

WORLD  
world

## Taliban claim Kabul attack, warn more

● Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid told journalists on WhatsApp that four attackers blew up an explosives-packed truck before entering Green Village

Kabul, Afghanistan

The Taliban yesterday claimed responsibility for a powerful truck bomb in Kabul that ripped through surrounding neighbourhoods, killing at least four people including an Indian national, and wounding more than 100 in the latest assault on the Afghan capital.

In a grim message, the militants also vowed to carry out more attacks in the city in direct response to the recent appointment of former spymaster and



An Afghan woman holds a wounded child after receiving treatment at Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital after a powerful truck bomb attack in Kabul

anti-Taliban veteran Amrullah Saleh as interior minister.

Monday evening's explosion near the heavily fortified Green Village foreign compound shook Kabul and comes as diplomats ramp up efforts to end the 17-year war in Afghanistan, which by some estimates was the world's deadliest conflict in 2018.

The force of the blast was felt across the sprawling city, initially causing confusion about the exact location of the attack. It shattered the windows of surrounding houses and shops.

Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid told journalists on WhatsApp that four attackers blew up an explosives-packed truck before entering Green Village and "killing many" foreigners.

Four people, including three guards and one civilian, have been confirmed dead and 113 wounded, the health minis-

try said. An Indian national was among those killed, India's foreign ministry said in a statement.

Kabul police spokesman Basir Mujahid said that most of the victims were Afghan civilians.

"Seven or eight people have been injured in every house around here including myself," said resident Mohammad Aref. "When I came out, the street was full of bodies of the dead and injured."

Until recently some UN staff had lived and worked at Green Village, which is heavily protected by cement blast walls.

But interior ministry spokesman Najib Danish said earlier the compound was now largely empty and "only a number of guards" were left.

A much bigger UN compound along with Afghanistan's customs office and headquarters for the Independent Election Commission are also nearby.

## Germany arrests army adviser for 'spying for Iran'

Berlin, Germany

Germany yesterday detained a German-Afghan man on suspicion he was spying for Iran while working for the German army as a linguistic and cultural adviser.

The 50-year-old identified as Abdul Hamid S. was arrested in western Germany, federal prosecutors said in a statement.

"The accused was a language evaluator and cultural issues adviser of the German armed forces. In this capacity, he is believed to have passed on information to an Iranian intelligence service," they added.

According to *Spiegel Online*, he is suspected of working for Iranian secret services for several years.

While working for the German army, he had access to highly sensitive information in-



According to Spiegel Online, he is suspected of working for Iranian secret services for several years.

cluding on troop deployment in Afghanistan, the report added.

Previous cases of infiltration by a foreign agency have sparked outrage and shock in Germany. In 2016, Markus Reichel, himself a former intelligence agent for Germany, was convicted for spying for both the CIA and the Russian secret

service.

He admitted handing over "scores of documents and internal information" to the CIA, including papers detailing Germany's counter-espionage strategies. Reichel also delivered three classified documents to the Russians.

In 2011, Germany jailed a married couple for spying for the Russian secret services for more than 20 years.

The pair, identified only by the code names Andreas and Heidrun Anschlag, were planted in the former West Germany from 1988 by the Soviet Union's KGB and later worked for its successor the SVR.

The couple had obtained NATO and EU political and military secrets, focussed especially on the relationship of NATO and the EU with eastern European and central Asian countries.

## Singapore vows to cane Briton despite protest

Singapore, Singapore

Singapore insisted yesterday it would still cane a British man convicted of drug smuggling despite a plea from London not to proceed with the punishment. Yuen Ye Ming was sentenced by a Singapore court last year to 20 years in jail and 24 strokes of the cane after he was convicted of drug-related offences, including trafficking, consumption and possession.

Flogging with a rattan cane, a legacy of British colonial rule, is a common punishment in Singapore and the city-state rarely backs down in applying the law.

Yuen was first arrested in August 2016 for drug-related offences and was convicted last year but released on bail pending sentencing, Singapore's interior ministry said. While out on bail, he was arrested again for similar narcotics offences, the ministry said.

British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt had asked his Singaporean counterpart during a visit to the city-state this month that Yuen be spared caning, a spokesman for Britain's foreign ministry said.

## Holy dip



Indian sadhus (Hindu holy men) take a dip into the water of the holy Sangam -- the confluence of the Ganges, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati rivers -- during the auspicious bathing day of Makar Sankranti at the Kumbh Mela in Allahabad. State authorities in Uttar Pradesh are expecting 12 million visitors to descend on Allahabad for the centuries-old festival, which officially begins on January 15 and continues until early March

## Indian temple trailblazer attacked by her mother-in-law

Thiruvananthapuram, India

One of the two women who infuriated Hindu traditionalists by entering a revered shrine in India was attacked by her mother-in-law yesterday as soon as she returned home after days on the run, police said.

Kanakadurga, 39, had been in

hiding since she made history by setting foot in the Sabarimala temple on January 2 along with Bindu Ammini, sparking days of unrest in the southern state of Kerala.

Sabarimala, set on top of a hill in a tiger reserve, is dedicated to the celibate deity Ayyappa, and followers believe letting in

women of menstruating age goes against his wishes.

A September ruling by India's Supreme Court that all women could enter the temple angered devotees, including supporters of Prime Minister Narendra Modi -- who was in Kerala on Tuesday -- and his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party

(BJP).

After moving to more than 10 different safe houses, Kanakadurga, who uses only one name, returned home on Tuesday morning, only to be attacked by the enraged relative -- reportedly with a stick.

"A case was registered by Kanakadurga against her moth-

er-in-law who, she said, attacked her when she arrived home this morning at 7.15 am," a police official in Perunthalmanna town told AFP on condition of anonymity.

A complaint had been registered against the mother-in-law for "voluntarily causing hurt by dangerous weapons or means"

and "wrongful restraint", reports said.

Kanakadurga, a government employee, was admitted to a hospital in the nearby city of Malappuram where protesters had begun gathering and chanting slogans.

It was not known immediately how serious her injuries were.