

# NEWSIN brief

## N Korea media hail amazing Trump visit

North Korea yesterday hailed the weekend meeting between leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump in the Demilitarized Zone as "historic", as analysts said Pyongyang was looking to shape the narrative to its own agenda. The two leaders agreed to "resume and push forward productive dialogues for making a new breakthrough in the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula", the official Korean Central News Agency said.

## 35 dead as bus plunges into Kashmir gorge

At least 35 people were killed yesterday when an overcrowded bus plunged into a gorge in Indian-administered Kashmir, officials said. It was the second deadly crash in less than a week in the northern state of Jammu and Kashmir, renowned for its mountainous terrain and abysmal road safety record. The bus skidded off a road in the remote Kishtwar region and fell into a deep, narrow valley, senior police official M K Sinha said.

## Pope to hold mass for migrants

Pope Francis will hold a mass for migrants and those who help them, to mark the sixth anniversary of his visit to Italy's Lampedusa island, a key entry point into Europe, the Vatican said yesterday. The news came as passions raged in Italy over the issue with the German captain of a charity migrant rescue vessel due in court after challenging Interior Minister Matteo Salvini's "closed-ports" policy.



A protester defaces the Hong Kong emblem after protesters broke into the government headquarters in Hong Kong yesterday on the 22nd anniversary of the city's handover from Britain to China. Hundreds of protesters stormed the parliament as the territory marked its China handover anniversary, ransacking the building and daubing its walls with graffiti as the city plunged into unprecedented depths of political chaos.

# Protesters ransack HK parliament

Hundreds of protesters stormed Hong Kong's parliament late yesterday as the territory marked its China handover anniversary, ransacking the building and daubing its walls with graffiti as police warned they were poised to use "appropriate force" to clear the area. The financial hub has been plunged into unprecedented political chaos after three weeks of record-breaking demonstrations against a hugely unpopular bill that would allow extraditions to the Chinese mainland. Tens of thousands of democracy activists staged another peaceful march yesterday afternoon, calling for the city's pro-Beijing leader to step down and reverse what they see as years of sliding freedoms. But late yesterday young, masked protesters wearing hard hats, managed to breach the legislature after clashes with riot police, ending two weeks of relative calm. Once inside they tore down portraits of the city's leaders, hoisted a British colonial era flag in the main chamber and sprayed the city crest with black paint. "There are no violent protesters, just tyranny," one banner that was hoisted above the podium read. "Hong Kong is not China," read another. Riot police appeared to have abandoned the building, which had been on lockdown. But shortly after the breach, Hong Kong police warned they were ready to expel the protesters from the parliament using "appropriate force" if they encountered "obstruction or resistance." The European Union yesterday urged the anti-government protesters to use restraint and avoid escalation.

# Iran exceeds stockpile limit

Says FM Zarif despite warning by EU signatories to stick to 2015 nuke deal; IAEA confirms breach of limit

Iran has breached the limit of its enriched uranium stockpile set in a 2015 deal with major powers, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said yesterday, according to the ISNA news agency, defying a warning by European co-signatories to stick to the deal despite US sanctions. Zarif confirmed that Iran had exceeded the relevant limit of 300 kg of uranium hexafluoride (UF6), but Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said Iran's steps to decrease its commitments to the nuclear deal were "reversible".

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed yesterday that Iran has exceeded a limit on its enriched uranium reserves set by a 2015 nuclear deal. Enriching uranium to a low level of 3.6% fissile material is the first step in a process that could eventually allow Iran to amass enough highly-enriched uranium to build a nuclear warhead. Last Wednesday, the IAEA verified that Iran had roughly 200 kg of low-enriched uranium, just below the deal's 202.8 kg limit, three diplomats who follow the agency's work told Reuters. A quantity of 300 kg of UF6 (uranium hexafluoride) corresponds to 202.8 kg of LEU. After talks on Friday in Vienna, Iran said European countries had offered too little in the way of trade assistance to persuade it to back off from its plan to breach the limit, a riposte to US President Donald Trump's decision last year to quit the deal and reimpose economic sanctions. Mousavi urged them yesterday to step up their efforts. "Time is running out for them to save the deal," state TV quoted him as saying.

**URANIUM ENRICHMENT**  
US imposed more economic sanctions on Iran in May  
Trump dispatched extra forces to ME

The deal between Iran and six world powers lifted most international sanctions against Iran in return for restrictions on its nuclear work aimed at extending the time. In May, Washington piled pressure on Tehran by ordering all countries to halt imports of Iranian oil, and tensions have been growing in the Gulf ever since. Washington has dispatched extra forces to the Middle East, and US fighter jets came within minutes of conducting air strikes on Iran last month after Tehran downed an unmanned American drone. In a speech yesterday broadcast on state TV, Iranian Zarif said: "Iran will never yield to pressure from the United States ... If they want to talk to Iran, they should show respect ... Never threaten an Iranian ... Iran has always resisted pressure, and has responded with respect when respected."

# Gun battle ends in Kabul

after blast hurts 105  
Taliban claims responsibility for the attack

Afghan security forces killed five Taliban gunmen who stormed a building in Kabul yesterday after detonating a bomb-laden truck that wounded at least 105 people, including 51 children, officials said. The gun battle lasted more than seven hours, a security official said, adding that the Taliban fighters in the under-construction building fired at Afghan forces who rushed to the blast site to evacuate the wounded. "Clashes ended with the death of all five attackers," said interior ministry spokesman Nasrat Rahimi, adding that more than 210 people had been rescued during the operation. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack. "The target was the defence ministry's technical installation," the Islamist militants' spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said in a statement.

Afghan security officials said the truck loaded with explosives was detonated near the ministry's engineering and logistics department at rush hour. About 100 wounded people were taken to hospital, said health ministry spokesman Wahidullah Mayar, but there was no immediate word of fatalities. Fifty-one children in two schools near the blast site were hurt by flying shards of glass, said Nooria Nazhat, a spokeswoman of the education ministry. A security guard at Shamsad TV was killed and several employees hurt in their office near the blast site, said director Abid Ehsas. The blast sent a plume of black smoke rising over the city and shook buildings. The area has a cluster of military and government buildings, as well as an office of the Afghan Football Federation, whose chief, Yusuf Kargar, was among several members injured.



## BLOODSHED AT RALLY

# Sudan protest leaders blame ruling generals

Sudan's protest leaders blamed ruling generals yesterday for deadly new violence as three blood-stained bodies were found a day after the first mass rallies since a June crackdown on demonstrators. State media reported that seven people were killed as tens of thousands rallied to demand a civilian government, while medics linked to the protest movement said five protesters had been killed. The northeast African country's protesters have been calling for the departure of generals who seized power following the April ouster of longtime ruler Omar al-Bashir. Sunday's "million man" march had been seen as a test for protest organisers after a June 3 raid on a Khartoum protest camp left dozens dead and a subsequent internet blackout curbed their ability to mobilise support. But that did not prevent vast crowds of men and women, chanting slogans demanding "civilian rule", flooding the streets of Khartoum, twin city Omdurman and other towns and cities, AFP correspondents and witnesses reported. Security forces meanwhile deployed en masse in key Khartoum squares, firing tear gas in several places including at protesters attempting to reach the capital's residential palace. The official SUNA news agency quoted a health ministry official saying seven people were killed, without giving further details but adding that another 181 were wounded, including 27 by gunfire.



A policeman stands next to vehicles buried in hail in the eastern area of Guadalajara, Jalisco state, Mexico on Sunday. The accumulation of hail in the streets of Guadalajara buried vehicles and damaged homes. Guadalajara had been enjoying a sweaty summer for the past few weeks until the weekend brought a shocking surprise.

# Missile from Syria-Israel clash lands in Cyprus

Sets hills ablaze; calls grow for neighbours' safety

An errant missile struck Cyprus early yesterday, skimming the densely populated capital Nicosia and crashing on a mountainside in what authorities described as a spillover from strikes between Israel and Syria. The explosion occurred around 1:00 am in the region of Tashkent, also known as Vouno, some 20 kms (12 miles) northeast of Nicosia, with the impact starting a fire and heard for miles around. There were no casualties. But it caused widespread concern on both sides of the ethnically-split island and brought calls for warring parties to respect their neighbours' safety. An Israeli air strike was underway against Syria at the time. Syrian state media said the Syrian air defences had fired in response. "It is understood that a missile fired from Syria fell here by accident, as a result of being fired in an uncontrolled way by batteries ... in response to the intense attacks yesterday evening by Israel," Kudret Ozersay, the Turkish Cypriot foreign minister, told a news conference. "Based on our initial assessment, it is the remains of a missile which is known as S-200 in the Russian system and SA-5 in the Nato system," he added. In a Facebook post earlier, Ozersay said the explosion was thought to have occurred before impact because there were no craters, and debris was found at several different points. Cyprus lies west of Syria, and the impact site about 50 kilometres (31 miles) inland. Israeli warplanes fired missiles targeting Syrian military positions in Homs - around 310 kilometres (193 miles) from Nicosia - and the Damascus outskirts overnight in an attack that killed at least four civilians and wounded another 21.



# Sri Lanka president rebuffs UN chief over hangings

Sri Lanka's president said yesterday he had rejected a telephone appeal by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to reconsider his push to reintroduce the death penalty after 43 years. "I told the Secretary General that I want to save my country from drugs," Maithripala Sirisena told a meeting in Colombo to mark his anti-narcotics drive. "He telephoned me last week shortly after I signed four death warrants. I told him to please allow me to stamp out the drug menace," Sirisena said. Sirisena told reporters on Wednesday that he had signed death warrants for four drug offenders, but did not give their names nor say when and where the executions would be carried out. He accused the European Union of interfering in the internal affairs of his country, saying that EU diplomats had threatened him with tariffs if Sri Lanka went ahead with the executions. "The EU told me that they will withdraw the GSP Plus (tariff concession) if I go ahead," Sirisena said. "This is interfering with the sovereignty and independence of our country. It is unacceptable." He also took a swipe at Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and at non-governmental organisations that had criticised him over his stance. Wickremesinghe had on Sunday said that a majority of parliament members were against Sirisena's decision to resume executions. Sirisena faces several court challenges to his decision to restore the death penalty. In the latest case filed in the Supreme Court Monday, the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) noted it was long recognised that hanging by death was a cruel and inhuman form of punishment, not befitting a multi-religious and civilised society. "Though convicts have been sentenced to death, the long recognised practice in Sri Lanka for over 43 years has been that they were not executed," the CPA's executive director Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu said.



## British PM hopeful Hunt unveils no-deal Brexit plans

British prime ministerial contender Jeremy Hunt yesterday pledged billions of pounds to mitigate the effects of a possible no-deal Brexit, but the country's finance minister dismissed the plans as unaffordable. Hunt is vying with frontrunner Boris Johnson to win the support of predominately pro-Brexit Conservative Party members, who will vote this month for Theresa May's replacement as prime minister. Hunt, the foreign minister, who has previously said leaving the European Union without a deal "would be a mistake we would regret for generations", made his strongest commitment to back such a move by unveiling a 10-point plan.

## India suffers driest June in five years

India had its driest June in five years due to a delay in monsoon rains, the weather department said late on Sunday, raising fears for crops and the broader economy. Overall, rains were a third below average, although in some states, including the sugar cane growing northern state of Uttar Pradesh, they were as much as 61 percent down, data from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) showed. Over half of India's arable land relies on rainfall, while agriculture makes up about 15% of Asia's third-largest economy, which is already suffering a slowdown. The monsoon usually covers nearly the entire country by July 1, but has covered less than two-thirds so far this year, according to the IMD data.

## Japan resumes whale hunts after 30 years

Japanese whalers brought ashore their first catches yesterday as they resumed commercial hunting after a three-decade hiatus, brushing aside criticism from activists who say the practice is cruel and outdated. Five vessels set sail under grey morning skies from northern Japan's Kushiro with their horns blaring and grey tarps thrown over their harpoons. By yesterday afternoon they were back with their catch: two grey minke whales. The hunts come after Japan decided to withdraw from the International Whaling Commission, a move slammed by activists and anti-whaling countries but welcomed by Japanese whaling communities. "Today is the best day," said Yoshifumi Kai, head of the Japan Small-Type Whaling Association, as the ocean giants were hauled ashore.