

Iraq govt, Kurds strike deal on budget, oil

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq's government and the autonomous Kurdish region yesterday announced an agreement on resolving their long-standing disputes over the budget and oil exports, boosting prospects of closer cooperation against jihadists.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's office said the deal was approved during a cabinet meeting also attended by Kurdish Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani.

Under the deal, due to come into effect at the start of 2015, 250,000 barrels per day (bpd) of oil will be exported from the autonomous region. In return, Baghdad will release the Kurdistan Regional Government's share of national revenue, which had been frozen for more than a year in retaliation for Arbil's efforts to export oil unilaterally.

Syrian refugees face starvation

UN cuts food aid to 1.7 million as funds dry up; war death toll passes 2, 00,000

AGENCIES

Aid workers fear a major humanitarian crisis for millions of Syrian refugees in the Middle East after funding gaps forced the United Nations to cut food assistance for 1.7 million people.

Meanwhile, Syria's civil war has killed more than 200,000 people in less than four years, a monitoring group, Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, told AFP yesterday, adding that most were fighters from the two sides.

"We have documented the killing of 202,354 people since March 2011," Rami Abdel Rahman of the observatory said, adding that more than 130,000 of them were combatants.

"Of the total, 63,074 of the killed were civilians, including 10,377 children," said Abdel Rahman.

The UN's World Food Programme said Monday it needed \$64 million (51 million euros) to fund its food voucher programme for December alone, and that "many donor commitments remain unfulfilled".

The announcement came as aid groups struggle to prepare millions of refugees for the impending winter, particularly those living in informal camps in cold, mountain-



ous areas.

"It's going to be a devastating impact. This couldn't come at a worse time," said Ron Redman, regional spokesman for the UN refugee agency UNHCR.

WFP's food vouchers were helping nearly two million refugees scattered in countries around the Middle East. But for most of the agency's recipients, December's top-up has not arrived.

Worst-hit in the region is Lebanon, where more than 800,000 of the 1.1 million Syrian

refugees in the country were receiving WFP food voucher support.

In Jordan, some 450,000 refugees will get no money this month, though around 90,000 living in the UN's Za'atari and Azraq camps will continue to receive assistance.

In Turkey and Egypt, there are sufficient funds to provide aid until December 13 but not beyond, said WFP's Regional Emergency Coordinator Muhammad Hadi.

"It's going to be a nightmare for refugees," Hadi told AFP.



Pope slams West for selling chemical weapons to Syria

MAIL ONLINE

Pope Francis has condemned the West for selling chemical weapons responsible for thousands of civilian deaths to Syria.

Returning from a three-day trip to Turkey the pope said the Middle East state did not have the ability to manufacture the chemical weapons that were deployed against Syrian civilians last year, adding they must have been supplied them by its 'accusers'.

Nerve agent Sarin, described by chemical weapons experts as one of the 'deadliest agents known to man', has been linked to several attacks during the three-year civil war in Syria.

Both British and the US governments threatened military action against President Bashar al-Assad after an attack in which almost 1,500 people were killed, including 426 children last year but ultimately were defeated by votes in Parliament and the US Congress.

Pope Francis firmly opposed Western intervention in Syria.

Pope Francis told journalists on the plane returning him to Rome: "Last year between September and December it was said that Syria had chemical weapons. I don't believe that Syria was capable of making chemical weapons. So who could have sold them to them? One of those who accused them."

Francis condemned arms trafficking as 'terrible' and lamented that it was currently one of the strongest fields of business.

Police shootings in US out of hand

AGENCIES

President Barack Obama will seek to release funds aimed at equipping more US police officers with body cameras following the racially charged fatal shooting of a black teenager in Ferguson, the White House said Monday.

The August death of 18-year-old Michael Brown in Missouri revived long-standing questions about how police, especially white officers, interact with African Americans.

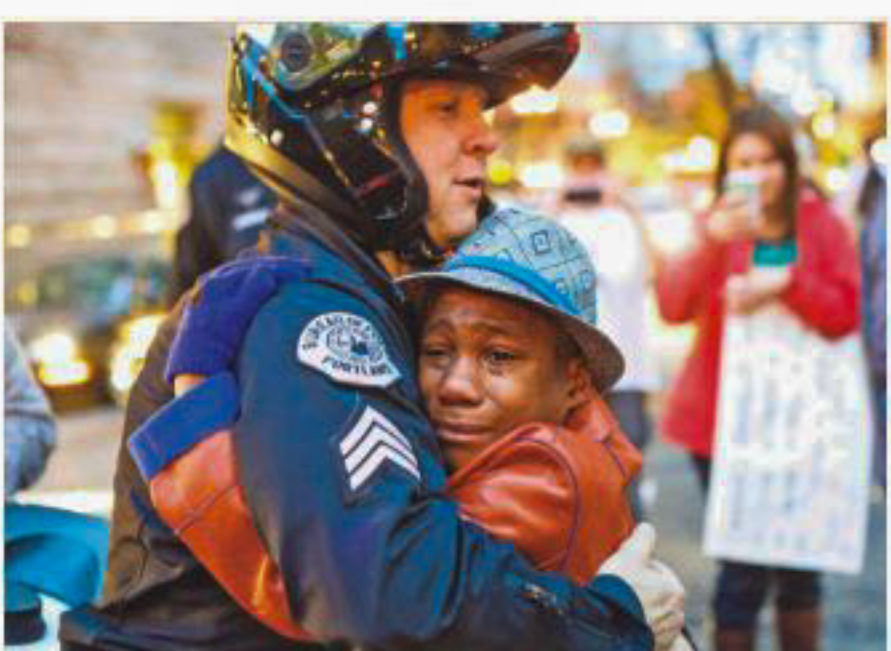
However, the president -- who met with civil rights and law enforcement leaders amid ongoing protests over a grand jury decision not to charge the white police officer in the shooting -- ruled out reducing federal sales of surplus military equipment to police forces.

The difference in the number of killings in the US and the rest of the world is startling. While police in other major countries typically kill a few people every year, the numbers here are enormous.

In the US, hundreds of people are killed by law enforcement every year. A large percentage of them are mentally ill. And although all ethnic groups have become

victims, minorities are getting shot in numbers much greater than their proportion in the population.

On average, at least one person is killed by a cop every day in the US. In contrast, not a single one was killed in Britain last year, where police fired their guns a grand total of



three times, according to The Economist. In 2011, when the FBI reported 404 justifiable law enforcement homicides in the US, police killed six people in Australia, two in England, six in Germany.

How many people are shot by police every year? Nobody seems to know the exact

number (something that is itself disturbing -- no official government agency tracks the full data for the entire country).

The FBI, compiling voluntarily submitted data from 750 out of 17,000 law enforcement agencies, reports about 400 "justifiable homicides" by police each year. That figure, of course, is incomplete and does not include killings deemed "unjustifiable," or shootings that do not result in death.

Unfortunately there are far too many cases where our consciences have been shocked. Take the case of a man widely reported to have had mental health issues, who was shot and killed not far from Ferguson after allegedly stealing a doughnut and a couple of energy drinks just two weeks after Michael Brown's death. He asked police "Shoot me! Shoot me!" What he likely needed was medical care.

Many will have seen the images of a 12-year-old boy who was shot last month in Cleveland after someone called police saying he was pointing a gun at people. The caller reportedly added that the gun was probably fake. It was indeed a toy, but the boy is dead.

There has to be a better way.

Islamist rebels kill 36 workers in Kenya

AGENCIES

Islamist al-Shabaab militants killed 36 non-Muslim workers at a quarry in northeast Kenya yesterday, beheading at least two of them in revenge for Kenyan military action against the group in neighbouring Somalia.

The gunmen crept up on dozens of workers sleeping in tents at about 1:00 am, a resident said, in the same area near the Somali border where they hijacked a bus and killed 28 passengers just over a week ago.

Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta has said "we will not flinch" in the war against al-Shabab after the massacre.

"This is a war against Kenya and Kenyans," he said on national TV. "It is a war that every one of us must fight."

He has announced that Kenya's police chief, David Kimayo, is quitting. Kenyatta's speech came hours after al-Shabab killed the quarry workers in the north-eastern Mandera region, reports BBC.

"The militia separated the Muslims, then ordered the non-Muslims to lie down where they shot them on the head at close range," Hassan Duba, an elder at a nearby village, said.

A witness said at least two of the victims were beheaded in the latest in a string of attacks that are piling pressure on Kenyan President Uhuru over national security, reports Reuters.

As with past attacks, al-Shabaab militants said they were punishing Kenya for sending troops to join African peacekeepers battling the Islamists in Somalia. In a statement, it put the death toll at 40 and called the victims "Kenyan crusaders".

NEWSIN brief

Snowden wins key human rights award

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

Whistleblower Edward Snowden received several standing ovations in the Swedish parliament after being given the Right Livelihood award for his revelations of the scale of state surveillance. Snowden, who is in exile in Russia, addressed the parliament by video from Moscow. In a symbolic gesture, his family and supporters said no one picked up the award on his behalf in the hope that one day he might be free to travel to Sweden to receive it in person.

Pak army offensive kills 24 militants

AFP, Peshawar

The Pakistan military yesterday said it had killed at least 24 militants in air strikes and ground fighting in northwestern tribal areas bordering Afghanistan, as part of ongoing offensives in the region. Air strikes took place in North Waziristan tribal district as ground troops traded fire with militants in Khyber agency, where Taliban and Lashkar-e-Islam fighters are based.

Britain's ex-PM Brown retires from politics

AFP, London

Britain's former prime minister Gordon Brown, who waited patiently for the top job only to be voted out after three years, said Monday he was stepping down from parliament after three decades. Brown said he would not be returning to the Westminster parliament in any capacity, but would work as the United Nations special envoy for global education from Fife in Scotland, a position he has held since 2012.

Birds as suicide bombers!

MAIL ONLINE

Terrorists the world over are known to deploy suicide bombers, or "human bombs", to wreak death and devastation on their targets, but have you ever heard of a bird being used as a suicide bomber?

The Taliban seem to be using such a strategy and the Afghan police reportedly shot dead a bird which had been equipped by the terrorists with an explosive pouch, a GPS tracker and a detonator.

The bird had several wires protruding from its feathers, a mobile phone detonator and a specially designed 'suicide vest', the Daily Mail reported on Monday.

Alert officers spotted the suspicious-looking bird in the Faryab province in the north of the country, near the border with Turkmenistan and their suspicions increased as the large bird is not known to be native to the area.

Major General Abdul Nabillham told NBC News that the bird exploded when it was shot and 'suspicious metal stuff' was scattered around.

Ilham added: 'We are gathering all the stuff, but found parts of what looks to be GPS and a small camera.'



Bhopal Gas Tragedy

Gas disaster survivors hold posters during a protest rally in Bhopal, yesterday. The Bhopal industrial disaster, the world's worst industrial disaster in 1984, when gas leaked from a pesticides plant owned by the US multinational Union Carbide, killed about 4,000 people on the night of December 3, 1984 with the death toll over the next few years rising to 15,000, according to government estimates. Thirty years later, many of those who were exposed to the gas have given birth to physically and mentally disabled children.

PHOTO: AFP

Most-wanted Nazi war criminal 'dead'

BBC ONLINE

The chief investigator pursuing Alois Brunner, one of the world's most wanted German Nazi war criminals, has told the BBC that he is "99% sure" that he died four years ago in Syria.

"We cannot prove it forensically, but we are certain that is the case," Nazi-hunter Efraim Zuroff said.

SS captain Brunner, who would now be 102, is accused of deporting more than 1,28,000 Jews to death camps in WWII. For many years there has been uncertainty as to whether he is dead.

Dr Zuroff - director of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Jerusalem - told the BBC that new information had recently come to light about Brunner's death and burial in Damascus from a "reliable" former German secret service agent who had served in the Middle East.

He said that the new evidence revealed that Brunner was buried in an unknown location in Damascus around 2010 and was unrepentant of his crimes.

Dr Zuroff - who is also a Holocaust historian - said that the latest information provided more concrete evidence to support that conclusion. "[Brunner] played a key role in the implementation of Hitler's 'Final Solution' to murder Jews," Dr Zuroff said, "and was a monster."

He said that Brunner sent 47,000 Jews in Austria, 44,000 in Greece, 23,500 in France and 14,000 in Slovakia to camps where most were murdered.



Alois Brunner

Ukraine, rebels agree new ceasefire deal

AFP, Donetsk

Ukraine and pro-Russian rebels "agreed in principle" on a ceasefire in one separatist province, Lugansk, and were working to conclude a broader truce yesterday that would end nearly eight months of bloodshed.

The latest push for peace in the former Soviet country was being spearheaded by European negotiators alarmed at the unravelling of a September 5 peace deal.

The Ukrainian conflict has killed more than 4,300 people and seen Nato fortify defences to help protect former Soviet satellite nations from what it sees as the Kremlin's new expansionist threat.

Moscow sees the West as trying to undermine Russia's rightful influence in the former Soviet bloc.

Fossil fuels 'high risk' investment, says UN

REUTERS, LIMA

Falling oil prices show the "high risk" of fossil fuel investments compared with renewable energies, the UN's climate chief said on Monday at the start of 190-nation talks on a deal to slow global warming.

The Dec 1-12 meeting in Lima opened with hopes that a UN deal to slow climate change is in reach for 2015, helped by goals set by China, the United States and the European Union to cut greenhouse emissions, mainly from burning fossil fuels.

Christiana Figueres, head of the UN's Climate Change Secretariat, dismissed suggestions that a tumble in the price of oil to a five-year low on Monday could brake hopes for a shift to renewable energies as a cornerstone of the climate deal.

Oil price volatility "is exactly one of the main reasons why we must move to renewable energy which has a completely predictable cost of zero for fuel" once wind turbines or solar panels were built, she told a

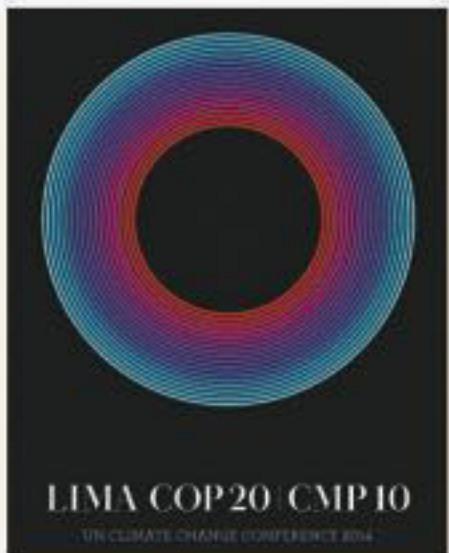
news conference.

"We are seeing more and more the realization that investment in fossil fuel is actually a high risk, is getting more and more risky," she said, welcoming a decision by Germany's top utility E.ON to spin off power plants to focus on renewable energy and power grids.

Delegates in Lima are due to work out elements of a deal due to be agreed at a UN summit in Paris next year as part of a UN goal to limit average world temperature rises to 2 degrees (3.6 Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial times.

Temperatures have already risen by about 0.9 C (1.5F) and a UN panel of climate scientists says there are risks of irreversible impacts, ranging from damage to coral reefs to a meltdown of Greenland's ice that would raise sea levels.

The talks have been boosted after the United States last month agreed to cut emissions by 26 to 28 percent below 2005 levels and China agreed to set a cap on its soaring emissions by around 2030.



LIMA COP20 CMP10

HK protest founders to surrender

Urge students to retreat
AFP, Hong Kong

The original founders of Hong Kong's pro-democracy Occupy movement tearfully announced yesterday they would "surrender" by turning themselves in to police and urged protesters on the streets to retreat.

But frustrated demonstrators at the city's main protest site said they felt "abandoned" by the move.

The announcement came after hundreds of pro-democracy protesters clashed with police late Sunday, leaving dozens injured in one of the worst nights of violence since rallies began over two months ago.

"As we prepare to surrender, we three urge the students to retreat -- to put down deep roots in the community and transform the movement," said Occupy Central leader Benny Tai.

Tai said the trio, including Chan Kin-man and Chu Yiu-ming, would surrender to police today in a commitment to the rule of law and "the principle of peace and love".

Protesters who have blocked three major intersections in the city since late September to demand free leadership elections in the semi-autonomous city, said that they cannot leave until their demands have been met.

Teenage protest leader Joshua Wong paid tribute to Tai and said the student groups leading the movement would "discuss" Occupy's request.

"If Benny Tai did not publicise the idea of civil disobedience at the beginning, then there would be no umbrella movement today," said Wong, who began a hunger strike on Monday in a last-ditch attempt to force the government into further talks.