

Top news stories of Tuesday 16 January 2018
Curated by Bhavya Bhagtani, 3rd Year Journalism Student, SCMC

Over 30 children killed in Syria, reports UN

United Nations, Jan 16 (UNI) In the first fortnight of the year 2018, more than 30 children were killed in escalating violence in Syria's East Ghouta, where an estimated 200,000 children have been trapped under siege since 2013, the top United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) official in the Middle Eastern country has said.

"At a time when most parents are filled with the New Year's hope for their children's future, mothers and fathers in Syria are left grieving for the children they have lost," said Fran Equiza, UNICEF Representative in Syria in a statement on Sunday.

"It is shameful that nearly seven years into the conflict, a war on children continues while the world watches. Millions of children across Syria and in neighbouring countries have suffered the devastating consequences of unabating levels of violence in several parts of the country," he added. UNICEF received information from inside East Ghouta that people are taking shelter underground in fear for their lives.

UN to vaccinate Rohingya kids against diphtheria

United Nations, Jan 16 (UNI) As part of an intensified response to the current diphtheria outbreak, United Nations agencies are working to vaccinate more than 475,000 children in Rohingya refugee camps, temporary settlements and surrounding areas in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar. "All efforts are being made to stop further spread of diphtheria. The vaccination of children in the Rohingya camps and nearby areas demonstrates the health sector's commitment to protecting people, particularly children, against deadly diseases," said Bardan Jung Rana, ai Representative to Bangladesh of the World Health Organisation (WHO).

UN estimates show that some 655,000 people have fled Myanmar to Bangladesh since August 2017.

Pak releases pro-Taliban leader

Islamabad, Jan 16 (UNI) Pakistani authorities have released on bail prominent militia commander and cleric Sufi Muhammad, known as the father of the Taliban in the Swat Valley, on health grounds, his lawyer said, an Al Jazeera report said on Tuesday.

Muhammad, 93, was imprisoned in the northwestern city of Peshawar in 2009 and charged with sedition and waging war against Pakistan, after he led demands for the imposition of a strict, conservative interpretation of Islamic law in the country's northern Swat valley.

He is the father-in-law of current Pakistani Taliban chief Mullah Fazlullah.

On January 8, a Pakistani court ordered that he be released on bail from the Peshawar central jail on humanitarian grounds, while the cases against him would continue to be heard.

Govt scraps subsidy for Haj pilgrims

New Delhi, Jan 16 (UNI) In a major policy decision, the government on Tuesday scrapped subsidy for Haj pilgrims.

The decision to abolish Haj subsidy comes day after government allowed Muslim women, above the age of 45, to go on Haj without male guardian, in a group of at least four.

Announcing this here Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said the Haj subsidy funds will be used for educational empowerment of girls and women of minority community.

Stating that the government believed in empowerment without appeasement, the Minister said "development with dignity is what we believe in."

He said despite the subsidy withdrawal, a record number of 1.75 lakh Muslims will undertake the pilgrimage this year.

Mr Naqvi said the withdrawal of subsidy however, won't affect the cost of travel of Haj pilgrims.

The Ministry of Minority Affairs had, last year, constituted a committee to

review the existing Haj policy and suggest a framework for a new Haj policy for 2018-22.

10 more Smart Cities to be announced soon

New Delhi, Jan 16 (UNI) The selection of ten more Smart Cities will be announced shortly, Minister of State (I/C) for Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep S Puri said on Tuesday.

'The Smart Cities Mission is progressing at a brisk pace. 90 cities have been selected so far. There are about 3000 projects worth Rs 1,40,000 crores at various stages of implementation,' the Minister said while addressing FICCI Smart Cities Summit 2018.

Mr Puri said Smart City Mission is setting a new benchmark in terms of project implementation. In a short duration of 2.5 years , the first round of 20 cities were selected in Jan 2016, and last 30 cities were selected as recently as June 2017 which is a small period in terms of the urban development life-cycle where transitions take place over decades.

Exclusive Industrial Development Scheme for J&K announced

Jammu, Jan 16 (UNI) Jammu and Kashmir Finance Minister, Dr Haseeb A Drabu on Tuesday announced an exclusive Industrial Development Scheme for J&K bringing, for the first time, the services sector under the ambit of the pioneering initiative.

Making the announcement in the State Assembly on Tuesday evening while winding up the discussion on Budget 2018-19 in the House, Dr Drabu said that under the scheme, to be rolled out shortly, Central Capital Investment subsidy of 30 percent would be provided for plant and machinery including buildings for hotels.

More assault rifles, carbines for Forces

New Delhi, Jan 16 (UNI) The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, has cleared procurement of 72,400 assault rifles and 93,895 carbines on fast track basis for Rs 3,547 crore here on Tuesday.

This will enable the Defence Forces to meet their immediate requirement for the troops deployed on the borders.

To encourage participation of private sector in defence design and production and to give a boost to 'Make in India' programme, the Council has also introduced significant changes in the 'Make II' category of the Defence Procurement Procedure.

Considering that no government funding is involved in 'Make II' project, the DAC simplified the procedure to make it industry friendly, with minimal government control.

Cold response to joint Korean Olympic teams

By Heekyong Yang and Josh Smith

SEOUL, Jan 16 (Reuters) While Seoul forges ahead with plans to use the upcoming Winter Olympics to showcase inter-Korean unity, some South Korean athletes are "furious" at proposals to form joint teams with North Koreans, highlighting a broader lack of enthusiasm for some of the government's peace-making plans.

Officials from both countries are still engaged in talks over exactly how the North will participate in next month's games in Pyeongchang. But the backlash may trip up Seoul's plans to use the sporting event to improve bilateral ties after a year of high tensions over Pyongyang's nuclear and missile programmes.

South Korea's women's ice hockey team was the first to be singled out for possible integration with North Koreans, with Sports Minister Do Jong-hwan saying the government would ask Olympic organizers to expand the team's roster from 23 to more than 30.

That came as a shock to team members, who had just returned to South Korea last Friday after training in the United States for the past three weeks,

a senior official with the Korea Ice Hockey Association said.

India biggest market for Airbus A320neo

New Delhi, Jan 16 (UNI) The leading aircrafts manufacturer Airbus has said that India is the single biggest market for its leading A320neo aircraft and the company will focus a lot on Indian aviation market.

In reply to a UNI question on the plans of Airbus for India and orders from Indian Aviation Companies (Airlines), Justin Dubon, Head of Global News, Airbus said, "So you will see the Airbus fleets grow with carriers such as GoAir, IndiGo, Vistara, Air India and Jet Airways."

He said that India is one of the fastest growing economies and in tandem has one of the fastest growth trajectories in the aviation sector.

He said that Airbus will publish an updated market outlook for India later this year but in Company's last forecasts it said the number of new aircraft serving the India world grow to over 1,600 aircraft in the next 20 years.

He added that this is partly due to added disposable income with India's middle classes set to reach some 600million people and people's propensity to travel to quadruple between now and 2034.

He further said that aviation is a long term business and investments are made years in advance.

The European plane maker said on Monday net orders after cancellations rose 52 per cent to 1,109 aircraft in 2017, placing it ahead of Boeing's 912 net orders.

20-nation initiative to resolve N.Korean crisis

Vancouver, Jan 16 (UNI) Foreign ministers from 20 countries are meeting in Vancouver to discuss ways to promote a peaceful resolution to the North Korea crisis, CBC News reported on Tuesday.

A government source speaking on background, said ministers will focus on alternate paths forward, amid the rapidly changing situation.

Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland and her US counterpart, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, are co-hosting the one-day gathering in Vancouver.

"Canada is really prepared to do everything we can to work towards a

peaceful diplomatic solution," Freeland told CBC's The Weeklywith Wendy Mesley.

US Defence Secretary James Mattis is also in Vancouver.

As CBC News reported on Friday, that message was not only aimed at North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, but also at members of US President Donald Trump's administration.

Indo-Israel coop to set up Agri-centres

New Delhi, Jan 16 (UNI) Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Israeli counterpart, Benjamin Netanyahu, will on Wednesday inaugurate the Centre of Excellence for date palms at Kukama, Bhuj District, through a video link.

The two leaders will also interact with farmers.

This will be one of the 28 Centres of Excellence being set up in India with Israeli cooperation.

The two leaders will visit the Centre of Excellence for Vegetables at Vadrad in Banaskantha districts.

The Centres of Excellence provide a platform for transfer of technology, protected cultivation, drip irrigation and Integrated Pest management technologies which are demonstrated at the centres and later transferred to farmers' fields.

Afghanistan to make Test debut on June 14

New Delhi, Jan 16 (UNI) India will host Afghanistan for their maiden Test match from June 14 in Bengaluru, the BCCI announced on Tuesday.

A joint decision to hold the Test match was taken by officials from the BCCI and the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) here.

Briefing mediapersons , BCCI acting secretary Amitabh Choudhary said "We thought June would be the best month to host the historic Test between India and Afghanistan in Bengaluru."

In June 2017, the neighboring nation had earned Test status along with Ireland.

UAR creates world's largest water project

Dubai, Jan 16 (UNI) The world's largest reserve of high quality desalinated water, secured in a network of 315 recovery wells lying up to 80 metres below the Liwa Desert, has been built in the United Arab Emirates. One of the Emirate's longest water pipeline networks fed the wells by taking water from a desalination plant at a rate of 7 million imperial gallons per day over 27 months.

"The reserve acts as a safety net for the provision of water and is now being regarded as an excellent regional model for foresight and planning," Saif Al Seiri, acting director general, Abu Dhabi Water and Electricity Authority (ADWEA), was quoted as saying by Arabian Business magazine.

45 Sangeet Natak Akademi awards

New Delhi, Jan 16 (UNI) President Ram Nath Kovind will on Wednesday award four eminent artists and scholars in the performing arts with Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowships and 41 other artists with the Sangeet Natak Akademi awards for 2016, an official release by the Ministry of culture said on Tuesday.

The four Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowships (Akademi Ratna) this year will be conferred on Arvind Parikh, R Vedavalli, Ram Gopal Bajaj and Sunil Kothari.

The Fellowship awardees will receive a purse of Rs 3 lakh, an angavastram, and a tamrapatra while the artists to be honoured with the Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards (Akademi Puraskar) will get Rs 1 lakh, an angavastram, and a tamrapatra.

Out of 41 artists, 11 will be awarded in the field of music, nine for dance, nine for theatre, ten for Traditional/Folk/Tribal Music/Dance/Theatre and Puppetry. Two artists will also be given away the awards for overall contribution in the performing arts.

Pre-budget GST meet may revise more rates

New Delhi, Jan 16 (UNI) The important meeting of Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council will held on January 18, 2018 which may consider reduction in GST rates for some selected items and amendment in GST related rules.

The 24th meeting holds special significance as it is the last time the council will meet ahead of the Union Budget.

The Union Budget is to be presented on February 1.

It is believed that the 24th meeting of GST Council may consider bringing the Real Estate sector under GST as the issue was discussed in the 23rd meeting of Council's meeting in Guwahati.

According to Sources in Finance Ministry, the officials too had held meetings with the real estate sector companies on the issue of bringing the sector under GST.

Top news stories of Sunday 14 January 2018

Curated by Ghazal Shekhawat, 3rd Year Journalism Student, SCMC

Nation

Israeli PM arrives in India on 'historic' visit

New Delhi, Jan 14: Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday arrived here on a six-day 'historic' visit and pledged to improve ties with the "important world power" - India, saying the enhanced relations will help Israel in security, trade and tourism. After being received by his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi, the two headed to the renamed Teen Murti 'Haifa' Chowk and paid tributes to martyred soldiers.

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj later called on the visiting Israeli Prime Minister and said India was eagerly waiting for his trip. Responding to her brief remarks, Israel Prime Minister said for his country this visit will be important and said "entire Israel" is following and looking with keenness to his India visit.

Bar Council asks CJI to bring 'order' to house

New Delhi, Jan 14: Pointing at

the trust deficit among the public towards the judiciary, the Co-ordination Committee of All District Court Association of Delhi on Sunday asked the Chief Justice of India and other Judges to put the 'house' in order.

The Committee stated that lack of a legal mechanism, which could deal with such issues, led to the present crisis in the Supreme Court.

"People of India have placed their faith in the sacred institution and the said faith should not be even touched by any act of anyone and judicial discipline should be maintained at any cost," the Committee said. The bar council had also met the judges, who held a press conference on Friday and spoke against Mr Misra.

Judge Loya's son retracts suspicions

Mumbai, Jan 14: Anuj Loya, son of special CBI judge B.H. Loya on Sunday said he had earlier been suspicious about his father's sudden death, but now no longer harboured doubts. He said he did not have any doubts about the way his father died three years ago.

"I had an emotional turmoil, hence I had suspicions about his death. But now we don't have any doubts about the way he died," he told reporters. Judge Loya, who was hearing the Sohrabuddin Sheikh "fake encounter" case, had allegedly died of a cardiac arrest in Nagpur on December 1, 2014, when he had gone to attend the wedding of a colleague's daughter.

Armed Forces observe Veterans' Day

New Delhi, Jan 14: Union Minister of State for Defence Dr Subhash Bhambre on Sunday assured the armed forces that the country stands with them and salutes their valour and indomitable will to protect the nation's pride and borders. Mr Bhambre made these comments after inaugurating the main event on the occasion of Armed Forces Veterans Day.

The day is celebrated as a mark of respect and recognition of the services rendered by Field Marshal K.M. Cariappa, the first Commander of the Indian Armed Forces, who retired from service on 14 January 1953.

Gold smuggler caught at Guwahati airport

New Delhi, Jan 14: The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has on Sunday, has hauled (detected) a huge quantity of gold bars worth nearly Rs.44 lakh at Guwahati and Rs.30 lakh at Airport Around 0939 hrs, during pre-embarkation security check (frisking) at Security Hold Area (SHA) of Guwahati Airport, a Sub-Inspector of CISF noticed the presence of metal in body (rectum area) of a passenger who was scheduled to travel to Kolkata by an Air India flight.

At about 1150 hrs, during pre-embarkation security check (frisking) at SHA area of Silchar Airport, an alert CISF staff noticed presence of metal in body (rectum area) of a passenger namely who was supposed to travel to Delhi by Jet Airway. Following the standard operating procedure, the alert security staff informed to the senior officers of CISF and the passenger was taken for thorough checking. During thorough checking, he revealed that he was carrying six pieces of gold bar inside his rectum, weighting about 996 gms, worth around Rs.30 lakh.

World

False missile alarm sparks panic in Hawaii

Honolulu, Jan 14: Incoming missile alert plunged residents of Hawaii into panic on Saturday morning before it was declared a false alarm, the BBC News reported on Sunday. Mobile phone users received a message saying: "Ballistic missile threat inbound to Hawaii. Seek immediate shelter. This is not a drill." State Governor David Ige apologised and said it was caused by an employee pressing the wrong button. The US government announced there would be a full investigation. An alert system is in place because of the potential proximity of Hawaii to North Korean missiles. In December, the state tested its nuclear warning siren for the first time since the end of the Cold War. The false warning message was sent to people's mobile devices, and was also broadcast on television and radio stations.

Protests in Pak over rape of 7-yr-old

Islamabad, Jan 14: Countrywide protests demanding the arrest of culprits in the case of rape and murder of seven year old continued as investigations entered their fifth day. Moreover, a demonstration was also held outside the Pakistani Embassy in London. Zainab, who was the 12th minor victim of rape and murder in Kasur since 2015, went missing on January 4 while heading towards a relatives home. Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Mian Saqib Nisar has taken suo motu notice of rape and murder of seven-year-old girl Zainab, the Dunya News reported on Thursday. Zainab was kidnapped six days ago from Road Kot when her parents left for Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah. The girl was strangled to death after being raped. Police officers recovered her body from a garbage heap near Zaki Ada on Wednesday morning.

Africa's UN envoys call Trump's remark racist

Johannesburg, Jan 14: The African group of ambassadors to the United Nations has issued an extraordinary statement condemning the "outrageous, racist and xenophobic remarks" by President Donald Trump and demanding a retraction and apology, the CBS News has reported. Former US ambassador to the UN Samantha Power has shared the statement on Twitter, saying: "Whoa. I've never seen a statement like this by African countries directed at the United States." The African ambassadors issued the statement late Friday following an emergency meeting after Mr Trump used vulgar language to reject an immigration bill, asking why the US would take in more people from Haiti and "sh*thole countries" in Africa.

9 convicted for murder of Bangladesh activist

Dhaka, Jan 14: A tribunal in southern district of Khulna convicted nine people and sentenced them to death for killing an Awami League man in Narail.

Khulna Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal Judge MA Rob Hawlader handed down the judgment.

The condemned convicts are Md Shahidur Rahman Mian, 52, and his brother Md Ilyas Mian, 56, Md Ashikur Mian, 22, Md Rassel Mian, 30, Bashar Mollah, 30, Rabiul Mollah, 25, Enayet Mollah, 53, Yasin Mollah, 24, and Mamun Mian, 28. The court also fined Tk 50,000 each of them. According to the case statement, the accused stabbed Awami League activists Provash Roy on February 1, 2017, over previous enmity when he was standing at a tea stall in Mirapara Bazar.

Filipinos flee fearing volcano eruption

Manila, Jan 14: The Mayon volcano in the Philippines has sparked an evacuation of nearby residents as it spewed ash into the air, the news.com.au reported on Sunday. The Philippines raised the alert at its restive Mayon volcano by one notch early on Sunday, citing signs of rising magma that could lead to hazardous eruptions.

Residents were evacuated from two villages near the volcano, a tourist attraction in central Albay province because of its near-perfect cone shape, following a "phreatic or steam-driven eruption" on Saturday. The explosion unleashed ash, rocks and sulfuric odor, and was followed by rumbling sounds and a faint glow in the crater, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said in its latest bulletin. Phivolcs raised the alert to level 2, which means that the current activity is "probably of magmatic origin, which could lead to more phreatic eruptions or eventually to hazardous magmatic eruptions."

Other News

S Africa Test: India trail by 152 runs

Pretoria, Jan 14: India captain Virat Kohli led the resistance for the tourists as they reached 183 for five against South Africa on day two of the second Test here on Sunday.

Kohli will resume his innings on 85 not out along with all-rounder Hardik Pandya (11 not out) as the pair seek to eke out a first innings lead in the knowledge that batting last on a wicket already showing variable bounce will be a challenge. India trail South Africa by 152 runs having bowled their hosts out for 335 just before lunch.

***Padmavat* release date affects other movies**

New Delhi, Jan 14 The decision of makers of Deepika Padukone-Ranveer Singh starrer 'Padmavat' to release the film on the Republic Day weekend has caused a major shake up in the release dates of Bollywood films. Following the Censor Board giving clearance to the film on some conditions, including the change in name to 'Padmavat', the makers decided to release it on January 25, a move clearly aimed at taking advantage of the Republic day weekend.

The move has, however, impacted 'Padman' and 'Aiyaary', which were scheduled to release on the same date. Following the decision of the makers of 'Padmavat' to release the film on January 25, the producers of the Siddharth Malhotra, Manoj Vajpayee starrer 'Aiyaary' decided to postpone its release to February 9, a move clearly aimed at avoiding clash with the Big Budget period venture.

Economy to grow at an average 7.3%: Study

New Delhi, Jan 14: Global financial services major Morgan Stanley has predicted an average 7.3 % GDP growth for India in next five years. "The uptick in the private capex cycle, which we anticipate will begin in 2018, will ensure that the economy enters into a sustained and productive growth cycle," Morgan Stanley said in a research note.

Moreover, the overall policy mix will also remain supportive of a further improvement in productivity, which will help keep macro stability risks limited, the report added. The report said, the structural growth story in India remains strong from a medium term perspective, adding that recovery in private capital spending in 2018 will help overall economic recovery.

Unbeaten Man City loses 4-3 to Liverpool

London, Jan 14: Liverpool scored three times in nine minutes on the way to a dramatic 4-3 win over Manchester City on Sunday which ended the Premier League leaders' unbeaten start to the season. Liverpool struck after less than 10 minutes when Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain surged forward from midfield to collect a neat layoff from Roberto Firmino and send a low shot past City keeper Ederson.

Leroy Sane equalised shortly before the interval, but Liverpool blew City away after halftime with Firmino chipping Ederson to restore the home side's lead and Sadio Mane striking from the edge of the box.

Egypt international Mohamed Salah looked to have completed the rout when he collected Ederson's clearance and sent the ball sailing back over the stranded keeper's head, but City substitute Bernardo Silva grabbed one back and midfielder Ilkay Gundogan prodded home in stoppage-time.

City's first league defeat in 23 games this season left them 15 points clear at the top, ahead of Manchester United, Liverpool and Chelsea.

"Congratulations to Liverpool for the victory," City manager Pep Guardiola told Sky Sports.

Lali Kala Academy announces awards

New Delhi, Jan 13: The Lalit Kala Akademi on Saturday announced the names of the fifteen winners of the National Academy Awards 2017-18 whose artworks were showcased at the 59th National Exhibition of Art, 2017-18 here. Addressing a press conference, the administrator of the Lalit Kala Akademi, CS Krishna Setty announced the names of the ten winners for the age group between 30-50 years. They included Rabi Narayan Gupta from Chhattisgarh for his work "Conscious and Subconscious"; Indira P Ghosh from Chhattisgarh for "Assembly of Angels"; Debasish Dutta from Gujarat for "Journey -III"; Chhering Negi from Delhi for his work "Tomorrow is a Long time". The Akademi had received 3644 entries submitted by 1433 artists throughout the country. The selection jury unanimously selected 172 exhibits in different disciplines by 171 artists for the national exhibition and out of these 172 exhibits 15 National Academy awardees were shortlisted.