

Indonesia toughens  
up anti-terror laws

REUTERS, Jakarta

Indonesia's parliament yesterday approved tougher anti-terrorism laws as it seeks to combat a surge in home-grown Islamist militancy, days after suicide bombings claimed by IS killed more than 30 people in the city of Surabaya. Revising a 2003 law became a top priority for the country after the Surabaya attacks.

France arrests spies for  
passing info to China

AFP, Paris

Two former French spies have been arrested and face treason charges after being accused of passing sensitive information to China, France's defence minister and security sources said yesterday. The two suspected double-agents were charged last December, but the incident only came to light late on Thursday following French media reports.

EU takes Bahamas, St  
Kitts off tax haven list

AFP, Brussels

The EU yesterday removed the Caribbean nations of the Bahamas and Saint Kitts and Nevis from a black list of tax havens, bringing the number of jurisdictions to seven. The nations were struck from the list after providing good conduct commitments to EU authorities and will now move to the so-called grey list -- a list of countries that have promised to do better.

50 dead in Congo  
boat accident

AFP, Mbandaka

Fifty people died in a boat accident on a river in remote northwestern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), officials said yesterday. The accident happened on the Momboyo river Wednesday night, Richard Mboyo Iluka, vice governor of Tshuapa province, told AFP, saying: "We found 49 bodies on Thursday and another one this morning."

Movie mogul charged with  
rape, other sexual crimes

AFP, New York

Disgraced Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein was arraigned in a New York court Friday, charged with rape and a criminal sex act on two women, nearly eight months after his career imploded in a blaze of accusations that triggered the #MeToo movement. The former mogul -- once the toast of Hollywood and whose films won scores of Oscars -- grinned as he was escorted into a Manhattan court building in handcuffs. Standing alongside his celebrated defense attorney, Weinstein looked glum and appeared not to speak during the fleeting court appearance, at which he agreed to post bail at \$1 million cash and was ordered fitted with a GPS monitoring device. The Manhattan District Attorney's Office said he was charged with rape in the first and third degrees, stemming from an attack on a woman in 2013, and a criminal sex act against another woman in 2004. Neither victims were named.



A man wearing a mask of US President Donald Trump performs next to a cutout of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un during an anti-US President Donald Trump rally near US embassy in Seoul, South Korea, yesterday. Inset, a photo taken on Thursday and released yesterday shows a dust-cloud during a demolition 'ceremony' of North Korea's Punggye-ri nuclear test facility.

PHOTO: REUTERS, AFP

GAZA BORDER CLASH

Israel SC upholds  
open-fire rules

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel's Supreme Court upheld the military's use of lethal force against Palestinians during protests and clashes on the Gaza border.

In the 41-page ruling published by the justice ministry Thursday night the panel of three justices unanimously rejected a petition by Israeli and Palestinian rights groups to restrain the army's use of snipers firing live ammunition.

Chief Justice Esther Hayut accepted the government position that the Gaza protesters were not peaceful civilian demonstrators but part of the "armed conflict" between Israel and the Gaza Strip's Islamist rulers Hamas.

But she said that despite the ruling the army should continue its internal review of the events and of its procedures.

The rules of engagement came under international fire after Israeli forces shot dead at least 62 Gazans on May 14, when thousands of Palestinians protested as the US officially moved its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

French President Emmanuel Macron condemned the "violence of the Israeli armed forces against the protesters".

UN and European Union demands for an independent investigation were echoed by Britain, Germany and Switzerland.

Israel has rejected the idea and the United States, its strongest backer, has blocked moves for a probe at the United Nations.

World powers, Iran meet  
to save nuclear deal

REUTERS, Vienna

Iran wants European powers to present it with measures by the end of May to compensate it for the US decision to abandon the 2015 nuclear deal, a senior official said yesterday, and Tehran would decide within weeks whether to quit the accord.

The 2015 agreement between Iran and world powers lifted international sanctions on Tehran. In return, Iran agreed to curbs on its nuclear programme.

Since President Donald Trump pulled the US out last month, European states have been trying to find a way to ensure Iran still gets the economic benefits to persuade it to stay in the deal. But that has proven difficult, with European companies frightened away by US sanctions.

Nations that remain in the agreement - Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia -- began meetings yesterday for the first time since Trump left the pact, but diplomats see limited scope for salvaging it. Their officials will try to flesh out with Iran's deputy foreign minister a strategy to save the deal by

keeping oil and investment flowing.

"To be honest with you, we are not confident," a senior Iranian official told reporters yesterday before the talks.

EU leaders have united behind the accord, with Brussels working on measures, including banning EU-based companies from complying with re-imposed US sanctions and urging governments to make money transfers to Iran's central bank to avoid fines.

"We expect the (economic) package to be given to us by the end of May," the Iranian official said. "I'm sorry to say that we haven't (seen) the Plan B yet. The Plan B has just started to be

figured out."

The International Atomic Energy Agency, which polices the pact, said on Thursday that Iran continued to comply with its terms, but could be faster in allowing snap inspections. Its chief, Yukiya Amano, briefed participants before yesterday's meeting.

Washington has not only re-imposed sanctions but started to make them even tighter.

Tehran sets May deadline  
to see EU measures

Iran continues to comply  
with its terms, says IAEA



Police officers stand in front of Bombay Bhel restaurant, where two unidentified men set off a bomb late Thursday night, wounding more than a dozen people, in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. The two male suspects fled after detonating their improvised explosive device. No one has claimed responsibility, and the motive for the attack was not known.

TENSIONS IN KOREAN PENINSULA

SUMMIT COLLAPSE MAY  
STRAIN US-CHINA TIES

US President Donald Trump's cancellation of a summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un threatens further strain on US-China ties amid a trade dispute that had been intertwined with Beijing's pressure on isolated Pyongyang.

The United States and China are also increasingly at odds in the disputed South China Sea. The Pentagon this week withdrew an invitation for China to take part in a major naval exercise in Hawaii, and Beijing has ramped up pressure on self-ruled Taiwan, armed by Washington but claimed by Beijing.

Trump on Thursday released a letter to Kim announcing his withdrawal from the planned June 12 meeting in Singapore, which would have been the first between leaders of the two countries.

Although Chinese state media called for continued engagement between Washington and Pyongyang, Trump's move could mark a split between China and the United States over how to deal with North Korea and its nuclear weapons, experts said.

It also risks adding fuel to simmering trade tensions, just days after China and the United States pulled back from the brink of a full-blown trade war.

Trump said yesterday that the meeting with Kim Jong Un could still go ahead. US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis told reporters diplomats were "still at work" and said Trump had just sent a note out on the summit, which could be back on "if our diplomats can pull it off."

CHINA ALIGNED WITH KIM

China has long viewed North Korea as a useful buffer between it and US forces in South Korea. The two also have deep emotional ties; Chinese troops fought side-by-side with North Korea in the 1950-53 Korean War.

But in recent years, relations between China and North Korea had nosedived to the point of a near diplomatic freeze, as Beijing signed on to ever-stricter United Nations sanctions over Pyongyang's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

China's willingness to keep up pressure on its neighbour may now wane.

Even with the summit's collapse, China must continue to improve ties with North Korea given Kim's pledge not to carry out nuclear and missile



tests, China's widely read state-run Global Times tabloid said in an editorial yesterday.

TRADE DEAL UNCERTAINTY

Meanwhile, Trump also cast uncertainty over progress in trade talks, saying Wednesday that Washington would seek a new "structure" for the deal and a new direction for talks with Beijing, days after the two had taken conciliatory stances. US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross will visit China from June 2 to 4.

"China does not link trade and North Korea because that will make things more complicated," said Ruan Zongze, a former diplomat now with the China Institute of International Studies, a think tank linked to China's foreign ministry.

Some analysts had suggested, however, that China was using its leverage on North Korea, and Trump's perceived desire for a successful summit with Kim, to blunt the sharpest edges of US trade threats.

Tu Xinquan, dean of the China Institute for WTO Studies at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, said the summit's collapse added to uncertainty in US-China trade relations.

"Even before this announcement, Trump's attitude on trade with China had changed a bit," he said. "I am a little pessimistic about this trade deal."

A souring of relations could see a tougher line from Washington on other issues deemed sensitive in Beijing, analysts say. SOURCE: REUTERS

World needs  
trade peace,  
not trade wars

Putin tells US

AFP, Saint Petersburg

Russian President Vladimir Putin warned yesterday that the world could be heading for an unprecedented economic crisis due to the confrontational trade policy and protectionism being pursued by the United States.

Without directly naming US President Donald Trump, who has slapped on tariffs and pulled out of trade deals, Putin lamented that a new era of protectionism was emerging and "breaking" the free trade system responsible for global prosperity.

"Today we need not trade wars or even trade truces, but trade peace," Putin told an economic summit in Saint Petersburg, also attended by Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and French President



Emmanuel Macron. Global trade rules "should be clear and the same for all".

But "breaking the rules is becoming the rule," Putin said in an apparent jab at Trump, who has abandoned a Pacific free trade deal and forced a renegotiation of the US pact with Canada and Mexico.

The Kremlin leader said that a combination of sanctions, trade barriers and a lack of trust was hugely dangerous.

"A spiral of sanctions and barriers is just beginning and is affecting a growing number of countries and companies," said Putin.

EU's new data law  
enters into force

Some US news sites blocked

AFP, Brussels

Several major US news websites including the Los Angeles Times were blocked in Europe yesterday after the EU's new data protection laws came into effect.

The LA Times, Chicago Tribune, New York Daily News, Baltimore Sun and Orlando Sentinel websites all displayed the same message saying they could not be accessed.

"Unfortunately, our website is currently unavailable in most European countries," the message read.

"We are engaged on the issue and committed to looking at options that support our full range of digital offerings to the EU market. We continue to identify technical compliance solutions that will provide all readers with our award-winning journalism."

The blocked websites are all owned by media company Tronc, formerly known as Tribune Publishing.

Local US newspapers owned by Lee Enterprises, including the St. Louis Post Dispatch and Arizona Daily Sun, were also out of reach.

"We recognise you are attempting to access this website from a country belonging to the European Economic Area (EEA) including the EU which enforces the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and therefore cannot grant you access at this time," its website said.

US backs Dutch, Aussie  
findings against Russia

AFP, Washington

The United States said yesterday it stood with the Netherlands and Australia after they blamed Russia for the 2014 shooting down of flight MH17 over war-torn eastern Ukraine.

Australia and the Netherlands are moving toward taking legal action to "hold Russia responsible" for its role in the shootdown that killed all 298 people on board.

"We strongly support the decisions by the Netherlands and Australia to call Russia to account," State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said in a statement.

"It is time for Russia to acknowledge its role in the shooting down of MH17 and to cease its callous disinformation campaign."

A top Dutch investigator said his team had concluded that the plane was shot

down by a Russian-made BUK missile from a Russian military brigade in Kursk.

Most of the dead were Dutch, but there were 17 nationalities, including Australians, on board.

The BUK missile launcher "was brought into sovereign Ukrainian territory from Russia, was fired from territory controlled by Russia and Russia-led forces in eastern Ukraine, and was then returned to Russian territory," Nauert said.

Russia has denied any responsibility, with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov saying the Netherlands had provided "no facts" to support the findings and was merely speculating "to achieve their own political goals."

Nauert said Russia's involvement in Ukraine since 2014 has led to more than 10,300 conflict-related deaths.

DOWNED MH17 INVESTIGATION

