

## International

# From reality TV to UN, Trump to wield Security Council gavel

## World leaders look for progress on N Korea, brace for Trump

**UNITED NATIONS:** He has chaired board meetings, cabinet meetings and starred in a reality television show, but on Wednesday US President Donald Trump will wield the gavel in the United Nations Security Council to denounce Iran for what it sees as its malign regional behavior. Trump is able to preside over the 15-member council as the United States holds the monthly rotating presidency, which coincides with the annual gathering of world leaders at the United Nations in New York this week. "I am sure that's going to be the most watched Security Council meeting ever," US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley told reporters.

But despite the unpredictable nature of Trump, some diplomats aren't expecting a reality television performance in the Security Council, where nearly every member is likely to be represented by their prime minister or president except Russia and China, which are expected to send ministers. "I don't think it will be that entertaining at all," said one senior UN diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity. "Even those who

don't like him, the attitude of all other heads of state and government in a public meeting when faced with any president of the United States of America is to be on their best behavior," the diplomat said. It is rare for the council - formed in 1945 to maintain international peace and security - to meet at the head-of-state and government level. This will be the third time the body is chaired by a US president. It has the ability to impose sanctions or authorize the use of military force. Trump's predecessor Barack Obama presided over meetings in 2009 and 2014 on nuclear nonproliferation and foreign terrorist fighters. In both cases the council adopted resolutions on the topics under discussion. US Ambassador Nikki Haley said there are no plans to adopt a resolution at Wednesday's meeting. "We want to make sure (Iran) understands the world

is watching. That's the biggest reason for this meeting," she said earlier this month.

### 'Thrilled'

The topic of the meeting will be nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, a broad issue that allows leaders around the horse-shoe table to raise a variety of subjects from North Korea to chemical weapons attacks in Syria and Britain. However, Trump signaled on Twitter he will zero in on Iran, when he posted: "I will chair a United Nations Security Council meeting on Iran." Tehran has accused the United States of abusing the power of the Security Council president.

The US concept note on the meeting circulated to Security Council members does not specifically mention any countries. "The purpose of this meeting is to discuss ways the Security Council can better enforce the resolutions it has adopted ... to counter the spread and use of the world's most dangerous weapons," it reads. The role of the Security Council president is typically administrative and neutral. The president is in charge of scheduling and presiding over council meetings and briefing other members states and the press on the council's work.

### US president takes the podium to face foes

### Bracing for Trump

North Korea and Iran will dominate this week's gathering of world leaders at the United Nations, where President Donald Trump will be firmly in the spotlight as he continues to upend global diplomacy. After warming up to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and ditching the Iran nuclear deal, the unpredictable Trump takes the podium tomorrow to face foes and increasingly uneasy allies at the UN General Assembly. On Wednesday, he will for the first time chair a



MISSOURI: US President Donald Trump arrives on stage to speak at a rally at JQH Arena in Springfield, Missouri. —AFP

Security Council meeting on non-proliferation and weapons of mass destruction that will focus heavily on Iran-likely triggering a clash with other big powers.

### U-turn on North Korea

Trump's address to the assembly will be the "polar opposite of what we heard last year," said Suzanne DiMaggio, an expert on North Korea and Iran at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The president will tout his face-to-

face with Kim as a major diplomatic win but "he should think twice if he plans to repeat his claim that North Korea is no longer a nuclear threat," she said. Despite the Trump-Kim landmark summit in Singapore in June, there has been little concrete progress on denuclearization.

North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong ho has been invited by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for talks on the sidelines of the assembly meeting. Ri is scheduled to deliver his address on September 29. —Agencies

## Pope honors Holocaust victims in Lithuania

**KAUNAS:** Pope Francis yesterday paid homage to Holocaust victims who perished in the Vilnius ghetto, 75 years to the day after the Nazis liquidated it, and warned 100,000 Lithuanians gathered for mass against "pernicious attitudes" leading to genocide. "Seventy-five years ago, this nation witnessed the final destruction of the Vilnius Ghetto; this was the climax of the killing of thousands of Jews that had started two years earlier," the pontiff told faithful in a homily in Kaunas, Lithuania's second city.

Pre-war Lithuania was home to a thriving Jewish community of more than 200,000 people, with its capital Vilnius a hub of learning known as the "Jerusalem of the North". According to historians, around 195,000 — nearly the entire Jewish population — perished at the hands of the Nazis and local collaborators under the 1941-44 German occupation. Today around 3,000 Jews live in the EU and NATO member state which has a population of 2.9 million, the majority of whom are Catholic.

Recalling the Holocaust, Francis prayed for divine "discernment" to alert the faithful to any reappearance of "that pernicious attitude, any whiff of it that can taint the heart of generations that did not experience those times and can sometimes be taken in by such siren songs." The pope also said he would pay tribute to Holocaust victims at the Vilnius ghetto memorial later on at ceremonies marking the 75th anniversary of its liquidation.

"In these days, I reserve a special thought for the Jewish community," the pontiff said, calling for "dialogue and the shared commitment for justice and peace". Francis will travel to mainly Protestant Latvia today and secular Estonia tomorrow as all three Baltic states mark 100 years of independence this year.

### Soviet-era repression

The last century of Baltic history was marked by both the Nazi invasion and then decades of persecution under Soviet occupation during the Cold War. Vilnius estimates that more than 50,000 Lithuanians died under Soviet occupation in camps, prisons, and during deportations between 1944 and 1953. Another 20,000 partisans and supporters were killed in anti-Soviet guerrilla warfare.

"Kaunas knows about this; Lithuania as a whole can testify to it, still shuddering at the mention of Siberia, or the ghettos of Vilnius and Kaunas, among others," Francis told the faithful. The Argentine pontiff will also honor victims of Soviet-era persecution later on during a visit to a museum in the former KGB building in Vilnius where regime opponents were tortured and killed. Behind the Iron Curtain, the Catholic Church played a key role in the non-violent anti-Soviet resistance, especially in Lithuania, the only Catholic-majority country of the three. As a result, it was persecuted with both priests and bishops jailed, sent to Siberia or killed by totalitarian authorities. —AFP

## Popularity of French leader hits record lows

**PARIS:** The popularity of French President Emmanuel Macron has hit its lowest level since the start of his term, according to a major tracker poll published yesterday, with just 29 percent of respondents satisfied with his leadership. The poll by research group Ifop and published in the Journal du Dimanche showed an overall fall of five points in September compared with August, reflecting the 40-year-old's battle with a series of domestic and foreign setbacks. The results of the widely watched Ifop poll are broadly in line with other surveys that have shown the approval ratings of the centrist falling sharply following a scandal involving a security aide in July.

A separate poll by the Kantar Sofres Onepoint group published on September 17 showed that only 19 percent of French people had a positive

view of Macron's record, while another survey on September 11 showed only 29 percent thought he was a "good president." The results reinforce a longer-term trend of French voters turning quickly on their presidents soon after their election—something suffered by Macron's predecessors Francois Hollande and Nicolas Sarkozy.

But many analysts also believe Macron has made a series of political errors, including failing to address the scandals over the summer quickly enough and repeatedly creating negative headlines with harsh or condescending remarks. His leadership style was again questioned last week when he told an unemployed gardener that he should look for a job in a restaurant or on a building site and implied he was not searching hard enough. Macron's biggest challenge remains the economy, however, with his pro-business reforms failing so far to produce a significant fall in unemployment or a major uptick in growth.

His government will unveil its draft budget for 2019 on Monday, which is set to see fresh efforts to rein in France's chronic overspending via cuts

## Tanzania buries disaster victims as toll hits 224

**UKARA:** Tanzania declared the whole nation was in mourning yesterday as the first dozen bodies were buried from a devastating ferry capsized on Lake Victoria that left 224 people dead. Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa led "national funerals" on the island of Ukara, where the MV Nyerere had been coming in to dock on Thursday. He spoke of "great mourning by the whole nation" as the first coffins were placed in individual graves, many of the victims unidentified.

The remainder of the dead were to be lain to rest later or taken away by families wishing for private funerals. The prime minister said a memorial would be built on Ukara. Hopes had faded of finding any more survivors three days after the disaster, even after rescuers pulled out an engineer on Saturday who had holed up in an

air pocket in the upturned vessel. But Majaliwa said divers would continue the grim search in the waters around the boat. The ferry would also be refloated. He updated the death toll to 126 women, 71 men, 17 girls and 10 boys. Just 41 people survived.

### 'Overloading' blamed for tragedy

Transport Minister Isack Kamwelwe said 265 people had been on board the ferry, which had an official capacity of 100 or 101 passengers. The prime minister said initial investigations suggested overloading was one of the causes of the accident. "We have already arrested all those people in charge of operating and supervising the MV Nyerere. Questioning has begun," he said.

A broader commission of inquiry into the disaster would also be set up, Majaliwa added. One survivor was an engineer who shut himself into a "special room" with enough air for him to stay alive until he was found, said local lawmaker Joseph Mkundi.

Transport minister Kamwelwe said on Saturday that 172 of the bodies had been identified by relatives. State

## Women foreign ministers promise fresh perspective

**MONTREAL:** Female foreign ministers meeting for the first summit of its kind vowed Saturday to bring a "women's perspective" to foreign policy. The two-day meeting, which began Friday in Montreal and brought together more than half of the world's top women diplomats, focused on topics such as conflict prevention, democratic growth and eliminating gender-based violence.

"This meeting represented a historic occasion," said Canada's top diplomat Chrystia Freeland, who also took the opportunity to announce the creation of Canada's first ambassador for women, peace and security. "This is not about creating a pink ghetto. This is quite to the contrary. This is about highlighting the importance and the role and the rights of women and girls in the world," Freeland said.

"It's about talking about the ways women in leadership positions can be particularly engaged in championing those rights." The ministers will share their takeaways from the event during meetings taking place as part of the United Nations General Assembly in New York in the coming week. The diplomatic chiefs from 17 countries promised to meet regularly—albeit informally—

within the next year. "We planted a seed that will grow into, I believe, a plant with beautiful flowers," said European Union diplomatic chief Federica Mogherini, who co-led the meeting with Freeland.

In addition to Freeland and Mogherini, the conference brought together ministers from Andorra, Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Croatia, the Dominican Republic, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya, Namibia, Norway, Panama, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, South Africa and Sweden. At the end of the summit, a dozen of the participants symbolically placed flowers on headstones erected in a Montreal park to commemorate 14 women killed in 1989 at the Ecole Polytechnique engineering school. The killer, who targeted women in what was classified as a hate crime, wounded 14 others. —AFP



SALZBURG, Austria: France's President Emmanuel Macron addresses a press conference at the end of the EU Informal Summit of Heads of State or Government at the Mozarteum University in Salzburg, Austria. —AFP

to the public sector payroll and caps on pensions. The survey by Ifop published yesterday was conducted between September 14-22 on 1,964 people. Macron's approval rating of 29 percent includes 3.0 percent of people who

declared themselves "very satisfied" and 26 percent who said they were "mostly satisfied." Hollande had an inferior rating of 23 percent at the same time of his term and Sarkozy had a rating of 34 percent. —AFP



MWANZA: Relatives of the victims of a ferry accident carry the wreath during the burial service at the shore of lake Victoria at Ukara, Ukerewe district, Mwanza region yesterday. —AFP

television cited witnesses reporting that more than 200 people had boarded the ferry at Bugolora, a town on the larger Ukerewe Island. It was market day, which usually sees the vessel packed with people and goods.

Witnesses told AFP that the ferry sank when passengers rushed to one side to disembark as it approached the dock. Others blamed the captain, saying he had made a brusque manoeuvre. —AFP