

NEWSIN brief

**Putin critic Navalny released from jail**

AFP, Moscow

Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny was released yesterday after serving 30 days in jail for planning opposition protests, which have grown into a movement that has shaken Moscow since last month. Police were present outside the prison on his release but made no move to re-arrest him, as they have when other opposition figures were freed recently. But he has continued to urge his supporters to take to the streets, which could lead authorities to detain him once again.

**22 people missing after Indonesia ferry fire**

AFP, Jakarta

Nearly two dozen people are missing from the carcass of a ferry that went up in flames off Indonesia's Java island, a port official said yesterday. The boat was en route from Indonesia's second-biggest city Surabaya to Balikpapan on Borneo island with some 277 people aboard when it caught fire Thursday evening, according to the official. Television images showed plumes of black smoke coming out of the boat, as search teams hunted for at least 22 missing passengers.

**Five people killed in Algiers stampede**

AFP, Algiers

Five young people were killed and dozens more injured in a stampede at a packed rap concert in the Algerian capital, a spokesman for the rescue services said yesterday. The stampede took place Thursday night as fans thronged an entrance of the August-20 Stadium where rapper Soukooling was to perform. The 29-year-old has won a huge number of fans in the North African country, his song "La Liberté" (Freedom) becoming a mainstay of anti-government protests that entered their seventh month yesterday.

**SYRIA CONFLICT Regime forces surround army post of Turkey**

AFP, Beirut

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said yesterday that Turkish troops will not quit a military observation post in northwestern Syria where they are surrounded by government forces. "We are there, not because we can't leave but because we don't want to leave," he told a news conference in Lebanon, denying that Turkish troops had been "cut off" by a government advance into the jihadist-ruled Idlib region. Earlier, Syrian regime forces overran a string of towns and villages in the north of Hama province, including the town of Morek, where the Turkish observation post is located, Syria's state news agency SANA said.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that "regime forces have surrounded the Turkish observation post in Morek" after the advance. Cavusoglu acknowledged that "there are clashes in the Idlib region".

"Regime forces are conducting activities around our observation post," he said, adding that the issue was being discussed with Damascus allies Russia and Iran. But "our observation point there is not cut-off and nobody can isolate our forces and our soldiers," he added.

Rebel-backer Turkey has carried out two cross-border offensives into Syria, where its forces have been deployed for nearly two years. The observation post in Morek is one of 12 the Turkish army set up along the front line between government forces and the jihadists and their rebel allies last year.



**An Israeli soldier temporarily detains a Palestinian youth during clashes following a weekly protest against the expropriation of Palestinian land by Israel, in the village of Kfar Qaddum, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank yesterday. Inset, An Israeli soldier detains a Palestinian man during the clashes in Kfar Qaddum, West Bank.**

PHOTO: AFP



**France watching Kashmir rights**

Macron tells Indian PM

AFP, Chantilly

France's Emmanuel Macron had a "frank" exchange with India's Narendra Modi about tensions in divided Kashmir on Thursday, telling him Paris would remain attentive to the rights of people living both sides of the ceasefire line. As tensions soared in the flashpoint region, the French president said he would also have a similar exchange with Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan in the coming days. His remarks came after talks with the Indian premier at the chateau in Chantilly, just north of Paris. On August 5, Modi's Hindu nationalist government scrapped the autonomy of Indian-controlled Kashmir, a divided Muslim-majority region that has enjoyed special status in the Indian constitution since the country's independence from Britain in 1947. Macron said he told Modi it was the responsibility of both India and Pakistan "to avoid any deterioration on the ground which could lead to an escalation", noting the importance of resolving their differences bilaterally. And he said France would "remain attentive to ensure the interests and rights of the civilian populations are properly taken into account in the territories on both sides of the (Kashmir) ceasefire line".

**India will attempt to divert attention from Kashmir**

Pak PM warns int'l community about 'false flag operation'

Dawn Online, Reuters

Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan yesterday alerted the international community to a possible "false flag operation" by the Indian leadership to "divert attention from massive human rights violations" in occupied Kashmir. "I want to warn the international community that the Indian leadership will in all probability attempt a false flag operation to divert attention from its massive human rights violations and the unleashing of a reign of terror in IOJK [Indian occupied Jammu & Kashmir]," said the premier via Twitter. "We are hearing Indian media claims that some terrorists from Afghanistan have entered IOJK for terrorist activities, while others have entered India's southern regions. These claims are predictable to divert attention from India's ethnic cleansing and

genocide agenda in IOJK," he added. The prime minister's comments come as Indian premier Narendra Modi visits France ahead of the G-7 summit, reported Dawn Online. According to AP, French President Emmanuel Macron in his meeting with Modi on Thursday pressed for dialogue with Pakistan over the crisis in occupied Kashmir. Financial Action Task Force (FATF) will monitor Pakistan's progress in implementing a proposed plan against financing for militant organizations ahead of a meeting in October, the international watchdog body said yesterday. Its Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG) met in Canberra this week to discuss reports on countries including Pakistan, which was last year placed on a "grey list" of countries with inadequate controls over money laundering and terrorism financing, reported Reuters.



**YouTube shuts 210 channels on Hong Kong**

Google announced Thursday that it had disabled 210 YouTube channels that were uploading videos "in a coordinated manner" about the ongoing protests in Hong Kong. The announcement came three days after Twitter and Facebook announced they had shut down a network of hundreds of accounts that were posting content aimed at undermining pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong. Some of the accounts posed as news organizations and independent entities but in fact had links to the Chinese government, both companies said. Google (GOOG) said in a blog post Thursday that the discovery of the 210 YouTube channels "was consistent with recent observations and actions related to China announced by Facebook and Twitter."

**Pakistan to Unicef: Drop Priyanka Chopra**



Pakistan has demanded that Indian actress Priyanka Chopra be stripped of her Unicef Goodwill Ambassador role, saying that her "support for war" and the Indian government amid heightened tensions in the disputed region of Kashmir make a "mockery" of the position. In a letter addressed to Unicef Executive Director Henrietta Fore and posted online Wednesday, Pakistan's Human Rights Minister Shireen Mazari asked for the 37-year-old former Miss World to be "immediately denotified" from her role. Chopra was accused of "jingoism" and showing "support for war" by publicly endorsing the Indian government's position on Kashmir, a disputed region that is claimed in full by both India and Pakistan.

**Lanka ends emergency 4 months after Easter attacks**

Sri Lanka has ended a four-month state of emergency declared after Easter suicide bombings by Islamist extremists that killed 258 people, officials said yesterday. President Maithripala Sirisena has been extending the emergency on the 22nd of each month since the April 21 attacks on three hotels and three churches. However, his office confirmed that Sirisena had not extended it for another term and thereby allowed the emergency to end on Thursday. "The president did not issue a fresh proclamation extending the emergency by a further period," an official source said. The official government printer also confirmed that there was no notification reimposing the state of emergency, which gives sweeping powers to police and security forces to arrest and detain suspects for long periods.

SOURCE: CNN, AFP

**Putin orders response to recent US missile test**

Reuters, Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday ordered a like-for-like response to a recent US missile test, which he said showed that Washington aimed to deploy previously banned missiles around the world. The Pentagon said on Monday it had tested a conventionally-configured cruise missile that hit its target after more than 500 km (310 miles) of flight, its first such test since the demise of a landmark nuclear pact this month. Washington formally withdrew from the Cold War-era Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) on August 2 after accusing Moscow of violating it, a charge dismissed by the Kremlin. The pact had prohibited land-based missiles with a range of 310-3,400 miles, reducing the ability of both countries to

launch a nuclear strike at short notice.

Putin told his Security Council yesterday that Russia could not stand idly by, and that US talk of deploying new missiles in the Asia-Pacific region "affects our core interests as it is close to Russia's borders".

US Defense Secretary Mark Esper said this month he was in favour of placing ground-launched intermediate-range missiles in Asia relatively soon, and Putin complained this week that the United States was now in a position to deploy its new land-based missile in Romania and Poland.

"All this leaves no doubts that the real intention of the United States (in exiting the INF pact) was to ... untie its hands to deploy previously banned missiles in different regions of the world," said Putin.

US test follows withdrawal from Cold War missile pact

Putin concerned that US aims to deploy new missile around world

**Russia launches floating reactor**

AFP, Moscow

Russia launched the world's first floating nuclear reactor yesterday, sending it on an epic journey across the Arctic, despite environmentalists warning of a "Chernobyl on ice." Loaded with nuclear fuel, the Akademik Lomonosov left the Arctic port of Murmansk to begin its 5,000 kilometre (3,000-mile) voyage to Pevek in northeastern Siberia. Nuclear agency Rosatom says the reactor is a simpler alternative to building a conventional plant in isolated places where ground is frozen all year round, and it intends to sell such reactors abroad.

The new reactor is part of the new floating energy and heat plant, which will be a "key element in the development of the Northern Sea Route" and will help Russia "realise large infrastructural projects" in the region, Rosatom said in a statement. But environmental groups have long warned of the dangers of the project, dubbing it a potential "Chernobyl on ice" and a "nuclear Titanic."

A deadly explosion this month at a military testing site in Russia's far north caused a radioactive surge, prompting further concerns. The reactor's trip is expected to last between four and six weeks, depending on the weather conditions and the amount of ice on the way.

**It's 'humanitarian pup'**

WFP finds new weapon to maintain awareness

AFP, Kutupalong

With interest in the Rohingya refugees fading two years after fleeing their homeland, the World Food Programme has found a new weapon to maintain awareness, one with a wet nose and a wagging tail. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees have fled a military crackdown in Myanmar into Bangladesh. They are now stuck in vast refugee camps with little prospect of returning home. The exodus attracted global attention at the time, but despite the efforts of aid agencies -- including a February visit to the camps by UN Special Envoy Angelina Jolie -- the world is losing interest.

But late last year, workers from the WFP rescued a three-week-old puppy abandoned on the beach, adopting him and naming him Foxtrot. Gemma Snowdon, a WFP communications officer, said that after posting photos of Foxtrot on her personal social media pages, she had a brainwave that the canine could be put to good use. Now Foxtrot has his own Instagram account -- called "humanitarian\_pup" -- with regular updates on his activities around the camps, sometimes wearing his own blue UN apron. "As time goes on, interest and attention on situations like these and emergency responses like these does naturally die off," Snowdon told AFP. "Foxtrot is opening us up to new audiences, and keeping the story of what's happening here on the agenda," she said. "He's very popular with donors."

**ROHINGYA CRISIS**



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**Pompeo a 'diehard toxin': North Korea**

Reuters, Seoul

North Korea's top diplomat said yesterday that US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was a "diehard toxin" who only complicates denuclearisation talks and North Korea was ready for both dialogue and standoff. Talks aimed at dismantling the North's nuclear and missile programmes have stalled since a failed second summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in the Vietnamese capital of Hanoi in February. Trump and Kim met again in June at the inter-Korean border and agreed to reopen working-level negotiations, but that has not happened.

North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho, who took part in the Hanoi summit along with Pompeo, called the chief US negotiator the "diehard toxin of the US diplomacy" who employs "hackneyed sanctions rhetoric". Ri referred to Pompeo's remarks in recent press interviews in which he said sanctions would be kept until North Korea takes concrete actions on denuclearisation. "He is truly impudent enough to utter such thoughtless words which only leave us disappointed and sceptical as to whether we can solve any problem with such a guy," Ri said in a statement carried by the official KCNA news agency.



**Protesters form a human chain along Victoria Harbour in Hong Kong yesterday. The protest in Hong Kong coincided with the 30th anniversary of the Baltic Way demonstration in 1989, which saw about 2 million people form a human chain that spanned over 600 kilometres across Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in protest against Soviet occupation.**

PHOTO: AFP