

# NEWS IN brief

## Fighting along LoC kills 2 Pak troops

THE INDIAN EXPRESS ONLINE  
Two Pakistani soldiers were killed by the Indian Army in "calibrated operations" in Tangdhar Sector in Jammu & Kashmir's Kupwara yesterday. The operation was conducted just a day after the Indian Army lost a soldier to ceasefire violations in the sector.

## Israel PM made secret Egypt trip: report

AFP, Jerusalem  
Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu paid a rare, secret visit to Egypt in May for talks with President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi on a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, Israeli television reported. There was no immediate confirmation of the visit from official sources, but the private Channel 10 station said the leaders met on May 22.

## 20,000-30,000 IS fighters left: UN

AFP, United Nations  
Between 20,000 and 30,000 Islamic State fighters remain in Iraq and Syria, according to a UN report released Monday. The report estimates that between 3,000 and 4,000 IS jihadists were based in Libya while some of the key operatives in the extremist group were being relocated to Afghanistan.

## Bus accident in Ecuador kills 23

AFP, Quito  
A bus carrying travelers from Colombia and Venezuela crashed in Ecuador early yesterday, killing 23 people and injuring 20 others, officials said. The bus, which had foreign license plates, was on a downward stretch of highway 30 kilometers east of Quito when it struck an all-terrain vehicle and overturned, slamming into three houses on the side of the road, officials said.



A woman lights a candle in front of jizo statues in Jizoji Buddhist Temple in Oganomachi, Saitama prefecture, for the souls of unborn children and those who died at a young age, during the Obon prayers period on Monday. The Jizoji temple in Oganomachi, northwest of Tokyo, enshrines some 15,000 jizo stone statues dedicated for the souls of those who died at a young age, including miscarried and aborted babies. PHOTO: AFP

## MOTORWAY BRIDGE COLLAPSE IN ITALY

# 'At least 35' killed

REUTERS, Rome  
At least 35 people were killed when a motorway bridge collapsed in torrential rains yesterday morning over buildings in the northern Italian port city of Genoa, Italy's ANSA news agency cited fire brigade sources as saying.  
A 50-metre high section of the bridge, including one set of the supports that tower above it, crashed down in the rain onto the roof of a factory and other buildings, crushing vehicles below and plunging huge slabs of reinforced concrete into the nearby riverbed.  
"People living in Genoa use this bridge twice a day, we can't live with infrastructures built in the 1950s and 1960s," Deputy Transport Minister Edoardo Rixi said on SkyNews24, speaking from Genoa.  
Within hours of the disaster, the anti-establishment government which took office in June said it showed Italy needed to spend more to improve its dilapidated infrastructure, ignoring EU budget constraints if necessary.  
"We should ask ourselves whether respecting these (budget) limits is more important than the safety of Italian citizens. Obviously for me it is not," said deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini, who leads the right-wing League which governs with the 5-Star Movement.  
Helicopter footage on social media showed trucks and cars stranded on either side of the 80-metre long collapsed section of the Morandi Bridge, built on the A10 toll motorway in the late 1960s. One truck was shown just metres away from the broken end of the bridge.  
Motorist Alessandro Megna told RAI state radio he had been in a traffic jam below the bridge and seen the collapse.  
"Suddenly the bridge came down with everything it was carrying. It was really an apocalyptic scene, I couldn't believe my eyes," he said.

# Taliban overrun army base

## Kill 17 Afghan soldiers, capture dozens; Kabul struggle to push back offensive on Ghazni after 5 days of intense fighting

AFP, Mazar-i-Sharif  
Taliban fighters overran an army base in northern Afghanistan, officials said yesterday, killing at least 17 soldiers with dozens feared captured in a stinging blow to security forces already struggling to push insurgents from eastern Ghazni.  
The fall of the base in Ghormach district of volatile Faryab province came with security forces -- who have struggled to hold back the Taliban since Nato combat troops pulled out in 2014 -- already stretched by the days of fighting in Ghazni, a strategic provincial capital two hours from Kabul.  
Militants gained control of the base after days of heavy fighting, according to army spokesman for northern Afghanistan Mohammad Hanif Rezaee.  
He said around 100 soldiers were on the base when it was first attacked Sunday.  
"It is a tragedy that the base fell to the enemy. Some soldiers were killed, some captured and some fled to

nearby hills," Rezaee told AFP.  
At least 17 were killed in the attack, according to defence ministry spokesman Ghafoor Ahmad Jawed, while a local MP said Taliban fighters captured another 40 in the base, known as Chenaya.  
"Preparations are underway to launch an operation to recapture the base," said the ministry's spokesman.  
Tahir Rehmani -- head of Faryab's provincial council -- said the base fell after the soldiers begged for reinforcements and air support from Kabul but were ultimately ignored.  
"They were too busy with Ghazni," said Rehmani.  
Ghazni, further east and which the Taliban first assaulted late Thursday, remains in government hands, officials have said.  
But fears of civilian casualties in the city were growing as Afghan security forces backed by US air power struggled to push the Taliban out five days after the assault began.

A spokesman for US Forces in Afghanistan, Lt Col Martin O'Donnell, said there had been "no reported enemy activity" so far yesterday, though he added that "some Taliban forces remain in the city".  
With reports of fighters hiding among the civilian population, O'Donnell said residents had been "terrorized and harassed".  
"The Taliban, who falsely and repeatedly claim that they do not target civilians, have executed innocents, destroyed homes, burned a market and created the conditions for a potential humanitarian crisis with this attack," he said.  
The United Nations said unverified reports put civilian casualties at more than 100, with residents also at risk from several days of US air strikes.  
O'Donnell said no air strikes had been carried out yet yesterday.  
Bombs placed along the road leading north and south from the city also "prevented civilians from safely fleeing the violence", said a UN report.

# US, China vie for Lanka

AFP, Colombo  
The United States announced Monday it would grant Sri Lanka \$39 million to boost maritime security as China develops its strategic hold on the Indian Ocean island.  
The State Department will provide the funds as "foreign military financing", pending congressional approval, the US embassy in Colombo said.  
"We look forward to discussing with the government of Sri Lanka how this contribution can support our Bay of Bengal initiative and Sri Lanka's humanitarian assistance and disaster response priorities," it said.  
It comes as China, the world's second-largest economy, increases investment in ports and other building projects in Sri Lanka -- a key link in its ambitious "Belt and Road" infrastructure initiative.  
Last week, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka announced it had secured a \$1 billion Chinese loan as the island develops closer relations with Beijing.

The US had stopped arms sales to Sri Lanka during the height of the island's Tamil separatist war that ended in 2009. The global power has also been highly critical of the human rights record of the former government of strongman president Mahinda Rajapakse.  
Several senior military commanders from the Rajapakse regime have been denied visas to visit the US.  
The US funding for Sri Lanka is part of a \$300 million package Washington is setting aside for South and Southeast Asia to ensure a "free, open, and rule-based order in the Indo-Pacific region".  
China has vowed to keep providing financial help, including loans, to Sri Lanka despite warnings about the island nation's mounting debt.  
Sri Lanka last year granted a 99-year lease on a strategic port to Beijing over its inability to repay Chinese loans for the \$1.4 billion project.  
IME, which bailed out Sri Lanka in June 2016 with a \$1.5 billion staggered loan, has warned Colombo over its heavy debt.

Colombo will get \$39m grants from US to boost maritime security  
China increases investment in Sri Lanka ports for its 'Belt and Road' initiative

## 'WORLD'S MOST LIVEABLE CITY'

# Vienna tops list

AFP, London  
Austria's capital Vienna has beaten Melbourne to be ranked the "world's most liveable city" in a new annual survey released Monday, ending the southern Australian city's seven-year reign.  
It is the first time a European metropolis has topped the annual chart compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit which identifies the best urban playgrounds to live and work in.  
Each year 140 cities are given scores out of 100 on a range of factors such as living standards, crime, transport infrastructure, access to education and healthcare, as well as political and economic stability.  
Vienna scored a "near-ideal" 99.1, beating Melbourne into second place on 98.4. Japan's Osaka took third place.  
Australia and Canada dominated the top ten, each boasting three cities. Australia had Melbourne, Sydney (fifth) and Adelaide (10th) while Canada had Calgary (fourth), Vancouver (sixth) and Toronto (joint seventh).  
Copenhagen was the only other European city in the top ten at ninth place.  
Researchers said wealthy financial capitals such as Paris (19th), London (48th) and New York (57th) tended to be "victims of their own success" with higher crime rates and overstretched infrastructure dampening their appeal.  
At the other end of the spectrum the five worst cities to live in were Damascus at the bottom of the table followed by Dhaka, Lagos, Karachi and Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea.



An Indian paramilitary trooper stands guard along a street as security measures were beefed-up ahead of Indian Independence day, in Srinagar, yesterday. Inset, Pakistani officials presents sweets to an Indian Border Security Force (BSF) commandant during a ceremony to celebrate Pakistan's Independence Day at the India-Pakistan Wagah border post. PHOTO: AFP

## Turkey to 'boycott' US electronics

Says Erdogan  
AFP, Istanbul  
President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday said Turkey would boycott US electronic goods in retaliation for punitive sanctions by Washington against Ankara over the detention of an American pastor.  
"We will boycott US electronic goods," Erdogan said in a televised speech, raising the stakes in a spat that has seen the Turkish lira plunge to record lows.  
"If (the United States) have the iPhone, there's Samsung on the other side," he said, referring to US giant Apple's iconic phone and the top South Korean brand.  
"We (also) have our Venus and Vestel," he said about homegrown Turkish electronics brands.  
Relations between the two Nato allies have plummeted in one of their worst crises in decades after the detention of US pastor Andrew Brunson on terror-related charges, sending the Turkish lira into free fall against the dollar.  
Erdogan has been repeatedly photographed with Apple products including the iPhone and iPad.  
The lira's plunge -- which had been ongoing for weeks -- was turned into a rout on Friday when US President Donald Trump tweeted that Washington was doubling aluminium and steel tariffs for Turkey.  
Erdogan said Turkey was facing an "economic attack" and a "bigger, deeper operation" but showed no sign of making concessions to the United States.

# 40 kids among 51 killed

## Red Cross reveals new toll of Thursday's attack as outrage grows

AFP, Sanaa  
Forty children were among 51 people killed in a Saudi-led coalition air strike on a bus in rebel-held northern Yemen, the Red Cross said in a new toll yesterday.  
Fifty-six children were also among the 79 people wounded in the Thursday strike on Saada province, a rebel stronghold that borders Saudi Arabia, the International Committee of the Red Cross said.  
The new casualty toll came after a mass funeral was held for many of the dead children on Monday at which thousands vented anger against Riyadh and Washington.  
Mourners raised pictures of the children and shouted slogans against Saudi Arabia and its ally and key arms supplier, the United States.  
The Saudi-led coalition intervened in Yemen in March 2015 as Huthi rebel fighters closed in on the last bastion of President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi's government.

The conflict has killed nearly 10,000 people since then, the vast majority of them civilians, and caused the world's worst humanitarian crisis, according to the United Nations.  
The high civilian death toll has been an embarrassment for Washington and other Western governments which supply the coalition with warplanes and other weapons.  
But Washington continues to provide replacement munitions as well as intelligence and refuelling support for coalition aircraft.

## SAUDI-LED STRIKE ON YEMENI BUS



A photo taken from a video shows the Yemeni children just before the strike. PHOTO: CNN

## VIOLENCE IN MIDDLE EAST

# Corbyn trades barbs with Netanyahu

REUTERS, London  
A furore over alleged anti-semitism in Britain's main opposition party widened when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn exchanged accusations on Twitter over Israeli-Palestinian bloodshed.  
Labour has been wrestling accusations of anti-semitism for months, and Corbyn has previously apologised for what he has described as "pockets" of anti-semitism in the organisation.  
Britain's right-leaning Daily Mail on Friday reported that Corbyn, on a visit to Tunisia in 2014, had laid a wreath at the graves of members of a Palestinian group that killed 11 Israeli athletes and a German policeman at the 1972 Munich Olympics.  
Unimpressed, Netanyahu said in a tweet: "The laying of a wreath by Jeremy Corbyn on the graves of the terrorists who perpetrated the Munich massacre and his comparison of Israel to the Nazis deserves unequivocal condemnation from everyone -- left, right and everything in between."  
Corbyn, a staunch supporter of the Palestinian cause, responded: "Netanyahu's claims about my actions and words are false. What deserves unequivocal condemnation is the killing of over 160 Palestinian protesters in Gaza by Israeli forces since March, including dozens of children."

## Trump wanted to play Cupid for Modi

INDIA TODAY ONLINE  
Last year, when Donald Trump discovered that Narendra Modi would be flying solo on his then upcoming June 2017 state visit to the US, he joked that he could play matchmaker for the Indian prime minister.  
Yes, that is what happened according to a report by Politico, a US-based media company devoted to covering politics and policy.  
Politico, quoting "two people briefed" on the matter, reported that ahead of PM Modi's June 2017 visit to the US, President Trump held a meeting with his national security aides.  
Trump, reportedly, asked them whether Modi would be accompanied by wife.  
"Staffers explained that Modi has long been estranged from his wife," Politico reported before revealing Trump's plans to play Cupid: "Ah, I think I can set him up with somebody," Trump joked [in response].  
These details were revealed by Politico in a larger piece about Donald Trump's diplomatic faux pas, which range from the US president's "desire to call world leaders at awkward hours" to mispronouncing Nepal as "nipple".  
The Nepal bloopers took place during the same meeting in which Donald Trump joked about arranging a date for Prime Minister Modi.  
Trump, by the way, may soon come to India on a state visit.