

Philippine President  
Rodrigo Duterte

# Philippines shelves talks after attack on guards

**Manila**  
The Philippine government's peace talks with communist rebels teetered near collapse yesterday as President Rodrigo Duterte threatened to end negotiations after suspected guerrillas shot and wounded five of his bodyguards in an ambush. Aides said Duterte was not in the convoy when gunmen opened fire on two Presidential Security Group vehicles on the southern island of Mindanao, where troops have also been battling Islamic State group-inspired gunmen for nearly two months. "The president directed

## Big casinos under scanner

**Manila**  
The Philippines said it would monitor large transactions at casinos to curb money-laundering, after proceeds from an \$81 million theft were funnelled through several gambling establishments last year.

President Duterte signed a law this week adding the gaming sector to monitored institutions.

Casinos must now report to the central bank's Anti-Money Laundering Council all transactions exceeding five million pesos.

the government panel... not to resume formal peace talks unless the reds (rebels) agree to stop their attacks against government troops in Mindanao," said a statement issued by the presidential palace.

The rebels have been in off-and-on peace talks with the government since Duterte, a self-described socialist, was elected last year. Both sides have since declared unilateral ceasefires, but these did not last. (AFP)

# Vietnam to rescue 1,000 bears to end bile trade

**Hanoi**  
Vietnam agreed yesterday to rescue more than 1,000 bears from illegal farms across the country, in a move to end the traditional medicine trade in the creatures' bile.

Though bile farms are already outlawed in Vietnam, bears are still captured and caged in illicit facilities where their bile is extracted using invasive and painful techniques.

Vietnam's Administration of Forestry (VNFOREST) and non-profit group Animals Asia signed an agreement Wednesday to rescue all remaining bears from farms, committing to end bile trade and close all facilities within five years.

"This is a truly historic day," Animals Asia CEO Jill Robinson at the signing in



A moon bear searches for food at the Vietnam Bear Rescue Centre near Tam Dao National Park in Vinh Phuc province Hanoi, adding that the decision "will lead to the definitive end to bear bile farming here in Vietnam". Bear bile farming has been outlawed in Vietnam since 1992. But many bile farms use a legal loophole allowing them to raise the animals as pets.

## #PollToday



The demand to shut Qatar's Al Jazeera has been dropped. Do you think that was the toughest one in the previous list given by the quartet?

Yes  No  Cant Say



The Turkish government needs to immediately and directly hear the German government's outrage and incomprehension as well as its crystal-clear expectations in the case of Peter Steudtner, and this time without diplomatic niceties."

**Martin Schaefer**, German Foreign Ministry spokesman over detention of German human rights activist

## Rest in sight

Rare birth of hairy-nosed wombat in Australia



The population of one of the world's rarest species has been boosted with the birth of a northern hairy-nosed wombat joey.

## Russia backs bill to strip 'terrorists' of citizenship

Russian MPs passed a law to strip naturalised citizens of passports for offences classed as "terrorism" following a deadly April suicide bombing in the St Petersburg metro.

## Russia probes fidget spinners over health fears

Russia's state consumer watchdog warned Tuesday over possible harmful effects on children from an addiction to fidget spinners.

## Court finds Thai general guilty of trafficking

A Thai general was found guilty of human trafficking on Wednesday as a Bangkok court convicted scores of people in a mass trial exposing the lynchpin role of corrupt officials in the grim.

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# French military chief quits after Macron row



Pierre De Villiers

Paris

French leader Emmanuel Macron faced the biggest crisis of his young presidency yesterday following the resignation of the head of the armed forces, whom he had rebuked for criticising defence spending cuts.

The row between Macron and General Pierre De Villiers blew up last week when the chief of staff told a parliamentary committee he would not allow the armed forces to be "screwed" by the government's plans to slash 850 million euros (\$980 million) from this year's budget.

Macron, 39, slapped down the 60-year-old, five-star general, telling army top

brass at their annual summer party "I am the boss" and that he deeply regretted that the budget dispute had been dragged into the "public sphere".

In a newspaper interview at the weekend, Macron added that if there was a difference of opinion, "it is the chief of the defence staff who will change his position".

De Villiers, who had been in the job for three years, said he felt he had no choice but to stand down.

"I no longer feel able to ensure the sustainability of the model of the armed forces that I think is necessary to guarantee the protection of France and the French people," he said.

# Eighth person in Trump Jr meeting identified



Donald Trump Jr. Washington

An eighth person who attended a controversial meeting with President Donald Trump's eldest son has been identified as a top official of a company founded by a Russian billionaire with links to the Trumps, CNN said Tuesday.

The confirmation is the latest development in the burgeoning scandal over the Trump campaign's contacts with Russia, after it was revealed that Donald Trump Jr. attended the June 2016 meeting during the campaign hoping to get dirt on his father's rival Hillary Clinton.

Trump Jr. had been told over email that a "Russian government attorney" would provide damaging details.

Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort and son-in-law Jared Kushner also attended.

The latest confirmed participant is Ike Kaveladze, a senior vice president of the Crocus Group -- a real estate business headed Aras Agalarov, the Azerbaijani-Russian mogul who has done business with the Trumps -- according to CNN, citing Kaveladze's lawyer for confirmation of his identity.

According to the lawyer, Scott Balber, Kaveladze is a US citizen who went to the meeting at Trump Tower under the impression that he would translate for Russian lawyer Natalia Veselnitskaya, who was thought to have the potentially incriminating information.