

NEWS IN
brief

Palestinian shot dead trying to stab Israeli

AFP, Jerusalem
A Palestinian was shot dead yesterday after trying to stab an Israeli soldier in the occupied West Bank, the army said. An Israeli military statement said the man who tried to attack the soldier near the Jewish settlement of Ariel was shot and killed. There were no immediate details on the alleged attacker's identity.

EU adopts new chem weapons sanctions

AFP, Luxembourg
The EU set up a new sanctions mechanism targeting those who use and develop chemical weapons yesterday, as part of a crackdown in the wake of the Skripal attack. The framework gives the EU power to impose restrictive measures on anyone identified as being involved in the development or deployment of chemical weapons.

Emergency pollution plan starts in Delhi

AFP, New Delhi
Delhi's biggest coal power plant was set to shut down yesterday as a new emergency plan to improve air quality in one of the world's most polluted cities came into force, Indian officials said. Under the new strategy, restrictions on construction sites and traffic will be imposed depending on the air quality in the megacity.

Hungary homeless ban to be enforced

AFP, Budapest
Rough sleeping in Hungary was banned yesterday after a homelessness law adopted by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's government and called "cruel" by critics comes into force. A constitutional amendment approved by the Budapest parliament on June 20 banned "habitual residence in a public space", beefing up a 2013 law that made it a fineable offence.



Rescue workers evacuate residents from a neighbourhood after flash floods hit Trebes, southwestern Aude district of France yesterday. Inset, cars are seen at a flood-damaged area in Villegailhenc. At least 13 people died as violent rainstorms turned rivers into raging torrents in southwestern France in the latest episode of wild weather in Europe.

PHOTO: REUTERS



TENSIONS IN KOREAN PENINSULA

North, S Korea agree to open roads, rail

REUTERS, Seoul
North and South Korea yesterday agreed to begin reconnecting rail and road links, another step in an improving relationship that has raised US concern about the possible undermining of its bid to press the North to give up its nuclear programme. The agreement on transport links came during talks in the border village of Panmunjom aimed at following up on the third summit this year between South Korea's President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, last month. "The South and North reached the agreement after sincerely discussing action plans to develop inter-Korean relations to a new, higher stage," said a joint statement released by the South's Unification Ministry. They agreed to hold ceremonies in late November or early December to inaugurate work on reconnecting the railways and roads that have been cut since the 1950-53 Korean War. The two sides will carry out joint field studies on the transport plans from late this month, according to the statement. They also agreed to discuss late this month a plan to pursue a bid to co-host the 2032 Olympic Games, and to explore in November ways to restart webcam reunions and video exchanges for families separated by the Korean War. Military officials from both sides are to meet "in the near future" to craft follow-on steps to a military pact struck at last month's summit. The accord includes the reinstatement of a joint military commission, the halting of military exercises, a no-fly zone near their border and the gradual removal of landmines and guard posts within the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ).

Brexit talks at impasse

EU intensifies preparations for no-deal plan as May struggles to find way to satisfy demands after Irish backstop

AFP, Luxembourg
Frustrated European ministers yesterday insisted there was still time to reach a Brexit deal despite the latest failed round of divorce talks, but the EU warned it was stepping up preparations for failure. Meeting in Luxembourg, foreign ministers from the bloc's 28 members admitted that no agreement will be struck this week at an EU leaders' summit that had earlier been billed as the "moment of truth". EU Brexit pointman Michel Barnier met his British counterpart Dominic Raab in Brussels on Sunday, but they failed to agree to a draft Brexit divorce arrangement, as EU leaders prepare to arrive on Wednesday for the summit. Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney, whose country would suffer the biggest economic impact after the United Kingdom from a "no-deal" Brexit, said the latest stumble was "frustrating and disappointing". And in Brussels, European Commission spokesman Margaritis Schinas said the bloc's own "no deal"

preparations were being stepped up. "While we are working hard for a deal, our preparedness and contingency work is continuing and intensifying," spokesman Margaritis Schinas said. British Prime Minister Theresa May is facing a political high-wire act in trying to reach a deal that is acceptable to both the EU and lawmakers at home, where

EU FMs admit no deal will be struck this week
Latest stumble was 'frustrating': Irish FM



her minority government relies on the support of Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). May said yesterday she still believes a Brexit deal is "achievable". "We cannot let this disagreement derail the prospects of a good deal, and leave us with the 'no deal' outcome that no-one wants," she told MPs in the House of Commons.

Highlighting the challenges she faces, the DUP's Brexit spokesman Sammy Wilson yesterday warned it was "probably inevitable" Britain would leave the EU with no deal. "Given the way in which the EU has behaved and the corner they've put Theresa May into, there's no deal which I can see at present which will command a majority in the House of Commons," he told the Belfast Newsletter. But ministers in Luxembourg insisted there was still time to resolve the outstanding issues, including the dispute over rules for trade in and out of Northern Ireland. "I think this is obviously a difficult period," British Foreign Minister Jeremy Hunt told reporters as he arrived for a scheduled meeting of the EU Foreign Affairs Council. "There was always going to be a moment like this, but we should remember that a huge amount of progress has been made. There are one or two very outstanding issues, but I think we can get there."

Yameen blames defeat on 'disappearing ink'

EC insists petition should be dismissed

AFP, Colombo
Outgoing Maldives President Abdulla Yameen has told the Supreme Court that disappearing ink and specially treated ballot papers were to blame for his heavy election defeat last month. The comments came as the court considered a petition by Yameen to have the September 23 election result annulled due to what his party called "rampant" vote-rigging. Yesterday afternoon, the five-judge bench put off the case until today when it will announce whether to allow testimony from three unnamed witnesses named by Yameen's lawyers. His lawyers told a packed court room that the trio of yet unnamed witnesses could substantiate Yameen's allegations. However, the country's independent Elections Commission (EC) through its lawyers insisted that the petition was

based on false allegations and should be dismissed. Local media also reported four of the five election commissioners have fled the country and sought refuge in neighbouring Sri Lanka following death threats after Yameen lost the September 23 vote. At a hearing on Sunday which resumed yesterday, Yameen's lawyer Mohamed Saleem accused the printer of coating ballot papers with an unnamed substance to make votes marked in Yameen's box vanish. Saleem said a "special pen with disappearing ink" was also given to people who were going to vote for his client, a reporter at the hearing said. Counting officials also allegedly carried secret pens with which they marked ballots for the opposition. A lawyer for the EC denied any wrongdoing, including using any special ink. Yameen had also accused the EC of colluding with the printer of the ballots.



POST-POLLS MALDIVES

TRUMP ON CBS'S '60 MINUTES'

SEVEN KEY MOMENTS FROM THE INTERVIEW

President Donald Trump said in an interview broadcast Sunday night that Russian President Vladimir Putin is "probably" involved in assassinations and poisonings, but "it's not in our country." Trump's remarks came during a wide-ranging interview on CBS's "60 Minutes" that touched on his relationship with North Korea, China, Russia, and his own West Wing staffers and Cabinet. Here are six other key moments from the interview.

RUSSIAN ELECTION MEDDLING

Asked after his Putin comments whether he thought Moscow meddled in the 2016 presidential election, Trump said he didn't think it was just Russia. "They meddled. But I think China meddled, too. And I think other countries..." Trump said. He added, "And I think, frankly, China is a bigger problem."

ON JAMES MATTIS' POLITICS

When asked whether Defense Secretary James Mattis would be leaving his post at the Pentagon, Trump said he was unsure. "Well, I don't know," he said, adding, "He hasn't told me that." Trump said the two maintained "a very good relationship," but he allowed for the possibility Mattis would leave.

CHINA TRADE

The President said he "might -- might" -- impose more tariffs on China. While the US has now imposed \$250 billion in tariffs, Trump last month threatened to impose even more tariffs if China retaliates against American farmers or other industries. "They want to negotiate... they want to negotiate," the President said.



NORTH KOREA

When pressed by Stahl over his embrace of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, Trump said he knew about Kim's human rights violations, but that his efforts have resulted in fewer threats to the United States. "Sure. I know all these things. I mean, I'm not a baby. I know these things," he said. The President continued, "Look, let it be whatever it is. I get along with him really well. I have a good energy with him."

MUELLER INVESTIGATION

Asked if he would pledge to refrain from interfering in special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation, Trump refused, but continued his refrain of "no collusion." "I don't pledge anything," Trump said. "But I will tell you, I have no intention of doing that. I think it's a very unfair investigation because there was no collusion of any kind."

CLIMATE CHANGE

Asked if he thinks climate change is a hoax, Trump said, "I think something's happening. Something's changing, and it'll change back again. I don't think it's a hoax, I think there's probably a difference. But I don't know that it's man-made. I will say this. I don't want to give trillions and trillions of dollars. I don't want to lose millions and millions of jobs. I don't want to be put at a disadvantage." SOURCE: CNN

Forces ready to fight for Idlib if rebels reject deal: Syrian FM

REUTERS, Beirut
Syria's foreign minister said yesterday that Syrian forces stand ready to fight jihadists around the northwestern region of Idlib if a Russian-Turkish deal is not implemented there the same day, in keeping with a critical deadline. The deal for Idlib sets up a buffer zone running 15-20 km (9-13 miles) deep into rebel territory that must be evacuated of all heavy weapons and all jihadists by yesterday. Foreign Minister Walid al-Moualeem said it was up to Russia now to judge whether the agreement, which staved off a government offensive on the last notable swathe of territory in insurgent hands after seven years of war, was being fulfilled. "Our armed forces are ready around Idlib to eradicate terrorism if the Idlib agreement is not implemented," al-Moualeem said at a press conference with his Iraqi counterpart Ibrahim al-Jaafari in Damascus. "Idlib, as any other province, has to return to Syrian sovereignty. We prefer to have it through peaceful means, through reconciliation, but if not there (are) other options." Tahrir al-Sham, a jihadist alliance spearheaded by al Qaeda's former Syrian affiliate, signalled on Sunday that it would abide by the terms of the deal, although it did not explicitly say so. "We value the efforts of all those striving - at home and abroad - to protect the liberated area and prevent its invasion and the perpetration of massacres in it," Tahrir al-Sham said in its statement. However, it added that Tahrir al-Sham would not end its jihad or hand over its weapons.



Malaysia's People's Justice Party president and leader of the Pakatan Harapan coalition Anwar Ibrahim (R) shakes hands with other members after taking oath as a member of the parliament at the Parliament House in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.



KEY BY-ELECTIONS

Pak PM holds on to slim majority

AFP, Islamabad
Pakistan's ruling party under new Prime Minister Imran Khan has maintained its slim majority in parliament after key by-elections, final results showed yesterday. Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) won 15 seats of the total 36 on offer in polls held across the country on Sunday, according to the Election Commission of Pakistan. Its ally the Pakistan Muslim League, one of several parties with which it has formed a coalition government, won an additional two seats, bringing the coalition's total in the national assembly -- the lower house of parliament -- to 177 out of 342. In Punjab, the by-elections were held for 11 seats, out of which the PML-N won six seats. The main opposition Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) increased its seat count to 85. The outcome of the by-election will not impact the federal or provincial government but help reinvigorate the opposition parties. Talking to journalists after attending case hearing at the Accountability Court, former prime minister Nawaz Sharif said the masses have witnessed the mess the incumbent government has created for them due to economic mismanagement. The by-elections come after a national vote on July 25 propelled former World Cup cricketer Khan to power, an outcome that was rejected by the main opposition parties.

Yemen on brink of worst famine

UN warns starvation could overwhelm the country in next three months if airstrikes by Saudi-led coalition not halted

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There are just three months left to avoid what could be "the worst famine in 100 years", according to the United Nations. Yemen is in the grip of a civil war that began three years ago with air strikes by Saudi Arabia contributing to the humanitarian crisis. There are now 13,000,000 people who are on the brink of starvation. Lise Grande from the UN told the BBC: "I think many of us felt as we went into the 21st century that it was unthinkable that we could see a famine like saw in Ethiopia, that we saw in Bengal, that we saw in parts of the Soviet Union, that was just unacceptable. Many of us had the confidence that that would never happen again and yet the reality is that in Yemen that is precisely what we are looking at. "We predict that we could be looking at 12 to 13 million innocent civilians who are at risk of dying from the lack of food." When asked if the world should be ashamed, she responded: "Yes. There's no question we should be ashamed, and we

should, every day that we wake up, renew our commitment to do everything possible to help the people that are suffering and end the conflict." The United Nations and humanitarian workers on Sunday condemned an airstrike by the Saudi-led coalition targeting Yemen's Shia rebels that reportedly killed at least 15 civilians near the port city of Hodeida. Video footage released by the rebels, known as Houthis, showed a mangled minibus littered with groceries and a woman's handbag, with rebel officials saying a day earlier that the airstrike in the Jebel Ras area had also wounded 20 others. Eyewitnesses who declined to be named for fear of their safety said that the attack appeared to target a rebel checkpoint in the area. "The United Nations agencies working in Yemen unequivocally condemn the attack on civilians and extend our deepest condolences to the families of the victims," said Lise Grande, the UN's Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen. "Under international humanitarian law, parties to the conflict are obliged to respect the principles of precaution, proportionality and distinction," said Grande.

