

NEWSIN brief

Syrian rebels complete Idlib arms pullout

Syrian rebels have completed the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the frontline of the last opposition-held province of Idlib, Turkish state media reported yesterday. News agency Anadolu said the withdrawal was concluded under a deal reached last month between Syrian regime ally Moscow and rebel backer Ankara.

52 suspected jihadists killed in Sinai: Egypt

Egyptian security forces pressing a campaign against Islamist militants have killed 52 suspected jihadists in the Sinai Peninsula in operations in which three soldiers also died, the army said yesterday. The military launched a sweeping operation in February focused on the Sinai in eastern Egypt aimed at wiping out jihadists.

British troops suffer higher rates of PTSD

Members of the British armed forces are suffering increased rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), principally among those who served in Afghanistan and Iraq, new research revealed yesterday. Rates of probable PTSD among current and former serving military personnel reached six percent in 2014/16, up from four percent in 2004/2006, the King's College London study said.

Russian trust in Putin plunges to 39 percent

Trust in President Vladimir Putin has plunged to 39 percent among ordinary Russians, according to an opinion poll published yesterday amid popular discontent over pension reforms. It is the lowest rating for Putin since 2014, before he enjoyed a surge in popularity over the annexation of Crimea from Ukraine.



Migrants, intercepted off the coast in the Mediterranean Sea, disembark a rescue boat after arriving at the port of Malaga, southern Spain, early yesterday. Inset, a member of Spanish Red Cross carries a migrant child. A total of 41,594 irregular migrants entered Spain between January 1 and September 30, according to the interior ministry.

TREASON CASE

Two ex-Pak PMs, journo face court

Two former prime ministers of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif and Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, facing allegations of treason yesterday appeared before a court along with a prominent journalist in a hearing to determine whether the case should go to trial. The hearing was adjourned until October 22.

The case related to an interview Sharif gave to the English daily Dawn in which he was quoted as suggesting the Pakistani state played a role in the militant attack on the Indian city of Mumbai that killed 166 people in 2008. India has repeatedly accused Pakistan intelligence agency of helping the Lashkar-e-Taiba militant group carry out the attack. Pakistan has denied any state involvement but its inaction against LeT leaders remains a major stumbling block to improving relations between the two nuclear-armed neighbours. Dawn assistant editor Cyril Almeida, who conducted the interview, had faced arrest if he failed to appear before the court and had been barred from leaving the country. Both the arrest orders and travel restrictions were removed yesterday. "The court removed his name from the (exit control list), withdrew his arrest warrant and directed us to submit a reply on Oct. 22," Almeida's lawyer Ahmad Rauf told Reuters, while surrounded by activists protesting threats to media freedom in Pakistan. Sharif was removed from office last year by the Supreme Court over corruption allegation and was sentenced earlier this year to 10 years in prison.

Brazil heads to runoff

Far-right firebrand Bolsonaro to face leftist Haddad in second round after missing required 50pc of votes

Brasilia, chanting "Fraud!" That anger reflected the uncertain outlook for the second round. Surveys suggest Bolsonaro will have the edge, but that Haddad will draw nearly even with him after picking up substantial support from the defeated candidates. "We expected to win in the first round," one Bolsonaro voter, 77-year-old retiree Lourdes Azevedo, said bitterly in Rio de Janeiro. "Now things are more difficult: the second round is a risk." Haddad, addressing his own supporters, called the looming runoff "a golden opportunity," and challenged Bolsonaro to a debate. He replaced popular former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in the race after Lula, imprisoned for corruption, was disqualified. Despite his complaints, Bolsonaro did not formally contest Sunday's result, saying his voters "remain mobilized" for the second round.

PRESIDENTIAL RACE



Bolsonaro Haddad

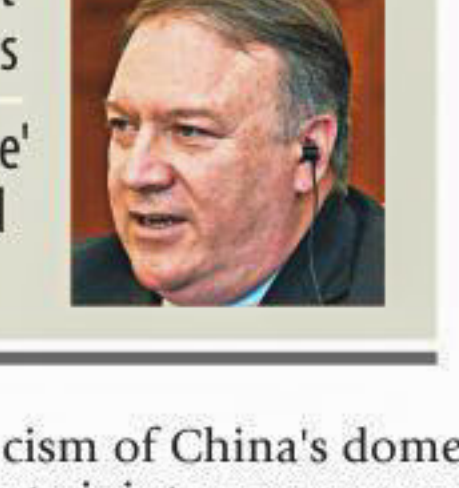
North to allow nuke checks

Says Pompeo; China tells US to stop criticising Beijing's policies

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said yesterday North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was ready to allow international inspectors into the North's nuclear and missile testing sites, one of the main sticking points over an earlier denuclearisation pledge. Pompeo, who met Kim during a short trip to Pyongyang on Sunday, said the inspectors would visit a missile engine test facility and the Punggye-ri nuclear testing site as soon as the two sides agree on logistics. "There's a lot of logistics that will be required to execute that," Pompeo told a news briefing in Seoul before leaving for Beijing. The top US diplomat also said both sides were "pretty close" to agreement on the details of a second summit, which Kim proposed to US President Donald Trump in a letter last month. Trump and Kim held an historic first summit in Singapore in June. "Most importantly, both the leaders believe there's real progress that can be made, substantive progress that can be made at the next summit," Pompeo said. Stephen Biegun, new US nuclear envoy who was accompanying the secretary, said he offered on Sunday to meet his counterpart, Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui, "as soon as possible" and they were in discussion over specific dates and location.

N KOREA-US DIPLOMACY

Int'l inspectors to visit nuke, missile test sites
US, N Korea 'pretty close' to agreement on 2nd summit: Pompeo



Pompeo

UN REPORT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

KEY FINDINGS

The landmark UN report on limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius was released in South Korea yesterday after a week-long meeting of the 195-nation Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Here are key findings, grounded in some 6,000 peer-reviewed scientific studies:

'UNPRECEDENTED CHANGES'

Capping global warming at 1.5C above pre-industrial levels will require "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society," the IPCC said. Earth's average surface temperature has already gone up 1C -- enough to unleash a crescendo of deadly extreme weather -- and is on track to rise another two or three degrees absent a sharp and sustained reduction in carbon pollution. At current levels of greenhouse gas emissions, we could pass the 1.5C marker as early as 2030. To have at least a 50-50 chance of staying under 1.5C without overshooting the mark, the world must, by 2050, become "carbon neutral".

STEEP COST OF INACTION

The 30-page executive summary also details humanity's "carbon budget" -- the amount of CO2 we can emit and still stay under the 1.5C ceiling. For a two-thirds chance of success, that is about 420 billion tonnes, an allowance that would -- according to current trends -- be used up in a decade. The share of electricity generated by renewables -- mainly hydro, solar and wind -- would have to jump by mid-century from about 20 to 70 percent. The share of coal, meanwhile, would need to drop from 40 percent to low single digits. Limiting global warming to 1.5C will require investing about \$2.4 trillion (2.1 trillion euros) in the global energy system every year between 2016 and 2035.



Greenpeace activists display a big banner during an activity prior to a press conference of IPCC in Incheon, South Korea yesterday.

1.5C VS 2C

Two degrees Celsius was long considered the temperature guardrail for a climate-safe world, but a raft of recent research shows otherwise. "Climate impacts are exponentially more dramatic when we go from 1.5C to 2C," said Henri Weisman, a scientist at the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations, and a coordinating lead author of the IPCC report. Some tropical fisheries are likely to collapse somewhere between the 1.5C and 2C benchmark. Staple food crops will decline in yield and nutritional value by an extra 10 to 15 percent. Coral reefs will mostly perish. The rate of species loss will accelerate "substantially".

PATHWAYS

IPCC authors say the 1.5C goal is technically and economically feasible, but depends on political leadership to become reality. One pathway, for example, relies heavily on a deep reduction in energy demand, while another assumes major changes in consumption habits, such as eating less meat and abandoning cars with internal combustion engines. Two others depend on sucking massive amounts of CO2 out of the air, either through large-scale reforestation, use of biofuels, or direct carbon capture. SOURCE: AFP

Taliban urge Afghans to boycott polls

Reject peace talks

The Taliban yesterday directed Afghans to boycott upcoming parliamentary elections and demanded a complete withdrawal of foreign forces as the only solution to end the 17-year-old war as they ramped up attacks in strategic provinces. The statement from the hardline Islamic militant group coincided with the visit of top US envoy Zalmay Khalilzad, who has been appointed to lead peace efforts with the Taliban. Khalilzad met President Ashraf Ghani in Kabul to strategise ways to hold Afghan-led peace talks with the Taliban, whose 1996-2001 rule was ended by US-led troops. "Peace is a holy process, and the US government and people are united with the Afghan government and people in this process," Khalilzad was quoted by Ghani's office in a statement as saying. Khalilzad, an Afghan-born former US ambassador to Afghanistan and Iraq, joined the US State Department team in September. He is scheduled to visit Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Qatar this week as he seeks to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table. But the Taliban, who are fighting to expel foreign forces, topple the government and restore their version of hardline Islamic law, have repeatedly rejected offers to hold peace talks or support the polls. The October 20 vote, seen by international partners as a dry run for presidential elections next year, has been hampered by chaotic preparations, allegations of fraud and ever-present fears of militant violence.



Indonesian children hug a Winnie the Pooh character as they attend a trauma healing program at a shelter in Palu, Indonesia's Central Sulawesi yesterday, following the September 28 earthquake and tsunami. Nearly 2000 bodies have been recovered from Palu since the earthquake and tsunami struck the city, an official said.

QATAR MIGRANT WORKERS

Exit visa reform to be enforced by end of Oct

Qatar's decision to abolish its controversial exit visa system will come into force by the end of October, a leading global trade union official said yesterday. Sharan Burrow, head of the International Trade Union Confederation and once a prominent critic of the 2022 football World Cup host's labour practices, was speaking in Doha after meeting Qatar's prime minister and labour minister. "We've seen significant progress, first of all we have seen the end of the exit visa law and that will be now implemented by the end of October," she said. "Everybody's aware that this is a big shift and that it will actually take a period of time but formally it will be implemented by the end of the month."

Qatar announced in September it had approved legislation to scrap the visa system, which requires all foreign workers to obtain their employers' permission to leave the country. Until now, no date had been given for when it would come into force. Under the landmark labour law, only a maximum five percent of each company's workforce -- thought to be those in the most senior positions -- will still need permission to leave Qatar.

There are some two million foreign workers in Qatar. Scrapping the exit permit is the biggest announcement made so far since Qatar agreed last November to enter into a three-year agreement with the UN's International Labour Organization to oversee reform.

Pope blames devil

Asks Catholics to recite special prayer to try to beat him back

The devil is alive and well and working overtime to undermine the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Francis says. In fact, the pope is so convinced that Satan is to blame for the sexual abuse crisis and deep divisions racking the Church that he has asked Catholics around the world to recite a special prayer every day in October to try to beat him back. "(The Church must be) saved from the attacks of the malign one, the great accuser and at the same time be made ever more aware of its guilt, its mistakes, and abuses committed in the present and the past," Francis said in a message on September 29. Since he was elected in 2013, Francis has made clear that he believes the devil to be real. In a document in April on holiness in the modern world, Francis mentioned the devil more than a dozen times. "We should not think of the devil as a myth, a representation, a symbol, a figure of speech or an idea. This mistake would lead us to let down our guard, to grow careless and end up more vulnerable," he wrote in the document. The Church has recently been hit by one sexual abuse scandal after another, from Germany, to the United States, to Chile. At the same time, a deepening polarisation between conservatives and liberals in the Church has played out on social media. Francis' use of the term "the great accuser" to describe Satan hit a raw nerve with one of the pope's harshest conservative critics, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, the Vatican's former ambassador to Washington. In an 11-page statement published on August 26, Viganò launched an unprecedented broadside by a Church insider against the pope and a long list of Vatican and US Church officials. He accused Francis of knowing about sexual misconduct by a former US cardinal with male adult seminarians but not doing anything about it. Viganò, concluding that his former boss had singled him out as the devil in disguise, complained in his next statement that Francis "compared me to the great accuser, Satan, who sows scandal and division in the Church, though without ever uttering my name". On Sunday, a top Vatican official issued a scathing open letter accusing Viganò of mounting a "political frame job devoid of real foundation" and contesting his accusations against the pope point by point.

CHURCH SCANDALS

Pope Francis has made clear that he believes the devil to be real
Conservative critic says pope comparing him to Satan



Pope Francis