

# NEWSIN brief

## Four murdered in London in 28 hours

REUTERS, London  
London Mayor Sadiq Khan said police were working around the clock after four people were murdered in a bloody 28-hour period for Britain's capital, including a heavily pregnant woman who was stabbed to death. In three separate incidents, two men died from stab wounds and a third following a fight, as the wave of violent murders that has gripped the capital continued. Five people have been arrested.

## S Arabia intercepts 2 Yemen rebel drones

AFP, Riyadh  
Two Yemeni rebel drones targeting southern Saudi Arabia were intercepted on Saturday, a Riyadh-led military coalition said, the latest in a series of assaults on the kingdom. The first drone targeted the province of Jizan and the second was aimed at a residential area in Asir province, the coalition said in a statement released by the official Saudi Press Agency. The coalition did not report any damage or casualties. Saudi Arabia has repeatedly accused Iran of supplying sophisticated weapons to Huthi rebels, a charge Tehran denies.

## Venezuelan parties to restart negotiations

REUTERS, Caracas  
Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's government and opposition leader Juan Guaido's team will restart negotiations to try to resolve the country's crisis, three people familiar with the talks said on Saturday. The three people told Reuters that both sides had not yet decided whether to hold the discussions in Oslo, where previous talks were held, or in Barbados. Two of the people said the talks would begin next week.



Sudanese protestors chant slogans demanding civilian rule on June 30, 2019 during a rally in Khartoum's southern al-Sahafa district. Police fired tear gas at protesters in Khartoum today as thousands gathered for a mass demonstration against Sudan's ruling generals, amid international calls for restraint to avoid a new deadly crackdown.

## TRUMP-KIM SURPRISE DMZ MEET

# Publicity stunt or leap for peace?

AFP, Seoul  
Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un's meeting in the Korean Demilitarized Zone produced a barrage of headlines and images, but left analysts questioning whether it was a small step for publicity or a giant leap for peace. The impromptu encounter saw Trump briefly crossing over the demarcation line -- becoming the first sitting US president to step into Pyongyang's territory. It came months after their second summit in Hanoi broke down over what the nuclear-armed North would be willing to give up in exchange for sanctions relief. After around an hour of talks in Panmunjom -- the "truce village" in the DMZ that has divided the peninsula since the two sides and their allies fought each other to stalemate in 1953 -- Trump emerged to say the two would begin working-level talks in the next few weeks. He also invited the North's leader to Washington "at the right time", he added. It was a more substantive outcome than many had expected after Trump issued his Twitter invitation to Kim and said the meeting could be as short as two minutes to simply "say hello". But analysts questioned whether it would be enough to create sustainable progress in a process that has already been running for years and has regularly become bogged down. Vipin Narang, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said the "reality show theatrics" of Panmunjom were worth it if they led to effective working-level talks. "If not, then we will keep tuning into this same show for the next 15 months," he added. While the Trump administration is adamant it wants

# India drought hits crops

## Modi pushes for greater grassroots water conservation efforts amid concerns over weak monsoon rains

REUTERS, New Delhi  
Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday pushed for greater grassroots water conservation efforts amid concerns weak monsoon rains would push millions of drought-hit people to the edge and hammer agricultural production in Asia's third-biggest economy. The monsoon season is responsible for around 70% of India's annual rainfall, and is particularly important for the farm sector since more than half of the country's arable land is rain-fed. "Only 8% of all the rain water in India is conserved," Modi said in his first monthly radio broadcast after winning re-election last month. "It's now time to solve this problem." India received 24% less rainfall than the 50-year average in the week ended on June 26, data from the India Meteorological Department showed, with scant rains over central and western regions of the country. The spectre of a crisis this year comes

after drought in some parts of India in 2018 destroyed crops, ravaged livestock, exhausted reservoirs, leaving some cities and industries with little water. "There is no one formula to deal with the water crisis across the country," Modi said, adding that he had written to scores of village chiefs across the country about the need to conserve

"Only 8% of all the rain water in India is conserved. It's now time to solve this problem": Modi



water earlier this month. The prime minister said there was a need to create public awareness about water conservation and explore traditional water management methods, in the much the same way the "Clean India" mission to end open defecation, started in 2014, had.

However, Modi did not outline any specific measures his government would take to deal with the ongoing situation, which has already affected the sowing of summer crops and forced many communities to buy water from expensive private tankers. Himanshu Thakkar, co-ordinator of the South Asia Network of Dams, Rivers and People (SANDRP), said Modi's initiative would have limited impact without the government fixing problems like rampant groundwater usage. A key source of water, groundwater levels in 52% of wells monitored nationwide were lower in 2018 compared to last decade's average, the country's water resources minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat told parliament this week. "The government is doing nothing to regulate groundwater use," said Thakkar of SANDRP, a non-governmental organisation that advocates for better water management practices.

## Trump-Kim meet raises hope for peace

### Says Pope

REUTERS, Vatican City  
Pope Francis yesterday praised the meeting between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and said he hoped it would lead to peace. "In the last few hours we saw in Korea a good example of the culture of encounter. I salute the protagonists, with a prayer that such a significant gesture will be a further step on the road to peace, not only on that peninsula, but for the good of the entire world," he told thousands of people in St Peter's Square for his weekly address and blessing. Trump became the first sitting US president to set foot in North Korea yesterday when he met Kim and agreed to resume stalled nuclear talks.



to see North Korea give up its nuclear arsenal, Pyongyang has never publicly declared it is willing to do so, referring instead to the wider and more ambiguous "denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula". The Panmunjom meeting gave both leaders "a good reason to seek dialogue again", said Hong Min, a senior researcher at the South's state-run Korea Institute for National Unification. But Mintaro Oba, a former State Department official in the Obama administration, called it a "temporary burst of momentum". "We are engaged in a sort of 'defibrillator diplomacy' with North Korea: keeping the process alive through an occasional injection of energy, but never treating the underlying disease," Oba tweeted. With a presidential election in the US next year, Trump's dramatic steps into North Korea will be a "useful tool" on the campaign trail, said Koo Kab-woo, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul. The visit also boosted Kim's image; a sitting US president visiting a country which it calls pariah state.

## 'Beauty and the beast'

Whether he is tweeting from his bed late at night or wrapping up a historical visit to North Korea, US President Donald Trump never fails to raise a few eyebrows with his off-hand attempts at humour. Trump did it again yesterday as he invited his daughter, Ivanka Trump, and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to the stage while visiting the Osan Air Base in Pyeongtaek, a region just south of South Korean capital Seoul, after an Asia trip. "What a beautiful couple," he quipped before his audience of air force personnel, referring to Ivanka Trump and Pompeo. "Mike, Beauty and the Beast, Mike." Earlier in the day, Trump had stepped onto North Korean soil in a historic move as he met Democratic People's Republic of Korea leader Kim Jong Un in a moment of high diplomatic drama.

## Don't take democracy for granted: Modi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday reminded people of the emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi and urged them not to take democracy "for granted", saying in day-to-day life, it is difficult to savour the joy of democratic rights, unless they are snatched away. In his first 'Mann ki Baat' monthly radio address after returning to power, he said everyday when one gets to eat food on time, one doesn't realize what hunger pangs are. "Similarly, in day-to-day life, it is difficult to savour the joy of democratic rights, unless they are snatched away. During Emergency, every citizen of the country had started getting the feeling that something that belonged to him had been snatched away," he said. Modi was of the view that people must keep reminding themselves that democracy is "gloriously great, it flows in our veins, through centuries of dedicated practice."



Indonesian people participate in the carnival parade to mark the 492nd anniversary of the capital city in Jakarta, yesterday.

# Dozens killed amid Afghan peace push

REUTERS, Kabul  
Taliban suicide bombers killed at least 19 people in an attack on a government office on Saturday night, officials said, in the latest episode of violence in Afghanistan as peace talks continue to end the war. Election workers were registering voters ahead of presidential elections in September at an office in the Maroof district of the southern Kandahar province when fighters of the hardline Islamist group launched an attack using four Humvee vehicles, officials said. Eight election workers were killed, they said. Eleven Afghan security force members were also killed alongside the four suicide bombers, said Tadeen Khan, the police chief of Kandahar. The Taliban, which rejects the election process, claimed responsibility for the attack. Taliban spokesman Qari Yousuf Ahmadi said the group's fighters also killed 57 members of the Afghan security forces in the attack and captured 11 others, but Afghan officials disputed the account. The interior ministry in a statement said 25 Taliban insurgents were killed in the clash. The Taliban, which controls or contests half the country, more than at any time since being overthrown by the US invasion in 2001, has rejected calls for a ceasefire. In a separate attack, Taliban fighters killed eight Afghan soldiers and injured eight others at a military checkpoint in Balabulak district in the western province of Farah, a local official said.

# Climate change running faster than we are

## UN chief urges action to avert 'catastrophe'

AFP, Abu Dhabi  
UN chief Antonio Guterres said climate-related devastation was striking the planet on a weekly basis and yesterday warned that urgent action must be taken to avoid a catastrophe. "We are here because the world is facing a grave climate emergency," Guterres told a two-day Abu Dhabi Climate Meeting to prepare for a Climate Action Summit in New York in September. "Climate disruption is happening now... It is progressing even faster than the world's top scientists have predicted," the UN secretary general said. "It is outpacing our efforts to address it. Climate change is running faster than we are," he said. "Every week brings new climate-related devastation... floods, drought, heatwaves, wildfires and super storms," Guterres said. He warned the situation would only deteriorate unless "we act now with ambition and urgency", but some of the world's decision-makers still did not realise the dangers. The UN chief held out hope in the Paris Agreement to cut harmful emissions and reduce global warming. "But we know that even if the promises of Paris are fully met, we still face at least a three-degree temperature rise by the end of the century -- a catastrophe for life as we know it," Guterres said. He was convening the Climate Action Summit because many countries were not even keeping pace with their promises under the Paris Agreement. A landmark report last year by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) said a safer cap of a 1.5 degree rise would see nations rapidly slash planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions via a sharp drawdown of fossil fuel use.

# Germany roasts in heatwave

## Cool reprieve for parts of Europe as hot-weather warnings lifted across north, west France; Spain wildfire triggers more evacuation

AFP, Paris  
A welcome dip in temperatures came to parts of Europe yesterday, bringing relief to areas which have sweltered through a widespread, deadly heatwave for nearly a week. Hot-weather warnings were lifted across north and west France, days after the country posted all-time high temperatures as it sizzled along with Italy, Spain and some central European nations. Six days of intense heat fuelled huge blazes and pollution peaks, and officially claimed four lives in France, two in Italy and another two in Spain, including a 17-year-old harvest worker, a 33-year-old roofer and a 72-year-old homeless man. The mercury was set to start dropping for France and Spain from yesterday, but still rise in Germany, with temperatures as high as 39 degrees Celsius (102 degrees Fahrenheit) in some places before cooling down from today. On Saturday night in Spain, firefighters were battling high flames in strong winds and blistering heat soon after they managed to contain another inferno in nearly 72 hours. Authorities ordered the evacuation of around 40 homes yesterday. A fire that started Friday in the central Spanish town of Almorox burnt at least 1,600 hectares (4,000 acres), spilling over into the Madrid region and forcing the evacuation of a village, emergency services said. In France, fires have razed about 600 hectares and dozens of houses in the Gard department in the country's south. This is the same region where a new French record of 45.9 degrees Celsius was set Friday, prompting the Meteo France weather service to issue its highest alert level of red for the first time. Winegrowers in the south of France said their precious crops have been badly burnt. "Some vines seem to have been hit with a blowtorch," Jerome Despey said, while Catherine Bernard likened it to the effects of a hairdryer. France is the seventh European country to ever register a plus 45-degree temperature, along with Bulgaria, Portugal, Italy, Spain, Greece and North Macedonia, Meteo France said. Meteorologists point to a blast of hot air from northern Africa for the scorching early European summer. Scientists warn that global warming linked to human fossil fuel use could make such heatwaves more frequent. In Germany, the national weather service said temperatures were more than four degrees higher in June than an international reference period of 1981-2010.



## Prince William and Kate announce Pakistan visit

Prince William and his wife Kate will visit Pakistan later this year on the first royal trip to the country in more than a decade, Kensington Palace announced yesterday. The royal couple's visit, requested by the Britain's Foreign and Commonwealth Office, shows London's renewed interest in the country. "Further details (of the visit) will be advised in due course," Kensington Palace tweeted. The visit comes 13 years after Charles and Camilla -- the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall -- toured the country in 2006. Britain is home to more than a million people of Pakistani origin, making it the largest Pakistani diaspora in Europe. SOURCE: AFP, NDTV