Suicide attack at checkpoint in Nigeria's Maiduguri

AFP, Kano

A suicide bomber hit a military checkpoint on the outskirts of the northeastern Nigerian city of Maiduguri yesterday, in the latest in a string of attacks blamed on Boko Haram Islamists. The blast happened at about 12:10 pm (1110 GMT) at the Jimtilo checkpoint, as passengers arriving in Maiduguri were being screened, two civilian vigilantes told AFP. "There have been casualties but we're still working to confirm the numbers," said Babakura Kolo, who is part of the militia assisting the military against the insurgents.

Prince William takes off in new air ambulance job

AFP, London

Prince William started his new job as an air ambulance pilot yesterday

and was swiftly in the air on an emergency mission. The Duke of Cambridge, 33, second in line to the throne, said he hoped he could juggle fatherhood, royal duties and his new role in the skies.

ISIS claims Baghdad bombings that killed 23 AFP, Baghdad

The Islamic State group yesterday claimed a string of bomb attacks that killed at least 23 people in the Iraqi capital Baghdad. In a statement posted on social media, ISIS said Sunday night's operation was dubbed "The Pounce of the Monotheists on the Chests of the Apostates". The blasts, several of which were caused by suicide bombers, left 23 people dead and 68 wounded in Shiite neighbourhoods of Baghdad, according to police and medical sources.



A Kashmiri woman carries bread past Indian soliders during a curfew amid events to mark the 83rd anniversary of Martyr's Day in Srinagar yesterday. Martyr's Day is marked anually on July 13 and notes Maharaja Hari Singh's use of force in 1931 to quell protests against his rule, resulting in the death of 23 Muslims.

PHOTO: AFP

World powers seek breakthrough

AFP, Vienna

Iran and major powers scrambled to finally nail down an elusive nuclear accord ahead of yesterday's deadline, with China calling for "no more delays" in the marathon talks.

After more than two weeks of intense political haggling in Vienna aimed at ensuring Iran does not get a nuclear bomb, diplomats said an agreement was tantalisingly close.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said the time had come to wrap up the talks, now in their 17th straight day. No deal could be "perfect" but "conditions are already in

place for a good agreement", he told reporters as he arrived for discussions in the Austrian capital, speaking through an interpreter. Foreign ministers from the so-called P5+1 -- the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China

-- were gathering "to bring the negotiation to its conclusion," he added. "We believe that there cannot and should not be

further delay." Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said he believed there should be no further extension to the talks but he would negotiate as long as needed.

"I always believe there shouldn't be any extension but we could work as long as necessary to finish this," Zarif said as he met Wang. Iran's President Hassan Rouhani will address the nation

about the nuclear talks on state television yesterday night, a media official told AFP in Tehran.

The official IRNA news agency said Rouhani would speak when the nuclear talks have concluded, but it did not give a time.

The six major powers want Iran to scale down its atomic activities in return for an easing of crippling sanctions.

They have already missed several deadlines in the highly complex discussions in Vienna, but diplomats were hopeful that this time would be different.

"No one is thinking of another extension. Everyone working hard to get to yes today, but political will still required," Iranian diplomat Alireza Miryousefi said on Twitter.

A source close to Iranian negotiators told AFP there were still "some important issues" to be resolved. There had been optimism that a deal would be clinched

over the weekend, but finalising a framework accord struck in April has proved difficult, with talks stumbling on the exact timing of sanctions relief and Iran's desire to have a UN conventional arms embargo lifted.

Such an accord, if it can be agreed, approved and implemented properly -- which is also no R A N small challenge -- would draw a line under 13 years of failed diplomacy and threats of military **NUKE** TALKS

> In return Iran will be granted staggered relief from painful sanctions, although the six powers insist on the option of reimposing the restrictions if Tehran breaches the agreement.

> The current diplomatic effort dates back to Rouhani coming to power in 2013.

> He sought a rapprochement with the West and an end to his country's diplomatic and economic isolation.

> The prospect of a thawing of relations between Iran and the United States unsettles many in the Middle East however, not least Tehran's rivals Saudi Arabia and other Gulf monarchies.

> Israel, widely assumed to have nuclear weapons itself, is also deeply concerned, complaining that the proposed deal will fail to stop its arch foe getting the bomb.

French Police hunt mall attackers

AFP, Villeneuve-la-garenne

French police yesterday were hunting armed robbers who escaped after holding up a store in a shopping mall near Paris, prompting special forces to intervene and seal off the area.

The three men -- one of whom was thought to be an employee of the shop -burst into the Primark store in Villeneuve-la-Garenne early yesterday, said a police source who wished to remain anonymous.

While security forces initially thought the gunmen were still inside the mall, they realised after searching the premises that the men had escaped.

The area around the Qwartz mall was shut down, all traffic stopped and other stores in the vicinity closed up as special forces rushed to the scene.

The mall was promptly evacuated but according to police, 18 employees had remained inside.

Punishing terms of Greek bailout deal

AFP, Brussels

Here are the key points of the statement issued by eurozone leaders after 17 exhausting hours of talks, with many far-reaching steps for Greece to take:

Immediate Steps

By July 15, the radical left government of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras must get parliamentary approval for four key pieces of legislation, in order to "rebuild trust" with the eurozone, the document said.

- -- Reforming Greece's notoriously complex Value Added Tax (VAT) system, and increasing revenue by broadening the tax base.
- -- Improving the "long term sustainability" of the pension system.
- -- Protecting the legal independence of Greece's national statistics agency, so that government fiscal data is reliable.
- -- Creating an independent fiscal authority and a mechanism to automatically reduce spending if budget targets are missed.
- Reforms -- "Ambitious" reforms to Greece's generous pension system, which has
- already suffered under previous bailouts. -- Market reforms affecting Sunday shopping, sales periods, milk and
- bakeries and pharmacy ownership.
- -- Privatise the electricity transmission network operator ADMIE.
- -- Review and modernise collective bargaining, industrial action, and collective dismissals.
- -- Strengthen the financial sector.

Privatisation

-- Greece will park assets for privatisation worth up to 50 billion euros (\$56 billion) in a special fund based in Athens. Some 25 billion of that will go towards recapitalising Greek banks left near-empty by two weeks of capital controls and a limiting of emergency European Central Bank funds. It will also help reduce its debt mountain, and go towards investment.

-- The asset fund will be set up in Greece under Greek government management but under the supervision of European institutions. Greece opposed initial plans to base the fund in Luxembourg.

Government

-- Greece must de-politicise the administration under EU monitoring -- a measure critics say is designed to remove officials from Tsipras's leftist Syriza party from their positions.

Return of the Troika

-- Greek officials must "fully normalise working methods with the Institutions, including necessary work on the ground in Athens." This is code for a return of the Troika, the creditor institutions of the European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund responsible for monitoring Greece's two previous bailouts, whose officials were kicked out of Greece by Tsipras after his election amid widespread loathing.

-- Consult with the Troika on "all draft legislation in relevant areas".

Amend Laws

-- Reverse laws brought in by the Syriza government since the election that run counter to Greece's earlier bailout arrangements in 2010 and 2012, except for a key humanitarian law. **Bailout Size**

-- The third bailout fund for Greece could amount to between 82 billion and

86 billion euros. Eurozone leaders agreed to take note of "urgent financing needs" to meet debt payments of 7.0 billion euros by July 20 including a huge ECB loan and another 5.0 billion by mid-August. Banks

-- Ten to 25 billion euros should be set aside for bank recapitalisation or liquidation

Debt

In response to Greek pleas for a reduction in a mountain of debt worth nearly 180 percent of its GDP, eurozone finance ministers are "ready to consider... possible additional measures" including longer grace and payment periods. This would be considered after a first review of a new Greek bailout programme, possibly in October. But any "haircuts" which would write off debt are ruled out. IMF

The International Monetary Fund, which was involved in the previous two Greek bailouts, must be involved in any new programme "as a precondition". **EU Loans**

The European Commission is ready to lend Greece 35 billion euros until 2020 to boost jobs and growth.

Najib Controversy

Malaysia cops hunt 'culprits' clashes continue to flout Yemen who leaked documents

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysian police said yesterday a special task force set up to probe reported transfers involving a state investment fund to Prime Minister Najib Razak is now itself under investigation to see if its members leaked classified information.

The Wall Street Journal reported on July 3 that investigators had discovered nearly \$700 million had moved through government agencies, banks and companies linked to 1Malaysia Development Bhd before ending up in Najib's personal accounts.

The report created a storm of controversy in Malaysia with the prime minister dismissing the WSJ report as "political sabotage" and threatening possible legal action, while 1MDB denied any wrongdoing, saying it had not transferred any funds to the premier.

Police chief Khalid Abu Bakar in a statement released yesterday said that after the

publication of the report, on July 8, the Attorney-General instructed the police to launch an investigation into "the criminal act of leaking classified documents to foreign nationals."

"These criminal acts are very serious and raise national security implications," said the police chief in the statement. "We are therefore duty bound to conduct

a fully independent investigation. This will include investigating all members of the special task force..." "The Royal Malaysia Police have not eliminated the possibility of a conspiracy to

subvert Malaysia's democratic process and topple the prime minister," he added. The statement went on to say that the "leakage of information... could constitute

economic sabotage against Malaysia." The task force is made up of the police,

the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission, the Attorney-General and Malaysia's central bank.

Global warming to fuel migration, terrorism: report

AFP, Paris

Global warming-induced food and water shortages may cause mass migration, competition for resources and state failure, providing fertile ground for conflict and terrorism,

analysts warned yesterday. In a report entitled: "Climate Change, A Risk Assessment", a global team of scientists, policy analysts and financial and military risk experts painted a grim picture of mankind's future on a much warmer planet.

As rising temperatures and sea levels shrink areas of productive land, humans will have reasons aplenty for warring with one another, they wrote -especially in already turbulent parts of the Middle East and Africa.

Even with average global warming of 0.8 degrees Celsius from the Industrial

Revolution to date, the world was facing "significant problems".

"It seems likely that high degrees of climate change would pose enormous risks to national and international security," said the report. "Extreme water stress, and competi-

become sources of conflict." Soon, today's refugee problems may seen trifling compared to the numbers of fugitives fleeing climate change-related

tion for productive land, could both

food and water scarcity and conflict. "Migration from some regions may become more a necessity than a choice, and could take place on a historically unprecedented scale," wrote the team.

"The capacity of the international community for humanitarian assistance, already at full stretch, could easily be overwhelmed."

truce

Saudi-led warplanes bombed Yemeni rebels who clashed with progovernment fighters in the south despite a UN-declared truce aimed at delivering desperately needed aid,

And 10 civilians were killed in pre-dawn raids on the capital Sanaa, according to medical sources.

Abdullah Saleh, in Aden

Air strikes in support of forces loyal to exiled President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi went on despite a six-day humanitarian truce which technically took effect just before midnight Friday.

The coalition brushed

Air strikes targeted a building of military engineering in the Sanaa neighbourhood of Saawan, witnesses said. Medical sources said the raids killed 10 civilians.

positions on the outskirts of the port city of Aden as well as a convoy in the city's neighbourhood of Khor Maksar, a military source said.

Sunday in Aden, where rebels have laid siege to many areas that are controlled by southern fighters loyal to Hadi and known as

Air strikes,

AFP, Aden

military sources said.

The coalition air raids targeted positions of the Iran-backed Shiite rebels and their allies, forces loyal to former president Ali

and Lahj provinces.

aside the ceasefire, saying it did not receive a request from Hadi's government to halt attacks, while the leader of the Huthi rebels said he did not expect the truce to take hold.

Raids also hit rebel

Clashes intensified



Migrants sleep at the main railway station in Belgrade, yesterday. Migrants cross Serbia to join other European countries, as it has land borders with three EU countries - Romania, Hungary and Croatia. The estimated number of people crossing the Serbia-Hungary border has increased more than 25-fold, rising from 2,370 to 60,602

UKRAINE CRISIS

according to an Amnesty International report.

Poroshenko faces new security crisis

AFP, Kiev

President Petro Poroshenko confronted a fresh crisis yesterday as a deadly standoff continued between interior ministry units and armed Ukrainian ultranationalists in a western enclave near Hungary.

The EU-backed leader planned to convene his "military cabinet" of top generals yesterday to try and diffuse tensions between two forces vital to his bid to stamp out a separatist insurgency 1,000 kilometres away in eastern Ukraine.

The Pravy Sektor (Right Sector) nationalists played a small but instrumental role in three months of pro-European protests that eventually toppled the Russian-backed leadership in February 2014.

They then formed the heart of some of the best-equipped units to wage war against

pro-Russian militias that overran parts of Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland in the wake of the Kiev revolution.

Interior ministry battalions are also at the forefront of the 15-month battle against the separatist fighters that has claimed more than 6,500 lives.

But mistrust between volunteer units and Ukraine's armed forces has been building as Poroshenko tries to follow through on a February peace deal whose terms -- including partial self-rule for the insurgents -- are anathema to the nationalists.

Pravy Sektor members also cast themselves as Robin Hood figures who defend the public against the corruption that has ravaged Ukraine's political

establishment and police since the Soviet

Union's collapse in 1991. The weekend battles were sparked by Pravy Sektor's self-proclaimed attempt to prevent Hungary and Slovakia from being

Scientist who studied 9/11 dust dies

CNN ONLINE

Paul James Lioy, an environmental scientist known for his analysis of the health effects of the dust produced by the September 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, died this week after collapsing at Newark Liberty International Airport. He was 68.

The cause of death has not been determined, his wife Jean Lioy told the New York Times.

The author of the 2010 published book "Dust: The Inside Story of Its Role in the September 11th Aftermath," Lioy received two lifetime achievement awards.