

## International

# Trump suggests 'arrest for treason' of Democrat in impeachment probe

## Trump-Putin phone calls in US Democrats' sights: Schiff

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump railed against the Democratic lawmaker leading the impeachment probe yesterday, suggesting he be arrested for treason for depicting him as using mafia-like tactics. Adam Schiff, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, opened a congressional hearing last week by pretending to be the president speaking like a mob boss to pressure Ukraine's leader to probe rival Joe Biden.

The impersonation was intended to dramatize Schiff's contention that Trump's July 25 phone call to Volodymyr Zelensky was a classic mafia-like shake-down - but has been widely criticized by conservative media. Trump denounced it on Twitter as a "FAKE & terrible statement," saying Schiff "pretended it to be mine as the most important part of my call to the Ukrainian President, and read it aloud to Congress and the American people." "It bore NO relationship to what I said on the call. Arrest for Treason?"



### Trump-Putin calls

Congress is determined to get access to Donald Trump's calls with Russian President Vladimir Putin and other world leaders, the US House Intelligence Committee's chairman said on Sunday, citing concerns that the Republican president may have jeopardized national security. "I think the paramount need here is to protect the national security of the United States and see whether in the conversations with other world leaders - and in particular with Putin - that the president was also undermining our security in a way that he thought would personally benefit his campaign," Democrat Adam Schiff said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

The Democratic-led House last week launched an official impeachment inquiry into Trump in the aftermath of a whistleblower complaint from an individual within the US intelligence community that Trump solicited interference by Ukraine in the 2020 election for his own political benefit. The whistleblower's complaint cited a telephone call in which Trump asked

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy to open an investigation of former Vice President Joe Biden, a leader among Democratic candidates seeking to challenge Trump in 2020, and his son Hunter. Hunter Biden sat on the board of a Ukrainian gas company.

Trump, in a series of Twitter posts on Sunday evening, said he wanted to "meet" the whistleblower, who he called "my accuser," as well as "the person who illegally gave this information" to the whistleblower. "Was this person SPYING on the US President? Big Consequences!" wrote Trump, who added without providing evidence. "I want Schiff questioned at the highest level for Fraud & Treason." The CBS program "60 Minutes" reported that the whistleblower is under federal protection after receiving threats.

Trump's July 25 phone call came shortly after the United States froze nearly \$400 million in aid to Ukraine, prompting concern that the president was using the taxpayer money approved by Congress as leverage for his personal political gain. The complaint said White House lawyers directed that an electronic summary of the call be moved

### Trump wants to 'meet' the whistleblower

from the place where such things are usually kept to a separate electronic system reserved for classified and especially sensitive material - a move Democrats have called part of a cover-up.

"If those conversations with Putin or with other world leaders are sequestered in that same electronic file that is meant for covert action, not meant for this, if there's an effort to hide those and cover those up, yes we're determined to find out," Schiff said on NBC's "Meet the Press." Schiff did not say whether he plans to subpoena that information. The White House did not respond to a request for comment. The intelligence committee has reached an agreement with the whistleblower to appear before the panel. Schiff told ABC's "This Week" Schiff said he hoped the whistleblower would appear very soon.



WASHINGTON: Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) speaks at an anti gun violence rally on Capitol Hill. US Democrats' explosive launch of an official impeachment inquiry of Donald Trump has set off a massive political battle, raising multiple questions about the process and its consequences for the Republican's tempestuous presidency. —AFP

The Ukraine scandal arose just months after Special Counsel Robert Mueller finished an investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election that concluded that Moscow waged a campaign of hacking and propaganda to boost Trump's candidacy. Mueller's investigative report, released in redacted form in April, laid out numerous contacts between Russian officials and Trump's campaign, but found insufficient evidence to determine that a criminal conspiracy had taken place.

### 'Deep state operative'

Trump has defended his phone call with Zelenskiy and called the whistleblower a "political hack." White

House adviser Stephen Miller took up the attack on Sunday, accusing the whistleblower of being part of a "deep state" government conspiracy against Trump. "I know the difference between a whistleblower and a 'deep state' operative. This is a 'deep state' operative pure and simple," Miller told "Fox News Sunday."

"The president of the United States is the whistleblower. And this individual is a saboteur trying to undermine a democratically elected government," Miller added. Trump's former homeland security adviser Tom Bossert, in a break with the president, called himself "deeply disturbed" by Trump's call with Zelenskiy, and not just because the president sought assistance in getting political dirt on Biden.—Agencies

## Far-right terror group in dock in Germany over attack plot

BERLIN: The trial of a neo-Nazi "terrorist" cell accused of plotting a violent political uprising in Germany opened yesterday amid reports the country's far-right scene is growing more armed and radical. Eight members of the so-called Revolution Chemnitz group aged between 21 and 32 are answering to charges of "forming a right-wing terrorist organization".

The suspects are accused of "coming together to achieve their political goals - to shake the foundations of the state - with serious violent acts", a spokeswoman for the superior regional court said. They allegedly sought to carry out "violent attacks and armed assaults" against immigrants, political "opponents", reporters and members of the economic establishment.

Authorities believe the group's members were trying to acquire semi-automatic weapons for a potential bloodbath last year in Berlin on October 3, Germany's National Unity Day. "This is one of the most important trials to date dealing with far-right terrorism," chief federal prosecutor Peter Frank said. Security agencies hope the trial, which is set to last until at least April 2020 and hear around 75 witnesses, will reveal what exactly was being plotted and the scope of the network.

Almost a year to the day after most of the suspects' arrest in coordinated raids, the proceedings are taking place under tight security in Dresden, the capital of Saxony state, a stronghold of the extreme right. Resentment runs deep in the region over Merkel's liberal refugee policy that led to the arrival of more than a million asylum seekers to Germany since 2015. The anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim Alternative for Germany (AfD) party scored 27.5 percent in a state election earlier this month, just shy of the 32 percent garnered by Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives.

The defendants belong to the hooligan, neo-Nazi and skinhead scene in and around Chemnitz, another city in Saxony, which was the site of anti-migrant street violence following the murder of a German man in August last year. Last month a 24-year-old Syrian man was sentenced to nine-and-a-half years in jail for the knife killing. In the hours after the stabbing, thousands of people took to the streets in protest, answering calls by the AfD and nationalist group PEGIDA, which campaigns against what it calls the Islamisation of the West.—AFP

## Cameroon opens dialogue to end separatist crisis

YAOUNDE: Cameroon launched a national dialogue yesterday in a bid to end a separatist conflict in the country's anglophone provinces, though key rebel leaders have already refused to participate. Nearly 3,000 people have died and half a million fled their homes since fighting broke out in 2017 between the army and insurgents who want independence for Cameroon's two English-speaking provinces.

The talks opened at the Congressional palace in the capital Yaounde yesterday, an AFP journalist said, and debating would begin after a speech by Prime Minister Joseph Dion Ngute, who is leading the negotiations. The dialogue is scheduled to run to October 4. President Paul Biya, who has been in power for 37 years, hopes the talks will end the crisis that is also hurting the economy of the coffee and cocoa-producing Central African state. October 1 marks the second anniversary

## UN, mayor call for transfer of migrants after a deadly fire

MORIA: The UN and the mayor of Lesbos yesterday called for the immediate transfer of migrants from an overcrowded Greek refugee camp on the island after a deadly fire sparked riots. Greek officials yesterday confirmed the death of a woman in Sunday's blaze at Moria, Europe's largest migrant camp, which houses around 13,000 people but has facilities for just 3,000.

However, Greek media reported that a burnt blanket possibly containing the charred remains of a baby had been found next to the woman, matching earlier police sources saying a mother and her child had died. Another 17 injured migrants were transferred to a hospital on the island at Mytilene, the health ministry said yesterday. "Many refugees are so sad, they are stressed, they fear an accident can happen again," Farid, a young Afghan who did not give his last name, told AFP.

ners yesterday, despite resounding success in parliamentary elections. His OeVP party won a clear victory with around 37 percent in Sunday's vote, a marked improvement on its performance in 2017.

The result means Kurz will have the responsibility of sounding out other parties - which may be an uphill task. "We will of course talk to all parties... to see with which parties we could have a stable government," Kurz told the national public radio yesterday, adding this could stretch for more than the two months it took him last time to form a pact

of the spiral towards conflict - the declaration of the self-described "Republic of Ambazonia" for Cameroon's English-speaking minority.

Even before it began, the national dialogue ran into trouble with many activists arrested and experts voicing skepticism that it would yield tangible results. English-speakers account for about a fifth of Cameroon's population of 24 million, who are majority French-speaking. Anglophones are mainly concentrated in two western areas, the Northwest Region and the Southwest Region, that were incorporated into the French-speaking state after the colonial era in Africa wound down six decades ago. Many locals in the two regions complain of discrimination and marginalisation.

In a report published last week, the International Crisis Group estimated that around 3,000 people have been killed by separatist violence and the military crackdown. The ICG said the talks do not include separatists or anglophone leaders who support more federalist solutions. "It thus risks further frustrating anglophones widening the gulf between the two sides and empowering hardliners," the group said. "The government should make

The incident came as the number of migrant arrivals has been steadily climbing in recent months, creating dangerous conditions in the camps of the Greek islands that are in the forefront of the influx. The UN's refugee agency (UNHCR) yesterday warned the "critical" situation at Moria required "urgent" action. "We are calling to accelerate the transfers and improve conditions in Moria," said Boris Cheshirkov, UNHCR's spokesman in Greece. Lesbos mayor Stratos Kytelis also urged the "immediate decongestion of our islands".

EU Migration Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos is set to visit Greece and Turkey this week with the foreign ministers of Germany and France to discuss the explosive situation in the camps on the Greek islands. "The increased arrivals in Greece over the past weeks have put an immense strain on an already flawed system and are creating unsustainable conditions as we have already had the opportunity to point out in the past," European Commission spokesman Mima Andreeva said yesterday, describing the Moria fire as a "truly tragic event".

Moria camp has become like a small town, with UN refugee agency tents for

with the far-right.

But that government collapsed in May after his junior coalition partner, the anti-immigration Freedom Party (FPOe), was engulfed in the so-called "Ibiza-gate" corruption scandal which led to the resignation of its leader Heinz-Christian Strache. In the week before the vote, the FPOe was hit by further allegations of expenses abuse by Strache and suffered a worse than expected loss, down almost 10 percent from 2017 to around 16 percent, according to projected results.



BUEA: The wreckage of burnt out car is pictured - allegedly destroyed by separatists fighter in a recent attack, as a Cameroonian soldier patrols the edge of the abandoned market in the majority anglophone South West province in Buea. —AFP

greater space for anglophones, particularly federalists who are willing to attend. It should also seek a neutral facilitator." Biya's government has rejected both a return to more federalism and any proposed separation. But anglophone supporters are also divided

between those two options for their regions. The government's dialogue spokesman George Ewane said Cameroonian authorities had held preliminary discussions with some separatists, adding that even hardliners were welcome to join the talks.—AFP



LESBOS ISLAND: A man holds a boy during clashes with police outside the refugee camp of Moria on the Greek island of Lesbos. —AFP

around 8,000 people sprawling into the olive fields of nearby Moria village. Others are housed in containers. A plane helped extinguish the fire, which reportedly started

in a mobile vendor's stall. But police later fired tear gas to control an angry crowd who accused authorities of taking too long to respond to the incident.—AFP

## Austria's Kurz faces a tricky search for partners

VIENNA: The 33-year-old leader of Austria's centre-right People's Party Sebastian Kurz faces the start of a tough search for possible coalition part-

The OeVP-FPOe alliance - hailed as a model by nationalists across Europe, including Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban - now seems unlikely to be repeated as FPOe leaders say they would prefer to lick their wounds in opposition. Dejected current FPOe leader Norbert Hofer says steps towards the "reconstruction" of the party will be announced in the coming days, while the influential Strache, who led the party for 14 years, could be expelled if the expenses allegations turn out to be true.—AFP