

NEWSIN
briefUS slaps sanctions
on Russian bank

AFP, Washington

The United States yesterday slapped sanctions on a Russian bank for helping North Korea evade UNSC measures designed to curb Pyongyang's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs. The US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) said it also targeted an individual and two entities for "facilitating North Korean illicit financial activity."

Iran conducts naval
exercise in Gulf: US

AFP, Washington

Iran launched a naval exercise in the Gulf on Thursday, just days before the US reimposes sanctions on Tehran, a defense official told AFP. The exercises come at a time of increased tension between the countries. US is poised to slap fresh sanctions on Tehran on Monday.

UN moves to unlock
aid to North Korea

AFP, United Nations

The UNSC is poised to back a US proposal aimed at removing some of the hurdles that tough sanctions on North Korea have thrown up in the way of delivering humanitarian aid. Drought and heatwaves have put more starins on North Korea where UN says about 10 million people are undernourished.

12 schools burned by
Taliban in Pakistan

REUTERS, Peshawar

Twelve schools - eight girls and four boys schools - were attacked by bombs and set on fire overnight in a northern Pakistani district where Taliban-linked militants opposed to girls' education are active, police said yesterday. Pakistani Taliban and allied militants, who regard girls' education as anti-Islam, have been attacking schools for women in northwestern and northern parts of the country.



A student takes part in a demonstration by students from different universities from across Nicaragua demanding President Daniel Ortega and his powerful vice president, wife Rosario Murillo, to resign and the government to keep the 6% budget for universities, in Managua, on Thursday. The death toll in violent protests in Nicaragua against Ortega stands at 317, a US-based regional rights group said Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

HELICOPTER MISUSE CASE

Imran summoned
by anti-graft body

TOI ONLINE

Imran Khan, Pakistan's prime minister-in-waiting has been summoned by the country's anti-graft body on August 7 in connection with the misuse of official helicopters which caused Rs 2.17 million loss to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, an official said yesterday.

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) summoned 65-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman on August 7. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Khan's party has led the provincial government since 2013.

The NAB is investigating the cricketer-turned-politician for causing Rs 2.17 million loss to the provincial exchequer by using the government's helicopter for over 72 hours.

A NAB official said Khan has been summoned on August 7 for questioning and to record his statement.

Khan has denied any wrongdoing and said the case was politically motivated.

Khan was earlier summoned on July 18, but he failed to appear before the panel, citing elections. His lawyer had filed an appeal requesting the accountability watchdog to fix the date for case after the general elections, "preferably on August 7".

His party's former chief minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pervez Khattak, and four senior bureaucrats have already recorded their statements in the case.

Khan's PTI has emerged as the single largest party in the elections held on July 25. He is expected to take oath in the second week of August.

'ISI INTERFERENCE IN PAKISTAN JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS'

IHC rejects allegations

Spy agency says claims made by Justice Shaukat damaged military's image home and abroad

DAWN ONLINE

Chief Justice of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) Mohammad Anwar Khan Kasi has rejected allegations of interference by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in judicial proceedings, especially in the constitution of benches.

Subsequently, a division bench of the IHC comprising Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb hearing an intra court appeal (ICA) of the ISI expunged adverse remarks of Justice Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui from a judicial order.

The ISI in the appeal asserted that the court order widely circulated on the social media within the country and abroad and damaged the reputation of the army, ISI and judiciary across the world.

It requested the court to expunge the adverse remarks from the court order and also impose cost of litigation on the petitioner for filing a frivolous petition.

Last month Justice Shaukat Aziz



Shaukat Aziz

Siddiqui claimed that security agencies were manipulating judicial proceedings. He also claimed the agencies approached the IHC chief justice to ensure Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz remained behind bars for the elections.

The IHC division bench comprising Justice Farooq and Justice Aurangzeb took up the ICA on Aug 1. The court had issued notices to the petitioner as well as the advocate general for Islamabad.

Advocate General Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri appeared before the bench. He told the court that the IHC registrar conveyed the message of IHC Chief Justice Kasi that he never allowed outside interference of any person or institution in the judicial proceedings.

He said that the IHC chief justice further said that he had never taken instructions from any quarter while working as a sessions judge or after his elevation to the IHC.

The bench then accepted the ICA and expunged the adverse remarks from the order sheet accordingly.

Threats and
sanctions
will not work

Turkey FM tells Pompeo
AFP, Singapore

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu yesterday said he told US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that threats and sanctions will not work, after Washington targeted Turkish ministers over the detention of an American pastor.

"We have said from the start that the other side's threatening language and sanctions will not get any result. We repeated this today," Cavusoglu said in televised remarks in Singapore after their meeting.

Pastor Andrew Brunson was held in prison for nearly two years before he was moved to house arrest last week, disappointing American officials who expected his release.

He is accused of carrying out activities on behalf of two groups viewed by Ankara as terrorists: the movement of the US-led Muslim preacher Fethullah Gulen blamed for the July 2016 coup attempt and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Brunson, who led a Protestant church in the Aegean city of Izmir, denies the charges.

He risks up to 35 years in prison if found guilty. His next hearing is on October 12.

The case is now at the centre of a bitter row between Nato allies Ankara and Washington after the US on Wednesday imposed sanctions on the Turkish justice and interior ministers claiming they played a major role in the arrest and detention of the pastor.

Modi govt accused
of muzzling press

Top editors of Indian news channel quit amid pressure for exposing 'coached' interview with the PM

AFP, New Delhi

India's government was under fresh fire yesterday over its relationship with the media after it emerged a farmer was coached to lie in a televised chat with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Journalists in India say they have faced increasing threats and intimidation aimed at stopping them from criticising Modi and his rightwing government ahead of general elections due next year.

During a conference between Modi and farmers aired across multiple channels in June, one woman farmer from eastern Chhattisgarh state said her income had doubled thanks to a government scheme.

However in a programme aired on July 6 on ABP News, one of India's top Hindi-language channels, the woman admitted she was coached by a government official who had visited her village to lie.

Matters escalated this week after the channel's editor-in-chief Milind Khandekar and Punya Prasoon Bajpai -- anchor of the "Master Stroke" programme that carried the expose -- quit the network.

Another senior anchor at the channel who has been critical of Modi's government has been taken off air for 15 days, a senior journalist with ABP News, who wished to remain anonymous, told AFP.

The opposition Congress party laid into Modi over the affair yesterday, while social media was rife with accusations that the government was trying to muzzle the press.

"It is unfortunate that the media is being targeted for doing its duty, for carrying out reality checks on the government's claim," senior Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge said in parliament. "The media is being intimidated," he said.

"I see the #ABPNews developments as an admission that the govt has failed and it is running scared of Hindi TV channels exposing its failures in an election year. This fascist streak will only get stronger," tweeted Arvind Jha, an entrepreneur.

Freelance journalist Dhruv Rathee said the journalists were paying the price for exposing a "big fraud".

"They had asked farmers to lie and speak good things about Modi. (Bajpai) dared to speak the truth and he was fired," he wrote on Twitter.

A BJP spokesman did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment.

The Press Trust of India quoted information minister Rajyavardhan Rathore as saying the government had "nothing to do" with the resignations.

The Reporters Without Borders press watchdog last month warned of deteriorating media freedom in India, the world's largest democracy.

It also took the Indian government to task over online hate campaigns and harassment by "armies of trolls" associated with Hindu nationalists loyal to Modi.

Meanwhile, India's government has abandoned a plan to set up a "command room" to monitor social media 24/7.

At a Supreme Court hearing yesterday, a government attorney informed the judges that government had withdrawn the tender for the centre. Activists said the war room would stifle free speech and violate India's constitutionally guaranteed right to privacy.



Children cool off in fountains as a summer heatwave with high temperatures continues in Paris, France, yesterday. Temperatures in Spain and Portugal soared to near record highs yesterday as part of Europe-wide heatwave and governments put emergency services on alert for forest fires.

PHOTO: AFP

GENERAL ELECTION IN ZIMBABWE

Rivals on collision course

REUTERS, Harare

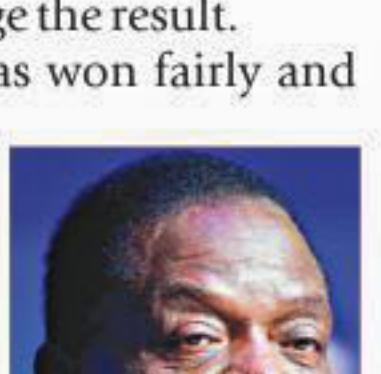
President Emmerson Mnangagwa yesterday called for Zimbabwe to unite behind him after he was declared winner of national elections, but the opposition leader insisted he had won and said he would use all means necessary to challenge the result.

Mnangagwa said his victory was won fairly and he had nothing to hide, although he criticised chaotic scenes where police shouting "clear out" chased away journalists waiting for a briefing by his main presidential election rival Nelson Chamisa.

Chamisa later told reporters Mnangagwa's ruling Zanu-PF had used deadly violence against opposition supporters following the vote because it had lost the election -- the first since the army removed 94-year-old Robert Mugabe in November.

"We are going to explore all necessary means, legal and constitutional, to ensure that the will of the people is protected," Chamisa said.

Voting passed off relatively smoothly on the day,



Mnangagwa

raising hopes of a break from a history of disputed and violent polls.

But an army crackdown on opposition supporters in which six people were killed and opposition claims that the vote was rigged revealed the deep rifts in Zimbabwean society that developed during Mugabe's four decades in power, when the security forces became a byword for heavy-handedness.

After three days of claims and counterclaims, 75-year-old Mnangagwa - a former spy chief under Mugabe - secured victory.

Mnangagwa received 50.8 percent of the vote, just edging over the 50 percent mark needed to avoid a runoff. The delays in announcing the presidential results and the narrow margin of victory fuelled the opposition accusations of rigging.

He now faces the challenge of persuading the international community that the army crackdown and lapses in the election process will not derail his promise of political and economic reforms needed to fix a moribund economy.



Nelson Chamisa

'It was a massacre'
Dozens killed in Saudi air raids on a hospital in Yemen's Hodeidah; 124 injured

AGENCIES

At least 55 people, including women and children, have been killed in Yemen's Red Sea port city of Hodeidah in air raids carried out by a Saudi and UAE alliance battling Houthi rebels, the rebel-run health ministry said.

In a statement issued late on Thursday, the ministry said the attacks, which targeted the city's Public al-Thawra Hospital and a busy fishing port, wounded at least 124 Yemenis.

The Reuters news agency put the death toll at 28 late on Thursday, while China's Xinhua said it stood at 70 early yesterday.

Taha al-Mutawakil, the Minister for Public Health and Population in the Houthi-led administration, said local authorities were struggling to cope with the number of casualties, and ambulances feared transporting the wounded to Sanaa or other provinces due to fears of being targeted by air attacks.

"What we have seen in Hodeidah is a heinous crime," Mutawakil was quoted by the Houthi-run SABA news agency saying. He added that US shared responsibility for the deaths.

Mohamed al-Hasni, the head of Hodeidah's fishermen union, told Al Jazeera that there were no military targets in the area and "the targeting of fishermen was not expected".

"The port and market were full of people. It was a massacre," he said.

A senior UN official expressed alarm yesterday at the deadly strikes in Hodeidah. "This is shocking," said Lise Grande, the UN humanitarian coordinator for Yemen, reported AFP.

UN envoy Martin Griffiths told the Security Council on Thursday that the United Nations will invite the warring sides for talks on September 6 in Geneva on a framework for peace negotiations.



Threats and
sanctions
will not work

Turkey FM tells Pompeo

AFP, Singapore

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu yesterday said he told US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that threats and sanctions will not work, after Washington targeted Turkish ministers over the detention of an American pastor.

"We have said from the start that the other side's threatening language and sanctions will not get any result. We repeated this today," Cavusoglu said in televised remarks in Singapore after their meeting.

Pastor Andrew Brunson was held in prison for nearly two years before he was moved to house arrest last week, disappointing American officials who expected his release.

He is accused of carrying out activities on behalf of two groups viewed by Ankara as terrorists: the movement of the US-led Muslim preacher Fethullah Gulen blamed for the July 2016 coup attempt and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Brunson, who led a Protestant church in the Aegean city of Izmir, denies the charges.

He risks up to 35 years in prison if found guilty. His next hearing is on October 12.

The case is now at the centre of a bitter row between Nato allies Ankara and Washington after the US on Wednesday imposed sanctions on the Turkish justice and interior ministers claiming they played a major role in the arrest and detention of the pastor.