

# NEWSIN brief

## India appoints new CBI chief

Former Madhya Pradesh Director General of Police Rishi Kumar Shukla, a 1983-batch officer, has been appointed the Director of the Central Bureau of Investigation, said a government notification. His name was chosen from a shortlist of over 30 contenders for the top post by a committee led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Shukla will head the CBI for a period of two years, the notification added.

## Ivory Coast's Gbagbo freed by ICC

The International Criminal Court finally freed former Ivory Coast president Laurent Gbagbo on Friday after his shock acquittal last month on charges of crimes against humanity. More than 3,000 people died on both sides after Gbagbo refused to concede defeat in 2010 to his internationally backed rival - and now-president -- Alassane Ouattara.

## 32 wounded in Gaza clashes

Thirty-two Palestinians were shot and wounded by Israeli troops in renewed clashes along the Gaza border Friday, the health ministry in the Hamas-run enclave said. At least 246 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire in Gaza since March 30, the majority during border protests but also by tank fire and airstrikes.

## Egypt unveils Pharaonic tomb

Egyptian archaeologists uncovered a Pharaonic tomb containing 50 mummies dating back to the Ptolemaic era, in Minya, south of Cairo, the ministry of antiquities said yesterday. The identities of the mummies were still unknown, said Mostafa Waziri, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities.



Syrian civil defence workers rescue a child from the rubble of a collapsed five-storey building in the Salah al-Din district of the northern city of Aleppo yesterday. Eleven people, including four children, were killed by the collapse of a war-damaged building in the northern Syrian city, which for years has been a battleground between government forces and opposition factions.

## US cuts all aid to Palestinians in occupied Gaza West Bank

The US has ended all financial aid for Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, government officials have said. The decision to cease is linked to new American legislation under which foreign aid recipients would be more exposed to anti-terrorism lawsuits, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) said after the new laws came into effect earlier this week. It will end of about \$60m (£45m) in US aid for the Palestinian security forces, whose cooperation with Israeli forces has helped maintain relative quiet in the West Bank. The US Congress's Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act (Atca) empowers Americans to sue foreign aid recipients in US courts over alleged complicity in "acts of war". The Palestinian Authority declined further US funding over worries about its potential legal exposure, although it denies Israeli accusations it encourages militant attacks. "At the request of the Palestinian Authority, we have wound down certain projects and programmes funded with assistance under the authorities specified in Atca in the West Bank and Gaza," a US official said. "All USAID assistance in the West Bank and Gaza has ceased." It was unclear how long the cessation would be in effect. The official said no steps were currently being taken to close the USAID mission in the Palestinian territories, and no decision had been made about future staffing at the USAID mission in the US Embassy in Jerusalem. USAID is the main agency administering US foreign assistance in the Palestinian territories. The agency spent \$268m (£203m) on public projects in the West Bank and Gaza as well as Palestinian private sector debt repayment in 2017, but there were significant cuts to all new funding through the end of June last year, according to its website.

# Venezuela tensions mount

### General urges military to disavow Maduro as opposition stages rallies

REUTERS, Caracas An active Venezuelan general called on the armed forces to rebel against President Nicolas Maduro and to recognize the opposition leader Juan Guaido as interim chief as pressure at home and abroad grows on the head of state to step down.

In a video circulating on Twitter yesterday, General Francisco Yanez of the air force's high command, said most of the armed forces already disavowed Maduro, who claims he is victim of a coup directed by the United States.

"People of Venezuela, 90 percent of the armed forces of Venezuela are not with the dictator, they are with the people of Venezuela," Yanez said in the video. "Given the happenings of the last few hours, already the transition to democracy is imminent." The high command's web page lists Yanez, along with a photo, as the air force's head of strategic planning. On its Twitter account, the air force's high command accused the general of treason. Yanez is the first active Venezuelan general to recognize Guaido since he pro-

claimed himself president on Jan 23. The video came as opposition supporters were set to protest nationwide in a bid to keep up the pressure on Maduro after Washington recognized Guaido as the legitimate president and issued potentially crippling sanctions that are likely to further weaken the OPEC nation's struggling oil industry. Maduro's critics also hope to encourage similar moves by European countries. Some European Union member states are expected to officially recognize Guaido next week, while others will likely take a more cautious stance of support. "We are going to send a very clear message in all the municipalities of Venezuela and in each city of the world, we are going to give a demonstration of strength, in a

peaceful and organized manner," Guaido tweeted yesterday. Maduro will also hold a rally, to commemorate the 20th anniversary of late socialist leader Hugo Chavez's first inauguration as president in 1999. Guaido has sent letters to Russia and China, both major creditors and allies of Maduro's government, saying that a change of government would be in the best interests of both countries.



# Filipinos spend most time online: report

CNN ONLINE A new report has revealed the world's heaviest internet users: the Philippines, where people spent an average of 10 hours and two minutes a day online in 2018.

Brazil came in second, with nine hours and 29 minutes of internet usage, followed by Thailand with nine hours and 11 minutes, Colombia with nine hours, and Indonesia with eight hours and 36 minutes.

The Digital 2019 report, created by social media management platform Hootsuite and digital marketing agency We Are Social, found that the worldwide average amount of time spent online was six hours and 42 minutes a day.

People in the US racked up an average of six hours and 31 minutes of screen time, compared with five hours and 52 minutes in China and five hours and 46 minutes in the UK.

Of the countries surveyed, people in Japan spent the least amount of time online, averaging just three hours and 45 minutes a day.

Unsurprisingly, social media accounted for a significant amount of time spent on the internet. In the Philippines, people spent an average of four hours and 12 minutes on social media platforms every day, while the global average was two hours and 16 minutes. Again, the lowest social media use was in Japan, where people devoted an average of just 36 minutes to scrolling.

Globally, 57% of the population now uses the internet, according to the report.

# Boko Haram killed 'at least 60' in NE Nigeria: Amnesty

AFP, Lagos In January 2017, a botched Nigerian air strike intended to hit jihadists killed at least 112 people as aid workers distributed food.

Rann, which is some 175 kilometres (110 miles) northeast of the Borno state capital, Maiduguri, has now been hit four times since March last year.

Rann had been home to some 35,000 internally displaced people (IDPs), according to the International Organization for Migration. More than 27,000 people have been killed in nearly 10 years of fighting, while some 1.8 million others remain homeless and reliant on aid for food, shelter, healthcare and water.

The UN this week said it needed \$848 million (741 million euros) to fund projects for affected civilians in Borno state and two other northeast states over the next three years. An additional \$135 million was required to help the 228,500 Nigerian refugees who have fled to neighbouring Cameroon, Chad and Niger, it added.



Iranians visit a weaponry and military equipment exhibition in the capital Tehran on February 2, 2019, organised on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Iranian revolution. Iran announced the successful test of a new cruise missile, inset, with a range of over 1,350 kilometres yesterday, state TV reported.

PHOTO: AFP



# Farewell Facebook Merkel closes account

AFP, Berlin German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced Friday she would close her Facebook account, taking another step in a long farewell from politics in her final term in office.

In a short video, Merkel thanked her more than 2.5 million followers on the social media site and asked them to keep watching her work on her official government site and on Instagram.

Having run the biggest EU economy since 2005, Merkel last year stood down as party leader of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), a post now held by her preferred successor, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer.

"Today is the day I would like to thank you for supporting my Facebook page in great numbers," Merkel said. "You know I am no longer CDU leader, so I will now close my Facebook page."

Although some observers have speculated Merkel may in future seek a senior UN or EU post, the 64-year-old has signalled she will opt for a new political job after her term ends in 2021. Merkel has served a marathon stretch as chancellor but faced major domestic headwinds after her 2015 decision to keep open German borders to a mass influx of mostly Muslim refugees, many from war-torn Syria.



# 2,700 indigenous languages dying

AFP, United Nations There's Ojibwe in Canada, Ami in Australia and Ayapanec in Mexico: these are among the world's nearly 2,700 indigenous languages at risk of disappearing unless new initiatives are taken to revive them, UN officials say.

The United Nations is hoping to raise awareness of the cultural loss with the launch this week of the International Year of Indigenous Languages, a yearlong project to help protect these ancient mother tongues.

"2019 must serve as a turning point in our collective determination to save indigenous languages and those who speak them," Maria Fernanda Espinosa, the president of the General Assembly, told a UN gathering on Friday. Out of the roughly 7,600 languages spoken worldwide, 2,680 indigenous languages are in danger and many are disappearing at an alarming rate, according to UN officials.

"Every two weeks, there is an indigenous language that disappears, so it is a pretty large toll indeed," said Ernesto Ottone-Ramirez, an assistant director at the UN's cultural



## FLOODING IN PART OF EASTERN AUSTRALIA

# Heavy rainfall to worsen situation

REUTERS, Melbourne Once-in-a-century flooding in part of the eastern Australian state of Queensland looks set to worsen as the nation's weather bureau yesterday warned of more heavy rain in the area.

Some residents have already been evacuated after days of monsoon rains lashed the region around the coastal city of Townsville in north Queensland, a spokesman for the Bureau of Meteorology said. Adam Blazak, a forecaster with the bureau, did not say how many people had been evacuated, but added that some areas had reached "major" flood levels.

"Normally a monsoonal burst might last a few days, but this one's been going on over a week now and is set to continue for a few more days as well," he said. Between 150 mm and 200 mm of rain is expected across Townsville yesterday - equal to about a month's average rainfall. Local authorities issued a number of flood warnings yesterday morning and told residents to avoid using roads and consider moving to higher ground if conditions worsen.

North Queensland has significant zinc reserves as well as major deposits of silver, lead, copper and iron ore, with Townsville a major processing centre for the region's base metals.