president was worried about the protests by the left.



Protesters burn effigies of US President Donald Trump and Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte to express their outrage over what they say is the increasing intervention of the United States in the ongoing war in Marawi city, southern Philippines, during a protest outside the US embassy in metro Manila, Philippines, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

SYRIA PEACE TALKS IN ASTANA

3 powers agree Idlib safe zone

Russia, Iran and Turkey yesterday agreed a deal to jointly police a fourth safe zone around Syria's Idlib province as part of a Moscow-led plan to ease the six-year conflict.

In a joint statement after two days of talks in Kazakhstan the three powers said they agreed "to allocate" their forces to patrol the zone covering rebel-held Idlib province and parts of the neighbouring Latakia, Hama and Aleppo regions.

The talks in Astana are the sixth round of negotiations Moscow has spearheaded since the start of the year as it seeks to pacify Syria after its game-changing intervention on the side of leader Bashar al-Assad.

Like Russia, Iran supports the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad, while Turkey has sided with the rebels.

Russia had previously deployed military police to patrol the boundaries of three zones agreed in the south of Syria in Eastern Ghouta near Damascus, and in part of the central Homs province.

Idlib, which borders Turkey, was captured in 2015 by an alliance of jihadists and rebels.

The statement said the forces would be deployed according to maps agreed earlier this month in Ankara, but gave no further details of their exact positions.

A joint Russia-Turkish-Iranian coordination centre will be set up "aimed at coordinating activities of deescalation forces", it said.

Both the Syrian government and the armed opposition sent delegations to the talks.

TERROR ATTACKS IN BRITAIN

Police have described yesterday's attack on a London Underground train, in which an "improvised explosive device" injured at least 22 people, as a terrorist incident. Here is a recap of some of the major terror attacks:

London Bridge attack (June 3, 2017): Three men wearing fake suicide vests mow down pedestrians with a van at a popular nightlife hub around London Bridge and then leave the vehicle to stab at people. They are killed by police. Eight people are killed and about 50 are hurt. IS claims responsibility.

Manchester Arena bombing (May 2017): A suicide bomber blows himself up outside a pop concert by teen idol Ariana Grande in Manchester, killing 22 people and injuring 116. Seven of the victims were under the age of 18. IS claims responsibility.

Westminster Bridge attack (March 2017): Five people are killed and more than 50 wounded when a man rams his car into pedestrians on Westminster bridge in London before crashing into the barriers surrounding parliament and then stabbing a police officer to death. Investigators describe the lone-wolf attack as "Islamist related terrorism".

British soldier slain (May, 2013): British soldier Lee Rigby, 25, is hacked to death by two Britons of Nigerian descent whom witnesses say shouted "Allah Akbar" before being injured and arrested.

Glasgow airport attack (June, 2007): Two men in a burning vehicle ram into the main terminal of Glasgow Airport in Scotland. An Indian man driving the car suffers serious burns and later dies. The passenger, Iraqi doctor Bilal Abdulla, 29, is jailed for at least 32 years for plotting to murder hundreds of people.

Suicide bombers hit London transport (July, 2005): On July 7 four British suicide bombers inspired by Al-Qaeda attack London's Underground network and a bus during rush hour, killing 52 people, as well as themselves, and wounding 700. It was the deadliest attack on British soil since a Pan Am airliner blew up over the Scottish town of Lockerbie, killing a total of 270 people including 11 on the ground, in 1988.

Knife-wielding man attacks soldier in Paris

AFP, Paris

A knife-wielding man attacked a soldier in Paris yesterday, the latest assault to raise questions over whether France's anti-terror patrols are a target for extremists.

The soldier, who was part of an anti-terrorism operation known as Sentinelle, rapidly tackled the man and was uninjured. The attacker was taken into custody.

The man had lunged at the soldier at the central Chatelet metro station around 6.30 am (0430 GMT), making reference to Allah, a police source said. The attacker was not previously known to police.

Investigators have opened an anti-terror probe, government spokesman Christophe Castaner said.

The incident came with France still on high alert following a string of terror attacks which began in January 2015 when jihadist gunmen stormed the offices of satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo, killing 12.

Trump for tougher travel ban

Says internet must be 'cut off' to stop further terror attacks

President Donald Trump yesterday again called for the expansion of his travel ban in the wake of an overseas terror incident, railing against "loser terrorists" behind the London Tube explosion.

He also suggested that the perpetrator was known to authorities and recruited on the Internet, prompting a London police spokesperson to publicly rebuke the President.

"Another attack in London by a loser terrorist. These are sick and demented people who were in the sights of Scotland Yard. Must be proactive!" he tweeted.

Donald Trump says that the internet must be "cut off" to stop further terror attacks. Responding to the terror incident at Parsons Green Tube station, he said that the internet was a terrorist "recruiting tool".

"Loser terrorists must be dealt with in a much tougher manner," he wrote. "The internet is their main recruitment tool which we must cut off & use better!"

A following message said that he would look to increase his muslim ban into the United States. "The travel ban into the United States should be far larger, tougher and more specific-but stupidly, that would not be politically correct!" he posted.

LONDON TUBE EXPLOSION

Scotland Yard rejects his claim that attackers were known to police

IS keeps 'solid' web support: Europol



It is far from the first time that Trump has asked for the internet to be shut down because of terror. In December, he said he would ask Bill Gates to "close up" the internet to stop it being used by IS.

That call actually came during the same event where he launched his plans for a "complete shutdown" on Muslims entering the US, the policy that later became the travel ban.

Meanwhile, Europe's policing agency yesterday warned that despite setbacks on the battlefield in Syria and Iraq the Islamic State group retains a "solid base of dedicated supporters" online.

Jihadist groups are also now using smaller internet platforms and forums to spread terror propaganda, Europol added.

"The relative decrease of 'official' IS propaganda over the last month has allowed more room for pro-IS user generated content," the agency said in a statement from its Hague-based headquarters.

"This indicates that the so-called Islamic State organisation continues to have a solid base of dedicated supporters in the virtual environment of the internet," it said.

The agency released its findings after a two-day joint operation earlier this week to seek out and flag content posted by jihadist groups on the internet.

Pak SC rejects ex-PM's appeal against ousting

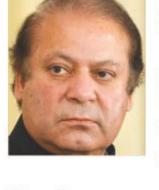
AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's Supreme Court yesterday dismissed an appeal from former prime minister Nawaz Sharif against his disqualification from the premiership over corruption allegations tied to the Panama Papers leak.

The Supreme Court removed Sharif in late July following an investigation into the allegations against him and his family, making him the 15th premier in Pakistan's 70-year history to be ousted before completing a full term.

The case against the prime minister stemmed from the Panama Papers leak last year, which spurred a media frenzy over the extravagant lifestyles and high-end London property portfolio of the Sharif dynasty.

"All these review petitions are dismissed," said Supreme Court justice Asif Saeed Khosa who oversaw the five-member review panel.



In a long-winded appeal demanding that his case be reviewed, Sharif's legal team presented 19 points challenging the court's judgement, saying the ruling suffered "from errors floating on the surface".

The Supreme Court has also ordered the country's anti-corruption watchdog, the National Accountability Bureau, to open a criminal case against Sharif, his sons -- Hussain and Hassan -- and his daughter Maryam.

Last month Sharif led legions of supporters from the capital Islamabad to his hometown, Lahore, in a days-long procession that brought thousands into the streets in a show of force.

During the trip Sharif repeatedly blasted the court's actions, saying the decision was an "insult" to Pakistanis.

The latest ruling comes days ahead of a by-election to fill Sharif's parliamentary seat in Lahore that is being contested by his wife Kalsum, who is being treated for throat cancer in London.



People recover motorbikes from a flooded field in Ha Tinh province, Vietnam. Typhoon Doksuri wreaked havoc on central Vietnam yesterday, lashing the coast with fierce winds and heavy rains as tens of thousands were evacuated and three people were reported dead in the country's worst storm in years.

PHOTO: REUTERS

A fifth of global deaths linked to diet: study

AFP, Paris

Fewer children are dying before their fifth birthday and although humans are living longer than ever before, one in five deaths last year were linked to poor diet, researchers said yesterday.

More than 1.6 million people in poor countries died in 2016 from diarrhoea caused by contaminated water and food, while another 2.4 million succumbed to lung infections that mostly could have been prevented or treated.

Another two million mothers and newborns perished due to complications at birth that rudimentary health care could have largely avoided.

AIDS and tuberculosis each claimed more than a million lives, while malaria killed over 700,000 people, according to half-a-dozen studies published jointly in The Lancet, a leading medical journal.

But trend lines have declined over the last decade for these communicable diseases.

The same cannot be said for viral hepatitis, which killed 1.34 million people in 2016 -- 22 percent more than in 2000, according to the World Health Organization.

"Hepatitis deaths can be avoided," said Raquel Peck, CEO of World Hepatitis Alliance, pointing out that no global facility exists to combat the disease and that most sufferers don't even know they have it.

"Globally, only five percent of people living with viral hepatitis are aware of their condition."

Nearly 55 million people died in 2016, while 129 million were born, leaving a net gain of 74 humans on the planet.

Global life expectancy last year was 75.3 years for women, and nearly 70 for men.

BLASPHEMY CASE

Pak Christian to die over WhatsApp text

AFP, Lahore

A Pakistani Christian man has been sentenced to death for blasphemy after he sent a Muslim friend a poem on WhatsApp that insulted Islam, a lawyer said yesterday.

Nadeem James was charged in July last year after his Muslim friend Yasir Bashir complained to police that he received a poem on the messaging app that was derogatory toward the Prophet Mohammed and other holy figures.

"James was handed a death sentence by the court on Thursday on blasphemy charges," defence lawyer Anjum Wakeel told AFP.

"My client will appeal the sentence in the high court as he has been framed by his friend who was annoyed over James' affair with a Muslim girl," Wakeel said.

He said the trial was held inside a prison due to security reasons after local Muslim clerics had threatened James and his family.

Court officials confirmed the sentence. Blasphemy is a hugely sensitive issue in conservative Muslim Pakistan, where even unproven allegations can stir beatings and mob violence.

US, for now, retains Iran deal sanctions relief

Trump hints at scrapping accord as Treasury announces new sanctions on non-nuclear issues

AFP, Washington

The United States agreed Thursday to continue to for now to exempt Iran from nuclear-related sanctions but slapped new measures on targets accused of cyber attacks or destabilizing the region.

The decision to continue to waive the sanctions was expected, but the new sanctions and some tough words from President Donald Trump will be seen as a victory for opponents of the Iran nuclear deal.

Trump is due to decide before October 15 whether Iran has breached the 2015 nuclear agreement, and critics fear he may abandon an accord they think prevents Tehran from building a nuclear bomb.

"You'll see what I'm going to be doing very shortly in October," Trump told reporters traveling with him on Air Force One. "The Iran deal is one of the worst deals I've ever seen."

"Certainly at a minimum the spirit of the deal is atrociously kept. The Iran deal is not

a fair deal to this country. It's a deal that should not have ever been made."

Policy hawks welcomed the US Treasury's announcement of new sanctions on non-nuclear issues.

A senior administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity, called the waiver "a holding action."

"This is the action that the US is taking in the interim," he said, "while the president and his cabinet come to a final decision in consultation among themselves and in consultation with allies."

The 2015 Iran deal, approved by Trump's predecessor Barack Obama, was implemented under a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, and enshrined in UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

Under the JCPOA, Iran surrendered much of its enriched uranium, dismantled a reactor and submitted nuclear sites to UN inspection, while Washington and Europe lifted some sanctions.

DEPORTATION OF ROHINGYAS FROM INDIA

Govt to file affidavit in SC after leak row

HINDUSTAN TIMES ONLINE

India's Home Minister Rajnath Singh yesterday said the government will inform the Supreme Court of its stand on the Rohingya immigrants on September 18, and refused any further comments on the issue.

Asked about the politics over the Rohingya refugees, a persecuted community of Muslims from Myanmar who have fled the country in large numbers, the home minister said: "Whatever affidavit we have to file, we will file on September 18."

The Supreme Court has fixed Monday for hearing of a plea challenging the government's decision to deport illegal Rohingya Muslim immigrants back to Myanmar.

Several Union Ministers, as well as ministers in the Assam government, have in the past said that the Rohingyas are illegal immigrants in India and will have to leave the country.

An affidavit on the issue, which the government later said was just a draft and being worked upon, was leaked after it was inadvertently served on the counsel for petitioner Muhammad Salimullah.

In the draft affidavit, the Centre said there were "contemporaneous inputs" received by it that indicated links of some of the unauthorised Rohingya immigrants with Pakistan- and Bangladesh-based terror organisations. The Centre also said that it was found that there were organised network of agents and touts facilitating illegal migration of Rohingyas in India.

"It has also been found that many Rohingyas figure in the suspected sinister design of IS (Islamic State terror group)/other extremist groups, who want to achieve their ulterior motives in India," the Centre's affidavit read.