

# NEWSIN brief

## Nipah virus toll hits 10 in India

AFP, New Delhi

The death toll from an outbreak of the rare Nipah virus in southern India jumped to 10 yesterday with more than 90 people quarantined to try to stem the spread of the disease, officials said. With tests from other suspect deaths awaited, authorities in Kerala state have ordered emergency measures to control the virus, which is spread by fruit bats. Nipah has a mortality rate of nearly 70 percent.

## Maduro expels US charge d'affaires

AFP, Caracas

President Nicolas Maduro yesterday ordered the expulsion of the chief US diplomatic representative in Venezuela, rejecting economic sanctions imposed by Washington over his reelection. "I have declared persona non grata and announced the departure in 48 hours of the charge d'affaires of the United States (Todd Robinson)," Maduro said in a speech.

## 104 coup suspects gets life in Turkey

AFP, Ankara

A Turkish court on Monday handed life sentences to 104 suspects over their involvement in the July 2016 attempted coup against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, state media reported. The former military personnel were given "aggravated life sentences". In total, 280 military staff are on trial over the failed coup bid.

## First woman CIA director sworn in

AFP, Washington

Veteran CIA officer Gina Haspel was sworn in as the agency's first female director Monday. The 61-year-old Haspel, who spent her career in the Central Intelligence Agency's service, takes over from Mike Pompeo, whom Trump recently made his secretary of state.



Afghan security forces inspect the site of a blast in Kandahar province, Afghanistan, yesterday. At least 16 people were killed and 38 wounded in the blast when a minivan packed with explosives exploded.

PHOTO: REUTERS

### BLOODSHED IN AFGHANISTAN

## Huge blast kills 16 in Kandahar

AFP, Kandahar

At least 16 people were killed and 38 wounded yesterday when a minivan packed with explosives exploded as members of the security forces were trying to defuse it in southern Afghanistan, officials said.

Police and intelligence officers in the city of Kandahar had already cleared the area around a bus station where the van was found, said the provincial governor's spokesman Daud Ahmadi.

"As the security forces were trying to defuse the van, it detonated," said police spokesman Mohammad Qasim Azad.

At least five children and 10 members of the security forces were among the wounded. The blast was so powerful that most of the casualties were passers-by outside the cleared area.

No group immediately claimed responsibility. The blast was quickly condemned by President Ashraf Ghani, who praised the "brave" officers who dealt with it.

The Taliban are stepping up their spring offensive across the war-torn country.

Late Monday the insurgents attacked two districts in the southeastern province of Ghazni, briefly capturing the police headquarters in one of them before being pushed back, said governor's spokesman Aref Noori.

He said 16 members of the security forces had been killed in the fighting and the Taliban also suffered "heavy" losses, with sporadic clashes continuing yesterday.

## Najib grilled over 1MDB

Graft fighter reveals threats from ousted govt; in a first, Indian-origin man given cabinet post

AGENCIES

Former Malaysian leader Najib Razak was questioned by anti-corruption authorities yesterday after his shock election loss, as the top graft fighter revealed he faced threats and a bullet in the post when the old regime suppressed a probe into a massive corruption scandal.

Najib's coalition suffered a defeat at the May 9 poll, beaten by a reformist alliance led by Mahathir Mohamad, which broke their six-decade stranglehold on power.

Najib and his reviled, luxury-loving wife Rosmah Mansor have had a swift fall from grace. They have been barred from leaving the country, and police have seized handbags, jewels and cash during raids on properties linked to the couple.

The ousted leader pushed through a huge media scrum as he arrived at the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) headquarters in the administrative capital of Putrajaya to be quizzed about 1MDB money allegedly ending up in his personal bank accounts.

He left after about five hours looking exhausted, and told waiting reporters the

process would continue today.

The toppled regime went to great lengths to put a halt to scrutiny of the problems surrounding 1MDB, closing down domestic probes, sacking critics from government, jailing those who spoke out, and muzzling the media.

New MACC chief Shukri Abdull, a long-time senior figure in the agency who retired but has been brought back by Mahathir, shed tears at a press conference as he told how he came under "tremendous pressure" during an earlier probe into a 1MDB subsidiary.

He recounted how witnesses were intimidated, authorities tried to push him into early retirement, and that he even received a bullet in the post.

Meanwhile, Gobind Singh Deo, an Indian-origin Sikh politician in Malaysia, has become a cabinet minister, the first member of the minority community in the country's history to be appointed as a minister, reported TOI. Deo, 45, who has been given the communications and multimedia portfolio, is among the two politicians of Indian descent included in the Pakatan Harapan coalition's Cabinet.



## 'Who are you to decide?'

Iran hits back at US demands, says US has no rights to decide for Iran and the world

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has said the world would "not accept" US unilateralism just hours after Washington laid out a series of tough demands to be included in a potential new nuclear treaty with Iran.

In remarks carried by Iran's ILNA news agency, Rouhani said the era of the United States making decisions for the rest of the world was "over".

"Countries are independent... We will continue our path with the support of our nation," Rouhani said. "Who are you to decide for Iran and the world?"

Earlier this month, US President Donald Trump defied efforts by European allies and announced Washington's withdrawal from a landmark multinational pact, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), signed with Iran in 2015 and a decision to

impose harsh sanctions on Tehran.

In announcing the new US strategy towards Iran, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Monday warned that Washington "will apply unprecedented financial pressure on the Iranian regime" unless it complied with a list of 12 conditions, which must be met before any new deal can be reached.

The demands include giving the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) a full account of the country's former nuclear military programme, withdrawing its forces from Syria and ending what Pompeo described as Iran's "threatening behaviour" towards its neighbours.

The spat comes after several European companies expressed concern about continuing business with Iran following the US exit, raising further doubts about the viability of the deal.



Demonstrators attempt to break thru a phalanx of police outside Thammasat University during a protest to mark the fourth year of junta rule in Bangkok, yesterday. Thai police detained leaders of anti-junta protest who had tried to mark the occasion by marching to Government House, one of the largest acts of dissent since the army grabbed power.

PHOTO: AFP

### 'ISRAELI WAR CRIMES'

## Palestinians urge full ICC probe

AFP, The Hague

The Palestinian foreign minister yesterday called on the International Criminal Court (ICC) "to open an immediate investigation" into allegations of war crimes and apartheid against the Palestinian people.

Amid rising tensions with Israel, Palestinian foreign minister Riyad al-Maliki met for an hour with the ICC's chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda at the tribunal in The Hague, "to refer the situation in Palestine" to her office.

It was an "important and historic step" for the Palestinian people "who have suffered for generations the consequences of crimes committed with impunity by Israeli officials," he told reporters.

The ICC launched a preliminary probe into allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Israel and the Palestinian territories in 2015.

And despite a visit to the region, it has yet to move to the next stage and open a full-blown investigation which could possibly lead to charges being brought.

Maliki said there was "insurmountable" evidence of crimes, adding that those "responsible... must be held accountable for their actions without further delay".

The meeting at the ICC comes after more than 60 Palestinians protesting the US decision to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to the disputed city of Jerusalem were killed by Israeli fire last week.

Maliki said the Palestinian move was "due to the intensification of the rate and the severity of the crimes against our people" including the targeting of "unarmed protestors in the

### NORTH KOREA-US TENSIONS

## Summit could be delayed

Says Trump as he hosts South's president amid uncertainty

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump yesterday warned his landmark summit with Kim Jong Un may not take place as planned, but stressed he believes the inscrutable North Korean leader is "serious" about denuclearization.

Hosting South Korean President Moon Jae-in at the White House, Trump did little to quell speculation about the historic first summit between US and North Korean leaders, set for next month in Singapore.

"It may not work out for June 12," Trump said, adding in a now familiar non-committal riff, "if it does not happen maybe it will happen later."

Politically, Trump has invested heavily in the success of the summit, and so privately most US officials, as well as outside observers believe it will go ahead.

But as the date draws near, differences between the two sides and the astronomically high stakes are coming into sharp relief.

Success could lead to peace on the Korean peninsula and end the threat of nuclear war. Failure could all but destroy



TRUMP AGAIN SAYS NORTH KOREA'S ATTITUDE CHANGED AFTER MEETING WITH CHINA LEADER

US VP WARNS KIM OVER FOOLING TRUMP

hopes of a peaceful solution to the crisis.

"You never know about deals," Trump said. "I've made a lot of deals. You never really know."

North Korea's willingness to denuclearize was plunged into doubt this month when the government denounced US demands for "unilateral nuclear abandonment."

South Korea -- deeply worried about Kim's bellicose weapons testing and Trump's similarly bellicose warnings about "fire and fury" -- was instrumental in convincing the two Cold War foes to sit down and talk.

"There was a difference when Kim Jong Un left China the second time," Trump said. "There was a different attitude after that meeting and I was a little surprised. And I think things changed after that meeting so I can't say that I am happy about it."

On Monday, US Vice-President Mike Pence warned North Korea's Kim Jong-un not to "play" Trump if they meet next month.

Pence said in a Fox News interview that such a move would be a "great mistake" by the North Korean leader.

## Eighth time unlucky

CNN ONLINE

A Japanese climber who lost nearly all his fingers on Everest has died on his eighth attempt to summit the mountain.

Nobukazu Kuriki, in his mid-thirties, fell ill and was descending on Monday when his team lost contact with him, his team said on Facebook. Later he was found dead. He had reached 7,400 meters.

Kuriki's suffered serious damage from frostbite during his 2012 attempt on Everest's West Ridge, losing all but one of his fingers.

Kuriki was no stranger to Everest's extreme conditions. In 2009, Chinese officials ordered him off the mountain before he could complete his climbing schedule.

Bad weather and a fatal accident with his crew ended a 2010 attempt from Nepal side. On a subsequent try in 2011, his tent poles, supplies and cooking gas were dug up by Himalayan crows at his final camp, and in 2012, extreme cold and high winds ended his quest.

He tried again in 2015 but he was thwarted by poor conditions. Attempts in 2016 and 2017 were also frustrated by bad weather.



## FB hasn't done enough

Zuckerberg apologises to European lawmakers

AFP, Brussels

Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg apologised to the European Parliament yesterday and said the social media giant is taking steps to prevent a repeat of a massive breach of users' personal data.

Zuckerberg also pledged to keep investing in Europe as he made the latest stop on a tour of contrition over the Cambridge Analytica scandal that began in the US Congress in April.

Zuckerberg told the livestreamed hearing in Brussels that it has become clear in the last two years that Facebook executives "haven't done enough to prevent these tools from being used for harm".

"And that goes for fake news, foreign interference in elections or developers misusing people's information. We didn't take a broad enough view of our responsibility," he said.

"That was a mistake, and I'm sorry for it."

Facebook admitted that up to 87 million

users may have had their data hijacked by British consultancy Cambridge Analytica, which worked for US President Donald Trump during his 2016 campaign.

The Silicon Valley giant has told the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, that the personal data of up to 2.7 million Europeans may have been sent inappropriately to Cambridge Analytica, which has since filed for bankruptcy in the US.

The Facebook chief welcomed the EU's sweeping new personal data protection rules, which come into effect in three days, saying that his website was adopting similar steps.

Zuckerberg said Facebook was bringing in new features including a special "clear history" button that would allow them to delete any cookies or browsing history details it stores.

He also told the leaders of the European Parliament's political groups that Facebook would make fresh investments to protect its users in the wake of the scandal.

### DATA SCAM



### HEATWAVE IN PAKISTAN

## 65 die in Karachi

REUTERS, Islamabad

A heatwave has killed 65 people in Pakistan's southern city of Karachi over the past three days, a social welfare organisation said yesterday, amid fears the death toll could climb as the high temperatures persist.

The heatwave has coincided with power outages and the holy month of Ramadan, when most Muslims do not eat or drink during daylight hours. Temperatures hit 44 degrees Celsius on Monday, local media reported.

Faisal Edhi, who runs the Edhi Foundation that operates morgues and an ambulance service in Pakistan's biggest city, said the deaths occurred mostly in the poor areas of Karachi.

"Sixty-five people have died over the last three days," Edhi told Reuters. "We have the bodies in our cold storage facilities and their neighbourhood doctors have said they died of heat-stroke."

But Sindh province's Health Secretary Fazlullah Pechuho told the English-language Dawn newspaper that no one has died from heat-stroke.

Nonetheless, reports of heat stroke deaths in Karachi will stir unease amid fears of a repeat of a heatwave in 2015, when morgues and hospitals were overwhelmed and at least 1,300 mostly elderly and sick people died from the searing heat.

In 2015, the Edhi morgue ran out of freezer space after about 650 bodies were brought in the space of a few days. Ambulances left decaying corpses outside in sweltering heat.