

CHALLENGE TO CROWN PRINCE?

# Saudi king's brother returns to Riyadh

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

The only surviving full brother of Saudi Arabia's King Salman has reportedly returned to the kingdom, amid an international outcry over the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Prince Ahmad bin Abdulaziz flew back to Riyadh from London on Tuesday, according to three Saudi sources close to the prince cited by The New York Times, in what some analysts are calling a potential challenge to the authority of Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Sources told the Times bin Abdulaziz, King Salman's younger brother who is in his 70's, arrived in the Saudi capital around 01:30 (22:30 GMT on Monday) on Tuesday and was warmly received by his nephew, the crown prince, who greeted him at the airport.

London-based Middle East Eye also reported bin Abdulaziz's return, quoting a source close to the prince as saying his return is intended to shake up the kingdom's leadership.

"The prince wants to play a role to make these changes, which means either he himself will play a major role in any new arrangement or to help choose an alternative to MBS," the source was cited as saying.

David Hearst, editor-in-chief of the Middle East Eye, said that Prince Ahmad's arrival is likely to cause some discomfort for the crown prince.

"Mohammed bin Salman has become a focus of the [royal] family's discontent, a symbol of it. Prince Ahmad had always made his objection to the crown prince know."

"He was one of the three members on the allegiance council who did not vote for him. He's made other public signs of his disapproval," Hearst said.



Mohammed bin Salman

Ahmad bin Abdulaziz

One of the most senior members of the royal family, bin Abdulaziz - who has been living in the United Kingdom - is said to have agreed to return to Riyadh only after receiving security assurances from the UK and United States.

Reports say the prince had been afraid to return after publicly challenging bin Salman on several occasions.

In November 2017, bin Salman conducted a sweeping purge of senior ministers and princes as part of purported anti-corruption measures.

Mahjoob Zweiri, director of the Gulf Studies Center at Qatar University, said the apparent arrival of bin Abdulaziz in Riyadh could signal a change at the top of the Saudi leadership.

"I think the gesture means there is a change coming some time soon," he told Al Jazeera.

Zweiri said bin Abdulaziz's reported return is a direct consequence of Khashoggi's killing, as well as international players' desire to ensure the kingdom's stability.

He and the king are the last remaining members of the powerful "Sudairi seven", a bloc comprised of the seven sons of King Abdul Aziz - considered the kingdom's modern founder - and his favourite wife Hussa bint Ahmed al-Sudairi. The brothers banded together to ensure the throne and important ministries passed between them and stayed out of the reach of the king's dozens of other sons.

Bin Abdulaziz served as deputy interior minister for decades and briefly as interior minister in 2012, but has been in retirement since then, spending most of his time in London.



An Indonesian Navy diver (bottom L) holds a recovered "black box" under water before putting it into a plastic container (R) after its discovery during search operations for the ill-fated Lion Air flight JT 610 at sea, north of Karawang in West Java, yesterday. Inset, The flight data recorder.

PHOTO: AFP

# 'Black box' recovered

AFP, Jakarta

A black box from the crashed Lion Air jet has been recovered, authorities said yesterday, a find that could be critical to establishing why a brand new jet plunged into the Java Sea shortly after take-off, killing 189 people on board.

Divers plucked the orange data recorder from the ocean and placed it in a plastic tub as search teams continued to scour the seabed for the fuselage of the Boeing-737 MAX 8, which crashed off Indonesia's northern coast on Monday and had only been in service a few months.

There have been no survivors and only body parts have been found so far.

Relatives are desperate to be able to say goodbye to their loved ones and the first funeral for one of the passengers was held yesterday.

But many others have yet to be located and analysts hope further victims could still be found with the bulk of the wreckage.

"I assume that there will be a lot of bodies still strapped into the seats," aviation analyst Dudi Sudibyo told AFP.

Dozens of divers are taking part in the massive recovery effort along with helicopters and ships, but authorities have all but ruled out finding any survivors.

The black boxes, which airlines are required to install, offer investigators their best chance of discovering why such a new jet crashed. The devices

record information about the speed, altitude and direction of the plane as well as flight crew conversations.

Authorities say a flight data recorder was recovered, but they were still looking for the cockpit voice recorder.

The single-aisle Boeing plane, which was on its way from Jakarta to Pangkal Pinang city, is one of the world's newest and most advanced commercial passenger jets.

Despite the name, black boxes are in fact bright orange with reflective stripes. They are built to survive at vast depths and in extreme heat, and are fitted with a beacon which can emit a signal for one month.

Black boxes help explain nearly 90 percent of all crashes, according to aviation experts.

## INDONESIA PLANE TRAGEDY

"Data from the plane -- the engine, all the instruments -- are recorded there," Sudibyo said. "If there is an anomaly, some technical problem, it is recorded there too."

Passengers' remains are being sent to hospital for DNA comparison to relatives.

Aviation experts are puzzled by the accident but say it's too early to determine what caused the crash.

Lion's admission that the jet had an unspecified technical issue on a previous flight -- as well its abrupt fatal dive -- have raised questions about whether it had faults specific to the newly released model, including a speed-and-altitude system malfunction.

# Oceans heating faster than thought: study

AFP, Paris

The world's oceans have absorbed 60 percent more heat than previously thought over the last quarter of a century, scientists said yesterday, leaving Earth more sensitive still to the effects of climate change.

Oceans cover more than two thirds of the planet's surface and play a vital role in sustaining life on Earth.

According to their most recent assessment this month, scientists from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) say the world's oceans have absorbed 90 percent of the temperature rise caused by man-made carbon emissions.

But new research published in the journal Nature used a novel method of measuring ocean temperature.

It found that for each of the last 25 years, oceans had absorbed heat energy equivalent to 150 times the amount of electricity mankind produces annually. That is 60 percent higher than previous studies showed.

Whereas those studies relied on tallying the excess heat produced by known man-made greenhouse gas emissions, a team of US-based scientists focused on two gases found naturally in the atmosphere: Oxygen and carbon dioxide.

Both gases are soluble in water, but the rate at which water absorbs them decreases as it warms.

By measuring atmospheric oxygen and CO2 for each year, scientists were able to more accurately estimate how much heat oceans had absorbed on a global scale.

The IPCC warns that drastic measures need taking in order to limit global warming to 1.5 Celsius by the end of the century but the world produced a record amount of carbon emissions in 2017.

# Trump hits polls trail with anti-immigration rhetoric

US may send as many as 15,000 troops to Mexico border

AFP, Fort Myers

President Donald Trump further hardened his pre-election anti-immigration rhetoric in a Florida campaign stop on Wednesday, after threatening to deploy as many as 15,000 soldiers on the Mexican border -- equal to the size of the US contingent in Afghanistan.

"They got a lot of rough people in these caravans. They are not angels," he said in Fort Myers, referring to migrants from poor Central American countries moving towards the United States in hopes of a better life or to escape violence.

"We're gettin' prepared for the caravan, folks," he said.

Brushing aside accusations that his divisive rhetoric on immigration is stoking extremism, Trump made the troop announcement before flying to Florida for the last stage of campaigning ahead of next Tuesday's midterm elections.

He will host 11 rallies across eight states

in the next six days.

Trump hopes to fire up core Republican voters and spur the party to retain dominance of both chambers of Congress. Democrats are threatening to light a fire under Trump's feet if they win even partial control, raising the specter of ever more brutal Washington politics.

At the core of Trump's message to his raucous, adoring supporters is the now near daily warning that America is literally under attack from an "invasion" of illegal immigrants and that Democrats would throw open the borders.

Trump frequently describes illegal immigrants -- a tiny minority of whom have formed groups to attempt walking hundreds of miles to the US border -- as "rapists" and "thugs."

"It's a dangerous group of people," Trump said of the latest group of a few thousand migrants, who are still deep inside Mexico far from their goal. "They're not coming into our country."



People in costume participate in the 45th Annual Village Halloween Parade in Manhattan, New York, US, on Wednesday.

## IRAN SANCTIONS

# US doesn't want to harm allies: Bolton

REUTERS, Washington

US national security adviser John Bolton said on Wednesday the Trump administration wants sanctions on Iran's crude exports to strain Tehran, but does not want to harm countries that depend on the oil.

The United States is preparing to impose the new sanctions on Iran's oil industry after Washington withdrew from a nuclear deal between Tehran and other global powers earlier this year, but is also considering offering waivers to some allies that rely on Iranian supplies.

"We want to achieve maximum pressure but we don't want to harm friends and allies either," Bolton said in a talk at the Hamilton Society.

Bolton said the administration understands that a number of countries, some close geographically to Iran which he visited last week and others "may not be able to go all the way, all the way to zero immediately." It was a more conciliatory tone about the sanctions from Bolton, a proponent of being tough on Iran and winding down its crude exports to zero.

Still, Bolton said that consequences can already be seen in Iran including the collapse of the rial, its currency. "I think it's important that we not relax in the effort," he said.

The administration's renewed sanctions are set to come into effect on Nov 5.

Under US law, Washington can sanction the financial institutions of foreign countries that fail to significantly reduce their purchases of Iranian oil and petroleum products.

Three of Iran's five largest buyers of crude - China, India and Turkey - have resisted calls by Washington to end their oil purchases outright.

# NYT in profit column as digital subscriptions rise

AFP, New York

The New York Times yesterday said that digital subscriptions topped three million in the past quarter, keeping the prestigious daily profitable in a difficult environment for the news media.

With a gain of 203,000 online-only subscribers in the third quarter, the newspaper is now getting nearly two-thirds of its revenue from subscriptions, helping offset weakness in advertising and print circulation.

The Times posted a net profit of \$24.9 million in the quarter, down from \$36 million in the same period a year ago, as total revenues rose eight percent to \$417 million.

"This was a strong third quarter for the company," said Mark Thompson, president and chief executive officer of The New York Times Company.

"We also passed two significant milestones, and now have more than three million digital-only subscriptions and more than four million total subscriptions."

While its profits are modest, the Times has been among the most successful legacy news organizations navigating the transition to digital news amid sharp declines in print readership.

The Times has maintained a large newsroom staff and has invested aggressively, seeking readers internationally and stepping up coverage of Washington even as it faces attacks from US President Donald Trump.

New York Times Co. shares are publicly traded, but the stock structure allows the controlling family to stave off the kinds of moves seen at other news organizations aimed at cutting costs to boost short-term profits.



# Kim to visit South Korea 'soon': Moon

AFP, Seoul

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un will visit Seoul "soon", the South's President Moon Jae-in said yesterday, amid a rapid diplomatic thaw on the peninsula despite stalled nuclear talks between Pyongyang and Washington.

At their third summit in Pyongyang in September, the leaders of the two Koreas agreed Kim would visit Seoul "in the near future" without giving a specific date.

Moon later suggested that the trip was likely to happen this year, and told lawmakers yesterday that the peninsula was approaching "the historic starting line" for peace.

"It appears that Chairman Kim Jong Un's trip to Russia and a visit to North Korea by (Chinese) President Xi Jinping will happen soon," Moon said, adding there was an "open" possibility of a meeting between Kim and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

"Chairman Kim Jong Un's return visit to Seoul will happen soon," he added.

No further detail was given.

Under a pact signed by the defence ministers at the September summit in Pyongyang all hostile activities along the border were to cease from November 1, including military drills on land, at sea and in the air, to prevent accidental clashes.

The 1950-53 Korean War ended with an armistice rather than a peace treaty, leaving the two sides still technically at war.

# Project launched to map genes of all complex life

REUTERS, London

Scientists launched a vast project yesterday to map the genetic code of all 1.5 million known species of complex life on earth, aiming to complete the work within a decade.

They described the Earth BioGenome Project (EBP) as "the next moonshot for biology" after the Human Genome Project, a 13-year \$3 billion endeavour to map human DNA which was completed in 2003.

The EBP is expected to cost \$4.7 billion and "will ultimately create a new foundation for biology to drive solutions for preserving biodiversity and sustaining human societies," said Harris Lewin, a professor at the University of California in the United States and chair of the EBP.

This plan will draw in major research efforts from across the world, including a US-led project aiming to sequence the genetic code of all 66,000 vertebrates, a Chinese project to sequence 10,000 plant genomes, and the Global Ant Genomes Alliance, which aims to sequence around 200 ant genomes.

In Britain, genome sequences for red and grey squirrels, the European robin, the Fen raft spider and the blackberry will be added to the vast database.

The volume of biological data that will be gathered is expected to be on the "exascale" - more than that accumulated by Twitter, YouTube or the whole of astronomy.

So far, fewer than 3,500 complex life species, or only about 0.2 percent, have had their genomes sequenced. Fewer than 100 of those have been done to "reference quality" level useful for researchers to access and learn from.