

NEWSIN brief

HRW founder Robert Bernstein dies at 96

Robert Bernstein, an ardent American defender of political dissent and freedom of expression who led publisher Random House and founded Human Rights Watch during the Cold War, died Monday, The New York Times reported. The newspaper cited Bernstein's son Peter as confirming his death at a hospital in New York.

Attacks against Afghan schools soar: Unicef

The number of attacks on schools in Afghanistan nearly tripled last year, Unicef said yesterday. Attacks on Afghan schools increased from 68 in 2017 to 192 in 2018, the first increase in such incidents since 2015. Afghanistan's ongoing war, now in its 18th year, resulted in more than 1,000 schools being closed by the end 2018, Unicef said, depriving some 500,000 children of their right to learning.

Sudan protesters strike

Thousands of Sudanese workers began a national strike yesterday, leaving air and bus passengers stranded as protesters piled pressure on the military to hand power to a civilian administration. Protesters remain at loggerheads with army generals who ousted president Omar al-Bashir last month over whether a civilian or a soldier should head a new governing body.

US climber becomes 11th Everest fatality

A US climber John Kulish, 61, has died after descending from Everest, officials said yesterday, taking this season's toll to 11 including several deaths blamed on overcrowding on the world's highest mountain. Nepal issued a record 381 Everest permits this season.



Sierra Waver gathers her belongings in Trotwood, Ohio, near Dayton, yesterday, after powerful tornadoes ripped through the US state overnight, causing at least one fatality and widespread damage and power outages.

Clashes in four Brazil jails kill 40

At least 40 inmates were killed in four jails in northern Brazil on Monday over an apparent gang dispute, authorities said, in the latest wave of violence to rock the country's severely overpopulated and deadly prison system. The victims appeared to have been killed by "asphyxiation," the Amazonas state government said in a statement, a day after 15 people were killed in one of the prisons. Officials had initially put the number of dead at 42, but later revised the number to 40. At least 25 of the victims were found in the Antonio Trindade Penal Institute near Manaus, the capital of Amazonas, where all four prisons are located. No guns or knives were used in the killings, which prison officials said appeared to have been sparked by a "rift between prisoners who belonged to the same criminal group and were involved in drug trafficking in the state." The federal government has dispatched reinforcements to boost security in the jails. An investigation launched into Sunday's mass killing at the Anisio Jobim Penal Complex, in which some of the prisoners were stabbed with sharpened toothbrushes during visiting hours, has been widened to include Monday's deaths. Four of those killed in the latest violence were found at the Anisio Jobim jail, which was also the scene of a prison rebellion that lasted almost 20 hours and left 56 people dead in January 2017. Another five were killed at the Provisional Detention Center for Men and six died at the Puraquequara Prison Unit. "The fact that the killings were coordinated across four separate prisons... suggests that this was a settling of scores," Robert Muggah, research director at the Igarape Institute think tank in Rio de Janeiro, told AFP.

Dark forces on the rise

Warns Angela Merkel as she defends her migrant policy

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has said "there is work to be done" in Germany to face up to the dark forces that are finding mainstream support there and in other parts of the world. "In Germany, obviously, they always have to be seen in a certain context, in the context of our past, which means we have to be that much more vigilant than others," she said. Speaking exclusively to CNN's Christiane Amanpour a day after the European elections, where nationalists failed to live up to a forecasted surge in support, Merkel said we have to face-up "to the specters of the past." "We have to tell our young people what history has brought over us and others." Merkel, who has been Chancellor for more than 13 years and outlasted many global leaders, has shouldered much of the blame for Europe's populist wave, with some pinning the spike in support for the far-right, anti-Islam Alternative for Germany (AfD)

on her handling of the European refugee crisis. The Chancellor again defended her relationship to allow nearly 1 million refugees into Germany, saying that the best way to manage immigration



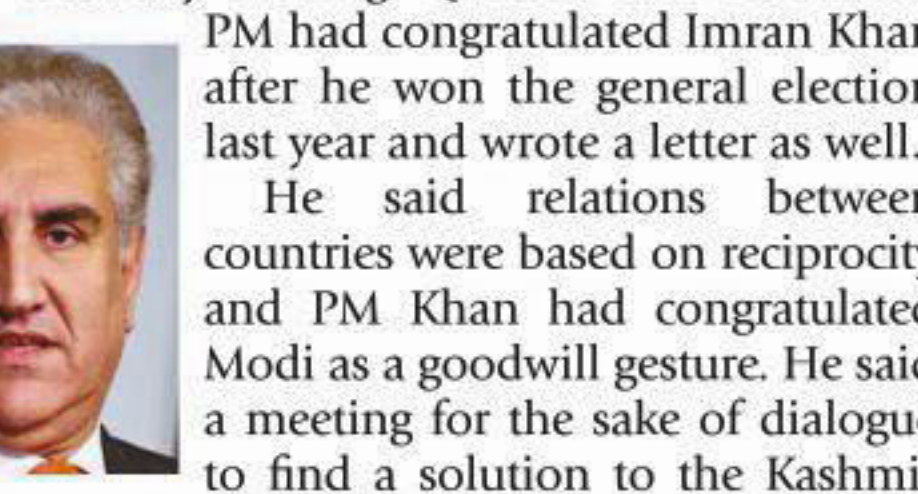
in the wake of humanitarian crises, like those in Syria and Iraq, was not to "shut ourselves off from each other," but to be more "vigilant" in making sure that refugees fleeing these countries are "sufficiently cared for." That the forecasted far-right surge in last week's European elections didn't happen was largely attributed to increased support for pro-European

Union green and liberal parties and an increased turnout across the bloc. In Germany, the green party finished second to Merkel's Christian Democratic Union. It's widely assumed that Merkel had a better relationship with Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama. But Merkel revealed to CNN that her relationship with the former president "did not start very smoothly" and that "it was not that easy in the beginning." With Merkel's final term as Chancellor ending in 2021, backers of her brand of politics fear it's on the way out as populism from both the left and right erodes the political center. Merkel strongly rejected ceding any ground to populist forces, instead saying there was a need to show "why we are for democracy, why we try to bring about solutions, why we always have to put ourselves into the other person's shoes, why we stand up against intolerance, why we show no tolerance towards violations of human rights."

MODI'S OATH-TAKING CEREMONY

Pak FM makes light of no invitation for Imran Khan

Pakistan has played down a decision by the Indian government not to invite Prime Minister Imran Khan to tomorrow's swearing-in ceremony of his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi, saying India's "internal politics" did not permit him to extend an invitation.



"His [Modi's] entire focus [during the election campaign] was on Pakistan-bashing. It was unwise to expect that he can get rid of this narrative [soon]," Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi told a news channel. Earlier, a Reuters report had said New Delhi would not invite PM Khan to Modi's oath-taking ceremony. An Indian government statement said the leaders of Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal and Bhutan — all members of the little-known Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation — had been invited to Modi's swearing-in.

All nations from the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, which includes Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Maldives, were invited to the swearing-in ceremony for Modi's first term in 2014. Speaking at a Geo News programme on Monday evening, Qureshi said the Indian PM had congratulated Imran Khan after he won the general election last year and wrote a letter as well. He said relations between countries were based on reciprocity and PM Khan had congratulated Modi as a goodwill gesture. He said a meeting for the sake of dialogue to find a solution to the Kashmir issue, as well as Siachen and Sir Creek disputes, would have been a significant measure instead of attending the swearing-in ceremony. "Finding a new way [to resume dialogue] is also essential for them [India]," Qureshi said. "If he [Modi] wants development of this region...the only way is to sit with Pakistan to find a solution," he added.

Lanka signs port deal with Japan, India

Sri Lanka yesterday announced it is entering into partnership with India and Japan to develop a deep-sea container terminal next to a controversial \$500-million Chinese-run container jetty in Colombo harbour. The state-run Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA) said a memorandum of cooperation (MOC) had been signed between the three countries to develop what is known as the East Terminal of the Colombo port. The SLPA said it will retain 51 percent of the company that will run the terminal while the rest will be owned by India and Japan. It gave no further details of the costs of the project. China owns 85 percent of the adjoining terminal known as the Colombo International Container Terminal (CICT) which was commissioned in 2013. The SLPA owns the remaining 15 percent of the company. In December 2017, Sri Lanka, unable to repay a huge Chinese loan, handed over another deep sea port in Hambantota, which straddles the world's busiest east-west shipping route, on a 99-year lease to a Chinese state company in a deal that raised concerns at home and abroad. India and US are both concerned that a Chinese foothold at Hambantota, 240 kilometres (150 miles) south of Colombo, could give it a military naval advantage in the Indian Ocean.



Japan's Yasuko Atsukata, who witnessed the crime scene where a man stabbed 19 people, lays flowers and prays at the site in Kawasaki, yesterday.



Kushner in ME to seek support for peace plan

Senior White House adviser Jared Kushner is leading a US delegation on stops in the Middle East this week seeking support for a late June workshop aimed at helping the Palestinians, a White House official said yesterday. Kushner, Middle East envoy Jason Greenblatt and US Special Representative for Iran and Kushner aide Avi Berkowitz began their trip in Rabat and were to travel to Amman and Jerusalem, arriving in Israel tomorrow. Kushner will then meet up with US President Donald Trump in London when the president makes a state visit there next week. The trip is similar to one that Kushner and Greenblatt took in February to Gulf states to drum up support for the economic portion of a Middle East peace plan that they have been developing on behalf of Trump.

Israeli polls rerun looms as Netanyahu talks falter

Late Monday and overnight, Israel's parliament took its first steps toward dissolving itself and holding new elections. Two further votes are needed to finalise it. The prime minister has sought to pile pressure on Lieberman, whose nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu party's five seats are crucial to the coalition Netanyahu wants to form, but he has refused to back down. The dispute hinges on Lieberman's demand that legislation he supports aimed at having ultra-Orthodox Jews perform mandatory military service like other Jewish Israelis be approved without changes. The issue is highly sensitive in Israel and the legislation is opposed by ultra-Orthodox parties, who control 16 seats in parliament and are set to become a key member of Netanyahu's coalition. Netanyahu said in an address late Monday that Lieberman was being unreasonable and that there was "no reason to drag the country to unnecessary elections that will cost a fortune and paralyse us all for another half a year."



No-deal Brexit is 'political suicide'

Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt yesterday said that Britain's governing Conservative Party would be committing "political suicide" if it tries to force through a no-deal Brexit. Hunt, who is among the 10 candidates vying to replace the outgoing Theresa May as Britain's prime minister, said trying to take the UK out of the European Union without a deal would trigger a general election in which the Conservatives risked being "annihilated." He said the centre-right party would face an existential threat, with voters who supported staying in the EU defecting to the pro-EU Liberal Democrats and those who supported leaving the EU heading to the Brexit Party. Hunt said any PM who promised to leave the EU by a specific date, without the time to renegotiate and pass a new deal, would effectively be committing to a general election because parliament would bring down the government. "Trying to deliver no deal through a general election is not a solution. It is political suicide," Hunt wrote in The Daily Telegraph newspaper. Rival leadership candidates, including Boris Johnson and Dominic Raab, have said Britain must be prepared to leave the EU without a deal. Britain is due to leave the EU on October 31, while the next general election is not due until 2022.

Mother, daughter sue France over air pollution

A Paris court yesterday began hearing a case brought by a mother and daughter who, in a legal first in France, are suing the state for damages over ill health caused by air pollution. The mother and the daughter are asking for 160,000 euros (\$179,000) in damages from the state at the administrative court of Montreuil in the east of Paris. They argue the authorities did not take effective measures against atmospheric pollution, in particular during the very high pollution that Paris endured in December 2016. Both say they developed respiratory problems that were accentuated during pollution peaks. The mother, 52, has had to take time off work and the daughter, 16, suffered asthma crises. In total, around 50 people across France are taking similar actions against the French state, said Sebastian Vray, the founder of the NGO Respire, which assists the cases of the plaintiffs.

Maldives ex-leader Nasheed tipped as new Speaker

The former Maldives president Mohamed Nasheed has been nominated as the country's parliamentary speaker and is set to be sworn in, a party official said. Nasheed was unanimously chosen to head the People's Majlis, or the parliament, by his Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) which won a near three quarter majority in the 87-member assembly in April. "He is unanimously chosen as the Speaker," a party official told AFP. Nasheed -- who until six months ago was still in exile -- has vowed to usher in his party's thumping mandate to usher in a new era of stability and democracy in the Maldives.

'Change everything' to avert climate crisis: Thunberg

Climate activist Greta Thunberg called on citizens to "change everything" to avert climate crisis, at the start of a conference in Vienna yesterday organised by former California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. "We young people are waking up and we promise, we won't let you get away with it anymore," 16-year-old Thunberg told delegates. Technological developments in fields such as electric cars and solar energy should not leave people with the impression that they could "solve the crisis without making any efforts," she said. "Once we realise, we act, we change. Humans are very adaptable," she added. She was speaking at the Austrian World Summit, an initiative launched by Schwarzenegger, which brings together some 1,200 figures from the worlds of science, politics and business to discuss ways to tackle climate change.

