

# ICC 'undeterred'

## Hague-based court rebuffs US threat of sanctions

AGENCIES

The International Criminal Court yesterday said it would "continue to do its work undeterred" a day after US National Security Adviser John Bolton threatened sanctions if the tribunal investigated US activities in Afghanistan.

The Hague-based court said in a statement it was an independent and impartial institution with the backing of 123 countries.

"The ICC, as a court of law, will continue to do its work undeterred, in accordance with those principles and the overarching idea of the rule of law," it said.

ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda said last year there was a "reasonable basis to believe" war crimes and crimes against humanity were committed in Afghanistan and that all sides in the conflict would be examined, including members of the US armed forces and Central Intelligence Agency.

White House National Security Adviser John Bolton on Monday called the Hague-based rights body "unaccountable" and "outright dangerous" to the United States, Israel and other allies, and said any probe of US service members would be "an utterly unfounded, unjustifiable investigation".

"If the court comes after us, Israel or other US allies, we will not sit quietly," Bolton said. The US was prepared to slap financial sanctions and criminal charges on officials of the court if they proceed against any Americans, he added.

The United States did not ratify the Rome treaty that established the ICC during the presidency of Republican George W Bush. Instead, it adopted the American Servicemembers' Protection Act, nicknamed the Hague Invasion Act because it authorised the use of any means necessary to free US personnel held by the court.

Meanwhile, the Palestinians yesterday announced a fresh push against Israel at the International Criminal Court, a day after the United States said it was closing their Washington mission partly over the campaign.

# Hunger rising with unruly climate

## UN says 821 million people in the world were undernourished in 2017

AFP, Paris

Extreme weather events were a leading cause of global hunger rising last year, with women, babies, and old people particularly vulnerable to the worsening trend, a UN report said yesterday.

Increasingly frequent shocks such as extreme rainfall or temperatures, as well as droughts, storms, and floods, helped push the number of undernourished people to 821 million in 2017, it said.

That figure, equivalent to about one in nine people globally, was up from 804 million in 2016, according to the annual report "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World".

"The number of people who suffer from hunger has been growing over the past three years, returning to levels that prevailed almost a decade ago. Equally of concern is that 22.2 percent of children under five are affected by stunting in 2017," said the document.

Low- and middle-income countries, in particular, were harshly impacted by ever-more frequent climate extremes.

"Africa is the region where climate shocks and stressors had the



biggest impact on acute food insecurity and malnutrition, affecting 59 million people in 24 countries and requiring urgent humanitarian action," the report said.

Trends were also worsening in South America.

"If we are to achieve a world without hunger and malnutrition in all its forms by 2030, it is imperative that we accelerate and scale up actions to strengthen the resilience and adaptive capacity of food systems and people's livelihoods in response to climate variability and extremes," it added.

While floods, droughts, and

other extreme weather events have always occurred, scientists say global warming is boosting the frequency and severity of such events.

In countries where conflict and climate shocks coincide, the impact on food insecurity was even more relentless, the report said. Nearly 66 million people worldwide required urgent humanitarian assistance last year.

Syria, where agriculture is one of the few sectors to have survived the seven-year war, saw its harvest hit by rising temperatures and drought.

Already down 40 percent from pre-conflict levels -- from 4 million tonnes to around 2.5 million tonnes --, Syria's cereal production "will suffer a new reduction" this year, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's director of emergencies Dominique Burgeon said.

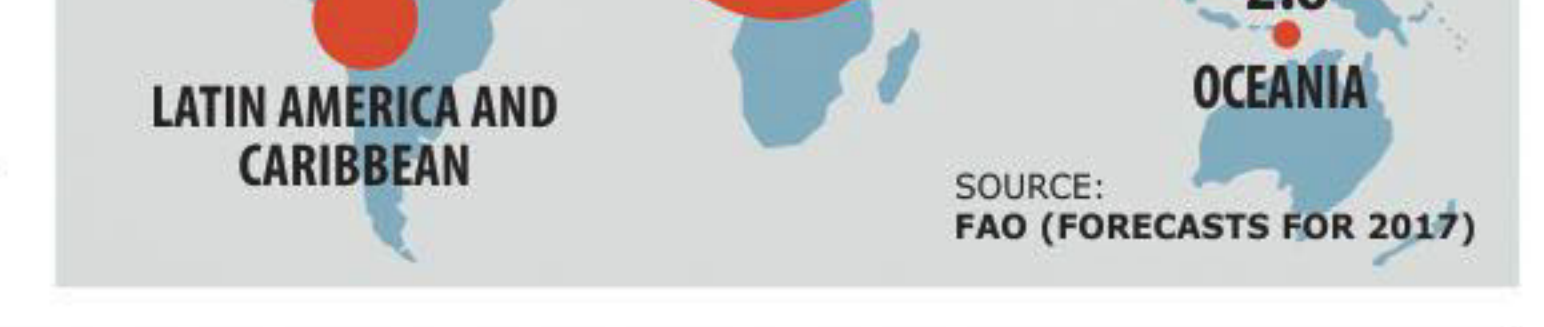
Yemen has suffered an even worse fate, with 35 percent of the population undernourished, Burgeon said, making the war-torn nation home to the world's "most acute food crisis today".

The UN noted that women worldwide are especially vulnerable to the impact of climate extremes, particularly in countries where even a semblance of gender parity remains a distant dream.

In India, limited resources coupled with entrenched gender inequalities saw poor families feed their boys better than girls when resources were limited.

The UN also pointed to the global rise of obesity in adults, particularly in North America, but also in Africa and Asia.

One in eight adults -- more than 672 million people worldwide -- are classified as obese.



Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping cook pancakes while visiting "The Far East Street" exhibition on the sidelines of the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, yesterday.

# Russia, China in show of force

AFP, Chita

Russia launched what it called its largest ever military drills, with hundreds of thousands of troops taking part along with Chinese soldiers in a show of force Nato condemned as a rehearsal for "large-scale conflict."

President Vladimir Putin was expected to attend the games yesterday after hosting an economic forum in Russia's far eastern city Vladivostok where his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping is one of the prominent guests.

The week-long war games dubbed "Vostok-2018" (East-2018) "have kicked off" in far eastern Russia, the defence ministry said. Taking part in the drills are around 300,000 soldiers, 36,000 military vehicles, 80 ships and 1,000 aircraft, helicopters and drones. Some 3,500 Chinese troops will take part in the games.

Putin praised Russia's increasingly close ties with China as he met with Xi at the economic forum in Vladivostok yesterday.

Xi for his part said the two countries' "friendship is getting stronger all the time."

The military exercises come at a time of escalating tensions between Moscow and the West over accusations of Russian interference in western affairs and conflicts in Ukraine and Syria. The Russian army has compared the show of force to the USSR's 1981 war games. But Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said these exercises are even larger.



# Kim seeks 2nd meet with Trump

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump has received a "very positive" letter from North Korean leader Kim Jong Un seeking a follow-up meeting after their historic summit in Singapore, the White House said.

"It was a very warm, very positive letter," White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said, adding that the message showed Pyongyang's "continued commitment to focus on denuclearization" on the Korean Peninsula.

"The primary purpose of the letter was to schedule another meeting with the president, which we are open to and are already in the process of coordinating," she said Monday at the first White House press briefing in nearly three weeks.

Sanders added that the letter was "further evidence of progress" in Washington's relationship with Pyongyang.

Trump and Kim held a historic summit in Singapore in June that raised prospects of a breakthrough on curtailing North Korea's nuclear program.

South Korea's dovish President Moon Jae-in, who brokered the June meeting, vowed to continue playing the role of a mediator to facilitate dialogue between Trump and Kim.

"The complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula is an issue that should fundamentally be resolved between the US and North Korea through negotiation," Moon told a cabinet meeting on Tuesday.

# NEWSIN brief

## Pak ex-PM Sharif's wife dies in London

REUTERS, Islamabad

The cancer-stricken wife of Pakistan's former prime minister Nawaz Sharif died in London yesterday while her husband and daughter were in jail, officials said. Kulsoom Nawaz Sharif, 68, died after months in a coma. New Prime Minister Imran Khan issued a statement offering condolences and ordering the Pakistani High Commission in London to "provide the family all the necessary facilities and cooperation".

## Duterte alleges coup plot to oust him

REUTERS, Manila

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte yesterday revealed what he said was a plot to unseat him hatched by the opposition, Maoist rebels and a group of former soldiers who had mounted failed coups in the past. In a conversation with his lawyer, shown on national television, Duterte said he received the information by a third country he did not identify.

## Pakistan sentences 28 to death in a month

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's army chief has confirmed death sentences for 13 militants, authorities said Monday, bringing the total executions ordered by secret military courts over the past month to at least 28. Excluding China, rights group Amnesty International says Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Pakistan -- in that order -- carried out 84 percent of all executions in 2017.

# TRAGEDY IN INDIA

## Bus plunges into gorge killing 55

AGENCIES

An overcrowded bus plunged into a gorge in southern India yesterday, killing at least 55 people and injuring several more, in one of the worst such accidents this year, authorities said.

The bus, part of the state-run network in Telangana, was returning from a hilltop temple in the district of Jagtial, about 190 kms from Hyderabad, the state capital, a district official said.

"The driver lost control and the bus skidded off the road and fell into the valley," a top district official, G. Narendhar, told Reuters. "The majority of the passengers have suffered severe injuries."

Media cited brake failure as the possible reason for the tragedy, but Narendhar said that needed to be investigated, adding that the 94 people on board the bus, including its driver and conductor, had exceeded the legal limit of 52.

"More than half of those killed were women, and there were at least three children," said a local official.

"The bus accident ... is shocking beyond words," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on social network Twitter. "Anguished by the loss of lives."

An investigation has been ordered.

# Century's 'worst' crisis looming

## Says UN as more than 30,000 flee imminent attack on Idlib

AFP, Khan Shaykhun

Violence in northwest Syria has displaced more than 30,000 people this month alone, the United Nations said Monday, warning that a looming assault could create the century's "worst humanitarian catastrophe".

Idlib province and adjacent rural areas form the largest piece of territory still held by Syria's beleaguered rebels, worn down by a succession of government victories in recent months.

President Bashar al-Assad has now set his sights on Idlib, and his forces have stepped up bombardment of the densely populated province since the beginning of the month.

That has prompted an estimated 30,452 people to be displaced within Idlib and parts of adjacent Hama province between September 1 and 9, the UN's humanitarian coordination agency (OCHA) said Monday.

"We're deeply concerned about this recent escalation of violence, which has resulted in the displacement of over

30,000 in the area. That's something we're monitoring very closely," OCHA spokesman David Swanson told AFP.

Many made a dash for Syria's northern border with Turkey, with just under half seeking refuge in displacement camps and others living with local



families or renting apartments.

An AFP correspondent in Idlib has seen dozens of displaced families head towards the frontier in recent days to escape bombing elsewhere.

On Monday, on the main highway running across the province, men on motorbikes headed north with their children on foot, herding dozens of

sheep.

Abu Jassim said he and his family were fleeing the latest bombardment near the southern town of Khan Sheikhun, after already having been displaced several times within the province due to the war.

The UN has said as many as 800,000 people could be displaced by a regime assault on Idlib and surrounding areas.

Russia is due to brief the United Nations Security Council later yesterday about the results of the Tehran summit it held with Iran and Turkey on the fate of Syria's Idlib province.

Meanwhile, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday called on Russia and Iran to halt a looming "humanitarian disaster" in Idlib, saying Syrians there could not be left to the mercy of President Bashar al-Assad.

Erdogan has called for a ceasefire in the northwestern province of Idlib, the last rebel stronghold in Syria, as an assault by Syrian government forces is expected any day.

# 'Detect, delete, deport'

## Says BJP's general secretary on Assam citizens' list

NDTV ONLINE

BJP General Secretary Ram Madhav said on Monday people excluded from the final list of Assam-specific National Register of Citizens would be de-franchised and deported to their country, while Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal suggested that the National Register of Citizens (NRC) be implemented across India.

"The NRC will ensure the detection of all illegal immigrants. The next step will be delete - means deletion of names of illegal immigrants from voters list and deprive them from all government benefits. The next stage will be deportation," Madhav said, speaking at an event on the NRC.

He said the citizen's register is being updated as part of the 'Assam Accord' signed in 1985 under which the government had made a commitment to "detect, delete and deport" all illegal immigrants from the state. Chief Minister Sonowal said genuine citizens of India would get adequate opportunities to prove their citizenship and include

their names in the final list of the NRC.

"The NRC should be implemented in all states. This is a document which can protect all Indians. Those who will be excluded from the NRC in Assam can go to other states. So we will have to take strong step," he said at the seminar.

The update of the NRC, a Supreme Court-monitored exercise to identify genuine Indian nationals living in Assam, excluded more than 40 lakh people from the draft list published on July 30, triggering a political controversy.

Ram Madhav said no country in the world tolerates illegal immigrants but India has become a "dharamshala" (lodge) for illegal immigrants due to political considerations.

Assam, which faced influx of people from Bangladesh since the early 20th century, is the only state having an NRC, first prepared in 1951. The current exercise, started in 2005 under then Congress government, got a major push after the BJP came to power in the state with alleged illegal immigration from Bangladesh as a poll plank.



A New York State Court Sergeant looks down into the South Pool during observances yesterday held on the 17th anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terror attacks at the annual ceremony at the Ground Zero memorial site. President Donald Trump paid tribute to the "heroes" who fought back against hijackers on September 11, 2001, vowing America would never flinch in the face of evil and that he would do whatever it takes to keep the country safe.