

Be ‘careful with his words’

Trump warns Iran’s supreme leader

AFP, WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump on Friday warned Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, to be “very careful with his words.”

“The so-called ‘Supreme Leader’ of Iran, who has not been so Supreme lately, had some nasty things to say about the United States and Europe,” Trump tweeted after Khamenei’s comments in Tehran.

According to Trump, Khamenei’s blistering speech, in which he attacked the “vicious” United States and described Britain, France and Germany as “America’s lackeys,” was a mistake.

“Their economy is crashing, and their people are suffering. He should be very careful with his words!” Trump tweeted.

Khamenei said that demonstrations at home over the accidental downing of a Ukrainian airliner were unrepresentative of the Iranian people and accused the country’s enemies of exploiting the disaster for propaganda purposes.

Leading the main weekly Muslim prayers in Tehran for the first time since 2012, he said the January 8 incident was a “bitter” tragedy but should not be allowed to overshadow the “sacrifice” of one of Iran’s most storied commanders, assassinated in a US drone strike.

His sermon came after a traumatic month for Iran in which it approached the brink of war with the United States and mistakenly shot down the Ukrainian jet, killing all 176 people on board. “The plane crash was a bitter accident, it burned through our heart,” Khamenei said.



Myanmar protestors hold a rally in Yangon to protest against any reinstatement of a controversial Chinese-backed mega-dam during the final day of Chinese President Xi Jinping’s visit in Naypyidaw yesterday. The demonstrators called for the “termination” of the 3.6 billion USD Myitsone project. The 6,000 megawatt dam was suspended in 2011 in the face of nationwide condemnation.

PHOTO: AFP

Support Turkey’s moves to end conflict in Libya

Erdogan calls on Europe amid new terror threats

REUTERS, Istanbul

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan has called on Europe to support its work in Libya, where it is providing military support to the internationally-recognised government, if it wants to end the conflict there.

Erdogan made his remarks in a column published on the Politico website yesterday, ahead of a summit in Berlin today that will try to stabilise the country.

At the meeting, Germany and the United Nations will push rival Libyan camps fighting over the capital, Tripoli, to agree to a truce and monitoring mechanism as first steps towards peace, diplomats and a draft communique said.

Turkey supports the government of Fayez al-Serraj in Tripoli and describes Khalifa Haftar, who heads the eastern Libyan

National Army (LNA), as a coup plotter.

“Keeping in mind that Europe is less interested in providing military support to Libya, the obvious choice is to work with Turkey, which has already promised military assistance,” Erdogan wrote.

“We will train Libya’s security forces and help them combat terrorism, human trafficking and other serious threats against international security,” he added.

Today’s summit will put pressure on Haftar and the LNA to halt a nine-month offensive against Tripoli after a week-long lull in fighting. But it will not try to broker power-sharing between the two sides, said diplomats briefed on preparations.

Haftar and Serraj are both due in Berlin - along with Erdogan and the leaders of Russia, Egypt and other Western and Arab powers.



AFP, Sydney

Rain and thunderstorms doused long-burning bushfires across much of eastern Australia yesterday, but they also brought a new threat of flooding in some areas.

Major bushfires continued to rage in regions of the south and southeast of the country that have so far missed out on the rain, including in wildlife-rich forests on Kangaroo Island off the southern coast.

The fire service in New South Wales (NSW) state, the country’s most populous and the hardest hit by the crisis, said 75 fires continued to burn yesterday, down from well over 100 a few days earlier.

“Rain continues to fall across a number of fire grounds,” the state’s rural fire service said, adding that “benign conditions” of rain and cooler temperatures were helping efforts to contain the remaining blazes.

To the north, Queensland state was hit by severe storms overnight, causing some flash flooding and road closures though no deaths or injuries were reported.

Rainstorms hit east

Flash flood threat looms large in Queensland; 75 fires continue to burn in New South Wales

Both states have suffered from one of the longest droughts in modern Australian history and some areas saw more rain Friday and yesterday than had fallen in more than a decade.

Fires continued to burn out of control in southern New South Wales and neighbouring Victoria state, but

forecasters expected significant rainfall in those areas today and tomorrow, raising hopes that some of those blazes could be brought under control as well.

Victoria’s emergency service also issued an evacuation warning due to a bushfire yesterday for French Island, the state’s largest coastal island with a small population of just above 100 people.

The unprecedented fires, fuelled by climate change and a years-long drought, have claimed 28 lives over the past five months.

They have scorched massive tracts of forest and bushland in eastern and southern Australia, decimated livestock on already barren farms and destroyed more than 2,000 homes.



AUSTRALIA BUSHFIRES

NEWSIN brief

Four killed in Utah home shooting

AFP, Los Angeles

Four people were killed and another wounded in a shooting at a home in Utah on Friday night, with the suspect taken into custody, police and media reported. The attack took place in the small town of Grantsville, on the outskirts of state capital Salt Lake City. “Officers arrived, they did clear the residence and were able to locate the four deceased,” said Grantsville police officer Rhonda Fields.

4 dead in Shabaab car bombing in Somalia

AFP, Mogadishu

Four people were killed in a car bombing in Somalia yesterday that apparently targeted Turkish engineers working on a road near the capital Mogadishu, police and witnesses said. The attack was claimed by the Al-Qaeda-linked Islamist militant group Al-Shabaab, which has stepped up its activities in Somalia and neighbouring Kenya in recent weeks. The bomb struck near the town of Afgoye about 30 kilometres west of the capital.

World’s shortest man dies in Nepal at 27

AFP, Kathmandu

The world’s shortest man who could walk, as verified by Guinness World Records, died Friday at a hospital in Nepal, his family said. Khagendra Thapa Magar, who measured 67.08 centimetres (2 feet 2.41 inches), died of pneumonia at a hospital in Pokhara, where he lived with his parents. “He has been in and out of hospital because of pneumonia. But this time his heart was also affected,” said his brother.

Dengue-resistant mosquitoes created

MAIL ONLINE

Mosquitoes can be genetically engineered to stop them spreading dengue fever to humans, a study has revealed.

Working in a lab, scientists created mosquitoes which were immune to the tropical disease and therefore unable to pass it on through bites.

They injected the insects with human immune system proteins which were able to fight off all four strains of dengue.

These proteins stopped the virus from multiplying inside the mosquito, meaning it never became strong enough to be transmitted.

Dengue threatens the health and lives of millions of people living in hot countries every year, and can cause fever, vomiting and deadly bleeding.

Scientists at the University of California, San Diego, implanted the dengue immune proteins, called antibodies, into female mosquitoes.

Antibodies are created naturally by the body and are what enables the immune system to destroy bacteria and viruses by itself without medical help.

But someone must become infected with, or exposed to, an illness before the body is able to develop them, which is risky with such a deadly disease.

The researchers found putting human dengue antibodies into mosquitoes stopped the disease spreading among the insects.



Demonstrators sit inside a mock-up jail during a protest organised by the Socialist Democratic Party of India against India’s new citizenship law, in Chennai yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Regional stability tops Pak FM-Pompeo talks in US

PTI, Washington

Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has stressed on Islamabad’s commitment towards “security and stability” in South Asia as he met US secretary of state Mike Pompeo and held wide-ranging talks on bilateral issues, the situation in Afghanistan and the Middle East.

Qureshi called on Pompeo on Friday during his two-day visit to the US. He is scheduled to meet US national security advisor Robert O’Brien. On Thursday, he met lawmakers at the US Capitol.

“In my meeting today with US secretary of state @SecPompeo, discussed engagement between Pakistan and US, its mutual benefit, along with it being a factor for stability in South Asia. Exchanged how stronger trade and investment is imp for an enduring partnership,” Qureshi said in a tweet after the meeting.

Qureshi also expressed his “deep concerns” over the situation in Kashmir and said that “peace in South Asia is elusive until this is resolved in accordance with UN resolutions and wishes of Kashmiris.”

Qureshi, while addressing the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) think-tank on Thursday, reiterated Pakistan’s demand that US President Donald Trump should mediate to resolve the Kashmir issue.

Ties between India and Pakistan came under

severe strain after New Delhi revoked Jammu and Kashmir’s special status and bifurcated it into two union territories on August 5, evoking strong reactions from Islamabad.

Pakistan has been trying to rally international support against India on the issue. However, India has maintained that the move was “entirely an internal matter”. On the Afghan peace process, the two leaders termed it as a “shared responsibility”



and spoke about the importance of US-Pakistan cooperation to bring peace in the region.

“The convergence between Pakistan and US stands as a unique opp for peace in Afghanistan, ultimately a shared responsibility,” he said in another tweet. They also discussed about the latest developments in the Middle East arising out of the killing of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani by a US drone strike.

Czechs detect first case of bird flu

New Europe outbreak feared

AFP, Prague

A highly contagious bird flu has been confirmed at a Czech farm, officials said yesterday after a French farm union warned of the risk of a new outbreak in Europe.

Czech official Petr Vorlicek said “the highly pathogenic H5N8 subtype lethal for birds” was found at a small farm 150 kilometres (94 miles) southeast of the capital Prague.

Vorlicek, spokesman for the State Veterinary Administration (SVS), said the infection at the farm in Stepanov nad Svratkou was most likely imported by wild water birds.

The SVS, which says the H5N8 has never been reported to have spread to humans, said the farm bred three ducks and 12 hens, of which six infected with the virus died within two days.

The remaining animals at the farm were culled yesterday morning, veterinarians said.

“We will create... a ten-kilometre (six-mile) protected area around the farm,” SVS head Zbynek Semerad added.

The French farm union, Coordination rurale, said Friday that H5N8 has been detected in recent weeks in farms in Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania as well as among wild birds in Poland.

It warned authorities to urgently stop shipments from the infected countries and alert customs agents to the risk.

It recalled how French poultry farms and the producers of foie gras were seriously affected by the 2017 epidemic when millions of birds were culled in Europe.

JAMMU & KASHMIR LOCKDOWN

Prepaid mobile services restored

2G services resume in 2 districts

PTI, Jammu

Prepaid mobile connections were restored in Jammu and Kashmir yesterday and 2G services resumed in two districts of the valley after being disconnected in August last year, official said.

Voice and SMS facilities were restored for all local prepaid mobile phones across the union territory.

Rohit Kansal, the principal secretary to the administration of Jammu and Kashmir, said the order came into effect from yesterday.

In order to consider giving mobile internet connectivity on such SIM cards, the telecom service providers will have to verify the credentials of the subscribers, he said.

Internet service providers have been asked to provide fixed line Internet connectivity in all the 10 districts of Jammu region and two districts, Kupwara and Bandipora, in North Kashmir.

Telecom services were shut in the entire Jammu and Kashmir on August 5 when the Centre abrogated special status to the erstwhile state and also bifurcated it into two union territories.

Early this week, government announced to restore broadband internet for institutions and government offices in Kashmir Valley. Social networking sites, however, will remain under complete restriction, the government order said.

The government said it will establish 400 internet kiosks after installing firewalls and whitelisting of sites to run essential services only.

Brazil minister quits over ‘Nazi’ quotes in speech

Brazil’s culture secretary Roberto Alvim resigned on Friday over a speech in which he appeared to quote Adolf Hitler’s propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels. In a video, Alvim, a member of far-right President Jair Bolsonaro’s government, announced a new arts funding program to the background of music by Richard Wagner, a composer many associate with Nazism. “Brazil art over the next decade will be heroic and national,” said Alvim, sitting behind a desk as he stared intensely at the camera, with a picture of Bolsonaro behind him, a Brazilian flag to one side and two-barred cross to the other. Rodrigo Maia, the president of the House of Deputies, called for Alvim to be sacked over the speech, which lasted several minutes.

4 South Koreans among 7 missing in Nepal avalanche



Seven trekkers, including four South Koreans, went missing in Nepal’s northwest Himalayan region after an avalanche hit their trail, local police and hiking officials said yesterday. The area where the avalanche struck the group, which also included three local guides, is estimated to be about 150 km (93.21 miles) northwest of Nepali capital Kathmandu, according to the officials. The avalanche was triggered by heavy rain and snowfall, they said. “Four of our Korean clients, who were trekking in the Annapurna region are not in contact and are missing since an avalanche struck them on Friday,” Sandesh Pandey, who runs the tour company which organised the hike, told Reuters. Mount Annapurna, in northwest Nepal, is the world’s tenth highest mountain at 8,091 metres (26,545 feet) and its base camp is popular with thousands of trekkers who visit annually.

Clinton prosecutor Ken Starr to defend Trump

Ken Starr, who was at the centre of Bill Clinton’s impeachment in the 1990s, and America’s biggest celebrity lawyer Alan Dershowitz were announced Friday to be joining President Donald Trump’s Senate impeachment defense. The administration has yet to unveil the full team but confirmed that White House counsel Pat Cipollone will be lead lawyer, backed by Trump’s personal attorney Jay Sekulow. “President Trump has done nothing wrong and is confident that this team will defend him, the voters, and our democracy from this baseless, illegitimate impeachment,” the White House said in a statement Friday evening. Dershowitz and Starr will bring the legal world’s equivalent of rock stardom when the trial begins on Tuesday.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS