



(From left, clockwise) The casket of Senator John McCain, R-Ariz., is carried down the steps of the US Capitol in Washington DC, yesterday; Former First Lady Michelle Obama, former US President Barack Obama, former Vice President Al Gore, and former US President George W Bush arrive for the Memorial Service for McCain; and Meghan McCain, daughter of US Senator John McCain, speaks during the memorial service.

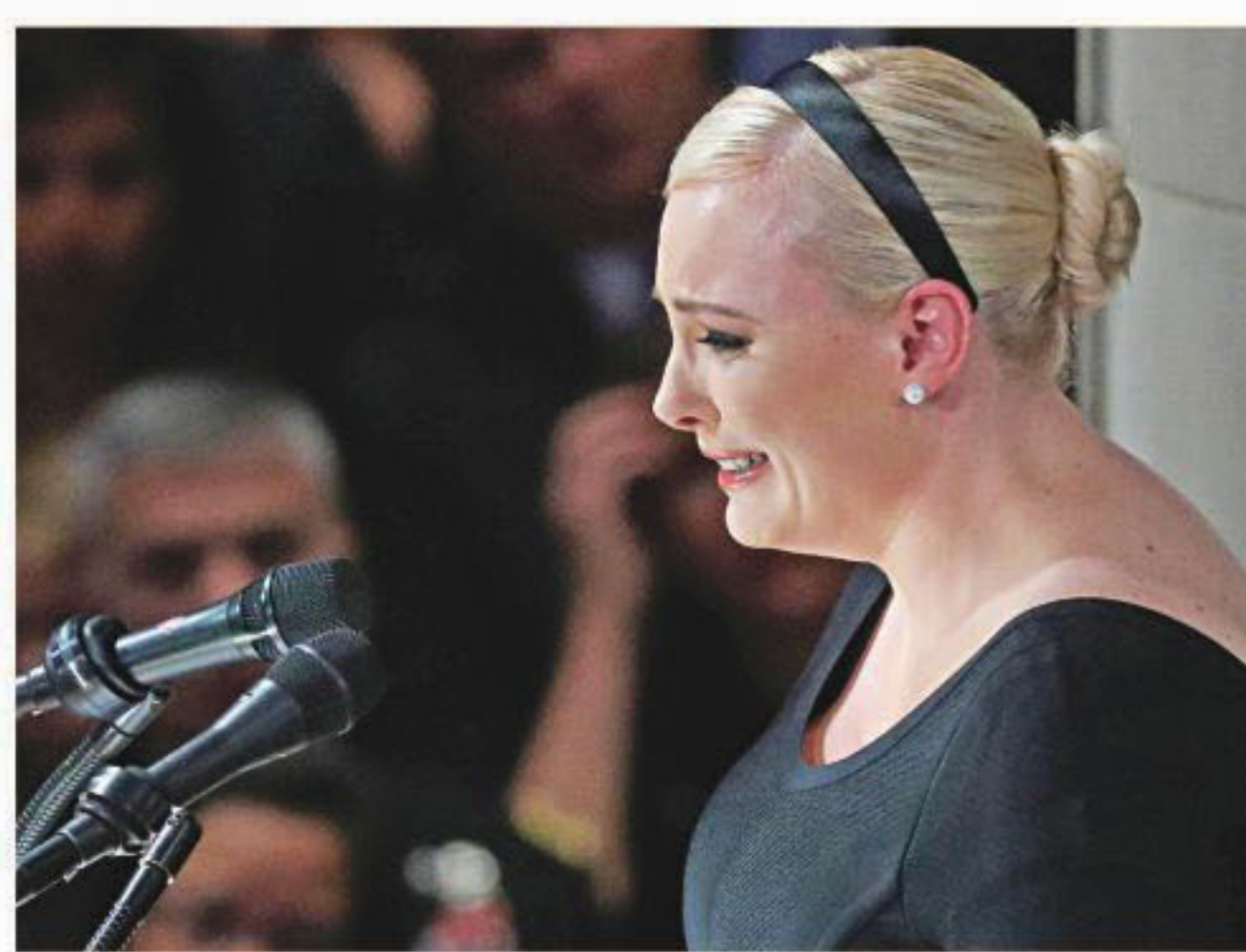


PHOTO: REUTERS, AFP

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

TRUMP'S DECISIONS

FIRST BREAK WITH PALESTINIANS
On February 15, welcoming Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to the White House, Trump halts Washington's quest for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, saying he would back a single state if it led to peace. On March 27 new US ambassador Nikki Haley promises an end to bias against Israel at the United Nations.

TRUMP AT WESTERN WALL
On May 3, Trump hosts Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas at the White House, saying of a Middle East peace agreement: "We will get it done." On May 22, Trump becomes the first sitting US president to visit the Western Wall in Jerusalem's Old Town. Netanyahu announces new US military aid.

'ALLEGED' OCCUPATION
In September, US ambassador to Israel David Friedman, a longtime friend and advisor of Trump, angers Palestinians by downplaying the Israeli occupation of the West bank.

JERUSALEM DECISION
On December 6 Trump says "it is time to officially recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel", breaking with the policies of his predecessors and provoking criticism worldwide. Palestinians express rage. Palestinians have since refused all contact with the American administration, and no longer accept the United States as a peace mediator.

'SLAP OF THE CENTURY'
On January 14, 2018 Abbas denounces White House peace efforts as "the slap of the century". On January 16 Washington holds back \$65 million, more than half of what had been earmarked for the UN relief agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA. On January 25, Trump threatens to withhold aid worth hundreds of millions of dollars until they accede to US-brokered talks.

US EMBASSY IN JERUSALEM
On March 5 Trump hosts Netanyahu at the White House and says US-Israel ties have "never been better". On May 14, the transfer of the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem coincides with a bloodbath in the Gaza Strip, where about 60 are killed from Israeli fire. On June 1 the United States vetoes a UN draft resolution calling for protection measures for the Palestinians and on June 19 announces its withdrawal from the United Nations Human Rights Council over its alleged bias against Israel.

HALT TO US AID
The United States announces on August 24 it has cancelled more than \$200 million in aid for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, then on August 31 decides to end funding for UNRWA, saying the organisation was "irredeemably flawed".

SOURCE: AFP

'He was a great man'

Former presidents, rivals, family pay tribute to senator McCain

REUTERS, Washington

Senator John McCain's daughter paid tribute to her father on Saturday with a broadside at President Donald Trump, lambasting the US leader without naming him for using "cheap rhetoric" against a man celebrated as a war hero and statesman.

Meghan McCain, who has made no secret of her unhappiness with Trump's criticism of her father, kicked off a memorial service that was attended by a who's who crowd of Democratic and Republican leaders who gathered to celebrate the former war prisoner's life.

"He was a great man," Meghan McCain said at the Washington National Cathedral. "We gather here to mourn the passing of American greatness, the real thing, not cheap rhetoric from men who will never come near the sacrifice he gave so willingly, nor the opportunistic appropriation of those who live lives of comfort and privilege while he

suffered and served."

Former US presidents Barack Obama and George W Bush, who both defeated John McCain in their White House contests, said at the late senator's funeral that he made them "better."

Hailing his friend as "an extraordinary man," warrior and patriot who embodied what is best in America, Democrat Obama said McCain "made us better presidents -- just as he made the Senate better, just as he made the country better."

He was echoing similar sentiments expressed minutes earlier by Republican Bush, who defeated McCain in a "hard fought" Republican primary battle in 2000, only to see that bitter rivalry melt away into a lasting friendship.

"He also made me better," Bush said.

Trump, who has feuded publicly with McCain and mocked his military service, received five deferments that got him out of serving in the

military. The president did not attend yesterday's service and spent the morning sending tweets on other subjects.

Top members of Trump's administration including his daughter Ivanka, son-in-law Jared Kushner, chief of staff John Kelly and national security adviser John Bolton were present at the solemn cathedral service.

Other guests included former President Bill Clinton and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, comedian Jay Leno, and former Senator Bob Dole.

McCain's daughter delivered a tearful but forceful tribute to her father, who she said told her to "show them how tough you are" with her eulogy. Taking aim at Trump's campaign slogan, "Make America Great Again," she said McCain's America was always great.

The statesman and former prisoner of war died Aug. 25 of brain cancer, days shy of his 82nd birthday.

Boko Haram raid kills 30 Nigeria troops

AFP, Kano

At least 30 Nigerian soldiers died in combat with Boko Haram jihadists who overran a military base in the northeast near the border with Niger, two military sources told AFP yesterday.

Scores of jihadists in trucks stormed the base at Zari village in northern Borno state late Thursday and briefly seized it after a fierce battle, they said.

"They came in large numbers in trucks and carrying heavy weapons and engaged soldiers in a battle that lasted for an hour," a military officer said. "We lost at least 30 men," the officer said, adding that the attack took place at around 4:00pm.

US sees assault on Idlib as escalation of Syria conflict

REUTERS, Washington

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Friday said the United States views the Syrian government military assault on rebel-held Idlib as an escalation of the Syrian conflict, as the State Department warned that Washington would respond to any chemical attack by Damascus.

The Syrian province of Idlib and surrounding areas are the last major enclave held by rebels opposed to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, a close Russian ally. A source has told Reuters Assad is preparing a phased offensive to regain the province.

"The US sees this as an escalation of an already dangerous conflict," Pompeo said in a post on Twitter in which he also blasted Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov for "defending (the) Syrian and Russian assault."

Lavrov said on Friday the Syrian government had every right to chase militants out of Idlib and that talks continued on estab-

lishing humanitarian corridors there.

The State Department said the new US special representative for Syria, James Jeffrey, would travel to Israel, Jordan, and Turkey from Saturday to Tuesday on his first official trip abroad.

Jeffrey and his delegation will "underscore that the United States will respond to any chemical weapons attack perpetrated by the Syrian regime," the State Department said in a statement.

The United Nations on Thursday called on Russia, Iran and Turkey to forestall a battle in Idlib which would affect millions of civilians and could see both militants and the government potentially using chlorine as a chemical weapon.

Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moualeem, speaking after talks with Lavrov in Moscow on Thursday, said government forces will "go all the way" in the rebel-held northern region of Idlib, but that they did not have and would not use chemical weapons.



NEWS IN brief

49 pc Americans want Trump impeachment

AFP, Washington

Sixty percent of Americans disapprove of President Donald Trump's job performance and nearly half support impeachment, according to an opinion poll published on Friday. Forty-nine percent of those polled by the Post and ABC News said that Congress should launch impeachment proceedings against Trump, while 46 percent disagreed.

Luxury cars of Pak PM House to be auctioned

DAWN, Islamabad

The Prime Minister House on Friday released a list of luxury and surplus vehicles to be auctioned by the government. The auction will take place at the PM House on Sept 17. The vehicles include eight BMWs, three cars of 2014 model and three 5000cc SUVs and two 3000cc SUVs of 2016 model. The list also contains four Mercedes Benz cars of 2016 model. There are 16 Toyota cars among others.

Trump to skip Asian regional summits

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump will not attend regional summits with Asian allies in November but will send Vice President Mike Pence instead, the White House announced Friday. Pence will travel to Singapore to attend the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit and the East Asia Summit, it said. He will then go on to Papua New Guinea for Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meetings, the White House said.

AMSTERDAM TRAIN STATION ATTACK

Cops probe terror link; victims US citizens

AFP, Amsterdam

Two people who were seriously injured in a knife attack at Amsterdam's Central Station are US citizens, the US ambassador said yesterday, as Dutch police probed a possible terror link.

"We are aware that both victims were US citizens and have been in touch with them and their families," Pete Hoekstra said in a statement.

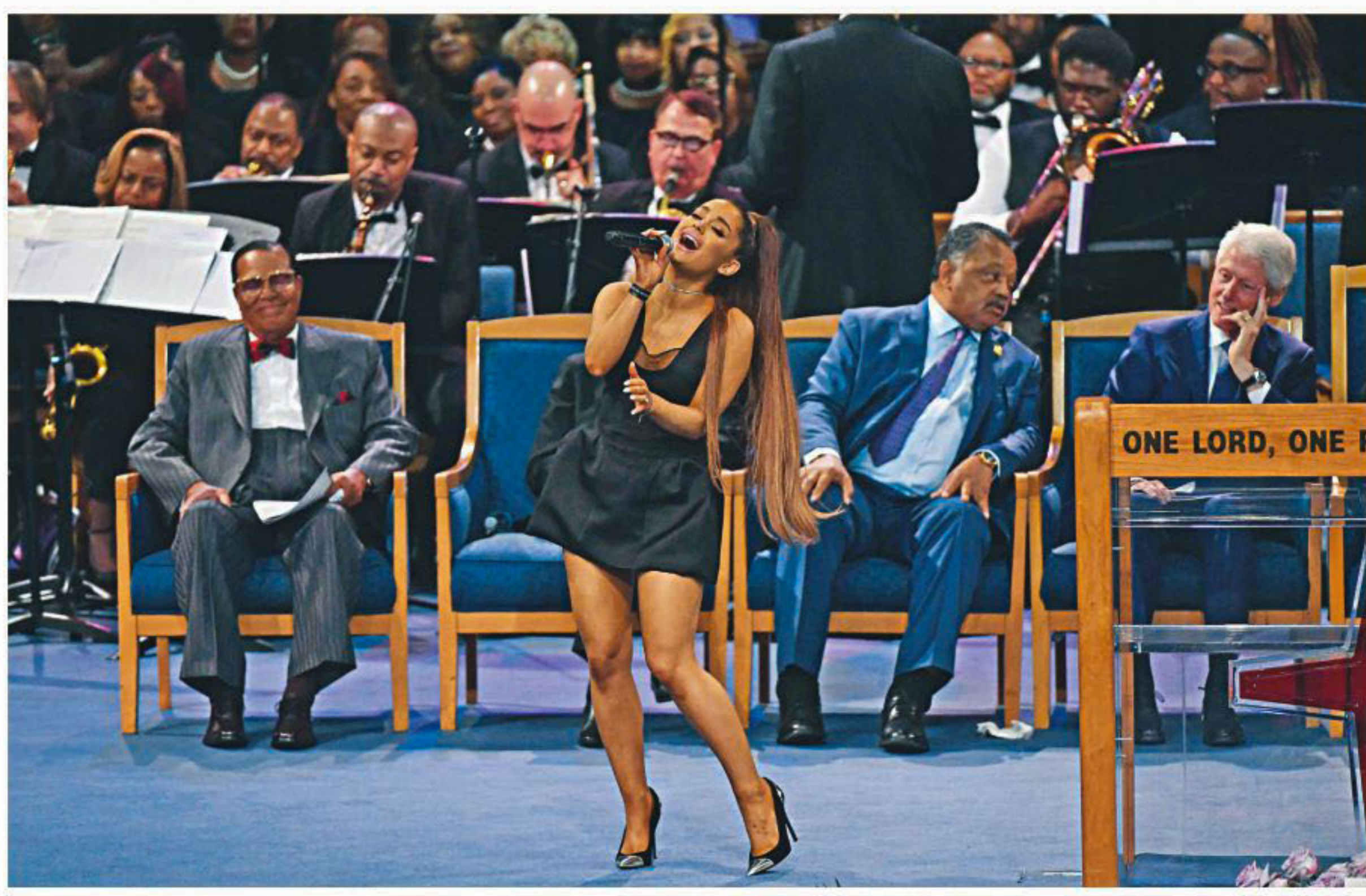
Panic broke out at the Dutch capital's main station shortly after midday Friday when the knife-wielding man stabbed two bystanders before he was shot and wounded by police.

Police later identified the suspect as a 19-year-old Afghan man with a German residency permit.

He is being questioned in hospital under police guard and Dutch authorities said they were in close contact with their German counterparts for more details about his background.

A preliminary investigation revealed that the assailant did not know his victims and that he did not specifically target them, the police spokesman said -- suggesting a random attack.

The attack comes a day after an announcement by Dutch anti-Islam politician Geert Wilders that he was cancelling moves to stage a cartoon competition to caricature the Prophet Mohammad, a plan that had angered many Muslims.



Ariana Grande performs during Aretha Franklin's funeral at Greater Grace Temple Friday in Detroit, Michigan. Former presidents, stars and musical royalty paid joyous tribute to Aretha Franklin at her marathon funeral on Friday, leading her family and members of the public in bidding goodbye to America's "Queen of Soul." PHOTO: AFP

BRAZIL PRESIDENCY

Top court bars Lula from race

AFP, Brasilia

A majority of Brazil's top electoral court shot down late Friday the candidacy of popular leftist Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in the country's upcoming presidential vote, telling the jailed former leader he cannot participate in October's critical election.

The vote punctuated a gripping case that has roiled the country for months, with Lula, 72, remaining the top contender among Brazilians to lead Latin America's largest economy -- despite sitting behind bars since April for accepting a bribe.

In an extraordinary session the Superior Electoral Court dashed Lula's hopes after hours of debate, with the judges voting an overwhelming 6-1 against him.

Shortly thereafter, the former president's Workers' Party (PT) vowed to "fight



with all means" to secure candidacy for the leftist icon.

Lula's case was a last-minute addition to the court session. The result was expected, but the vote of Judge Edson Fachin, the second to speak, had momentarily rekindled suspense.

Lula has been sentenced to 12 years in prison for accepting a luxury seaside apartment as a bribe from a construction firm.

He vehemently denies the accusations and has dismissed the charges as a political plot aimed at preventing him from standing in the elections.

The court's decision would be open to appeal.

All int'l agreements to be reviewed: Pak PM

DAWN ONLINE

Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday said his government would review all international agreements it inherited from the last Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) government and asked critics to bear with him for three months for performance.

He stated this during a meeting with a select group of news anchorpersons at the Prime Minister House. The issues that came under discussion were the accountability of ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) leaders, use of official helicopters by the family of Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar, a verbal clash between Khawar Maneka, ex-husband of the first lady, and Pakpattan District Police Office (DPO) Rizwan Gondal, remarks by Punjab Information Minister Fayyazul Hassan Chohan against a film star, alleged misuse of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's official chopper by PM Khan, etc.

The PM was quoted as saying: "Give our government three months before criticising its performance." He claimed that in three months, there would be a marked difference in the way the country was currently run.

Khan also vowed to further strengthen Pakistan-Iran ties during his meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, who is the first foreign leader to visit him after his inauguration. He expressed unequivocal support for Iran's position on its troubled nuclear deal with the West that has been abandoned by the US and urged the other parties to the agreement to remain committed to it.

Iran plans to boost ballistic, cruise missile capacity

REUTERS, Dubai

Iran plans to boost its ballistic and cruise missile capacity and acquire modern fighter planes and submarines, the Iranian state news agency IRNA quoted a senior Defence Ministry official as saying yesterday.

News of the military development plans came a day after Iran dismissed a French call for negotiations on Tehran's future nuclear plans, its ballistic missile arsenal and its role in wars in Syria and Yemen, following the US pullout from Tehran's nuclear agreement with world powers.

State media also reported the launch earlier this week of war games involving some 150,000 volunteer Basij militia members, who vowed to defend the Islamic state against "foreign threats" including its arch foe, the United States.

Tehran is furious over US President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the accord on Iran's nuclear programme and re-impose sanctions on Tehran.

Senior Iranian officials have warned the country will not yield easily to a renewed US campaign to strangle Iran's vital oil exports. They say the country's missile programme is solely for defence purposes and is not negotiable as demanded by the United States and European countries.

"Increasing ballistic and cruise missile capacity ... and the

acquisition of next-generation fighters and heavy and long-range vessels and submarines with various weapons capabilities are among the new plans of this ministry," said Mohammad Ahadi, deputy defence minister for international affairs, IRNA said.

Speaking to Tehran-based foreign military attaches, Ahadi said international sanctions had not hampered the development of Iran's arms industry.

"We have the necessary infrastructure and what we need to do is research and development, and at the same time upgrade and update the defence industry while relying on the country's very high scientific capacities and tens of thousands of graduates in technical fields and engineering," Ahadi was quoted as saying.

Separately, the head of the Defence Ministry's naval industries said Iran was developing a water jet propulsion system that would be ready by next March and a military commander said the air force planned to adopt Iran's new Kowsar fighter plane after successful tests, the semi-official news agency Tasnim reported.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said last month the Islamic Republic's military prowess was what deterred Washington from attacking it.

The exercises by the Basij militia, which are led by the elite Revolutionary Guards, come ahead of massive annual rallies planned for later this month to mark the start of the 1980s Iran-Iraq war.

Asks media to give his govt 3 months before criticising

Islamabad backs Tehran over US nuclear deal row