

NEWS IN brief

World's oldest man dies at 113

AFP, Jerusalem
Israeli Holocaust survivor Yisrael Kristal, certified last year by Guinness World Records as the world's oldest man, died yesterday aged 113, Israeli media reported. Kristal, originally from Zarnow in what is now Poland, was born on September 15, 1903 -- three months before the Wright brothers' first successful powered airplane flight.

At least 36 killed in China bus crash

AFP, Beijing
At least 36 people were killed and 13 injured when a packed bus slammed into a wall at the mouth of an expressway tunnel in northern China, authorities said yesterday. The coach crashed at the Qinling tunnel in Ankang, a city in Shaanxi province, on Thursday night, according to the State Administration of Work Safety.

Strong 6.2 quake rocks Philippines

AFP, Manila
A strong 6.2-magnitude earthquake rocked the region south of the Philippine capital yesterday, causing buildings in Manila and nearby areas to sway, seismologists and witnesses said. The quake struck just off the coast of Lian town at 1:28 pm, at a relatively deep 173 kilometres. Rescue officials reported no damage or casualties.

Bomb kills 3, wounds 26 in NW Pakistan

AFP, Khair
A roadside bomb killed at least three people and wounded 26 others in a Pakistani tribal district near the Afghan border yesterday, officials said. The explosion struck a truck carrying civilians, most of them labourers, in Bajaur tribal district.



An Israeli soldier takes aim during clashes with Palestinian demonstrators, inset, following a demonstration against the expropriation of Palestinian land by Israel in the village of Kfar Qaddum, near Nablus in the occupied West Bank, yesterday.

IS threat remains despite blows: UN

AFP, United Nations
The Islamic State group continues to "motivate and enable" global attacks and funnel funds to supporters despite military blows to its so-called Caliphate in Syria and Iraq, according to a UN report Thursday.
The 24-page text, prepared by a panel of experts for the Security Council, noted that remittances sent abroad -- often in small sums, making them difficult to detect -- comes as IS steps up its international efforts "as demonstrated by the higher pace of attacks in Europe."
Funding sources are still based on oil profits and the imposition of taxes on local populations in the areas under its control.
Beyond Europe, IS is seeking to expand its footprint in Southeast Asia, the report said, citing the southern Philippines where a bloody urban siege has killed almost 700 people in more than two months fighting.
It noted that the number "of foreign terrorist fighters traveling to Iraq and Syria" has continued to fall. In addition, the financial situation of the (IS) core continues to deteriorate, "mainly due to military pressure against the group."
Special care however should be given to radicalized minors returning home after undergoing advanced IS training. This group requires "specific attention and strategies that take into account the legal protections afforded to minors."
The report added that stiff resistance in Mosul -- Iraq's second largest city which was declared "liberated" by the government in July -- shows that the IS command and control structure "has not broken down completely," and remains "a significant military threat."

Doklam crisis escalates

Indian military steps up operational readiness on China border

REUTERS, New Delhi
India's military has increased operational readiness along the eastern Indian border with China, sources said, as neither side shows any sign of backing off from a face-off in a remote Himalayan region near their disputed frontier.
Indian and Chinese troops have been embroiled in the seven-week confrontation on the Doklam plateau, claimed by both China and India's tiny ally, Bhutan.
The military alert level had been raised as a matter of caution, two sources in New Delhi and in the eastern state of Sikkim told Reuters on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter.
The crisis began in June when a Chinese construction crew was found to be trying to extend a road in the Doklam region that both China and the mountainous nation of Bhutan claim as theirs.
India, which has special ties with Bhutan, sent its troops to stop the construction, igniting anger in Beijing which

said New Delhi had no business to intervene, and demanded a unilateral troop withdrawal.
Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration, though, has dug in its heels and said that the Chinese road activity in the region near the borders of India, Bhutan and China was a threat to the security of its own northeast region.
"The army has moved to a state that is called 'no war, no peace'," one of the sources said.
Meanwhile, India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj yesterday met her Bhutanese counterpart Damcho Dorji in Kathmandu on the sidelines of Bimstec meeting here and is understood to have discussed bilateral issues, amidst the standoff between Indian and Chinese troops in the Doklam area.
Each year, Indian troop formations deployed on the border go on such an "operational alert" usually in September and October. But this year the activity has been advanced in the eastern sector, the source in Sikkim, above which lies the area of the current standoff, said.
"Its out of caution. It has been done because of the situation," the source said. But the source stressed there was no additional force deployment and that the area was well defended.



Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj (R) and Bhutanese Foreign Minister Damcho Dorji talk during a meeting in Kathmandu yesterday.

China to remain 'neutral' if N Korea attacks first

As tensions soar, South Korea mulls nuke arms

AL JAZEERA ONLINE
A Chinese state-run newspaper has suggested Beijing would "stay neutral" if North Korea strikes first in a conflict with the United States, despite a mutual defence pact between the Asian allies.
The nationalistic Global Times tabloid said in an editorial that Washington and Pyongyang were playing a "reckless game" that could lead to "miscalculations and a strategic war".
"China should also make clear that if North Korea launches missiles that threaten US soil first and the US retaliates, China will stay neutral," the editorial said.
However, it added: "If the US and South Korea carry out strikes and try to overthrow the North Korean regime and change the political pattern of the Korean peninsula, China will prevent them from doing so."
China - which has been accused by the US of not doing enough to rein in its long-time ally - has maintained that political dialogue is the only solution.
Al Jazeera's Adrian Brown, reporting from Beijing, said the commentary gave an inkling of China's official stance.
As tension soars in the region, South Korea's

media yesterday called for Seoul to build nuclear weapons of its own to defend itself.
South Korea, which fought a war alongside the US with the North that ended in a stalemate in 1953, is highly technologically advanced and analysts estimate it could develop an atomic device within months of deciding to do so.
"Now is time to start reviewing nuclear armament," the Korea Herald said in an editorial.
The South, which hosts 28,500 American troops, is banned from developing its own nuclear weapons under an atomic energy deal it signed in 1974 with the US, which instead offers Seoul a "nuclear umbrella" against potential attacks.
But after Pyongyang conducted two successful tests of an intercontinental ballistic missile last month, putting much of the mainland US within reach, the paper warned: "Trust in the nuclear umbrella the US provides to the South can be shaken."
A conflict between the North and the US could have devastating consequences for Asia's fourth-largest economy, with Seoul within range of Pyongyang's vast conventional artillery forces.

Iran not 'living up to spirit' of nuclear deal: Trump

Says decision on Afghanistan strategy 'very close'

AFP, Washington
President Donald Trump on Thursday blasted Iran for not "living up to the spirit" of the nuclear deal it reached in 2015 with world powers including the United States, and reiterated that he thought it was a "horrible agreement."
"I don't think Iran is in compliance," Trump said from his golf club retreat in New Jersey, where he is spending two weeks away from Washington for a working vacation.
"I don't think they're living up to the spirit of the agreement."
On July 17, the White House certified that the Islamic republic was in fact sticking to the nuclear agreement.
Trump also said he was "very close" to revealing his keenly awaited decision on the number of US troops he plans to keep in Afghanistan.
The White House has launched a review of the US plan for Afghanistan after 16 years of

war, and reports suggest that Trump's national security team is divided on whether to send more troops or to pull out. Reports have suggested that other Trump advisers favor cutting American losses by pulling out or sending private military contractors to replace troops.
The report came as an US airstrike in eastern Afghanistan killed 11 people of the same family, local officials said yesterday.
Trump also thanked Russian President Vladimir Putin for ordering the US embassy in Moscow to slash its staff -- boasting that this would cut payroll costs.
Last month, the Kremlin demanded that Washington reduce its diplomatic footprint in Russia by 755 employees -- both US diplomats and local staff -- and close two compounds.
"I want to thank him because we're trying to cut down our payroll and, as far as I'm concerned, I'm very thankful that he let go of a large number of people because now we have a smaller payroll," Trump declared.



People gather at the site of a train collision in the area of Khorshid, in Egypt's Mediterranean city of Alexandria, yesterday. At least 36 people were killed as two trains collided outside of Alexandria, in one of the deadliest in a string of such accidents in Egypt, the health ministry said.

BY-ELECTION

Wife of ousted Pak PM to seek parliament seat

REUTERS, Lahore
The wife of ousted Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will contest a special election for the parliamentary seat he was forced to vacate after the Supreme Court disqualified him from holding office, party officials said.
Kulsoom Nawaz Sharif will be the candidate of the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz party in the by-election to be held in about 45 days, Sharif adviser Asif Kirmani told reporters.
The announcement comes as Nawaz Sharif leads a "homecoming" caravan to Lahore that has drawn thousands of supporters. Sharif on Thursday described his removal last



Tension in Rakhine rises

Myanmar army dispatches about 500 soldiers to several towns near the border with Bangladesh after recent killings of seven Buddhists

REUTERS, Yangon
Myanmar has sent hundreds of soldiers to beef up security in northwestern Rakhine state after a recent spate of killings, military sources said yesterday, fuelling fears of yet more violence and instability in the troubled region.
Muslim-majority northern Rakhine was plunged into violence last October when Rohingya Muslim insurgents killed nine police, setting off a brutal counteroffensive beset by allegations of rape, killings and torture by government troops.
Two military sources based in Rakhine told Reuters the army had sent troops to the state's north to "help tighten security" after seven Buddhists were found hacked to death in mountains near the town of Maungdaw last week.
The army dispatched about 500 soldiers to several towns near the border with Bangladesh on Thursday, including the towns of Buthidaung and Maungdaw, according to one of

the military sources with direct knowledge of the matter.
"We have to increase security operations because the security situation has worsened - some Muslims and Buddhists have been killed by the insurgents," Rakhine State police chief Colonel Sein Lwin told Reuters.
Govt blames 'extremists' for the killing of Buddhists who stumbled upon a camp for Rohingya militants
Asean Parliamentarians for HR voices concern about increased number of troops in Rakhine

Rohingya women and burned homes.
United Nations investigators who interviewed some of the nearly 75,000 people who fled to neighbouring Bangladesh said troops probably committed crimes against humanity.
The government rejects the allegations and has refused to cooperate with a UN fact-finding mission to look into abuses in Myanmar.
Despite the massive counter-offensive last year, the government has accused the militants of continuing to run training camps in the mountains and killing alleged informants in the Muslim community.
The government blamed "extremists" for the killing of the seven Buddhists who, residents of the area believe, stumbled upon a camp for Rohingya militants.
That prompted security forces to hunt for the killers in an "intensive clearance operation", a military source told Reuters last week.

Contaminated eggs scandal spreads from Europe to Asia

AFP, Brussels
A scandal involving eggs contaminated with insecticide spread to 15 EU countries, Switzerland and as far away as Hong Kong yesterday as the European Commission called for a special meeting on the growing crisis.
Ministers and food safety chiefs from around the European Union are set to meet on September 26 in a bid to get countries to stop "blaming and shaming" each other over the scare involving the chemical fipronil.
Millions of eggs have been pulled from supermarket shelves from 15 EU countries and dozens of poultry farms closed since the discovery of fipronil, which can harm human health, was made public on August 1.
The issue has sparked a row between Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany, the three countries at the epicentre of the crisis, about how long they knew about the problem.
Fipronil is commonly used to get rid of fleas, lice and ticks from animals but is



banned by the European Union from use in the food industry.
The EU insists there is no threat to human health, but the World Health Organization (WHO) says that when eaten in large quantities it can harm people's kidneys, liver and thyroid glands.
In a sign the crisis is going global, Brussels also announced that Hong Kong had received some tainted eggs from the Netherlands, with the southern Chinese city becoming the first place in Asia known to be affected.
Belgium earlier this week accused the Netherlands of knowing about the fipronil eggs since November 2016 and failing to notify other countries.
On Thursday Dutch Health Minister Edith Schippers admitted the government had made "errors" but denied a cover-up.
The food scare is one of the biggest to hit Europe since the 2013 horsemeat scandal when equine meat was falsely labelled and mis-sold.

month by the top court over unreported income as "an insult to the mandate of 200 million voters".
The decision to put forward Sharif's wife is in keeping with Pakistan's tradition of dynastic politics.
Sharif's ruling party last week elected one of his loyalists, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, as prime minister.
Party leaders have suggested Abbasi will hold office until elections due next year, a reversal of earlier indications that Sharif's younger brother, Shahbaz, would seek the vacant seat and later take over as premier.
There is also talk in the party ranks that Kulsoom herself could become PM once elected to parliament, but a Sharifaide said it was too early to speculate.