

# NEWS IN brief

## Swiss vote for gradual nuclear phaseout

AFP, Geneva  
The Swiss yesterday appeared to have voted in favour of a massive overhaul of the country's energy system by gradually replacing the power from its ageing nuclear reactors with renewable sources. Initial results after the voting indicated a 58 percent vote in favour. Final results were expected in by late afternoon.

## Four killed in Indian Kashmir firefight

AFP, Srinagar  
Two soldiers and two suspected rebels were killed Saturday in Indian Kashmir near the de-facto border that divides the disputed territory with Pakistan, the Indian army said. Indian army spokesman Colonel Rajesh Kalia said the four died during an exchange of fire.

## Erdogan to return as ruling party boss

AFP, Ankara  
Turkey's ruling party yesterday selected President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as its chief after a nearly three year break. The special congress of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Ankara choose Erdogan -- the only candidate -- to replace Prime Minister Binali Yildirim as party chairman.

## Australia says no to 'fake refugees'

AFP, Sydney  
Australia yesterday gave 7,500 boatpeople until October to file a claim proving they are genuine refugees or be kicked out, declaring the "game is up" for illegal arrivals ripping off taxpayers. Immigration Minister Peter Dutton said that if they fail to lodge a claim by October 1, they will be removed from the country and banned from re-entering.

# Very encouraging Says Ivanka Trump on Saudi progress in empowering women

AFP, Riyadh  
US President Donald Trump's daughter Ivanka said yesterday that ultra-conservative Saudi Arabia has made "encouraging" progress in empowering women but more freedom is needed. "Saudi Arabia's progress, especially in recent years, is very encouraging," Trump's eldest daughter told a group of Saudi women she met in Riyadh while accompanying her father on a visit to the Muslim kingdom. "But there's still a lot of work to be done and freedoms and opportunities to continue to fight for," added Ivanka, who serves as an advisor to her father. "Around the world women continue to achieve unprecedented levels of rights and freedoms. Today you all stand on the frontlines of the fight for gender equality," she told a roundtable of women led by Princess Reema bint Bandar, deputy president of the Women's Sports Authority. Saudi Arabia, which applies a strict form of Sunni Islam, imposes many restrictions on women. It is the only country where they are not allowed to drive. When in public, women in Saudi Arabia are expected to cover from head to toe.



**'You are a unique personality that is capable of doing the impossible'**  
EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT ABDEL FATTAH AL-SISI TELLS DONALD TRUMP



## TRUMP IN SAUDI SWORD DANCE

President Donald Trump and other male White House officials bounced along to a ceremonial sword dance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on Saturday outside the Murabba Palace. Trump, surrounded by Saudi officials, bops back and forth with a smile on his face along with Saudi King Salman. The traditional men's sword dance is known as the ardash, according to the Saudi Embassy in the United States. The performance combines dance, drumming and chanting poetry, and it signifies the start of notable occasions like religious holidays or weddings, according to the United Nations.



# Dismantle 'network of terrorism'

### US tells Iran as Trump visits Saudi; Tehran reminds US of Riyadh's 9/11 links

AGENCIES  
US President Donald Trump yesterday held talks with leaders of the oil-rich Gulf monarchies, a day after Washington told their arch rival Iran to dismantle its "network of terrorism". Tehran and Riyadh are regional arch-rivals which accuse each other of sponsoring fundamentalist militias aligned to their competing sects of Islam in war zones across the Middle East. The GCC groups Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, all of which are traditional allies of Washington. Most GCC monarchies accuse Tehran of meddling in their internal affairs and want Washington to be tougher with Iran, which secured a landmark nuclear deal with world powers when Trump's predecessor Barack Obama was in office. US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Saturday demonstrated a tougher position on Tehran,

saying multi-billion-dollar defence deals signed with Riyadh aim to protect Saudi Arabia from a "malign Iranian influence." In a joint press conference with his Saudi counterpart Adel al-Jubeir, Tillerson urged newly re-elected Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to dismantle his country's "network of terrorism" and end "ballistic missile testing." Iran's foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif hit back to Saudi Arabia. In an editorial published yesterday, he advised Trump to discuss how to avoid another September 11 attack with the Saudi hosts of his first official visit abroad. Critics of Saudi Arabia say its strict view of Islam fuels Sunni extremism, called takfir, and some even accuse the kingdom of responsibility for the September 11 attacks. Saudi Arabia denies providing any support for the 19 hijackers - most of whom were Saudi citizens - who killed nearly 3,000 people in 2001. "(Trump) must enter into dialogue with them about ways to prevent terrorists and takfiris from continuing to fuel the fire in the region and

repeating the likes of the September 11 incident by their sponsors in Western countries," Zarif wrote for the website of the London-based Al Araby Al-Jadeed news network. Meanwhile, a senior Saudi cabinet minister yesterday said the scandals besetting Trump at home have no bearing on an increasingly close relationship with Saudi Arabia. The past week has seen a string of major developments in Trump's domestic woes, including the announcement that James Comey, the former FBI chief fired by Trump, has agreed to testify publicly about Russian interference in the US elections last year. And Israel yesterday gave a muted response to a mammoth \$110 billion arms deal between the United States and Saudi Arabia announced a day earlier. "This is a matter that really should trouble us," said Israeli Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz prior to the weekly cabinet meeting, although Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made no mention of the deal in his customary public remarks.

# Iran reformists sweep Tehran council polls

AFP, Tehran  
Iran's reformists have swept to the power in Tehran's city council, winning all 21 seats and knocking the conservatives from power, local media reported yesterday. It was another boost to the reformist camp after the resounding re-election of President Hassan Rouhani announced the day before. The results of the council elections, which were held alongside the presidential ballot on Friday, were announced by the governor's office. Voters in Tehran had to choose 21 councillors for the city of nine million, and stuck resolutely to the names put forward by the moderate-reformist camp. At the top of the list was Mohsen Hashemi, son of one of the Islamic revolution's founding fathers, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who died in January. Rafsanjani was the key backroom figure behind the recent alliance of moderates and reformists that propelled Rouhani to power in 2013. The victory in Tehran knocks the conservatives from power in the city for the first time in 14 years. The council will choose a new mayor when it convenes, which it must do within 45 days of the results.



**Smoke rises from an airstrike during a battle between Iraqi forces and Islamic State militants in western Mosul, Iraq, yesterday. Iraqi forces are battling IS in Mosul in a massive operation launched more than seven months ago to retake the country's second city from the jihadists.**

## TENSIONS IN KOREAN PENINSULA

# North fires another missile

AFP, Seoul  
North Korea yesterday test-fired a ballistic missile, the latest in a series of launches which have sparked international condemnation and threats of tougher UN sanctions. South Korea described the launch, the second in a week and the eighth this year, as "reckless and irresponsible" while the US military stressed "ironclad commitment" to defend its allies in the region. The missile, described by Washington as a medium-range one, was fired from Pukchang in South Pyongan province and travelled about 500 kilometres (311 miles), according to the South's armed forces. "Our military is closely monitoring signs for additional provocation by the North Korean military and we are keeping a full military readiness," said a statement from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The launch came just one week after the North fired a Hwasong-12 intermediate-range missile, which according to

Pyongyang flew almost 800 km and was capable of carrying a "heavy" nuclear warhead. A White House official visiting Saudi Arabia with Trump appeared to play down yesterday's firing. But the South's foreign ministry slammed the "reckless and irresponsible" firing as "throwing cold water on the hope and longing of the new government and the international community" for denuclearisation and peace on the Korean peninsula. Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson warned yesterday that the United States was still in the "early stages" of applying pressure on Pyongyang, after yet another North Korean missile test in defiance of international sanctions. In an interview with Fox News yesterday, Tillerson called the latest test "disappointing" and "disturbing," but he rejected a suggestion it was a sign that the United States's approach to the challenge posed by North Korea was not working.



## THE NEW YORK TIMES REPORT

# China killed, jailed 20 US spies in 2 yrs

AFP, Washington  
Beijing systematically dismantled CIA spying efforts in China beginning in 2010, killing or jailing more than a dozen covert sources, in a deep setback to US intelligence there, The New York Times reported yesterday. The Times, quoting 10 current and former American officials who spoke on condition of anonymity, described the intelligence breach as one of the worst in decades. It said that even now intelligence officials are unsure whether the US was betrayed by a mole within the CIA or whether the Chinese hacked a covert system used by the CIA to communicate with foreign sources. Of the damage inflicted on what had been one of the most productive US spy networks, however, there was no doubt: at least a dozen CIA sources were killed between late 2010 and the end of 2012, including one who was shot in front of colleagues in a clear warning to anyone else who might be spying, the Times reported. In all, 18 to 20 CIA sources in China were either killed or imprisoned, according to two former senior American officials quoted. It was a grave setback to a network that, up to then, had been working at its highest level in years. Those losses were comparable to the number of US assets lost in the Soviet Union and Russia because of the betrayals of two infamous spies, the report said.

# Two killed as militants attack Kabul guest house

## 20 cops killed as Taliban storm their outpost

AFP, Kabul  
A German aid worker and an Afghan guard were killed and a Finnish woman kidnapped as gunmen stormed an international guest house in central Kabul, officials said yesterday. No group has so far claimed responsibility for the attack late Saturday on the guest house run by Swedish charity Operation Mercy. In further violence roiling the country, 20 Afghan policemen were killed early yesterday when Taliban fighters stormed their outposts in the southern province of Zabul, as the insurgents escalate their annual spring offensive. The interior ministry confirmed the brazen Kabul attack, the latest in a series of assaults on aid workers in Afghanistan. "A Finnish lady was kidnapped from police district (three) last night at 11.30. A German lady and an Afghan guard were killed," interior ministry spokesman Najib Danish said on Twitter. Authorities in Helsinki confirmed that a Finnish citizen had been kidnapped, adding that they were investigating the incident in coordination with their counterparts in Kabul. "At the moment, the identity of the kidnapers is not known. Finland urges immediate release of the kidnapped person," the Finnish foreign ministry said in a statement. Operation Mercy's director Scott Breslin told Swedish news agency TT that he was holding a crisis meeting over the incident. Operation Mercy works with local Afghan communities in areas such as reducing infant mortality and women's empowerment. The kidnapping of foreigners has been on the rise, but the threat of abductions is even greater for Afghans. Kabul is plagued by criminal gangs who stage abductions for ransom, often targeting foreigners and wealthy locals, and sometimes handing them over to insurgent groups.

## Iran fires mortars into Pakistan

ANI, Islamabad  
Mortar shells were fired into Pakistan's territory from across the Iranian border, reports Samaa TV. Pakistan shares a 900 kilometre long porous border with Iran and the two countries had in 2014 decided to boost intelligence coordination to wipe out terrorists from the border region. Work on the Rs 20 million Pakistan Gate in Taftan along the Pak-Iran border was completed in 2016. This border crossing point is the oldest trade route to Iran and Europe and thousands of foreigners and locals travelling to Europe and Iran by road each year use this crossing point.

## Indian woman scales Mt Everest twice in a week

AFP, Kathmandu  
An Indian climber yesterday reached the summit of Mount Everest for the second time in less than a week, her expedition team said, setting a women's record for a double ascent of the world's highest mountain in a single season. Anshu Jamsenpa, 37, returned from the 8,848-metre (29,028-feet) peak on May 16, before turning around after a short rest to repeat the feat. "Anshu reached the summit of Everest at 8:00am today for the second time this season, setting a new record," said Dawa Lama of Dream Himalaya Adventures. Jamsenpa, a mother of two, was blessed by Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama before leaving for the expedition. The current female record, certified by Guinness World Records, is held by Nepali climber Chhurim Sherpa, who in 2012 became the first woman to scale the peak twice in a season. Jamsenpa has climbed Mount Everest five times. Last week Nepali climber Lhakpa Sherpa broke her own record for the greatest number of summits by a woman after scaling the peak for an eighth time. More than 120 climbers have made the summit this season, with the first ascents delayed by high winds, fresh snowfall and unusually cold temperatures.

