

# NEWS IN brief

## Israel demolishes home of Palestinian attacker

Israeli forces demolished the home of a Palestinian who carried out a deadly knife attack in a settlement in the occupied West Bank, the army said yesterday. Minor clashes broke out between Palestinians opposed to the raid and soldiers in the West Bank early yesterday.

## China may scrap two-child limit

China appears poised to scrap its two-child policy, with a state-run newspaper Monday citing a draft civil code that would overhaul decades of controversial family-planning rules. The wide-ranging code would end a policy that has been enforced through fines but was also notorious for cases of forced abortions in the country.

## Blow for France's Macron as star minister quits

President Emmanuel Macron suffered a major political blow yesterday as his popular environment minister resigned live on radio -- without informing him beforehand. Nicolas Hulot took his interviewers by surprise on the France Inter radio station when announcing his move.

## Duterte hit by new ICC complaint

Activists and families of eight victims of the Philippines' "war on drugs" yesterday filed a complaint with the International Criminal Court (ICC), a second petition accusing President Rodrigo Duterte of murder and crimes against humanity. The 50-page complaint calls for Duterte's indictment for what it describes as thousands of extrajudicial killings.



Volunteers use umbrellas to protect from rain as they cross Pampa river to reach to flood-affected areas to clean houses and public places following floods in Kuttanad in Alappuzha district in Kerala, India yesterday. Inset, a motorboat moves past a row of empty houseboats in a tributary of the Pampa river following floods in Alappuzha. Kerala has reported 445 deaths with more bodies discovered each day as a massive cleanup gets underway.



# Denuclearisation talks 'at stake'

## Top N Korean officials warn US

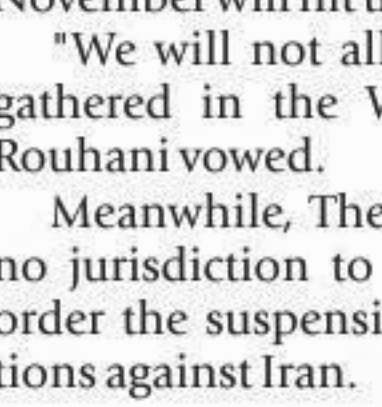
Top North Korean officials warned the United States in a letter that denuclearisation talks are "again at stake and may fall apart," sources familiar with the process told CNN. The letter was delivered to US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, whose fourth trip to Pyongyang was abruptly canceled, hours before he was scheduled to depart with his new special envoy Stephen Biegun on Friday, sources said. Three sources with direct knowledge of the North Korean position on denuclearisation said the letter stated that Kim's regime felt that the process couldn't move forward because "the US is still not ready to meet (North Korean) expectations in terms of taking a step forward to sign a peace treaty." The US has so far been unwilling to replace the armistice agreement that ended the Korean War with a permanent legally binding peace treaty, which would require the approval of two-thirds of the US Senate. If a compromise cannot be reached and nascent talks crumble, Pyongyang could resume "nuclear and missile activities," the sources said. The existence of the letter, sent to Pompeo by Kim Yong Chol, the former head of North Korea's spy agency, was first reported by the Washington Post. The Post, which characterized the letter as a "secret" communication, said it wasn't clear how Kim had gotten the letter to Pompeo, but suggested that it may have been sent through its UN mission.

# Iran's Rouhani under fire

## Parliament blames president for economic woes, refers him to judiciary

Iran's parliament yesterday declared its dissatisfaction with President Hassan Rouhani, voting to reject his answers after grilling him over the deteriorating economy. It was the first time Rouhani had been summoned by parliament in his five years in power, and MPs demanded answers on unemployment, rising prices and the sharp depreciation of the rial, which has lost more than half of its value since April. The lawmakers, who have already impeached his labour and economy ministers this month, were unimpressed. In votes at the end of the session, they expressed dissatisfaction with Rouhani's responses to four of their five questions on the economy, which will now be referred to the judiciary for review. The economy has been battered by the return of US sanctions following President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the landmark nuclear deal between Iran and world powers. Rouhani trod a difficult line, seeking to acknowledge the problems facing ordinary Iranians without admitting to a full-blown crisis. "It should not be said we are facing a crisis. There is no

crisis. If we say there is, it will become a problem for society and then a threat," he told parliament. As usual, Rouhani offered no concrete policy proposals, instead saying the answer lay in showing a united front. "You may talk about employment, foreign currency, recession, smuggling... I think the problem is in people's view of the future," he said. "The people are not afraid of the United States, they are afraid of our disagreements. If the people see we are united, they will realise the problems will be resolved." But Rouhani's government -- which staked everything on its bid to attract foreign investment through a more "moderate" approach to relations with the West -- has been badly weakened by the return of sanctions. Most foreign firms have abandoned investment projects in Iran, and the next phase of renewed US sanctions in November will hit the crucial oil sector. "We will not allow a bunch of anti-Iranians who have gathered in the White House to conspire against us," Rouhani vowed. Meanwhile, The US told UN judges yesterday they had no jurisdiction to rule on Tehran's demand for them to order the suspension of debilitating nuclear-related sanctions against Iran.



Rouhani quizzed by lawmakers in session broadcast live  
US rejects UN court jurisdiction in Iran sanctions case

# No-deal Brexit not 'the end of the world': May

## Plays down warnings of consequences for UK economy

Prime Minister Theresa May yesterday indicated that a no-deal Brexit would not be a disaster for Britain, playing down warnings of serious consequences for the UK economy. May said she was confident of striking an acceptable new deal with Brussels as Britain prepares to leave the European Union in March. She cited WTO director general Roberto Azevedo as she made her case. "Look at what the director of the World Trade Organization has said," she told British media on her tour of Africa. "He said about a no-deal situation that it would not be a walk in the park but it wouldn't be the end of the world." Her government last week outlined its preparations for a no-deal scenario. "What the government is doing is putting in place the preparations such that if we're

in that situation we can make a success of it, just as we will make a success of the good deal I believe we're able to get and the good deal we're working to get," she said. London and Brussels have yet to reach an agreement on the terms of Britain's exit from the bloc. British lawmakers are split on May's proposals to keep Britain close to the EU on trade -- parts of which have since been rejected by Brussels. London and Brussels hope to strike a deal by October, to allow its ratification by the European and British parliaments before Britain leaves the EU. Last week, British finance minister Philip Hammond warned a no-deal Brexit could have "large fiscal consequences" on productivity and borrowing. And Alexandre Winterstein, a European Commission spokesman, said the bloc was focused on achieving Britain's "orderly withdrawal" but "preparing for all possible outcomes".



# Muslim nations failed to tackle blasphemous issue

## Says Pak PM while addressing the Senate

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has said that the absence of an international policy against the generation of blasphemous content is a "collective failure" on part of the Muslim countries. Addressing the Senate for the first time as Prime Minister, Khan on Monday said his government will raise the matter before the UN, adding: "However, I do not think that would do much," Dawn news reported. The Senate had passed a resolution to bring the UN's attention to the matter regarding the announcement by the leader of Dutch Freedom Party and Parliamentarian Geert Wilders to hold a competition of blasphemous caricatures. Pakistan's Foreign Office last week had called the charge d'affaires of the Netherlands to record a protest against the announcement by Mr Wilders. "Our government will raise the matter in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

(OIC) and ask the Muslim countries to come up with a collective policy that could then be brought up at international forums," the Prime Minister said. "This should have been done years ago," he said while giving the example of the Holocaust and how four European countries have jail sentences for "anyone who misquotes the figures of Holocaust. That is because they realise that this is something that hurts the sentiments of the Jewish community." "We need a similar policy for this matter so that people do not repeatedly hurt our sentiments." Discussing his reason for being in the Senate, PM Khan said that he and his ministers would continue to raise the importance of the Senate and the National Assembly by making sure that government representation is present in all sessions. Speaking about his government's efforts to minimise overall spending, PM Khan said: "I am here today to convince the senators [...] to take part in the austerity drive launched by the government."



Russia's President Vladimir Putin (L) and Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu are seen during their vacation in Sayano-Shushensky nature reserve in the Republic of Tyva, Russia on Monday. The photo was released yesterday.

# Trump bows to pressure over McCain

## Orders flags to half-staff

Donald Trump bowed to pressure Monday to honor the late John McCain, ordering that flags be lowered to half-staff across the country, as the late senator fired a parting shot at the president in a farewell message to the United States. Trump's about-face came after he found himself mired in controversy over his rather conspicuous failure to pay tribute to McCain, who died Saturday at 81 after a year-long battle with brain cancer. When veterans' groups launched appeals for a more fitting salute to McCain, a Navy veteran who was imprisoned for more than five years in Vietnam, the Republican leader -- who had no love lost for the Arizona senator -- blinked. "Despite our differences on policy and politics, I respect

# 'SAVE ME'

## Kidnapped Nigerian schoolgirl pleads for freedom

A Nigerian Christian schoolgirl abducted by Boko Haram jihadists has called on President Muhammadu Buhari to secure her release, local media said yesterday, citing a purported audio recording of the hostage. Leah Sharibu, 15, was among more than 100 schoolgirls abducted from their hostel in the town of Dapchi in the restive northeast on February 19. The only Christian among the hostages, she remains in captivity months after all the other girls were released. In an unverified recording Boko Haram sent to local media late Monday, Sharibu begged Buhari to work for her freedom. "I plead with... the government and the president to have pity for me and save me from my situation," Sharibu said in Hausa, a language widely spoken in the north. Sharibu faltered and repeated herself in the recording, suggesting she was reading from a prepared text. If verified, it would be the first evidence that Sharibu was alive since she was kidnapped. The audio was accompanied by a picture of Sharibu clad in a light brown hijab revealing only her face, sitting on a mat in an undisclosed location.

# Huge drill 'justified'

## Says Kremlin as Russia will hold its biggest war games in nearly four decades

Russia will next month hold its biggest war games in nearly four decades, Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said yesterday, a massive military exercise that will also involve the Chinese and Mongolian armies. The exercise, called Vostok-2018 (East-2018), will take place in central and eastern Russian military districts and involve almost 300,000 troops, over 1,000 military aircraft, two of Russia's naval fleets, and all its airborne units, Shoigu said in a statement. The manoeuvres will take place at a time of heightened tension between the West and Russia, which is concerned about what it says is an unjustified build-up of the Nato military alliance on its western flank. Nato says it has beefed up its forces in eastern Europe to deter potential Russian military action after Moscow annexed Ukraine's Crimea in 2014 and backed a pro-

Russian uprising in eastern Ukraine. The war games, which will take place from Sept. 11-15, are likely to displease Japan which has already complained about what it says is a Russian military build-up in the Far East. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is due to attend a forum in Vladivostok over the same period, and a Japanese Foreign Ministry official said yesterday Tokyo always paid attention to shifts in Russian-Chinese military cooperation. The Russian Ministry of Defence has said that Chinese and Mongolian military units will also take part in the exercise. When asked if the cost of holding such a massive military exercise was justified at a time when Russia is faced with higher social spending demands, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said such war games were essential. "The country's ability to defend itself in the current international situation, which is often aggressive and unfriendly towards our country, means (the exercise) is justified," Peskov told reporters on a conference call.



# Re-verify 4.7m of those excluded: Indian SC

India's Supreme Court today ordered re-verification of 10 per cent of the people in Assam, who were excluded from the draft National Register of Citizens (NRC) published last month. A bench comprising of Ranjan Gogoi and R F Nariman said the re-verification was a "sample survey" for the satisfaction of the court and its schedule would be decided later. The draft NRC, aimed at identifying illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, was published on July 30, leaving out 40.7 lakh people from having a place in the document. The apex court also deferred the scheduled date of August 30 for receipt of claims and objections to the draft NRC, as it pointed out certain contradictions in the Indian government's Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) when filing them. The top court raised doubts over the government's proposal to allow a claimant to change his legacy document for inclusion in the draft. On July 31, the apex court had made it clear that there will be no coercive action by authorities against the over 40 lakh people whose names did not figure in the NRC. It had then asked the Indian government to come out with modalities and the SOPs, including timelines, for deciding claims and objections arising out of the publication of the draft. Earlier, the apex court had asked the Assam NRC coordinator to place before it the data of district-wise percentage of population excluded from the draft in the state.



Senator John McCain's service to our country," Trump said in a statement as he ordered the flag atop the White House and elsewhere to fly at half-staff until McCain's burial on Sunday. He later told evangelical leaders that "we very much appreciate everything that senator McCain has done for our country." The White House flag was lowered after McCain's death on Saturday -- but it was once again at the top of the flagpole on Monday morning. Trump's initial silence about McCain underscored the isolation of the US leader and fueled criticism that he is incapable of bringing a divided nation together even as it mourns a man widely seen as an American hero and a political icon.