

NEWS IN brief

Nawaz Sharif skips Pak court hearing

Ousted Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif yesterday failed to appear before a court hearing corruption cases against him as he was in London to take care of his ailing wife. The court is hearing the corruption cases after the Supreme Court on July 28 disqualified him in the Panama Papers scandal.

Israel intercepts drone over Golan Heights

Israel's military fired a Patriot missile yesterday to bring down what it said was an Iranian-made drone reconnaissance by Hezbollah on a UN-authorized mission over the Golan Heights. The drone took off from a Damascus military airport before entering the demilitarized zone.

Afghan Air Force gets Black Hawk helicopters

The Afghan Air Force took delivery of its first four US-made UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters yesterday as part of a planned replacement of the ageing fleet of Russian-made Mi-17 helicopters, officials said. The US plans to supply a total of 159 Black Hawks to Afghanistan in the coming years.

Suicide bombers kill 3 in Iraq restaurant

Two suicide bombers killed at least three people and wounded 34 yesterday in a northern Iraq restaurant frequented by militiamen battling the Islamic State group. Security sources said the attack came just five days after a gun and bomb attack on a restaurant and a nearby checkpoint in southern Iraq.



A picture taken yesterday shows the powerful winds and rain of Hurricane Maria battering the city of Petit-Bourg on the French overseas Caribbean island of Guadeloupe. Inset, crewmen brace themselves from the propeller wash of a Marine Corps MV-22 Osprey departing aboard the USS Kearsarge as US military continues to evacuate from the US Virgin Islands in advance of Maria.



Hurricane Maria ruins Dominica

Barrels toward Virgin Islands

Hurricane Maria smashed into the eastern Caribbean island of Dominica yesterday, with its prime minister describing devastating damage as winds and rain from the storm hit his territories still reeling from Irma. Maria, which has been fluctuating in intensity between a Category Four and Category Five hurricane on its path through the Caribbean, hit Dominica with winds of up to 160 miles (257 kilometres) per hour, the US National Hurricane Center (NHC) said. "We have lost all what money can buy and replace," Dominica's premier Roosevelt Skerrit posted on Facebook, saying there were initial reports of "widespread devastation." "My greatest fear for the morning is that we will wake up to serious physical injury and possible deaths as a result of likely landslides triggered by persistent rains." Earlier, he said his roof had been blown off and house flooded, leaving him "at the complete mercy of the hurricane." After being rescued, Skerrit appealed for "help of all kinds" but noted specifically that authorities would need helicopters to survey the damage. Dominica's airport and ports have been closed. After moving across the tropical island of 72,000 people, Maria churning north towards the British Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. The British archipelago, which is still mopping up after Hurricane Irma earlier this month, has been under curfew since Monday, with residents ordered to stay indoors until after the storm, which is expected to hit today.

US has 'many' military options

Says India's Congress party, calls on govt to take all parties into confidence on deportation plan

IAANS, New Delhi
"A blanket approach is never helpful," the Congress leader added. Singhvi said: "We beseech the government with all earnestness and humility to not use blanket approaches as we are given to understand that the affidavit submitted in the Supreme court suggests that the government of India is not bound by any international treaty. "Whether it is a technical point or it is a blanket approach, you should be very guarded because ultimately the governments change, parties change, and times change. The State of India and the affidavit with the Supreme Court are permanent." The Centre on Monday told the Congress Court not to interfere in the Rohingya issue as it was a policy decision to deport them and that some of them were linked to Pakistani terrorist groups. As the apex court heard a petition challenging the deportation of Rohingya Muslim refugees to Myanmar, the central government told the apex court that this was an essential executive decision taken in the larger national interest.

Says Mattis as Japan deploys missile defence to northern island

AFP, Washington
Tensions flared when Kim Jong-Un's regime tested what it termed a hydrogen bomb many times more powerful than its previous device. The North also fired a ballistic missile over Japan and into the Pacific on Friday, responding to fresh UN sanctions with what appeared to be a long-term missile flight. "There are many military options in concert with our allies, that we will take to defend our allies and our own interests," Mattis told Pentagon reporters. He did not provide details, but he responded affirmatively when asked if such included options that would not put Seoul at grave risk. Mattis also confirmed that the US and Seoul had discussed the option of sending limited-size "tactical" nuclear weapons to South Korea. North Korea's weapons drive was set to dominate Trump's address to the United Nations General Assembly yesterday and his meetings with South Korean and Japanese leaders this week.

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US Senate passes \$700B defense spending bill



Meanwhile, Japan yesterday deployed an additional missile defence system on its northern island of Hokkaido. "As part of measures to prepare for emergencies, we will today deploy a PAC-3 unit" to a base of the nation's Ground Self-Defense Force in the southern tip of Hokkaido, Defence Minister Tsunori Onodera told reporters. North Korea "may take further provocative actions including launching ballistic missiles that would fly over Japan again in the future", Onodera said, adding that his ministry "would take appropriate measures to protect people's safety". The US Senate passed its version of a \$700 billion defense policy bill on Monday, backing President Donald Trump's call for a bigger, stronger military but setting the stage for a battle over government spending levels later this year.

UK companies made £6b from Saudi Arabia: report

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK
British arms companies have earned more than £6bn from their trade with Saudi Arabia during the ongoing war in Yemen, new research has found. War Child UK claimed the true revenue from dealings with the Gulf state are almost double previous estimates, despite only around £3bn going to the public through corporation tax receipts. The charity accused including BAE Systems and Raytheon of "profiteering from the deaths of innocent children" by selling missiles and equipment to the Saudi-led coalition. It stands accused of committing war crimes and killing thousands of civilians with its bombing campaign against Houthi rebels. Rocco Blume, a conflict and humanitarian adviser at War Child, said Britain is not only selling arms to Saudi forces but maintaining them as well. "The estimated revenue from ongoing support pushed the estimated revenue far above the £3.6bn figure announced by the UK's own Arms Trade Last week. "We all want to see productive international trade, but this is damaging," Blume told The Independent. "The revenue has to be seen in the context of all the other costs incurred in this trade, especially to our international human rights." Blume said there was a "lack of transparency" on the extent of British firms' involvement amid a global weakening of protections for children in conflicts including Yemen, Syria and Iraq.

2m Japanese now over 90 for first time

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK
The number of Japanese aged over 90 has passed two million for the first time, according to the latest government data. The figure has doubled from 1.02 million in 2004 to 2.06 million. The total number of elderly Japanese - over 65 - comes to 35.14 million, accounting for 27.7% of the population. The data, released for Respect for the Aged Day on Monday, highlights the issues posed by Japan's declining birth rate, which is already affecting the country's economy in areas including job security and housing markets. According to Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, the number of births dropped to below one million for the first time in 2016. The country's current population of 127 million is expected to decline by nearly 40 million by 2065, Japan's National Institute of Population and Social Security Research said. Experts say Japan's shrinking population can be attributed to young people focusing on their careers and abstaining from sex and marriage, while senior citizens are living longer than ever. A study released earlier this year found nearly a third of Japanese people are entering their 30s without any sexual experience. The total population data highlights the contribution of senior people to Japan's economy. It has found record 7.7 million people aged 65 or over had a job as of last year, of which 3.01 million had part-time or temporary jobs. "Elderly people are eager to work and more companies are seeing them as a valuable official in charge of the statistics said."



Members of the Iraqi forces backed by paramilitary units advance against one of the Islamic State group's last bastions in the area of Anbar, in the west western province of Anbar bordering Syria, yesterday.

AROUND THE WORLD IN 79 DAYS

British cyclist sets new world record

AFP, Paris
A British cyclist set a new world record Monday by travelling around the globe in 79 days - beating the fictional exploits of Phileas Fogg by a day. Scottish adventurer Mark Beaumont rode into Paris 78 days, 14 hours and 14 minutes after he set off from the French capital, smashing the previous record of 123 days for a round-the-world bike trip. Arriving in evening rush hour traffic under light drizzle, the 34-year-old rode the last cobbled mile to the Arc de Triomphe with a 20-strong entourage on wheels, including a man in a top hat on a penny-forthing bicycle. Some 50 supporters were at the moment to greet him, including his dear wife Nicci and his daughters, Harriet, four, and Willa, one. "I doubt I'll ever do anything like it again," said Beaumont, describing the journey as "definitely the longest two-and-a-half months of my life". Bouncing his grinning one-year-old in his arms, Beaumont said the world record was "an absolute dream come true". A Guinness World Records judge was on hand to present him with his two framed records - he also beat the previous time for the farthest distance cycled in a month - while he was still in the saddle.

'The man who saved the world' dies in Russia

AFP, Moscow
Stanislav Petrov, a Soviet military officer who is widely credited with helping prevent a nuclear war with the United States, has died aged 77, his son told AFP yesterday. Petrov, whose extraordinary story was told in a documentary titled 'The Man Who Saved the World', received several international awards, was honoured at the United Nations and met Hollywood superstars such as Robert De Niro and Matt Damon. Yet Petrov lived in a small town outside Moscow and died in relative obscurity on May 19, his death making headlines in Russia and abroad only months later when a German friend wrote a blog post about his death. In September 1983, Petrov was an officer on duty at a secret command centre south of Moscow when an alarm went off signalling that the United States had launched intercontinental ballistic missiles. The officer - who had only a few minutes to make a decision and was not sure about the incoming data - dismissed the warning as a false alarm. He had told his commanders of an imminent US nuclear strike, the Soviet leadership - locked in an arms race with Washington - might have ordered a retaliatory strike. Instead the 44-year-old lieutenant colonel reported a system malfunction and an investigation that followed afterwards proved he was right. Petrov came home only several days later but did not tell his family about what had happened. "He came home knackered but did not tell us anything," his son Dmitry said. Several months later Petrov received an award "for services to the Fatherland" and the incident at the control centre was kept secret for many years. In 1984, he left the military and settled in the town of Fryazino some 20 kilometres (12 miles) northeast of Moscow.

US ELECTION MEDDLING

Trump lawyer denies Russia collusion

AFP, Washington
President Donald Trump's personal lawyer Michael Cohen said yesterday he had no ties to Russian interference in the 2016 election and saw "not a hint" that Trump himself was involved. In a statement before closed-door questioning by the Senate Intelligence Committee, Cohen said that Russian intelligence agent's dossier that tied him to Russian election interference was "riddled with falsehoods and intentionally salacious accusations." "I have never engaged with, been paid by, paid for, or conversed with any member of the Russian Federation or anyone else to hack or interfere with the election," Cohen said. "Given my own proximity to the president of the United States as a candidate, let me also say that I never saw anything - not a hint of anything - that demonstrated his involvement in Russian interference in our election or any form of Russian collusion." Cohen also said that the Russian meddling issue has been politicized "to discredit our lawfully elected president and shame his supporters." The Senate committee has been interviewing Trump advisers and members of his election campaign as part of a sprawling probe into how Russia tried to influence last year's election to damage front-runner Hillary Clinton, the Democratic candidate, and boost Trump.