

NEWS IN brief

China to tighten internet controls

China will further tighten its internet regulations with a pledge to strengthen controls over search engines and online news portals, the latest step in President Xi Jinping's push to maintain strict Communist Party control over content. The five-year cultural development and reform plan released by the party and State Council, or Cabinet, calls for a "perfecting" of laws and rules related to the internet.

WWII bombs force mass evacuation in Germany

German police yesterday evacuated some 50,000 people from the northern city of Hanover in one of the largest post-war operations to defuse World War II era bombs. Residents in a densely populated part of the city were ordered to leave their homes for the operation, planned since mid-April, to extract five recently discovered unexploded bombs.

35 killed in school bus crash in Tanzania

Thirty-two schoolchildren, two teachers and a minibus driver were killed in Tanzania when their vehicle plunged into a roadside ravine in the northern tourist region of Arusha on Saturday. The students killed in the accident, which occurred at about 9:30am in Karatu district, were standard seven pupils, aged 12 to 13.

Frenchman kidnapped in Chad freed in Sudan

A French mineworker who was kidnapped in Chad and taken to neighbouring Sudan has been freed after more than six weeks in captivity. Thierry Frezier, 60, was freed after collaboration between Sudanese, Chadian and French intelligence services, sources said. Frezier was taken to Sudan's capital after being freed on Saturday.



(From bottom, anti-clockwise) Outgoing French President Francois Hollande looks out of a window after casting his ballot in Tulle, central France, yesterday; presidential election candidate Marine Le Pen walks out a polling booth after voting; and Emmanuel Macron greets supporters after casting his ballot.

Five killed in latest Kashmir violence

Suspected militants launched an attack in Indian Kashmir killing three civilians and a policeman, the latest violence to hit the restive valley, authorities said yesterday. One of the militants was also killed when they attacked policemen clearing the site of a road accident late Saturday near Kulgam district. "A police party was at the accident site when they were attacked. In the cross-fire, one policeman and three civilians died. One of the attackers also died," a police source told AFP. On Sunday, thousands of local residents gathered to mourn the dead militant at a funeral where rebels fired shots into the air as a mark of respect. The Press Trust of India said the attacker had been identified as Fayaz Ahmed Ashwar, who carried a bounty of 200,000 rupees (\$3,100) on his head over his role in an attack on a military convoy in 2015 that killed two soldiers. Anti-India sentiment runs deep in the predominantly Muslim Kashmir valley, one of the world's most heavily militarised areas, where most people favour independence or a merger with Pakistan. Apart from armed militant groups, the roughly 500,000 Indian soldiers deployed in Kashmir are regularly involved in clashes with civilians, fuelling growing resentment against New Delhi. The clashes have become more frequent since the killing of popular rebel leader Burhan Wani last July which sparked widespread unrest. Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since the end of British rule in 1947 but both claim the territory in its entirety.

Love conquers all?

Macron's marriage proves politics is different in France

CNN had an interesting piece last month quoting all sorts of French people taking delight in the idea of a younger man and an older woman and shrugging off the idea that there should be a scandal of any kind. They shrug and move on. Complicated love lives are nothing new for French presidents. The current president, Francois Hollande, has four children by another politician and former presidential candidate, Segolene Royal. They split, however, and he took up with a French journalist until a tabloid caught him riding on a motor scooter to the apartment of a much younger woman in Paris. Imagine an American president riding a moped around the streets of Washington to an affair. Insert your Bill Clinton comparisons here, but his extramarital relationship was a major scandal that nearly brought down his presidency. Hollande's was not. Neither was his predecessor's; Nicolas Sarkozy divorced after he was elected. He then took up with Carla Bruni, a model and pop star, who he married while president. Trump is only the second US president ever to have been divorced. Ronald Reagan was the first. Most US presidents have one spouse and stick with them. Truth is, complicated love lives aren't that new in American politics either. The fascination with politicians' private lives is relatively new. The Roosevelts and Kennedys each had relationships you could see being picked apart by the modern media. Among presidential candidates, there's a longer line of complicated personal lives. John Edwards. Newt Gingrich, whose first wife, by the way, was his high school math teacher. But for whatever reason -- the importance of religious conservatives as a voting bloc, perhaps? -- a candidate's personal life has always seemed to matter more here. Not really anymore. Not with President Trump's past.



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Outrage as Kejriwal faces bribery allegation

Congress, BJP demand his resignation as Delhi CM

Anti-corruption crusader Arvind Kejriwal's government in the Indian capital plunged into a crisis yesterday as a minister he fired over the weekend accused him of accepting 20 million rupees in cash as a bribe. There was no immediate comment from Kejriwal. His Aam Admi Party spokesman, Kumar Viswas, rejected the allegation by party lawmaker Kapil Mishra, describing it as an attack by rivals. "We don't want to give any credence to such wild allegations," said Ashish Khaitan, another party leader. Mishra told reporters that in his presence, Kejriwal accepted the cash from another colleague and minister, Satyendra Jain, at his New Delhi residence on Friday. He said that Jain later told him that the money was paid in connection with a land deal worth 500 million rupees (\$760,000). Mishra said he met Kejriwal on Saturday and asked him to explain the source of money

to all party lawmakers but was fired. He said that Kejriwal told him that "such things happen in politics" and he would explain it later. Mishra said he would meet officials of federal and state investigating agencies and seek a probe against Kejriwal and Jain. Kejriwal's political rivals, Manoj Tiwari of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party and Ajay Maken of the opposition Congress party, demanded his immediate resignation. The BJP is in opposition in the state legislature. Kejriwal launched the Aam Aadmi Party in 2012, and it won the Delhi state legislature election a year later, when he became the chief minister. Kejriwal, a 48-year-old former civil servant, campaigned to rid the Indian political system and governance of corruption and inefficiency. The party's symbol - a broom - and its promise to sweep the administration of graft struck a chord with Delhi residents fed up with venal politicians, runaway inflation and slowing economic growth.



AP, New Delhi

AFGHAN-PAK BORDER CLASHES

Pakistan claims 50 killed, Kabul disputes toll

Pakistan's military yesterday said it had killed more than 50 Afghan soldiers in a clash on a major border crossing two days earlier, a claim quickly rejected by Kabul. The skirmish took place Friday at the Chaman border that divides Pakistan's southwest Balochistan province and Afghanistan's southern Kandahar, as Pakistani officials were carrying out a census count. At least eight civilians were killed, according to previously stated tolls by officials -- seven on the Pakistani side, and one on the Afghan side. Afghanistan had blamed Pakistani census enumerators accompanied by soldiers for straying across the border, a charge denied by Islamabad. Yesterday, Pakistani forces elevated their rhetoric by saying Afghan forces had suffered dramatic losses. "We are not pleased to tell you that five Afghan check posts were completely

destroyed -- more than 50 of their soldiers were killed and above 100 were wounded," Major General Nadim Ahmad, head of the paramilitary Frontier Corps told reporters. "We are not happy for their losses but we were forced to retaliate," he said, adding two Pakistani soldiers were killed and nine wounded in the incident. Kabul quickly denied the claim. "A very false claims by a Pakistani Frontier Corp that as many as 50 Afghan soldier lost their lives in Pak retaliation; totally rejected," tweeted Sediq Sediqqi, a government spokesman. Meanwhile, hundreds of Afghan families have fled fighting between the Taliban and government forces near the northern city of Kunduz as the insurgents captured a strategic district soon after launching their annual spring offensive. The militants began their assault on the Qala-e-Zal district in Kunduz province on Saturday and captured most of it including the district centre.



Members of the Venezuelan community hold black crosses with names of victims of clashes with police during protests against Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro, yesterday at St Peter's square. The death toll since April - when the protests intensified after Maduro's administration and the courts stepped up efforts to undermine the opposition -- is at least 36, according to prosecutors, with hundreds more injured.

Russia-US agree Syria air deal

The Russian and US chiefs of general staff agreed on Saturday to fully resume the implementation of a joint memorandum on preventing mid-air incidents over Syria, Russian news agencies quoted the Russian Defence Ministry as saying. Russian General Valery Gerasimov and General Joseph Dunford of the United States discussed in a phone call the Syria de-escalation zones and agreed to continue working on additional measures aimed to avoid clashes in Syria. The aircraft safety memorandum was signed in October 2015 after Russia began bombing targets in Syria to support Syrian government forces in their fight against Islamic State and other armed groups. In Washington, a Pentagon spokesman said in a statement that Dunford and Gerasimov "talked about the recent Astana agreement and affirmed their commitment to de-conflicting operations in Syria. Both also agreed to

maintain regular contact." An agreement reached at peace talks in Astana, Kazakhstan, and backed by Russia, Iran and Turkey, calls for "de-escalation zones" in major areas of conflict between Syrian government forces and rebel groups, reported Reuters. Meanwhile, dozens of Islamic State

ate. In their drive for Raqa, the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces have captured more than 90 percent of Tabqa, but have not been able to fully clear the jihadists out of the city or the adjacent dam. In Iraq, government forces faced stiff resistance from Islamic State in northwest Mosul yesterday after opening a new front against the militants there in a push to rout them from the city after seven months of fighting. Trapped in a steadily shrinking area of the city, the militants are fighting back with a barrage of suicide car bombs and snipers concealed amongst hundreds of thousands of civilians they are effectively holding hostage. Meanwhile, suicide attackers from the IS group killed two Kurdish peshmerga forces yesterday in an operation against a base in northern Iraq. "Two members of the peshmerga were killed and five wounded in a suicide attack on K1 base," a major general in the peshmerga told AFP on condition of anonymity.

WAR IN SYRIA, IRAQ
IS holds off US-backed force in town near Raqa
Jihadists mount fierce resistance on new Mosul battle front
Militants kill two at Iraqi base where US advisers stationed

ALLEGED HOSTILE ACTS N Korea detains another US citizen

North Korea has detained another US citizen for committing "hostile acts", it said yesterday, its second arrest of an American in a fortnight with tensions high between Pyongyang and Washington. The arrest of Kim Hak-Song means that the North is holding four US citizens, with the two countries at loggerheads over Pyongyang's nuclear and missile ambitions. Kim was detained on Saturday, KCNA reported. It said Kim had been working for the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology (PUST) which is known to have a number of American faculty members.

EU MIGRANT CRISIS

6,000 rescued in Med in two days

Some 6,000 migrants hoping to head to Europe were rescued in the Mediterranean on Friday and Saturday in dozens of frantic operations coordinated by the Italian coastguard. Some 3,000 were picked up Saturday by the navy, coastguard, EU border agency Frontex and several NGOs, the coastguard said in a statement. Some of them have already been taken to shore in Italy while others, including 730 onboard a ship operated by Doctors Without Borders (MSF), were on their way. The Libyan coastguard told AFP it had picked up around 170 migrants off Tripoli on Saturday, but had failed to rescue others "due to a lack of means". The rescues came a day after around 3,000 others were found floating in rubber boats and makeshift rafts after having left Libya, heading towards Italy. The International Organization for Migration meanwhile said had rescued 371 migrants Friday off the coast of the Libyan town of Zuwara. Some 37,000 people, many of them sub-Saharan Africans, have arrived in Italy from Libya since the start of the year. More than 4,500 migrants died or were missing and feared drowned in 2016, and another 1,000 have met the same fate this year.

Pope blasts 'mother of all bombs' name

Pope Francis has criticised the United States military and the talking heads who discuss the military for calling a bomba "mother." The pontiff's comments -- referencing the Massive Ordnance Air Blast bomb (MOAB), the largest bomb in the American arsenal -- came during a speech he gave to an audience of students, and just weeks before he is scheduled to meet with President Donald Trump. "I was ashamed when I heard the name," the pope said. "A mother gives life and this one gives death, and we



call this device a mother. What is happening?" The MOAB bomb was used for the first time last month to attack a series of caves with IS insurgents in tunnels in the Achin district, Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan. Although that was the first time that the bomb had been used by the US military, the explosive had been in the American arsenal for over a decade. It is not the first time that Pope has taken offense from something connected to Trump. The two disagree on a range of subjects. For instance, the two have diametrically opposed views on immigration and do not see eye to eye on how to respond to the ongoing refugee crisis that has stemmed from the civil war in Syria.