

## NEWS IN brief

## Afghan leader at UN urges Pak talks

AP, United Nations

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani yesterday appealed to Pakistan to work together to curb extremists, seeing an opportunity as the United States sends in more troops. "I call upon Pakistan to engage with us on a comprehensive state to state dialogue on peace, security and regional cooperation leading to prosperity," he said.

## Obama to earn from Wall Street speech

AFP, New York

Barack Obama has begun cashing in on his time in the White House with paid Wall Street speeches less than a year after leaving office, a practice which drew stinging rebukes for Hillary Clinton during last year's presidential campaign.

Obama will appear Monday before a who's who of the US health care industry at a US\$100,000-a-head-table next week by the New York trading firm Cantor Fitzgerald. According to a person briefed on a person's planned appearance, he will be paid about \$400,000.

## 3 more arrested over London train attack

REUTERS, New York

British police arrested three men in south Wales over last week's bombing of a busy train in the heart of west London, leaving five people ailing. Two of the men are being held on suspicion by detectives over the attack which injured 30 people. The home-made bomb went off on Friday during the morning rush hour on a packed train at Parsons Green underground station, engulfing the carriage in flames.

## Saudi Arabia set to lift ban on internet calls

REUTERS, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia will remove its ban on internet phone calls today, a government spokesman said, in a bid to stimulate online business as the kingdom looks to boost non-oil revenue. All online voice and video calls service such as Microsoft's Skype and Facebook's WhatsApp that satisfy regulators' requirements will become accessible at midnight, officials said yesterday.

## GULF CRISIS

## Qatar emir at UN urges for dialogue

REUTERS, United Nations

Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani on Tuesday renewed a call for "unconditional dialogue" to resolve the dispute between Qatar and its Arab allies, while US President Donald Trump said he expected the dispute to be resolved quickly.

Speaking from the podium of the 193-member United Nations General Assembly, Sheikh Tamim renewed the call for "an unconditional dialogue based on mutual respect for sovereignty".

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Bahrain are all part of the axis and trade links with Qatar. In June 5, suspending air and shipping routes with the world's biggest exporter of liquefied natural gas, which home to the region's biggest US military base.

The nations say Doha supports regional foes Iran and ISIS, and urges a "humanitarian dialogue" to resolve the dispute.

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"Most have no money, no food, no clean water, no shelter and don't speak the language," said IOM's Asia-Pacific spokesman Chris Lom.

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(Clockwise from top) Rescuers, firefighters, policemen, soldiers and volunteers desperately remove rubble and debris from a flattened building in search of survivors after a powerful quake in Mexico City; rescuers work at the site of a collapsed building after night falls in the capital; and an injured woman is being rescued and taken to safety from a collapsed building. Pictures were taken on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

## Trump's UN speech bags mixed reaction

REUTERS, BBC Online

Donald Trump's first major speech at the United Nations has been denounced by some of the member nations he singled out for criticism and gained praise from some of US allies.

The US president included Iran among "a small group of rogue regimes", and said the US would "totally destroy" North Korea if forced to do so.

Iran's foreign minister said: "Trump's ignorant hate speech belongs in medieval times", and not the UN.

North Korea has yet to respond to the president's threat of destruction.

Washington has repeatedly warned North Korea over its weapons tests, which violate UN Security Council resolutions. On Tuesday, Trump criticised North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-un, saying: "He's on a suicide mission." If "he's forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to completely destroy North Korea," he added.

Reuters news agency said one audience member covered his face with his hands, and that loud, startled murmur filled the hall in response.

Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom, who was observed crossing her arms, told the BBC: "It was the wrong speech, at the wrong time, to the wrong audience."

In his speech, he called the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers "one of the most important and sided transactions the United States has ever entered into".

Trump also targeted Venezuela, calling its government a corrupt "socialist dictatorship" and warned that the US was prepared to take action against it. Venezuela's Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza rejected what he called "threats".

But Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu backed Trump during his speech, saying the deal with Iran should be amended or scrapped altogether, and warned against the spread of Iranian influence in the Middle East.

South Korea praised the US leader's speech, US ally Japan, which Pyongyang often threatens to destroy, has taken a consistently hard line on North Korea, pushing for immediate action.

"We greatly appreciate President Trump's approach to changing North Korea's policy stance, denunciating the country and calling on the international community, including China and Russia, for their cooperation toward strengthening pressure on North Korea," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters.



## Trump 'decided' on Iran deal

Rouhani at UN says nuke deal does not belong to 'one or two' countries; Tillerson, Israel PM urge for amendments

REUTERS, United Nations

US President Donald Trump yesterday said that he had made his decision on whether or not the United States will remain in a 2015 nuclear accord between Iran and world powers, but he declined to reveal it.

"I have decided," Trump told reporters when he had made up his mind after having criticized the accord to which he agreed to curb its nuclear program in return for relief from economic sanctions.

Meanwhile, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani yesterday defended the nuclear deal at the United Nations, saying it was an internationally-backed accord whose fate could not be decided by "one or two countries."



"As such it belongs to the international community in its entirety and not only to one or two countries," he said. In a pugnacious speech on Tuesday before the UN General Assembly annual

gathering of world leaders, Trump called the accord "an embarrassment."

And his top diplomat Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said that the Iran nuclear deal must be changed if the United States is to remain in it.

Critics of the deal, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, worry that one of the main restrictions on Iran's nuclear program expire in 10 to 15 years, Tehran will be in a position to quickly develop an atomic weapon, if it wishes.

"Change it, or cancel it. Fix it, or nix it," Netanyahu said in his UN speech.

Netanyahu vowed to fight an "Iranian curtain" descending on the Middle East, pledging to prevent Tehran from ever establishing a permanent foothold in Syria.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres formally opened a signing ceremony at the United Nations, hailing it as a milestone as the first multilateral disarmament treaty in more than two decades.

## Dozens of states sign nuke weapons ban treaty at UN

AFP, United Nations

With the North Korean nuclear crisis looming large, 51 countries were to sign a new treaty yesterday outlawing nuclear weapons that has been fiercely opposed by the United States and other nuclear powers.

The treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons was adopted by 122 countries at the United Nations in July following negotiations led by Austria, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa and New Zealand.

Now 20 more countries that possess nuclear weapons – US, Russia, Britain, China, France, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel – took part in the negotiations.

The treaty will enter into force when 50 countries have ratified it.

The signing ceremony came a day after President Donald Trump threatened to "totally destroy" North Korea if the United States failed to defend itself or its allies.

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But Guterres acknowledged that much work was needed to rid the world of its stockpile of 15,000 atomic warheads.

"Today we rightfully celebrate a milestone. Now we must continue along the hard road toward the elimination of nuclear arsenals," said Guterres.

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The decades-old NPT seeks to prevent the spread of atomic weapons but also puts the onus on nuclear states to reduce their stockpiles.

## KURDISH INDEPENDENCE VOTE

## Turkey threatens tough sanctions

REUTERS, Hafter Border Crossing

Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan threatened to impose sanctions against Kurdish northern Iraq after a planned independence vote, piling economic pressure on Kurdish authorities after Turkish troops deployed near the main commercial border crossing.

Turkey, home to the largest Kurdish population in the region, has warned that any breakup of neighbouring Iraq or Syria could lead to a global conflict, and is due to prepare a formal response on Friday, three days before the referendum.

Erdogan said the Turkish cabinet and security council would discuss Ankara's options. They will "put forward their own stance on what kind of sanctions we can impose, or if we will," he told reporters in New York, according to Anadolu news agency.

"But these will not be ordinary," Erdogan said.

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