

# US pulls out of key int'l accord

The United States said Wednesday it was quitting an international accord related to the top UN court after the Palestinians challenged the US move of its Israel embassy to Jerusalem. It was the latest attack on the international justice system by the administration of President Donald Trump, who last month at the United Nations virulently rejected the authority of the International Criminal Court. Trump's national security adviser, John Bolton, said the United States was pulling out of a protocol concerning the separate International Court of Justice in The Hague, which considers disputes between nations. Bolton said the United States was leaving the 1961 Optional Protocol and Dispute Resolution to the Vienna Convention, which establishes the International Court of Justice as the "compulsory jurisdiction" for disputes unless nations decide to settle them elsewhere. The United States will still remain part of the underlying convention that established the International Court of Justice and "we expect all other parties to abide by their international obligations" on it, Bolton said. It was the second withdrawal in one day announced by the Trump administration. Earlier Wednesday, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the United States was terminating a 1955 friendship treaty with Iran reached under its pro-Western shah. Iran cited the treaty as it sought an end to renewed US sanctions imposed by Trump, who has left an accord on curbing the clerical regime's nuclear program. The International Court of Justice ruled that the United States was required to allow shipments of humanitarian goods such as medicine, an exemption that Washington insists it has already allowed.



## Trump shrugs off NYT report on tax fraud

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday shrugged off a New York Times investigation that concluded he made his fortune with the help of more than \$400 million from his parents, partly through tax schemes, as a boring, rehashed "hit piece." Trump has often boasted that he built a multi-billion dollar real estate empire from a \$1 million loan from his father, Fred. But the Times reviewed more than 100,000 documents including confidential tax returns and financial records that it said showed he actually received at least \$413 million in today's money, in part through schemes to avoid taxes. The Times story said that from the time Trump was a toddler, his father funneled millions of dollars to his four children through a sham corporation to avoid gift taxes. The Times said the records also indicate that Trump helped his father take millions more in improper tax deductions. And he helped devise a scheme that undervalued his parents' real estate holdings by hundreds of millions of dollars, sharply reducing taxes on those properties when they were transferred to their children, according to the paper. The New York State Department of Taxation and Finance announced it was "reviewing the allegations in the NYT article and is vigorously pursuing all appropriate avenues of investigation."

# UK, Australia blame Russia

Netherland says it 'thwarted' Russian cyber attack on OPCW

Britain and Australia yesterday blamed Russia's military intelligence service for some of the biggest cyber attacks of recent years -- including one on the Democratic National Committee during the 2016 US presidential campaign. They said the GRU military intelligence service could have only been conducting operations of such scale on Kremlin orders. Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly and angrily rejected similar charges. But Britain's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and the Australian government pointed the blame directly at alleged GRU front operations such as Fancy Bear and APT 28. The announcement could further strain ties between Russia and Britain. "This is not the actions of a great power, this is the actions of a pariah power," British Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said during a visit to Brussels. The Australian government added

that Russia's actions violated its international commitments to "responsible state behaviour" in cyberspace. "Cyberspace is not the Wild West," Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Foreign Minister Marise Payne said in a joint statement. Meanwhile Dutch intelligence thwarted a Russian cyber attack targeting the global chemical weapons watchdog in April and expelled four Russian agents, the government said Thursday. The Russians set up a car full of

electronic equipment in the car park of a hotel next to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague in a bid to hack into its computer system, it said. The Netherlands publicly identified the alleged Russian agents and said the operation was carried out by Russia's GRU military intelligence agency, Dutch officials said. At the time of the attack the OPCW was probing the nerve agent poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Salisbury, England. Dutch officials said it was not clear if the cyber operation was linked to that. Amid the accusation, OPCW yesterday said it has suffered "increased cyber-related activities" since the start of the year. "The OPCW takes very seriously the security of its information systems and networks," it said. "Since early 2018, the organisation has observed increased cyber-related activities," the OPCW added in a statement issued at its headquarters in The Hague.



An aerial view taken yesterday show the destruction caused by an earthquake in the Balaroa neighbourhood in Palu, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## INDONESIA QUAKE AND TSUNAMI

# Thousands fate still unknown

Toll hits 1,424; aid effort ramps up amid concern for isolated regions

REUTERS, Palu

Electricity was restored and shops began reopening in Indonesia's quake and tsunami stricken city of Palu yesterday, but the fate of many thousands of people in outlying districts remained unknown nearly a week after the disaster struck. The small city of 370,000 people has been the focus of the aid effort launched after last Friday's 7.5 magnitude earthquake and tsunami on the west coast of Sulawesi island. International help for survivors has gathered pace, but communities in more remote areas have been cut off by broken roads, landslides and crippled communications, leaving people increasingly desperate for basic needs as aid has only just begun to trickle through. By yesterday, the official death toll stood at 1,424, but it is widely

expected to rise as most of the dead accounted for have been from Palu, while figures for remote areas are trickling in or remain unknown. "There are so many challenges with this disaster, it's never been so bad," said Frida Sinta, an aid volunteer trying to get basic food and other supplies out to fellow residents of Palu. The city, 1,500 km (930 miles) northeast of Indonesia's capital, Jakarta, has teetered close to chaos this week, with outbreaks of looting, but a recovery was evident as some shops and banks reopened and a major mobile phone network was back in operation. Orderly queues formed at petrol stations after the arrival of fuel shipments and late in the day, traffic lights and televisions flickered back to life as the power came back on. The badly affected areas in the disaster zone include some 1.4 mil-

lion people. Rescue workers are pushing into outlying districts, where residents have said they have been scavenging for coconuts, bananas and cassava. There has been scant information about conditions of many areas surrounding Palu. While the power is back in Palu, it will take much longer for people to pick up the pieces of their lives. International aid is beginning to arrive, including supplies from Britain and Australia, after the government overcame a traditional reluctance to accept help from abroad. In 2004, a quake off Sumatra island triggered a tsunami across the Indian Ocean that killed 226,000 people in 13 countries, including more than 120,000 in Indonesia. But safety measures implemented after that disaster, including tsunami warning systems, failed on Friday.

## CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

# Peru top court annuls ex-leader's pardon

AFP, Lima

Supreme Court of Peru on Wednesday annulled ex-president Alberto Fujimori's pardon for crimes against humanity and ordered the 80-year-old's immediate arrest, officials said. He was pardoned last December on humanitarian grounds, but critics said the move was in exchange for Fujimori's son helping then-president Pedro Pablo Kuczynski avoid impeachment. Fujimori was 12 years into a 25-year jail sentence handed down for ordering two massacres by death squads between 1991 and 1992. "This decision is inhuman, it's unjust," said his daughter Keiko, leader of the main opposition Popular Force party and seen by many as the heir to Fujimori's political dynasty. One of Fujimori's lawyers, Miguel Perez, said on Chile's RPP radio the decision was subject to appeal. The charge of crimes against humanity stemmed in part from the killings or disappearances of scores of civilians -- allegedly by a shadowy squad of military officers -- during Peru's bloody struggle against Maoist rebels. The ex-ruler is revered and despised in equal measure in Peru. Admirers laud him for dragging the country's economy into the modern era and defeating the Shining Path guerrilla movement.



## Khamenei vows 'never' to allow Iran to bow

AFP, Tehran

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei yesterday vowed "never" to allow the Islamic republic to bow to the demands of its enemies, at a time of increased tensions between Tehran and Washington. "To entertain the idea, as desired by the enemy, that the only solution is to hand ourselves over to the enemy, is the worst act of treason towards the Iranian nation, and that will not happen," Khamenei said in an address to tens of thousands of members of the Basij, an Islamic volunteer militia, broadcast live on state television. "With God's help, so long as I am alive and retain my capacities and with your help, I will never allow such a thing to happen," he said in the speech at Tehran's Azadi stadium. For Iran's clerical establishment, enemy refers firstly to the United States which is dubbed the "Great Satan" and with which relations have been severed since the aftermath of its 1979 Islamic revolution. Khamenei played down the impact of economic sanctions reimposed on Iran by the United States in August after Washington pulled out of the 2015 nuclear accord between Tehran and world powers. On Wednesday, Tehran hailed its "victory" after the International Court of Justice ruled that sanctions reimposed after President Donald Trump pulled out of a nuclear deal put Iranian lives at risk. But the United States insisted it was already allowing humanitarian exemptions to sanctions and, accusing Iran of seeking a "propaganda" win, announced it was terminating a treaty on which the case was based.

## US SUPREME COURT NOMINEE SELECTION FIASCO

# Senators get FBI report on Kavanaugh; vote today

REUTERS, Washington

The White House rebuffed Democratic criticism over its handling of an FBI report on Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh, saying yesterday it had not micromanaged the agency or edited the report on allegations of sexual misconduct. President Donald Trump, pushing to get his nominee to the court confirmed, said in a Twitter post early yesterday that the allegations against Kavanaugh were "totally uncorroborated." The White House sent the FBI report to the US Senate Judiciary Committee early yesterday. The Senate Judiciary Committee said lawmakers will review the report before a procedural vote advancing the nomination today. Some Democrats said the FBI had not interviewed enough people, reflecting the partisan struggle that has developed around

the report, and more broadly, over Kavanaugh's confirmation. Trump and the Senate Republican leadership are battling to corral enough support for a majority vote for Kavanaugh, a federal appeals court judge who would become a deciding conservative voice on the country's highest court, while Democrats are in near unanimity against him. Christine Blasey Ford, a college professor from California, has accused Kavanaugh of assaulting her in 1982 when they were high school students. Her attorneys said she was not contacted by the FBI for the latest report. Three Republicans who could be key to whether Kavanaugh is confirmed given the narrow Republican majority in the chamber - Senators Jeff Flake, Susan Collins and Lisa Murkowski - have criticised Trump for mocking Ford at a political rally on Tuesday.

