

# Colombian voters reject peace deal

Govt, FARC leaders vow to sustain their efforts to end the half-century civil war

AFP, Bogota

Colombia's government vowed to sustain its efforts to end the country's half-century civil war after voters handed it a shock defeat by rejecting a peace accord reached with the communist FARC rebels.

Resentful of the bloodshed by the leftist guerrillas and the immunity the accord offers many of them from prosecution, voters on Sunday rejected the historic deal by a razor-thin margin, defying the government and flying in the face of opinion polls.

The result threw Colombia's future into uncertainty. The sides spent four years negotiating the deal and agreed it must be ratified in a referendum -- but there was no Plan B in the event of a "No" vote.

President Juan Manuel Santos admitted defeat, but pledged: "I will not give in, and I will continue to seek peace to the last day of my term."

FARC chief Rodrigo Londono, alias Timoleon "Timochochenko" Jimenez, vowed his side was also committed to continuing peace efforts. He said its ceasefire remained in force.

"The FARC deeply deplores that the destructive power of those who sow hatred and resentment has influenced the Colombian people's opinion," he said in Havana, Cuba, where the accord was negotiated.

"The people of Colombia who dream of peace can count on us. Peace will triumph."

Also "very disappointed" was Borge Brende, foreign



PHOTO: REUTERS

A supporter of "Si" vote cries after the nation voted "NO" in a referendum on a peace deal between the government and Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) rebels, at Bolivar Square in Bogota, Colombia, on Sunday.

affairs minister of Norway, one of the countries actively supporting the peace process.

He told radio NRK that the accord supporters should "work in the next days to see if there are solutions to save peace in Colombia" by taking into account opposition to the deal.

The peace accord was supposed to end the last major armed conflict in the Western hemisphere.

But the late Sunday vote result was a dramatic defeat for Santos and the accord he signed with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

Commentators compared the result to that of June's surprise "Brexit" vote for Britain to leave the European Union.

Colombians voted 50.21 percent to 49.78 percent against the accord, according to results published online with more than 99.9 percent of votes counted.



An Indian Border Security Force (BSF) soldier keeps guard at the India-Pakistan border Chakri post, about 20km from Gurdaspur, yesterday. Pakistani and Indian troops exchanged fresh fire across their de facto border in Kashmir early in the morning, Islamabad said, following an overnight militant raid on an Indian army camp in which one trooper was killed.

PHOTO: AFP

# Putin scraps plutonium cleanup accord with US

AFP, Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday ordered a halt to an agreement with the United States on plutonium disposal, citing Washington's "unfriendly actions".

The deal, signed in 2000, was meant to allow both nuclear powers to dispose of weapons-grade plutonium from their defence programmes, a move seen as a key step in the disarmament process.

The two countries recommitted to the deal in 2010. The Kremlin indicated yesterday that it would stick to the agreement if Washington lifts sanctions and ends other policies seen as unfriendly to Moscow.

Putin charged earlier this year that the United States was not honouring the deal by disposing of plutonium in a way that allowed it to retain its defence capabilities.

The suspension is symbolic of the breakdown in nuclear nonproliferation cooperation, an expert said.

The decree published yesterday states that Russia is pulling out of the agreement

"due to a drastic change in circumstances, the appearance of a threat to strategic stability due to unfriendly actions of the United States toward Russia".

It claimed that Washington was "unable" to carry out the terms of the agreement and that Moscow "must take urgent measures to defend Russian security".

Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told journalists that Washington has not honoured the agreement and "Russia no longer thinks it possible to carry out the conditions of the agreement alone" due to "general tension" between the two countries.

"It's a symbolic gesture that demonstrates that the sides no longer cooperate in this sphere," said independent military expert Alexander Golts, adding that it was not the first agreement to be suspended in the non-proliferation sphere.

A bill submitted by Putin to parliament, which asked lawmakers to support the agreement's suspension, indicated that some quid pro quo could still keep the deal alive.



# Afghan Taliban enter Kunduz

Security forces under pressure as Helmand fighting intensifies

REUTERS, Kunduz

Taliban fighters pushed into the centre of the northern Afghan city of Kunduz yesterday, taking control of the central intersection where they raised their flag a year earlier in their biggest success of the 15-year conflict.

Witnesses and police said that insurgents, who entered the city in the early hours of the morning, were attacking the governor's compound and police headquarters, while some officials were seen fleeing to the airport.

Footage posted by the Afghan Taliban on social media showed fighters in Kunduz, many wearing white headbands, describing how they had captured army strongpoints and taken prisoners during a day of fighting.

Reuters could not verify the authenticity of the footage. The fighters appear to have slipped through a defensive security line set up around Kunduz, entering the city itself from four directions before clashes broke out, witnesses said.

The assault on Kunduz came as the Taliban have stepped up attacks in different parts of Afghanistan, including in Helmand, where they have been threatening the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah.

Yesterday, Taliban fighters, positioned just across the Helmand river from the centre of Lashkar Gah, also took control of Nawa district to the south, killing a district police chief, officials said.

# 80 jihadists killed in Sirte

AFP, Tripoli

Forces loyal to Libya's unity government said yesterday at least 80 jihadists were killed at the weekend in the city of Sirte, a former stronghold of the Islamic State group.

"Commanders of front line units have counted at least corpses (of jihadists) killed as they tried in vain to attack behind the lines" of the loyalists, said the media office of forces loyal to the Government of National Accord (GNA).

It said in a statement sent to AFP that the bodies of another 25 jihadists were found in alleyways of the battleground coastal city.

The pro-GNA forces, who reported eight soldiers killed and 57 wounded on Sunday, said vehicles, arms and ammunition were seized in the latest round of an assault launched on May 12 and executed in phases to recapture Sirte from IS.

A Dutch journalist covering the clashes in Sirte, Jeroen Oerlemans who worked for the Belgian weekly Knack, was shot dead on Sunday.

Oerlemans became the second journalist killed in the fighting in Sirte after Abdelqader Fsouk, a Libyan who died in July.

On Saturday, GNA aircraft conducted six

sorties in preparation for another advance on the jihadists' last hideouts in the city's east.

American aircraft have also carried out 177 air strikes since August 1 in support of GNA forces, according to US Africa Command (AFRICOM).

The fighting has left more than 450 GNA fighters dead and 2,500 wounded. The IS death toll is not known.

Meanwhile, at least two people were killed yesterday in rare suicide blasts in the central Syrian city of Hama, claimed by the Islamic State jihadist group.

State news agency SANA, citing a local police source, said two "terrorists" detonated their explosive belts near Assi Square in the city centre about 15

minutes apart. The attack killed two people and wounded 12 others, Hama governor Ghassan Khalaf told state television.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor, one of the blasts hit a building used by the ruling Baath party.

The IS-affiliated Amaq news agency said "suicide attacks by fighters from the Islamic State using explosive vests" targeted government buildings in the city.

**WAR ON IS IN LIBYA**

# Arundhati Roy announces second novel after 20-yr gap

AFP, New Delhi

Indian author Arundhati Roy announced yesterday that her second novel will be published in 2017 -- 20 years after she won the Booker Prize for her debut one.

Roy, an activist and outspoken government critic, said through her publishers that "The Ministry Of Utmost Happiness" would be released next year.

"I am glad to report that the mad souls (even the wicked ones) in 'The Ministry Of Utmost Happiness' have found a way into the world, and that I have found my publishers," Roy said in a statement.

Her literary agent David Godwin said: "Only Arundhati could have written this novel. Utterly original. It has been 20 years in the making. And well worth the wait."

The 54-year-old has published a range of nonfiction works including about her time in India's jungles researching the country's Maoists who are fighting for

land rights.

But this will be her first novel since "The God of Small Things", published in 1997 about twins growing up in the southern state of Kerala which earned her the prestigious prize.

One of India's most famous and polarising authors, Roy faced arrest for sedition for challenging India's right to rule over the disputed Kashmir region in 2010.

Roy also criticises the United States as a global empire established through violence, rails against Western multinationals and decries the excesses of capitalism.

She recently featured on the cover of Elle magazine, saying she wanted to break the myth of the typical Indian beauty.

"I'm a black woman. Most of us are. Ninety percent of us are. This obsession that Indians have with white skin and straight hair makes mesick," she told the magazine.



# Turkey extends emergency for 90 days

AFP, Istanbul

Turkey will maintain the state of emergency imposed in the wake of July's failed coup for another three months starting from October 19, Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus said yesterday.

"The state of emergency will be extended for another 90 days starting October 19," Kurtulmus told a news conference after a weekly cabinet meeting.

The government has launched a vast crackdown to hunt down suspects in the failed putsch, blamed by authorities on US-based Muslim preacher Fethullah Gulen.

Gulen, who has lived in self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania since 1999, has denied he was involved in the coup bid.

# Trump running out of time

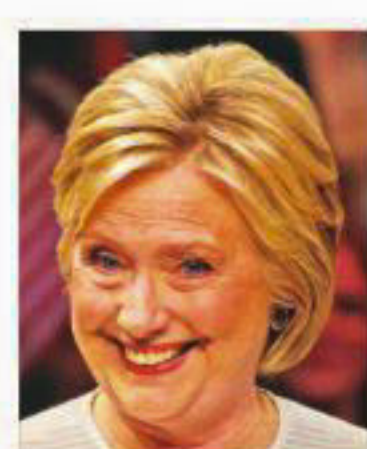
Controversies pile up as tax questions swirl

CNN ONLINE

Donald Trump's tax controversy and his self-destructive lack of discipline threaten to drain the Republican nominee of something he can't afford: time.

With 36 days remaining before Election Day, the real estate mogul's campaign is consumed with the fallout from a New York Times story published over the weekend that found Trump reported a \$916 million loss in 1995. That loss could mean Trump went 18 years without paying federal income taxes.

Those findings -- which Trump's presidency. "The reality is that we are in day six of the meltdown," Clinton supporter Neera Tanden said Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union." "He had a terrible debate performance. Everybody sees that. He sees the state polls moving towards Hillary. Eleven state polls were out this week. She's beating him in every



An injured Syrian child waits after receiving treatment at a makeshift hospital yesterday, following reported air strikes in the rebel-held town of Douma, on the eastern outskirts of the capital Damascus.

PHOTO: AFP

# NEWS IN brief

## Saudi abandons Islamic calendar for govt pay

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi government workers will be paid according to the Gregorian calendar instead of the Islamic Hijri calendar, making the working month longer as part of cost-cutting measures, newspapers reported yesterday. The change, approved by cabinet last week, brings civil service pay in line with the government's January-December fiscal year, the Arab News and Saudi Gazette reported. The reports said the latest austerity measure took effect on October 1.

## IS suicide bombers kill 10 in Baghdad

AFP, Baghdad

Suicide bombers struck two Shia-majority areas of the Iraqi capital yesterday, killing at least 10 people and wounding more than 30, officials said, attacks claimed by the Islamic State group. In the deadliest blast, a bomber detonated explosives in the Amil neighbourhood of southern Baghdad, killing at least six people and wounding 16 or more, officials said.

## Kim Kardashian robbed of millions in Paris

AFP, Paris

US reality television star Kim Kardashian was tied up and robbed at gunpoint at a luxury Paris residence by assailants disguised as police who made off with millions in jewellery, French police and her representative said yesterday. A spokeswoman for Kardashian said she was "badly shaken but physically unharmed" after the assault, which occurred at 2:30 am yesterday.