

**NEWS IN brief**

**UAE jails Filipino for 10 yrs for joining IS**

REUTERS, Dubai

A man from the Philippines has been sentenced to 10 years in jail in the United Arab Emirates for being a member of Islamic State and promoting its ideology on social media, Emirati media reported yesterday. State news agency WAM identified the defendant as a 35-year-old Asian man and said he was also fined 2 million dirhams (\$544,543) by the Abu Dhabi Court of Appeal and will be deported after serving his sentence.

**Pak PM Khan returns home from US**

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan returned home from Washington yesterday after a visit seen by supporters as a major diplomatic success, saying he felt like he had when he came back after winning the cricket World Cup. US President Donald Trump's warm reception of Khan and a delegation including the army chief and the head of the powerful ISI intelligence service was a welcome relief to a government under increasing economic pressure at home.

**France to unveil new space defence strategy**

AFP, Paris

France was yesterday set to outline a new strategy for defence in space after President Emmanuel Macron announced the creation of a French space force command to deal with emerging threats to its interests in orbit. Defence Minister Florence Parly was due to give more details on the strategy in a keynote speech at the Lyon Mont-Verdun military base starting from 1000 GMT. The announcement comes as China, Russia and the United States all jostle for an increased strategic presence in space.



**A cameraman films a damaged car at the site of a blast in Kabul, Afghanistan yesterday. Inset, a wounded woman receives treatment at a hospital after the blast. At least 11 people -- including several women and a child -- were killed and dozens wounded by a series of blasts that rocked the Afghan capital ahead of the election season. Taliban and IS claimed responsibility for the attack.**

PHOTO: REUTERS

**MIGRANT BOAT TRAGEDY**

**116 missing off Libyan coast**

132 rescued by coast guards

REUTERS, Tripoli

At least 116 migrants are missing and another 132 were rescued by Libyan coast guards and local fishermen after a wooden boat capsized off Libya, Libyan navy spokesman Ayoub Qassem said yesterday.

Citing initial findings, he said there had been more than 200 migrants on board the boat, which capsized off the coast near Komos, a town east of the capital Tripoli. He said one body had been recovered so far.

Earlier, the UN refugee agency UNHCR said that up to 150 people were feared dead while another 150 were rescued. If confirmed, that death toll would be the highest for a shipwreck in the Mediterranean this year.

Libya is a hub for migrants, many of whom try to reach Europe in unseaworthy boats.

The ship left Libya from Komos, 120 km (75 miles) east of Tripoli.

The survivors were picked up by local fishermen and then returned to the coast by the Libyan coastguard, UNHCR spokesman Charlie Yaxley said.

The UNHCR and other UN agencies have repeatedly called for survivors not to be returned to Libya, a conflict zone where rescued migrants and refugees are routinely jailed in inhumane conditions and are vulnerable to being caught up in fighting.

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

**N Korea test fires missiles**

Latest provocation casts fresh doubt about nuke talks since Trump, Kim met at DMZ; S Korea says tests pose threat

REUTERS, Seoul

North Korea test-fired two new short-range ballistic missiles yesterday, South Korean officials said, its first missile test since its leader, Kim Jong Un, and US President Donald Trump agreed to revive denuclearisation talks last month.

South Korea, which supports efforts by North Korea and the United States to end years of hostility, urged the North to stop acts that are unhelpful to easing tension, saying the tests posed a military threat on the Korean peninsula.

The South's National Security Council said it believed the missiles were a new type of ballistic missile but it would make a final assessment with the United States.

Firing a ballistic missile would be a violation of UN Security Council resolutions that ban the North from the use of such technology. North Korea has rejected the restriction as an infringement of its sovereign right to self-defence.

North Korea launched the missiles from the east coast city of Wonsan with one flying about 430 km (267 miles) and the other 690 km (428 miles) over the sea. They both reached an altitude of 50 km (30 miles), an official at South Korea's Defence Ministry said.

Some analysts said the North appeared to have retested

missiles it fired in May, but two South Korean military officials said the missiles appeared to be a new design.

The launch casts new doubt on efforts to restart stalled denuclearisation talks after Trump and Kim met at the demilitarised zone (DMZ) between the two Koreas at the end of June.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho had been expected to meet on the sidelines of a Southeast Asian security forum in Bangkok next week.

But a diplomatic source told Reuters yesterday that Ri had cancelled his trip to the conference.

The White House, Pentagon and US State Department did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said the test had no immediate impact on Japan's security, according to Kyodo News.

US national security adviser John Bolton, who has taken a hard line towards North Korea, made no mention of the launches in a tweet yesterday after a visit to South Korea.

Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a briefing that Beijing had noted the launch, and called for North Korea and the United States to reopen negotiations "as early as possible".



**TMC demands steps to rename West Bengal**

Submits memorandum to Modi at Parliament

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

A delegation of West Bengal's ruling Trinamool Congress lawmakers met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Parliament on Wednesday and submitted a memorandum urging him to take steps to change the state's name to "Bangla".

The demand of the Mamata Banerjee-led party for changing the state's name awaits the clearance of the Indian government after a resolution for the same was passed by the state legislative assembly.

The 12-member Trinamool delegation led by Sudip Bandyopadhyay requested Modi to bring a legislation to amend the name of West Bengal to "Bangla".

They also submitted all the letters written by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to the federal government over the renaming of the state.

Earlier on Wednesday, Trinamool lawmaker Sukhendu Sekhar Ray raised the issue of renaming issue during the

zero hour in the Rajya Sabha and said "no geographical territory ever existed officially to be known as East Bengal".

"The word Bangla or the territory called Bangla is believed to have been derived from Banga, a Dravidian tribe that settled in the region in 1000 BC," he added.

In July 2018, the West Bengal Assembly passed a resolution recommending that the state should be renamed as "Bangla".

The Indian Home Ministry, which is the arbitrator in the issue, has not yet accepted the assembly's demand.

Ray pointed out that after the Partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 following the award passed by the Radcliffe Commission, the eastern districts of Bengal became east Pakistan which later became an independent country of Bangladesh.

On November 14, Mamata accused the central government of "stonewalling" her government's decision to rename West Bengal as Bangla.



**US Navy warship sails through Taiwan Strait**

China expresses 'deep concerns'

REUTERS, Beijing

China yesterday expressed "deep concerns" over a US Navy warship sailing through the Taiwan Strait, a day after Beijing warned that it was ready for war if Taiwan moved toward independence.

Taiwan is among a growing number of flashpoints in the US-China relationship, which include a trade war, US sanctions and China's increasingly muscular military posture in the South China Sea, where the United States also conducts freedom-of-navigation patrols.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman in Beijing said China had "expressed deep concerns to the US side" over its latest action in the strait separating China from Taiwan.

"The Taiwan question is the most

sensitive and important issue between China and the US," spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a regular press briefing.

"We urge the US to abide by the One China principle and the three joint communiqués, to be prudent and act appropriately with regards to Taiwan so that it doesn't harm China-US relations and the peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait's region."

China claims self-ruled and democratic Taiwan as its own and has never renounced the use of force to bring it under Beijing's control.

On Wednesday, China warned that it is ready for war if there was any move toward Taiwan's independence, accusing the United States of undermining global stability and denouncing its arms sales to the self-ruled island.



**A man carries his new born baby as he and his family members wade through a flooded area to reach a relief camp at a village in Barpeta district of the northeastern state of Assam, India yesterday. India is likely to get above-average rainfall in the next two weeks after receiving below average rains in the past two weeks, a weather department official said.**

PHOTO: REUTERS



**Lt Col Dhoni to do patrolling in Kashmir**

TOI, New Delhi

An honorary Lieutenant Colonel in the Territorial Army and currently taking rest from cricket duties, India's former captain MS Dhoni will soon be seen patrolling the hills in Kashmir valley in army uniform, according to ANI.

"Lieutenant Colonel (Honorary) MS Dhoni is proceeding to 106 Territorial Army Battalion (Para) for being with the Battalion from 31 Jul-15 Aug 2019," the ANI tweeted on Friday.

"The unit is in Kashmir as part of Victor Force. He'll be taking duties of patrolling, guard & post duty and will be staying with troops," the tweet added.

The 38-year-old Dhoni was accorded the honorary rank of Lieutenant Colonel by the Indian Army in 2011.

The World Cup-winning captain, who has already retired from Test cricket, had made himself unavailable for the West Indies tour where India will play three T20s, three ODIs and two Tests.

Speaking to news agency IANS, sources in the know of the developments said the plan was in the pipeline for a while.

"Just like Dhoni has been one of the greatest names of Indian cricket, his love for the armed forces is also well known. This idea that he would go and spend time with his regiment was in the pipeline for a while but it took a backseat due to his cricketer commitments."

"This will also help increase awareness among the youth about the armed forces and that is what Dhoni wants," the source said.

**Make-or-break moment?**

Iran poses loyalty test for 'British Trump' Boris Johnson, Europe

AFP, London

Iran's seizure and continued detention of a UK-flagged tanker deals Boris Johnson an immediate loyalty test: Britain's new prime minister may have to choose between Gulf escorts led by Europe or by the United States.

Which way Johnson leans could set the tone for a complex agenda that includes withdrawing from the European Union and striking a trade deal with the United States.

It could also maintain or break European efforts to keep alive the deal curbing Iran's nuclear ambitions that Washington pulled out of last year.

Some US commentators see this as a make-or-break moment for Europe's policy on Iran as a whole.

"Johnson could simply announce that the UK is joining America's maximum-pressure campaign and calls for a new (Iran) deal," the editorial board of The Wall Street Journal wrote.

"The rest of Europe would likely have no choice but to join its Anglophone partners -- and finally present a united front."

Britain has proposed that European partners join together in a "naval protection mission" to ensure commercial ships can safely navigate in the Gulf.

But such an operation would expose Britain's continued reliance on EU allies at the very same time that Johnson is determined to yank his

trade deal with Washington.

The downside risk is that British warships could be caught up in more aggressive US rules of engagement that London currently does not support.

The US president cheered Johnson's election -- referring to him as "Britain Trump" -- and a source close to Johnson told The Daily Mail it was time to "reset" US-UK ties.

Yet that might doom British efforts to salvage the remnants of the 2015 deal with Iran that Trump pulled out of last year.

Tehran's ultra-conservative Resaalat newspaper published a cartoon Wednesday of Johnson as a British butler being patted on the head by Trump.

Centre for European Reform foreign policy director Ian Bond said Johnson might actually win Trump's favour by shepherding European navies to the Gulf. Bond said Johnson's Brexit credentials might also be saved by the likely inclusion in this "coalition of the willing" of non-EU members such as Norway.

But Chatham House's Middle East researcher Sanam Vakil advised Britain's new leader to "avoid the temptation to align completely with Washington on Iran".

**NEWS ANALYSIS**

Johnson's option is to sign UK up to a US-led alliance outlined by Trump admin

That decision could boost UK's chances of striking post-Brexit deal with US



country out of the bloc on October 31.

Johnson's other option is to sign Britain up to a US-led alliance outlined by Donald Trump's administration at Nato last month.

That decision could boost London's chances of reviving stalled efforts to strike a post-Brexit