

# NEWSIN brief

## Stampede at stadium in Angola kills 17

Angola yesterday announced an investigation into a stadium stampede that killed at least 17 and injured scores in what was described as the southern African country's worst football tragedy. The government set up a commission to probe Friday's crush in the northern town of Uige, the national Angop news agency reported, with children among the victims.

## 70,000 flee in Greece over WWII bomb scare

Greek authorities yesterday began evacuating some 70,000 people in the city of Thessaloniki ahead of an operation to defuse a bomb from World War II. The bomb, containing nearly 250 kilograms (550 pounds) of explosives, was unearthed in the northern city during road works last week and is due to be defused today. Authorities are fully evacuating of all residents within a 1.9-kilometre (1.1-mile) radius of the bomb site. Seven decades after the end of World War II, unexploded bombs from the conflict are still being found around the globe.

## Jihadist behind France attacks hit in Mosul

French jihadist Rachid Kassim, suspected of inspiring several attacks in France, was targeted in a coalition air strike near the Iraqi city of Mosul, but his death is not yet confirmed, the Pentagon said Friday. Earlier in the day, several French media reports had reported Kassim's death. He is suspected of using the encrypted Telegram app to direct attacks on France from IS-controlled territory in Iraq or Syria.

## Polish PM injured in car accident

Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydlo was hospitalized with minor injuries on Friday after a car struck her government vehicle in the southern city of Oswiecim, a government spokesman said. The 53-year-old prime minister was riding in a motorcade when the Fiat vehicle struck, forcing her car off the road where it crashed into a tree. Two security agents were also injured.

## Brazil police protest spreads to Rio

A partial police shutdown over unpaid wages put Rio de Janeiro on edge Friday, sparking fears of chaos similar to that seen in a neighboring Brazilian state where police are in revolt and criminals have run amok. Morale among street police is low as a result of nearly bankrupt Rio state's inability to pay full wages, as well as brutal crime fighting that has seen more than 3,000 officers killed in Rio since 1994.

## Snowden's extradition report is 'speculation'

Allegations of Russian interference in the US elections and continued "cyber warfare" and espionage from China have sparked fresh fears over the threat posed by hacking. IS and other terrorist groups have also invested in their own cyber branches, while Islamist hacking groups like one that recently attacked a series of NHS websites have sprung up around the world. The government is now aiming to guard against a future skills shortage amid mounting concern over the damage hackers or terrorists could inflict on the



President Donald Trump and his wife Melania Trump arrive with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his wife Akie Abe on Air Force One at the Palm Beach International airport in West Palm Beach, Florida on Friday. Inset, The leaders during a White House moment.

# Trump charms Japan PM

### Leaders pledge deeper trade and security ties amid China tensions

President Donald Trump welcomed Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe with a brotherly hug and warm words of admiration Friday, as he ditched previously hard-charging rhetoric toward Tokyo during a White House summit. Trump praised his guest's "strong hands," the pair's "very, very good chemistry" and rolled out a White House military honor guard in a remarkable public display of diplomatic affection. "When I greeted him today at the car," Trump said after an Oval Office meeting, "I shook hands, but I grabbed him and hugged him, because that's the way we feel."

The odd political couple had lunch at the White House before heading to Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida for further talks and a round of golf. US-Japan ties have been strained by Trump's willingness to question US defense commitments and his rejection of a trans-Pacific trade deal. Plans under consideration in the White House propose a substantial hike of import tariffs that could have a seri-

ous impact on Japanese manufacturers. Abe dodged questions about the trade deal, instead dispatching a slew of compliments. "Donald, Mr President, you are an excellent businessman," he said, praising Trump on everything from his meteoric political rise to his golf game. "My scores in golf are not up to the level of Donald at all," Abe said self-

"The bond between our two nations and the friendship between our two peoples runs very, very deep. This administration is committed to bringing those ties even closer." In a statement, Trump offered reassurances the US would come to Japan's defense if China were to seize the disputed Senkaku islands, known as the Diaoyu in China. In a joint statement, the pair said they "oppose any unilateral action that seeks to undermine Japan's administration of these islands" -- comments that are sure to rile Beijing. Although Abe has pushed ahead with efforts to boost Japan's military capabilities, Tokyo still relies on US security guarantees.

Meanwhile, the US Pacific Command said Friday that a Chinese military aircraft had an "unsafe" encounter with a US Navy surveillance aircraft near a contested reef in the South China Sea. The two planes came within 1,000 feet of each other during Wednesday's incident near the Scarborough Shoal, which is claimed by both the Philippines and China, according to Pentagon spokesman Jeff Davis.

### DEVELOPMENTS

- Chinese, US aircraft in 'unsafe' encounter over South China Sea
- US, Japan say defense pact covers disputed Senkaku islands

effacingly. Abe's efforts appeared to have paid off. After some tough anti-Japanese rhetoric on the campaign trail, Trump embraced long-standing defense agreements and "free, fair and reciprocal" trade. "We're committed to the security of Japan," Trump said.

# You 'better be careful'

## Trump warns Iran president

Donald Trump dialed up the rhetoric against Iran on Friday, warning the country's president he "better be careful" about his words. The war-of-words between Tehran and Washington escalated as President Hassan Rouhani and Trump traded threats and warnings. Rouhani told a crowd of hundreds of thousands marking the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic revolution that "the Iranian people must be spoken to with respect." "Iranians will make those using threatening language against this nation regret it," he said. "Anyone threatening Iran's government and armed forces should know that our nation is vigilant." Trump was asked about the remarks later, responding that "he better be careful." The US president has toughened the rhetoric against Iran considerably since coming to office. He has also introduced sanctions after an Iranian missile test. Many in Trump's inner circle want to see a harder line against Tehran, but have so far shied away from killing a deal that saw Iran get sanctions relief in exchange for curbing its nuclear program. Last week, he imposed sanctions on Iran over a January 29 ballistic missile test and officials warned more might follow. Last weekend, new Pentagon chief James Mattis described Iran as "the single biggest state sponsor of terrorism in the world."



# Do not 'interfere' in European politics

### EU foreign affairs chief warns Trump over Brexit

EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini warned Donald Trump's administration Friday not to "interfere" in European politics, in an apparent reference to the US president's praise of Brexit. "We do not interfere in US politics... And Europeans expect that America does not interfere in European politics," said Mogherini, who is wrapping up her first visit to Washington since Trump took office. Mogherini held her first meetings with Trump's administration on Thursday at a moment of uncertainty for trans-Atlantic ties.

While the new US leader has toned down some of his criticism of America's NATO allies since his election, he has shown no enthusiasm for the 28-member European Union and has praised Britain's decision to leave the bloc. "The unity of the European Union, I believe, is more evident today than it was

some months ago," Mogherini said Friday. "The UK will stay a member state of the European Union for another two years at least... And it will not be able to negotiate any trade agreement bilaterally with any third country." According to some media reports, Trump has tipped as the next US ambassador to the EU businessman Ted Malloch, who has ruffled feathers with anti-EU comments. Last week in the German and British press, for instance, Malloch reportedly said that Brexit was a harbinger of the EU's eventual disintegration, and has in the past compared the bloc to the Soviet Union. Trump's election dismayed many European leaders, who see him as dangerously naive about the threat posed by Russia and fear his victory will inspire Europe's own far-right populist parties. "Europeans feel and believe that their interest are better protected and promoted through our union," Mogherini said. "The European Union is here to stay."



## OFFENSIVE AGAINST JIHADISTS IN SYRIA

# Turkish troops, rebels enter key IS-held town

Turkish troops and Syrian rebels yesterday entered the Islamic State-held town of Al-Bab in northern Syria, as government forces also approached the jihadist bastion, a monitor said. "Turkish forces and allied rebels in the Euphrates Shield campaign entered the western edge of the town and took control of a number of areas," the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. The monitor said heavy clashes were underway with IS in the town, which is the jihadist group's last stronghold in the northern province of Aleppo. The town has been seen as a key prize and Syrian government troops and allied forces have also been advancing towards it in a bid to wrest it from IS. Al-Bab was besieged since Monday, when government forces advancing from the south cut off a road leading into the town. By Friday, government forces were just 1.5 kilometres (less than a mile) from the southern outskirts of Al-Bab, while Turkish troops and allied rebels advanced from the north, east and west. Turkey began an unprecedented campaign inside Syria on August 24, targeting both IS and Kurdish militia. After initial rapid progress, the campaign became mired in the deadly fight for Al-Bab since December.



People queue to cast their vote during the state assembly election, in the village of Kairana, in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India, yesterday.

# British teenagers to be taught 'cyber curriculum' to defend UK

Thousands of British teenagers are to be given training in cyber security to boost the UK's defences against the rising threat of online attacks. The new Cyber Schools Programme aims to teach pupils some of the skills they would need to help defend Britain's businesses and institutions against online threats. Allegations of Russian interference in the US elections and continued "cyber warfare" and espionage from China have sparked fresh fears over the threat posed by hacking. IS and other terrorist groups have also invested in their own cyber branches, while Islamist hacking groups like one that recently attacked a series of NHS websites have sprung up around the world. The government is now aiming to guard against a future skills shortage amid mounting concern over the damage hackers or terrorists could inflict on the economy and infrastructure. Ministers are making up to £20m available for extracurricular sessions that will see expert instructors drafted in to teach, test and train selected teenagers. A "cyber curriculum" will be drawn up to mix classroom and online teaching with real-world challenges and hands-on work experience. The led by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) scheme is aimed at those aged between 14 and 18, with a target for at least 5,700 teenagers to be trained by 2021. Matt Hancock, the digital and culture minister, said: "This forward-thinking programme will see thousands of the best and brightest young minds given the opportunity to learn cutting-edge cyber security skills alongside their secondary school studies. "We are determined to prepare Britain for the challenges it faces now and in the future and these extracurricular clubs will help identify and inspire future talent."



# Strong quake kills 6 in Philippines

Rescuers dug through rubble Saturday to find survivors after a powerful earthquake struck the southern Philippines, killing at least six people and sending thousands fleeing for safety. Residents of the southern town of Surigao in Mindanao island spent the night huddled in fear as aftershocks rocked the city following the 6.5-magnitude quake which struck late Friday when many people were already in bed. Provincial disaster management officer Ramon Gotinga said that most of those killed had died due to falling objects. The quake damaged many buildings. One bridge collapsed and two others were damaged in the quake, which also cracked the city airport's runway, forcing flights to be diverted, the civil defence office added.

# Test for Modi as UP votes

Millions of voters in India's most populous state cast their ballots yesterday in a contest seen as a key test for Narendra Modi halfway through his first term as prime minister. Uttar Pradesh is home to over 200 million people -- more than the entire population of Brazil -- and polls in the battleground state are a bellwether of national politics. This election is seen as a referendum on Modi's controversial ban on high-value banknotes, a move aimed at combating tax evasion by the rich that has hit poor rural communities hard. The northern state voted overwhelmingly for Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the 2014 general election, powering him to victory over the Congress Party that has dominated Indian politics since independence. But now the BJP faces a major challenge from the youthful and charismatic current Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav, who has tapped into the pain from Modi's cash ban to try and swing the state his way. "Modi must answer the people. His credibility will come into question, and that is why he is panicking," Yadav told reporters Saturday in the state capital Lucknow. "This result is going to give him a big jolt."



# 18 injured in HK subway arson attack

A Taiwan tourist was among three people in critical condition yesterday after a rush hour arson attack on a Hong Kong subway train the previous night, officials said, with one man with a history of mental illness arrested for the crime. A total of 18 people were injured in the incident which occurred at 7:15 pm Friday, while police said they had seized suspected liquid accelerants from the scene. Police have ruled out the possibility of a terrorist attack and said the man acted alone. Video footage showed chaos on the platform of the packed Tsim Sha Tsui station, with a train carriage on fire and one man lying on the floor with his clothes ablaze as bystanders tried to help him.