



Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos (L at centre) and the head of the FARC guerrilla Timoleon Jimenez shake hands during the signing of the historic peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC, in Cartagena, Colombia, on Monday. Inset, Members of FARC guerrilla react after the signing ceremony; and Colombians cheer in Bogota to celebrate the historic peace agreement.



PHOTO: AFP

17 killed in IS Baghdad blasts

AFP, Baghdad

Bombings claimed by the Islamic State jihadist group hit shopping areas in Shia districts of the Iraqi capital yesterday, killing at least 17 people, security and media officials said. The group said IS suicide bombers with explosive vests carried out the attacks in the Baghdad Jadida neighbourhood in the east of the city and the Bayaa area in the south. Officials said at least eight people were killed and 29 wounded in Baghdad Jadida, although some said the area was hit by a roadside bomb as well as a suicide bomber. Another suicide bomber targeted the Bayaa, killing at least nine people and wounding 30, officials said. IS and other Sunni extremists consider Shia Muslims to be heretics, and the jihadist group often targets civilians in Shia areas of Baghdad. Checkpoints in the capital frequently cause massive traffic jams that inconvenience citizens, but they consistently fail to prevent attacks. For years, most checkpoints featured fake bomb detectors that have now finally been scrapped, and guards wave most cars through unchecked. Yesterday's violence came two days after another suicide bombing claimed by IS killed six people in western Baghdad. A day before that, bomb and gun attacks claimed by the jihadist group killed 12 people in the area of Tikrit, a city north of the capital.



TIMBUKTU ATTACKS ICC hands 9-yr jail term to Mali jihadist

AFP, The Hague

War crimes judges yesterday sentenced a Malian jihadist to nine years in jail for destroying the fabled shrines of Timbuktu, in a landmark ruling experts hope will help safeguard the world's vulnerable monuments. Judges at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague found Ahmad al-Faqi al-Mahdi guilty of directing the 2012 attacks on the Unesco world heritage site in northern Mali. The landmark verdict is the first to focus solely on cultural destruction as a war crime and the first arising out of the conflict in Mali, when jihadists swept into the country's remote north in 2012. Unesco applauded the ICC for jailing the Malian jihadist, calling the sentence a "landmark" decision for the preservation of heritage. Prosecutors will likely be satisfied having asked for a jail term of between nine and 11 years, which they said would recognise both the severity of the crime and the fact that Mahdi was the first person to plead guilty before the court. Observers say they hope the sentence will act as a deterrent to those bent on razing the world's cultural heritage, which UN chief Ban Ki-moon recently condemned for "tearing at the fabric of societies".

Peace after 52 yrs Colombia, FARC rebels sign historic deal

AFP, Cartagena

Colombia's leftist FARC rebel force signed a historic peace accord with the government Monday and apologized to the countless victims of the country's half-century civil war. In an emotional open-air ceremony, President Juan Manuel Santos welcomed the communist rebels into the political sphere after signing the accord with FARC leader Rodrigo Londono, alias Timoleon "Timochenko" Jimenez. Dressed in white, the former mortal enemies signed and shook hands, smiling before an audience of international dignitaries, drawing loud cheers. The ceremony in the Caribbean coast city of Cartagena followed a four-year process to end the last major armed conflict in the Americas. The accord remains to be ratified by referendum in a week. "We are being reborn to launch a new era of reconciliation and of building peace," Timochenko said. "In the name of the FARC, I sincerely apologize to all the victims of the conflict for any pain we may have caused during this war." Colombian authorities estimate the 52-year-long territorial and ideological conflict has killed 260,000 people, left 45,000 missing and uprooted 6.9 million.

"Let no one doubt that we are moving towards politics without weapons. Let us all prepare to disarm hearts and minds," Timochenko said. An emotional Santos then addressed a message to the thousands of FARC fighters preparing to disarm in their jungle camps. "I welcome you to democracy," he said. "Swapping bullets for votes and weapons for ideas is the bravest and most intelligent decision that any rebel group could take." The 2,500 guests at the signing included UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, US Secretary of State John Kerry and an array of Latin American heads of state, including Cuban President Raul Castro. A squadron of planes flew overhead at sunset, prompting Timochenko to quip: "This time, they're coming to salute peace and not drop bombs." Under the deal, the FARC will now re-launch as a political party. Timochenko, 57, is expected to remain its leader. It grants an amnesty for "political crimes" committed during the conflict, but not for the worst atrocities, such as massacres, torture and rape. The FARC's fighters are to disarm in a UN-supervised process.

Delhi summons Pak envoy Presents proof of cross-border origins of Uri terror attack

AGENCIES

Stepping up its diplomatic offensive against Pakistan, India yesterday summoned Pakistan high commissioner Abdul Basit and gave him evidence of cross-border origins of Uri terror attack. Tensions between the longtime rivals have spiked over a recent attack on an Indian army base in Kashmir that New Delhi has blamed on Pakistan-based militant group Jaish-e-Mohammad. "Foreign secretary S Jaishankar summoned Abdul Basit and told him that the two guides who helped infiltration were apprehended by local villagers and are now in police custody," MEA spokesman Vikas Swarup tweeted yesterday. This is the second time that India has summoned the Pakistan envoy over the Uri terror attack. Jaishankar also told Basit about the content of GPS recovered from the bodies of terrorists with coordinates that indicate the point and time of infiltration across the LoC and the subsequent route to the terror attack site and grenades with Pakistani markings

as evidence of Pakistan's role in Uri attack in which 18 jawans were killed. Earlier, Islamabad branded an address by India's foreign minister to the UN in which she accused Pakistan of terrorism in disputed Kashmir as a "litany of falsehoods". It added "Jammu and Kashmir never was and can never be an integral part of India." **INDO-PAK TENSIONS** PAKISTAN SLAMS INDIA'S SPEECH AT UN AS 'LITANY OF FALSEHOODS' ISLAMABAD THREATENS TO BRING INDIA TO COURT OVER INDUS WATERS TREATY Addressing the UN General Assembly on Monday, Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj said: "Pakistan remains in denial. It persists in the belief that such attacks will enable it to obtain the territory it covets. My firm advice to Pakistan is: abandon this dream. Let me state unequivocally that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and will always remain so." Pakistan responded by calling Swaraj's speech a "litany of falsehoods" that distorted history, and denied its forces had aided the army base attack. Meanwhile, rattled by India's decision to review the decades old Indus Waters Treaty, Pakistan has threatened to petition the International Court of Justice. According to Pakistani media reports, Nawaz Sharif's Adviser on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz has said that "If India violates the treaty, Pakistan can approach the International Court of Justice." On Monday, India took the offensive right into the heart of Pakistan and decided to suspend the meeting of the Indus Water Commission. "Blood and water cannot flow simultaneously," Indian PM Modi told a meeting to review the Indus Waters Treaty. The meeting discussed ways to make Pakistan pay for the terrorist attack, in a bid to extend the retaliation against the strike beyond efforts to isolate Pakistan diplomatically.

Turkey sacks 87 spy agency staff

AFP, Istanbul

Turkey has dismissed 87 staff from its spy agency over alleged links to the failed July 15 coup, state media said yesterday, in the first purge of one of the country's most powerful institutions. The National Intelligence Organisation (MIT) has suspended 141 personnel in an internal probe over links to US-based preacher Fethullah Gulen who Ankara alleges was behind the coup. Of these, 87 have now been expelled, the Anadolu news agency said. Criminal complaints have been lodged against 52 of them, it added. Turkey has fired tens of thousands of people from state institutions in the wake of the attempted putsch but this was the first announcement of dismissals from the powerful spy agency. Turkey's secret service was widely criticised for not warning authorities about the coup bid and the government has acknowledged a vacuum in gathering intelligence.

First Clinton-Trump debate: key quotes

- On stamina to lead**: "I said she doesn't have the stamina. To be president of this country, you need tremendous stamina."
- On Hillary's experience**: "Let me tell you, Hillary has experience. But it's bad, bad experience." "He has really started his political activity based on this racist lie that our first black president was not an American citizen."
- On racism**: "The kind of plan that Donald has put forth would be trickle-down economics all over again... I call it trumped up trickle-down."
- On each other's economic plans**: "Typical politician. All talk, no action. Sounds good, doesn't work. Never going to happen."

Photo: Jewel Somad

NEWSIN brief

'Insider attack' kills 12 Afghan troops AFP, Kunduz Two Afghan soldiers with suspected Taliban links killed at least 12 of their comrades as they slept in the volatile northern province of Kunduz, officials said yesterday in the latest so-called "insider attack". The incident occurred just after midnight on the outskirts of Kunduz city, which was briefly captured by the Taliban last year in a blow to Afghan forces. **Typhoon Megi kills four in Taiwan** AFP, Taipei The third typhoon to hit Taiwan in two weeks killed four people and injured scores yesterday, bringing violent winds and heavy rain as schools and offices closed. Typhoon Megi forced thousands to evacuate their homes and played havoc with rail and road networks as it made landfall in the eastern county of Hualien in the early afternoon. **Peres 'fighting for his life': source** AFP, Jerusalem Israeli ex-president and Nobel Peace Prize winner Shimon Peres-- the last of Israel's founding fathers -- was "fighting for his life" yesterday after suffering a stroke earlier this month, a source close to him said. Peres, 93, has held nearly every major office in Israel, serving twice as prime minister. He won the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize for his role in negotiating the Oslo Accords, which envisioned an independent Palestinian state.

Regime forces launch Aleppo ground attack

AFP, Damascus

Syria's army took control of a rebel-held district in central Aleppo yesterday, after days of heavy air strikes that have killed dozens and sparked allegations of war crimes. In the first advance since announcing plans last week to retake all of the divided city, pro-government troops seized the Farafina district northwest of Aleppo's historic citadel, a military source told AFP. The push follows several days of Syrian and Russian air strikes on rebel-held Aleppo neighbourhoods -- some of the fiercest bombardment of the five-year conflict so far -- after a ceasefire deal brokered by Moscow and Washington collapsed last week. The Aleppo maelstrom prompted Western powers to accuse Russia of committing possible war crimes, charges the Kremlin condemned as "unacceptable". In the latest broadside, Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg also condemned the air campaign. "The appalling attacks on Aleppo have shaken all of us, and the violence and the attacks we have seen... is morally totally unacceptable and is a blatant violation of international law," Stoltenberg told a news conference in Bratislava. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a monitor, said that more than 155 people have been killed by Russian and regime bombardment on Aleppo city since the government announced its offensive last week. They include 11 civilians killed in raids yesterday on the neighbourhoods of Al-Shaar and Al-Mashhad, according to the Britain-based group. As well as the intensified violence, residents have been left reeling from food shortages and skyrocketing prices. Analysts yesterday said that the unprecedented ferocity with which Aleppo has been hit in recent days suggested that Moscow was backing the Syrian government's aim to totally recapture the city. "Russia has decided to go all out because it no longer believes in the possibility of collaborating with the United States in Syria," said Fabrice Balanche, a Syria expert at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Pak House adopts Hindu marriage bill

PTI, Islamabad

In a historic move, Pakistan's parliament has passed the much-delayed bill to enable the country's minority Hindu community to register their marriages. The first ever national law was passed on Monday after the draft was presented in the lower house or National Assembly by minister for human rights Kamran Micheal. The Nation newspaper reported that the law bill sets the minimum age for marriage for Hindus at 18. The minimum legal age for marriage for citizens of other religions is 18 for men and 16 for women. Breaking the law regarding the minimum age would result in six months' jail and a Rs 5,000 fine. The new law legalises remarriage for a widow six months after her husband's death. It also grants Hindus the right to divorce, with women having the additional right to do so on grounds of negligence, bigamy or having been married before 18.

AP FACT CHECKS OF FIRST US PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

WHEN RIVALS DENY THEIR OWN WORDS

Donald Trump's habit of peddling hype and fabrication emerged unabated in the first presidential debate while Hillary Clinton played it cautiously in her statements, though not without error. They both denied making statements that they are on the record as saying. A look at some of the claims in the debate and how they compare with the facts:

TRUMP ON IRAQ WAR: "Wrong. Wrong. ... That is a mainstream media nonsense put out by her. I was against the war in Iraq." (After Clinton accused him of supporting the war) **THE FACTS:** There is no evidence Trump expressed public opposition to the war before the US invaded, despite his repeated insistence that he did. Rather, he offered lukewarm support. He only began to voice doubts about the conflict well after it began in March 2003. On March 21, 2003, just days after the invasion began, Trump said it "looks like a tremendous success from a military standpoint." **CLINTON ON TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP TRADE DEAL:** "I did say I hoped it would be a good deal." (Said Clinton denying Trump's accusation that she called the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal the "gold standard" of trade agreements) **THE FACTS:** Trump is correct. On a 2012 trip to Australia as secretary of state, Clinton called the deal that was taking shape the "gold standard" of trade agreements. She championed it in other venues around the world. **TRUMP ON CLIMATE CHANGE:** "I did not say that." (Said the New York billionaire when Clinton accused him of calling climate change a hoax invented by the Chinese) **THE FACTS:** Yes he did, in the form of a 2012 tweet: "The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make US manufacturing non-competitive." He later claimed he was kidding, but he's also repeated the claim that climate change is a hoax, and one that benefits China. **TRUMP ON TRANSPARENCY OF HIS PERSONAL WEALTH:** "I've been under audit for almost 15 years." **THE FACTS:** Trump has never provided evidence to the public that he is actually under audit. A letter released by his tax attorneys never used the word, merely describing his tax returns under continuous examination. That is not a formal term for any kind of action by the Internal Revenue Service. **TRUMP TO CLINTON ON FIGHT AGAINST IS:** "You've been fighting ISIS your entire adult life." **THE FACTS:** Hillary Clinton was born in 1947 and is 68 years old. She reached adulthood in 1965. The Islamic State group grew out of an al-Qaeda spinoff, al-Qaeda in Iraq in 2013, the year Clinton left the State Department. **TRUMP ON HIS EARLY BUSINESS CAREER:** "My father gave me a small loan in 1975." **THE FACTS:** Trump got a whole lot more than a small loan. Aside from \$1 million in financing from his father, Trump received loan guarantees, bailouts and a drawdown from his future inheritance. Tim O'Brien noted in a 2005 book that Trump not only drew an additional \$10 million from his future inheritance during hard times, but also inherited a share of his father's real estate holdings, which were worth hundreds of millions when they were eventually sold off.

