

# NEWSIN brief

## 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 annually 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 small challenge -- would draw a line under 13 years of failed diplomacy and threats of military action.

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.

## IRAN NUKE TALKS

## 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 Quartier 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.

## NAJIB CONTROVERSY

# Malaysia cops hunt 'culprits' 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.

## Air strikes, clashes continue to flout Yemen truce

AFP, Aden

Saudi-led warplanes bombed Yemeni rebels who clashed with pro-government fighters in the south despite a UN-declared truce aimed at delivering desperately needed aid, military sources said.

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

The coalition air raids targeted positions of the Iran-backed Shiite rebels and their allies, forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, in Aden and Lahj provinces.

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 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.

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

Raids also hit rebel 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.

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



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 according to an Amnesty International report.

PHOTO: AFP

## UKRAINE CRISIS

# 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 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 New York 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.

## 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 competition for productive land, could both become sources of conflict."

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