

DEMOCRATIC EMAIL HACK Russia dismisses claims as 'absurd'

AFP, Moscow
The Kremlin yesterday dismissed allegations that Russia was behind a hack of the Democratic National Committee's emails as absurd, mocking what it called obsessive references to Russia in the US presidential campaign.
"This absurd news was immediately refuted by the family of the well-known presidential candidate," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told journalists, referring to Trump's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr.
"We are still seeing attempts to obsessively use the topic of Russia during the US electoral campaign," Peskov complained.
"Unfortunately Russia is being used in the electoral campaign in the US. Unfortunately this traditional game is continuing.
"We think that's not very good for bilateral relations but we understand that we need to get through this unfavourable period."
Trump has made no secret of his admiration for Russian President Vladimir Putin, leading some to conjecture that the Kremlin strongman was working to put the real estate billionaire in the White House.
Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov earlier shrugged off the accusations by the Hillary Clinton campaign that Russia was involved in the embarrassing leak of emails.
Ahead of meeting US Secretary of State John Kerry in Laos, Lavrov said simply: "I don't want to use four-letter words."

FIRST DAY OF DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION

'Clinton must become next president'

AFP, Philadelphia
Democratic power players Michelle Obama and Bernie Sanders offered contrasting heartfelt and hard-headed endorsements of Hillary Clinton Monday, imploring a riven and feisty party convention to unite against Donald Trump.
As polls showed Trump ahead of Clinton in the race to the White House, the first lady wowed the Philadelphia crowd as she impeached Trump's character and hailed the inspirational power of putting a female US president in the White House for the first time.
From Sanders, Clinton's vanquished primary rival, there was a much more pragmatic embrace.
"Based on her ideas and her leadership" Clinton was a better choice than Trump and

"must become the next president of the United States," he said.
The opening throes of the four-day convention in Philadelphia were dominated by boos and jeers from disgruntled Sanders supporters almost every time Clinton's name was mentioned.
Sanders had called on his backers to get behind the Democratic nominee twice on Monday before his primetime endorsement speech.
That included a text message sent to supporters asking them not to protest on the floor of the convention as a "personal courtesy" to him.
But Sanders' self-styled "political revolution" appeared to have transformed into an open revolt.
With some delegates in tears, Sanders received cheers and boos when he told the crowd: "Hillary Clinton will make an outstanding president and I am proud to stand with her tonight."
"Clinton can't beat Trump. Period," said Michigan delegate Melissa Arab, a Sanders supporter.
"A ham sandwich could beat Trump and she's not going to beat him. If she's nominated, people are going to end up with somebody bad for president."
Hoping to poach some of Sanders' supporters, Trump tweeted: "Bernie Sanders totally sold out to Crooked Hillary Clinton. All of that work, energy and money, and nothing to show for it! Waste of time."
Michelle Obama's message was at once



A supporter of Bernie Sanders stands in silent protest during Day 1 of the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia, on Monday.
PHOTO: AFP
coniliatory, raw and personal -- and earned by far the most positive response of the night.
"Because of Hillary Clinton, my daughters and all of our sons and daughters now take for granted that a woman can be president of the United States," said the wife of America's first black president, her voice cracking with emotion.
Obama will address the convention today.
The party is reeling from leaked Democratic National Committee emails which show nominally neutral party staff trying to undermine Sanders' campaign and questioning his Jewish faith.
WikiLeaks at the weekend released nearly 20,000 emails from between January 2015 and May 2016, gleaned by hackers who apparently raided the accounts of seven DNC leaders.
The Federal Bureau of Investigation said it was investigating the "cyber intrusion," which the Clinton campaign blamed on Russian hackers it said are bent on helping Trump.
Sanders lost to Clinton in the primary handily. But the scandal has angered his already embittered supporters, who believe the deck was stacked against them.
It has led to the resignation of party chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz and a "deep and sincere" apology from party leaders.



"Based on her ideas and her leadership -- Hillary Clinton must become the next president of the United States. (...) I am proud to stand with her tonight." -- Bernie Sanders
"Because of Hillary Clinton, my daughters and all of our sons and daughters now take for granted that a woman can be president of the United States." -- Michelle Obama

I'm voting Trump

Says Obama's Kenyan half-brother
AFP, Nairobi
US President Barack Obama's half-brother yesterday said he was going to vote for Republican candidate Donald Trump in this year's American election, saying he felt let down by his sibling's neglect of his Kenyan family.
Obama was born in Hawaii to an American mother and a Kenyan father he barely knew, who left the family home and the US when the future president was two years old.
"This Trump guy is a really cool guy and I like him because he speaks from his heart and he is so down to earth," Malik Obama told AFP by phone from the western Kenyan village of Kogelo, from where the pair's father's family comes from.
"Trump is so much concerned about security and he wants to make America great," added Obama, who has both



United Nations soldiers secure a partially-crumbled perimeter wall following twin car bombings outside the UN's office in Mogadishu yesterday. At least 13 people were killed in twin bombings near UN and African Union buildings adjoining Mogadishu's airport, police said, in what the jihadist Shabaab group claimed as a suicide attack.
PHOTO: AFP

Dozens killed in Aleppo air raids

UN eyes new Syria talks in late August

AGENCIES
Air strikes in Syria's divided city of Aleppo have killed dozens of people, according to a monitor, as fighting intensifies across the country despite UN appeals for greater humanitarian access and the resumption of peace talks.
The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights yesterday said that Syrian government helicopters targeted the al-Mashhad neighbourhood in the rebel-held half of the city, killing at least 18 people.
The Observatory added that the number of casualties was likely to rise due to the high number of people critically wounded.
Zouhir Al Shmale, an Aleppo-based journalist, said air strikes, including on a residential building, have killed at least 32 people over the past two days. Separately, at least 42 civilians were killed on Monday in Syrian government air strikes on al-Atareb, a city in the Aleppo province.
The latest attacks came amid a renewed international push to restart the stalled Syria political talks next month.
Speaking in Geneva yesterday, following a closed-door meeting with US and Russian officials, UN special envoy to Syria Staffan de Mistura said Washington and Moscow had been discussing ways to work towards the reintroduction of a ceasefire.
De Mistura told reporters that a third round of intra-Syrian peace talks is set for August. But the HNC's Atassi told Al Jazeera that de Mistura had said "nothing new", and that there was "no progress on the ground" to convince the opposition to return to the negotiating table.
More than 280,000 people have been killed throughout the five years of bloodshed. More than 4.8 million Syrians have become refugees displaced from their homeland, while more than 6.5 million people are internally displaced within the country's borders.

Kenyan and US citizenship and says he has voted in US elections since the 1980s.
Last year President Obama paid his first visit to Kenya since assuming office in 2009, but did not visit Kogelo, where his father is buried.
Malik Obama said he felt his half-brother could have done more for his family in Kenya.
"I still love my brother, but it still baffles me that when he came to Kenya he told us that he can't associate too much with family back home just because he is the president of the United States, and that he needs to finish his term for him to associate more. It does not make any sense at all," he said with a laugh.
"This is the time we need him most, not when he is out of the White House," said Malik Obama.

Malawi 'hyena' arrested over child sex

AFP, Blantyre
Malawi police have arrested an HIV-infected man who was paid to have sex with more than 100 adolescent girls as part of a traditional ritual marking their passage to womanhood, officials said yesterday.
Eric Aniva, from the southern district of Nsanje, was held after giving a media interview confessing to have slept with the girls for a fee of between four and seven dollars, paid by each of their families.
The little-known local practice lasts three days and is performed in southern Malawi by men known as "hyenas" at the request of a girl's parents after her first menstruation.
The ritual is believed to train girls to become good wives and to protect them from disease or misfortune that could fall on their families or their village.
In a BBC interview broadcast last week, Aniva confessed to being infected with HIV and sleeping with at least 100 girls without using protection.
"Some girls are just 12 or 13 years old, but I prefer them older," he said.
Aniva, who has two wives and was reported to be in his 40s, said a "hyena" was selected by the community based on good morals and that custom did not allow him to use condoms.
Malawi, which has one of the highest HIV infections in the world, criminalises sex with a person under the age of 16.
If found guilty of underage sex, Aniva could be imprisoned for life.

WIDENING PURGE AFTER ATTEMPTED COUP IN TURKEY

Generals, more journos detained

AGENCIES
Defying international alarm, Turkey yesterday widened its crackdown after a failed coup, detaining top generals serving in Afghanistan as well as prominent journalists.
In a move apparently reflecting a shift in diplomatic strategy, Turkey also announced President Recep Tayyip Erdogan will meet Russian leader Vladimir Putin next month after months of chill between the two countries.
Two senior Turkish generals serving in the Nato force in Afghanistan were detained at Dubai airport on suspicion of links to the attempt to overthrow Erdogan, an official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.
The source named the pair as Major General Mehmet Cahit Bakir, the commander of Turkey's task force in Afghanistan, and Brigadier General Sener Topuc. The detentions followed cooperation between Turkish intelligence and UAE authorities, the state-run Anadolu news agency added, saying the pair were now being brought to Turkey.
The attempted putsch of July 15 has

sent shockwaves through all aspects of life in Turkey. Some 13,000 people have been detained and over 9,000 of them remained in custody ahead of trial over the coup.
Almost two thirds of Turks believe US-



based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen was behind a failed coup attempt in Turkey on July 15, a survey conducted by pollster Andy-Ar showed yesterday, backing the government line.
President Tayyip Erdogan says Gulen, who has many followers in Turkey, masterminded the plot, having long accused his former ally of building a network within the army, police, judiciary, civil service, education and media to

control the state.
Veteran journalist Nazli Ilıcak was detained yesterday at a traffic checkpoint in the southwestern region of Bodrum, a day after the authorities issued arrest warrants for over 42 reporters, Anadolu said.
According to the Dogan news agency, eight of the 42 have now been detained including Ilıcak and the former pro-Gulen Zaman newspaper writer Hanim Busra Erdal, who was picked up in the western city of Manisa. Also held in the coup investigation was former governor of Istanbul Huseyin Avni Mutlu.
According to Anadolu, more than 47,000 civil servants have lost their jobs since the coup, including almost 43,000 in the state education sector. A major shake-up of the Turkish armed forces is expected to be announced tomorrow when the country's Supreme Military Council meets.
With 143 generals and more than 3,000 soldiers arrested on suspicion of links to the coup, there are gaping holes in the command structure which will have to be filled.

Large deposits of gas found in Bay

Say scientists from India, US, Japan

AFP, New Delhi
Scientists from India, the United States and Japan have struck upon a large natural gas deposit in the Bay of Bengal, the first potentially producible discovery of its kind in the Indian Ocean.
A research expedition carried out jointly by the three countries discovered the natural gas hydrate -- an ice-like form of the fuel -- off India's east coast, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) said in a statement Monday.
"The results from this expedition mark a critical step forward to understanding the energy resource potential of gas hydrates," said USGS Senior Scientist Tim Collett.
The discovery in the sand reservoirs of the Krishna-Godavari Basin contains "what we believe to be several of the largest and most concentrated gas hydrate accumulations yet found in the world," Collett said.
The amount of natural gas locked in hydrate form worldwide is believed to be far greater than the volume of all known conventional gas resources, USGS said. Yet producing the fuel from hydrates is extremely technically challenging.
The expedition involved experts from India's Oil and Natural Gas Corporation and USGS as well as Japanese drilling and marine-earth specialists.
Energy-hungry India is heavily dependent on imports to meet its oil and gas needs and is hungry to secure more of its own supplies.

NEWS IN brief

87 migrant bodies wash up in Libya

AFP, Tripoli
The number of bodies of migrants recovered on a Libyan beach since the weekend has risen to 87, a media official from the coastal city of Sabratha said on Monday. The bodies began washing up on the city's beach west of Tripoli on Friday, the official said. On Saturday, 41 bodies were found.



Indian Iron Lady to end hunger strike

AFP, Guwahati
Indian human rights campaigner Irom Sharmila yesterday announced she will end her 16-year long hunger strike on August 9 to focus on contesting upcoming elections in Manipur. Sharmila, known as the Iron Lady of Manipur, is demanding for the withdrawal of special powers wielded by security forces in the insurgency-wracked region.

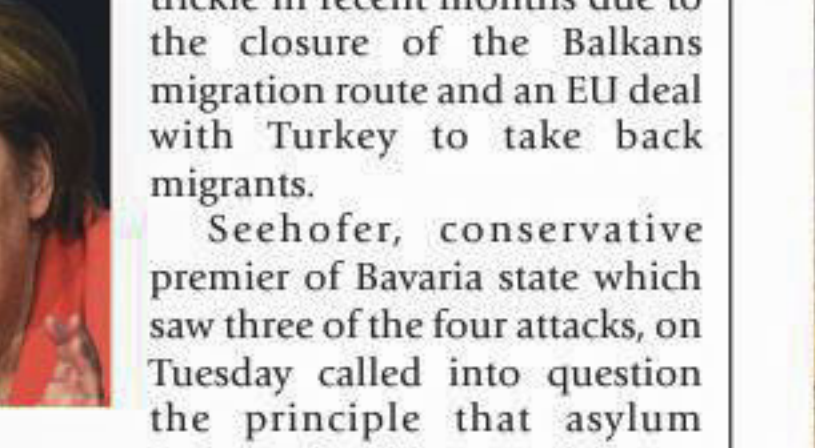
NZ announces plan to exterminate all rats

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK
The New Zealand Prime Minister John Key has announced a project to the rid country of rats and other predators by 2050. Species introduced to New Zealand kill 25 million native birds a year, including the national bird, the Kiwi, of which 20 die per week, according to the government.

MIGRANTS AND WAVE OF TERROR ATTACKS Pressure mounts on Merkel

AFP, Berlin
A rash of attacks in Germany has emboldened political rivals of Chancellor Angela Merkel, who blamed her liberal asylum policy yesterday for exposing the country to a shocking week of bloodshed.
Four brutal assaults in the south of the country, three of which were carried out by asylum seekers, have rattled Germans and revived a backlash against Merkel's decision last year to open the borders to those fleeing war and persecution.
"It all appeared to be going pretty well for Merkel but the situation has changed dramatically in 10 days between the Nice attack and Sunday's suicide bomber in Ansbach," the daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung wrote, referring to attacks in France and Germany claimed by the Islamic State (IS) group.
"The chancellor must once again fear that she will be punished by the voters," with two pivotal state polls looming in September.
Merkel's aides were quick to point out that three of the four assailants arrived in Germany before the record influx that

brought more than one million refugees and migrants last year. The fourth, a teenager who went on a shooting rampage in Munich Friday killing nine before turning the gun on himself, was born and raised in Germany, the son of Iranian asylum seekers who arrived in the country in the 1990s.
The violence reignited political friction that had eased as the number of new arrivals to Germany slowed to a trickle in recent months due to the closure of the Balkans migration route and an EU deal with Turkey to take back migrants.
Seehofer, conservative premier of Bavaria state which saw three of the four attacks, on Tuesday called into question the principle that asylum seekers should never be sent back to war zones.
"We must seriously consider how such people should be treated if they violate the law or can be considered a danger," he told the Muenchner Merkur newspaper.
Merkel, who has led Europe's economic powerhouse for nearly 11 years, sought to project calm by remaining at her holiday cottage north of Berlin this week.



Indian police and demonstrators clash in Srinagar yesterday after 17 days of lockdown, but protesters continued to clash with police in the main city of Indian-administered Kashmir following two weeks of violence which killed 50 people.
PHOTO: REUTERS