

# DT NEWS

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## Mexico rejects 'unilateral' US migration moves



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Tweet of the Day



How unacceptably jaded have we become by our politicians that people are shocked when one of them actually does what he said he would do?

@DonaldJTrumpJr

Today's Weather

|   | Max  | Min  |
|---|------|------|
|  | 19°C | 12°C |

## 11th Hour

### Israeli fraudster sentenced to 30 months

Washington

**F**ormer Israeli fugitive Jacob "Kobi" Alexander was finally sentenced to prison for securities fraud dating from the last century, ending a decade-long saga, the US Department of Justice announced yesterday.

### Two jihadist leaders in US sanctions list

Washington

**T**he United States said yesterday it has added two senior leaders of the Al-Nusra Front in Syria to its sanctions blacklist. Although the Treasury Department announcement identified the group as Al-Nusra Front, the jihadist force changed its name last year to Fateh al-Sham Front, after supposedly breaking its ties with Al-Qaeda.

### UN likely to vote on Syria sanctions

United Nations

**T**he UN Security Council is likely to vote next week on a draft resolution that would slap sanctions on Syria over the use of chemical weapons but Russia is almost certain to veto the measure, a senior diplomat said yesterday.

Britain, France and the United States are pushing for a ban on the sale of helicopters to Syria and sanctions on 11 Syrians and 10 entities linked to chemical attacks in the nearly six-year war.

### Israel shuts Jerusalem school for Hamas links

Jerusalem

**I**sraeli police said yesterday they had closed a private Palestinian school in annexed east Jerusalem, accusing its officials of belonging to the Islamist movement Hamas. The Al Nkhba School in the Sur Baher district had already been ordered to close by the Israeli education ministry, a decision ratified by a court.

# Turkey backed rebels seize IS stronghold



Turkey-backed Syrian opposition fighters advance in the city of Al-Bab

### Al-Bab

**T**urkish-backed Syrian rebels said yesterday they had fully captured the town of Al-Bab from the Islamic State group, marking a key defeat for the jihadists after weeks of heavy fighting.

As Ankara said its allies now had "near complete control" of the town, a fresh round of peace talks opened between the Syrian opposition and regime in Geneva.

Al-Bab, just 25 kilometres (15 miles) south of the Turkish border, was the last IS stronghold in the northern Syrian province of Aleppo.

"We are announcing Al-Bab completely liberated, and we are now clearing mines from the residential neighbourhoods," said Ahmad Othman, a rebel commander.

"After hours of fighting, we chased out the last remaining IS rank and file that were collapsing after the fierce shelling of their positions," he added.

Turkish Defence Minister Fikri Isik said rebels had "near complete control" of Al-Bab.

"When the search and combing operations are over, we will be able to say that Al-Bab has been completely cleared of Daesh (IS) elements," he said, quoted by state-run Anadolu news agency.

Isik reaffirmed that Turkey was now ready to join any operation by international coalition forces to take the Syrian city of Raqqa, the extremist group's de facto capital.

### Rebels dance in streets

Most rebel fighters appeared relieved, with some dancing in the streets and others munching on a late breakfast after hours of clashes.

But others were on edge, nervously discussing three

bombs that had detonated that morning in areas under their control.

Several corpses of alleged IS fighters lay crumpled under a destroyed building.

One rebel poached a weapon from a dead IS fighter.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said IS fighters were still present in parts of the town and that rebels were in control of less than half of it.

Rebels launched an offensive to capture Al-Bab last year with the support of Turkish ground troops, artillery and air strikes.

Al-Bab was IS's last remaining stronghold in Aleppo province, after a US-backed alliance of Kurdish and Arab fighters seized the town of Manbij in August.

The jihadist group still controls a scattering of villages and towns in the province.

Field commanders from two other rebel factions in the town also claimed the capture of Al-Bab, including Abu Jaafar, who said he expected clearing up operations would be wrapped up within hours.

"Dozens of IS fighters were killed and we evacuated more than 50 families from inside Al-Bab," he said.

### 'Tall task' ahead

Turkey sent troops into Syria in August last year in an operation it said targeted not only IS but also US-backed Kurdish fighters whom it regards as terrorists.

"Al-Bab is important, insofar as its taking from IS will deprive the group of a tax base and an area where it was able to congregate and plot attacks against Syrians and the West," said Aaron Stein, a senior fellow at the US-based Atlantic Council. The battle for Al-Bab has been the bloodiest of the campaign with at least 69 Turkish soldiers killed. (AFP)

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Pakistan on edge as 8 killed in Lahore bomb blast



P 03

One-stop crossing on King Fahad Causeway

