NEWS_{IN} brief

'Useful' Iran nuclear

Negotiators from Iran and

six world powers hunkered

down yesterday to a second

day of talks aimed towards

deal on Tehran's controver-

Indications of how the talks

were progressing in a rainy

ground, however. Both sides

Vienna were thin on the

Tuesday that the negotia-

tions would be hard. The

parties want to get a deal by

July 20, when a November

interim deal under which

Iran froze certain activities

in return for some sanctions

'Friends of Syria' hold

US Secretary of State John

from Western and Arab

nations met yesterday to

discuss new ways of sup-

porting the Syrian opposi-

group gathered in London

League peace envoy Lakhdar

Brahimi stepped down after

almost two years of fruitless

just days after UN-Arab

Battles rage in

Warring forces in South

Sudan battled yesterday,

trading blame for breaking

a ceasefire as the civil war

amid warnings of famine if

bloodshed continues. Both

sides reported heavy fight-

producing state of Upper

Nile, which now pumps

almost all of South Sudan's

crude after intense battles

shut down most fields in

Militants attack Iraqi

court, kill prisoners

Militants killed 10 people

court involving suicide

bombers and shot dead

in an assault on a Baghdad

five army officers in attacks

post-election violence. The

from Iraq's April 30 parlia-

Malaysian cops foil

terror attack in India

Malaysian police have

eign missions in two

foiled a plot to attack for-

Indian cities and arrested a

South Asian terror suspect,

said yesterday. Police dep-

uty inspector general Bakri

Zinin said the South Asian

man was arrested on May

unit just outside the capital

14 by the anti-terrorism

Kuala Lumpur. Bakri said

Indian security forces were

informed of the impending

terror attack and they suc-

ceeded in arresting three

a senior security official

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

yesterday amid a surge of

attacks were the worst in

AFP, Baghdad

the other main area of

ing in the key oil-

entered its sixth month

AFP, Tokyo

Nationalist Prime Minister

Shinzo Abe set out his case

yesterday for beefing up

pacifist Japan's rules of

engagement, saying he wants

the armed forces to be able to

enter battle in defence of allies.

reporters in Tokyo.

equal to waging war."

South Sudan

AFP, Juba

tion. The Friends of Syria

Kerry and foreign ministers

London talks

AFP, London

warned on arrival on

what could be a historic

sial nuclear programme.

talks resume

AFP, Vienna

AFP, Soma

Anger at Turkey's government boiled over yesterday when thousands went on strike and police clashed with protesters after at least 282 workers died in one of the worst mining accidents

trapped underground two days after the devastating blast, police fired tear gas and water cannon at around 20,000 antigovernment protesters in the western city of Izmir. Turkey's four biggest unions called a one-day

strike, saying workers' lives were being jeopardised to cut costs, and demanding that those responsible for the collapse of the coal mine in the western town of Soma in Manisa province be brought to account.

mining accidents are a frequent occurrence.

PHOTO:

AFP

In Ankara, police fired tear gas and water cannon with police in the capital and in Istanbul, accusing the government and min-

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has rejected claims of government culpability, saying that "such accidents happen" while visiting the mine site

It is unclear how many underground following the huge explosion at the mine

Mining operators put the figure at 90, but reports from rescue workers on the

The disaster has added to

on Erdogan, who faced

TURKEY MINE **TRAGEDY**

as death toll hits 282

Scores remain missing

in modern history.

As hopes faded for scores more miners still

Anger at the disaster has swept across Turkey, where

on around 200 protesters, a day after thousands clashed ing industry of negligence.

on Wednesday.

workers are still trapped on Tuesday, which was believed to have been set

off by an electrical fault. scene suggest the figure

could be far higher. the huge political pressure

Tokyo's World War II defeat. Article 9 of the document -- which has reportedly been unrest that left 20 people nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize -- says Japan forever dead nationwide, part of a renounces the use of force as a means of settling internaprotracted spike in bloodtional disputes. shed as officials tally votes

For decades, governments have held that this means Japan's military may only open fire if fired upon, even if that entails leaving US counterparts in danger on the same battlefield.

pacifist stance: PM

Citing a rising climate of disquiet in north and southeast

"As prime minister, I have the responsibility to protect

"I don't think the constitution says we have to abandon

"If we can enhance our deterrence, it will prevent our

Around 500 people demonstrated against the prime

minister's plans near his official residence, with some

carrying banners that read "Exercising collective defence is

The prime minister has long nurtured a desire to see

more flexibility in Japan's pacifist constitution, which was

imposed by the occupying United States in the aftermath of

the lives of people under any circumstances," he told

Asia, Abe said Japan needs to cast off constitutional

strictures that have prevented its so-called Self Defence

Forces from firing a shot in combat since 1945.

the responsibility to protect the lives of people.

country from being involved in war."

Unable to change the constitution because of deep domestic resistance, Abe has argued for the next-best thing: a reinterpretation of the laws to permit "collective defence"

A panel of academics, diplomats and military advisers convened by the prime minister has come up with a series of proposals on possible legal frameworks for military action. Over the coming months, Abe will use this document to

persuade a sometimes-sceptical public of his case as he looks to shepherd his plans through the labyrinth of Japan's political system. The move is controversial and risks forcing a split with

his ruling party's coalition partner, New Komeito, secular Buddhists without whom Abe does not have an outright majority in the upper house of parliament.

Voters are lukewarm on the idea; a poll of more than 2,000 adults nationwide showed 63 percent oppose the concept of collective defence, the Asahi Shimbun reported last month.

That was up from 56 percent last year and more than double the 29 percent who support the idea, the poll showed. Unease in Japan about China's increasing assertiveness,

and specifically its strident claims to disputed islands in the East China Sea, has helped bolster Abe's push to enhance the role of the military.

Japan ready to shed Army hints at intervention

Election Commission delays polls as attack on protest camp kills three

A woman reacts as she sits in front of her husband's grave during a funeral ceremony in

the western town of Soma in the Manisa province, yesterday. Inset, a person identified by

Turkish media as Yusuf Yerkel, advisor to Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan, kicks a pro-

tester already held by special forces during Erdogan's visit to Soma on Wednesday.

AFP, Bangkok

The chief of Thailand's coup-prone army yesterday warned his troops "may use force" to quell political violence, after three people were killed in a grenade and gun attack on protesters in Bangkok.

The rare official statement from General Prayut Chan-O-Cha followed a call by Thai election authorities for July polls to be postponed because of

the unrest. "I want to warn every group -especially those who use violence and war weapons against innocent civilians -- to stop now because if the violence continues the military may be needed to come out... to restore peace and order," Prayut said in unusually strong

comments. He said his troops "may need to use force to resolve the situation," threatening "decisive measures" if civilians

THAI TURMOIL

are hurt.

Unknown assailants fired two grenades into a rally camp early yesterday at the Democracy Monument -- a stone's throw from the city's famed backpacker zone -- followed by a burst of gunfire.

Bangkok's Erawan emergency centre said three people were killed and 23 wounded.

Amid this violence, Election Commission secretary general Puchong Nutrawong told AFP that the July 20 poll "is no longer possible" adding early August was one option

The latest bloodshed comes as demonstrators push for the appoint-

protesters do not agree".

ousted Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra from office. The Thai military, which has staged 18 successful or attempted coups since 1932, has been at pains to stay neutral in public during the six-month crisis despite pressure by anti-government

ment of an unelected premier in a

move that has infuriated government

supporters, who last week were dealt a

blow after a controversial court ruling

protesters to step-in on their behalf. Observers say the army may be chastened by events of 2010, when it led a crackdown on pro-government "Red Shirts" gathered in Bangkok that

left scores dead. Red Shirt leaders, who are hosting a mass rally on the city's outskirts, have warned of an imminent military coup and the risk of civil war if power is

mass protests last summer and a corruption scandal involving his family and key allies in recent months.

AFGHAN POLLS

Abdullah-Ghani runoff confirmed

AFP, Kabul

Afghanistan's election will go to a run-off vote between former foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah and ex-World Bank economist Ashraf Ghani, results yesterday confirmed, as the country enters a new era without

Nato combat troops. The head-to-head election, scheduled for June 14, will choose a successor to President Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan's first demo-

cratic transfer of power. Abdullah secured 45 percent of the vote on April 5, with his main rival Ghani on 31.6 percent, according to the final results.



In this picture taken on Wednesday, protesters holding Vietnamese flags attempt to push down the front gate of a factory in Bien Hoa, Dong Nai province, as anti-China demonstrations yesterday spread to 22 Vietnamese provinces.

PHOTO: AFP

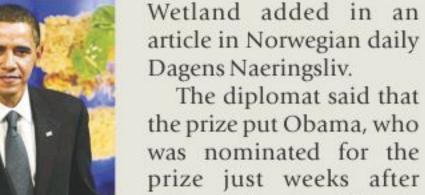
OBAMA'S NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

Barack Obama's administration rebuked Norway after he won the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize, saying it was an awkward honour for an as-yet untested leader, a Norwegian diplomat revealed yesterday.

"My most embarrassing day at the UN, at the time when I was Norway's ambassador there, was when Obama's

Nobel Peace Prize was announced. Nobody was talking about it," said Morten Wetland, who served at the UN from 2008 to 2012.

"My colleague in Washington received a reprimand from Obama's chief of staff (Rahn Emmanuel, at the time). The word 'fawning' was used,"



The diplomat said that the prize put Obama, who was nominated for the prize just weeks after taking office, in a difficult position.

"An American president wants to set his own agenda. Here he was forced into a role that he hadn't sought," Wetland said.

"It could seem like somebody did this to make Obama visit the country."

The Nobel was unexpectedly awarded to Obama "for his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples". The announcement came as the US was engaged in two conflicts, in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Anti-China sentiment simmers in Vietnam

Chinese flee country as riot kills 1

AFP, Hanoi

A riot at a steel plant in Vietnam has left one Chinese worker dead and over 100 injured, officials said yesterday, as an angry Beijing accused Hanoi of "connivance" in the worst anti-China unrest in decades.

Long-simmering enmity between the communist neighbours has boiled over in Vietnam with protests in major cities and mobs torching foreign-owned factories after China deployed an oil drilling rig in contested waters.

Worker demonstrations have spread to 22 of Vietnam's 63 provinces, the government the situation under control before alarmed

said, calling for "tough measures" to bring foreign investors pull out of the country. Hundreds of Chinese nationals have fled

across the border into neighbouring

Cambodia, according to police there, amid

least 149 people were injured, local official Dang Quoc Khanh said.

protests in the south.

sider" their plans.

China accused Hanoi of acting in concert with the protesters. Beijing also issued a warning to tourists planning trips to Vietnam, advising them to "carefully con-

fears that a wave of patriotic fervour initially

encouraged by Hanoi is getting out of hand.

public protests to go ahead recently as a

means of expressing extreme discontent

with Beijing. The pair have close economic

steel mill owned by Taiwanese group

Formosa Plastics in Vietnam's central Ha

Tinh province, following earlier violent

One Chinese worker was killed and at

The deadly riot broke out Wednesday at a

ties but often-fraught diplomatic relations.

Experts say Hanoi has allowed some

Russia may face more sanctions on Ukraine

AFP, London

The United States and European partners are ready to impose tougher sanctions against Russia if it seeks to disrupt Ukraine's upcoming presidential elections, top diplomats warned yesterday.

Ukrainian officials are also working to hold another round of unity talks in eastern Ukraine in the coming days,

US Secretary of State John Kerry said after talks in London. Ukraine is due to hold crunch presidential elections on

May 25, following the ouster of Ukraine's pro-Russian leader Viktor Yanukovych in February. In a meeting with his French, German, British and Italian

counterparts in London "we agreed.. that if Russia or its proxies disrupt the elections the United States and those countries represented here today in European Union will impose sectoral economic sanctions as a results," the top US diplomat said.

"Our message is really, quite simple: 'Let Ukraine vote. Let the Ukrainian people choose their future."

US President Barack Obama has already drafted an executive order to impose sanctions on Russia across key sectors such as banking, energy, defence and mining, and Kerry stressed that on the US side "we have completed our work, we know what they are, we're ready."

US rebuked Norway AFP, Oslo