

NEWSIN brief

Zimbabwe's Mugabe died from cancer
AFP, Harare
Zimbabwe's founding president Robert Mugabe had "advanced cancer" when he died in hospital in Singapore on September 6, the state-owned newspaper reported yesterday. The former guerilla leader, who died aged 95, came to power at the end of white minority rule in 1980 and ruled Zimbabwe uninterrupted for 37 years and seven months. He was toppled on November 2017 in a military-backed coup, ending an iron-fisted rule.

Israel cuts power in West Bank over debts
AFP, Ramallah
Israel's national electricity company said Sunday it was cutting power to parts of the occupied West Bank due to outstanding payments amounting to nearly \$483 million. The Israel Electric Corporation said it was owed 1.7 billion shekels in debts from the main Palestinian power distributor for the West Bank, which is based in east Jerusalem. The company "will reduce the current in some areas of the West Bank" because of the debts, it said in a statement.

7 children killed in Kenya school collapse
AFP, Nairobi
Seven children died and scores were injured early yesterday when a school building collapsed in the Kenyan capital Nairobi, in an accident blamed on shoddy construction. "So far we can confirm that we have seven fatalities," government spokesman Cyrus Oguna said at the scene. Education Minister George Magoha said in a statement that 64 pupils had been admitted to Kenyatta National Hospital, most of them with soft tissue injuries while two others required "more attention".



US President Donald Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi attend "Howdy, Modi!" at NRG Stadium in Houston, Texas, on Sunday. Tens of thousands of Indian-Americans converged on Houston for an unusual joint rally by Trump and Modi, a visible symbol of the bond between the nationalist-minded leaders. Story on page 16.

ARMY RAID ON MILITANT HIDEOUT
35 Afghans killed at wedding party

REUTERS, Helmand/Kabul
At least 35 civilians attending a wedding party were killed and 13 people wounded by explosions and gunfire during a raid by Afghan government forces on a nearby militant hideout, two officials in southern Helmand province said yesterday.
The officials said the house being used by the Taliban to train suicide bombers was located adjacent to the bride's home that came under fire during Sunday night's attack.
A senior Afghan Defence Ministry official said the raid was against "a foreign terrorist group actively engaged in organizing terrorist attacks".
"During the operation, a large warehouse of the terrorists' supplies and equipment was also demolished," the official said.
A second Afghan Defence Ministry official said a foreign militant detonated a suicide vest that killed him and others around him, including a woman.
"The compound was being used to train men and women who were willing to become suicide bombers, we raided it. We are aware that civilians were injured in the attack," he said.
Attaullah Afghan, a member of the Helmand provincial council member, said 35 civilians people attending the wedding party near to the attack site in the Khaksar area of Musa Qala district were killed and 13 were injured.
A second provincial council member, Abdul Majid Akhundzadah, said 40 people, all civilians.
The Defence Ministry said the Taliban hideout was also used by foreign nationals working for the hardline Islamist group.

US wants to avoid Iran war
Pompeo emphasizes diplomacy in standoff with Tehran; Rouhani says Iran resists sanctions, drives US 'desperate'

AGENCIES
The United States said Sunday it will make its case against Iran at the United Nations this week, insisting it wants to give diplomacy "every opportunity to succeed" in the wake of a devastating attack on a vital Saudi oil complex.
Setting the stage for President Donald Trump's address to the annual UN General Assembly today, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo put aside threats of US military retaliation against Iran for the attack.
"President Trump and I both want to give diplomacy every opportunity to succeed," Pompeo said in an interview with ABC's "This Week."
"Our administration's taking this on in a serious way and we are working diligently to see that this has a diplomatic outcome," he said.
"But make no mistake about it, if we're unsuccessful in that and Iran continues to strike out in this way, I

am confident that President Trump will make the decisions necessary to achieve our objectives."
The United States has accused Tehran of carrying out the sneak air attacks that set aflame Saudi Arabia's
Seized British-flagged tanker 'free' to leave: Iran
Rouhani heads to UN in bid to win Iran support
Abqaiq plant and the Khurais oil field September 14, knocking out half the kingdom's oil production, reported AFP.
Pompeo called it "one of the largest attacks on the global energy supply in history."
Meanwhile, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said yesterday new US sanctions, under which Iran's central

bank was blacklisted for a second time, pointed to US "desperation" in face of Iranian resistance, reported Reuters.
"Americans are sanctioning institutions that have already been blacklisted. This signals America's complete desperation and shows that it's "maximum pressure" has failed... as the great Iranian nation has resisted successfully," Rouhani said in remarks carried by state television.
Rouhani set off for New York yesterday to attend the UN General Assembly on a mission to win Iran support against "cruel" pressure from arch-foe the United States.
His departure came as Iran said an oil tanker flying the flag of US ally Britain was "free" to leave more than two months after seizing it in sensitive Gulf waters.
Speaking before flying out, Rouhani said his delegation was heading to the UN gathering despite reluctance from President Donald Trump's administration to issue them visas.

Trump confirms Biden topic in Ukraine call
Impeachment calls from Democrats return

AFP, Washington
US President Donald Trump confirmed Sunday that he discussed former vice president Joe Biden and corruption allegations in a phone call with Ukraine's leader, adding to calls by Trump's opponents for his impeachment.
A whistleblower's complaint sparked off accusations that Trump had sought to persuade President Volodymyr Zelensky to investigate a son of Biden, Trump's possible 2020 election challenger -- raising concerns of dangerous foreign meddling in the US election similar to the interference blamed on Russia in 2016.
Trump said that the conversation, held in July, addressed alleged corruption involving Biden and his son Hunter, and he floated the possibility that a transcript

could be released.
"We had a very great conversation, very straight, very honest conversation. I hope they can put it out," Trump said, repeating that he had done nothing wrong in the latest scandal to shake his presidency.
The Democratic Party has been split on whether to push for impeachment proceedings against Trump since he came to power in 2017.
But influential congressman Adam Schiff, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, on Sunday said that his own reservations about impeachment were fading over Trump's Ukraine call.
"I have been very reluctant to go down the path of impeachment (but) the president is pushing us down this road," Schiff said.



Don't expect any Brexit breakthrough in NY
Says UK PM; SC to rule on parliament suspension today

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British Prime Minister Boris Johnson cautioned yesterday that there would be no Brexit breakthrough at talks with European leaders in New York as gaps remained, but said significant progress had been made on striking a deal.
Three years after the United Kingdom voted in a referendum to leave the European Union, hopes of an emerging deal to ease the transition were stoked when Johnson said that the shape of an accord was emerging, and European Commission President Juncker said an agreement was possible.
But the two sides remain split over London's desire to remove the Irish "backstop" - an insurance policy to prevent a return of border controls on the island of Ireland - from the divorce deal struck by Johnson's predecessor Theresa May.

Johnson, who has vowed to deliver Brexit on October 31 with or without a deal, will meet EU leaders on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, including Germany's Angela Merkel and Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar, reported Reuters.
He will also discuss progress on reaching a Brexit deal with European Council President Donald Tusk.
"I would caution you all not to think that this is going to be the moment," Johnson told reporters on the plane to New York. "I don't wish to elevate excessively the belief that there will be a New York breakthrough."
The Supreme Court will decide today on whether Johnson acted unlawfully in shutting down parliament in the run-up to the country's scheduled EU exit next month, reported AFP.



Indonesian firefighters battle a forest fire, one of many spewing toxic haze across the region causing an increase in reports of respiratory illnesses, in Kampar, Riau yesterday.

WHO accused of rationing Ebola vaccine in DR Congo

Aid group Doctors Without Borders (MSF) yesterday accused the World Health Organization of rationing the Ebola vaccine in the Democratic Republic of Congo where more than 2,100 people have died of the deadly virus. "One of the main problems currently is the fact that in practice the vaccine is rationed by the WHO and that too few people at risk are protected today," MSF said in a statement. It called for "the creation of an independent international coordination committee" to "guarantee the transparency of the management of stocks and data sharing". Around 225,000 people have received the Ebola vaccination manufactured by German pharma giant Merck since August 8, 2018, "but this number remains largely insufficient", MSF said.

Italian man mistaken for wild boar shot dead by son

An Italian man shot dead his father Sunday during a hunting expedition in southern Italy after mistaking him for a wild boar, according to media reports. Martino Gaudio, 55, was shot in the stomach by his 34-year-old son as they stalked their prey separately through thick foliage in Sicignano degli Alburni, near Salerno, in a national park area off limits to hunters, the reports said. Italy's environment minister called for a nationwide ban on hunting last October following the fatal shooting of an 18-year-old after he was mistaken for a boar. Two months ago a hunter aged 67 was found dead in the woods after accidentally shooting himself in the head.

Israeli Arab parties back Gantz for PM

AFP, Jerusalem
Israeli Arab political parties broke with longstanding precedent Sunday and endorsed ex-military chief Benny Gantz for prime minister following last week's elections, seeking to keep the president from asking incumbent Benjamin Netanyahu to form the next government.
The dramatic move came after the mainly Arab Joint List alliance won 13 seats in Tuesday's polls, making them the third-largest force in the 120-seat parliament.
In announcing the decision, Joint List leader Ayman Odeh said the alliance's decision was not an endorsement of Gantz's policies but a move to oust Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving prime minister.
Netanyahu has repeatedly been accused of political rhetoric and actions amounting to racism toward Israel's Arab population.
"We have become illegitimate in Israeli politics in the Netanyahu era," Odeh told Israeli President Reuven Rivlin when informing him of the endorsement.
"We are this time recommending Benny Gantz to form the next government."
Prominent Arab parliament member Ahmad Tibi said "history is done: We'll do what is needed to bring down Netanyahu."
It was the first time that majority Arab parties had endorsed a candidate for prime minister since 1992, when they backed Yitzhak Rabin, who went on to sign the Oslo accords with the Palestinians.

INT'L AID TO BATTLE CLIMATE CHANGE
Poorest people getting less than a cent per day: report

THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION, Barcelona
The world's poorest people, increasingly buffeted by storms, floods and droughts, have been getting less than 1 cent a day each in international help to protect them from wild weather and rising seas as the Earth heats up, aid group Oxfam said yesterday.
Its analysis of global funding for developing countries to adapt to climate change was released as world leaders gathered in New York for a UN summit where they have been asked to set out how they will do more to rein in global warming.
Poorer nations - many in places where climate change effects are hitting the hardest - have long demanded more financial support so they can build stronger homes, plant hardier seeds on farms, put in irrigation and warn citizens of dangerous weather.
"Millions of people are already living with the threat of deadly storms, rising floodwater and failed crops," said Danny

HK mops up after violence

REUTERS, Hong Kong
Hong Kong cleaned up and train services in the city resumed yesterday, after another weekend of sometimes violent protests that saw pro-democracy activists vandalise a railway station and a shopping mall.
Nearly 50 people were arrested in the weekend clashes, police said, bringing the total number of arrested in the protests since June to 1,556.
The Chinese-rule territory is on edge ahead of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic on Oct. 1, with authorities eager to avoid scenes that could embarrass the central government in Beijing.
The Hong Kong government starts an official dialogue with community members this week in a bid to heal rifts in society and has already called off a big fireworks display to mark Oct. 1 in case of further clashes.
The former British colony also marks the fifth anniversary this weekend of the start of the "Umbrella" protests, a series of pro-democracy demonstrations in 2014 that failed to wrestle concessions from Beijing.

Balakat terror camp in Pak reactivated: Indian army chief

Chief of Army Staff General Bipin Rawat yesterday said terror camp in Pakistan's Balakat has been reactivated and that there are at least 500 people waiting to infiltrate into Jammu and Kashmir from Pakistan. The Indian Air Force did surgical strikes in February to destroy terror camps in Balakat. Speaking to reporters after inaugurating the Young Leaders Training Wing at Officers Training Academy here, Rawat said that more troops had been deployed and that there was no hesitation to go beyond strikes in Balakat but would like to keep them (Pakistan) guessing. He also said infiltration depended on the weather. "Now, ice has melted so people try to come in from the north."
SOURCE: AFP, TNN

