

**LIBYA CRISIS**

**UN warns as rivals poised for clashes**

AFP, Tripoli

Forces led by a controversial Libyan military chief yesterday advanced towards Tripoli as UN chief Antonio Guterres warned of the growing risk of violence.

The self-proclaimed Libyan National Army of Khalifa Haftar announced Wednesday it was gearing up to move on the west of the country including the capital, home to a UN-backed unity government. Spokesman Ahmed Mesmari said preparations were almost complete "to purge the west of terrorists and mercenaries".

Haftar yesterday ordered his troops to "advance" on the capital Tripoli through audio message.

His statement was followed by troop movements on the ground, local and military sources said, as a convoy of LNA vehicles approached the city of Gharyan, some 100 kilometres (60 miles), from Tripoli.

Commander Abdesslem Al-Hassi yesterday told AFP that his forces had entered into the city without fighting.

But at least four sources in the city denied this, and a local official said there were "ongoing efforts to avoid a confrontation" between rival fighters who divide the city.

Dozens of militias have fought for control of the North African country since a Nato-backed uprising toppled and killed long-time dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

Haftar's forces oppose the government in Tripoli and backing a parallel administration in the east.

Unity government chief Fayed al-Sarraj condemned Haftar's "escalation" and said he had ordered loyalist forces to prepare to "face all threats".

Powerful armed groups from Libya's western city of Misrata, which back Sarraj, said they "stand ready... to stop the cursed advance".



This aerial view shows military vehicles on a road in Libya yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

**Fear of chaotic Brexit grows**

UK scrambles to find solution as May-Corbyn meet promises little

AFP, London

Britain's government yesterday redoubled its efforts to win over the main opposition party in a last-gasp bid to avoid a chaotic exit from the European Union next week.

The latest round of talks came after lawmakers tried to safeguard against a doomsday ending to the 46-year partnership by fast-tracking a bill Wednesday night seeking to delay Brexit.

May is racing against the clock in a desperate search for votes that could push her ill-loved divorce deal with the other 27 EU leaders through parliament on the fourth attempt.

May's spokesman said there would be "intensive discussions over the course of today", noting the "urgency" of the situation.

Britain's latest deadline is April 12 and resistance to May's plan remains passionately strong. But increasingly weary EU leaders -- tired of Britain's political drama and eager to focus on Europe's own



problems -- want to see either a done deal or a new way forward from May before they all meet in Brussels on Wednesday.

Her European counterparts will decide whether to grant May's request to push back Brexit until May 22 -- the day before nations begin electing a new European Parliament.

One alternative is to force her to accept a much longer extension that could give Britain time to rethink Brexit and possibly reverse its decision to leave.

inconclusive.

But May's decision to hear out Corbyn's demands for a closer post-Brexit alliance with the bloc that includes membership in its customs union has enraged Britain's right-wing and seen two junior ministers resign.

Corbyn said late Wednesday that he did not see "as much change as I expected" from May.

The Labour-backing Mirror newspaper said May and Corbyn would let their teams negotiate Thursday before deciding on whether to meet again face to face Friday.

Meanwhile, the European Parliament yesterday approved a law allowing Britons visa-free EU visits even after a "no deal" Brexit, despite a furious dispute over the status of Gibraltar.

The law means British visitors making trips of fewer than 90 days to the Schengen passport-free zone will not need visas, even if Britain crashes out of the EU without a

**UNHEALTHY DIET BIGGEST KILLER**

Global study links one in five deaths worldwide to poor choice of food

REUTERS, London

Which risk factor is responsible for more deaths around the world than any other? Not smoking. Not even high blood pressure. It's a poor diet.

Eleven million deaths worldwide in 2017 were linked to people eating poor diets high in sugar, salt and processed meat that contributed to heart disease, cancer and diabetes, a global study found.

The research, published in the Lancet medical journal, found that among 195 countries studied, the proportion of diet-related deaths was highest in Uzbekistan and lowest in Israel. The United States ranked 43rd, while Britain was 23rd, China 140th and India 118th.

Consumption of healthier foods such as nuts and seeds, milk and whole grains was on average too low, and people consumed too many sugary drinks and too much processed meat and salt. This led to one in five deaths in 2017 being linked to bad diets.

The Global Burden of Disease study tracked trends from 1990 to 2017 of consumption of 15 dietary factors. Chris Murray, director of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington which led the work, said it "affirms what many have thought for several years".

"Poor diet is responsible for more deaths than any other risk factor in the world," he said. "Our assessment suggests the leading dietary risk factors are high intake of sodium, or low intake of healthy foods, such as whole grains, fruit, nuts and



seeds and vegetables."

The study found people ate only 12 percent of the recommended amount of nuts and seeds - an average intake of 3 grams a day, compared with the recommended 21 g - and drank more than 10 times the recommended amount of sugary drinks. Diets high in sugar, salt and bad fats are known risk factors for heart disease, stroke, diabetes and many types of cancer.

The global diet also included less than a quarter of the recommended amount of whole grains - at 29 g average intake a day compared with the recommended 125 g - and almost double the recommended amount of processed meat - at around 4 g average intake per day compared with the 2 g recommended.

A study published in January suggested an "ideal diet" for the health of people and the planet would include a doubling of consumption of nuts, fruits, vegetables and legumes, and a halving of meat and sugar intake.

In a breakdown of diet-related deaths, the study found that of the 11 million in 2017, almost 10 million were from cardiovascular diseases, around 913,000 from cancer, and almost 339,000 from type 2 diabetes. Annual deaths related to diet have increased from 8 million in 1990, but the researchers said this was largely due to increases in populations and populations ageing.

**ETHIOPIAN PROBE ON BOEING 737 MAX CRASH**

**Crew followed procedure but unable to control jet**

REUTERS, Addis Ababa

Ethiopian investigators urged Boeing to review its flight control technology and said pilots of state carrier Ethiopian Airlines had carried out proper procedures in the first public findings on the crash of a 737 MAX jet that killed 157 people.

The doomed flight repeatedly nosedived as the pilots battled to control the nearly full aircraft before it crashed six minutes after take-off from Addis Ababa in clear conditions, Ethiopian authorities said yesterday.

"The crew performed all the procedures repeatedly provided by the manufacturer but was not able to control the aircraft," Transport Minister Dagmawit Moges told a

news conference, presenting the outlines of a preliminary report. Investigators are expected to publish the report by today.

Boeing's top-selling aircraft has been grounded worldwide since the March 10 disaster, which came just five months after a Lion Air 737 MAX crash in Indonesia that killed 189. An initial report into that accident also raised questions about the jet's software, as well as training and maintenance.

Ethiopian investigators did not blame anyone for the crash, in line with international rules requiring civil probes to focus on technical recommendations for safer flight. Nor did they give a detailed analysis of the flight, which is expected to take several months before a final report due within a year.



Russian President Vladimir Putin and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, talk to each other during their meeting in the Kremlin in Moscow, Russia, April 4, 2019. Netanyahu was in Russia ahead of Israeli general election which will be held on April 9.

**YEMEN WAR**

**Congress votes to end US role; veto likely**

REUTERS, Washington

The US House of Representatives approved a resolution yesterday to end US support for the Saudi Arabia-led coalition in the war in Yemen, rebuffing President Donald Trump's policy toward the kingdom.

As the resolution had already passed the Senate, where Trump's fellow Republicans have a slim majority, the 247-175 vote in the Democratic-led House sends the measure to the White House, which said last month Trump would issue a veto.

The final tally was not available, but about 15 House Republicans joined Democrats in backing the resolution.

The four-year-long civil war in Yemen, which pits the Saudi-led coalition against Houthi rebels backed by Iran, has killed tens of thousands of people and spawned what the United Nations calls the world's most dire humanitarian crisis, with the country on the brink of famine.

Backers of the resolution argued that US involvement in Yemen violated the constitutional requirement that Congress, not the president, should determine when the country goes to war.

Resolution opponents argued that support for the Saudi-led coalition was not an appropriate use of the War Powers Act that limits the president's ability to send troops into action.

Overcoming Trump's veto would require two-thirds majorities in both the Senate and House, more votes than it has garnered in either chamber.

Yemen's war escalated in March 2015, when a Saudi-backed coalition intervened against the Iran-aligned Houthi rebels.

**NEW ZEALAND MOSQUE MASSACRE**

**Suspected killer donated to European extremists**

AFP, Vienna

The alleged New Zealand mosque attacker made several donations to far-right "identitarian" activists in Europe known for their anti-immigration stunts, Austrian daily Der Standard reported yesterday.

Brenton Tarrant, who will face 50 murder charges in court this week over last month's attacks on two mosques in Christchurch, made donations in 2017 and 2018, the daily said, citing security sources from Germany and Austria familiar with the investigations.

In 2017, the Australian made four donations totalling 2,200 euros (\$2,500) were made. Sources quoted by the paper with knowledge of the probe in Germany said the money went to the French "Generation Identitaire" group.

ence was still probing whether the money all went to a group in a single country, the paper reports.

Tarrant also donated 1,500 euros to Martin Sellner, the leader of the Identitarian Movement Austria (IBOe), in 2018.

Austria, which is governed by a coalition including the far-right Freedom Party (FPoE), is now probing whether the IBOe is a terrorist organisation and as such could be disbanded.

France is also studying whether the Identitarian group there can be disbanded over a recent anti-immigration stunt on a roof of an administrative building in a Paris suburb.

Tarrant, who travelled extensively in Europe, including in Austria, raised money from speculating on cryptocurrency, amassing some 200,000 Australian dollars (127,000 euros), The Standard reported.

**Army shelling kills 22 civilians in Idlib**

AFP, Beirut

Heavy bombardment by the Syrian army of the jihadist-controlled Idlib region has killed 22 civilians, a monitor said yesterday, the latest violence which threatens a seven-month-old truce.

The ceasefire was brokered by the main foreign backers of the warring parties in September to head off a government offensive that prompted UN warnings of humanitarian disaster for the region's three million residents.

But since the region was overrun by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham alliance led by former al-Qaeda fighters in January, the fragile truce has come under mounting assault.

Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem accused Turkey, which signed the September deal on behalf of the rebels, of failing to honour its commitments and warned that his government's patience was running out.

The UN humanitarian affairs office said the escalating violence threatened aid deliveries to some 2.7 million people in need.

In the latest flare-up, army artillery and rocket fire on the Idlib towns of Kafnabel and Maaret al-Noman killed 13 people yesterday, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

**Life expectancy up 5.5 yrs: WHO**

AFP, Geneva

Global life expectancy grew by 5.5 years between 2000 and 2016, the World Health Organization said yesterday, warning though that unequal income and access to healthcare translates into far shorter lives for many.

The UN health agency also stressed significant gender differences in life expectancy worldwide.

On average, a child born in 2016 can expect to live 72 years, up from 66.5 in 2000, according to the annual World Health Statistics report.

The first 16 years of the century saw dramatic drops in deaths among children under five, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where progress has been made against malaria, measles and other communicable diseases, WHO said.

Life expectancy has also increased thanks to advances against HIV/AIDS, which ravaged much of Africa in the 1990s. But despite progress in poorer countries, WHO said there remained significant life expectancy gaps between developed and developing nations. People in low-income countries live 18 fewer years on average than those in high-income nations, statistics showed.