

# NEWS IN brief

## Child suicide bombers kill nine in Cameroon

REUTERS, Douala

Two children, between 10 and 15 year, carrying explosives blew themselves up on Friday near a camp in northern Cameroon housing civilians displaced by Nigeria's Boko Haram militants, killing nine people and wounding 30, officials said. They entered the town of Kolofata, around 10 km from the border with Nigeria, before dawn, posing as refugees looking for food before the start of the daytime fast for Ramadan.

## Astana Syria peace talks on June 12-13

REUTERS, Moscow

The next round Syria peace talks will be held in the Kazakh capital of Astana on June 12-13, RIA news agency quoted the Syrian ambassador to Moscow as saying yesterday.

## Yemen clashes kill 27

AFP, Aden

Yemeni government forces yesterday fought to capture a rebel-held presidential palace in the southwestern province of Ta'ez after clashes that killed 27 people, medics and military sources said. Most of Ta'ez province is controlled by Shia Huthi rebels. The UN has warned that 17 million people, or two-thirds of the population, face a serious threat of famine this year.

## Gulen links: Turkey detains PM's advisor

AFP, Ankara

Turkish PM Binali Yildirim's chief adviser was detained yesterday over suspected links to the movement of US-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen blamed for last year's failed coup, state media reported. Birol Erdem, a former senior justice ministry official, was taken into custody in Ankara along with his wife



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is greeted by French President Emmanuel Macron on the last leg of his four-nation visit at the Elysee palace in Paris, France, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

## India will 'go beyond' Paris climate deal

Modi tells Macron  
AFP, Paris

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday vowed after meeting French President Emmanuel Macron to go "above and beyond" the Paris Agreement on climate change, after the US said it would quit the deal.

Speaking two days after US President Donald Trump announced plans to withdraw from the deal on curbing carbon emissions, Modi said it was "part of the world's shared heritage" and that India would "continue working...above and beyond the Paris accord".

The agreement signed by 195 countries in the French capital in 2015 "can protect future generations and give new hope," the Indian leader said.

He avoiding direct criticism of Trump's move, however.

Macron said that during two hours of the talks that encompassed trade, defense and the anti-terror fight the pair had "mainly discussed our commitment to the climate".

"I want to restate here France's full commitment to the fight against climate warming," said the president, who reacted to Trump's announcement Thursday with a memorable call to "make the planet great again" -- a play on Trump's pledge to "make America great again" that has been shared by tens of thousands of Twitter users.

Macron said he would visit India, the world's third-largest carbon emitter, by the end of the year for an international summit on solar power -- an area on which France plans closer cooperation with the Asian power.

The Frenchman has led Europe's defence of the Paris accord in the face of Trump's climate scepticism.

As justification for his move Trump accused China and India of benefiting from the deal at the expense of the US.

# Blasts hit Kabul funeral

19 killed; Ghani calls for unity, says country under attack

REUTERS, Kabul

A series of blasts in Kabul yesterday killed at least 19 people at a funeral for one of the victims of clashes between police and protesters a day before.

The latest explosions continued a wave of violence in the capital since a devastating truck bomb on Wednesday.

Yesterday's blasts shattered an uneasy calm which had descended after authorities blocked the streets of Kabul in a bid to prevent a repeat of the bloody confrontation between protesters and police on Friday.

The violence, fuelled by public anger over the inability of President Ashraf Ghani's divided government to ensure security in Kabul, has exacerbated political tensions between rival factions, and Ghani issued a call for unity.

"The country is under attack," Ghani said in a message on Twitter. "We must be strong and united."

Kabul's Italian-run Emergency Hospital, which has treated a stream of wounded over the past few days, said 19 people had been reported killed

and 16 wounded had been brought to the hospital. The interior ministry said there were six dead and 87 wounded.

Government Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah was at the funeral but was unharmed, while survivors said a series of explosions had ripped through the crowd, most of whom



appeared to be linked to Abdullah's mainly Tajik Jamiat-e-Islami party.

One of the most bloody weeks in Kabul for months began with the devastating truck bomb attack in the city's diplomatic zone on Wednesday morning which killed more than 80 people and wounded more than 460.

That was followed by five more deaths on Friday during clashes which broke out between protesters and police at a rally demanding the resignations of Ghani and Abdullah over repeated security failures.

The Taliban, which has often carried out bomb attacks in the past, issued a swift denial that it had any role and instead blamed factional rivalries in the government's own camp, the group's spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said.

Yesterday's blasts occurred at the funeral of the son of the deputy Senate speaker, Mohammad Alam Izadyar, an ethnic Tajik ally of Abdullah. He died after being seriously injured in clashes during Friday's protest.

The violence further complicates the situation confronting US and coalition officials as they work on plans expected to see an increase of between 3,000 and 5,000 in the number of foreign troops in Afghanistan.

With much of the capital locked down by security forces, a group of around 200 protesters remained near the blast site in the centre of town, sheltering from the sun in open tents.

# Iraq forces announce gains in west Mosul

AFP, Mosul

Iraqi forces have recaptured one neighbourhood in west Mosul and nearly half of another that are targets of a broad offensive against jihadists launched last week, officers said on Friday.

Iraqi security forces are more than seven months into a massive operation to retake Mosul from the Islamic State group, which overran the city and swathes of other territory nearly three years ago.

Now, IS's grip on Mosul has been reduced to the Old City and several nearby areas, but the jihadists are still putting up significant resistance and up to 200,000 civilians may be caught in the fighting.

Forces from Iraq's elite Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) recaptured Al-Saha al-Oula neighbourhood, Staff Lieutenant General Abdulmir Yarallah, who heads the military command coordinating the Mosul operation, said in a statement.

Earlier Friday, Lieutenant General Raed Shakir Jawdat, the commander of the federal police, said in a statement that his forces "continue to advance cautiously, and have imposed their control over 40 percent of Al-Zinjili neighbourhood".

Those are two of the three neighbourhoods that are the target of the current assault by Iraqi forces, with the third being the nearby Al-Shifaa area.

All three are located north of the Old City, a warren of narrow streets and closely spaced buildings that has posed a major challenge for security forces.

# IS not behind casino attack

Says Duterte; scores flee Islamist gunmen in Marawi

AGENCIES

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte yesterday said that Islamic State militants were not behind the attack on a casino in the capital that killed at least 36 people, supporting a police assessment that it was merely a botched robbery.

The gunman who burst into the Resorts World Manila entertainment complex early on Friday, firing shots, setting gaming tables alight and killing dozens, all suffocating in thick smoke, had been labelled by a top lawmaker as a "lone wolf" terrorist.

"That is not the work of ISIS," Duterte, using an acronym for Islamic State, told reporters in Cagayan de Oro city where he was visiting troops. "The work of ISIS is more cruel and brutal, they would simply kill people for nothing."

Clips from the casino CCTV, which police and officials at Resorts World released yesterday, showed the gunman was



firing shots at the ceiling and setting gaming tables and slot machines ablaze.

The gunman, whose identity remains unknown, was caught on camera purportedly stealing casino chips worth 113 million pesos (\$2.27 million) from a storage room before he was later found by security officers, who shot and wounded him during an exchange of fire.

Duterte's spokesman, Ernesto Abella, said on Friday there was no proof linking the casino attack to a protracted urban battle between government troops and Islamist militants in the country's south.

Meanwhile, scores of people ran to freedom through a terrifying gauntlet of military air strikes and Islamist gunmen Saturday, nearly two weeks after being trapped in a deadly battle for a Philippine city.

Marawi has been transformed into a warzone since hundreds of gunmen rampaged through the city on May 23.



A man holds up a sign that reads "drink against terror" as thousands cheer for a rock band at the open-air weekend "Rock am Ring" concert at Germany's Formula One race track Nuerburgring, Germany, yesterday. The concert near Germany's Nuerburgring race track resumed yesterday after being suspended on Friday due to a possible terrorist threat, the organisers and police said. PHOTO: REUTERS

# US can honour climate pact without Trump

Says Bloomberg  
AFP, Paris

Billionaire climate advocate Michael Bloomberg met French President Emmanuel Macron on Friday as the political and grassroots response to Donald Trump's ditching of the Paris Agreement built up steam.

Bloomberg made an unannounced visit to Paris after launching a coalition of US cities and corporations that intends to uphold the Paris accord while Macron led Europe's charge to defend the pact.

"Today I want the world to know the US will meet our Paris commitment, and through a partnership among cities, states, and businesses, we will seek to remain part of the Paris agreement process," Bloomberg said at a joint

# No compromise on S China Sea

Mattis reassures allies as US turns to China on N Korea

AFP, Singapore

Pentagon chief Jim Mattis yesterday moved to reassure Asian allies that the United States can work with China on reining in North Korea's nuclear weapons programme without compromising its opposition to Beijing's continued "militarisation" of the South China Sea.

President Donald Trump -- who frequently denounced China on the campaign trail -- has turned to Beijing to help pressure Pyongyang, prompting broad concerns that America will go easy on China's maritime activities.

Longstanding partners are also mortified that Trump has seemed indifferent to traditional alliances, and have interpreted his pulling out of a trans-Pacific trade deal and the Paris climate accords as signs of broader American disengagement.

Mattis, arguably Trump's most important statesman as the new president hopes to slash the State Department, tried to allay the fears.

"In the security arena, we have a deep and abiding commitment to reinforcing the rules-based international order, a product of so many nations' efforts to create stability," Mattis said in Singapore at the Shangri-La Dialogue, a major defence summit for countries from the Asia-Pacific region



and beyond. Calling North Korea's nuclear ambitions a "threat to us all," Mattis asked the international community to come together on the issue.

"The Trump administration is encouraged by China's renewed commitment to work with the international community toward denuclearisation," he added.

International pressure ramped up on Pyongyang Friday as the UN Security Council imposed sanctions on 18 North Korean officials and entities.

The defence chief spoke directly to concerns America might grant concessions to China to ensure cooperation on North Korea, saying the issue was not "binary" and that the United States would continue to pressure Beijing elsewhere.

"Artificial island construction and indisputable militarisation of facilities on features in international waters undermine regional stability," Mattis said, calling China out over its "disregard for international law" and "contempt for other nations' interests".

China claims nearly all of the South China Sea, despite partial counter-claims from Taiwan and several southeast Asian nations including the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam.

# TRUMP'S SNUB TO PARIS CLIMATE DEAL

## Isolated US hits back

Accuses Europe of trying to 'shackle' its economy

AFP, Washington

The White House hit back Friday at criticism of Donald Trump's decision to scrap a major global climate deal, accusing Europe of trying to "shackle" the US economy and refusing to acknowledge climate change is real.

With the United States virtually isolated on the world stage, a string of administration officials went on the offensive Friday to justify the Republican president's decision to abandon the 195-nation Paris deal curbing global emissions.

Trump's top climate advisor Scott Pruitt was indignant: "The world applauded when we joined Paris. And you know why? I think they applauded because they knew it would put this country at a disadvantage."

"The European leaders, why do they want us to stay in? They know it will continue to shackle our economy," said Pruitt, who serves as Trump's Environment Protection Agency administrator.

That combative tone came amid a wave of bitter condemnation from around the world and as Trump and his aides refused to say whether he believes climate change is real, in

line with the global scientific consensus.

Along with Trump, Pruitt and White House press secretary Sean Spicer were among those who refused to answer repeated questions on the subject.

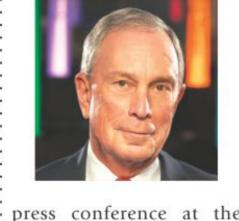
Instead, Pruitt lashed out, saying "we have nothing to be apologetic about as a country," despite the United States being the world's second-largest emitter of greenhouse gases after China.

"We have taken significant steps to reduce our CO2 footprint," he said.

As well as world outcry, Trump's decision prompted a domestic backlash, with state governors, city mayors and powerful companies already drawing up plans to meet the Paris pact's greenhouse gas emission targets.

At least two Republican governors announced Friday they were partnering with Democratic-run states to combat climate change.

The Paris Agreement commits signatories to keep the worldwide rise in temperatures "well below" two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) from pre-industrial times and to "pursue efforts" to hold the increase under 1.5 degrees Celsius.



press conference at the Elysee presidential palace.

"The American government may have pulled out of the agreement, but the American people remain committed to it. We will meet our targets."

Macron described the Paris accord as "irreversible" and hailed Bloomberg as "a key player in the climate battle."

"He can count on us," he added.

On Thursday, Bloomberg said mayors, governors, and business leaders from both political parties were "signing onto a statement of support that we will submit to the UN -- and together, we will reach the emission reduction goals the US made in Paris in 2015."