

NEWSIN brief

Najib spent \$0.8m on cards in a day!

Credit cards belonging to Malaysia's disgraced ex-leader Najib Razak were used to spend over \$800,000 in one day at a luxury jeweller in Italy, a court has heard. The 2014 spending spree is the latest evidence of what critics say is the lavish lifestyle enjoyed by Najib after he and his cronies allegedly plundered state coffers. The former prime minister, his family members and inner circle are accused of stealing billions of dollars from Malaysia's sovereign wealth fund 1MDB in a fraud that stretched around the world.

13 killed in Nigeria building collapse

Thirteen people in central Nigeria died after a three-storey residential building collapsed after torrential rain, emergency workers said yesterday. Rescue crews sifted through the rubble overnight after the building in the city of Jos came down on Monday. A Red Cross official at the scene told AFP that seven survivors were being treated in hospital. The collapse came after three days of pounding rain.

Quake causes panic in Indonesia; one killed

A magnitude 7.3 shallow earthquake struck the Moluccas islands in eastern Indonesia yesterday, the US Geological Survey (USGS) reported, killing one person and causing panic among residents. Within less than four hours since the main quake, the disaster agency recorded at least 30 aftershocks, it added. People who lived near the ocean left for higher ground despite reassurances from officials that the quake did not have tsunami potential.

Floods wreak havoc across South Asia

Survivors scrambled for higher ground as torrential monsoon rains swept away homes and triggered landslides across South Asia yesterday, with millions of people affected and at least 180 dead, officials said. The monsoon is crucial for irrigation and groundwater supplies in the impoverished region -- home to a fifth of the world's population -- and brings relief after the unforgiving summer. But the downpours -- which stretch from June to September -- can turn deadly, and have wreaked havoc again this year across India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan-administered Kashmir, with people, dwellings and boats in remote low-lying areas washed away. "Entire communities have been cut off by rising waters, increasing the risk of people going hungry and getting sick," Xavier Castellanos, of the International Federation of Red Cross, said of the growing crisis. In Mumbai, a building collapsed in a cramped neighbourhood, killing four people and trapping 12 following heavy rains in the city.3 Almost a third of Bangladesh -- a delta country criss-crossed by hundreds of rivers -- was underwater, Arifuzzaman Bhuyan of the state-run Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre told AFP. At least 14 major rivers, including the Brahmaputra, burst their banks and were



Rescue workers carry a child who was rescued from the rubble at the site of a collapsed building in Mumbai, India, yesterday.

- 78 people died in Nepal; flood water starts to recede
- Flash floods kill 23 in Pakistan-administered Kashmir
- 4 dead, over 40 trapped in Mumbai building collapse
- Over all death toll nears 50 in India; Assam issues red alert

flowing above "danger levels", marooning hundreds of thousands, he added. The toll in the flood-prone country rose to 34. In Nepal, at least 78 people died and 16,000 families were displaced, although flood waters have started receding. Health experts have warned of possible outbreaks of waterborne diseases and called for international help. Nearly 50 people have been killed in India, with two eastern states -- Assam and Bihar, which borders Nepal -- bearing the brunt of the deluge. Authorities in Assam declared a red alert Monday as the flood situation turned critical, with villages cut off by surging waters and a major highway submerged. So far 11 people have died in the state and some 83,000 people displaced by flooding. Authorities have raced to reach animals marooned by the deluge at the state's World-Heritage listed Kaziranga National Park, which is home to two-thirds of the world's one-horned rhinos. In Bihar, 25 deaths were reported, with 2.5 million residents affected. Further northwest, in the Pakistan-administered part of the Kashmir region, flash floods killed 23 people and damaged 120 houses, with the water and power supplies crippled. The United Nations said Monday it "stands ready to work with the authorities in the affected countries as they respond to the humanitarian needs resulting from this ongoing monsoon season".

Nuke talks at risk: N Korea Hints at resuming weapons tests

North Korea yesterday said looming US-South Korea military drills could impact the proposed resumption of nuclear talks between Pyongyang and Washington, and hinted that it could reconsider its moratorium on nuclear testing. It was the first statement from Pyongyang on the talks since US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un agreed to their resumption at an impromptu meeting in the Demilitarized Zone in June. "If the military exercise really goes ahead, it would affect the DPRK-US working-level talks," an unnamed foreign ministry spokesperson said. The official described next month's drills as "clearly a breach" of a joint statement signed by the leaders in Singapore and hinted that Pyongyang may resume weapons tests in response.

World hunger affects 821 m

More than 821 million people suffered from hunger worldwide last year, the United Nations reported Monday -- the third year in a row that the number has risen. After decades of decline, malnutrition began to increase in 2015, mainly because of climate change and war. Reversing the trend is one of the 2030 targets of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals which aim to improve the planet and its people. But getting to a world where no one is suffering from hunger by then remains an "immense challenge," the report said, noting the number of people without enough to eat had risen from 811 million in 2017. "We will not achieve zero hunger by 2030," said David Beasley, head of the World Food Programme, one of the UN agencies contributing to the report. "That's a bad trend. Without food security we will never have peace and stability," said Beasley, deploring that the media carry more talk about Brexit and Donald Trump than children

dying of hunger. He warned that extremist groups were using hunger and control over food supplies as a weapon to divide communities or recruit new members. "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World" report was produced by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and other United Nations agencies including the World Health Organization. "To safeguard food security and nutrition, it is critical to already have in place economic and social policies to counteract the effects of adverse economic cycles when they arrive, while avoiding cuts in essential services, such as healthcare and education, at all costs," it said. Malnutrition remains widespread in Africa, where around 20 percent of the population is affected, and in Asia where more than 12 percent of people experience it. In Latin America and the Caribbean, fewer than seven percent of people are affected. Adding those hit by food insecurity gives a total of more than two billion people, eight percent of whom are in North America and Europe, who don't regularly have access to enough nutritious, safe food, the report said. The FAO said current efforts were insufficient to meet the goal of halving the number of children whose growth is stunted by malnutrition by 2030. Around 149 million of the world's children currently suffer from hunger-related growth delays. At the same time, the UN report notes that obesity and excess weight are both on the rise in all regions, with school-age children and adults particularly affected.

DENGUE FEVER CASES IN PHILIPPINES

Nat'l alert after 456 killed

Health authorities in the Philippines have declared a "national dengue alert" after a spike in cases of the viral disease which has left 456 people dead since January. Around 100,000 dengue cases were reported across the Philippines in the first six months of 2019, an increase of 85% on the same period last year. Epidemics have been declared in four regions of the country -- Mimaropa, Western Visayas, Central Visayas, and Northern Mindanao -- which between them are home to more than 20 million people, or roughly 20% of the Philippines population. Health officials are also monitoring the situation in nine other regions, including Davao, but said dengue remains "localised" rather than a national epidemic, CNN Philippines reported. A mosquito-borne viral infection, dengue

causes flu-like symptoms, including piercing headaches, muscle and joint pains, fever and full body rashes. Of the millions of people infected with dengue every year worldwide, an estimated 500,000 develop severe symptoms requiring hospitalisation, and of those some 12,500 people die, according to the World Health Organization. While it is most common in tropical and sub-tropical climates such as the Philippines, India and Brazil, a recent study found that rising global temperatures caused by the climate crisis could see mosquitoes which carry dengue move north, affecting the southern US, inland Australia and coastal areas of China and Japan. Dengue cases in the Philippines have historically surged every three to four years, and the sharp increase this year is in line with expectations after a spike in cases nationwide in 2016, the country's Health Secretary Francisco Duque said.



Iran to give no quarter to US Says Khamenei, vows to continue cranking up uranium enrichment

Iran's supreme leader upped the ante in a volatile stand-off with the United States yesterday, warning Tehran would continue removing restraints on its nuclear programme and retaliate for the seizure of an Iranian oil tanker. Tensions have spiked since US President Donald Trump last year abandoned world powers' 2015 nuclear deal with Iran under which it agreed to curtail its enrichment of uranium in return for the lifting of global sanctions crippling its economy. European parties to the pact decided on Monday not to trigger the deal's dispute mechanism in favour of pursuing more talks and avert any US-Iranian military conflict, but took no action to shield Iran against a sanctions clampdown by Trump. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's ultimate authority, accused Britain, Germany and France of failing to uphold obligations under the deal to restore Iranian access to global trade, especially for Tehran's oil exports blocked by US sanctions. "According to our foreign minister, Europe made 11 commitments, none of which they abided by. We abided by our commitments and even beyond them. Now that we've begun to reduce our commitments, they oppose it. How insolent! You didn't abide by your commitments!" Khamenei said, according to his website. "We have started to reduce our commitments and this trend shall continue," Khamenei said in remarks carried by state television. He has previously upbraided European powers for not standing up to Trump and circumventing his sanctions noose. Russia and China are also parties to the accord. But it was the first time Khamenei explicitly pledged to press ahead with breaches of the nuclear deal, spurning European appeals to Iran to restore limits on enrichment aimed at obviating any dash to developing atomic bombs. "Western governments' major vice is their arrogance," Khamenei said. "If the country opposing them is a weak one, their arrogance works. But if it's a country that knows and stands up against them, they will be defeated." Khamenei also said Iran would respond to Britain's "piracy" over the seizure in early July of an Iranian oil tanker in Gibraltar. "Evil Britain commits piracy and steals our ship ... and gives it a legal appearance. The Islamic Republic...will not leave this wickedness unanswered and will respond to it at an appropriate time and place," he said.

\$200 for a cup of tea!

It's no secret that the British are very serious about their tea. Now a London hotel has taken this dedication to new heights by offering what's been dubbed the UK's most expensive cuppa. The Rubens at The Palace is now serving a rare tea blend for £500 (\$620) per pot, which works out to around \$200 a cup. Produced in the highlands of Sri Lanka, Golden Tips is hand-picked by expert tea-pluckers and sundried on a velvet cloth, which turns the buds from silver to gold. The pricey tea is only available at The Rubens, where diners can sip it while overlooking The Royal Mews at Buckingham Palace.



Civilians and members of the Syrian Civil Defence, also known as the "White Helmets", carry a wounded person following an airstrike by Syrian regime forces in Maaret al-Numan in northwest Syria, yesterday. The air strikes killed 11 civilians in opposition-held northwest Syria, the target of months of bombardment by the government and its ally Russia.

UN REPORT ON AIDS

Deaths down a third since 2010

HIV-related deaths last year fell to around 770,000 -- some 33 percent lower than in 2010 -- the United Nations said yesterday, but warned that global efforts to eradicate the disease were stalling as funding dries up. An estimated 37.9 million people now live with HIV -- and a record 23.3 million of those have access to some antiretroviral therapy (ART), UNAIDS said in its annual report. Highlighting the enormous progress made since the height of the AIDS epidemic in the mid-1990s, the report showed that the number people dying from the disease fell from 800,000 in 2017 to 770,000 last year. The figure was down by more than a third from 2010, when there were 1.2 million AIDS-related deaths. But it also exposed weaknesses in the world's fight against AIDS. While AIDS-related deaths in Africa, the continent most affected by the epidemic, have plummeted this decade, Eastern Europe has seen the death toll rise 5 percent and the Middle East and North Africa 9 percent. Year-on-year, those same regions saw a 29-percent and 10-percent rise in new infections, respectively.

Decades of research have yet to yield a cure or vaccine for the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which has infected almost 80 million people and killed more than 35 million since the early 1980s. The UN said that more than half of new HIV infections globally come from "key populations" -- intravenous drug users, gay men, transgender people, sex workers and prisoners. Peter Ghys, UNAIDS strategic information director, said that the 16-percent reduction in new infections since 2010 was way behind the global aim of a 75-percent fall by next year. Another vulnerable group is children, with more than 160,000 new HIV infections last year. That is 41 percent lower than in 2010, but far off the mark countries set themselves of no more than 40,000 new cases worldwide each year by 2018. The report also warned that a lack of political will coupled with decreasing finance risked undermining the progress made so far. Last year \$19 billion (17 billion euros) was made available for AIDS response, more than \$7 billion short of the estimated \$26.2 billion needed by 2020. Ghys said the funding drop was a result of "small reductions by different donor countries".

US, Russia to discuss nuclear arms limits in Geneva today

Representatives from the United States and Russia are set to meet in Geneva today to explore the concept of a new accord limiting nuclear arms that could eventually include China, senior US officials said on Monday. US President Donald Trump has said that he would like to see a "next generation" arms control deal with Russia and China to cover all types of nuclear weapons. China is not a party to any nuclear arms pacts and China's Foreign Ministry reiterated that the country had no interest in joining such talks. The Geneva meeting will be just two weeks before the United States withdraws from the Cold War-era Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty that required both countries to eliminate short-range and intermediate-range nuclear and conventional missiles.

Conjoined twins split after 50-hour surgery

Two-year-old twins joined at the head have undergone successful surgery at a British hospital to separate their skulls, brains and blood vessels, doctors said yesterday. The highly complex surgery involved multiple operations on Sifa and Marwa Ullah, who were born in Pakistan in January 2017 with a condition known as "craniopagus" in which the girls' skulls and parts of their brains were joined and intertwined. "Craniopagus is an exceptionally rare and complex condition," said David J. Dunaway, who co-led the surgical team that treated the twins. The operation, conducted in February, was the most complex such separation his team had performed to date, he said.



S Korea bans seeking job applicant's personal info

From today, prospective employers in South Korea cannot ask job seekers for information unrelated to the positions they are being hired for. The country's Employment Ministry yesterday said that a revised hiring law prohibits employers from collecting information irrelevant to job performance and engaging in behavior that may hurt fairness in employment practices. Asking about a job applicant's weight, height, place of birth, marital status and assets is subject to a fine of up to 5 million won (\$4,200) under the new law, unless it is relevant to the job. Personal information about the applicant's family members, such as their level of education and occupation is also off-limits. SOURCE: AFP, ANN, REUTERS

পূর্বাচলে ১০ কাঠার একটি আকর্ষণীয় পুট বিক্রি হবে।
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