

## World News Roundup

## Germany

## Debate starts

## 'Support' for IS fight rises

BERLIN, Dec 2, (Agencies): German support for military involvement in the campaign against Islamic State has risen sharply with 42 percent backing action, a poll showed on Wednesday shortly before ministers make their case to parliament for a new mission.

In direct response to a French appeal for solidarity after the attacks in Paris which killed 130 people,

Germany has joined other countries in stepping up its role in the military campaign against IS insurgents in Syria.

Britain's parliament is likely to vote on Wednesday to approve air strikes.

Germany, already arming Iraqi Kurds fighting IS, is stopping short of joining the United States, France and Russia in air strikes but plans to send up to 1,200 soldiers, six Tornado reconnaissance jets, a frigate and refuelling aircraft.

## Approved

After cabinet approved the plans on Tuesday, Chancellor Angela Merkel's ministers will open a debate in the Bundestag lower house of parliament on Wednesday.

A strong majority for her "grand coalition", made up of her conservatives and the Social Democrats, means the plans are set to sail through in a vote, expected on Friday despite dissent from the pacifist Left party and some opposition Greens.

In a country that has been reluctant since World War Two to send soldiers on foreign missions, the move is significant and although 54 percent of Germans are against joining the campaign against IS, opposition is down from 68 percent in February.

The Forsa poll showed 42 percent of Germans back a role for their country in fighting IS, up from 27 percent in February. Still more surprising is that 28 percent think German fighter jets should join air strikes and 24 percent say Germany should send ground troops if needed.

## Warned

Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen has warned voters that the mission will be tough and stressed the importance of international efforts to get a political solution for Syria.

"It will be a long mission and it will be a difficult and dangerous mission. We should have no illusions about that," she warned on ARD television.

Compounding voters' fears is concern about the condition of German equipment. A defence ministry report seen by Reuters states that of Germany's 93 Tornados, only 66 were fit for use last year. But von der Leyen tried to reassure Germans, saying 30 were combat ready and only six were needed in Syria.

But Bild daily printed a picture of a captured Jordanian pilot who was burned alive by IS insurgents earlier this year. "What happens if German soldiers fall into IS hands?" it said.

## Also:

**BERLIN:** The German government says far-right extremists are behind offshoots of the anti-Islam group PEGIDA in six of the country's 16 states.

The government says far-right extremists were found to be "steering or influencing" groups in Berlin, North Rhine-Westphalia, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Bavaria.

Saxony, where the group calling itself Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of Europe began staging protests more than a year ago, wasn't among those states.

PEGIDA has denied it is influenced to far-right extremists, though neo-Nazis are visibly present at its weekly demonstrations in Dresden.

The government response to a parliamentary query was first published Wednesday by German daily Thuringer Allgemeine.

**BERLIN:** A German court Tuesday sentenced a Pakistan-born couple to life in jail for the "honour killing" of their 19-year-old daughter, who had sex before marriage.

The 52-year-old father was found guilty of strangling the teenager to death, and the 41-year-old mother was also jailed, as an accessory to murder, by the regional court in the western city of Darmstadt.

The deeply conservative Muslim parents had killed their daughter in January because she had been in a pre-marital sexual relationship, the court was told.



Merkel



A protester holds a placard reading 'Don't bomb Syria' during a demonstration against British military action in Syria outside the Houses of Parliament in London on Dec 1. Britain looks poised to join air strikes on Islamic State (IS) group targets in Syria this week after Prime Minister David Cameron announced yesterday that a vote would be held in parliament on Dec 2. (AFP)

## Britain

## Action we propose is legal and necessary: Cameron

## MPs urged to vote for Syria airstrikes

'Don't do what you did in 2001, 2003, 2011'

## Anti-war protesters rally on eve of Syria vote

LONDON, Dec 2, (Agencies): Britain's parliament looks set to vote Wednesday in favour of joining the bombing campaign against the Islamic State group in Syria, despite growing doubts among the public and some MPs.

Prime Minister David Cameron kicked off over 10 hours of scheduled debate by urging MPs to "answer the call" from Britain's allies and authorise air strikes against IS targets inside Syria.

"The action we propose is legal, it is necessary and it is the right thing to do to keep our country safe," Cameron said.

But he was forced to fend off calls to apologise, including from opposition Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, after reportedly telling fellow Conservative MPs at a private meeting not to vote with "a bunch of terrorist sympathisers" against the strikes.

Corbyn, for his part, warned MPs against an "ill-thought rush to war".

Ministers are confident that MPs will ultimately say "yes" in a vote expected at around 2200 GMT, while campaigners have promised a new protest outside parliament after a demonstration on Tuesday drew around 4,000 people.

The vote comes after US Secretary of State John Kerry urged NATO to intensify the fight against IS.

## Support

British support for strikes has dropped sharply in a week according to an opinion poll published Wednesday, with those in favour down to 48 percent from 59 percent, and those against rising to 31 percent from 21 percent in the YouGov survey for the Times.

"The likeliest explanation is that as the debate about air strikes has intensified, the issue has moved to the forefront of voters' minds," YouGov president Peter Kellner wrote in an analysis.

Britain is still scarred by the memory of unpopular wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and has played a smaller role in recent foreign military actions, leading to concerns that its global clout is diminishing.

Cameron urged MPs not to allow Iraq to dictate their decision, saying: "This is not 2003. We must not use past mistakes as an excuse for indifference or inaction."

The prime minister insists military action is needed to prevent attacks like last month's gun and bomb rampage

does not get his way on the reforms. (AFP)

## UK 'plans must address issues':

Britain's government should not give the go-ahead for the expansion of Heathrow airport until its officials can show they will comply with air quality, noise and other environmental concerns, a parliamentary committee report said Tuesday.

The Environmental Audit Committee

LONDON, Dec 2, (AFP): Thousands of protesters gathered in central London on Tuesday in an effort to stop Britain joining air strikes on Islamic State targets in Syria, a day before a parliamentary vote on the move.

A crowd of around 4,000 marched from parliament to the headquarters of the ruling Conservative party and main opposition Labour party nearby, in the second major London protest on the issue in four days.

"We're here to say one simple thing: 'Don't bomb Syria. Don't do what you did in 2001, 2003 and 2011,'" the Stop the War Coalition protest movement's Lindsey German told the crowd, referring to British involvement in wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya.

"Don't go and bomb a country where we make the war even worse."

Parliament looks set to vote in favour of joining the bombing campaign against Islamic State (IS)

that killed 130 people in Paris, saying the bombing would be accompanied by a diplomatic push to resolve the Syrian conflict.

Military experts question how much difference Britain would make to the campaign, saying the move may be more about Britain wanting to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with allies like France and the United States.

"It will not make a big operational difference," Professor Malcolm Chalmers of military think-tank the Royal United Services Institute told AFP.

"It is important symbolically, useful operationally, but not transformative."

The motion up for debate stresses that Britain will not deploy ground combat troops while noting that allies have requested British assistance.

Britain already has eight Tornado fighter jets operating from its military base in Cyprus plus an unknown number of drones involved in strikes on IS targets in Iraq, an operation it joined last year.

The government has said it will deploy an unspecified number of additional jets if the bombing is approved

jihadists in Syria on Wednesday, paving the way for sorties by British jets to start within days.

The debate has become increasingly heated, with Prime Minister David Cameron labelling Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and his allies "a bunch of terrorist sympathisers" for opposing the strikes, British media reported.

In an opinion piece in Britain's Guardian newspaper late on Tuesday, Corbyn accused Cameron of having a "bomb first, talk later" strategy.

The prime minister insists military action is needed to prevent attacks in Britain like those in Paris last month, when jihadists killed 130 people, but many experts, lawmakers and members of the public remain sceptical.

A poll in Britain's The Times newspaper by pollster YouGov to be published on Wednesday found that less than half of Britons, at 48 percent, supported Syria strikes, compared to 59 percent last week.

## Peace

Corbyn, a veteran anti-war campaigner, argues that only a negotiated settlement can bring peace to Syria.

"The doubts and unanswered questions... have only grown and multiplied" since Cameron first made his case for the vote in parliament last week, Corbyn said.

In a blow to Cameron on the eve of the vote, parliament's foreign affairs committee said he had "not adequately addressed" its concerns.

The committee has cast doubt on the legality of the move, its effectiveness in the absence of reliable allies on the ground and its usefulness in the context

of finding a diplomatic solution. While Cameron is expected to win, he will likely face fresh questions from MPs about his claim that there are 70,000 moderate opposition fighters in Syria ready to help secure territory following air strikes.

US Defense Secretary Ash Carter said Tuesday that the US military will deploy a new special operations force to be sent to Iraq to step up the fight against IS militants.

President Barack Obama had previously announced he was sending fewer than 50 special operations forces to Syria, but Carter said the new expeditionary force will be larger. He did not provide force strength details.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said after Carter's announcement that his security forces are capable of defeating Islamic State extremists without the help of foreign combat troops.

But he said foreign troops might be accepted in the future if they respect Iraqi sovereignty, cooperate fully with the Iraqi government, and have its approval.

London and southeastern England needs more airport capacity to meet the growing demands of business travelers and tourists. Heathrow and rival Gatwick, 30 miles (50 kms) south of central London, have offered competing projects that will cost as much as 18.6 billion pounds (\$29.1 billion). (AP)

chair, **Huw Irranca-Davies**, said the purpose of the report was not to re-open the debate on whether there should be airport expansion or where it should be. But the Labour Party lawmaker said the airport must demonstrate that it can reconcile expansion with legal air pollution limits and other concerns.

"To defer dealing with the environmental impact of a third runway would be irresponsible and could lead to legal chal-



British Prime Minister David Cameron talks to lawmakers inside the House of Commons in London during a debate on launching airstrikes against Islamic State extremists inside Syria on Dec 2. The parliamentary vote was expected Wednesday evening. (AP)

## Britain

**4 held in 'probe':** British police arrested four men in the town of Luton on Wednesday on suspicion of plotting acts of terrorism, police said in a statement.

The men, all in their 30s, were taken into custody at a London police station. Searches were being conducted at seven addresses in Luton, north of London, and several vehicles were also being searched, police said.

The arrests and searches were part of an ongoing investigation of individuals in the Luton area and were not connected to the Nov 13 Islamic State attacks in Paris, the statement said.

The government has said seven plots to attack targets in Britain, directed or inspired by Islamic State, have been thwarted by security services in the past year. (RTSR)

**Cameron aiming for EU deal:** Prime Minister David Cameron, who is negotiating with Britain's EU partners on its conditions of membership, is aiming for a deal at an EU summit in December, European Council President **Donald Tusk** has said.

"If he is ready to take this risk, I will be helpful. But then, it would be his risk," Tusk was quoted as saying in an interview with the Guardian and five other European newspapers published on Wednesday.

"If Cameron is sure December is better for him as the organiser of this referendum, I will be helpful and I am ready to convince our officials," Tusk said.

But he warned the legal aspect of any renegotiation deal would be "very difficult" because of EU treaty rules and said: "We need some compromise when it comes to substance".

Cameron has promised to hold a referendum on Britain's EU membership by the end of 2017 but senior officials expect the vote to be held next year.

Tusk said he was initially aiming for the negotiation to take place at an EU summit in February but was now ready to go with Cameron's timetable.

"The first political priority is obviously to help Cameron to win the referendum," he said.

"It means that I really cooperate very closely with David Cameron also when it comes to the question of the timing. I have no doubt that the first goal must be to keep the UK in the EU," he added.

Cameron last month laid out a list of demands for European leaders in a bid to cut migration from other parts of Europe, ensure greater "fairness" for non-eurozone members and sovereignty issues including an exemption from the EU goal of ever-closer union.

He said the referendum was a "once-in-a-generation" choice and warned he could call for Britain to leave the group if he



Tusk



Davies