

NEWSIN  
brief

Dutch MPs recognise  
Armenian 'genocide'

AFP, Ankara  
Turkey summoned the Dutch charge d'affaires yesterday to complain about the Netherlands parliament recognising the massacre of as many as 1.5 million Armenians in 1915 as genocide. The parliamentary motion, which the Dutch government said would not become official policy, risks further worsening ties between the countries.

5 refugees killed in  
Rwanda food protest

AFP, Kigali  
At least five refugees were killed and 20 injured at a camp in Rwanda when a protest over a cut in food rations turned violent, Rwandan police said yesterday. The refugees from neighbouring Republic of Congo were protesting against a 25 percent cut implemented last month in rations provided by the UNHCR.

Scam-hit UNICEF  
deputy resigns

AL JAZEERA ONLINE  
The deputy director of the United Nations children's agency Justin Forsyth has resigned saying he doesn't want allegations of sexual misconduct made against him to "damage" the agency's work. Female colleagues of Forsyth's at Save the Children raised complaints against him in 2011 and 2015, alleging he had sent inappropriate text messages.

UK PM's key Brexit  
speech next Friday

AFP, London  
Prime Minister Theresa May will make a keynote speech next Friday on Britain's relationship with the EU after Brexit following a "very positive" meeting of her senior ministers, her spokesman said. The full cabinet will discuss the plans at their regular weekly meeting on Tuesday.

# US imposes 'heaviest' sanctions

Trump to announce new measures as South Korea prepares for talks with North

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump rolled out sanctions against North Korea-linked shipping assets Friday, hailing the package as the "heaviest sanctions ever" levied on the Pyongyang regime.

Trump used a speech to conservatives just outside Washington to step up his campaign of "maximum pressure" designed to force North Korea to roll back its weapons programs.

"We imposed today the heaviest sanctions ever imposed on a country before," Trump claimed at the end of a 90 minute campaign-style address.

In light of past US embargoes, that is likely an overstatement, but Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin confirmed the sanctions



South Korean President Moon Jae-In talks with Ivanka Trump during their dinner at the Presidential Blue House in Seoul, South Korea, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

covered "virtually all the ships" North Korea is "using at this moment in time."

Trump's administration is locked in a nuclear standoff with North Korea, which is trying to develop missiles that could deliver a nuke to major cities in the United States.

The tougher sanctions may jeopardise the latest detente between the two Koreas, illustrated by the North's participation in the Winter Olympics in the South, amid preparations for talks about a possible summit between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korean President Moon Jae-in.

Kim said he wants to boost the "warm climate of reconciliation and dialogue" with South Korea after a high-level delegation, including his sister, returned from the Olympics.

In December the United Nations approved US-drafted limiting North Korea's access to refined petroleum products and crude oil, which the North Korean Foreign Ministry said amounted to an act of war. In January Washington announced a round of sanctions and urged China and Russia to expel North Koreans raising funds for the

programmes.

The new US sanctions were announced while Trump's daughter, Ivanka, is visiting South Korea. She had dinner with Moon after a closed-door meeting with the president.

At a dinner with Moon at Seoul's presidential Blue House, she said the purpose was also to "reaffirm our commitment to our maximum pressure campaign to ensure that the Korean Peninsula is denuclearised."

Moon, cited by his spokesman, Yoon Young-chan, said talks with the North on denuclearisation and improving inter-Korean relations must go hand in hand.

Ivanka's visit to South Korea coincides with that of a sanctioned North Korean official, Kim Yong Chol, blamed for the deadly 2010 sinking of a South Korean navy ship that killed 46 sailors. His delegation will attend the closing ceremony and also meet Moon.

North Korea has denied any involvement.

Seoul said it approved the pending visit by Kim Yong Chol in the pursuit of peace and asked for public understanding in the face of opposition protests.

South Korea's decision on Thursday to allow in Kim Yong Chol, currently sanctioned by the United States and South Korea, sparked protest from family members of the dead sailors and opposition parties.

## India-bound gas pipeline opens in Afghanistan

REUTERS, Serhetabat

Regional leaders launched construction work on the Afghan section of an \$8 billion natural gas pipeline that will link the energy-rich Central Asian nation of Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan and India.

Ex-Soviet Turkmenistan holds the world's fourth-largest natural gas reserves but has been heavily dependent on gas exports to China after Russia cut back gas imports in the past few years.

The project is expected to transport 33 billion cubic metres (bcm) of natural gas a year along an 1,800 kilometre (1,125 miles) route from Galkynysh, the world's second-biggest gas field, to Fazilka near the border with Pakistan in northern India.

"South Asia is being connected with Central Asia through Afghanistan after more than a century of division," Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said.

### NORTH KOREA CRISIS

Trump says Treasury to cut off sources of revenue and fuel

Seoul says sanctioned North Korean general 'right person' for talks

Ivanka Trump backs pressure on North Korea to denuclearise

## World have to face another nuke crisis

Iran warns over scrapping nuke deal

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

The world will have to confront "another nuclear crisis" if the landmark 2015 agreement between Iran and world powers is scrapped, Iran's deputy foreign minister warned.

In a speech at London's Chatham House on Thursday, Abbas Araghchi said the "atmosphere of uncertainty" under US President Donald Trump has made it more difficult for Iran to stay with the deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"If we lose JCPOA, we would face another nuclear crisis, which would be very difficult to be resolved this time," he said.

"This is a choice between security and insecurity at the world level."

Araghchi, who served as Iran's top nuclear negotiator, also hinted that Iran could withdraw from the deal if the country fails to reap the expected benefits of the agreement.

"For Iran, we are supposed to benefit from the sanctions' lifting," he said. "If companies and banks are not working with Iran, we cannot remain in a deal that has no benefit for us."

Under the deal signed in Vienna between Iran and six world powers - the US, Russia, Germany, France, Britain and China, as well as the European Union - the leadership in Tehran scaled back the country's uranium enrichment programme.

According to UN inspectors, Iran continues to be in compliance with that condition.



Indian PM Narendra Modi greets Canadian PM Justin Trudeau's son Hadrien during Trudeau's ceremonial reception in New Delhi, yesterday. Despite the hug (inset), Modi yesterday spoke out against separatism in an apparent warning to his Canadian counterpart. Canada is home to roughly half a million Sikhs and Trudeau's administration has been accused of being too cosy with those who appear to back independence.



PHOTO: REUTERS

### TENSIONS AND DIFFERENCES WITH PRESIDENT

## Top Trump advisers may leave

REUTERS, Washington

Longstanding friction between US President Donald Trump and two top aides, the National Security Adviser and the Chief of Staff, has grown to a point that either or both might quit soon, four senior administration officials said.

Both HR McMaster and John Kelly are military men considered by US political observers as moderating influences on the president by imposing a routine on the White House. They have also convinced Trump of the importance of international alliances, particularly Nato, which he has criticised as not equally sharing its burdens with the United States.

However, all the officials were quick to add that the tensions could blow over, at least for now, as have previous episodes of discord between the president and other top officials who have fallen out of favor, including Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Attorney

General Jeff Sessions.

Trump swatted McMaster in a Twitter post after his comments at a European conference last weekend that he was certain Russia meddled in the 2016 US election campaign, which Trump has been reluctant to acknowledge.

Kelly and McMaster have chafed at



Trump's treatment of them in public and in private, which both at times have considered insulting, said all four officials, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The current and most potent irritant, they said, is Kelly's effort, supported by McMaster, to prevent admin-

istration officials who have been unable to obtain permanent high-level security clearances from having access to the government's most closely held secrets.

Under pressure to act last week, Kelly strengthened the security clearance process in response to a scandal involving Rob Porter, a former official accused of domestic abuse by two ex-wives. Staffers whose interim clearances have been pending since June would have them revoked on Friday.

That would bar Trump's son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner from reading the president's daily intelligence brief, which often contains information on covert operations and intelligence collected from spy satellites, spies, and close US allies.

White House officials were working to find a compromise that would allow Kushner to continue his work as a senior adviser to Trump, another source familiar with the situation said.

## Mueller files new charges against Manafort, Gates

REUTERS, Washington

The special counsel in the Russia probe filed new criminal charges on Thursday against President Donald Trump's former campaign aides Paul Manafort and Rick Gates, stepping up pressure in a legal battle that started last year.

The 32-count indictment filed by Robert Mueller in Alexandria, Virginia, federal court includes charges of bank fraud and lying on tax returns. It alleges that Manafort, with Gates' assistance, laundered more than \$30 million and duped banks into lending money. It says the pair used funds from secret offshore accounts to enjoy a life of luxury.

Manafort and Gates already face criminal charges by Mueller's office in federal court in Washington, D.C., that include conspiracy to launder money, conspiracy to defraud the United States and failure to register as foreign agents for political work they did for a pro-Russian Ukrainian political party.

The pair were among the first to be charged as part of Mueller's ongoing investi-

gation into whether the Trump presidential campaign colluded with Russia to influence the 2016 election. Russia has denied meddling in the campaign and Trump has denied any collusion took place. The probe has shadowed Trump's year-old presidency.

The latest charges against Manafort, who was Trump's campaign manager for five months in 2016, and Gates, who was deputy campaign manager, do not mention their work for the Trump campaign.

Jason Maloni, a spokesman for Manafort, said Manafort is innocent of the new charges which, he noted, "have nothing to do with Russia and 2016 election interference/collusion."

Thomas Green, a new lawyer for Gates, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Michael Zeldin, a former special assistant to Mueller at the Justice Department, said the new charges "substantially increased the sentencing exposure Manafort and Gates would face upon conviction" at trial. The bank fraud charges, for example, carry up to 30 years in prison.



HARASSMENT CLAIM

## Australian deputy PM resigns

REUTERS, Sydney

Australia's deputy prime minister yesterday said he will resign as leader of his party after weeks of pressure over an affair with a staffer that brought him into open conflict with his premier and a new allegation of sexual harassment emerged.

Barnaby Joyce said he will step down on Monday as leader of the National party, the junior partner in Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's centre-right coalition, after resisting earlier calls to quit over the affair with his former media secretary, with whom he is expecting a child.

He will remain in parliament, safeguarding Turnbull's shaky one-seat majority. The National Party will now elect a new leader, who will also become deputy prime minister under the terms of the coalition agreement with Turnbull's Liberal party.

Joyce's decision came after a falling-out with Turnbull, who is in the United States for meetings with President Donald Trump and who declined to leave him in charge while he is out of the country. Turnbull called Joyce's affair a "shocking error of judgment" last week, to which Joyce responded by calling Turnbull "inept". Joyce denied any wrongdoing but acknowledged the allegation had hastened his decision.

## They've rights to look beautiful!

India state offers free breast implants to poor women

AFP, New Delhi

Thousands of poor women in India's Tamil Nadu state have been offered free cosmetic breast surgery, including implants, its health minister said yesterday, because "poor people also have a right to look beautiful".

The southern Indian state is known for its populist schemes, which have previously included free canteens and providing thousands of disadvantaged people with goats, laptops and bicycles among other items.

It will now offer cosmetic breast surgery free of cost to all women -- for aesthetic or medical reasons -- with priority given to those from the poorest sections of society.

"If a poor woman desires to look beautiful, we will support her financially," state health minister C. Vijayabaskar told AFP.

"Whether they require medical procedures or beauty treatment, it will be free." Tamil Nadu is ranked among the top states in India's public healthcare sys-

tem, compared with ailing government-run facilities in many other parts of the vast country.

But critics of the new scheme said the state government is wasting public money on cosmetic surgery instead of spending money on treating serious ailments.

Cosmetic breast surgery is becoming increasingly popular in India, but private hospitals charge anywhere between \$2,300 to \$3,800 for a procedure -- a year's wage for most Indians.

More than 90,000 such procedures were carried out in the country in 2016, according to the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery.

The Tamil Nadu scheme was launched Wednesday at a state-run clinic in state capital Chennai, with a promise to soon expand it to other districts of the state.

One of India's more prosperous states, Tamil Nadu has for decades offered freebies to its marginalised population, mostly under the government of popular actor-turned-politician Jayalalithaa. She died in 2016 but her party still rules the state.



Israeli soldiers detain a Palestinian during clashes at a protest in Hebron, in the occupied West Bank yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS