

# 'Ricin-laced mail' sent to Trump

AFP, Washington

Mail addressed to President Donald Trump and the Pentagon was suspected of containing the deadly poison ricin, officials said Tuesday.

The US Secret Service said it had obtained a "suspicious envelope" addressed to Trump on Monday, the same day at least two suspicious packages were intercepted at a screening center for Pentagon mail, according to a Defense Department spokesman.

"The envelope was not received at the White House, nor did it ever enter the White House," the Secret Service said.

"We can confirm that we are working jointly with our law enforcement partners to fully investigate this matter."

Chris Sherwood, a Pentagon spokesman, said authorities at its screening site "recognized some suspicious packages," noting they were "suspected to be ricin."

He stressed that authorities were still waiting for confirmation that the packages contained ricin. Pentagon police referred the matter to the FBI for investigation.

A defense official told AFP the packages were addressed to Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Navy chief Admiral John Richardson.

While located on the Pentagon campus, the mail facility is not within the main building itself for security reasons.

Highly toxic, ricin can cause nausea, vomiting, internal bleeding and difficulty breathing, leading to death from organ failure or the collapse of the circulatory system.



(From left, clockwise) A passenger ferry rests beside houses that left in Wani, Central Sulawesi, after a tsunami hit the coastal region caused by a 7.5 earthquake; villagers carry their belonging as they walk through ruins of houses of quake-hit Jono Oge village in Sigi, Sulawesi island; and a mother and her son, both injured, wait to be airlifted out by a military plane at Mutiara Sis Al Jufri Airport in Palu, Central Sulawesi. Pictures were taken yesterday.



PHOTO: REUTERS, AFP

# Ease some Iran sanctions

UN court orders US to lift punitive measures on 'humanitarian' goods

AFP, The Hague

The UN's top court yesterday ordered the United States to lift sanctions on humanitarian goods for Iran in a stunning rebuke to US President Donald Trump.

Tehran hailed its "victory" after the International Court of Justice ruled that sanctions reimposed after Trump pulled out of a nuclear deal put Iranian lives at risk.

The US said the case was "meritless" and only involved a few

US slams ICJ ruling as 'meritless', terminates 1955 'Treaty of Amity' with Iran

Trump set to tighten sanctions further in November

France accuses Iran over bomb plot near Paris

sanctions, although the decision is still likely to rile Trump.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said US is terminating 1955 'Treaty of Amity' with Iran and called the ICJ's ruling a "defeat for Iran".

It remains unclear whether the judgment will be anything more than symbolic because both Washington and Tehran have ignored ICJ decisions in the past.

The judges at the court in The Hague ruled unanimously that the sanctions on some goods breached the "Treaty of Amity".

They said Washington "shall remove by means of its choosing any impediments arising from the measures announced on 8 May to the free exportation to Iran of medicines and medical devices, food and agricultural commodities" as well as airplane parts and services, chief judge Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf said.

The court said sanctions on goods "required for humanitarian needs... may have a serious detrimental impact on the health and lives of individuals on the territory of Iran."

US sanctions also had the "potential to endanger civil aviation safety in Iran."

Trump slapped a first round of sanctions on Iran in August after pulling out in May from the 2015 international deal aimed at curbing Tehran's nuclear ambitions, to the dismay of his European allies. A second round of punitive measures is due in November.

Iran dragged the US to the ICJ in July, and during four days of hearings in late August, its lawyers accused Washington of "strangling" its economy.

Wednesday's ruling is in fact a decision on so-called provisional measures ahead of a final decision on the matter, which may take several more years, experts said.

Decisions by the Hague-based ICJ, which rules on disputes between United Nations members, are binding but it has no mechanism through which it can enforce its decisions.

In 1986 Washington disregarded the court's finding that it had violated

international law by supporting the pro-US Contra rebels in Nicaragua. Iran in turn ignored the ICJ's ruling in 1980 to release hostages taken during the Iran hostage crisis.

Despite many bitter incidents on both sides since the 1979 revolution, the 'Treaty of Amity' remained intact.

The treaty consists of an introduction and twenty-three articles. Clause 2 of Article XXI of the treaty establishes the ICJ's role: "Any dispute between the High Contracting Parties as to the interpretation or application of the present Treaty, not satisfactorily adjusted by diplomacy, shall be submitted to the International Court of Justice, unless the High Contracting Parties agree to settlement by some other pacific means."

Meanwhile, US on Tuesday issued a fresh warning after Paris accused Tehran's intelligence agency over a bomb plot.

France said Tuesday it was freezing assets of two suspected Iranian intelligence operatives over an alleged plot to bomb a rally in Paris three months ago.

## INDONESIA QUAKE, TSUNAMI

# Hope fades for survivors

Toll tops 1,400; people 'scavenging' for food amid raid, looting; volcano eruption rocks Sulawesi

AGENCIES

The death toll in Indonesia's twin quake-tsunami disaster passed 1,400 yesterday, with time running out to rescue survivors and the UN warning of "vast" unmet needs that have fuelled looting.

Indonesian soldiers have been ordered to fire on those raiding stores on the quake and tsunami-struck island of Sulawesi, a colonel told AFP, after desperate survivors emptied shops of food and water.

Meanwhile the authorities have set a tentative deadline of Friday to find anyone still trapped under rubble, at which point -- a week after this devastating double disaster -- the chances of finding survivors will dwindle to almost zero.

Military spokesman M Thohir said the number of confirmed dead has risen to 1,411, while the disaster agency said 519 bodies have already been buried.

At a minimum, 150 people are unaccounted for beneath the rubble, officials said.

According to the UN's humanitarian office almost 200,000 people need urgent help, among them tens of thousands of children, with an estimated 66,000 homes destroyed or damaged by the 7.5-magnitude quake and the tsunami it spawned.

In yet another reminder of Indonesia's vulnerability to natural disasters, the Soputan Volcano in Sulawesi erupted yesterday, spewing volcanic ash up to 4,000 metres above the crater.

In Geneva, UN expressed frustration at the slow pace of the disaster response. WHO has estimated that across Donggala, some 310,000 people have been affected by the disaster.

Survivors are battling thirst and hunger, with food and clean water in short supply, and local hospitals are overwhelmed by the number of injured.

Ahmad Derajat, said survivors were scavenging for food in fields and orchards. Six of the Indonesian social affairs ministry's trucks laden with supplies were reportedly looted enroute to Palu.

UN voices frustration over slow response

200,000 people need urgent help

# Saudi king wouldn't last two weeks without US backing

Says Trump, urges Riyadh to pay more for its defences

REUTERS, Southaven

President Donald Trump made an undiplomatic remark about close ally Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, saying he warned Saudi Arabia's King Salman he would not last in power "for two weeks" without the backing of the US military.

"We protect Saudi Arabia. Would you say they're rich. And I love the King, King Salman. But I said 'King we're protecting you, you might not be there for two weeks without us - you have to pay for your military,'" Trump said to cheers at a rally in Southaven, Mississippi.

Trump did not say when he made those remarks to the Saudi monarch.

Despite the harsh words, the Trump administration has had a close relationship with Saudi Arabia, which it views as a bulwark against Iran's ambitions in the region.

Trump made Saudi Arabia his first stop on his maiden international trip as president last year.

Saudi Arabia is the world's top oil exporter and the de facto leader of OPEC, which has been criticized by Trump for high oil prices.

Speaking at the United Nations General Assembly in New York last month, Trump said OPEC members were "as usual ripping off the rest of the world."

"We defend many of these nations for nothing, and then they take advantage of us by giving us high oil prices.

Not good. We want them to stop raising prices, we want them to start lowering prices," Trump said.

He has also pressed other US allies, such as Japan, South Korea and Germany, to take more of the financial burden of their defence.



Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May dances a few steps as she takes the stage to give her keynote address on the fourth and final day of the Conservative Party Conference 2018 at the International Convention Centre in Birmingham, central England, yesterday. May appealed for her bickering party to unite at the "toughest phase" of negotiations aimed at averting economic chaos once Britain leaves the European Union in six months.

PHOTO: AFP

## NEWSIN brief

### Pompeo to meet Kim in fresh visit

AFP, Washington

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will pay a fresh visit to North Korea on Sunday and meet leader Kim Jong Un, the State Department said. The rare advance announcement came hours after North Korea raised the stakes in negotiations, saying it would not give up its nuclear weapons in exchange for a peace treaty.

### French interior minister quits

AFP, Paris

French President Emmanuel Macron was left scrambling to fill another key cabinet post yesterday after Interior Minister Gerard Collomb resigned, the third minister to step down in two months. Prime Minister Edouard Philippe took temporary control of the interior ministry while Macron began searching for a replacement for 71-year-old Collomb, who was one of the first politicians to back him for president.



### Missing China superstar to pay \$130m in taxes

AFP, Beijing

Chinese superstar Fan Bingbing took to social media for the first time in months yesterday to apologise to fans and the Communist Party for tax evasion, shortly after news broke that authorities had ordered her to pay nearly \$130 million in back taxes and fines. The 36-year-old actress, model and producer disappeared from the public eye in May.

## PURCHASE PLAN OF RUSSIAN S-400 AIR DEFENCE SYSTEM

# US warns India of sanctions

REUTERS, New Delhi/washington

The United States has warned India against a planned purchase of S-400 surface-to-air missiles from Russia when President Vladimir Putin's visits New Delhi this week, saying such an acquisition would attract sanctions under US law.

India's military wants the missile batteries, both as a deterrent against China and to gain an edge over traditional rival, Pakistan, as they are able to track and shoot down combat aircraft, even stealth planes, at unprecedented ranges.

India and Russia will sign the missile deal, estimated at more than \$5 billion, during Putin's visit for annual summit talks with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi beginning today, a Kremlin aide said.

But the United States has warned countries trading with Russia's defence and intelligence sectors they would face automatic sanctions under a sweeping legislation called Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) that President Donald Trump signed into law last August.

The law is designed to punish Putin for the 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine, involvement in the Syrian

civil war and meddling in the 2016 US presidential election.

"We urge all of our allies and partners to forgo transactions with Russia that would trigger sanctions under the CAATSA," a US State Department representative said.

"The administration has indicated that a focus area for the implementation of CAATSA Section 231 is new or qualitative upgrades in capability -- including the S-400 air and missile defense system."

Last month, the United States imposed sanctions on China's military for its purchase of combat fighters as well as the S-400 missile system it bought from Russia this year.

The United States is also concerned about Nato ally Turkey's decision to buy the Russian missile system, seeing it as incompatible with the alliance systems.

Modi's government, caught in the US-Russia crossfire, hopes the Trump administration will give it a pass on the proposed arms transfer from Russia, officials in New Delhi said.

Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told reporters India was closing in on the deal to buy the air defence system from Russia, with which it has long-standing military ties.



## Ex-Malaysian first lady arrested

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Rosmah Mansor, the flamboyant wife of Malaysia's former prime minister, was arrested yesterday by the country's anti-graft agency over a multi-billion-dollar scandal that helped to bring down the last government.

Investigations into the alleged looting of state fund 1MDB by an audacious international fraud ring have already seen her husband Najib Razak hit with more than two dozen charges including corruption and money laundering.

The MACC in a statement said it arrested Rosmah, 66, in relation to money laundering investigations after getting approval from state prosecutors.

## Ranjan Gogoi takes charge as Indian CJ

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Justice Ranjan Gogoi was yesterday sworn in as the 46th Chief Justice of India.

President Ram Nath Kovind administered the oath to 63-year-old Justice Gogoi at a brief ceremony in Rashtrapati Bhavan's Darbar Hall.

Justice Gogoi, who succeeds Justice Dipak Misra in the post of the Chief Justice of India, will have a tenure of a little over 13 months and would retire on November 17, 2019.

Justice Gogoi faces the task of monitoring the smooth and effective preparation of the National Register for Citizens (NRC) in Assam whose draft final list published on July 30 left out 40.7 lakh people.

One key decision the apex court bench headed by Justice Gogoi would have to take is whether ration cards could be treated as a proof of Indian citizenship for those excluded from the draft NRC aimed at identifying "illegal" immigrants from Bangladesh.

Another key and sensitive case he is expected to deal with is the title suit of the disputed land at the Babri Masjid-Ram Janambhoomi site in Ayodhya.

Justice Gogoi will also head a bench that will take a call on the issue of appointment of an anti-corruption ombudsman on which the government has made very slow progress.