

NEWS IN brief

New Zealand PM

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AFP, Wellington

New Zealand's Prime Minister John Key said he was "ecstatic" yesterday after a crushing election win, securing his third term as leader of the South Pacific nation.

Opposition leader David Cunliffe had quickly conceded defeat. The 53-year-old's party won 61 of 121 seats, making him the first New Zealand leader to be able to govern in his own right since the country introduced proportional voting in 1996.

Taiwan braces for Typhoon Fung-Wong

AFP, Taipei

Taiwan yesterday readied nearly 50,000 troops in preparation for tropical storm Fung-Wong as it churns toward the island with threats of downpours and powerful winds after claiming five lives in the Philippines. Three countries in southern Taiwan have decided to close offices and schools from yesterday night while dozens of flights and ferry services were suspended, authorities said. The storm is expected to make landfall today.

G20 nations want Putin at leaders' summit

AFP, Cairns

Vladimir Putin is set to attend the G20 leaders' summit in November despite alarm over Russia's actions in Ukraine with host Australia Saturday saying it was the "emphatic" wish of member nations. There had been question marks over whether Moscow should be invited to the high-powered forum in Brisbane with the brutal five-month conflict that has killed around 3,000 people still unresolved.

US intercepts Russian jets near Alaska

AFP, Washington

Two Russian fighters entered a US "air defense identification zone" two days ago and were intercepted by American F-22 jets near Alaska, military officers said Friday. The incursion on Wednesday was followed by a second incident on Thursday involving two Russian long-range bombers, which flew into Canada and were intercepted by two Canadian F-18 jets, officers said. In both cases the Russian aircraft flew out of the area without incident.

"I will take back Kashmir, all of it, and I will not leave behind a single inch of it because, like the other provinces, it belongs to Pakistan," said the scion of highly influential Bhutto family.

When Bilawal made these remarks, he was flanked by former prime ministers

Killing in the name of faith is unacceptable

Dalai Lama urges jihadist to fight with inner evil

AFP, New Delhi

The Dalai Lama yesterday condemned mindless violence in the name of religion, saying the concept of jihad was being misused and misinterpreted by Islamist extremists.

The Nobel Peace prize winner was referring to bloodshed unleashed by the Islamic State group in Syria and Iraq where it has overrun swathes of territory.

"Killing in the name of faith is unacceptable," he told a meeting of India's religious leaders representing as many as nine different faiths including Islam.

Jihad or holy war should be a fight to combat our inner destructive emotions", the 79-year-old spiritual leader said. "It (jihad) does not mean harming other people."

The hard-hitting statements by the Dalai Lama come after the Islamic State group released a video earlier this month showing the beheading of a second US hostage, journalist Steven Sotloff.

"If we remain indifferent to what is happening around us, it is wrong," the Dalai Lama said.



PHOTO: AFP

Syrian Kurds carry their belongings after they crossed the border between Syria and Turkey, yesterday. Several thousand Syrian Kurds began crossing into Turkey on Friday fleeing Islamic State fighters who advanced into their villages, prompting warnings of massacres from Kurdish leaders.

US admits Iran's 'role' Turkish hostages freed, jihadists advance in Syria

AFP, United Nations

Washington's arch-foe Iran has a role to play in tackling Islamic State militants who have overrun large swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria, US Secretary of State John Kerry said.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said this week that his government had rejected a request from the United States for cooperation on the battlefield.

US officials have not confirmed or denied making an offer in private, but they do not regard Iran as part of the coalition they are building to fight the IS militant scourge.

Kerry said Friday that in combating the jihadist threat "there is a role for nearly every country to play, including Iran."

Just last week, the top US diplomat had said it would be inappropriate to invite Iran to meetings seeking to building an international coalition because of Tehran's "engagement in Syria and elsewhere."

Iran is actively supporting Iraq's government against IS jihadists, and helping Syria in its battle against both the IS group and unaffiliated rebel groups.

Speaking before a group of 35 countries brought together for a meeting at the UN Security Council by top US diplomat John

FIGHT AGAINST IS

Kerry, Iran's deputy foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, stressed the need to cooperate with governments in the region.

Meanwhile, forty-nine Turks were freed yesterday more than three months after the Islamic State group kidnapped them in Iraq, as tens of thousands fled across the Syrian border from the advancing jihadists.

It was not immediately clear what circumstances led to the Turks' release, which came as heavy clashes raged in neighbouring Syria between Kurds and Islamic State jihadists after they seized dozens of villages.

Nato member Turkey has so far been reluctant to take part in combat operations against the IS militants, or allow a US-led coalition to use its airbases for strikes against them, citing its concern over the safety of the hostages.

The news came after France mounted air strikes in Iraq, becoming the first nation to join the US campaign and boosting American efforts to unite the world against the growing threat posed by the jihadists.

In Syria, where IS already holds significant territory, the group gained further ground, overrunning 60 Kurdish villages near the Turkish border in a two-day offensive, a monitor said Friday.

Afghan polls result today

AFP, Kabul

The result of Afghanistan's disputed election will be declared today, officials said yesterday, as last-minute talks between the two rival candidates continued on a proposed power-sharing deal.

The stalemate between Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah since the June 14 vote has plunged Afghanistan into a political crisis as US-led Nato troops end their 13-year war against the Taliban.

Both men claim to have won the fraud-tainted election, and the United Nations and the United States have pushed hard for a "national unity government" to try to avoid a return to the ethnic divisions of the 1990s civil war.

The election process has been plagued by delays and setbacks, and the latest timetable could still change if disputes flare up again over how the new government would take shape.

Scotland skeptical over promises

AFP, Edinburgh

Having rejected independence and lost First Minister Alex Salmond, Scotland woke up to an unsettled future yesterday as fears grew that new powers promised by London will prove a disappointment.

Despite a surge in nationalist support in the final two weeks of the Scottish campaign, the "No" camp secured 55.30 percent of the vote in Thursday's independence referendum against 44.70 percent for the "Yes" camp.

Worried by the prospect of a nationalist victory, British Prime Minister David Cameron made last-ditch promises to give more powers over tax, spending and welfare to the devolved government in Edinburgh, but then vowed more rights for English voters when the result was declared.

A key question is what fresh powers Conservative Cameron and Britain's other main parties will now hand to the Scottish parliament in Edinburgh.

Many people do not trust a Westminster elite preoccupied by a general election in May to honour a pledge of accelerated devolution made in the heat of the campaign.

"All these promises were made -- it's as if

Rivals agree buffer zone

AFP, Kiev

Ukrainian forces and pro-Russian militias were due to pull back their troops from a demilitarised zone yesterday created under a new peace plan agreed in marathon overnight talks.

A nine-point agreement thrashed out in the early hours of yesterday in the Belarusian capital Minsk also requires the withdrawal of all "mercenaries" from eastern Ukraine and an immediate end to hostilities.

But Russia appeared ready to keep up the pressure on its westward-leaning neighbour by sending in a new convoy it claimed was carrying aid for the rebel-held city of Donetsk that Ukraine never approved.

Former Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma -- representing Kiev throughout stuttering efforts to resolve the five-month conflict -- said the agreement rested on the creation of a 30-kilometre buffer zone.

Forces from both sides are required to retreat 15 kilometres from current frontlines within 24 hours of the signing of the accord and allow monitors from the OSCE pan-European security organisation into the area to make sure the truce holds.

Territory under rebel control would be left open to their administration under a temporary self-rule plan adopted by lawmakers in Kiev tomorrow.

The Minsk pact -- also signed by Moscow's ambassador to Kiev and the self-proclaimed "prime ministers" of the rebel-run regions of Donetsk and Lugansk -- aims to shore up a ceasefire deal agreed two weeks ago.

UKRAINE CRISIS

I will take back entire Kashmir from India

Says Bilawal Bhutto; India says comments unrealistic

AGENCIES



Yousaf Raza Gilani and Raja Pervaiz Ashraf.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the 'Gen Next' politician of Pakistan, has said that his Pakistan People's Party (PPP) would get back entire Kashmir from India.

Bilawal, in his 20s, was addressing the party workers in Multan region in Punjab on Friday.

"I will take back Kashmir, all of it, and I will not leave behind a single inch of it because, like the other provinces, it belongs to Pakistan," said the scion of highly influential Bhutto family.

When Bilawal made these remarks, he was flanked by former prime ministers

'Happy' Iranians get jail, lashes

AFP, Tehran

Seven young Iranians featured dancing to Pharrell Williams' hit "Happy" in a video that went viral on the Internet have been given suspended jail and lashing sentences, a lawyer said.

Recorded on a smartphone and uploaded multiple times on YouTube, the clip shows three unveiled girls dancing and singing to the song in a room, on rooftops and in secluded alleys with three young men.

For the youths, the home-made video now watched more than a million times was merely an "excuse to be happy," but for the authorities it was "vulgar" breach of the Islamic republic's values.

The seven were arrested in May and released on bail after appearing on state television and expressing remorse for appearing in the clip.

Their arrest sparked international fury and criticism in the media and online, with many Iranians expressing shock and some observers questioning whether it was a "crime to be happy in Iran."



CLIMATE SUMMIT 2014

UN climate summit to rally global action

AFP, United Nations

Some 125 world leaders are expected to commit to action on climate change at a UN summit tomorrow called to inject momentum in struggling efforts to tackle global warming.

The gathering will be the largest ever of governments and heads of states on climate change and the first of its kind since the Copenhagen summit collapsed in disarray in 2009.

US President Barack Obama is to outline his vision for limiting global warming, but key polluters China and India are sending lower-level representatives in a move seen as reducing the summit's authority.

"Action on climate change is urgent. The more we delay, the more we will pay in lives and in money," UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said this week.

Ban called the summit to set the stage for a breakthrough at the crucial Paris conference in December next year that is intended to yield a new deal on cutting greenhouse gas emissions after 2020.

Action to tackle greenhouse gases falls way short of what is needed to meet the United Nations' global-warming target, according to a snapshot of pledges and policies ahead of next month's climate summit. In 2010, the latest year for which a comprehensive assessment is available, global emissions stood at about 50 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (GtCO2e). These must be slashed for a good chance -- of about 85 percent -- of pegging warming to two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-industrial levels, according to Climate Action Tracker (CAT). The tally would have to be 42 GtCO2e by 2020, warming by 2100.

Major Carbon Emitters

CHINA

The No. 1 carbon polluter is pledging a big energy efficiency drive but has so far resisted setting an overall cap on its fast-rising emissions. It promises to reduce emissions per unit of GDP by 40-45 percent from 2005 levels by 2020. This would bring the total to 14.3 GtCO2e -- pushing beyond levels of about 12 GtCO2e in 2010 by rapid economic growth.

UNITED STATES

The world's No 2 emitter in 2009 pledged to reduce its greenhouse gases by 17 percent to 6.2 GtCO2e by 2020 compared with 2005 levels. The US is unlikely to reach this "inadequate" target on current policies, according to CAT, even considering a new initiative to cut carbon emissions from power plants by 30 percent by 2030 from 2005 levels.

EUROPEAN UNION

(EU)

The 28-member bloc aims to reduce average annual emissions from 2013-2020 by 20 percent from 1990 levels -- a pledge it has already all but achieved. This would mean emissions in 2020 of about 4.6 GtCO2e. EU emissions have been on a downward trend since 1990, with a brief spike after the 2010 economic recovery.

INDIA

Fast-growing India, where emissions have been rising steadily since 1990, has pledged to reduce the greenhouse gas intensity of its economy by 20 to 25 percent by 2020 from 2005 levels -- to about 3.5 to 4.0 GtCO2e. The target's ambition is rated "medium," and remains within reach.

BRAZIL

One of the first developing giants to set a greenhouse gas target, Brazil aims to reduce emissions by 36.1 to 38.9 percent in 2020 from what they would be under a "business-as-usual" scenario (in which no steps are taken to turn the tide). This would come to about 2.0