

NEWS IN brief

Trump Tower meeting documents released

REUTERS, Washington
The US Senate Judiciary Committee yesterday released hundreds of pages of transcripts and other details from its investigation of a Trump campaign meeting at Trump Tower in June 2016 with Russians who claimed to have damaging information about Hillary Clinton, Trump's Democratic rival for the presidency.

OPCW confirms chlorine use in Syria attack

AFP, The Hague
Global arms experts yesterday confirmed chlorine was used in a Syrian town in February leaving residents fighting for breath, as the world awaits the results of a probe into last month's alleged poison gas attack on Douma. The team's conclusions were based on finding two cylinders "which were determined as previously containing chlorine."

Senate panel approves CIA nominee Haspel

AFP, Washington
Veteran covert operative Gina Haspel was yesterday approved to become director of the Central Intelligence Agency in a crucial Senate panel vote, despite her record of involvement in torture. The Intelligence Committee voted 10-5 to forward her nomination to lead the spy agency to the entire Senate, virtually assuring final approval of her nomination.

Japan passes law to get more women politicians

AFP, Tokyo
Japan's parliament yesterday passed a law to encourage female candidates to stand for elections in a country where women are vastly underrepresented in politics. Under the new law, political parties are urged to make the number of male and female candidates as equal as possible and are encouraged to set targets for gender parity.



Indonesian policemen examine a car used by attackers outside the police headquarter in Pekanbaru, Riau following attacks yesterday. Inset, police remove the bodies of attackers. Four men who attacked the police headquarters with samurai swords were shot dead and one officer also died. IS claimed responsibility for the attack.



Crisis escalates in northern Myanmar

UN warns of rising attacks between military forces and rebel groups in Kachin, Shan states

ANADOLU AGENCY ONLINE
The UN on Tuesday warned of increasing attacks perpetrated by military forces and armed groups in the Kachin and Shan states of Myanmar.

"We are deeply concerned about the escalation in attacks by military forces and armed groups in Kachin and northern Shan States in Myanmar. Some 7,400 people have been internally displaced in Kachin State since early April," UN human rights spokesman Rupert Colville said in a press conference in UN at Geneva on Tuesday.

The Myanmar military and the Kachin Independent Army (KIA), an armed ethnic group, have engaged in clashes after a 17-year ceasefire broke down in June 2011.

Thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes as fighting between the military and Kachin Independence Army (KIA) has escalated in the northern Kachin state since April.

"About 2,000 of these civilians spent about four weeks trapped in the jungle after fleeing the fighting in the conflict zone of Awng Lat, but this weekend, they were reportedly relocated to other towns in Kachin State. Many more remain trapped in areas of active fighting, with extremely difficult escape routes through mountains and forests, and in need

7,400 people have been internally displaced in Kachin since early April
In Shan state, 14 civilians were killed on Saturday



of humanitarian support," Colville said. "In Shan State, on Saturday, at least 14 civilians were reportedly killed and at least 20 others injured in attacks by armed groups, with the military mounting an offensive in response," Colville said.

The ethnic rebel group Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) said it had launched surprise attacks on three military outposts near and in Muse, a major trading town in the northeastern part of Shan, earlier in the day.

"There are also reports that the military, known as the Tatmadaw, has used heavy weaponry an aerial bombing in the region. More than 600 people have been displaced in Namtu Township in northern Shan," Colville said.

Kachin and Shan are not the only states to have faced their share of violence in Myanmar. Since August 25, 2017, some 750,000 Rohingya mostly children and women, fled Myanmar after Myanmar forces launched a crackdown on the minority Muslim community, according to the Amnesty International.

At least 9,000 Rohingya were killed in the western Rakhine state from August 25 to September 24, according to Doctors Without Borders.

POST POLLS KARNATAKA

BJP trying to bribe its way to power

Claims a Janata Dal leader

AFP, New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling party yesterday hit back against charges it tried to bribe opposing lawmakers to change sides after an election in a south Indian state left no group with a majority.

H D Kumaraswamy, a leader of the Janata Dal (Secular) party which came third in the Karnataka state election, said Modi's right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had offered \$15 million each to as many as 32 lawmakers.

The BJP dismissed the allegation as a "figment of imagination" and attacked Janata Dal (Secular) and the country's main opposition party, Congress.

"The bitter enemies want to come together just for a marriage of convenience. It's unethical," Prakash Javadekar, human resource minister in the national government, told reporters.

Tense negotiations are likely to form the next government in the state. The result is being closely watched as India builds up to a national election next year.

Kumaraswamy's Janata Dal (Secular) secured 37 seats in the 224-member assembly after last Saturday's vote.

The BJP was the single largest party with 104 seats, nine short of an overall majority. Janata Dal (Secular) has however agreed to form a coalition with Congress, which previously controlled the assembly but saw its share cut to 78 seats from 122 previously.

Anwar gets full pardon

Hails 'new dawn' for Malaysia after release from prison, says he will not join cabinet any time soon

AGENCIES

Reformist Anwar Ibrahim yesterday declared a "new dawn for Malaysia" after his release from prison paved the way for a return to national politics as presumptive successor to Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad following a stunning election upset.

In scenes that captivated Malaysians, the charismatic 70-year-old returned to the national spotlight after the country's king quashed a widely criticised sodomy conviction that had put Anwar behind bars for three years.

To ecstatic cries of "Reformasi!" (Reform) -- Anwar's rallying cry -- he took selfies with his former prison guards and vowed before hundreds of journalists and supporters to back efforts to take the country in a new direction.

Anwar said he had forgiven Mahathir, 92, who had him imprisoned two decades ago but has become his unlikely ally, reported AFP.

"Now there is a new dawn for Malaysia," said Anwar, flanked by his wife Wan Azizah

Wan Ismail and other members of his political party.

"The entire spectrum of Malaysians, regardless of race or religion, have stood by the principles of democracy and freedom. They demand change."

Anwar said he would like to take time off with his family and did not intend to join the cabinet any time soon, reported Reuters.

Mahathir has said he expects to run the government for one to two years but has signalled that the reins would be turned over to Anwar eventually.

Anwar said his history with Mahathir was water under the bridge, as they shared the same goals of reforming the government and cleaning up a massive corruption scandal involving former prime minister Najib Razak.

"Bury the hatchet? It's been a long time already," Anwar said when asked about Mahathir. "I have forgiven him."

Anwar indicated that he had no immediate plans to get deeply involved in politics, but would support Mahathir's governing efforts as a "private citizen".



Turkey, Israel exchange jibes over Gaza dead

AFP, Istanbul

Turkey has told the Israeli consul general in Istanbul to leave the country temporarily, state media said yesterday, the latest in a series of tit-for-tat expulsions in a growing crisis over Israel's killing of Palestinians on the Gaza border.

The Turkish foreign ministry has told the consul to leave Turkey "for a period of time", the state-run Anadolu news agency said.

Turkey had already withdrawn its ambassador in Tel Aviv for consultations and told Israel's ambassador to Ankara to leave, while Israel ordered the Turkish consul in Jerusalem to leave, also for an unspecified period of time.

Israel's foreign ministry yesterday summoned the Turkish charge d'affaires in Israel to its Jerusalem headquarters for a reprimand over what it called in a statement "inappropriate treatment" of Israeli ambassador Eitan

Naeh as he departed Istanbul airport.

The statement said that Naeh was subjected to "a stringent security check in the pre-arranged presence of the Turkish media."

The Israeli statement invited local news teams to film Turkish charge d'affaires Umut Deniz when he arrives at the foreign ministry later in the afternoon.

The row, which on Tuesday saw President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu exchange bitter jibes on Twitter, threatens a 2016 deal on normalising ties after a long-running crisis.

Guatemala inaugurated its Israel embassy in Jerusalem yesterday, becoming the first country to follow in the footsteps of the United States.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority recalled its envoys to Romania, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Austria after their ambassadors attended an Israeli reception marking the US embassy's move to Jerusalem.

Guatemala follows US footsteps in Jerusalem

PA recalls envoys to four EU countries



Relatives of 51-year-old Palestinian Nasser Ghorab mourn during his funeral in al-Nusirat refugee camp in the central Gaza strip yesterday. Ghorab was killed the day before during clashes along the border with Israel as protesters marked the 70th anniversary of Nakba.

Afghan leader apologises for air strike

AFP, Kabul

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani yesterday apologised to the families of civilians, mainly children, killed when the country's air force sprayed an outdoor religious gathering with rockets and machine gun fire last month.

The April 2 airstrike on a ceremony attended by hundreds of men and boys in Dasht-e-Archi district -- a Taliban stronghold in the northern province of Kunduz -- left at least 36 people dead including 30 children, a United Nations investigation has shown.

Seventy-one people were wounded, including 51 children, it said, adding that it had "credible information" the tolls could be even higher.



Originally the government and military had said the Afghan Air Force targeted a Taliban base where senior members of the group were planning attacks.

The defence ministry initially denied any civilians had been hurt, then claimed the Taliban had shot them.

Yesterday, Ghani met families as well as local elders and apologised, a statement from the presidential palace said.

"(T)he difference between evildoers and a legitimate government is that a legitimate government apologises for the mistakes made," he said, according to the statement.

Hidden pages of Anne Frank's diary found

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Anne Frank tried to cover up two pages of writing in her diary that contained dirty jokes and a description of what she referred to as "sexual matters," pasting brown paper over the pages in her red-and-white plaid notebook.

But researchers have revealed the hidden text using new digital technologies, the Anne Frank House and two other Dutch cultural institutions announced on Tuesday.

Frank, the teenage diarist who wrote about coming of age in a secret attic annex while in hiding from the Nazis during the Second World War, may have camouflaged the two pages because they contained prurient content that she did not want her father or someone else in the cramped quarters to discover.

"I sometimes imagine that someone might come to me and ask me to inform him about sexual matters," Frank wrote in Dutch. "How would I go about it?" She attempts an answer, addressing an imaginary listener with a lofty tone, using phrases such as "rhythmic movements" to describe sex, and "internal medication" to refer to contraception.

Iran would resist US plot

Says Rouhani as Merkel defends 2015 nuclear pact

REUTERS, London

German Chancellor Angela Merkel yesterday pushed back against Washington's rejection of the Iran nuclear deal, saying the accord helped outside powers worried about Tehran's regional role to pursue their concerns with the Islamic Republic.

Iran reiterated it would not surrender to US pressure and would resist US "plots", following President Donald Trump's abandonment of the 2015 agreement last week.

Repudiating the result of more than a decade of diplomacy, Trump complained that the deal does not cover Iran's ballistic missiles, its role in regional wars or what happens after the pact begins to expire in 2025.

Major European countries share Trump's concerns but argue that the nuclear deal is the best way to stop the increasingly influential regional power from obtaining an atomic weapon.

Merkel reassured a defence of the deal in remarks to lawmakers in the Bundestag

lower house of parliament.

"This agreement is everything other than ideal, but Iran is, according to all the knowledge of the international nuclear authorities, sticking to the commitments of the agreement," she said.

Iran meanwhile said the new US sanctions were an attempt to derail efforts to save the deal.

"With such destructive measures, the American government is trying to influence the will and decision of the remaining signatories of the JCPOA (nuclear agreement)," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qasemi was quoted as saying by Fars news agency.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said Trump expected Tehran to leave the deal after the US withdrawal, but Tehran had refused to follow that plan by trying to save the deal with its remaining signatories.

"Trump played his first card, but miscalculated the second move," Rouhani was quoted as saying by the ISNA agency. He also said Iran would not surrender to US pressures.



Auschwitz trial files get Unesco nod

AFP, Berlin

Documents from the post-war Auschwitz trial have been classed part of the Unesco "Memory of the World Register", underlining their significance as "common heritage of humanity", Germany's foreign minister said yesterday.

The 1963-1965 trial of 22 Nazi officials who ran the Auschwitz death camp marked a turning point when Germans faced up to their role in the Holocaust.

Unlike the better known 1945-1946 Nuremberg trials where judges from the Allied powers presided over the hearings of top Nazis, the Frankfurt trial was the first in which Germans prosecuted Germans.

In 183 days of hearings, the trial "paved the way for an entire society to take a critical look in the mirror at the role of Germans as citizens, participants, followers and criminals," said Foreign Minister Heiko Maas.

Classifying the court material from the Auschwitz trial in an international register is an "insurance against forgetting", said Hesse science and arts minister Boris Rhein, in remarks carried by national news agency DPA.

The documents are "an important element in the fight against ongoing denial and relativising of Nazi violations," added Maas.

The material classed in the international register includes 454 volumes of files stored at the Hesse State Archives.