

NEWS IN brief

Blast kills at least 10 in Afghanistan

At least 10 people were killed and over 40 injured in a suicide bombing in Afghanistan's eastern province of Kunar yesterday, officials said. "A suicide bomber riding a motorcycle detonated his explosives in a market in Asadabad the provincial capital, 10 people were killed and over 40 were injured," Ghani Mosamem, spokesman for the provincial governor, told AFP. No group claimed responsibility for the attack.

Iran complying with nuclear deal: IAEA

Iran is complying so far with the July 2015 landmark nuclear deal with major powers, a report from the UN atomic watchdog seen by AFP showed on Friday. The International Atomic Energy Agency's first assessment since the accord came into force on January 16 showed that Iran was meeting its main commitments.



Men demonstrate near a barbed wire fence yesterday at the Idomeni camp on Greece's northern border with Macedonia, demanding that the Macedonian authorities let them in.

PHOTO: AFP

Saudi air strike on Yemen market kills 30

A Saudi-led air coalition air strike on a market northeast of the rebel-held Yemeni capital Sanaa killed at least 30 rebels and civilians, witnesses said. The air strike targeted three rebel vehicles as they entered a market in the town of Naqil bin Ghaylan, killing at least 30 Huthi insurgents and civilians, one tribal source in the area said. The rebel-controlled Saba news agency gave a higher death toll, saying that 60 civilians were killed and wounded in the attack but it did not mention any casualties among fighters. The attack hit Khulaqa market, which is known for selling qat, a mild narcotic that is chewed throughout Yemen, witnesses said. The area is part of the Nehm region, where coalition-backed loyalists have been advancing against the rebels as they try to close in on Sanaa. Rights groups have repeatedly urged the coalition to avoid causing civilian casualties. Earlier this month, Human Rights Watch accused the coalition of using US-supplied cluster bombs.

Balkan states cap arrivals

Humanitarian crisis looms as thousands stranded at Greek border

More than 5,000 people were stranded at the Idomeni camp on Greece's northern border with Macedonia yesterday after four Balkan countries announced a daily cap on migrant arrivals. The buildup began in earnest last week after Macedonia started refusing entry to Afghans and imposed stricter document controls on Syrians and Iraqis, slowing the passage of migrants and refugees to a trickle.

Since Thursday night, only 150 people have crossed into Macedonia, officials said, putting the total number of refugees and migrants currently on Greek soil at around 25,000. Tensions were running high along the border with some 400 people protesting by the Idomeni crossing early yesterday, demanding that the Macedonian authorities let them in.

pledged to limit the daily number of people crossing the country to 3,200. The move has sparked a bitter spat between Athens and Vienna and yesterday saw some 200 people demanding safe passage for refugees protest outside the Austrian embassy in Athens, an AFP correspondent said. Austria has repeatedly accused Greece of failing to police its borders properly and allowing many migrants to continue their journey northwards to western Europe.

And the situation looked set to worsen significantly after Slovenia and Croatia, both EU member states, and Serbia and Macedonia said they would restrict the number of daily arrivals to 580. The tighter controls have left thousands -- including many children -- stuck in Greece, as Europe's worst migration crisis since World War II shows no sign of abating. By yesterday, the number of people at Idomeni had reached 5,500, local police said, with 800 others gathered at another provisional camp some 20 kilometres away.

"We are facing a humanitarian crisis that the others provoked. We have already tabled proposals for the provisions we need in order to fix this situation", Greek Migration Minister Yiannis Mouzalas said yesterday. Friday's announcement by four Balkan states came a week after Austria said it would only allow 80 people claiming asylum per day, and also

"Europe can't be indifferent to those of our partners who don't respect their obligations," Greek President Prokypis Pavlopoulos said yesterday, referring to the border restrictions. Last week, the European Union told Austria that limiting asylum claims was "plainly incompatible" with European and international laws. Until the border situation is resolved, Greek authorities are trying to house migrants on the islands where they land by boat from neighbouring Turkey.

MIGRANT CRISIS IN EUROPE

FIGHT AGAINST TERROR FINANCE

G20 warns over 'loopholes'

Leaders say UK's EU exit would be global 'shock'

More needs to be done to combat "loopholes and deficiencies" in the world financial system as part of the fight against terrorism, finance ministers from the G20 group of leading economies said Saturday. In a communique following a meeting in Shanghai, the G20 officials urged the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to "intensify its work on identifying, analysing and tackling terrorist financing threats, the sources and methods of funding and the use of funds". The ministers were "resolved to combat decisively terrorist financing" and would intensify efforts to tackle "all sources, techniques and channels of terrorist financing", they said, pledging to enhance cooperation and information exchange. The promises -- which did not include precise details -- came after the head of the FATF said some government responses were still inadequate in the fight against money laundering, terrorism financing and other threats.

Since the Paris terror attacks in November, when 130 people were killed, around 50 countries have responded to a new call by the FATF -- whose current blacklist includes North Korea, Afghanistan and Syria -- for concrete steps to choke terror organisations funding, the body's executive secretary David Lewis told AFP. Meanwhile, finance ministers from the world's leading economies yesterday warned of a "shock" to the global economy if the UK leaves the EU. The ministers give their assessment in a statement released at the end of a two-day meeting of G20 nations in China. UK Chancellor George Osborne, who is at the event, told the BBC the issue was "deadly serious". The UK will vote on whether to leave or remain in the EU on 23 June. Meanwhile, London Mayor Boris Johnson has clarified his position on the idea that a vote to leave the EU could force Brussels to give Britain a better deal and trigger a second referendum.



Yoko Ono admitted to NY hospital

Artist Yoko Ono, 83, has been admitted to hospital in New York with "flu-like symptoms", her spokesperson says. But Elliot Mintz denied reports she had suffered a stroke. He said she went to hospital on the advice of her doctor and was expected to be discharged and return home later yesterday.

Yellow fever toll rises to 125 in Angola

An ongoing yellow fever epidemic in Angola has killed 125 people out of 664 suspected cases since December 30, government statistics show, despite attempts to quell the outbreak. The centre of the health crisis remains the capital Luanda, where 92 people have died, the health ministry said on Friday.

US signs new data pact with EU

Sets out limits on its spying on allies

The United States has set out limits to its use of data collected in bulk about European citizens after a new information-sharing pact was agreed this month, according to documents seen by Reuters. A clear explanation of what information could be used for -- preventing its "indiscriminate" and "arbitrary" use -- was a key condition of the new Privacy Shield framework that enables firms to easily transfer personal data to the United States. Under the deal, Washington agreed to create a specific new role within the State Department to deal with complaints and enquiries forwarded by EU data protection agencies. There will also be an alternative dispute resolution mechanism to resolve grievances and a joint annual review of the accord. In a letter to the US Department of Commerce, Robert Litt, General Counsel of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, says data collected in bulk can only be used for six specific purposes, including counterterrorism or cybersecurity. Crucially, US authorities would apply the same safeguards against indiscriminate data collection to information being transmitted through transatlantic cables. That addresses a key European concern that information gathered outside the United States was afforded fewer protections.



A Syrian rebel fighter from the Islamist Fulaq al-Rahman brigade mans a position on the frontline against regime forces in the town of Arbin in the eastern Ghouta region on the outskirts of the capital Damascus on Friday. Story on page 16. PHOTO: AFP

WAR IN SYRIA

271,138 killed since March 2011
Civilians: **79,106**
Women: **8,760**
Children: **13,500**
97,842 pro-regime fighters
46,452 non-jihadist rebel fighters
44,254 Islamist and extremist fighters, including foreigners

REFUGEES

4,719,605 registered refugees in neighbouring countries
TURKEY **2,620,553**
LEBANON **1,069,111**
JORDAN **637,859**
EGYPT **118,512**
IRAQ **245,543**
NORTH AFRICA **28,027**

Trump 'reminds me of Hitler'

Says former Mexican president; Christie endorses GOP 'con artist'

Mexico's former President Vicente Fox has compared Donald Trump to Adolf Hitler. Fox, who has several times criticised Trump over the Republican presidential frontrunner's comments about Mexico and its citizens, was speaking to CNN's Anderson Cooper. "He's going to take that nation [the US] back to the old days of, uh, conflict, war and everything," Fox said in a phone interview, referring to Trump. "I mean, he reminds me of Hitler. That's the way he started speaking."



Donald Trump Chris Christie

out of the 2016 presidential race after a lacklustre showing in polls. Trump gives Republicans the best chance to win the White House, he added. He said junior senators Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio, both running for president, were "unprepared" for the job. Frontrunner Donald Trump, a businessman from New York, is leading in three state polls and has already won three consecutive state contests in New Hampshire, Nevada and South Carolina, despite never having worked in politics.

Pak offensive kills 34 militants

The Pakistani military's latest ground and aerial onslaught in the troubled northwest killed at least 34 Islamist militants yesterday while five of its troops also died during clashes, security officials said. The attacks come days after Pakistan's powerful military chief General Raheel Sharif ordered his troops to begin the last phase of a bloody operation targeting militants in the country's restive northwest along the Afghan border. The strikes were carried out in the Maizer area of the Datta Khail region in North Waziristan.

Early gains for reformists

President Hassan Rouhani won a resounding vote of support and his moderate allies made a strong showing in high stakes elections that could speed Iran's post-sanctions opening to the world, according to early partial results yesterday. Tens of millions thronged polling stations on Friday for a twin vote to the 290-seat parliament and the 88-member Assembly of Experts, which selects the country's highest authority, the supreme leader. An initial tally of 1.5 million votes counted in Tehran - fewer than one-fifth of the capital's eligible voters - showed Rouhani and his pragmatic ally, ex-president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, leading the race for the Assembly of Experts, according to Interior Ministry figures. Reformists and moderates also seemed set to make big gains against Islamic hardliners in parliament. The twin poll was seen by analysts as a potential turning point for Iran, where nearly 60 percent of the 80 million population is under 30. The elections were the first since a landmark nuclear deal last year that led to the removal of most of the sanctions that have damaged the economy over the past decade. However, of the top contenders for Tehran's 16 Assembly of Experts seats, the partial count showed 13 were members of a list led by Rouhani and Rafsanjani. Of the first 61 parliamentary seats declared, 18 went to hardliners, 17 to reformists, 12 to independents and 14 will be decided in runoff elections in late April because no candidate won the required 25 percent of votes cast. Five of the initial winners were women. Even if reformists do not emerge with a majority in the legislature, dominated since 2004 by conservatives, analysts say they will secure a bigger presence than before. Interior Ministry spokesman Hosseinali Amiri said more than 33 million votes had been cast but that tally was not final. It would probably take three days to count all the votes, he said.