

NEWSIN brief

British ministers' phone numbers leaked

Phone numbers and other personal details of senior ministers from Britain's Conservative party were made public by an app security flaw yesterday. Several top MPs reportedly received nuisance calls after their profiles were accessed on the official mobile application for the annual party conference, which kicks off this weekend.

Pyongyang gifts dogs to S Korea's Moon

South Korean President Moon Jae-in received a pair of North Korean indigenous hunting dogs from Pyongyang, his office said yesterday, the latest token of the rapidly blossoming friendship on the peninsula. Known for its loyalty and cleverness, the Pungsan breed is one of the National Treasures of North Korea.

Iraqi Kurds vote in parliamentary polls

Voting began yesterday across Iraq's Kurdistan for a new parliament in the autonomous region. Almost 3.1 million voters are eligible to cast ballots across three provinces in the northern region where 673 candidates from 29 political movements are vying for seats in the 111-member parliament.

Pak chopper violates Indian airspace

A Pakistani helicopter, likely to be a civil aircraft, was spotted flying in Indian airspace at Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch yesterday, following which the army tried to shoot it down, people with direct knowledge of the matter said. No large-calibre anti-aircraft weapon was used, sources said.



This aerial picture shows the remains of a ten-storey hotel in Palu in Indonesia's Central Sulawesi yesterday after it collapsed following a strong earthquake in the area. Inset, Family members carry the body of a relative to the compounds of a police hospital in Palu, Indonesia's Central Sulawesi. Story on page 1.



QUAKE, TSUNAMI IN INDONESIA

Air traffic controller hailed as hero

An Indonesian air traffic controller is being posthumously hailed as a hero for refusing to leave his post despite devastating earthquakes so that he could guide a passenger jet safely off the ground. Twenty-one-year-old Anthonius Gunawan Agung was on duty in the air traffic control tower at Palu's Mutiara SIS Al-Jufrie airport when a series of earthquakes struck the city in Sulawesi island on Friday. Officials say he refused to leave his post until he got an Batik Air plane off the ground, while his colleagues who were not handling aircraft departed. After the plane got off, Agung jumped from the top of the crumbling four-storey tower in a desperate bid to escape, breaking his leg and suffering serious internal injuries. He was taken to a nearby hospital where he received basic treatment, but died before a helicopter could arrive to transport him to a better-equipped facility.

Repatriation should start

Singapore tells Myanmar about Rohingya refugees stuck in Bangladesh

Singapore's Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan said Myanmar should start repatriating the Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh, and it must ensure that they return to a society where there is security, peace, justice and better prospects for everyone. "The next step has to be repatriation, since there was an agreement signed between Myanmar and Bangladesh, in fact, in November last year," The Strait Times quoted him as saying. "It is now September. At some point, in order to remain credible, you have to see some movement... on a voluntary basis; you need to see that they are able to move back in a dignified, safe manner. That's the next step and it's an important confidence-building step," Dr Balakrishnan told Singapore media in New York on Saturday. At an Asean meeting on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, the key point made to Myanmar was that "we stand ready to help", said Dr Balakrishnan.

ROHINGYA CRISIS

Leaders of US Foreign Affairs Committee call for immediate prosecution of top Myanmar military commanders for 'genocide'

government in July to collect evidence of serious international crimes committed in Myanmar. But he urged focus on the humanitarian crisis. "Right now, there are a million people suffering. There's a humanitarian disaster... unacceptable in this day and age," said the minister. "These people need help and we

have to make sure humanitarian assistance reaches them. And we're also grateful to Bangladesh for hosting them in the interim." Meanwhile, leaders of the US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee have called for immediate prosecution of top military commanders of Myanmar in a credible and competent international court for their complicity in crimes against humanity that have all the hallmarks of genocide. US Representatives Steve Chabot, senior member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Eliot L Engel and Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Edward R Royce also called for the release of the two Reuters journalists sentenced unjustly, reports our diplomatic correspondent. "This legislation calls for the release of the Reuters journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, who were unjustly sentenced earlier this month, and states the House's position that the atrocities committed by the Burmese military against the Rohingya were genocide," they said in a statement on Friday.

Leave Syria immediately

Damascus calls on US, French, Turkish forces at UN

Syria's foreign minister on Saturday denounced US, French and Turkish forces operating in his country as "occupying forces" and demanded that they leave immediately. Addressing the UN General Assembly, Foreign Minister Walid al-Moualeem also called on Syrian refugees to come home, even though the country's war is now in its eighth year. Moualeem, who also serves as deputy prime minister, said the foreign forces were on Syrian soil illegally, under the pretext of fighting terrorism, and "will be dealt with accordingly." "They must withdraw immediately and without any conditions," he told the assembly. Moualeem insisted that the "war on terror is almost over" in Syria, where more than 360,000 people have died since 2011, with millions more uprooted from their homes. He said Damascus would continue "fighting this sacred battle until we purge all Syrian territories" of both terror groups and "any

illegal foreign presence." The United States has some 2,000 troops in Syria, mainly training and advising both Kurdish forces and Syrian Arabs opposed to President Bashar al-Assad. France has more than 1,000 troops on the ground in the war-ravaged country. On the issue of refugees, Moualeem said the conditions were fine for them to return, and he blamed "some western countries" for "spreading irrational fears" that prompted refugees to stay away. "We have called upon the international community and humanitarian organizations to facilitate these returns," he said. "They are politicizing what should be a purely humanitarian issue." Meanwhile, pro-Ankara rebels began withdrawing from areas in northern Syria yesterday, under a Russian-Turkish deal to avert a massive assault on the country's last major opposition stronghold. Reached earlier this month between regime ally Moscow and rebel backer Turkey, the accord provides for a buffer zone around the northern region of Idlib.

Syria ready for return of refugees: FM

Pro-Turkey rebels begin withdrawal from Idlib

'We fell in love, okay?'

Trump swoons over letters from North Korea's Kim

US President Donald Trump said he and North Korea's Kim Jong Un have fallen "in love" -- their bromance fuelled by "beautiful letters" he received from the leader of the nuclear-armed state. Trump on Saturday elevated his recent praise of Kim to new heights, at a West Virginia rally in support of local candidates for his Republican Party. "And then we fell in love -- OK? No really. He wrote me beautiful letters and they're great letters. We fell in love," Trump told the crowd. On Monday at the United Nations General Assembly Trump lauded the North Korean strongman -- who is accused by the UN and others of widespread human rights abuses -- as "terrific", one year after Trump eviscerated Kim from the same platform. Trump followed those comments by saying Wednesday he had received an "extraordinary letter" from Kim, and sounded

optimistic about prospects for a second summit between the two leaders "fairly quickly." Trump used his debut address at the UN General Assembly 12 months ago to threaten to "totally destroy" North Korea and belittle its leader as "rocket man," prompting Kim to respond by calling the president a "mentally deranged US dotard." Those were among a series of playground-type slurs the leaders of the two nuclear-armed states hurled at each other, setting the world on edge. Last August, after US media reported Pyongyang had successfully miniaturized a nuclear warhead to fit into a missile, Trump warned Pyongyang not to threaten the United States or it would face "fire and fury like the world has never seen." Kim had earlier compared comments by Trump to the bark of a "rabid dog," and Trump derided Kim as a "sick puppy" -- before the apparent outbreak of puppy love.



A woman walks against the strong winds after Typhoon Trami hit the city of Kagoshima on Kyushu island yesterday. Inset, A ship washed ashore in Yonabaru, on the southern island of Okinawa. The powerful typhoon pounded Japan's mainland yesterday after injuring dozens on outlying islands, bringing transport grinding to a halt and triggering warnings of fierce winds, torrential rain, landslides and floods.



EMBASSY IN JERUSALEM

Palestinians sue US at UN court

Palestinian foreign minister Riyad al-Maliki said Saturday the Palestinians have petitioned the UN's top court, alleging that the US inauguration of an embassy in Jerusalem was illegal. The Palestinians have filed a lawsuit at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) "for violating international law by moving its embassy in Israel to the occupied city of Jerusalem", he said, quoted by the official Palestinian news agency WAFA. In December, US President Donald Trump recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, despite Palestinian claims on part of the city and breaking with longstanding US policy. Palestinians have since refused all contact with the Trump administration. The US embassy was transferred from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem on May 14, a day marked by mass protest in the Gaza Strip, where about 60 Palestinian protesters were killed by Israeli fire in border clashes. Israel occupied east Jerusalem along with the West Bank in the 1967 Six-Day War and later declared the entire city its united capital. Palestinians claim the predominantly Arab eastern area as the capital of a future Palestinian state. UN resolutions call on countries to refrain from moving their embassies to the city until its status is resolved in an Israeli-Palestinian deal. An official of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) said it was the first time Palestinians had petitioned the court against the United States. In November 2012, the UN General Assembly recognised the Palestinian Authority as a "non-member observer state".

'Let's come together'

UK PM calls on her party to unite behind her plan to leave EU

Prime Minister Theresa May yesterday called on her party to unite behind her plan to leave the European Union, making a direct appeal to critics by saying their desire for a free trade deal was at the heart of her own Brexit proposals. At the start of what is set to be one of the Conservative Party's stormiest annual conferences, May's plans were once again attacked by two former ministers, with former foreign secretary, Boris Johnson, calling them "deranged". Just six months before Britain is due to leave the EU in the country's biggest shift in foreign and trade policy in more than 40 years, the debate over how to leave the bloc is still raging in the centre-right Conservative Party, and even in government. May's already fragile leadership was put under further pressure this month when the EU rejected parts of the so-called Chequers plan. But she put a positive spin on those talks, saying she was ready to consider to the EU's concerns. "My message to my party is let's come together and get the best deal for Britain," May told the BBC in the central English city of Birmingham.

"At the heart of the Chequers plan is a free trade deal, a free trade area and frictionless trade... Chequers at the moment is the only plan on the table that delivers on the Brexit vote... and also delivers for the people of Northern Ireland." May has shown little sign of shifting away from her Chequers plan, named after her country residence where she hashed out an agreement on Brexit with her ministers in July, despite growing criticism that her proposals offer the worst of all worlds. Johnson, who quit May's cabinet after Chequers was agreed, called her plans "deranged" and attacked the prime minister for not believing in Brexit. He, and the former Brexit minister David Davis, are pushing for a Canada-style free trade deal with the EU - a proposal May says will split Northern Ireland from mainland Britain by making the British province adhere to different customs rules. "Unlike the prime minister I fought for this, I believe in it, I think it's the right thing for our country and I think that what is happening now is, alas, not what people were promised in 2016," Johnson, the bookmakers' favourite to succeed May, told the Sunday Times newspaper.

BREXIT ROW

Ex-foreign secretary Boris Johnson calls her plans 'deranged'

Ex-minister Davis calls them 'just wrong'



Maldives court frees ex-leader Gayoom on bail

A maldivian court Sunday granted bail to jailed former president Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, the country's longest-serving leader, a week after his estranged half-brother was defeated at a presidential election. Gayoom, 80, and his legislator son Faris Maumoon, were released by the High Court in Male after they mounted fresh appeals against their controversial convictions. President-elect Ibrahim Mohamed Solih had urged incumbent Abdulla Yameen to free all political prisoners in the tourist paradise atoll nation after his shock victory at the September 23 election with the backing of all opposition parties, including Gayoom's party.

What's in a name? Macedonia votes for new name

Macedonians went to the polls yesterday to vote on whether to re-name their country North Macedonia in a bid to settle a long-running row with Greece and unlock its path to Nato+ and EU membership. Macedonia has struggled for recognition of its name since its birth in 1991 when the landlocked country declared independence from Yugoslavia. Athens protested immediately, accusing Skopje of stealing the name of its own northern province also called Macedonia. The dispute stretches back nearly three decades, with both countries claiming links to Alexander the Great's ancient empire of Macedon, which spanned the territories. A grandiose "antiquisation" project under Macedonia's former government that plastered Skopje with neo-classical facades and statues of Alexander the Great added fuel to the fire. But in June Macedonia's new premier Zoran Zaev and his Greek counterpart Alexis Tsipras reached a landmark compromise under which Greece would drop its objections to Macedonia joining the EU and Nato in return for the name change. Polls opened at 7am (0500 GMT) and are to close at 7pm in the referendum on whether to accept or reject the deal. The referendum is not binding, but a 'yes' majority would give parliament a political mandate to change the constitution. If the deal is backed in the referendum and is ratified by two-thirds of MPs, the Greek parliament will be called on to give the final stamp of approval.