

# NEWSIN brief

## Three Saudi 'terrorists' killed in Shia region

AFP, Riyadh  
Three Saudi wanted "terrorists" were killed in a shootout with security officials in the Shia-majority eastern region of Qatif, state media said Thursday. Three security officers also suffered minor injuries as they raided the "hideout" in a residential neighbourhood on Wednesday, the Saudi Press Agency said.

## US says it will stay in Syria as long as Iran

AFP, United Nations  
The United States will stay in Syria as long as rival Iran maintains its presence, but the US role will not necessarily involve troops, a senior official said Thursday. James Jeffrey, the US special representative on Syria, was clarifying recent comments by senior officials who appeared to suggest that troops would stay indefinitely to counter Iran.

## Taliban meets Afghan officials in Saudi Arabia

REUTERS, Peshawar  
Representatives from the Taliban met an Afghan government delegation in Saudi Arabia this week to discuss security ahead of next month's parliamentary elections and a limited prisoner release, three Taliban officials said. The meeting comes less than a month before voters are due to go to the polls on October 20 to elect a new Afghan parliament.

## Typhoon Trami churns towards Japan

AFP, Tokyo  
A large, very strong typhoon churned towards Japan yesterday, with the weather agency warning the storm would rip through the nation over the weekend, bringing violent winds and torrential rain. Typhoon Trami, packing gusts of a maximum 162 kilometres per hour near its centre, was in the Pacific spiralling slowly towards Japan's southern islands.



A Palestinian demonstrator hurls stones at Israeli troops during a protest against Israeli land seizures for Jewish settlements, in the village of Ras Karkar, near Ramallah in the occupied West Bank yesterday. A spokesman for Gaza ministry said two Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire in Gaza border clashes. PHOTO: REUTERS

# 'My only sin is the extrajudicial killings'

## Duterte admits for the first time

ALJAZEERA ONLINE  
Critics of Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte have called for his prosecution after remarks in which he appeared to take responsibility for extrajudicial killings in the country.



During a speech at the presidential palace on Thursday, Duterte said: "I told the military, what is my fault? Did I steal even one peso? My only sin is the extrajudicial killings." President Duterte is currently facing two charges of crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court (ICC). In August, activists and families of eight victims of the Philippines' "war on drugs" called for the president's indictment over thousands of extrajudicial killings during his crackdown on drugs. Yesterday, opposition Senator Rizza Hontiveros said Duterte's "verbal admission will serve as solid evidence in the people's quest for justice". "It will serve to contribute in moving forward national and international efforts to exact accountability from the president and his cohort," said Hontiveros. Meanwhile, Duterte's spokesperson Harry Roque attempted to backtrack from the comments. "You know the president. He wasn't serious," Roque told local radio station DZRH yesterday. "That's the president being himself, being playful, highlighting the point that he isn't corrupt."

# Need action before talks

## Indian FM sends clear message to Pakistan at a meeting of Saarc ministers on the sidelines of UNGA

NDTV ONLINE

Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj on Thursday made a strong statement on terrorism threatening peace and stability in South Asia at a meeting of Saarc ministers on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. Regional cooperation in South Asia is not possible without an environment of peace and security, said the minister.

"The number of threats and incidents that endanger South Asia are on the rise. Terrorism remains the single-largest threat to peace and stability in our region, and indeed in the world. It is necessary that we eliminate the scourge of terrorism in all its forms, without any discrimination, and end the ecosystem of its support," the foreign minister said in an indirect reference to Pakistan as she addressed the Saarc foreign ministers.

"I would like to stress that meetings, including high-level ones, can only be effective if expressions of resolve are translated in to concrete action on the ground," the minister said. Her comments are significant after India last week turned down Pakistan's request for a meeting of the two foreign

ministers over the killing of a soldier and three policemen in Jammu and Kashmir.

Pakistan's new Prime Minister Imran Khan had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi requesting the meeting of the ministers on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. India first accepted the request, but a day later, rejected it after the killings and over Pakistan's move to release stamps glorifying terrorist Burhan Wani, who was killed by security forces in Kashmir in 2016.

The two foreign ministers avoided meeting each other on Thursday.

As Sushma Swaraj left the venue without waiting for his statement, the Pakistani foreign minister said: "In the progress of Saarc only one country's behaviour is the stumbling block. When it comes to any positive gesture from India's side, all I can say is that she left the meeting midway, maybe she wasn't feeling well."

Indian officials said Qureshi's allegations are "baseless and away from reality". Sushma Swaraj, said the officials, had "extensively dealt with various Saarc related projects. She also expressed India's unwavering commitment for making Saarc a success as regional grouping."

**INDO-PAK TENSIONS**

Regional co-op in SA not possible without an environment of peace and security: Swaraj

Pak FM blames India for blocking the progress of Saarc



# Allegations are part of calculated 'political hit'

## Trump's SC pick denies assault claims during hearing

REUTERS, Washington

Fighting to salvage his US Supreme Court nomination, Brett Kavanaugh angrily denied on Thursday a university professor's accusation that he sexually assaulted her 36 years ago in a day of dramatic testimony that gripped the country.

Christine Blasey Ford, her voice sometimes cracking with emotion, appeared in public for the first time to detail her allegation against Kavanaugh, a conservative federal appeals court judge chosen by President Donald Trump for the top US court.

Ford told the Senate Judiciary Committee she feared Kavanaugh would rape and accidentally kill her during the alleged assault in 1982, when both were high school students in Maryland.

She said she was "100 percent certain" it was Kavanaugh who assaulted her. Trump wholeheartedly backed his pick for the

nation's top bench after the gripping day-long hearing opened.

Kavanaugh testified after Ford finished her appearance, claiming he was the victim of "grotesque and obvious character assassination" orchestrated by Senate Democrats. He said he "unequivocally and categorically" denied Ford's allegation and vowed he would not back down.

"I will not be intimidated into withdrawing from this process," Kavanaugh added.

Kavanaugh at times choked back tears, especially when he mentioned that his daughter suggested they pray for Ford, when he spoke of his father and when he mentioned women friends who had rallied to support him.

Kavanaugh sharply attacked Democratic senators, calling himself the victim of "a calculated and orchestrated political hit" fueled by anger on the left at Trump's 2016 election win over Democrat Hillary Clinton.



# Rohingya issue should not be 'internationalised'

## Says China; Canada strips Suu Kyi of honorary citizenship

REUTERS, Beijing

The Rohingya issue should not be complicated, expanded or "internationalised", China's top diplomat said, as the United Nations prepares to set up a body to prepare evidence of human rights abuses in Myanmar.

The UN Human Rights Council voted on Thursday to establish the body, which will also look into possible genocide in Myanmar's western state of Rakhine.

China, the Philippines and Burundi voted against the move, whose backers said it was supported by more than 100 countries.

The United Nations has called Myanmar's actions "ethnic cleansing", a charge Myanmar rejects, blaming Rohingya "terrorists" for most accounts of atrocities.

China has close relations with Myanmar, and backs what Myanmar officials call a legitimate counter-insurgency operation in Rakhine. Beijing has helped

to block a resolution on the crisis at the UN Security Council.

Speaking to Bangladesh Foreign Minister Abul Hasan Mahmood Ali and Myanmar's minister of the office of the State Counsellor Kyaw Tint Swe in New York on Thursday, China's State Councillor Wang Yi said the Rakhine issue was a complex, historical one.

"The Rakhine state issue is in essence an issue between Myanmar and Bangladesh. China does not approve of complicating, expanding or internationalising this issue," Wang said, according to a Chinese foreign ministry statement issued yesterday.

Meanwhile, Canada's parliament has unanimously voted to strip Myanmar's leader Aung San Suu Kyi of her honorary citizenship over her handling of the Rohingya crisis.

Thursday's vote came a week after Canadian MPs approved a motion recognising the crimes committed against the Rohingya as genocide.



This handout photograph released by Indonesia's National Agency for Disaster Management yesterday shows a collapsed house following a powerful earthquake in Donggala, Central Sulawesi. The quake caused a tsunami that slammed into the city on Sulawesi island with officials saying the tremor had levelled many buildings. PHOTO: AFP

# Temple must allow entry of all women

## Rules Indian SC

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

The Indian Supreme Court yesterday allowed the entry of women of all ages into a famous Hindu temple at Sabarimala in southern state of Kerala where the entry of women of menstrual age was restricted as its presiding deity Lord Ayyappa is considered to be a celibate.

The five-judge constitution bench of the court, headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra, in its 4:1 verdict, said banning the entry of women into the shrine is gender discrimination and the practice violates rights of Hindu women.

While Justices RF Nariman and D Y Chandrachud concurred with the CJ and Justice A M Khanwilkar, Justice Indu Malhotra gave a dissenting verdict.

Justice Malhotra, the lone woman judge in the bench, said issues having deep religious connotation should not be tinkered with to maintain secular atmosphere in the country.

She was of the view that it is not for courts to determine which religious practices are to be struck down except in issues of social evil like 'Sati' (self-immolation by Hindu women on the pyre of their husband).

Justice Malhotra said the right to equality conflicts with the right to worship of devotees of Lord Ayyappa.

She said the issue in this case not limited to Sabarimala only. It will have far reaching implications for other places of worship.

The court passed four sets of separate judgements on a clutch of pleas challenging ban on the entry of women of menstrual age in Sabarimala temple saying law and society are tasked with the task to act as levelers.

# The world's most unusual school run!

MAIL ONLINE

A group of dedicated schoolchildren have been filmed getting into metal pots and paddling themselves across a river to get to class.

The pupils were recorded by an onlooker in the Naduwar area of Biswanath District, in north-eastern India's Assam State.

In the video, the youngsters can be seen getting into the pots in their smart school uniforms with their rucksacks on their backs.

They skillfully edge into the water before using their hands to paddle across the river to the other side.

As five children make their way across the water another two can be seen heading back towards the bank inside aluminium pots, being careful not to get their uniforms wet.

Local media report the children's school was built on an island in the river that has no bridge connections. Politician Biswanath Pramod Borthakur told reporters that he will speak to officials to try and organise a boat to allow the students to get to school in an easier and safer way. He added that in the long-term he believes the school should be moved to a more accessible location.

# Yemen undeniably world's worst humanitarian crisis

## WFP chief raises alert as famine fears loom

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

The World Food Programme (WFP) has said there "very well could be" famine in remote areas of Yemen where the UN's food agency does not have access, painting a bleak picture of the hunger crisis gripping the country.

"Yemen is undeniably the world's worst humanitarian crisis by far," said Beasley. Access into the country, controlled by the Saudi-led coalition, has "substantially improved" in the past year, but denial of access within Yemen remains the major obstacle to fighting hunger and disease, especially in areas controlled by Houthis, he added.

"If we don't have access then we can't monitor [and] draw necessary conclusions. We have to assume the worst."

An Associated Press investigation found that some families in the northern, Houthi-controlled area of Aslam were found eating leaves to survive.

The cost of food has increased by 35 percent in the last 12 months and if trends continue the rial will reach an exchange rate of 1,000 to the US dollar, putting 12 million at risk of starvation, UN officials have warned.

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# Major terror attack foiled in Netherlands

## Seven people arrested

AFP, The Hague

Dutch police arrested seven men Thursday suspected of plotting to carry out a "major terrorist attack" at a public event using explosive belts and an AK-47 assault rifle, the public prosecutor's office said.

"Police arrested seven men on Thursday... suspected of being at a very advanced stage of preparation for a major terrorist attack in the Netherlands," it said in a statement, adding one of the suspects had wanted to kill "many victims".

Prosecutors and investigators were "convinced that a terrorist attack was prevented" as a result of the arrests in the cities of Arnhem and Weert which followed a months-long police operation.

Officers had placed a group of people under surveillance, a central figure being a 34-year-old man of Iraqi origin convicted in 2017 of attempting to reach territory controlled by the jihadist Islamic State group, the statement added.

Those arrested by elite special anti-terrorist police teams with helicopter support ranged in age from 21 to 34. The suspects came from Arnhem, the port city of Rotterdam and villages close to those two cities. Two others in the group also had convictions related to attempts to travel to Iraq or Syria.