

IS forming new cells in Turkey

Warns Iraqi spy chief

CNN ONLINE

Senior members of IS are plotting mass prison breaks and a resurgence of terror after taking refuge in Turkey, according to the head of Iraqi Military Intelligence.

Lt Gen Saad al-Allaq told CNN in an exclusive interview that Iraq had handed dossiers on nine alleged terror leaders to Turkey. The subjects included top financiers with access to "huge" amounts of money to fund operations around the world, he said.

And recent communications from IS point to plans to try to break prisoners out of camps and jails across Syria and Iraq, al-Allaq said.

"Huge international efforts should be taken to deal with this issue because these criminals ... are able to leave these camps and go back to their countries and thus they pose great danger in countries like Europe, Asia and northwest Africa," al-Allaq said.

The general said senior IS figures known as "emirs" have access to enormous amounts of cash and were forming new cells in Turkey.

There are an estimated 10,000 alleged IS fighters including many foreign nationals in custody under the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces in northern Syria. A nearby camp holds 70,000 women and children. Each has been described by the US as a "ticking time bomb," even after the killing of IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and some of his deputies.

Al-Allaq rarely gives interviews. The intelligence he has on IS figures emerged during a wide-ranging discussion about Iraq's role in finding al-Baghdadi, who was killed in a raid by American troops in October.



Iraqi demonstrators gather in the capital Baghdad's Tahrir square during ongoing anti-government demonstrations yesterday. Striking Iraqis sealed off key bridges and avenues in Baghdad and across the south the day before, boosting a weeks-long street movement that is demanding a government overhaul.

PHOTO: AFP

Iran blames US for riots

Germany urges Tehran to respect 'legitimate' protests

AFP, Tehran

Iran has slammed a US show of support for "rioters," after violent protests sparked by a decision to impose petrol price hikes and rationing in the sanctions-hit country.

Major roads have been blocked, banks torched and public buildings attacked in the nationwide unrest that has left at least two dead -- a civilian and a policeman.

Footage of the violence showing masked young men on debris-strewn streets setting buildings ablaze has been aired on state television, which rarely shows any signs of dissent in the country.

Demonstrations broke out on Friday after it was announced that the price of petrol would be raised by 50 percent for the first 60 litres and 200 percent for any extra fuel after that each month.

The authorities in the Islamic republic say they have arrested more than 200 people and restricted internet access.

The Basij militia, whose commander Brigadier General Gholamreza Soleimani said "America's plot (had) failed", reported looting, according to semi-official news agency ISNA.

The situation on the streets was

PROTEST OVER PETROL PRICE HIKE

Major roads blocked, banks torched and public buildings attacked in nationwide unrest

More than 200 arrested and internet access restricted

Unclear yesterday morning, largely due to the internet outage that has stemmed the flow of videos shared on social media of protests or associated acts of violence.

Iran's economy has been battered

since May last year when President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the US from a 2015 nuclear agreement and reimposed crippling sanctions.

The United States on Sunday condemned Iran for using "lethal force" against demonstrators.

"The United States supports the Iranian people in their peaceful protests against the regime that is supposed to lead them," White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham said in a statement.

Iran's foreign ministry slammed US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo after he tweeted "the United States is with you" on Saturday in response to the demonstrations.

"The dignified people of Iran know well that such hypocritical remarks do not carry any honest sympathy," ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi was quoted as saying.

Berlin yesterday urged Iran to respect the "legitimate" protests against the petrol price hike and open talks with the demonstrators.

N Korea rejects 'useless' summits with US

Urges Trump to withdraw hostile policies

AFP, Seoul

Another summit between North Korea and the US would be "useless" unless Washington offers new concessions in their nuclear negotiations, Pyongyang said yesterday, hours after Donald Trump hinted at the prospect.

"You should act quickly, get the deal done," Trump tweeted Sunday, referring to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. "See you soon!"

Kim and Trump have met three times since June last year, but talks have been gridlocked since their Hanoi summit in February broke up in disagreement over sanctions relief, while October's working-level talks rapidly broke down in Sweden.

Pyongyang has set Washington a deadline of the end of the year to come forward with a fresh offer, and foreign ministry advisor Kim Kye Gwan said the US was "buying time while acting as if it has achieved progress".

He interpreted Trump's tweet as a "signal" for a new summit, he said in a

statement carried by state news agency KCNA, but declared: "We are not interested in such useless talks any more."

"We will not give anything to the US president to brag about when we have received nothing in return," he went on, adding the North should be "rewarded for what President Trump touts as his achievements".

The implied criticism of Trump by name is a departure for Pyongyang, which has long limited its frustration to other administration officials.

Last month, adviser Kim declared: "Contrary to the political judgment and intention of President Trump, Washington political circles and DPRK policy makers of the US administration are hostile to the DPRK for no reason," using the initials of North Korea's official name.

Washington should withdraw its "hostile policy" if it wants dialogue to continue, Kim said yesterday, without elaborating further.

4 dead in California party shooting

AFP, Los Angeles

Four people were shot dead and six others wounded while watching a football game in the backyard of a central California home on Sunday, police said. Police were called to the scene after at least one person opened fire into a crowd of about 35 people gathered outside the house in Fresno, around 200 miles north of Los Angeles. "Three people died on scene," Fresno deputy police chief Michael Reed told reporters.

Justice Bobde takes oath as CJ of India



PTI, New Delhi

Justice Sharad Arvind Bobde, who has decided several key cases and was part of the recent historic Ayodhya verdict, was yesterday administered oath as the 47th Chief Justice of India by President Ram Nath Kovind. Bobde, 63, succeeds Justice Ranjan Gogoi who demitted office on Sunday. He took oath in English in the name of God at a brief ceremony held at the Durbar Hall of the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Israel's Gantz races to form government

AFP, Jerusalem

After weeks of talks over a new Israeli government have gone around in circles, Benjamin Netanyahu's rival Benny Gantz had just two days left yesterday to form a coalition and become prime minister. Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party and Gantz's centrist Blue and White coalition achieved near parity in September's repeat elections, but even with allied parties both fell short of the 61 seats needed to form a majority in parliament.

Translation of Pakistani satire hits bookstores

Featuring bumbling generals, assassination plots, and homosexual romance, Pakistani military satire "A Case of Exploding Mangoes" by Mohammed Hanif has finally been released in the country's official language Urdu -- even as the army tightens its grip on freedom of expression. The former fighter pilot turned journalist, novelist and librettist is best known for the 2008 novel which chronicles the final days of hardline dictator General Zia-ul-Haq's rule and the myriad conspiracies behind the plane crash that killed him in 1988. Zia is portrayed by Hanif as a paranoid buffoon backing the Afghan jihad against the Soviets while battling a case of rectal worms.

Fee protests: Indian cops baton charge JNU students

Indian police yesterday fought street battles in New Delhi with thousands of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) students who stepped up protests over fee increases at one of the country's top universities. Police baton charged some groups of demonstrators and media reports said dozens of students from Jawaharlal Nehru University were detained. Defying a ban on groups of more than four people, demonstrators started a march from the university to the parliament as part of their action against higher costs for accommodation as well as curfews and other restrictions on campus. They broke through police barricades and police had to close three metro stations because of the troubles.

Pak conducts test launch of ballistic missile



Pakistan yesterday conducted a successful test launch of a surface-to-surface ballistic missile capable of delivering all types of warheads up to 650 kilometres, the military announced. According to a press release issued by the media wing of Pakistani military, the launch of Shaheen-1 missile was held as part of a training exercise "aimed at testing the operational readiness of Army Strategic Forces Command". The Shaheen-1 missile is capable of delivering all types of warheads up to range of 650 KMs, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) tweeted.

SOURCE: AFP, PTI



Georgian riot police disperse protesters demanding the government's resignation and early parliamentary polls outside the parliament in Tbilisi yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

UK PM drops tax cuts to fund spending as polls nears

REUTERS, London

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said yesterday he was putting on hold further cuts in corporation tax and told voters he would pump the money into services such as health instead, addressing a central issue in the December 12 election.

"We are postponing further cuts in corporation tax," Johnson told business leaders at a conference organised by Britain's main business lobby, the CBI.

"This saves 6 billion pounds (\$7.8 billion) that we can put into the priorities of the British people, including the NHS (National Health Service)," he said.

Britain had been due to cut its corporation tax rate to 17% next year, down from 19% now, which is already one of the lowest among the world's big industrialised economies.

Johnson has faced questions about how he would pay for the extra public spending that he has promised, without ramping up

borrowing sharply.

In September, his finance minister Sajid Javid announced the biggest increase in day-to-day spending in 15 years in what was widely seen as an attempt to counter the spending promises of the left-wing opposition Labour Party.

Johnson's announcement received a cautious welcome from the head of the CBI.

"Postponing further cuts to corporation tax to invest in public services could work for the country if it is backed by further efforts to the costs of doing business and promote growth," Carolyn Fairbairn said in a statement.

Before yesterday's announcement, the Conservatives had been arguing that corporation tax cuts could lead to more government income.

Turning to Brexit, the Conservative leader told the conference that while big business did not want the UK to leave the EU, his withdrawal deal would provide the certainty "that you want now and have wanted for some time".



'DISOBEDIENCE' CHARGES Catalan president goes on trial

AFP, Barcelona

The president of Catalonia's regional government yesterday went on trial in Barcelona for "disobedience" after refusing to remove separatist symbols from public buildings, amid heightened tensions in the Spanish region.

Prosecutors have called for Quim Torra to be fined 30,000 euros (\$33,000) and declared ineligible for public office for 20 months, which would make it impossible for him to remain president and likely trigger an early election in the wealthy northeastern region.

But his ineligibility would only come into effect if the sentence is confirmed by Spain's Supreme Court, which could take months.

Torra's one-day trial opened after Spain's Supreme Court on October 14 sentenced nine Catalan separatist leaders to lengthy jail terms over an abortive 2017 independence bid, setting off a wave of angry protests that repeatedly descended into violence.

In March, Spanish electoral authorities ordered Torra to remove separatist symbols to respect institutional neutrality ahead of parliamentary elections in April.

They objected in particular to a banner outside the Catalan regional government headquarters that read "Freedom for political prisoners and exiles" next to a yellow ribbon indicating support for the detained Catalan separatist leaders who were sentenced last month.

IMPEACHMENT PROBE

Trump will 'strongly consider' testifying

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump yesterday said he is "strongly" considering answering a challenge from opposition Democrats to testify in his own impeachment investigation.

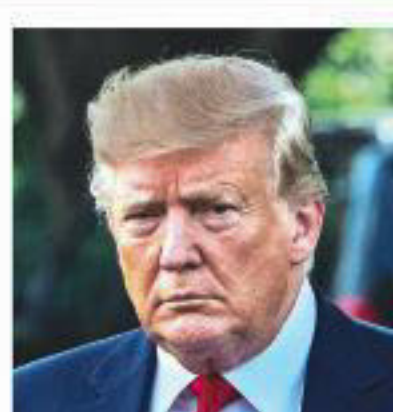
After the speaker of the lower house, Nancy Pelosi, upped the ante by suggesting that Trump come forward to tell the "truth," the Republican president said he was keen.

Pelosi suggested "that I testify about the phony Impeachment Witch Hunt. She also said I could do it in writing," Trump tweeted.

"Even though I did nothing wrong, and don't like giving credibility to this No Due Process Hoax, I like the idea & will, in order to get Congress focused again, strongly consider it!"

It was unclear what kind of testimony the president had in mind. His defense team would likely be highly resistant to the idea of him appearing before the House intelligence committee delving into the allegation that Trump pressured Ukraine to dig up dirt on a political rival to help his 2020 reelection chances.

During the lengthy probe led by special prosecutor Robert Mueller into accusations that Trump worked with Russians to boost his 2016 election chances, the president answered questions in written form.



CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT BILL Protests against bill in India's northeast

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Street protests broke out across north eastern states of India yesterday against the government's proposed Citizenship (Amendment) Bill that seeks to give citizenship to non-Muslim migrants from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Protest rallies coincided with the first day of the winter session of parliament during which the bill is proposed to be introduced.

Sit-ins demonstrations were also launched in various places of Guwahati and effigies of Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal were burnt in different parts of Assam in protest against the Bill.

The protests were held by the North East Students Organisation (NESO), the north eastern region's umbrella organization of students unions, its constituents, Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti, youth body Assam Jatiyatibadi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) and Left-Democratic Mancha, Assam among others.

The NESO submitted a memorandum addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah against the Bill.

The NESO and the AASU along with other outfits took out a big rally from its headquarters at Uzan Bazar in Guwahati to the Raj Bhawan shouting slogans and waving banners and placards against the Bill.