

YEMEN CRISIS
Saudi-led air raids kill 45 in Sanaa

AFP, Sanaa
Twenty civilians were among at least 45 people killed in Saudi-led air strikes on the rebel-held armed forces headquarters in the Yemeni capital early yesterday, a medic said.
The raids on the army headquarters in central Sanaa came a day after the kingdom's air defences shot down a Scud missile fired from the war-torn country.
They also followed the UN confirmation of June 14 as the start date for peace talks between warring Yemen factions in Geneva, which both the country's Shiite Huthi rebels and its exiled government said they will attend.
The raids hit residential buildings, including five houses that were completely destroyed, witnesses said.
The Saudi-led coalition has carried out air strikes on Yemen since March 26 to push back the Huthis and restore Hadi's authority. More than 2,000 people have died since the air campaign began.



Leaders of the member countries of the G7 attend the first working session of a G7 summit at the Elmau Castle near Garmisch-Partenkirchen, southern Germany, yesterday. Inset, Activists of global anti-poverty charity Oxfam, wearing masks, protest ahead of the meeting.



PHOTO: AFP

Malaysia quake toll hits 16

AFP, Kuantan
Six Singapore primary school students and one teacher were among 16 people so far confirmed killed by an earthquake that rocked Malaysia's Mount Kinabalu, government authorities said yesterday. Two people still remain missing. The Singaporean students were part of a school excursion to the popular climbing destination, which was jolted by a 6.0-magnitude quake just as the 4,095-metre-high (13,435-foot) mountain

Blaze in Mumbai high-rise kills 7

AFP, Mumbai
A fire in a high-rise apartment block in Mumbai has killed seven people after they became trapped on the upper floors, officials said yesterday. Fire officials are probing the cause of the blaze in the Indian financial capital which erupted on Saturday night on the 14th floor of the 21-storey tower

Saudi SC upholds jail, lashes for blogger

AFP, Dubai
Saudi Arabia's supreme court has upheld a sentence of 10 years in jail and 1,000 lashes against blogger Raif Badawi on charges of insulting Islam, his wife said yesterday. The judgement came despite worldwide outrage over his case and criticism from the United Nations, United States, the European Union, Canada and others. He was arrested in June 2012 under cyber-crime provisions, and a judge ordered the website shut after it criticised Saudi Arabia's

Israeli planes hit Gaza after rocket attack

AFP, Jerusalem
The Israeli air force hit the Gaza Strip early yesterday for the second time in three days after new rocket fire from the territory hit southern Israel, raising fears of a new confrontation with Palestinian militants. The Israeli government also ordered the closure until further notice of the Erez crossing for people and the Kerem Shalom crossing for goods. Only medical cases and humanitarian aid will be allowed through, it said.

Two convicted killers escape NY prison

AFP, New York
A frantic manhunt was on yesterday for two convicted murderers who busted out of New York state's biggest maximum security prison by cutting through cell walls with power tools and escaping along tunnels. Killers Richard Matt, 48, and David Sweat, 34, sneaked out of the all-male Clinton Correctional Facility in Dannemora sometime between Friday night and early Saturday. They reportedly left a taunting note behind saying:

ISIS militants suffer blow in Syria, Iraq

AGENCIES
The Syrian army yesterday said it had repulsed a major offensive by Islamic State militants in the northeastern city of Hasaka and driven out fighters who had taken over key installations on the southern edge of the city.
The northeastern corner of Syria is strategically important because it links areas controlled by Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. Syrian Kurds have also sought to expand their territorial control over a region stretching from Kobani to Qamishli they see as part of a future Kurdish state.
The militants, approaching from their stronghold the city of Shadadi, south of Hasaka city, made lighting advances this week after conducting around a dozen suicide attacks using explosives-laden trucks at army checkpoints in the city.
But Syrian state television, quoting an army source, said in a newflash they had taken back an electricity station, a juvenile prison and two villages almost two kilometers (one mile) south of the city that had been occupied by militants.
The United States and its allies said on Thursday they staged 17 air strikes on Islamic State targets in Syria and Iraq with four of the raids near Hasaka.
In Iraq, forces with the support of the US are now in control of Baiji city, military and militia sources told CNN yesterday.
"Forces have cleansed and are in control completely of government complex, city center, Fatah mosque (main mosque) and surrounding neighborhoods," said Brig Gen Tahseen Ibrahim, a spokesman for the Iraqi defense ministry.
He credited the US with "a significant role supporting" Iraqi ground forces in the assault. He did not provide specifics on what kind of support the forces received.
ISIS forces, who had seized the city, fled back toward Mosul.
Meanwhile, a suicide car bomb ripped through roadside restaurants at the entrance to the town of Baladruz in eastern Iraq, killing at least 15 people, police and provincial officials said yesterday.

Ukraine dominates G7 meet

Leaders urge tough line on Russia; Greece, EU trade barbs over debt deal

REUTERS, Kruen
Leaders from the Group of Seven (G7) industrial nations backed a tough line towards Moscow at the start of a summit in the Bavarian Alps, with US President Barack Obama urging the gathering to stand up to Russian aggression in Ukraine.
Host Angela Merkel greeted Obama in the idyllic Alpine village of Kruen under blue skies, surrounded by locals in traditional dress, drinking beer and eating white sausage and pretzels.
The German chancellor was hoping to secure commitments from her G7 guests to tackle global warming ahead of a major United Nations climate summit in Paris in December. The German agenda also foresees discussions on global health issues, from Ebola to antibiotics and tropical diseases.
But the crises in Ukraine and Greece seemed likely to overshadow the discussions at Schloss Elmau, a luxury Alpine hotel near the Austrian border.
European Commission President

Jean-Claude Juncker, speaking before the start of the summit, voiced exasperation with Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, who has dismissed the latest aid-for-reform proposal from international creditors as "absurd".
Athens is running out of cash and will default on its debt, a move that could end up pushing it out of the euro zone, if it fails to reach a deal with its European partners and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the coming weeks.
Juncker reaffirmed that a so-called "Grexit" was not an option being considered, but said this did not mean he could "pull a rabbit out of a hat" to prevent it.
Obama said leaders would discuss the global economy, trade partnerships and "standing up to Russian aggression in Ukraine", as well as threats from violent extremism and climate change.
Both he and Merkel highlighted the importance of the German-American relationship, damaged in recent years

by revelations of US spying in Germany, including the bugging of the chancellor's mobile phone.
British Prime Minister David Cameron and European Council President Donald Tusk both said they hoped the G7 would present a united front on sanctions towards Russia.
EU leaders agreed in March that sanctions imposed over Russia's intervention in Ukraine would stay until the Minsk ceasefire agreement was fully implemented, effectively extending them to the end of the year, but a formal decision has yet to be taken.
Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi is known to be sceptical about sanctions and left-wing politicians in Germany have also called for them to be removed.
European monitors have blamed a recent upsurge in violence in eastern Ukraine on Russian-backed separatists. Russian President Vladimir Putin was frozen out of what used to be the G8 after Moscow's annexation of Crimea last year.

Turkey vote in election key to Erdogan's dream

BBC ONLINE
Turkey yesterday voted in a general election which will determine whether the ruling party can change the constitution.
President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who first came to power as prime minister in 2003, is seeking a big enough majority to turn Turkey into a presidential republic.
However his hopes may be scuppered if the pro-Kurdish HDP crosses the 10% threshold and enters parliament.
Polls across Turkey's 81 provinces opened at 08:00 local time and closed at 17:00. First results are expected late yesterday.
If the left-wing HDP succeeds in winning seats in parliament for the first time, it would reduce the number of seats won by Erdogan's AKP, thwarting its plans to change the constitution and transfer the prime minister's executive powers to the president.
A strong showing from the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) and the third-placed Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) could even force the AKP into a coalition, correspondents say.
Kemal Kilicdaroglu, chairman of the CHP echoed Dermits and called the campaign period "unequal". He promised however to "continue to work with a sense of responsibility".
Turkey's current Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu shied away from accusations of unfairness telling reporters: "Whatever [the people's] will, it is a will that must be respected by everyone."



A Turkish woman reacts before casting her vote for Turkey's legislative election at a polling station in Istanbul, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

MIGRANT CRISIS IN EUROPE
Rebellion in Italy as numbers surge

AFP, Rome
Italy's wealthy North yesterday vowed that it would refuse to accommodate any more migrants as thousands more were rescued in the Mediterranean by a multinational flotilla of ships.
As another frantic weekend of rescues unfolded, at least 4,000 people were plucked to safety from packed fishing boats and rubber dinghies off Libya.
Mass drownings in the Mediterranean have claimed nearly 1,800 lives so far this year.
All of those rescued will be deposited at ports on Sicily or elsewhere in southern Italy in the coming days, lifting this year's total of new arrivals on Italian soil to over 50,000.
The latest batch sent the migration crisis back to the top of the political agenda with three big northern regions vowing to defy the centre-left government of Prime Minister Matteo Renzi by refusing to house any of the new arrivals.
The figure represents an increase of around 10 percent on the same period last year, which, after a summer surge, ended with an unprecedented total of 170,000 migrants arriving on Italian soil. The country's reception facilities are at breaking point with nearly 80,000 asylum seekers or recently arrived migrants currently accommodated across the country.

Burma's drug-fuelled economic boom

NEW YORK TIMES ONLINE
Visitors flying into this buzzing tropical metropolis step into a modern glass-and-steel airport that symbolizes both Myanmar's aspirations to rejoin the wider world after years of isolation and the country's troubled past.
The company that built the terminal, Asia World, was started by one of the country's premier drug kingpins, a warlord whose militia peddled heroin extracted from the opium fields of the mountainous hinterlands. It is nearly impossible to visit Myanmar today and not encounter the company's other projects: roads, hydroelectric dams, the country's biggest ports and one of its most luxurious hotels, the Sule Shangri-La in downtown Yangon.
There is no evidence to suggest the company has any current ties to drug trafficking, but as Myanmar strives to modernize after decades of dictatorial rule, Asia World's role in that effort provides a prominent example of how the drug trade is inextricably intertwined with the country's new economy and lies at the root of many of its efforts to rebuild.
"The seed capital of the Burmese economy is heroin," said Ronald Findlay, an economist at Columbia University who was born in colonial Burma, which the military government renamed Myanmar in 1989. "If that's an exaggeration, it's not a huge one."
According to interviews with real estate brokers, economists, and current and former law enforcement agents, illicit drug profits have been a major source of investment in rebuilding the country, and companies linked to the drug trade are building new roads and bridges and reshaping the skyline of the biggest city, Yangon.
The drug trade, analysts say, reinforces corruption, bolsters the power of the military and threatens to return Myanmar to a pariah state instead of the democratic ally the administration hopes for.
Since Myanmar began opening up to the world four years ago, heroin

China riverboat tragedy toll hits 431; 11 missing

AFP, Jianli
Rescuers bowed their heads and ships' hooters blared in tribute to the victims of Communist China's worst shipping disaster yesterday, as relatives of the 431 dead and 11 still missing spoke of their grief.
The solemn ceremony was held to remember the dead after the "Eastern Star" cruise ship carrying 456 people capsized late Monday on the Yangtze River in a storm.
Only 14 survivors have been confirmed out of all those aboard, who were mostly tourists aged over 60, after the ship capsized at night in Jianli country in the central province of Hubei.
Although regulations exist on paper to trace ill-gotten money, real estate agents say the government's unofficial policy appears to be don't ask, don't tell.



A photo taken by Britain's Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge (L) and Princess Charlotte of Cambridge (R) at Anmer Hall in Norfolk, eastern England. The Duchess of Cambridge released four official photographs of Prince George and one-month-old Princess Charlotte together at their country retreat in Sandringham.

PHOTO: AFP