

TOPOF THE WORLD



Abu Bakar Bashir has been linked to the 2002 Bali bombings

INDONESIA President backtracks on unconditional release of cleric

Jakarta: Indonesia's President said a radical Muslim cleric linked to the 2002 Bali bombings would only be released from jail if he pledged loyalty to the state and its ideology, after news he would be freed unconditionally sparked criticism. President Joko Widodo had declared last week that Abu Bakar Bashir, 81, would be freed on humanitarian grounds, citing his age and poor health. A legal adviser to the President had said the cleric would be granted unconditional release. But Widodo said in a statement on Tuesday it would be "conditional release", a day after a minister said the decision was being reviewed.

CHINA Beijing warns US, Canada against Huawei CFO extradition

Beijing: China on Tuesday warned the US and Canada that it would "take action" against them if they went ahead with the extradition of the CFO of Chinese telecom giant Huawei to America, and accused both the countries of abusing their extradition treaty. Meng Wanzhou, Huawei's chief financial officer, was arrested in Canada in December and faces extradition to the US, which alleges that she covered up her company's links to a firm that tried to sell equipment to Iran despite sanctions linked to its nuclear programme.

PHILIPPINES New law would make 9-yr-olds criminally liable

Manila: A proposed law making its way through the Philippine Congress would consider children as young as 9 criminally responsible for their actions. The justice panel in the House of Representatives hurriedly approved amendments Monday to the country's juvenile justice law, which was signed in 2006 and set the minimum age for criminal liability at 15. The measure still awaits approval by the full House.

TURKEY 'Ankara planning international probe into Khashoggi case'

Ankara: Turkey is planning to launch an international investigation into the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi and will take further steps in coming days, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu was quoted as saying by state-owned media. Khashoggi, a royal insider who became a critic of Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, was killed in the kingdom's Istanbul consulate on October 2, 2018.

Death toll 14 as 2 ships with Indian, Turkish crew catch fire off Russia

Directorate General of Shipping in Mumbai says many of the 15 Indians aboard the ships survived

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MOSCOW, MUMBAI, JANUARY 22

AT LEAST 14 sailors were killed and six others missing when two Tanzanian-flagged fuel ships carrying Indian, Turkish and Libyan crew members caught fire in the Kerch Strait separating Russia from Crimea, Russian rescue officials said Tuesday.

While the identities of those killed and missing are still not known, officials at the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) in Mumbai said that a good number of the 15 Indian seafarers who were on board the two ships have survived the accident.

While one ship was a liquefied natural gas carrier, the other was a tanker. The fire broke out as the two ships were transfer-

US top court revives ban on transgender military service

ADAM LIPTAK
WASHINGTON, JANUARY 22

THE US Supreme Court Tuesday revived the Trump administration's policy of barring most transgender people from serving in the military. In a brief, unsigned order, the justices temporarily allowed the ban to go into effect while the case moves forward.

The vote was 5-4. Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan dissented.

The policy, announced on Twitter by President Donald Trump and refined by the defence secretary at the time, Jim Mattis, generally prohibits people identifying with a gender different from their biological sex from military service. It makes exceptions for several hundred transgender people already serving openly and for those willing to serve "in their biological sex".

Challenges to the policy have had mixed success in the lower courts. Trial judges around the nation issued injunctions blocking it, and the 9th Circuit US Court of Appeals, in San Francisco, is expected to rule soon on whether to affirm one of them.

On January 4, the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit vacated a third injunction, that one issued by a federal trial judge in Washington. The appeals court said its ruling was "not a final determination on the merits." But it handed the administration at least a provisional victory.

The Supreme Court granted stays of two other injunctions, issued by US District Court judges in California and Washington State, both in the 9th Circuit.

Solicitor General Noel J. Francisco, representing the administration, told the justices that prompt action was required to ensure that the Supreme Court could rule before its term ends in June. **NYT**



A rescue vessel during a fire-fighting operation following an accident involving two ships, which caught fire in the Kerch Strait, near the coast of Crimea. Reuters

ring fuel from one to the other.

One of the ships, the *Candy*, had a 17-member crew, including nine Turkish citizens and eight Indians.

The other one, the *Maestro*, had a 15-member crew, including seven Indian nationals, seven Turkish citizens and an intern from Libya, Russian news agency

House Democrats turbocharge committee probes on Trump

Tweaks rule on secret depositions to boost investigations

GINGER GIBSON & KAREN FREIFELD
WASHINGTON, JANUARY 22

DEMOCRATS IN the US House of Representatives have quietly tweaked a rule on taking secret depositions that is likely to give a boost to their investigations of President Donald Trump, his personal finances and his administration.

The little-noticed change, made since the Democrats took over majority control of the House earlier this month, will let staffers of House investigative committees take testimony from subpoenaed witnesses without a lawmaker being present.

By eliminating complications with lawmakers' schedules, the change will let staffers work faster and range more widely, said former staffers and sources inside the committees that are launching several inquiries into Trump and his presidency.

The importance of this was underscored, legal experts said, when attorney general nominee William Barr indicated last week that he was unlikely to release the final report from Special



Trump with US Vice President Mike Pence and acting Secretary of Interior David Bernhardt at the Martin Luther King Memorial in Washington on Monday. Reuters

Counsel Robert Mueller to lawmakers in its original format.

Mueller has been probing for many months Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election, any collusion between Moscow and Trump's campaign, and obstruction of justice. If Barr is confirmed and holds back on Mueller's report, the rule change may help House investigators rapidly replicate Mueller's work.

"Dropping the member requirement will give much more power to staff investigators in different committees, which

Tass quoted maritime authority officials as saying.

A senior DGS official told PTI that dozens of vessels were looking for survivors in the vicinity of the accident site.

"Some of our sailors have contacted their families back home about making it, while a few have been rescued after they jumped out of the blazing ships," the official said, declining to give an exact number.

Fourteen people were killed in the accident, Crimea's leader Sergei Aksyonov told reporters on Tuesday. "I cannot say anything about the cause of the fire. We currently have information about 14 dead sailors. Other sailors have not reached hospitals yet. Kerch hospitals are expecting to receive them, they will get medical assistance," he said.

Twelve people have been res-

GLOBAL WARMING GREENLAND ICE MELTING FOUR TIMES FASTER

Greenland's melting ice, which causes sea levels to rise, disappeared four times faster in 2013 than in 2003 and is noticeable across the Arctic island, not just on glaciers, researchers warned on Tuesday. "Increasingly, large amounts of ice mass are going to leave as meltwater, as rivers that flow into the sea," Michael Bevis, lead author of the research paper, said. He warned this would have major implications, causing additional sea level rise.



The Army now accounts for less than 50 per cent of the total number of Chinese troops, state media said. Reuters

PLA strategic shift: China reduces Army by half, increases size of Navy, Air Force

KJM VARMA
BEIJING, JANUARY 22

CHINA'S MILITARY, the world's largest force, has cut the size of its land-based Army by about 50 per cent and significantly boosted its Navy and Air Force as part of an "unprecedented" strategic shift designed to transform the People's Liberation Army (PLA) into a comprehensive modern force.

The two million-strong Chinese military has significantly boosted its Navy, Air Force and new strategic units and downsized its land-based Army, the Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post* reported quoting a state-run *Xinhua* report.

In a feature report highlighting the "transformational changes" made by the PLA, *Xinhua* on Sunday said "this new data is unprecedented in the history of the PLA — the Army now accounts for less than 50 per cent of the total number of PLA troops; almost half of our non-combatant units have been made redundant, and the number of officers in the PLA has been reduced by 30 per cent."

In the last few years, the PLA has downsized its military by retrenching three lakh troops under the military reforms initiated by President Xi Jinping. But it still remained the world's largest military with two million personnel in the ranks.

The statement indicated that the four other branches of the PLA — the Navy, Air Force, Rocket Force and Strategic Support Force, which is responsible for areas such as cyberwarfare — now together make up more than half of the Chinese military, overtaking the Army, which has



Nawaz Sharif shifted to hospital from jail

M ZULQERNAIN
LAHORE, JANUARY 22

PAKISTAN'S FORMER prime minister Nawaz Sharif, who is serving a seven-year prison term in a Lahore jail, was rushed to a hospital on Tuesday after he complained of heart related complications.

Sharif, 69, was taken to the Punjab Institute of Cardiology (PIC) Lahore from Kot Lakhpat Jail.

"My father is not well. I wanted to go to the PIC, but my father stopped me to come because of security issues," Sharif's daughter Maryam said. "The authorities concerned have not yet provided with us the reports of the special medical board that earlier had examined Mian sahib. After pleading with jail authorities, we have also written to the Punjab Home department for the reports but to no avail," she said. A medical team that visited Sharif last week observed "he is not completely well". **PTI**

Russian police detain drunken man who hijacked plane

He threatened crew, forcing flight to land soon after take-off

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MOSCOW, JANUARY 22

RUSSIAN POLICE detained a drunken man who threatened the crew of a passenger plane flying Tuesday from a Siberian city to Moscow, forcing it to land shortly after take-off.

The Russian Investigative Committee said that the man told the Aeroflot crew that he was armed and demanded the diversion of the plane after it



The Aeroflot flight was en route to Moscow. Reuters file

had taken off from the Siberian city of Surgut. The plane landed in the city of Khatny-Mansiysk,

traditionally been the dominant unit of the PLA.

The expansion of the Navy in the past few years was massive as China now has one aircraft carrier, another undergoing trial and third in the making. **PTI**

Singer Chris Brown arrested in France on suspicion of rape

REUTERS
PARIS, JANUARY 22

US SINGER Chris Brown was arrested in Paris on Monday with two other people on suspicion of rape, a French police source said.

The arrests were first reported by *Closer* magazine, which said Brown, his bodyguard and a friend were detained after a 24-year-old woman alleged she was raped at the singer's suite at the Mandarin Oriental hotel on January 15.

The woman said she had met the men at a Paris nightclub ear-



A woman alleged that she was raped at Brown's hotel room in Paris on Jan 15.

lier in the evening, according to the magazine.

Neither Brown nor his agents could not immediately be

reached for comment.

Brown, 29, whose previous legal troubles include assaulting singer Rihanna in 2009, remained in custody on Tuesday, a judicial source said.

Brown pleaded guilty to assaulting then-girlfriend Rihanna in an incident that made headlines around the world when a photo of her bruised face was released.

In 2016, Brown was arrested in Los Angeles after a woman said he had pointed a gun at her. Brown denied any wrongdoing.

A rape conviction in France can carry a sentence of 15 years.

NETFLIX, MARVEL MAKE DEBUTS IN BEST PICTURE CATEGORY

Roma, The Favourite lead Oscar nomination with 10 nods

JAKE COYLE
NEW YORK, JANUARY 22

OSCAR VOTERS on Tuesday showered Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma* and Yorgos Lanthimos' *The Favourite* with a leading 10 nominations to the 91st Academy Awards, while two dominant but contentious Hollywood forces — Netflix and Marvel — each scored their first best picture nomination.

Though many expected *A Star Is Born*, Bradley Cooper's tear-inducing revival of one of Hollywood's most oft-remade show-business myths, to top the nominations, Cooper was surprisingly overlooked as director and the academy instead put its fullest support behind a pair of indies by international directors.

With the black-and-white, Spanish-language *Roma*, Netflix scored its first best picture nomination, a prize the streaming giant has dearly sought. Marvel, too, joined the club with Ryan Coogler's *Black Panther*, the first superhero movie ever nominated for best picture.

Cuarón tied the record for most decorated Oscar nominee for one film with four individual nods for *Roma*, a deeply personal exhumation of his Mexico City childhood. Cuarón was nominated for direction, cinematography, original screenplay and best picture. Only Orson Welles and Warren Beatty have matched the four-nod feat.

Just as rewarded Tuesday was Lanthimos' period romp, which resounded most in the acting categories thanks to its trio of ac-



AND THE NOMINEES ARE...

BEST PICTURE

- *A Star Is Born*
- *BlackKkKlansman*
- *Black Panther*
- *Bohemian Rhapsody*
- *The Favourite*
- *Green Book*
- *Roma*
- *Vice*

DIRECTOR

- Alfonso Cuarón (*Roma*)
- Yorgos Lanthimos (*The Favourite*)
- Adam McKay (*Vice*)



Rami Malek and Glenn Close won Best Actor and Actress at this year's Golden Globes.

- Spike Lee (*BlackKkKlansman*)
- Pawel Pawlikowski (*Cold War*)

ACTOR IN A LEADING ROLE

- Christian Bale (*Vice*)
- Bradley Cooper

ACTRESS IN A LEADING ROLE

- Willem Dafoe (*At Eternity's Gate*)
- Rami Malek (*Bohemian Rhapsody*)
- Viggo Mortensen (*Green Book*)
- Yalitza Aparicio (*Roma*)
- Glenn Close (*The Wife*)
- Olivia Colman (*The Favourite*)
- Lady Gaga (*A Star Is Born*)
- Melissa McCarthy (*Can You Ever Forgive Me?*)

tresses: Olivia Colman in the best actress category, and Rachel Weisz and Emma Stone in supporting.

The acting categories played out largely as expected with a few notable differences. Along with Lady Gaga and Colman, the best actress nominees are Yalitza Aparicio (*Roma*), Glenn Close (*The Wife*) and Melissa McCarthy (*Can You Ever Forgive Me?*).

In best actor, the expected front runner Christian Bale was nominated for his transformation into Cheney in *Vice*, along with Cooper, Willem Dafoe (*At Eternity's Gate*), Rami Malek (*Bohemian Rhapsody*) and Viggo Mortensen (*Green Book*).

The lead-up to Tuesday's nominations was rocky for both the film academy and some of the contending movies. Shortly

after being announced as host, comedian Kevin Hart was forced to withdraw over years-old homophobic tweets that the comedian eventually apologised for. That has left the Oscars, one month before the Feb. 24 ceremony, without an emcee, and likely to stay that way.

Some film contenders, like *Green Book* and the Freddie Mercury biopic *Bohemian Rhapsody*, have suffered waves upon waves of backlash, even as their awards tallies have mounted.

The Oscars last year had hit a new ratings low, declining 20 per cent and averaging 26.5 million viewers on ABC. Though ratings for award shows have generally been dropping, the downturn prompted the academy to revamp this year's telecast. **AP**