

# NEWSIN brief

## Pak bus accident kills 23, injures 18

At least 23 people were killed and 18 others injured yesterday when a bus hit a rock and plunged into a ravine in northwestern Pakistan, officials said. Local administration official Aurangzeb Haider told AFP four women and six children were among the dead, while senior police official Zaibullah Khan said six of the injured were in critical condition. The accident happened in the Babusar Top area, bordering Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province with Gilgit-Baltistan.

## Flights cancelled as typhoon eyes Japan

Typhoon Tapah approached southwestern Japan yesterday, with heavy rain and strong winds grounding hundreds of regional flights. Tapah, with gusts up to 162 kilometres per hour, was expected to draw near Nagasaki prefecture overnight, according to the Japan Meteorological Agency. The storm prompted cancellations of more than 400 domestic flights, according to national broadcaster NHK.

## UN hails Huthi offer to halt Saudi attacks

The United Nations envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths welcomed Saturday an offer from the country's Huthi rebels to halt all attacks on Saudi Arabia, saying it could bring an end to years of bloody conflict. Saudi Arabia gave a cautious response, with minister of state for foreign affairs Adel al-Jubeiri saying on Saturday, "We judge other parties by their deeds, actions and not by their words, so we will see (whether) they actually do this or not."



António Guterres, UN Secretary-General speaks next to the youth climate activists at the first ever United Nations Youth Climate Summit in New York City, on Saturday. Inset, Guterres shakes hands with teen environmental activist Greta Thunberg. Young climate activists demanded a greater role in decision-making as they met leaders at UN headquarters. Story on page 16.



PHOTO: AFP

# Trump 'a serial abuser'

## Says Biden as whistleblower's complaint rocks Washington

AFP, Washington

Joe Biden accused Donald Trump of "an overwhelming abuse of power" and called for an investigation into accusations the US leader pressured his Ukrainian counterpart to investigate the presidential candidate's son. Biden's allegations prompted a swift rebuke from Trump, who himself accuses the Democratic frontrunner of wrongdoing in Ukraine during his time as vice president under former president Barack Obama. The back-and-forth recriminations stem from a Washington Post report stating a whistleblower complaint had been filed over Trump's communications with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, and a "promise" allegedly made by the US leader. Trump allegedly pressured Zelensky to investigate possible corruption involving Biden and his son Hunter, who had worked with a Ukrainian natural gas company while his father was vice president. Trump has urged media to "look into" Biden's comments in early 2016 when the then US vice president said the Obama administration would freeze \$1 billion in US loan guarantees unless Kiev fire its top prosecutor, who was looking into the gas company. "This appears to be an overwhelming abuse of power, to



get on the phone with a foreign leader who is looking for help from the United States and ask about me," Biden told reporters on the campaign trail in the state of Iowa. "I know what I'm up against, a serial abuser. That's what this guy is," Biden continued. "If he sees any threat to his staying in power, he'll do whatever he has to do. But this crosses the line." Biden had on Friday demanded Trump immediately release the transcript of a July 25 call with Zelensky while saying reports that the president sought to coerce his Ukrainian counterpart, if true, amounted to "clear-cut corruption." Trump slammed the allegations as "ridiculous," and on Saturday accused Biden on Twitter of having demanded, during his time as vice president, "that the Ukrainian Government fire a prosecutor who was investigating his son." Biden has said the call had nothing to do with his son. Trump also accused news outlets of fabricating "a story about me and a perfectly fine and routine conversation I had with the new President of the Ukraine. Nothing was said that was in any way wrong, but Biden's demand, on the other hand, was a complete and total disaster." Ukrainian Foreign Minister Vadym Prystaiko denied that there was any pressure from Trump in an interview on television station Hromadske.

## RARE ANTI-SISI PROTESTS IN EGYPT

# Police fire tear gas, live rounds

AFP, Cairo

Egyptian security forces, for the second consecutive night, clashed with hundreds of anti-government protesters in the port city of Suez on Saturday, firing tear gas and live rounds, said locals. A heavy security presence was also maintained in Cairo's Tahrir Square, the epicentre of Egypt's 2011 revolution, after protests in several cities called for the removal of general-turned-president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. Such demonstrations are rare after Egypt effectively banned protests under a law passed following the 2013 military ouster of Islamist ex-president Mohamed Morsi. But discontent over rising prices has been swelling in Egypt, where Sisi's government has imposed strict austerity measures since 2016. Nearly one in three Egyptians live below the poverty line on less than \$1.40 a day. On Saturday protesters headed to downtown Suez for the second night in a row, where they were met by security forces. "There were about 200 or so people. They (security forces) fired tear gas, rubber and live bullets and there were injuries", a man who took part in the demonstration but declined to be named told AFP. On late Friday, hundreds of Egyptians poured through the streets of Cairo, chanting slogans including "Leave, Sisi!" and demanding the "fall of the regime". At least 74 people were arrested after clashes between the crowds and police in the capital, a security source told AFP.

## Not too late for Brexit deal: Juncker

AFP, Madrid

There is still time for London and Brussels to make a Brexit deal, outgoing European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker said in remarks published yesterday, as the clock runs down to a October 31 deadline. Juncker also told the Spanish daily El Pais that he wished the Commission had played a more active role in the 2016 British referendum to counteract "lies and fake news". Juncker described as "constructive and partly positive" his talks with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Monday in Luxembourg. "I believe that we still have a chance to reach an agreement," the paper quoted Juncker as saying. "I don't share the views of those who think that Johnson is playing games with us and with himself," he said. Britain's departure from the EU "is a tragic moment for Europe", he said. Juncker said he had not been surprised when a majority of Britons in



2016 voted for a departure from the bloc, because they had been told by elites for decades that political union was a "Federalist folly" and that a common market was sufficient. But it was a regret that the Commission kept out of the referendum campaign when asked to by then-prime minister David Cameron, Juncker said. "We at the Commission decided not to intervene, at the request of David Cameron, and that was a big mistake," he said. Britain is racing toward its October 31 departure without an exit agreement and faces the threat of economic disruption that the government admits could cause food shortages and spark civil unrest.

## 'Howdy, Modi!'

### Trump set to join Modi at Texas rally

REUTERS, CNN

Donald Trump yesterday headed to Houston, Texas, to join a major rally of tens of thousands of Indian-Americans, but the US President won't be headlining. Instead, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be the star. "Howdy, Modi!" is billed to be the largest gathering for any foreign leader visiting the US, "other than the Pope," according to the event's website. The event gives Modi, a nationalist facing international criticism over a recent crackdown in disputed Kashmir, a chance to energize his relationship with Indian-Americans who are active political supporters. Trump, meanwhile, will face a largely foreign-born audience that may not prove receptive to his typical strident anti-immigrant messages, reported Reuters. Both populist leaders energize their respective bases with big rallies and even bigger personalities. Their similar strongman tactics have also landed them at loggerheads. After failing to secure a trade deal earlier this year, the leaders have exchanged tariffs. But the joint appearance seems to indicate there's no love lost. Over the last five years, Modi has consistently trumpeted the slogan that would become Trump's signature campaign promise: India (or America, in Trump's case) comes first. Within months of taking office in 2014, Modi launched "Make in India" -- a campaign promoting local manufacturing, reported CNN. It will not be the first time Modi, who heads the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, has addressed a large crowd in the US, which is home to about 4 million Indian-Americans including about 300,000 in Houston and nearby Dallas, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of US Census data.



Activists of the Extinction Rebellion movement wheel a red and white lightship the size of a double decker bus along the seafont as they sound the alarm about climate change, during the Labour party conference in Brighton, on the south coast of England, yesterday. Britain's main opposition Labour Party begins its annual conference yesterday desperately searching for a coherent Brexit plan to stem a potential drubbing in a looming election.

## Lanka orders fresh probe into Easter bombings

A fresh inquiry into the Easter suicide bombings that hit Sri Lanka killing at least 258 people was ordered by president Maithripala Sirisena yesterday, after concerns from the Catholic Church that current probes are not independent. The government has blamed a local jihadi group, the National Thowheeth Jama'ath (NTJ) for the April 21 attacks on three churches and three luxury hotels, while the Islamic State group also claimed responsibility. Sirisena said the commission has wide judicial powers to gather evidence on those responsible for the bombings, and to probe security and intelligence lapses. The five-member panel is headed by a Court of Appeal judge and includes three other judges and a retired civil servant. It is to report back with recommendations within three months.

## Myanmar crew held as India seizes 1 tonne of ketamine

India's coast guard has arrested six Myanmar men and seized \$42 million worth of ketamine after spotting a suspicious vessel in the Indian Ocean near the Nicobar Islands. The 1,160 kilogram drug haul came after coast guard aircraft spotted the boat, which had its lights off, on Wednesday in India's Exclusive Economic Zone, the defence ministry said in a statement. The six Myanmar men and cargo were taken to Port Blair, the capital of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, where they were questioned by investigators. They claimed they left Myanmar on September 14 and were due to rendezvous with another boat "operating near the Thailand-Malaysia maritime border line" on Saturday, the statement said.

## Firefighters starting to lose hope

### Burned area doubles in Bolivia's Amazon region

REUTERS, Concepcion

Bolivian volunteer firefighters, exhausted from battling blazes sweeping rapidly across the country's lowlands, are starting to lose hope and retreat from the front lines of some infernos in the drought-stricken region. The fires this year are Bolivia's worst in at least two decades, with the size of burned land across the country nearly doubling in under three weeks, destroying swaths of biodiverse forest and ranches and farms that sustain thousands of people. In the dusty cattle ranching town of Concepcion, despite nearly two months of non-stop firefighting, blazes that had been put out in surrounding dry forests have reignited while others continue to spread toward the Noel Kempff Mercado National Park, a gateway to pristine Amazonian rainforest. "Nothing has been controlled. The fires continue," said Elias Johns, the deputy governor of the province of Nuño Chavez, where Concepcion is located. While helicopters have doused flames around Concepcion, the Boeing supertanker 747 that



Bolivian President Evo Morales ordered to battle blazes across the country has not yet made it here. The heat and smoke are so intense along part of the front lines that firefighters cannot remain working for more than several minutes at a time. Local firefighters with Bolivia's volunteer-based force say they are poorly equipped with little more than backpacks of water, hoses and machetes, lacking heavy machinery to clear debris and stop fires from advancing. Some 700 to 800 volunteer firefighters have gone home, Johns said. The province now mostly relies on foreign units from Argentina and France and Bolivian soldiers sent to help. With no sign of the fires slowing, residents are anxiously waiting for the start of the rainy season, which might not come until October. Wildfires in Bolivia this year have spread over 4.1 million hectares (16,000 square miles) through Sept 15, up from 2.1 million hectares less than three weeks earlier, according to the Bolivian environmental group Fundacion Amigos de la Naturaleza.

## Nehru responsible for Kashmir's split: Amit Shah

NDTV ONLINE

Indian Home Minister Amit Shah yesterday blamed former prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru for the formation of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK), and said it was because of the "untimely ceasefire" declared in 1947. Jawaharlal Nehru was responsible for the "non-integration" of Kashmir and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the country's first home minister, should have handled the issue, Shah said at a rally in Maharashtra, where assembly polls are due next month. "The PoK wouldn't have come into existence had Nehru not declared untimely ceasefire with Pakistan... Sardar Patel should have handled Kashmir, instead of Nehru handling it... the princely states handled by Sardar Patel had all become part of India," he said at the event, which was themed on Article 370 of the constitution. In August, the government had ended the special status of Jammu and Kashmir granted under Article 370 and bifurcated the state



into two union territories. The restrictions announced in the state since - including the unplugging of internet in Jammu and Kashmir and the house arrest of political leaders - to prevent any backlash, had triggered opposition protests. With Pakistan flagging the issue at international forums, including the United Nation, the matter has also been discussed abroad. "The Congress sees politics behind Article 370 abrogation, we don't see it that way... for us, it is a matter of nationalism," Amit Shah said, while explaining the BJP's stand on Article 370. The party, he said, had always supported the idea of "one nation, one Prime Minister and one constitution". Jawaharlal Nehru's move, he said, led to the special status of Jammu and Kashmir under the constitution and eventually terrorism in the Kashmir Valley. "Forty thousand people were killed and Kashmiri pundits, Sufis, and Sikhs were driven out from the state in 10 years between 1990 and 2000," he said.

## Israel set for crucial talks on who should be next PM



Israel was set for crucial discussions yesterday on who should try to form the next government as last week's deadlocked election threatened Benjamin Netanyahu's long reign as prime minister. President Reuven Rivlin was to hold separate meetings with all the political parties voted into the latest parliament, to hear their recommendations on who should be the premier. The political parties will arrive in order of the number of votes received. That means ex-military chief Benny Gantz's centrist Blue and White alliance will arrive first, since it won 33 seats out of parliament's 120, two more than Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party. The mainly Arab Joint List alliance has won 13 seats, and ex-defence minister Avigdor Lieberman's nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu won eight. SOURCE: AFP