

## Multiple explosions, gunfire rock Indonesia's Jakarta; at least 7 dead including 4 attackers

Suspected Islamic militants launched a massive gun and bomb attack in Indonesia capital Jakarta, leaving at least 7 people dead. Media reports claimed that at least 10-14 gunmen – most of whom are still at large – were involved in the deadly strike, which has been now described by Indonesian President Joko Widodo as a terror attacks.



The deadly attacks were focused on a Starbucks in an area filled with offices and Western brands.

Jakarta police say the 7 dead include 4 attackers too.

Starbucks has confirmed that a customer has sustained injuries from explosion in Jakarta and was treated, latest reports said.

Indonesian police has said that the attack in downtown Jakarta has ended and security forces are in control.

Eyewitnesses said that the multiple terror strike started at 10:30 am local time in the heart of Jakarta when a militant shot dead a traffic cop from close range and then blew himself up.

Moments later one more explosion was heard from across the street at a Starbucks cafe. Reports later said that the gunman who attacked the cafe shoot at bystanders, as a series of explosions rocked the area.

The area is very near to a number of embassies and the regional office of the United Nations. A popular shopping centre called the Sarinah mall along the busy Jalan Thamrin is also in the vicinity.



Police snipers were deployed among hundreds of other security officers even as latest reports now suggest that the terrorists are holed up in a theatre.

Indonesia has been on edge in recent weeks over the threat posed by Islamist militants and counter-terrorism police have launched a crackdown on people with suspected links to Islamic State.

“We have previously received a threat from Islamic State that Indonesia will be the spotlight,” police spokesman Anton Charliyan told reporters. But he said police did not know who was responsible.

An explosion was heard in the western suburb of Palmerah, according to a domestic media tweet, but police said they could not confirm a blast there.



Indonesia has the world’s largest Muslim population, the vast majority of whom practise a moderate form of the religion.

The country saw a spate of militant attacks in the 2000s, the deadliest of which was a nightclub bombing on the holiday island of Bali that killed 202 people, most of them tourists.

Police have been largely successful in destroying domestic militant cells since then, but officials have more recently been worrying about a resurgence inspired by groups such as Islamic State and Indonesians who return after fighting with the group.

The last major militant attacks in Jakarta were in July 2009, with bombs at the JW Marriott and Ritz Carlton hotels.

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### Six killed by bomb at Turkey police HQ

A car bomb blast has hit a police headquarters in south-eastern Turkey, killing six people and wounding at least 39, officials say.

A woman and a baby were among the dead. Rescuers were searching through rubble at the scene in Cinar district, Diyarbakir province.

Officials blamed the blast on Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) militants, who are active in the mainly Kurdish province.

No group has so far said it carried out the attack.

The bomb was detonated at the entrance of the Cinar district police complex, officials say. The blast also damaged nearby residential buildings, where the mother and baby were killed.

The attackers then reportedly fired rockets at the headquarters.

Another police station, in Midyat town, in neighbouring Mardin province, was also attacked by militants, according to Turkish media, but there are no reports of casualties.

Diyarbakir province has seen violent clashes between PKK separatists and the Turkish army in recent months.

Last year, the city of Diyarbakir and a number of other areas in the south-east were put under curfew as part of a security crackdown.

This followed a bomb blast that left 16 soldiers dead and a rebel ambush that killed 14 police officers – both incidents in the east.

A ceasefire between the army and the PKK collapsed in July, and Turkish jets have since bombed PKK bases in northern Iraq and the army launched a ground operation there.

Turkey is also part of a US-led coalition that has been carrying out air strikes against Islamic State (IS) militants in Iraq and Syria.

However, Ankara has been accused of hitting mostly PKK targets, angering Kurds who are themselves fighting IS in the two countries.

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### Pathankot attack: Pakistan says `not aware` of JeM chief Maulana Masood Azhar's arrest

In a volte-face, Pakistan's Foreign Office on Thursday said it has no idea if [Jaish-e-Mohammad](#) (JeM) chief [Maulana Masood Azhar](#) has been detained in connection with terror attack at Pathankot airbase in India.

Talking to press, Foreign Ministry spokesman Qazi Khalilullah also said that dates of Foreign Secretary-level talks between India and Pakistan, which were scheduled to be held tomorrow, are being rescheduled.

The development raises question mark on Pakistan's commitment to act against terrorism.

On Wednesday, Pakistani media had reported that the JeM chief, known for his close ties with

Pakistani intelligence agencies, was taken to an undisclosed destination and was questioned as part of a crackdown.

Reports had also claimed the detention of his brother Mufti Abdul Rauf and brother-in-law Ashfaq Ahmad as well as some 10 others.

Pakistani media quoted unidentified sources as saying that “concerned authorities” interrogated Masood Azhar and the others about the Pathankot attack that left seven security personnel dead.

India says all six terrorists who raided the IAF base and got killed were Pakistanis and were allied to the JeM. India later said it had delivered “actionable intelligence” for Pakistan to act against the attack plotters.

The Pathankot attack took place just a week after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi flew to Lahore and met his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif in a bid to push forward the dialogue between the two countries.

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### Blast close to foreign consulates in Jalalabad in Afghanistan

An explosion was heard in the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad on Wednesday close to foreign consulates including those of India, Pakistan and Iran, witnesses told Reuters.

There was no immediate confirmation of the cause of the blast or of any casualties or damage. There have been several bomb blasts in Afghanistan over recent weeks at a time when efforts are underway to restart a peace process with the Taliban and ease diplomatic tension between Pakistan and India.

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### Obama puts 'focus on the future' in State of the Union address

US President Barack Obama vigorously defended his legacy while striking an optimistic tone for the future in his final State of the Union address.

He pushed back against the negative tone of the current presidential race, arguing the US has the “strongest, most durable economy in the world”.

“Anyone claiming that America’s economy is in decline is peddling fiction,” Mr Obama told lawmakers.

The speech to Congress highlighted his accomplishments such as health reform.

However, his focus was on cementing his legacy rather than unveiling new policies.

“For my final address to this chamber, I don’t want to talk just about the next year,” he said. “I want to focus on our future.”



*Both houses of Congress attended Mr Obama's annual address*

Mr Obama focused on tackling income inequity, using technology to combat climate change and how to maintain national security while not becoming mired in far-flung conflicts.

Finally, he talked at length about improving the state of politics and debate.

"Democracy does require basic bonds of trust between its citizens," he said.

He called on voters and members of Congress to change the divisive tone of politics and to "change the system to reflect our better selves".

Mr Obama said a major regret of his presidency is that Republicans and Democrats have become more divided.

Mr Obama took indirect aim to Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump who has been criticised for his comments about Muslims and immigrants.

"When politicians insult Muslims, when a mosque is vandalized, or a kid bullied, that doesn't make us safer," Mr Obama said.

"That's not telling it like it is. It's just wrong. ... And it betrays who we are as a country."

In the year ahead, Mr Obama said he wants to:

- close the Guantanamo Bay prison
- achieve meaningful criminal justice reform
- address rising tide of prescription drug abuse
- authorise the use of military force against IS
- lift the embargo on Cuba

He also announced a new national cancer research initiative that Vice President Joe Biden will be leading.

He only mentioned guns briefly, despite a recent policy push for executive actions on gun control, though a chair was left empty in the chamber to symbolise victims of gun violence.

South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, delivering the Republican response to the address, said Mr Obama "spoke eloquently about grand things," but that his "record has fallen short of his

soaring words”.

“During anxious times, it can be tempting to follow the siren call of the angriest voices. We must resist that temptation,” she said, likely referring to Mr Trump but not mentioning him by name.

She said Republicans must recognise their role in the declining trust in government in the US.

“We have big decisions to make. Our country is being tested,” she said. “But we’ve been tested in the past, and our people have always risen to the challenge.”

[News Source](#)

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### Madrasa students on the rampage in Brahmanbarhia

Madrasa students in Brahmanbarhia have gone on a rampage after the death of a fellow student who was injured earlier in a clash with law enforcers on Monday.

Police said the trouble began on Monday when a student of a madrasa got into an altercation with a mobile-phone shop employee in the town.

Other students of the madrasa turned up and vandalised the shop, then clashed with the police who tried to intervene.

Hafez Masudur Rahman, 20, a student of Jamia Islami Yunusia Madrasa, who was injured in the clash with law enforcers, succumbed to injuries at Brahmanbarhia Sadar Hospital early on Tuesday.

The hospital’s duty medical officer, Mainul Haque Upal, told bdnews24.com that Masudur Rahman had been seriously injured on the left side of his chest and abdomen.



As the news of his death spread, several hundred students went on a rampage in Brahmanbarhia town. They disrupted traffic and smashed several display gates.

They held angry demonstrations, attacked a train station and removed railway sleepers, and burnt tyres on the streets to block off several areas of the town.



The angry students vandalised the district unit office of the ruling Awami League, and a music college named after the renowned composer and music teacher Ustad Alauddin Khan. They set fire to a number of instruments at the college.

They also vandalised the district Shilpakala (Arts) Academy, a branch of Bank Asia in the Mukitijoddha Sangsad Complex, and the premises of a non-government organisation named Proshika.

Police had to fire rubber bullets and use tear gas to disperse the students.



Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) was deployed on Tuesday morning amid mounting tension in the town.

The students have called a dawn-to-dusk shutdown in the district for Wednesday.

The assistant station master at Brahmanbarhia Railway Station, Mainul Islam, said train services through the town were suspended at about 11:15am after the railway sleepers had been removed.

“Train services on the Dhaka-Chittagong and Dhaka-Sylhet routes have been stopped, leaving the Subarna and Kalni express trains stranded,” he said.

However, Dhaka’s rail link with Chittagong and Sylhet was restored after a seven-hour suspension following the violence.

Islam said train services resumed at around 6:50pm after the rail tracks had been repaired.

Lt Col Nazrul Islam, the chief of the 12th batallion of the BGB based in Brahmanbarhia, said that two platoons of troops have been deployed in the town to maintain law and order.



At least 30 handmade bombs were exploded in different parts of the town during Monday’s clash in which about 20 people were injured.

One of them, a policeman named Rajib Chandra Das, 25, has been shifted to Dhaka for better treatment. The others are being treated locally.□

[News Source](#)

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### Nepal hopes for world support to implement new Constitution

Deputy Prime Minister Kamal Thapa on Tuesday expressed hope that the world community would support Nepal for the smooth implementation of the new Constitution and assured that all “genuine concerns” of the Madhesis would be addressed through dialogue.

Addressing chiefs of diplomatic missions based here and representatives of donor agencies, Thapa, who is also foreign minister, noted that Nepal has become only the second country in South Asia to draft its constitution through a democratically-elected constituent assembly.

Thapa also thanked the international community for its support in concluding the peace process and promulgation of the new Constitution in September last year.

“I am also confident of receiving your continued support which is crucial for the implementation of this Constitution,” he said.

“Nothing is perfect in this world,” he said adding “Nepal’s new constitution encompasses the main features of a democratic and inclusive polity to judge by any fair standard”.

“Commitment has been expressed in the very Preamble to democratic norms and values, civil liberty, fundamental freedoms, human rights, adult franchise, periodic elections, complete press freedom and an independent, impartial and competent judiciary, and the rule of law,” he said.

He said that the new constitution has guaranteed the rights of socially backward groups and communities based on principle of inclusion.

Stating that a few political parties, especially Madhes-based parties, have expressed discontent over some of the provisions of the new statute, Thapa stressed that Nepal government has repeatedly made it clear that the Constitution is dynamic in a true sense and genuine concerns can and will be addressed through dialogue.

Nepal has been in political turmoil as the Indian-origin Madhesi people are opposing the seven-province model of federalism which was introduced in the country through the promulgation of the new Constitution.

Madhesis are also protesting against division of their ancestral homeland under the new structure and have led an ongoing blockade of key border trade points with India.

Thapa said as a result of several rounds of dialogue between the government and the agitating leaders an amendment bill has been tabled to address the demands of proportional inclusiveness in state organs and delineation of electoral constituency on the basis of population while maintaining at least one seat in each geographical district.



He noted that a high-level mechanism with representatives of major parties will be formed to settle the dispute over demarcation of provinces.

Lauding the Indian government's statement on the amendment proposal as an encouraging and positive gesture, Thapa hoped that problems would be resolved soon.

He said supply of commodities from the southern border check points that were disrupted following the promulgation of new constitution has been gradually improving in recent days.

"I have been informed that all other check-points, except Raxaul-Birgunj, are now operational," said Thapa.

The continued disruption of supplies, especially medicines and food might lead to a humanitarian crisis, Thapa said adding that the government has conveyed this concern to the Indian authorities.

He hoped the supply situation will return to normal with resumption of all border check-points within a few days.

Highlighting the foreign policy of the new government, Thapa said that the country is fully committed to further strengthening relations with its neighbours and all other friendly nations.

"We pursue the policy of friendship with all and enmity with none. It was in pursuance with this commitment that I visited India and the People's Republic of China where I had very fruitful discussions on matters of mutual interest with my counterparts and other high dignitaries," he said.

"The government is serious about the reconstruction of the infrastructures, both public and private, damaged by the earthquakes," he said.

"I am pleased to say that with passage of Reconstruction Authority Act by the Legislature-Parliament and the appointment of its CEO, the Authority has started its task," he said.

Thapa further requested all donor countries to use government channels for their support and firmly recognise the national leadership and ownership in development efforts rather than channelling such precious resources through non-transparent agencies, NGOs and other entities.

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### **BJP highlights Malda riots' 'truth' with five questions for Mamata**

Hours after its three-member delegation was detained and sent back without their planned visit to violence-torn Malda district, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday levelled serious allegations against West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Accusing Mamata Banerjee of failing to control violence at Kaliachak despite reports about brewing tension in advance, BJP senior leader Siddharth Nath Singh on Monday indicated that Kaliachak police station was attacked to destroy records about opium farming and fake currency racket in the area.

He also said the three party MPs – SS Ahluwalia, BD Ram and Bhupender Yadav, who were part of the BJP's delegation to Malda, will meet the President and Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh

after returning to Delhi.

Singh said the BJP is posing five questions before Mamata Banerjee:

1. The incident (Malda violence) happened on January 3. Leaflets, pamphlets and other publicity materials were being openly distributed in the area in advance to provoke the communal flare. Then why did state government failed to take precautionary measures and curb the violence on time?
2. Mamata govt is calling Malda violence a reaction to a provocative statement against Prophet Muhammad made one month ago. So why was this reaction after a gap of one month? It was not a reaction but a planned action.
3. Mamata Banerjee is saying the violence was between locals and BSF. If it was so, then why the mob attacked police station? They should have attacked or gathered at BSF posts.
4. NIA has been working on the investigation into Malda fake currency racket. More than 50 persons have been arrested in the past and most of them were from Malda. NIA was in touch with West Bengal govt to burst this racket. There were crucial records at Kaliachak police station which was attacked by the mob.
5. There is widespread opium farming taking place in Malda. Aren't the state government and police aware of it? Why is West Bengal govt sleeping over it?  
Opium farming here leads to fake currency rackets and other anti-national activities. This is why the police station which had crucial information regarding these cases was attacked.

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### Earthquake hits India's Manipur state

An earthquake measuring 6.8 magnitude has hit northeast India, near its border with Myanmar and Bangladesh, the US Geological Survey (USGS) has said.

The quake hit at 04:35 local time (23:05 GMT Sunday) about 29km (18 miles) northwest of Imphal, the capital of Manipur state, according to USGS.

Strong tremors have been felt across the region.



Our reporter in Dhaka says many people were seen fleeing their homes in Bangladesh.

USGS issued a yellow alert for casualties and damage, with a 35% likelihood of between one and 10 deaths from the tremor.

The earthquake was originally reported to have measured 6.8 magnitude.

The region has a history of powerful earthquakes caused by the northward collision of the Indian and Eurasian plates. They are moving towards each other at a rate of 4-5cm per year.

In 2005, a magnitude 7.6 quake in Pakistan-administered Kashmir left more than 75,000 people dead.

In April 2015, Nepal suffered its worst earthquake on record with 9,000 people killed and about 900,000 homes damaged or destroyed.

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### Saudi Arabia breaks off ties with Iran

Saudi Arabia says it has broken off diplomatic ties with Iran, amid a row over the Saudi execution of a prominent Shia Muslim cleric.

Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir was speaking after demonstrators had stormed the Saudi embassy in Tehran.

Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr and 46 others were executed on Saturday after being convicted of terror-related offences.

Mr Jubeir said that all Iranian diplomats must leave Saudi Arabia within 48 hours.

Saudi Arabia was recalling its diplomats from Tehran, he said.

Mr Jubeir said Saudi Arabia would not let Iran undermine its security, accusing it of having “distributed weapons and planted terrorist cells in the region”.

“Iran’s history is full of negative interference and hostility in Arab issues, and it is always accompanied by destruction,” he told a news conference.

US state department spokesman John Kirby said: “We will continue to urge leaders across the region to take affirmative steps to calm tensions”.

“We believe that diplomatic engagement and direct conversations remain essential,” he said.

Saudi Arabia says it has broken off diplomatic ties with Iran, amid a row over the Saudi execution of a prominent Shia Muslim cleric.

Earlier, Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned that the Sunni Muslim kingdom would face “divine revenge” for the execution – an act which also angered Shia Muslims elsewhere in the Middle East.

Ayatollah Khamenei called Sheikh Nimr a “martyr” who had acted peacefully.

Protesters stormed the Saudi embassy in Tehran late on Saturday, setting fire to the building

before being driven back by police. The Saudi foreign ministry said none of its diplomats had been harmed in the incident.

Iran is Saudi Arabia's main regional rival – they back opposing sides in the conflicts in Syria and Yemen.

Relations between the countries have been strained over various issues in recent decades, including Iran's nuclear programme and deaths of Iranians at the Hajj pilgrimage in 1987 and again in 2015.

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## Who was Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr?

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*News of Sheikh Nimr's execution prompted an angry response from Shias across the region*

- In his 50s when he was executed, he has been a persistent critic of Saudi Arabia's Sunni royal family
- Arrested several times over the past decade, alleging he was beaten by Saudi secret police during one detention
- Met US officials in 2008, [Wikileaks revealed](#), seeking to distance himself from anti-American and pro-Iranian statements
- Said to have a particularly strong following among Saudi Shia youth

[Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr: Figurehead Shia cleric](#)

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Most of the 47 people executed by Saudi Arabia were Sunnis convicted of involvement in al-Qaeda-linked terror attacks over the last decade.

Sheikh Nimr was involved in anti-government protests that erupted in Saudi Arabia in the wake of the Arab Spring, up to his arrest in 2012.

The execution sparked new demonstrations in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province, where Shia Muslims complain of marginalisation, as well as in Iraq, Bahrain and several other countries.

The top Shia cleric in Iraq, Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani denounced the execution as an "unjust aggression".

The leader of Lebanon's Shia Hezbollah movement, Hassan Nasrallah, launched his sharpest attack yet on the Saudi ruling family on Sunday, accusing them of seeking to ignite a Shia-Sunni civil war across the world.

He said the blood of Sheikh Nimr would "plague the Al Saud [family] until the Day of Resurrection", prompting cries of "Death to the Al Saud!" among an audience watching his address.

[News Source](#)

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