

Philippines: 20 die
in truck accident

AFP, Manila

Twenty people, including children, were killed yesterday in the southern Philippines when the flatbed truck they were riding in plummeted into a ravine, police said. The vehicle was bringing a group of people home from a trip to the beach when the driver lost control near the town of T'boli in the latest deadly crash on the nation's dangerous roads. The dead included children aged between one to six years old.

Power outage hits
much of C America

AFP, San Salvador

A power supply line went down in Honduras, hitting it and Nicaragua with a massive blackout Monday, with power cuts reaching El Salvador and Guatemala as well. The issue left almost the entirety of Honduras and Nicaragua without power, a statement from electricity operator EOR in El Salvador said. Both countries had power restored in several hours, EOR reported, adding that there was no impact in Costa Rica or Panama.

8 injured as train
derails in HK

AFP, Hong Kong

A passenger train derailed during the morning rush hour in Hong Kong yesterday leaving eight people injured, authorities said. Images from the scene showed three carriages off the tracks and zigzagged across the rails near Hung Hom station in Kowloon. Five hundred passengers had been evacuated from the train. The cause of the derailment was still under probe but there was no immediate suggestion of foul play after previous attacks by pro-democracy protesters on the mass transit system.



People protest outside the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom against Prime Minister Boris Johnson's decision to prorogue parliament, in London, yesterday. The top court yesterday began considering legal challenges to Prime Minister Boris Johnson's controversial decision to suspend parliament for over a month, as the country's political crisis over Brexit intensifies.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Khamenei rules out US talks

Trump blames Tehran, but says does not want war as Riyadh demands response

AGENCIES

Iran's supreme leader yesterday ruled out talks with Washington after President Donald Trump blamed Tehran for a crippling attack on Saudi Arabia's oil facilities.

Saudi King Salman called on governments around the world to confront the threats to oil supplies and global economic stability posed by the weekend attack. European allies said the crisis should be addressed collectively.

Trump said on Monday that it looked like Iran was behind the strike at the heart of the Saudi oil industry but stressed he did not want to go to war. Iran denied it was to blame.

"Iranian officials, at any level, will never talk to American officials ... this is part of their policy to put pressure on Iran," Iranian state TV quoted Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as saying.

He said talks could only take place if the United States returned to a nuclear accord between Iran and the West that Trump abandoned last year.

US-Iran relations deteriorated

after Trump quit the accord and reimposed sanctions over Tehran's nuclear and ballistic programmes. He also wants Iran to stop supporting regional proxies, including Yemen's Houthi group, which has claimed responsibility for the attack.

"I'm not looking to get into new conflict, but sometimes you have to," said Trump.

Britain and Germany agreed they needed to work with international partners to form a collective response and de-escalate tensions as efforts

Riyadh indicating that Iran has used its ground for the drone attacks. Saudi Arabia said an initial investigation showed the strikes were carried out with Iranian weapons.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said Yemeni Houthi rebels launched the strikes in retaliation for attacks by a Saudi-led coalition that has been battling the Houthis for four years. The weekend strikes on Abqaiq -- the world's largest processing plant -- and the Khurais oilfield have knocked out 5.7 million barrels per day (bpd), or six percent of global production, sending prices soaring.

Trump said he was sending Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to Saudi Arabia soon, but he had not made any commitments to protect the Saudis. "That was an attack on Saudi Arabia, and that wasn't an attack on us. But we would certainly help them."

Overnight air strikes killed 10 pro-Iranian Iraqi militiamen in eastern Syria, a war monitor said yesterday, without specifying who carried them out.

ATTACK ON SAUDI OIL HEARTLAND

US intel indicates attacks staged from Iran: report

Britain, Germany agree on need for international response

Air strikes kill 10 pro-Iran fighters in Syria



A day after warning that the United States was "locked and loaded" to respond to the incident, Trump said on Monday there was "no rush" to do so and that Washington was coordinating with Gulf Arab and European states. "I'm not looking at options right now. We want to find definitively who did this."

continued to establish exactly what happened, Prime Minister Boris Johnson's spokesman said.

Saudi King Salman said that Riyadh was capable of dealing with the consequences of attacks on its installations.

Meanwhile, the Wall Street Journal reported on Monday that American officials had shared intelligence with

Trump sees progress

Says will meet Modi, Imran over Kashmir; Amnesty chief vows to defy India bid to 'crush' criticism

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump has said that he would meet Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan soon. He maintained that tension between India and Pakistan had reduced.

While President Trump will address Indian-Americans along with Modi at the "Howdy Modi!" event in Houston on Sunday, the American president did not say when or where he would meet Imran Khan.

"I'll see Prime Minister Modi and I will - we'll - be meeting with (prime ministers of) India and Pakistan and I think a lot of progress has been made there...lot of progress," President Trump told reporters in response to a question at the White House, without mentioning Kashmir.

Trump's schedule suggests that his meeting with Imran Khan may take place on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly Session in New York later this month.

Meanwhile, Amnesty International's chief vowed on Monday that the rights

group would not be silenced on raising concerns about Kashmir despite what he called intimidation by Modi's government. India's financial crime investigators recently accused Amnesty's local branch of violating foreign exchange regulations through taking money from its London-based parent.

That claim came after Amnesty vocally criticized Modi's Hindu nationalist government on Kashmir, which was India's only Muslim-majority state until New Delhi stripped its autonomy last month.

"The Modi government has made a very big attempt to crush Amnesty in India," Kumi Naidoo, Amnesty International's secretary-general, told AFP on a visit to Washington.

"On the Kashmir question, on various human rights questions in India itself, we are not intimidated," he said.

Amnesty has faced heated criticism from India's right wing for its stance on Kashmir, where authorities have largely shut down the internet, mobile service and initially also landlines.

Data leak hits Ecuador

Almost the entire population of Ecuador had their personal data leaked online in a major security breach, officials and security experts said Monday. Data on an estimated 20 million people, including almost seven million minors as well as deceased citizens, was exposed by the breach, the state attorney general's office said. The data was hosted on an unsecured server run by an Ecuadoran marketing and analytics firm Novaestrat. The South American nation has a population of 17 million, according to the UN Population Fund. Ecuadoran authorities said the data was allegedly from a server based in the United States. The breached data include citizens' full names, dates and places of birth, education levels, phone numbers and national identity card numbers.

Iran charges three detained Australians with spying

Iran has charged three detained Australians with spying, Tasnim news agency reported yesterday, citing judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili. Two of the Australians were alleged to have used a drone to take pictures of military sites, while a third was accused of spying for another country, Esmaili said in the report, without naming them. It was the first official confirmation that Australians have been detained in Iran after the families of three of them said last week they had been arrested in the Islamic republic. They identified them as a travel-blogging couple Jolie King and Mark Firkin and Melbourne University lecturer Kylie Moore-Gilbert. Australia has said it is providing consular assistance for the three detainees.

Greta Thunberg wins AI's highest rights award



Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg and the Fridays for Future youth movement received Amnesty International's "Ambassadors of Conscience" award on Monday for their work highlighting the need for urgent action to avert climate disaster. The 16-year-old, who is taking a year out of high school, received a standing ovation from students at The George Washington University in the US capital where the ceremony was held. Urging all to hold the responsible accountable, she said that the prize was not just for her but the millions of youth who have taken part since last year in weekly school strikes held every Friday, inspired by the sit-in she began outside Sweden's parliament in August 2018. The next of these will be on September 20, a day when Thunberg and thousands of New York students are expected to pour into the streets as part of a "global climate strike" along with other protests around the world.

SOURCE: AFP



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his wife Sara cast their votes at a voting station in Jerusalem, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Israel votes as Netanyahu fights for political survival

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel voted in its second election in five months yesterday that will decide whether to extend Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's term as the country's longest-serving prime minister despite corruption allegations against him.

The stakes could not be much higher for the 69-year-old right-wing leader who, as in April polls, faces a strong challenge from ex-military chief Benny Gantz and his centrist Blue and White alliance.

Netanyahu voted in Jerusalem alongside his wife Sara and said he expected a close election, urging Israelis to turn out in large numbers.

"President (Donald) Trump said yesterday that the elections will be tight," Netanyahu said in reference to Monday's comments calling the polls "50/50" by the US leader, who has been a strong supporter of the premier.

"I can guarantee you this morning that they are very tight."

Gantz voted in his hometown of Rosh Haayin near Tel Aviv and called on the country to reject corruption and

"extremism".

"We want new hope. We are voting today for change," Gantz said after voting with his wife Revital.

"We will succeed in bringing hope. We will succeed in bringing change, without corruption and without extremism, all together."

Polls opened at 7:00 am (0400 GMT) and were due to close in most areas at 10:00 pm. Some 6.4 million people are eligible to vote. The first exit surveys will be released just after polls close, while official results are not expected until today.

There were early signs that concerns over election fatigue may not materialise.

Turnout by 10:00 am was 15 percent, the highest by that time since 1984, according to the election committee.

Opinion polls have indicated another tight race, showing Netanyahu's Likud and the Blue and White winning around 32 seats each in the 120-seat parliament.

Ex-defence minister Avigdor Lieberman, Netanyahu's former right-hand man turned rival, could play a kingmaker role with his campaign to "make Israel normal again."

7C warmer earth by 2100!

New climate models show our planet is warming alarmingly

AFP, Paris

Greenhouse gases thrust into the atmosphere by burning fossil fuels are warming Earth's surface more quickly than previously understood, according to new climate models set to replace those used in current UN projections, scientists said yesterday.

By 2100, average temperatures could rise 6.5 to 7.0 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels if carbon emissions continue unabated, separate models from two leading research centres in France showed.

That is up to two degrees higher than the equivalent scenario in the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change's (IPCC) 2014 benchmark 5th Assessment Report.

The new calculations also suggest the Paris Agreement goals of capping global warming at "well below" two degrees, and 1.5C if possible, will be harder to reach, the scientists said.

"With our two models, we see that the scenario known as SSP1 2.6 -- which normally allows us to stay under 2C -- doesn't quite get us there," Olivier Boucher, head of the Institute Pierre Simon Laplace Climate Modelling Centre in Paris, told AFP.

With barely one degree Celsius of warming so far, the

world is already coping with increasingly deadly heat waves, droughts, floods and tropical cyclones made more destructive by rising seas.

A new generation of 30-odd climate models known collectively as CMIP6 -- including the two unveiled Tuesday -- will underpin the IPCC's next major report in 2021.

"CMIP6 clearly includes the latest modelling improvements," even as important uncertainties remain, Joeri Rogelj, an associate professor at Imperial College London and an IPCC lead author, told AFP.

These include increased supercomputing power and sharper representations of weather systems, natural and man-made particles, and how clouds evolve in a warming world.

"(These models) represent current climate trends more accurately," said Boucher. A core finding of the new models is that increased levels of CO2 in the atmosphere will warm Earth's surface more easily than earlier calculations had suggested.

If confirmed, this higher "equilibrium climate sensitivity", or ECS, means humanity's carbon budget -- our total emissions allowance -- is likely to shrink. Researchers says other respected models also have come to the same unsettling conclusion, Boucher confirmed.

