BOLTON'S EXPLOSIVE CHARGES AGAINST TRUMP

John Bolton, the former US national security advisor, is making explosive allegations about President Donald Trump in a new memoir, "The Room Where It Happened." Here are some of the key claims in Bolton's book, as reported ahead of its publication by The New York Times, The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal:

ALL ABOUT RE-ELECTION

"I am hard-pressed to identify any significant Trump decision during my tenure that wasn't driven by re-election calculations," writes Bolton, who left his position in September. Despite widespread disputes with China, Bolton said that Trump asked his counterpart Xi Jinping in a meeting to boost purchases of soybeans and wheat in an explicit bid to help his chances of winning a second term through support from farmers. The episode has echoes of Trump's freeze on military aid as he pressed Ukraine's leader to dig up dirt on US domestic rival Joe Biden, a revelation that led to the president's impeachment by the House of Representatives.

FLIRTING WITH AUTOCRATS

Bolton, known for his hawkish views, says he was alarmed that Trump warmed up to autocratic leaders. He writes that Xi explained to Trump why China has detained masses of Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims, in what US lawmakers charge may be a crime against humanity designed to destroy minority groups. Trump, hearing Xi argue that the camps are meant to reduce Islamic radicalism, agreed that the camps were "exactly the right thing to do," Bolton writes. "In my government experience, it was the most irrational thing I ever witnessed any president do," writes Bolton, 71, who has served under Republican presidents since Ronald Reagan. Trump also appeared to envy the behavior of autocrats, once saying that journalists he dislikes should be executed as they are "scumbags."

IGNORANT OF BASIC FACTS

Bolton, in line with previous reporting, writes that Trump appeared ignorant of basic facts about the world. He writes that Trump asked whether Finland, where he met his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, was part of Russia and voiced surprise when a British official told him the US ally had a nuclear arsenal. "Oh, are you a nuclear power?" Trump is quoted as saying, in what Bolton writes "was not intended as a joke."

DISMISSED BEHIND BACK

Bolton writes that he was not alone in his views and that Trump's aides widely disparaged him behind his back. Even Secretary of State Mike Pompeo -- publicly a stalwart ally of Trump who traveled four times to North Korea in 2018 -- privately dismissed Trump and especially his outreach to Kim, according to Bolton. Pompeo slipped a note to Bolton during Trump's historic first meeting with Kim in Singapore, saying of the president, "He is so full of shit," Bolton writes. Pompeo yesterday blasted Bolton for "spreading a number of lies, fully-spun half-truths and outright falsehoods".

SOURCE: **AFP**

BOLTON'S BOMBSHELL BOOK, SUPREME COURT VOTE ON 'DREAMERS'

Trump presidency in turmoil

AGENCIES

Donald Trump's turbulent presidency hit another turmoil after top ex-aide John Bolton declared him unfit for office in a bombshell book and the Supreme Court blocked a key part of his re-election vow to deport undocumented migrants.

The mounting drama around the Republican's already rocky re-election bid raised the stakes for his rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on Saturday -- the first he will have held since the US coronavirus lockdown began, but mired in controversy over whether it is safe.

Trump's once supremely self-confident march toward a second term was already in a hole due to criticism over his responses to the coronavirus pandemic and nationwide anti-racism protests.

A Supreme Court ruling against his administration's bid to remove protections for hundreds of thousands of undocumented migrants classified as "Dreamers" struck another body blow.

The 5-4 ruling, with conservative Chief Justice John Roberts joining the court's four liberals, upheld lower court decisions that found that Trump's 2017 move to rescind the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, created in 2012 by his Democratic predecessor

Barack Obama, was unlawful.

The administration's actions, the justices ruled, were "arbitrary and capricious" under a federal law called the Administrative Procedure Act.

The ruling means that the roughly 649,000 immigrants, mostly young Hispanic adults born in Mexico and other Latin American countries, currently enrolled in DACA will remain protected from deportation and eligible to obtain renewable two-year work permits.

The ruling does not prevent Trump from trying again to end the program. But his administration may find it difficult to rescind DACA - and win any ensuing legal battle - before the Nov. 3 election in which Trump is seeking a second term in office.

Trump's platform rests in large part on his promise to crack down on illegal immigration. His push to get the "Dreamers" deported symbolized that hardline position.

The ruling was doubly stinging because Trump has long boasted that his appointing of two justices succeeded in tilting the nation's top court to the right.

In an outburst on Twitter, Trump called this and other recent rulings he didn't like "shotgun blasts into the face of people that are proud to call themselves Republicans."

He also faced a blistering insider attack from Bolton, a lifelong Republican who saw Trump from up close as national security advisor.

"I don't think he's fit for office. I don't think he has the competence to carry out the job," Bolton told ABC News to promote his book, "The Room Where it Happened."

The book -- which the White House is trying desperately to get blocked by court order -- alleges that Trump asked Chinese President Xi Jinping for re-election help, obstructed justice, and was no match for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"Putin thinks he can play him like a fiddle," Bolton told ABC.

Trump, who has assiduously built his image as a president who is tough on China, lashed back at Bolton, calling him a "sick puppy" and dismissing the book as "fiction."

In an apparent bid to underline his tough stance, Trump threatened in a tweet that a "complete decoupling" between the deeply entwined US and Chinese economies is an "option." Just the previous day, his hawkish trade ambassador Robert Lighthizer had told Congress this would be unfeasible.

Australia under cyberattacks from 'state-based actor'

AFP, *Sydney*

Australia's prime minister yesterday revealed his country was under a broad cyberattack from a "state-based actor" targeting government, public services and businesses, with suspicions falling on China.

Warning Australians of "specific risks" and an increased tempo of attacks, Scott Morrison told a press conference that a range of sensitive institutions had been hit.

"This activity is targeting Australian organisations across a range of sectors, including all levels of government, industry, political organisations, education, health, essential service providers and operators of other critical infrastructure," he said.

Morrison levelled blame at a "sophisticated state-based cyber actor", but declined to name the culprit, while saying that it could only come from one of a handful of states.

China, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Russia, the United States and a number of European countries are known to have developed advanced cyberwarfare capabilities.

But suspicions immediately fell on Beijing, which has clashed repeatedly with Canberra as it looks to increase the cost of Australia speaking out against Communist Party interests.

Most recently Australia enraged China by calling for an investigation into the origins of the coronavirus pandemic.

But Canberra has also pushed back against what it describes as China's economic "coercion", covert influence campaigns and the use of technology companies like Huawei as a tool of intelligence gathering and geopolitical leverage.

China has warned its students and tourists against going to Australia, slapped trade sanctions on Australian goods and sentenced an Australian citizen to death for drug trafficking.

Last year Australia's parliament, political parties and universities were targeted by state-backed cyberattacks, with China seen as the likely culprit.

Public broadcaster ABC cited "senior sources" confirming that China was believed to be behind the ongoing attacks as well.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian yesterday said that China was "a staunch defender of cybersecurity" and has "always resolutely opposed and cracked down on all forms of cyberattacks".

DEBATE ON RACISM, POLICE BRUTALITY

UN resolution will not mention US

AFP, *Geneva*

The United States is no longer mentioned in a draft resolution before the UN Human Rights Council condemning systemic racism and police brutality, a revised version of the text showed Friday.

The UN's top rights body is due to vote Friday afternoon on a draft resolution initially presented by African countries this week ahead of an urgent council debate sparked by the police killing of George Floyd in the United States.

But the initially strongly-worded text, which called for a high-level international investigation into police violence against people of African descent in the United States, has been repeatedly watered down in recent days, sparking outrage from rights groups.

First the call for an international investigation was removed, and in what appeared to be a final revision circulated around midday Friday, the text no longer mentions the United States.

In its current form, the draft resolution calls for United Nations rights chief Michelle Bachelet to "prepare a report on systemic racism, violations of international human rights law against Africans and people of African descent by law enforcement agencies."

It adds that the report should especially pay attention to "those incidents that resulted in the death of George Floyd and other Africans and of people of African descent, to contribute to accountability and redress for victims."

US keeps its promise to Taliban on troops cut

The United States has reduced its military presence in Afghanistan to the level negotiated with the Taliban, around 8,600 troops, the top US commander for the region said Thursday. "What I would tell you now is we have met our part of the agreement," General Kenneth McKenzie, the head of US Central Command, said. Under the February deal reached with the Taliban, the United States agreed to reduce its forces in Afghanistan from 12,000 troops to 8,600 by mid-July.

Dylan releases album

Legendary US folk singer Bob Dylan releases his first album of original songs in eight years yesterday with the ten-track "Rough and Rowdy Ways." Dylan's 39th studio album features a 17-minute ballad about the assassination of John F Kennedy, as well as a tribute to American electric bluesman Jimmy Reed. "Rough and Rowdy Ways" is the Nobel winner's first collection of new material since "Tempest" in 2012, although he has released a number of cover albums in the interim.

'Into the Wild' bus removed from Alaska trail

The "Into the Wild" bus is no longer in the wild. Alaska officials on Thursday airlifted from a remote trail outside Denali National Park the wrecked bus made famous by the 1996 book and 2007 movie "Into the Wild," removing an object that drew hundreds of fans and sightseers. Too many people were putting themselves at risk trekking to the site where adventurer Christopher McCandless died of starvation in 1992, officials said. The ultimate fate of the dilapidated bus is unknown.

Four Confederate portraits removed from US Capitol

Four portraits of senior 19th century lawmakers who served in the Confederacy were removed from the US Capitol on Thursday in the latest manifestation of efforts to confront systemic racism and injustice in America. The paintings of the men, all former speakers of the House of Representatives, were taken down at the order of current Speaker Nancy Pelosi. "There is no room in the hallowed halls of Congress or in any place of honor for memorializing men who embody the violent bigotry and grotesque racism of the Confederacy," the top Democrat wrote to the US House clerk Thursday requesting their removal. The symbolic action preceded Friday's observance of Juneteenth, which commemorates the end of slavery in the US.

SOURCE: **AFP**

Palestinian demonstrators carry a cement block and burn tires as they clash with Israeli troops during a protest against Israel's plan to annex parts of the occupied West Bank, near the city of Ramallah, yesterday. Israel intends to annex West Bank settlements and the Jordan Valley, as proposed by US President Donald Trump, with initial steps slated to begin from July 1. PHOTO: **AFP**

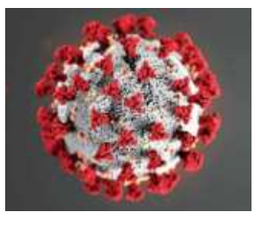
Does infection create immunity?

Study raises questions on coronavirus 'immunity passports'

AFP, *Paris*

People who catch COVID-19 but don't show symptoms may have significantly lower levels of immunity against the virus than those who become severely ill, new research showed.

The majority of virus patients display relatively minor signs of infection, and a small proportion show no symptoms at all.



Very little is known about this group, given that they are far less likely to be tested than those who go on to develop severe symptoms including respiratory problems.

Researchers based in China compared two groups of individuals infected with COVID-19 in Chongqing's Wanzhou district: 37 who showed symptoms versus 37 who did not.

The researchers analysed blood samples from both groups taken a few weeks after recovering and found that just 62.2 percent of the asymptomatic group had short-term antibodies, compared with 78.4 percent of symptomatic patients.

After eight weeks of convalescence, antibody presence had fallen in 81.1 percent of asymptomatic patients, compared with 62.2 percent of symptomatic patients.

What's more, asymptomatic patients were found to have lower levels of 18 pro- anti-inflammatory cell-signalling proteins than the symptomatic group, suggesting a weaker immune response to the novel coronavirus.

Authors of the study, which was published in Nature Medicine, said their findings called into question the idea that everyone who has had coronavirus are immune to future infection.

"These data might indicate the risks of using COVID-19 'immunity passports' and support the prolongation of public health interventions, including social distancing, hygiene, isolation of high-risk groups and widespread testing," they wrote.

Danny Altmann, a spokesman for British Society for Immunology said the research showed that natural immunity to coronaviruses can be quite short-lived".

NEWS IN *brief*

Seoul's unification minister resigns

AFP, *Seoul*

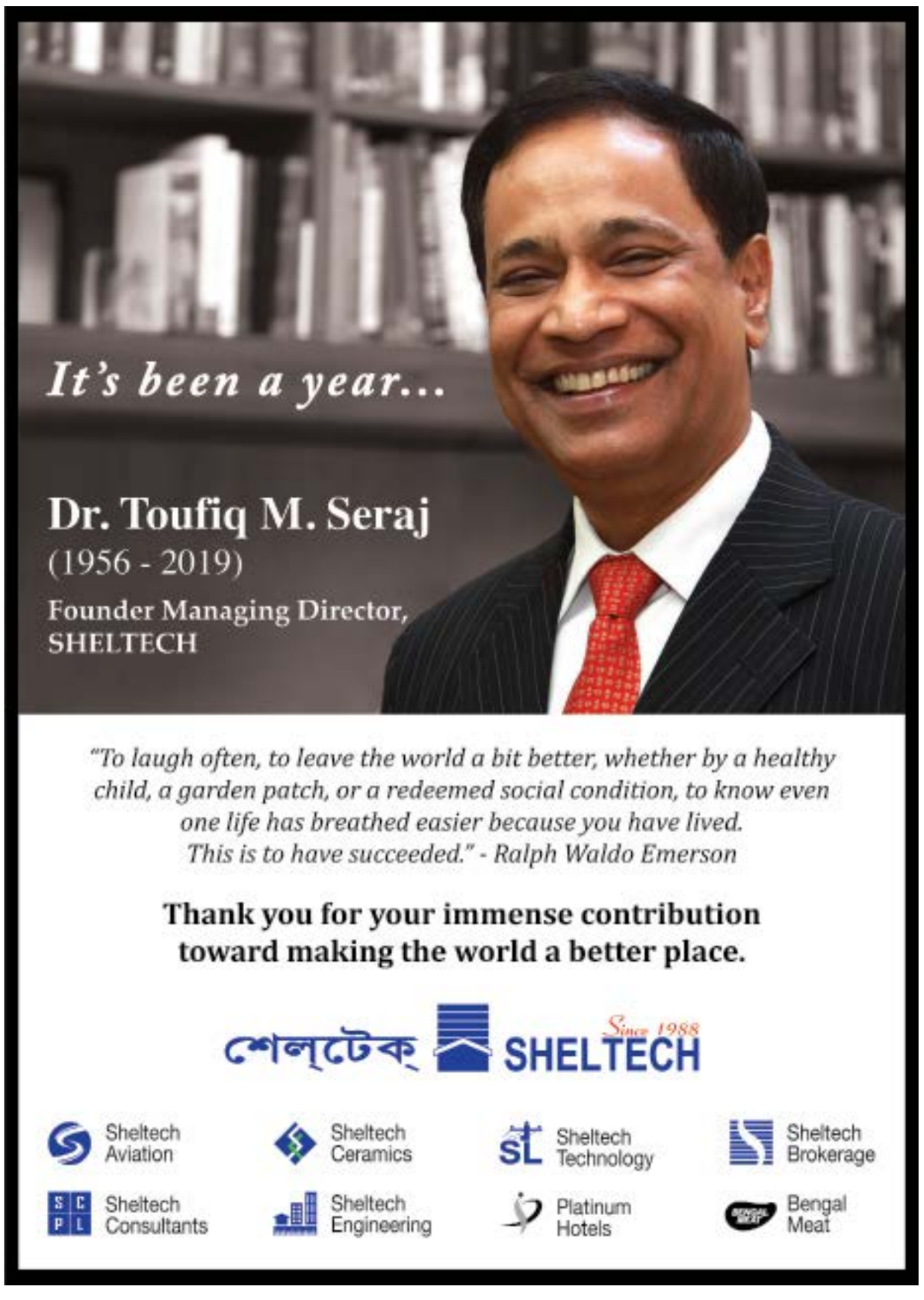
South Korea's Unification Minister Kim Yeon-chul, its point man for relations with the North, stepped down yesterday over heightened tensions on the peninsula, days after Pyongyang blew up its liaison office with the South. Kim had offered to leave on Wednesday, a day after the North demolished the liaison office, saying he "takes responsibility" for the worsening of inter-Korean relations.

2 Canadians charged with spying in China

AFP, *Beijing*

China has formally charged two Canadians, ex-diplomat Michael Kovrig and businessman Michael Spavor, with spying, officials said yesterday, more than 18 months after they were arrested. The pair were detained shortly after Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou was arrested in Canada on a US warrant. The move comes after a Canada court ruled that proceedings to extradite her to the US will go ahead.

8 J&K militants killed

AFP, *Srinagar*

Indian forces have killed eight militants in restive Kashmir, including two who hid in a mosque, officials said yesterday as New Delhi steps up offensive against separatists. The new fatalities take the death toll of alleged militants over 100 this year, officials said.