

NEWS IN
brief

600,000 Yemenis risk cholera in 2017: ICRC

AFP, Aden

More than 600,000 people are expected to contract cholera in Yemen this year, the International Committee of the Red Cross warned yesterday as the war-torn country's healthcare system faces collapse. More than 370,000 people have fallen ill and 1,800 have died since late April in Yemen's second cholera outbreak in less than a year, according to the ICRC and the World Health Organization.

Popularity tumbles for France's Macron: poll

AFP, Paris

A poll out yesterday shows the popularity rating of France's new President Emmanuel Macron has slumped 10 points to hit 54 percent over the past month. While Macron has made a strong start on the world stage and won a solid majority in parliament, his first three months in power have not been completely trouble-free.

Venezuelan opposition readies fresh strike

AFP, Caracas

Venezuela's opposition has called a fresh 48-hour general strike against embattled President Nicolas Maduro's plans to have the constitution rewritten giving him broader powers. The walkout comes as violent and sometimes deadly protests continue amid a political and economic crisis that has led to shortages of basic goods and soaring inflation.

Flood fear forces mass evacuation in Japan

REUTERS, Tokyo

Tens of thousands of people in northeast Japan were told to evacuate their homes yesterday as heavy rain caused major flooding and cut some rail links, authorities said. The storm follows freak rains in southwestern Japan earlier this month that left at least 25 people dead.



Israeli border guards attempt to disperse Palestinian Muslim worshippers outside Lions' Gate, a main entrance to the Al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem's Old City, late Saturday, as they gather in protest against new Israeli security measures implemented at the holy site.

PHOTO: AFP

US Congress agrees on Russia sanctions

Defies Trump to punish Russia for alleged election meddling

REUTERS, Washington

US Republicans and Democrats have reached agreement on legislation that allows new sanctions against Russia, Iran and North Korea, leading congressional Democrats said on Saturday, in a bill that would limit any potential effort by President Donald Trump to lift sanctions against Moscow.

The Countering Iran's Destabilizing Activities Act, which was passed by the Senate a month ago, was held up in the House of Representatives after Republicans proposed including North Korea sanctions in the bill.

The House is set to vote on Tuesday on a package of bills on sanctions covering Russia, Iran and North Korea, according to House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy's office. The measure will "hold them accountable for their dangerous actions," McCarthy said in a statement Saturday.

Under the proposed bill, Trump

must submit to Congress a report on proposed actions that would "significantly alter" US foreign policy in connection with Russia, including easing sanctions or returning diplomatic properties in Maryland and New York that former President Barack Obama ordered vacated in December.

Congress would have at least 30 days to hold hearings and then vote to uphold or reject Trump's proposed changes.

Many lawmakers hope the bill will send a message to Trump to keep a strong line against Russia.

Trump, who met Putin at the Group of 20 summit in Hamburg earlier this month and said it was an "honor" to meet him, has been criticized for seeking to reset US-Russian relations. His administration has been bogged down by ongoing investigations of possible ties between his 2016 campaign and Russia.

With the bill, Republicans and Democrats are seeking to punish Russia for

its 2014 annexation of Crimea, a peninsula belonging to Ukraine, and for meddling in the 2016 presidential election.

Putin has denied any meddling in the US democratic process last year. Trump has said that his campaign did not collude with Russia.

House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi said Russia's "outrageous and unacceptable" behaviour in the 2016 US election and in Europe "demand that we have strong statutory sanctions enacted as soon as possible."

Even so, she expressed concerns that by including North Korea the legislation could face procedural delays in the Senate.

Senior Republican lawmakers did not immediately comment on the latest bill.

In Brussels, the European Union sounded an alarm about the US moves to step up sanctions on Russia, urging Washington to coordinate with its Group of 7 partners.

Trump asserts 'complete power to pardon'

Reuters, Norfolk

US President Donald Trump declared on Saturday that he has "complete power to pardon," as his administration confronts ongoing investigations of possible ties between his 2016 campaign and Russia.

In a series of early morning Twitter messages, Trump aired renewed frustration with his attorney general, the special counsel leading the Russia probe, and Republicans in Congress who are struggling to advance his legislative agenda.

But Trump's comment about pardons, tucked into an attack on the media, raised the possibility that he was considering his options if the investigations do not turn out the way he hopes.

Trump did not specify who, if anyone, he might consider pardoning. His tweets appeared to be written in response to a report by The Washington Post this week that Trump and his legal team have examined presidential powers to pardon Trump aides, family members and possibly even himself.

Reuters has not confirmed the newspaper accounts.

RUSSIA COLLUSION



REUTERS

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