

NEWS IN brief

Iran summons UK envoy over seizure of oil tanker

Iran summoned the British ambassador in Tehran over the "illegal seizure" of an Iranian oil tanker in Gibraltar yesterday, Iranian state TV quoted Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi as saying. British Royal Marines seized an oil tanker in Gibraltar yesterday accused of bringing oil to Syria in violation of EU sanctions, a dramatic step that could escalate confrontation between the West and Iran.

Malaysia ex-PM's stepson arrested over 1MDB scam

The Malaysian producer of the Leonardo DiCaprio-starred film "The Wolf of Wall Street" was arrested yesterday on suspicion of money laundering as part of investigations into the 1MDB scandal, officials said. Riza Aziz, stepson of Malaysia's disgraced ex-leader Najib Razak, was detained in Malaysia after questioning by graft investigators and will appear in court today to face charges.

27 dead as fishing boat sinks off Honduras

At least 27 people died and nine were missing Wednesday when their fishing boat sank off the Caribbean coast of Honduras, the country's military said. Armed forces spokesman Jose Meza said that 55 people survived when the vessel sank off the remote coastal Mosquitia region. Ninety-one people were aboard the boat, the 70-tonne "Wallie," when it set sail from Cabo Gracias a Dios -- on the country's easternmost point bordering Nicaragua -- after a seasonal ban on lobster fishing was lifted.

Trump brushes off migrant centre criticism with a tweet

President Donald Trump brushed off reports of overcrowding and squalid conditions in migrant detention centres Wednesday by saying the migrants can opt "not to come" to the United States. "If illegal immigrants are unhappy with the conditions in the quickly built or refitted detention centers, just tell them not to come. All problems solved!" Trump tweeted. The comment came one day after a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) report warned of "dangerous overcrowding" in the facilities, which hold thousands of migrants seeking to remain in the country, most of them fleeing violence and poverty in their Central American homes. And it follows Democratic lawmakers who also visited detention facilities reporting massive crowding in cells with no running water, children and adults lacking access to needed medicines and deprived of showers for up to two weeks.

Facebook services back online after outage

Facebook said it was "back at 100 percent" Wednesday evening after an outage on all of its services affected users in various parts of the world. Online monitoring service DownDetector reported earlier the outage began around 1200 GMT and affected Facebook as well as its Instagram and WhatsApp services. A Facebook spokesperson, also speaking on behalf of Instagram and WhatsApp, explained that a "routine maintenance operation" accidentally triggered a bug that made it difficult for users to upload or send photos and videos, US media reported. #Facebookdown and #instagramdown were trending on Twitter as users around the world reported these apps were not functioning. According to DownDetector, thousands of users around the world were reporting outages, with Europe and North America most impacted. Both individual users as well as businesses and organizations were affected.

Imran Khan to meet Trump

Prime Minister Imran Khan will travel to Washington to meet US President Donald Trump on July 22, the Pakistani foreign ministry said yesterday, a rare visit between leaders of the sometimes prickly allies. The visit -- Khan's first to the US since coming to power last year -- came at Trump's invitation, a Pakistani foreign office spokesman said at a weekly briefing, adding: "The focus will be to refresh the bilateral relationship". He gave no further details. The announcement comes as the US is seeking Pakistan's help in finding a way out of neighbouring Afghanistan, where American forces are now in their 18th year of war.

Too hot for humans

Experts say heat waves in South Asia may make parts of the region inhabitable

CNN ONLINE

Intense heat waves have killed more than 100 people in India this summer and are predicted to worsen in coming years, creating a possible humanitarian crisis as large parts of the country potentially become too hot to be inhabitable.

Heat waves in India usually take place between March and July and abate once the monsoon rains arrive. But in recent years these hot spells have become more intense, more frequent and longer.

India is among the countries expected to be worst affected by the impacts of climate crisis, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Experts at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) say that even if the world succeeds in cutting carbon emissions, limiting the predicted rise in average global temperatures, parts of India will become so hot they will test the limits of human survivability.

"The future of heat waves is looking worse even with significant mitigation of climate change, and much worse without mitigation," said Elfatih Eltahir, a professor of hydrology and climate at MIT.

Last year, there were 484 official heat



waves across India, up from 21 in 2010. During that period, more than 5,000 people died. This year's figures show little respite.

In June, Delhi hit temperatures of 48 degrees Celsius (118 Fahrenheit), the highest ever recorded in that month. West of the capital, Churu in Rajasthan nearly broke the country's heat record with a high of 50.6 Celsius (123 Fahrenheit).

India's poorest state, Bihar, closed all schools, colleges and coaching centers for five days after severe heat killed more than 100 people. The closures were accompanied by warnings to stay

indoors during the hottest part of the day, an unrealistic order for millions of people who needed to work outdoors to earn money.

India's situation is not unique. Many places around the world have endured heat waves so far this year, including parts of Spain, China, Nepal and Zimbabwe.

To examine the question of future survivability of heat waves in South Asia, MIT researchers looked at two scenarios presented by the IPCC: The first is that global average surface temperatures will rise by 4.5 degrees Celsius by the end of the century. The second is the more

optimistic prediction of an average increase of 2.25 degrees Celsius.

Under the more optimistic prediction, researchers found that no parts of South Asia would exceed the limits of survivability by the year 2100.

However, it was a different story under the hotter scenario, which assumes global emissions continue on their current path.

In that case, researchers found that the limits of survivability would be exceeded in a few locations in India's Chota Nagpur Plateau, in the northeast of the country, and Bangladesh.

And they would come close to being exceeded in most of South Asia, including the fertile Ganges River valley, India's northeast and eastern coast, northern Sri Lanka, and the Indus Valley of Pakistan.

Survivability was based on what is called "wet bulb temperature" -- a combined metric of humidity and the outside temperature.

When the wet bulb reaches 35°C it becomes impossible for humans to cool their bodies through sweating, hence it indicates the survival temperature for humans. A few hours of exposure to these wet bulb conditions leads to death, even for the fittest of humans.

CLIMATE CHANGE LITIGATIONS

28 countries face lawsuits

CNN, AFP

Legal action on climate change has become a global phenomenon, with lawsuits launched against governments and corporate interests in 28 countries so far, according to new research published yesterday.

A report from the Grantham Research Institute at the London School of Economics and Political Science looked at instances of legal action on climate change from 1990 to May 2019.

Researchers found that while the US remains the global leader in terms of climate change litigation, the prevalence of such lawsuits has spread worldwide according to a press release.

This reflects an increasing willingness to use litigation as a tool to influence policy, according to the report, and human rights and science are playing an increasingly important role in these lawsuits.

Since 2015, the first cases of climate change litigation were recorded in Colombia, Indonesia, Norway, Pakistan and South Africa, according to the report, titled "Global trends in climate change litigation: 2019 snapshot."

Yesterday, residents of Indonesia's capital filed a new lawsuit against the government over the toxic levels of air pollution that regularly blanket the city. Fed up with



what they say is worsening air pollution, a group of 31 concerned residents has sued President Joko Widodo, as well as the ministry of environment and forestry, ministry of health, and Jakarta's governor.

There were 1,023 climate change cases in the US for the period of the research, followed by 94 in Australia and 53 in the UK.

Most of the litigation has targeted local and national governments, but companies have also been taken to court over failures to inform shareholders of the risks of climate change, or to incorporate climate change planning into decision making.

Both businesses and governments have been taken to court accused of failing to protect people from climate change, or contributing to the problem.

Outside the US, rulings have favored the fight against climate change 43% of the time, compared to 27% that hindered efforts. Others had no impact on existing policy or law.

Migrant boat with 86 sinks off Tunisia

Four rescued by coast guard

AFP, Tunis

More than 80 migrants have gone missing and only four were rescued after their boat capsized off Tunisia on its way from Libya to Italy, Tunisia's coast guard said yesterday.

The Red Crescent and the navy told AFP that three Malians and an Ivorian were rescued off Zarzis in southern Tunisia on Wednesday by the coast guard who had been alerted by local fishermen.

The Ivorian, however, died in hospital and one of the Malians has also been hospitalised in intensive care.

Those rescued had told Tunisian officials that 86 people were on board their inflatable boat when it left from the Libyan town of Zuwara, west of Tripoli, on its way to cross the Mediterranean to Italy.

"About 80 migrants are feared dead. More updates are needed in order to confirm what happened and the actual number of missing," Flavio Di Giacomo, a spokesman for the International Organisation for Migration, tweeted.

Libya, which has been wracked by chaos since the 2011 uprising that killed veteran dictator Moamer Gaddafi, has long been a major transit route for migrants, especially from sub-Saharan Africa, desperate to reach Europe.

On Tuesday night, 44 migrants were killed in an air strike on their detention centre in a Tripoli suburb.

Around 300 migrants are still being held in the detention centre, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said yesterday.

US hell-bent on hostility

Says N Korea despite Trump, Kim agree to resume nuke talks

REUTERS, United Nations

North Korea's mission to the United Nations accused the United States on Wednesday of being "more and more hell-bent on hostile acts" against Pyongyang, despite President Donald Trump wanting talks between the two countries.

In a statement the mission said it was responding to a US accusation that Pyongyang breached a cap on refined petroleum imports and a letter that it said was sent on June 29 by the United States, France, Germany and Britain to all UN member states urging them to implement sanctions against North Korea.

"What can't be overlooked is the fact that this joint letter game was carried out by the permanent mission of the United States to the UN under instruction of the State Department, on the very same day when President Trump proposed for the summit meeting," the statement said.

Trump became the first sitting US president to set foot in North Korea on Sunday when he met leader Kim Jong Un in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between the two Koreas. The pair agreed to resume stalled talks aimed at getting Pyongyang to

give up its nuclear weapons program.

The North Korean UN mission said the June 29 letter to UN member states "speaks to the reality that the United States is practically more and more hell-bent on the hostile acts against the DPRK, though talking about the DPRK-US dialogue." North Korea is formally known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

The UN Security Council has unanimously boosted sanctions on North Korea since 2006 in a bid to choke funding for Pyongyang's nuclear and ballistic missile programs, banning exports including coal, iron, lead, textiles and seafood, and capping imports of crude oil and refined petroleum products.

The United States, backed by dozens of allies, told a council sanction committee last month that North Korea had breached an annual UN cap of 500,000 barrels imposed in December 2017, mainly through transfers between ships at sea.

Washington wanted the 15-member North Korea sanctions committee to demand an immediate halt to deliveries of refined petroleum to North Korea. However, Pyongyang allies Russia and China delayed the move.



China, UK in war of words

REUTERS, London/Beijing

British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said on Thursday that he had backed violent protests in Hong Kong, after Chinese state media blamed "Western ideologues" for fomenting unrest in the former British colony.

Hundreds of protesters broke into the Hong Kong legislature on Monday after a demonstration marking the anniversary of the return to Chinese rule in 1997 under a "one country, two systems" formula that includes freedoms not enjoyed in mainland China, including the right to protest.

That followed weeks of protests against a now-suspended extradition bill that opponents say would undermine Hong Kong's much-cherished rule of law and give Beijing powers to prosecute activists in mainland courts, which are controlled by the Communist Party.

China has stepped up a war of words with Britain over Hong Kong, especially after Hunt warned of consequences if China neglects commitments made when it took back Hong Kong to allow its way of life for at least 50 years.



A woman gets drenched by huge waves outside her house along a seafront during high tide in Mumbai, India, yesterday. Thirteen bodies have been recovered in western India after the heaviest monsoon rains in a decade breached a dam and caused mayhem in Mumbai, authorities said.

PHOTO: REUTERS

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State media in particular has blamed London, Washington and other Western capitals for offering succour to the demonstrators.

"Ideologues in Western governments never cease in their efforts to engineer unrest against governments that are not to their liking, even though their actions have caused misery and chaos in country after country in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia," the official China Daily said in an editorial.

"Now they are trying the same trick in China," the English-language newspaper said.

Hunt, speaking to BBC radio, repeated that there would be "consequences" if Beijing breached commitments it made about rights in Hong Kong when Britain handed over control.

"What I wasn't doing was to make the point clearly that this isn't something that we would just gulp and move on -- this would be a very serious issue for the UK," he said.

China has said Britain has no more responsibility for Hong Kong. Britain says it still considers the Joint Declaration in 1984 on the terms of the return of Hong Kong, which guarantees its freedoms, to be valid.

Violent Hong Kong protests

China media slam 'Western ideologues' Britain again warns of 'consequences' if Beijing breached commitments



Pakistan books Hafiz Saeed

AGENCIES

Pakistani authorities announced a crackdown against Hafiz Saeed, leader of the group blamed for deadly attacks on Mumbai in 2008, amid growing international pressure to act against militant groups.

Pakistan's counter-terrorism department said it had launched 23 cases against Saeed and 12 aides for using five trusts to collect funds and donations for Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), blamed by India and the United States for the attacks in Mumbai that killed 166 people.

Two banned LeT-linked charities, Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) and Falah-i-Insaniat Foundation (FIF), were also targeted, the department said in a statement.

"All the assets of these organizations and individuals will be frozen and taken over by the state," said a counter-terrorism senior official on Wednesday.

The counter-terrorism department said the action was in accordance with

UN sanctions against the individuals and entities.

The move follows pressure from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which last year placed Pakistan on its "grey list" of countries with inadequate controls over money laundering and terrorism financing, reported Reuters.

The international watchdog gave Pakistan an October deadline last month to improve its efforts against terrorism financing.

The FATF has said Pakistan could end up on the black list when it reviews progress in a meeting later this year.

US, which has pressured Pakistan to crack down on militant groups, has offered a \$10 million reward for evidence leading to Saeed's conviction.

India yesterday slammed Pakistan's crack down on Saeed and his close aides, calling it "cosmetic steps" and half-hearted measures undertaken to hoodwink the international community, reported Times of India.

Terror financing

