



**3** Govt supports entities highlighting state achievements: Info minister



**6** Empty classrooms as some schools reopen in Kashmir



**24** Facelift of Cairo's Baron Palace sparks outcry



**28** At last: Cincinnati title lands Medvedev in world top five



# Bashir acknowledges receiving millions of dollars as trial opens

## Sudan ex-president sits in court cage, jokes about prison

**KHARTOUM:** Sudan's ousted president Omar Hassan Al-Bashir acknowledged receiving millions of dollars, a police detective told a court yesterday at the start of a corruption trial that many Sudanese thought they would never see. Bashir listened to the testimony without comment, sitting in a metal cage and wearing traditional white robes and a turban in his first appearance in a Khartoum courtroom. He is charged with illicit possession of foreign currency and accepting gifts in an unofficial manner. Bashir's lawyer dismissed the accusations, telling reporters after the hearing it was usual for leaders to hold amounts of foreign currency.

The veteran leader spoke to confirm his name and age. When asked about his residence, Bashir laughed and said: "Formerly the airport district, at army headquarters but now Kobar prison," referring to the detention complex where he sent thousands of opponents during his rule. Bashir weathered multiple rebellions, economic crises, US sanctions and coup attempts until he was overthrown by the military in April after mass protests against his 30-year rule.

His trial will be seen as a test of how serious authorities are about trying to erase the legacy of a rule marked by widespread violence, wars, economic collapse and the secession of South Sudan. The 75-year-old, who seized power in a coup in 1989, arrived at the courthouse in a convoy with military and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces soldiers. Family members shouted "Allahu Akbar" (God is the Greatest) and he raised his hand in

greeting from the courtroom cage. A small number of family members were permitted inside the cage after the session ended to speak with him. The next hearing was scheduled for Saturday.

Bashir faces a raft of charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide from the International Criminal Court over his role in the Darfur war but yesterday's trial is over graft allegations. London-based rights watchdog Amnesty International has warned however that the corruption trial should not distract from his Darfur indictments.

"While this trial is a positive step towards accountability for some of his alleged crimes, he remains wanted for heinous crimes committed against the Sudanese people," Amnesty said. Amnesty urged the country's new transitional institutions to ratify the ICC's Rome Statute, a move that would allow for his transfer to the international tribunal. The Hague-based ICC has for years demanded that Bashir stand trial, and has renewed its call since his fall.

Bashir's lawyer Ahmed Ibrahim told reporters: "There is no information or evidence with regards to the accusations of illicit gains aimed at Bashir. Anyone in his occupation has to have foreign currency and it was in a room attached to his office in his residential residence."

Bashir was also charged in May with incitement and involvement in the killing of protesters, and prosecutors also want him questioned over suspected money laundering and terrorism

Continued on Page 24



**KHARTOUM:** Sudan's deposed military ruler Omar Al-Bashir sits in the defendant's cage during the opening of his corruption trial yesterday. — AFP

### News in brief

#### Govt rejects amending system

**KUWAIT:** The government has rejected parliamentary proposals calling for changing the current one-man-one-vote election system. The government also rejected increasing electoral constituencies to 10 or amending the current five constituencies. The sources said the government believes the current election system has achieved stability and gave everyone justice and equality in opportunities. It also gave minorities the possibility of gaining National Assembly membership, which was something hard to achieve earlier. Sources said the current system gives everyone a chance to win and closed the door to pre-poll alliances that placed obstacles in front of competent minorities. — A Saleh

#### Bahrain to join US-led efforts

**DUBAI:** Bahrain said yesterday it would join US-led efforts to protect shipping in the Gulf amid tensions between Washington and Tehran after a series of attacks on tankers. Bahrain's King Hamad voiced his country's appreciation of the "US role in supporting regional security and stability" during a meeting with US Central Command chief General Kenneth McKenzie, state media said. "The king confirmed the kingdom of Bahrain's participation in the joint effort to preserve the safety of international maritime navigation and secure international corridors for trade and energy," the official Bahrain News Agency reported. — AFP

#### Pak extends military chief's tenure

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan extended its military chief's tenure yesterday, ensuring stability in what is arguably the country's most powerful position as tensions soar with rival India over Kashmir and Washington is expected to announce a withdrawal deal in Afghanistan. "General Qamar Javed Bajwa is appointed as chief of army staff for another term of three years," read a statement signed by Prime Minister Imran Khan and released by his office. "The decision has been taken in view of the regional security environment." — AFP

#### Message in bottle found 50 yrs later

**WASHINGTON:** A man gathering firewood in Alaska discovered a bottle with a handwritten message inside wishing the finder "happy sailing" more than 50 years after it was dropped into the sea by a Russian sailor. "Sincere greetings! From the Russian Far East Fleet mother ship VRXF Sulak," it read. "We wish you good health and long years of life and happy sailing, 20 June 1969." Tyler Ivanoff, a teacher's aide in Shishmaref, Alaska, spotted the bottle on the shore near his village, and pried off the plastic stopper with his teeth. Rossiya 1, a Russian television network, tracked it by its return address in Vladivostok to a retired Soviet ship captain now living in Crimea. — AFP

## Regime advance cuts off Turkish convoy in Syria

**MAARET AL-NOMAN, Syria:** A Turkish military convoy crossed into northwest Syria yesterday, its path blocked by advancing regime troops as tensions soared between Damascus and Ankara. Rebel-backer Turkey said its forces were targeted by an air strike, while the Syrian regime accused Turkish forces of backing "terrorists". The convoy had entered Idlib province before heading towards a key town where Russian-backed regime forces are waging a fierce battle to retake the area from jihadists and rebels.

Turkey claimed an air strike hit its convoy, killing three civilians, though a war monitor said a Russian air raid took the

lives of three rebels in the surrounding area. Russian President Vladimir Putin told French President Emmanuel Macron yesterday that Moscow supports the Syrian army's offensive against "terrorists" in the northern province of Idlib. "We support the efforts of the Syrian army... to end these terrorist threats" in Idlib, Putin said after Macron urged respect for a ceasefire in Idlib.

After eight years of civil war, the jihadist-run region on the border with Turkey is the last major stronghold of opposition to President Bashar Al-Assad's regime. The region of some three million people was supposed to be protected by a Turkish-Russian buffer zone deal signed last year, but regime and Russian forces have upped their deadly bombardment there since late April.

After days of inching forward, Russian-backed regime ground forces on Sunday entered the key town of Khan Sheikhun in

Continued on Page 24



**MAAR HATTAT, Syria:** A convoy of Turkish military vehicles is pictured near this town as smoke billows in the background during air strikes by pro-regime forces yesterday. — AFP

## Iran warns US as freed tanker leaves Gibraltar

**TEHRAN:** Tehran said it had warned its arch-foe Washington against attempting to seize an Iranian tanker, which sailed into international waters yesterday after being released from Gibraltar. Iran had been locked in a six-week standoff with US ally Britain since Royal Marines seized the tanker off British territory Gibraltar, on suspicion it was shipping oil to Syria in breach of EU sanctions. Little more than two weeks later, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps impounded the British-flagged Stena Impero tanker in strategic Gulf waters in what London called a tit-for-tat move.

A Gibraltar court on Thursday

ordered the release of the Grace 1, since renamed the Adrian Darya. That was in spite of a last-minute US bid to detain the supertanker on allegations of involvement in supporting illicit shipments to Syria by the Guards, listed as a terrorist group by Washington. Gibraltar's government rejected the request, saying it could not seek a court order to detain the ship because US sanctions against Iran were not applicable in the European Union.

The Adrian Darya had left Gibraltar and entered international waters yesterday, the deputy head of Iran's port and marine authority Jalil Eslami said, cited by state news agency IRNA. Flying the Iranian flag, it was on course for the Greek port of Kalamata, according to shipping data. But the final destination of the vessel and its 2.1 million barrels of oil remains unclear, with authorities in Greece yet to confirm it is expected to dock there.

Continued on Page 24



**GIBRALTAR:** An Iranian flag flutters on board the Adrian Darya oil tanker, formerly known as Grace 1, off the coast of Gibraltar on Sunday. — AFP

## Malaysia quizzes Indian preacher as pressure mounts

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysian police yesterday questioned a controversial Indian Islamic preacher for allegedly making insensitive remarks about race in the multiethnic country, as pressure mounts on authorities to kick him out. Zakir Naik, a radical television preacher who has called the 9/11 attacks an "inside job", left India in 2016 and moved to largely Muslim Malaysia, where he was granted permanent residency. He is wanted in India for inciting extremism and money laundering, and New Delhi last year asked Malaysia to extradite him,

according to reports - a request that was rejected.

Calls are now mounting for action after Naik said Hindus in Malaysia have "100 times" more rights than India's Muslim minority, and suggested Chinese Malaysians should be expelled before he was. Several cabinet ministers have publicly called for Naik to be kicked out, while even Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said he had crossed the line. His lawyer, Akberdin Abdul Kader, told AFP that Naik was "being interviewed by the police" for a second day yesterday, after first being hauled in last week.

Continued on Page 24



Zakir Naik

## UK to end EU free movement after Brexit

**LONDON:** Britain said yesterday it will immediately end freedom of movement for people from the European Union after Brexit on Oct 31, in a policy shift under Prime Minister Boris Johnson. "Freedom of movement as it currently stands will end on October 31 when the UK leaves the EU," a Downing Street spokeswoman said. She added the government planned "tougher criminality rules for

Continued on Page 24