THAI CAVE MIRACLE **SOCCER TEAM PLANNED TO BE INSIDE FOR ONLY AN HOUR**

Twelve boys and their soccer coach rescued from a flooded cave in Thailand planned to explore the cavern complex for only about an hour before treacherous flood waters rose to trap them for more than two weeks, one of the boys' fathers said.

All 12 of the boys and their 25-year-old coach were brought to safety over the course of a three-day rescue, organised by Thai navy SEALs and an international team of diving and caving experts, that ended on Tuesday.

They had gone into the Tham Luang cave in the northern province of Chiang Rai on June 23, for a quick excursion after soccer practice, when a rainy season downpour flooded the tunnels. "He told me that as soon as they finished practice they went to play at

the cave. They thought they'd only be an hour," Banpot Korncam, father of the 13-year-old captain of the "Wild Boars" team, told media. "While they were inside the cave it rained, water flowed in and

everyone took off," Banpot said. Two British divers found the boys on July 2, squatting on a muddy mound in a flooded chamber several kiometres inside the complex, nine

days after they went for their quick jaunt.
The boys, aged 11 to 16, had to dive for part of their journey out before they were put on green plastic toboggan-like stretchers and carried, at times through steep, rocky tunnels, with ropes strung overhead.

BRITISH DIVER TELLS OF 'MASSIVE RELIEF'

The British diver who found 12 Thai boys and their coach trapped alive in a flooded cave has described his "massive relief" as he counted them one by

one, sparking a rescue bid unprecedented in its daring and complexity.

Richard Stanton, one of a pair of British caving experts who found the boys, gave reporters yesterday a first-hand account of the moment he saw them emerge from behind a rock face onto a muddy ledge kilometres (miles) inside the Tham Luang cave.

"That was a massive, massive relief. Initially we weren't certain they were all alive -- as they were coming down I was counting them until I got to 13," he said after his arrival at London's Heathrow airport.

Grainy footage of the moment Stanton and John Volanthen discovered the dishevelled and emaciated group has become the symbol of a remarkable survival story -- that has already piqued the interest of Hollywood film producers.

But the mission would last a further eight days, with the risk of extracting the weakened group through flooded, tight, twisting passageways intensified by the risk of fresh rains and falling oxygen levels inside the cave.

The mission was "an order of difficulty much higher than anything that's been accomplished anywhere around the world by any other cave diving team," said Stanton.



12 RESCUED BOYS NOW FACE BATTLE WITH FAME

After their traumatic ordeal deep inside a dark and flooded mountain cave, Thailand's 12 rescued boys and their young soccer coach will now have to navigate a fresh challenge: Fame.

The boys, aged 11 to 16, will spend at least a week in hospital and a month at home, health officials said, following a daring rescue from the Tham Luang cave complex in the northern province of Chiang Rai that captivated the world.

"The world is watching," said Kham-oey Promthep, 64, grandmother of 13-year-old Duangpetch Promthep, or Dom, 13, captain of the 'Wild

"He was trapped in a cave and everyone in the country and from around the world had to come and help him. What do we have to give them in return?" Kham-oey told Reuters.

"We have nothing, so he must be a good boy." They already face the pressure of rising expectations.

The boys need to go back to their normal life, to their daily routines, in order to fully appreciate that the threat is over," said Danese, who heads

the institute's stress and development laboratory. His research suggested up to 20 percent of the boys may develop longer-term psychiatric disorders such as depression, anxiety and posttraumatic stress disorder. SOURCE: REUTERS, AFP





(Clockwise from left) Activists inflate a giant balloon depicting US President Donald Trump as an orange baby during a demonstration against Trump's visit to the UK in Parliament Square in London yesterday; a young demonstrator holds a banner objecting to the visit, in Belfast, Northern Ireland; and The Trumps meet Britain's Queen Elizabeth II (C) in the Grand Corridor at Windsor Castle in Windsor, west of London. PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

Trump hails US-UK ties

Praises strong relationship with May after damning her Brexit plan

Russia with strength

and unity: May

Trump looks forward to

finalising a post-Brexit

trade deal with Britain

AFP, Aylesbury

US President Donald Trump said yesterday ties between Britain and the US were "very very strong" after launching an extraordinary attack on Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit strategy during a visit already marked by protests. Sitting alongside his host at the start of talks at May's

country retreat of Chequers, Trump told reporters: "The relationship is very, very strong. We really have a very good relationship." Their meeting came just hours after an UK, US agree to engage interview was published in which Trump

said May's plans for close future ties with the European Union would "probably kill" her hopes for a US trade deal. He suggested this was not what voters wanted, said he had advised May to take another path and added that Boris Johnson, who quit as foreign minister

minister". Trump's comments saw the value of the pound plunge on currency markets.

over the plan, would make "a great prime

Trump said that at a gala dinner at Blenheim Palace the night before he and May spoke for almost 90 minutes and had "probably never developed a better relationship".

The prime minister smiled and said there was "a lot to discuss", including "the special relationship, which is great,

between the UK and US". She said they would discuss "the real opportunities" on a

US trade deal, as well as foreign, defence and security issues "where we work really closely together". After the meeting, Trump said he was "OK" with May's

Brexit strategy and was hopeful the two countries could strike a trade deal, a day after excoriating her policy.

"Whatever you do, it's OK with me," he said after talks with May, adding: "The only thing I ask of Theresa is to make sure we can trade."

May said Britain and the United States have agreed that Russia should be engaged with "strength and unity".

"We agreed that it is important to engage Russia from a position of strength and unity," May said, as Trump prepares for a summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday. Trump's interview with The Sun came

from Brussels, where he subjected Nato allies to a roasting over their defence spending. Junior foreign minister Alan Duncan sought to brush off the remarks, telling the

before he flew into Britain on Thursday

BBC: "Donald Trump is a controversialist, that's his style... I don't think we see it as rude." In London, demonstrators began gathering for a mass

protest against Trump, beginning with the flying of a huge balloon of the president depicted as a crying baby outside the Houses of Parliament.

"I think it's hilarious. It's an accurate representation of his politics which are so immature. He never enters into adult discussion, " said Paul Fonseca, 23.

MEDDLING IN 2016 US POLLS

Grand jury indicts 12 Russian spies

REUTERS, Washington

A federal grand jury on Friday indicted 12 Russian military intelligence officers on charges of hacking the computer networks of 2016 Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton and the Democratic Party, the Justice Department said.

The indictment, secured by Special Counsel Robert Mueller in his ongoing investigation of Russian involvement in the 2016 election won by President Donald Trump, was issued three days before Trump, who is currently on a visit to Britain, meets Russian President Vladimir Putin for a summit in Helsinki.

"The indictment charges 12 Russian military officers by name with conspiring to interfere with the 2016 presidential election," Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein told a news conference.

Rosenstein said there is no allegation that US citizens were involved in the alleged crimes described in the indictment. He said he briefed Trump earlier this week on the indictment.

A Justice Department news release said that officers of Russia's military intelligence agency, the GRU, "in their official capacities engaged in a sustained effort to hack into the computer networks of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, the Democratic National Committee and the presidential campaign of Hillary Clinton and released that information on the internet under the names DCLeaks and Gufficer 2.0."

ROHINGYA RETURN DEAL UN readies to send experts to Rakhine

REUTERS, Yangon

The United Nations is preparing to send teams of experts into Myanmar's Rakhine state to begin work aimed at eventually repatriating Rohingya Muslims who fled violence last year, the regional head of the UN development agency said on Thursday.

The UN agencies for development and refugees struck an outline deal with Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's government at the end of May to allow Rohingya Muslims sheltering in Bangladesh to return safely and by choice.

Haoliang Xu, the United Nations Development Programme's director for the Asia-Pacific region, said UN officials were last week allowed to travel freely around northern Rakhine for the first time since August 2017.

But an initial work plan still needed to be devised with the government before proper assessment could begin, Xu told Reuters in an interview in Myanmar's largest city, Yangon.

"You can say we are working with an extreme sense of urgency," he said. "We're also preparing in parallel to send in teams."

Those teams would assess the needs of an estimated more than 200,000 Rohingya and other communities who remain in northern Rakhine, he said.

Myanmar's main government spokesman Zaw Htay was not available for comment.

Myanmar's military launched a crackdown in the northern part of Rakhine in response to militant attacks in August, driving 700,000 stateless Rohingya across the border to Bangladesh.



Onlookers watch as a member of Indonesia's Sharia police (R) whips a man (C) accused of having gay sex during a public caning ceremony outside a mosque in Banda Aceh, capital of Aceh province yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Civilians among 54 dead in anti-IS strike: monitor

US-led coalition says it

may have carried out

raids near Iraqi border

AFP, Beirut

An air strike on one of the last holdouts of the Islamic State group in Syria has killed 54 people, more than half of them civilians, a war monitor said yesterday.

The US-led coalition fighting the jihadists said it or its allies may have carried out air raids in the area, and it was investigating the alleged civilian deaths.

The raid late Thursday on an ice factory near the village of Al-Soussa close to the Iraqi border killed 28 civilians and 26 IS jihadists, the Britainbased Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

It was not immediately clear if the raid on the eastern Deir Ezzor province was carried out by an Iraqi plane or the coalition, the monitor said.

In a written statement, the US-led alliance said: "The coalition or our partner forces may have conducted strikes in the vicinity of Al-Soussa and Baghour Fukhani" on Thursday.

"We are forwarding the report to our

AFP, Paris

Civilian Casualty Cell for further assess-

ment on this allegation," it said. Iraqi warplanes have recently carried out strikes against IS in eastern Syria, while coalition aircraft have been supporting Kurdish-led fighters battling the jihadists.

The IS fighters were Syrians and Iraqis,

the Observatory said. State news agency SANA reported the strike late Thursday, saying

> more than 30 civilians were killed and accusing the coalition of carrying it out. IS fighters swept across

> Syria and Iraq in 2014, declaring a cross-border "caliphate" in areas they controlled.

They have since lost most of that territory to various offensives, but still retain pockets of land in Syria including in the country's

vast Badiya desert and in Deir Ezzor. IS fighters have faced two separate offensives in Deir Ezzor on either side of

the Euphrates River that cuts through the province.

WORLD CUP, BASTILLE DAY

ment potential."

Up in smoke Vaping China co-pilot

sparks mid-air emergency

AFP, Shanghai

An Air China jet made a rapid emergency descent after a co-pilot mistakenly turned off airconditioning systems in a bid to conceal his ecigarette smoke, Chinese media quoted the country's civil aviation authority as saying yesterday.

The incident, which resulted in the deployment of passenger oxygen masks, occurred Tuesday on a flight by the Chinese flag carrier from Hong Kong to the city of Dalian in northeastern China.

The Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) said in a press conference in Beijing that the drama was triggered when the co-pilot sought to turn off a ventilation system to prevent his smoke spreading into the main cabin, the respected news site Caixin said. Smoking is not allowed aboard Chinese com-

mercial passenger flights.

But the co-pilot accidentally switched off airconditioning instead, leading to a decrease in cabin

oxygen levels. That set off an emergency warning system indicating that the 737 jet may have flown too high and instructing the pilots to quickly descend.

Failure to educate girls could cost world \$30tn

Failing to let girls finish their education could cost the world as much as \$30 trillion in lost earnings and productivity, yet more than 130 million girls are out of school globally, the World Bank said.

Women who have completed secondary education are more likely to work and earn on average nearly twice as much as those with no schooling, according to a report by the World Bank.

About 132 million girls worldwide aged 6 to 17 do not attend school, while fewer than two-thirds of those in low-income nations finish primary school, and only a third finish lower secondary school, the World Bank said on Wednesday.

If every girl in the world finished 12 years trillion, according to the report. "Overall, the message is clear: educating

girls is not only the right thing to do," the

World Bank said in the report.

of quality education, lifetime earnings for women could increase by \$15 trillion to \$30

population growth, and reduced child mortality and malnutrition, the World Bank said. "We cannot keep letting gender inequal-

ity get in the way of global progress,"

executive, said in a statement.

"It also makes economic and strategic

Other positive impacts of completing

sense for countries to fulfill their develop-

secondary school education for girls

include a reduction in child marriage,

lower fertility rates in countries with high

WORLD BANK REPORT

Gerard Collomb said yesteday.

attacks targeting crowds and other so-called "soft" targets. The massive security effort has been complicated by France's national day, Bastille Day, which falls today. Few French can think of the traditional national holiday parties and firework displays without recalling the 86 peo-

Authorities will deploy 110,000 police and security forces

across France this weekend to secure the huge street parties

if "Les Bleus" win the World Cup tomorrow, after years of

France to deploy

110,000 police

ple mown down two years ago by a van in the Mediterranean coastal resort of Nice. The country has been repeatedly targeted by extremists

over previous years in attacks that have claimed 246 lives since January 2015, according to an AFP toll. "Everything is being done so the French can live these

festive moments with peace of mind, despite the terrorist threat which remains at a high level," Interior Minister

The Bastille Day festivities kick off Friday night with firework shows and public street dances. Today, a military parade and air force flyovers attended by President Emmanuel Macron will be followed by a pyrotechnics display near the Eiffel Tower Kristalina Georgieva, World Bank chief which is expected to draw tens of thousands of people.