

NEWS IN
brief

Iraq celebrates IS victory with parade

AFP, Baghdad
Iraq's armed forces yesterday held a military parade in Baghdad to celebrate the victory announced by Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi over the Islamic State group after three-year war. Abadi had declared yesterday a public holiday after making this announcement, in which he said Iraq had defeated the jihadists "through our unity and our determination".

Indian trooper opens fire, kills 4 comrades

AFP, New Delhi
A paramilitary soldier has killed four of his comrades and injured another inside a camp in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh state in central India, an official said yesterday. The constable from India's paramilitary Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) opened fire following a reported altercation. Police said they are investigating the incident.

'March of shame'

AFP, Tel Aviv
Thousands of people rallied in central Tel Aviv on Saturday in what organisers called a "March of Shame" in protest at alleged corruption in government. Marchers chanted "Bibi go home", using the nickname of PM Benjamin Netanyahu who is under police probe over suspicions of graft offences.

Syrian joins UN talks

REUTERS, Geneva
The Syrian government's delegation returned to Geneva yesterday for the resumption of talks focusing on constitutional reform as well as elections with UN mediator after more than a week's absence. Expectations are low as President Assad's fate has become a stumbling block for a breakthrough.



A Protester is about to throw a stone at security forces during clashes near the US embassy in Awkar, in Beirut, Lebanon, yesterday; Afghan demonstrators shout slogans during a protest against US President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, in Jalalabad, Afghanistan; and protesters hold a rally outside the US embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia, to condemn the US decision.



PHOTO: REUTERS, AFP

JERUSALEM ROW

Pope Francis call for 'wisdom, prudence'

AFP, Vatican City
Pope Francis yesterday renewed a call for "wisdom and prudence" over the controversial US decision to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital. "The Holy Father renews his appeal for the wisdom and prudence of everyone, and raises fervent prayers so that the leaders of nations... commit themselves to avert a new spiral of violence," Vatican said.

Decision will help militants: UAE

REUTERS, Dubai
The US decision could provide a lifeline to militants after the setbacks they suffered this year, the de facto leader of the United Arab Emirates has warned. Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahayan also said that the UAE hopes that Washington would reconsider its decision.

Erdogan calls Israel 'terrorist state'

AFP, Istanbul
Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday described Israel as a "terrorist state" and vowed to use "all means to fight" against the US recognition of Jerusalem as the country's capital. "Palestine is an innocent victim... As for Israel, it is a terrorist state, yes, terrorist!" Erdogan said.

Coptic pope cancels USVP meeting

AL JAZEERA ONLINE
The leader of Egypt's Coptic Church has cancelled an upcoming meeting with US Vice President Mike Pence, protesting against Washington's move to declare Jerusalem as Israel's capital. The move by Pope Tawadros II on Saturday came a day after Palestinian leaders also said that Pence, who is scheduled to visit the region later this month, was not welcome in the occupied territories.

Keep channels open

UN urges N Korea to avoid risk of war as Japan, US, S Korea prepare to hold missile tracking drill

REUTERS, Seoul

The United Nations political affairs chief told senior North Korean officials during a visit to Pyongyang this week that there was an "urgent need to prevent miscalculations and open channels to reduce the risks of conflict," the world body said.
Jeffrey Feltman, the highest-level UN official to visit North Korea since 2012, met with Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho and Vice Minister Pak Myong Guk, the United Nations said in a statement on Saturday after Feltman arrived back in Beijing.
Feltman emphasized the need for the full implementation of UN Security Council resolutions and that the international community was committed to achieving a peaceful solution.
"He also said there can only be a diplomatic solution to the situation,

achieved through a process of sincere dialogue. Time is of the essence," the United Nations said. "They ... agreed that the current situation was the most tense and dangerous peace and security issue in the world today."
Meanwhile, Japan's Maritime Self-Defence Force said United States, Japan and South Korea will hold two days of missile tracking drills starting today, as tensions rise in the region over North Korea's fast-developing weapons programmes.
The United States and South Korea conducted large-scale military drills last week, which the North said made the outbreak of war "an established fact".
North Korea has fired missiles over Japan as it pursues nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles in defiance of UN sanctions and international condem-

nation. On Nov 29, it test-fired an intercontinental ballistic missile which it said was its most advanced yet, capable of reaching the mainland United States.
This week's exercises will be the sixth drills sharing information in tracking ballistic missiles among the three nations, the defence force said.
It did not say whether the controversial THAAD system would be involved. The installation of the US Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system in South Korea has angered China, which fears its powerful radar could look deep into China and threaten its own security.
South Korea said yesterday it would impose new unilateral sanctions on 20 institutions and a dozen individuals in North Korea, barring any financial transactions between those sanctioned and any South Koreans.

US JERUSALEM MOVE
Malaysia army 'ready' to play role if needed

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

Malaysian defence minister has said that the United States' decision to make Jerusalem the capital of Israel was "a slap in the face for the entire Muslim world", pointing out that his country's military is prepared to perform its duty if its services are required.
"We have to be prepared for any possibilities. The ATM [Malaysian Armed Forces] has always been ready, waiting for instructions from the top leadership," the Malaysian state news agency Bernama quoted Hishammuddin Hussein as saying.
"Let us pray that this dispute would not lead to chaos," Hussein added.
The dramatic shift in Washington's Jerusalem policy triggered demonstrations in the occupied Palestinian territories, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria, Iraq and countries around the world.
Israel occupied East Jerusalem in 1967 war, but no country in the world recognises it.
Jerusalem remains at the heart of the Israel-Palestine conflict, with Palestinians wanting East Jerusalem as the capital of their future state, while Israel says the city, which is under Israeli occupation, cannot be divided.

Foreign fighters from Iraq, Syria join IS in Afghanistan

Report says French, Algerians are among the jihadists

AFP, Kabul

French and Algerian fighters, some arriving from Syria, have joined the ranks of the Islamic State group in northern Afghanistan where the militants have established new bases, multiple international and Afghan sources have told AFP.
It is the first time that the presence of French IS fighters has been recorded in Afghanistan, and comes as analysts suggested foreigners may be heading for the war-torn country after being driven from Syria and Iraq.
It is also a troubling sign as France, which has faced the worst of the IS-inspired violence in Europe since 2015, debates how to handle hundreds of its citizens who went to fight for the group in the Middle East.
"A number" of Algerian and French nationals entered the largely IS-controlled district of Darzab in northern Jowzjan province in November, said district governor Baaz Mohammad Dawar.
At least two women were among the arrivals, who were travelling with a translator from Tajikistan as well as Chechens and Uzbeks, Dawar added.

Several European services believe the fighters are arriving through Tajikistan, the source said, adding that at least one Frenchman arrested there in July said he had wanted to join IS in Afghanistan.
European and Afghan security sources in Kabul confirmed Dawar's claim that French citizens were among the fighters -- though, one cautioned, "we do not know how many there are".
Three of the Algerians seen in Darzab are believed to have been in Syria and Iraq, Dawar said, suggesting they may link Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-K), the group's franchise in Afghanistan and Pakistan, with the main group in the Middle East.
When it first emerged in 2015, IS-K overran large parts of eastern Nangarhar and Kunar provinces, though initially its part in the Afghan conflict was overshadowed by the Taliban.
Afghanistan has long attracted foreign fighters, from the mujahedeen during the 1980s war against Soviet invaders to al-Qaeda's later use of the country as a haven.
The Pentagon has said IS numbers fewer than 1,000 in Afghanistan.

European services believe fighters are arriving through Tajikistan
At least two women were among the arrivals: source



Fire fighters attack the Thomas Fire's north flank with backfires as they continue to fight a massive wildfire north of Los Angeles, near Ojai, California, US, on Saturday. Brutal winds that fueled southern California's firestorm finally began to ease Saturday, giving residents and firefighters hope for respite as the destructive toll of multiple blazes came into focus.

PHOTO: REUTERS

All 'vaporised, carbonised'

Hiroshima survivor laments nuclear 'insanity' at Nobel ceremony

AFP, Oslo

Setsuko Thurlow, 85, was 13 years old when she was rescued from the ruins of the world's first atomic bombing in Hiroshima on August 6, 1945.
Yesterday she receives the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, along with its head Beatrice Fihn.
Here is how Thurlow recalled the horrors of that day 72 years ago, in her speech during the ceremony in Oslo:
"I still vividly remember that morning. At 8:15, I saw a blinding bluish-white flash from the window.
"I remember having the sensation of floating in the air.
"As I regained consciousness in the silence and darkness, I found myself pinned by the collapsed building. I began to hear my classmates' faint cries: 'Mother, help me. God, help me.'
"As I crawled out, the ruins were on fire. Most of my classmates in that building were burned to death alive. I saw all around me utter, unimaginable devastation.
"Flesh and skin hung from their bones. Some with their

eyeballs hanging in their hands. Some with their bellies burst open, their intestines hanging out. The foul stench of burnt human flesh filled the air.
"Thus, with one bomb my beloved city was obliterated. Most of its residents were civilians who were incinerated, vaporised, carbonised -- among them, members of my own family and 351 of my schoolmates.
"In the weeks, months and years that followed, many thousands more would die ... from the delayed effects of radiation.
"Whenever I remember Hiroshima, the first image that comes to mind is of my four-year-old nephew, Eiji -- his little body transformed into an unrecognisable melted chunk of flesh. He kept begging for water in a faint voice until his death released him from agony.
"To me, he came to represent all the innocent children of the world, threatened as they are at this very moment by nuclear weapons. Every second of every day, nuclear weapons endanger everyone we love and everything we hold dear. We must not tolerate this insanity any longer."



Saudi air raids on Yemen rebel camp kill 26

AFP, Aden

Saudi-led coalition air strikes on a Yemen rebel training camp northwest of the capital killed at least 26 Huthi fighters, security sources said yesterday.
The head of the training camp in Hajjah province, Amar al-Jarab, was among those killed in the strikes, the sources close to the Shia rebels told AFP.
Meanwhile, Yemen's ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh, slain this week by his former rebel allies, was buried on Saturday at his home village outside Sanaa, a relative close to the family said. A Huthi official confirmed the burial had taken place.

Trump watches TV 8 hrs a day!

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

US President Donald Trump reportedly spends up to eight hours of his day in front of television.
According to the New York Times, he begins his daily White House routine at 5:30am with the television in his master bedroom.
The newspaper interviewed 60 advisers, friends, and members of Congress to get a picture of the day-to-day life of the President.
Usual morning shows include "Fox & Friends," the programme and network are known to be more friendly to the President's agenda.
But, he also tunes into CNN, an outlet he has routinely referred to as "fake news," and MSNBC's "Morning Joe" programme "because, friends suspect, it fires him up for the day."
Trump has had several public rows with co-hosts Joe Scarborough and Mika Brzezinski, who were once friends of the former real estate magnate.

"Energized, infuriated -- often a gumbo of both," Trump then takes to Twitter because "the ammunition for his Twitter war is television," the newspaper reported.
Through the course of his day, he spends at least four - but often up to eight - hours a day watching news channels. Sometimes he will leave them on mute, but he uses it as a way to keep track of what the media is saying about him, his presidency, and the investigation into alleged collusion between his campaign team and Russian officials during the 2016 US election.
Aboard Air Force One during his recent Asia tour, Trump responded to fact-checking questions regarding his television watching habits by saying: "I do not watch much television... I know they like to say -- people that don't know me -- they like to say I watch television. People with fake sources -- you know, fake reporters, fake sources. But I don't get to watch much television, primarily because of documents. I'm reading documents a lot."

