

**NEWS IN**  
brief



**Trump picks new UN ambassador**

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump on Friday said he is nominating Kelly Craft, his envoy to Canada, to be the next US ambassador to the United Nations. If confirmed by the US Senate, she would fill the post that has been vacant since Nikki Haley.

**Sushma Swaraj to attend OIC meet**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India yesterday announced its External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj will attend the inaugural plenary session of the 46th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to be held in Abu Dhabi on March 1-2. India is not a member of the OIC despite having much larger Muslim population than many OIC member-countries. Swaraj will address the inaugural plenary, the Indian External Affairs Ministry said in a statement.

**February 21 observed at German University**

STAR REPORT

South Asia Institute (SAI) of Heidelberg University in Germany on Thursday observed the International Mother Language Day for the first time in its history. Students from different countries recited poems in their mother tongue during the ceremony. The worldwide celebration of the day on February 21 was firstly announced by UNESCO on 17 November 1999 and was formally recognised by the UN General Assembly in 2008.



**Kim's train arrives in China: reports**

AFP, Dandong

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's armoured train arrived in China late yesterday ahead of his highly anticipated second summit with US President Donald Trump in Vietnam, according to media reports. The train arrived in the border city of Dandong after 9 pm local time (1300 GMT), according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency and the specialist outlet NK News, though it was not known whether Kim was on board.

The train's crossing into China follows days of speculation over Kim's travel plans, which remain shrouded in secrecy, as his team gathered in Hanoi ahead of the talks expected next Wednesday and Thursday.

Security was tight before the train's arrival, with police cordoning off the riverfront some 100 metres (yards) from the bridge with tape and metal barriers, and leading an AFP journalist out of the area.

Guests at a hotel facing the rail bridge from North Korea were suddenly asked to leave on Friday and told it was closed Saturday for impromptu renovations.

"The train is long and crossed the bridge slower than the tourist train, but it's definitely him, there's a lot of police presence," an unidentified source told NK News.

# Power struggle deepens

*Guaido claims military help; US threatens new sanctions if aid convoys blocked*

AGENCIES

Venezuelan security forces fired tear gas and rubber bullets yesterday to disperse a crowd demanding to cross the Venezuela-Colombia border, ordered closed by President Nicolas Maduro as tensions in the Latin American country soared ahead of an opposition deadline to bring in humanitarian aid.

"We want to work!" people chanted as they faced Venezuelan National Guard riot police blocking the crossing at the Urena border bridge to Colombia, one of several ordered closed Maduro late Friday.

Meanwhile, four National Guard troops deserted their posts near



border, one greeted by a crowd of cheering Venezuelans on the Colombian side as he walked across. Three others smashed through a security barrier on the Simon Bolivar bridge crossing in their jeep.

Supporters of opposition leader Juan Guaido in Colombia are planning to cross the border carrying emergency supplies into Venezuela later yesterday. Guaido has vowed humanitarian aid would enter his country despite a blockade.

Socialist leader Maduro has rejected the aid, which he's dismissed as a show and pretext for a US invasion.

Humanitarian aid has become the centerpiece of the stand-off between Maduro and Guaido, the 35-year-old leader of Venezuela's National Assembly who declared himself interim president exactly one month ago. Guaido has accused Maduro of rigging his re-election and is demanding a new vote.

Guaido on Friday defied a government ban on leaving the country and attended the "Venezuela Live Aid" concert organized by British billionaire Richard Branson just over the border in Colombia. The concert is aimed at raising funds to

help the relief effort.

Guaido sensationally claimed that the Venezuelan military, whose high command has repeatedly declared absolute loyalty to Maduro, "participated in this process" to get him into Colombia.

Hours later, Caracas said it had closed much of the Colombian border, citing threats to Venezuela's security. It earlier sealed border with Brazil.

On Friday the tense stand-off turned deadly when two people were killed and 15 wounded as they tried to prevent Venezuelan troops from blocking an entry point on the Brazilian border.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged Venezuelan authorities to refrain from using lethal force against protesters.

Meanwhile, US national security adviser John Bolton has canceled his trip to South Korea next week, even as preparations ramp up for a second summit between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

US Vice President Mike Pence is expected to travel to Colombia on Monday in an effort to pressure Maduro to step down.

**VENEZUELA CRISIS**

**Bolton cancels South Korea trip 'to focus on events'**

**UN condemns use of force after troops kill 2**

**After Brazil, Venezuela seals Colombia border**

**HIJACK THREAT TO AIR INDIA**

## Indian airports on high alert

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Airports across India have been put on high alert yesterday after an airline's operation centre in Mumbai got a call that an Indian carrier's flight will be hijacked to Pakistan.

This will mean enhanced security at airports, including stricter pre-boarding screening of passengers and of vehicles going to car park.

The telephonic threat was made to Air India's airport operation control centre yesterday about an Indian Airlines (erstwhile AI domestic) flight being hijacked to Pakistan. While security at airports had been enhanced after the Pulwama attack, the threat saw the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) issuing a list of dos for all airport and airline operators.

The BCAS has asked for very strict access to terminals and operational areas; intensive checks of vehicles at airports; enhanced screening of passengers, staffers, baggage, cargo and catering and more random checks at airport entry point.

Perimeter security has been sought to be increased also, including deployment of quick reaction teams (QRT). While the threat could well be a hoax or a prank, security agencies don't take such calls lightly and do not leave anything to chance.

The hijack threat came in the midst of heightened tensions between India and Pakistan in the aftermath of the attack by Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed in Pulwama that left 40 Indian paramilitary men dead on February 14.



Women and children are searched by fighters with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), after fleeing the IS group's last holdout of Baghouz, in Syria's northern Deir Ezzor province. President Donald Trump insisted Friday he was not pulling an about-face on his Syria withdrawal plans, after it was announced hundreds of US troops would remain in the war-torn country.

PHOTO: AFP

## Warning issued over attacks on internet infrastructure

AFP, San Francisco

Key parts of the internet infrastructure face large-scale attacks that threaten the global system of web traffic, the internet's address keeper warned Friday.

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) declared after an emergency meeting "an ongoing and significant risk" to key parts of the infrastructure that affects the domains on which websites reside.

"They are going after the internet infrastructure itself," ICANN chief technology officer David Conrad told AFP.

"There have been targeted attacks in the past, but nothing like this." The attacks could date back to 2017 but have sparked growing concerns from security researchers in recent weeks, which prompted the special meeting of ICANN.

The malicious activity targets the Domain Name System or DNS which routes traffic to intended online destinations.

ICANN specialists and others say these attacks have a potential to snoop on data along the way, sneakily send the traffic elsewhere or enable the attackers to impersonate or "spoo" critical websites.

"There isn't a single tool to address this," Conrad said, as ICANN called for an overall hardening of web defenses.

US authorities issued a similar warning last month about the DNS attacks.

"This is roughly equivalent to someone lying to the post office about your address, checking your mail, and then hand delivering it to your mailbox," the US Department of Homeland Security said in a recent cybersecurity alert.

"Lots of harmful things could be done to you (or the senders) depending on the content of that mail."

## Adults aren't doing much

*Teenage climate activist's class-boycott campaign causes stir*

AFP, Paris

Teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg brought her class-boycott campaign to Paris, hoping to encourage more French students to hit the streets with demands for bold efforts to combat global warming.

The Friday protests that the 16-year-old Swede launched in August have gained little traction so far in France, where the landmark COP21 international accord on cutting emissions was signed in 2015.

After urging the EU in Brussels to move more aggressively on greenhouse gas cuts on Thursday, Thunberg then travelled to Paris where she met up with young activists from France, Belgium and Germany for a march which was also joined by French actress Juliette Binoche.

A crowd of around 1,000 people took part in the protest in central Paris, one of dozens planned in cities across Europe as part of her "Fridays For Future" movement.

But outside Paris, only two other class-cutting marches have been organised -- one in Beauvais just north of Paris and one in the southwestern city of Dax.

Under the 2015 Paris deal to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), the 28-nation EU has pledged to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40 percent by 2030, compared to 1990.

But Thunberg told an EU conference Thursday that the goal was woefully inadequate, saying an 80 percent reduction was necessary to meet the 2030 goal.

"If you think we should be in school instead, we suggest that you take our place in the streets, striking from your work," she said.

Thunberg's determined campaign to hold adults accountable for looming climate change consequences has gained global resonance since she began skipping class for weekly Friday protests in Stockholm six months ago.

She made global headlines in December with a strong-willed speech at a UN climate meeting in Poland, and last month took her message to the top corporate echelons at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

In the last six months, tens of thousands of high school students -- in Sydney, Brussels, Berlin, The Hague, London and other cities -- have followed her lead.



## Protest leaders dismiss Sudan emergency

Demand Bashir quit

AFP, Khartoum

Sudanese protest leaders yesterday dismissed veteran President Omar al-Bashir's declaration of a state of emergency and vowed to keep up nationwide demonstrations until his "regime is overthrown."

Bashir's three-decade rule has been rocked by two months of protests that a deadly crackdown has failed to suppress and on Friday he imposed a nationwide state of emergency and dissolved the federal and provincial governments.

In a televised speech to the nation, the veteran leader pledged to form a government of technocrats to address the country's chronic economic woes, which have been the driving force behind the protests.

But protest organisers and their supporters in the political opposition, said the state of emergency showed that Bashir's government was weakened and only its overthrow would now satisfy the protesters.

The National Umma Party, whose leader Sadiq al-Mahdi was Sudan's elected prime minister when Bashir seized power in an Islamist-backed coup in 1989, said the protests against his successor's iron-fisted rule would continue until he quit.

Analysts said the state of emergency was an act of desperation that would make it even harder to turn round the economy and ease public anger.



A woman casts her ballot to vote in the presidential and parliamentary elections, at a polling station at the Malkohi refugee camp in Jimeta, Adamawa State, yesterday. Nigerians began voting for a new president yesterday, after a week-long delay that has raised political tempers, sparked conspiracy claims and stoked fears of violence.

PHOTO: AFP

## Myanmar army warns against charter change

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's military yesterday said they would thwart attempts by leader Aung San Suu Kyi's party to alter the "essence" of the country's controversial constitution, putting the army and civilian administration on a collision course over the politically-charged issue.

Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) dominated 2015 elections ending decades of military-backed rule. But because of a 2008 charter scripted by the military, the NLD was forced into an uneasy power-sharing agreement.

The constitution grants the armed services control of security ministries and a quarter of unelected parliamentary seats.

That hands the military an effective veto over constitutional change.

But the NLD-dominated parliament voted earlier this month to form a cross-party committee to look at reforms of the charter, a key campaign pledge.

The party will be allocated 18 out of 45 seats on the panel, the military will have eight and the remainder will be divided between other parties. There has been no detail about the specific reforms, but military MPs stood up in protest when the idea was first mooted.

Brigadier General and military MP Than Soe said they would take part in the panel but would oppose changes to the "essence of the constitution", echoing rare comments by commander-in-chief Min Aung Hlaing in an interview this month with Japanese paper Asahi Shimbun.