

# Trump aide faces Russia questions

US attorney general demands cities get tough on migrants

AGENCIES

Donald Trump's son-in-law and top aide Jared Kushner will appear before a Senate panel investigating Russian interference in the US election, the White House said Monday.

Kushner, 36, was Trump's main intermediary with foreign governments during the 2016 election campaign and now plays that role in the White House.

He arranged meetings between Trump and leaders from Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto. But it is his contacts with Russian officials that are now coming under the microscope, amid explosive allegations of collusion between the Trump campaign and the Kremlin, reported AFP.

Trump took to Twitter to insist that "Trump Russia story is a hoax," urging lawmakers to instead focus on his losing rival for the presidency, Hillary Clinton, the former secretary of state.

"Throughout the campaign and transition, Jared Kushner served as the official primary point of contact with foreign governments and officials," a White House official said. "Given this role, he has volunteered to speak with Chairman (Richard) Burr's committee, but has not yet received confirmation," the official said.

Meanwhile, US Attorney General Jeff Sessions threatened on Monday to cut off US Justice Department grants to cities that fail to assist federal immigration authorities, moving the Trump administration closer to a potential clash with leaders of America's largest urban centers.



Outdoor furniture lies in a pool at a motel as Cyclone Debbie hits the northern Queensland town of Airlie Beach, located south of Townsville in Australia, yesterday. Police said one man was badly hurt when a wall collapsed at Proserpine and was taken to hospital. PHOTO: REUTERS



## 'Punishing' Britain will hurt EU too

Says London mayor

AFP, Brussels

The mayor of London yesterday warned the European Union against punishing Britain in Brexit negotiations saying that everyone would suffer the consequences.

Speaking in Brussels a day before Britain triggers the two-year Brexit process, Sadiq Khan also urged Prime Minister Theresa May to give a "cast iron" guarantee of the rights of EU citizens living in Britain.

"There is no need for the EU to send a message or to instil fear by punishing the UK," Khan told an event run by the Politico Europe newspaper.

"A bad Brexit deal that hurts London would hurt the EU too," added Khan, who is meeting key EU figures including European Parliament chief Antonio Tajani while in Brussels.

Khan warned that businesses driven out of London, one of the world's leading financial centres, would "leave Europe altogether and go to New York and Singapore instead."

"A bad Brexit really is a lose-lose situation." The London mayor, whose city voted overwhelmingly against Brexit in last year's referendum, called on May to set a positive tone for the Brexit talks by quickly agreeing to protect the rights of the three million EU citizens in Britain, including one million in London.

"It would be a perfect gesture of goodwill to provide a cast iron guarantee of their rights to remain in the UK," Khan said.

Khan also held a minute of silence for victims of last week's attack outside the British parliament and said it was important for Britain and the EU to keep cooperating on security after Brexit.

# 300 killed since last month

Says UN; US defence department probes air strikes on west; coalition falling short in protecting civilians: Amnesty

AFP, Geneva

Over 300 civilians have been killed since last month in an offensive against the Islamic State group in western Mosul, the UN said yesterday, adding the toll could exceed 400 if fresh killings are verified.

"According to information verified by the UN Human Rights Office and the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq, at least 307 people were killed ... between 17 February and 22 March," the UN rights office said in a statement.

"In addition, between 23 and 26 March, reports were received that at least 95 civilians were killed in ... (four) neighbourhoods in western Mosul."

Iraqi forces, supported by air strikes from the international coalition fighting the IS, are engaged in a bitter struggle to dislodge the jihadists from Iraq's second-largest city.

Iraq and the US defence department are investigating reports that coalition air strikes have killed dozens if not hundreds of people in recent days.

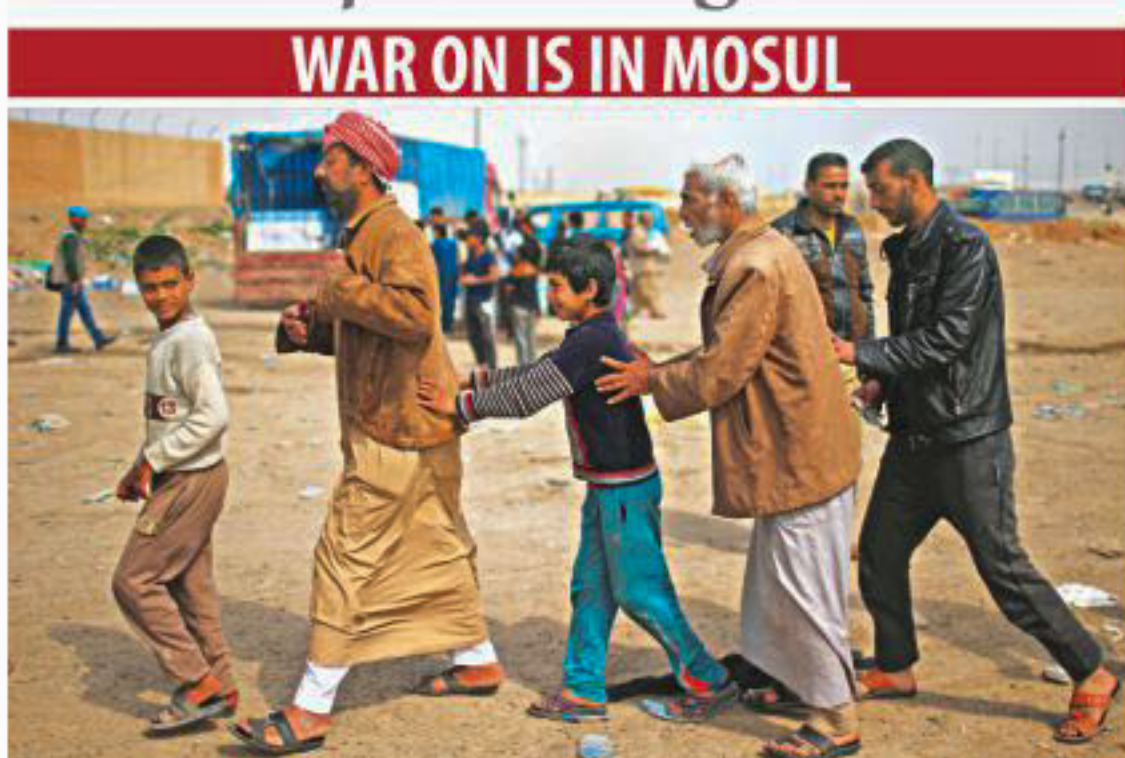


PHOTO: REUTERS

Displaced residents who fled their homes move to be searched by Iraqi troops in Mosul yesterday.

UN rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said he welcomed those probes and his office did not directly blame the coalition for any specific deaths, but called for "an urgent review of tactics to ensure that the impact on civilians is reduced to an absolute minimum".

With IS reportedly using civilians as human shields in buildings around western Mosul, Zeid's spokesman Rupert Colville noted that it was "clearly not easy" to ensure that non-combatants were spared.

Investigators are studying more than 700 video feeds taken during air strikes on that area of Mosul over a 10-day stretch around March 17, Colonel J T Thomas, a spokesman for the US Central Command, said.

Meanwhile, Amnesty International said yesterday the US-led coalition was not doing enough to protect civilians in the battle to retake Iraq's Mosul with cases of entire families killed in their homes.

# Fury as Chinese man shot dead in Paris

AFP, Paris

China yesterday urged France to protect its citizens in Paris after police there killed a Chinese father of four, sparking violent protests in which 35 people were arrested.

Paris police said around 150 "members of the Asian community" gathered late Monday outside a police station in the northeast of the capital and clashes broke out.

Three officers were slightly injured in the confrontation and one police vehicle was damaged by an incendiary device.

The angry demonstrators were protesting after a police officer shot and killed the Chinese man on Sunday night.

A police source told AFP that officers were called to his house after reports of a domestic dispute.

The source said the man attacked the officer with a knife "as soon as the door opened", injuring him.

A police colleague then opened fire, killing the Chinese man, authorities say.

Lawyer Calvin Job said the family of the dead man "totally disputes this version of events."

"He didn't injure anyone," Job said, adding that the man had been "trimming fish with a pair of scissors" when the police came to the door. As tempers frayed between Paris and Beijing, the Chinese foreign ministry said it had filed an official complaint to France over the events in the French capital.

Beijing calls on Paris to "guarantee the safety and legal rights and interests of Chinese citizens in France and to treat the reaction of Chinese people to this incident in a rational way," ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a regular press briefing.



United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres speaks to Syrian children during his visit to Al Zaatari refugee camp in the Jordanian city of Mafraq, near the border with Syria yesterday. Guterres called on Arab leaders to set aside their differences to confront Syria's six-year conflict. PHOTO: REUTERS

# US asks Maldives to restore democracy

AFP, Malé

The United States yesterday asked the Maldives to restore faith in democracy after the government deployed troops to parliament to forcibly remove opposition politicians, sparking chaotic scenes.

The US expressed concern about "irregularities" that impeded a free and fair vote in parliament, after plain-clothes soldiers evicted MPs as they attempted to impeach the speaker.

"We call on the government to restore faith in democratic processes by ensuring free and impartial proceedings in parliament," the US embassy to Sri Lanka and the Maldives said in a statement.

It came as the Maldives' ruling party sacked the country's former strongman president Maumoon Abdul Gayoom as its leader, after he led an unsuccessful rebellion against his half-brother, who is now in power.

Gayoom's sacking followed an abortive

bid to impeach the speaker and take control of parliament, as part of a pact he entered over the weekend with exiled opposition leader Mohamed Nasheed.

National President Abdulla Yameen had recently taken executive control of the party, but his half-brother was its nominal president.

"Gayoom has been accused of sympathising with the opposition," said a Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) official who asked not to be named.

"His ideology no longer aligns with that of the PPM," the official told AFP.

Gayoom had urged PPM legislators to vote with the opposition on Monday to impeach the speaker of the house, a move aimed at undermining Yameen's hold on power before 2018 elections.

Nasheed had hoped that the surprise alliance with Gayoom would provide enough parliamentary support to oust the speaker.

## Turkey 'spied' on opponents in Germany

AFP, Berlin

German prosecutors announced an investigation yesterday into claims that Turkish agents are spying on alleged followers of exiled preacher Fethullah Gulen in Germany.

The probe came as a German state minister accused Turkey of the "unacceptable" espionage against supporters of Gulen, blamed by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for a failed coup attempt last year.

The claims open a new front in the diplomatic row between Nato allies Germany and Turkey.

"It is clear that the Turkish secret service MIT is investigating people living in Germany," said Boris Pistorius, interior minister of the northern German state of Lower Saxony.

## Chinese army drills on border with Myanmar

AFP, Beijing

China's army held drills near its border with Myanmar yesterday, state media reported, in a show of strength from Beijing following weeks of clashes between ethnic rebels and Myanmar's military.

Tens of thousands of people have fled to China in recent months to escape the battles in Myanmar's restive borderlands.

The bloodshed has threatened to derail a push by de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi to end decades of fighting with ethnic insurgents.

China's infantry, artillery and air force took part in yesterday's exercise, the official Xinhua news agency said, adding the drills were part of annual training.

## Angry mob attacks Africans in India

AFP, New Delhi

Police arrested five men yesterday after hundreds of angry residents of a north Indian city attacked Africans with sticks and metal chairs following the death of a local teenager from a suspected drug overdose.

Around a dozen people were wounded in the violence late Monday in Greater Noida, a satellite city of New Delhi where hundreds of African students are based.

"Rumours were being spread that Africans are behind the youth's death and racist comments were made on social media. It looks racially motivated," senior police officer Sujata Singh told AFP.

"Five attackers have been arrested and four others are on the run," she said, adding that 300 people were involved in the rioting. India's foreign ministry condemned the incident as "deplorable" and said it had assured the Nigerian high commissioner (ambassador) that all steps were being taken to protect the country's nationals.

Many Nigerians were targeted in the violence, which was apparently triggered by the release without charge of five Nigerian students detained over the teenager's death.

"The government is committed to ensuring safety and security of all foreigners in India," said a ministry statement.

## NEWSIN brief

### Four killed in clashes in Indian Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

Three civilians and one rebel were killed and at least 28 people were injured yesterday in clashes between protesters and troops and police in Indian-administered Kashmir, police said. The clashes started when soldiers cordoned off a house in a village in central Kashmir's Chadoora area in which at least one armed militant was hiding.



### Anti-apartheid icon Kathrada dies

AFP, Johannesburg

Celebrated South African anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Kathrada, a Robben Island prisoner and one of Nelson Mandela's closest colleagues in the struggle against white rule, died yesterday aged 87. Kathrada was among those tried and jailed alongside Mandela in the Rivonia trial in 1964.

### US vows to end Israel-bashing' at UN

AFP, Washington

The US ambassador to the United Nations received a rapturous welcome Monday at Washington's biggest pro-Israel forum, where she vowed never to allow "Israel-bashing" at the world body. Nikki Haley was addressing the annual American Israel Public Affairs Committee policy conference for the first time.

AFP, New York

The popular bronze statue of a young girl staring down a bull on Wall Street will stay in place until March 2018, New York Mayor Bill de Blasio announced Monday.

Initially installed on March 7 for one week, the "Fearless Girl" sculpture appeared in media around the world, seen by many as a defiant symbol of women's rights under the new administration of President Donald Trump, who has bragged about sexually assaulting women.

The exhibit of artist Kristen Visbal's work was first extended until April 2 and is now



set to run until next year's International Women's Day on March 8.

De Blasio, an outspoken Trump critic, said the statue "means so much to the people of New York," especially the city's women and girls.

"She spoke to the moment," he told reporters in front of the defiant girl.

The relevant municipal agencies voted in favor of keeping the statue, he said. The artwork was installed by asset managers State Street Global Advisors, with City Hall's agreement.

It marked the start of the firm's campaign to encourage companies in which it invests to increase the number of women on their boards of directors.

The young girl faces down the "Charging Bull" sculpture, installed in December 1989 -- also temporarily at first -- by Italian-American artist Arturo Di Modica to symbolize "the strength and power of the American people." It has since become a symbol of Wall Street.

Visbal chose to depict a young girl to show others that it is possible for them to forge a career on Wall Street, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer said.