



RUSSELL BRAND SAYS TICKLING CHILDREN SHOULD BE BANNED: 'IT VIOLATES THEIR PERSONAL SPACE'

BEYONCE, JAY-Z OFFER ONE OF THEIR FANS THE CHANCE TO WIN CONCERT TICKETS FOR LIFE BY BECOMING VEGAN



US suspends N-weapons pact with Russia, EU fears new arms race

BID TO TAME THE DRAGON? US Fears China, Which Is Not Party To Treaty, Is Gaining Military Advantage In Asia By Deploying Missiles With Ranges Beyond Limit

Washington: The United States announced on Friday that it was pulling out of a landmark nuclear arms control treaty with Russia, accusing Moscow of violating the Cold War-era pact with "impunity" by continuing to develop banned missiles.

President Donald Trump said Russia has been secretly developing "a prohibited missile system that poses a direct threat to our allies and troops abroad". He said the US had adhered to the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty—a key pact signed in 1987 that has been a centerpiece of European security since the Cold War, but Russia has not. "We cannot be the only country in the world unilaterally bound by this treaty, or any other," Trump said in a written statement.

Some analysts worry the demise of the centerpiece of superpower arms control could fuel a new arms race. US officials fear that China, which is not party to the treaty, is gaining a significant military advantage in Asia by deploying large numbers of missiles with ranges beyond the treaty's limit. Leaving the treaty would allow the Trump administration to counter the Chinese, but it's unclear how it would do that.

Trump said the US will



Russian infantry vehicles drive during the military parade in St Petersburg. President Trump said Russia has been secretly developing 'a prohibited missile system that poses a direct threat to our allies and troops abroad'

"suspend its obligations" under the treaty on Saturday, meaning it will be freed from its constraints that included the banning of testing and deployment of missiles. At the same time, the US will begin withdrawing from the treaty, which will be effective in six months, he said.

An American withdrawal had been expected for months after years of unresolved dispute over Russian compliance with the pact. It was the first arms control measure to ban an entire class of weapons: ground-launched cruise missiles with a range between 500km and 5,500km. The US alleges a new Russian cruise missile violates the pact.

The missile, the Novator 9M729, is known as the SSC-8 by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Nato).

Secretary of state Mike Pompeo said in early December that Washington would give Moscow 60 days to return to compliance before it gave formal notice of withdrawal. The 60-day deadline expires on Saturday. Technically, a US withdrawal would take effect six months after this week's notification, leaving a small window for saving the treaty. However, in talks this week in Beijing, the US and Russia reported no breakthrough in their dispute, leaving little reason to think either side would change its stance on whether

a Russian cruise missile violates the pact.

"We have raised Russia's non-compliance with Russian officials — including at the highest levels of government — more than 30 times," Pompeo told reporters on Friday at the state department. "We have provided Russia an ample window of time to mend its way. Tomorrow that time runs out."

Sergei Ryabkov, a Russian deputy foreign minister, said there was no progress after the Beijing talks on Thursday. "The position of the American side is very tough and like an ultimatum," he said, according to the Russian state news agency Tass.

Nato said that if Moscow failed to destroy all new missile systems that Washington insists violate the treaty, "Russia will bear sole responsibility for the end of the treaty". Russia denies that it has been in violation.

Trump said his administration "will move forward with developing our own military response options". But senior Trump administration officials said they don't expect any immediate testing or deployment of weapons that are banned under the treaty. The officials, speaking after Trump's announcement, said the US is not in position to

flight test, let alone deploy, INF non-compliant missiles as a counter to Russia any time soon. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity.

One official said that only non-nuclear missiles are being considered for future development and potential deployment, and that allies will be closely consulted before any decisions are made on countering the Russian missiles that allegedly violate the INF treaty.

The US move was regarded with anxiety in Europe. European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini called on both sides to stick to the treaty. "What we definitely don't want to see is our continent going back to being a battlefield or a place where other super-powers confront themselves. This belongs to a faraway history," he said in Romania before the announcement. "It is important that disarmament and the international arms control architecture are put back on the international agenda," German foreign minister Heiko Maas said. The Europeans are keen to avoid a repeat of the missile crisis in the 1980s. Nato allies decided to deploy US cruise and Pershing 2 ballistic missiles in Europe in 1983 as negotiations with Moscow faltered over its stationing of SS-20 missiles in Europe. AGENCIES

Trump praises Harris' prez run launch: 'Best opening so far'

Peter Baker & Maggie Haberman

Washington: A defiant President Trump declared on Thursday that he has all but given up on negotiating with Congress over his border wall and will build it on his.

In an interview in the Oval Office, Trump called the talks "a waste of time" and indicated he will most likely take action on his own when they officially end in two weeks. "I think Nancy Pelosi is hurting our country very badly by doing what she's doing and, ultimately, I think I've set the table very nicely," Trump said.

Addressing a wide range of subjects, he rejected speculation that he might not run for re-election next year. "I love this job," he said. And he said he did not think he would face a challenger for the his party's presidential nomination, even though several Republicans are considering running. "I have great support in the party."

Watching the emerging Democratic field, Trump said the opposition party has "really drifted far left" but expressed admiration for the campaign kickoff of Indian-origin Senator Kamala Harris, who drew thousands of supporters. "I would say the best opening so far would be Kamala Harris," he said, pronouncing it "Kameela". "I would say in terms of the opening act, I better crowd, would be her. A better crowd — better crowd, better enthusiasm." NYT



Desi immigrants force-fed at US detention centre

Washington: At least six immigrant detainees, including Indians, were force-fed through nasal tubes by immigration authorities in the US after they went on a hunger strike to protest conditions at a processing centre in Texas, drawing a strong reaction from Indian-American groups which described it as "violation of human rights".

In a statement, Immigration and Customs Enforcement said that as of Wednesday night, 11 detainees in El Paso had refused to eat. Four other individuals at different ICE detention centres across the country were also on hunger strike, officials added.

Of the 11 people on hunger strike in El Paso, six were being hydrated and force-fed under court orders issued by a federal judge in mid-January — about two weeks after those detainees stopped eating, ICE said. Two of the 11 began their hunger strike on Wednesday, officials added. "The ICE health services corps is medically monitoring the detainees' health and regularly updating ICE of their medical status," the agency's statement said. "Efforts are being taken to protect the detainees' health and privacy."

Ruby Kaur, a lawyer for two of the detainees in Texas, said her clients are Indian immigrants who entered the US through southern border more than six

Eleven detainees, including Indians, are on hunger strike in Texas since start of the new year to protest inhumane living conditions and threats of deportation

months ago and turned themselves in to officials.

"They have tubes that have been shoved through their noses and IV's giving them fluids. It's extremely painful and it's against their will," Kaur said, adding that her clients told her over phone on Thursday that they were experiencing nasal and rectal bleeding, and vomiting.

Kaur said they began the strike at the start of the new year to call attention to the "inhumane living conditions, repeated verbal threats of deportation by officials and total absence of information about their impending asylum cases". She said up until 10 days ago both of her clients and several others were held in solitary confinement "to intimidate them" into ending the protest. Christina Fialho of the nonprofit Freedom for Immigrants said as many as 30 people could be on hunger strike in El Paso, a higher figure than the one ICE provided. An ICE spokeswoman didn't comment on the charges. PTI

Sri Lanka to get \$1bn from China for road project

Beijing: Sri Lanka, which last year handed over a strategic port to a Chinese firm for a 99-year lease as a debt swap, will soon sign a \$1 billion concessional loan agreement with Beijing to fund a major highway project linking Colombo to the hill resort of Kandy. The first phase of the project had been delayed for more than two years due to a lack of funding.

Sri Lankan ambassador to China Karunasena Kodituwakku was quoted by the official media on Friday as saying that the \$1 billion will be used for the first stage of the central highway. Earlier, the chief of Sri Lanka's central bank said the country will receive a sovereign loan of \$1 billion from the Bank of China in the first quarter of this year. Kodituwakku did not confirm if it was the same loan, the state-run Global Times reported. According to reports, Sri Lanka owed \$8 billion debt to China. PTI

FIRE & ICE

While Australia battles record-smashing heat, drought and bushfires, the United States is in the grip of a polar vortex with temperatures plunging to their lowest in history

US FREEZES

21 people die due to extreme weather	30 record lows were broken across Midwest
-40°C Temp in the Midwest with wind chill factored in	2,300 flights cancelled across America. Another 3,500 delayed

Americans participated in FROZEN PANTS CHALLENGE where people brought out wet jeans only to witness them freezing within a minute

OZ BURNS

Jan Hottest month ever in Australia	Adelaide broke its own record twice, first reaching 47.7 deg C & then 49.5 deg C	Mean temp exceeded 30°C for the first time ever	2018 was Oz's third hottest year on record after 2005 and 2013
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Now, Apple punishes Google over app rules

Apple Inc temporarily pulled important app-development tools from Google after the iPhone maker decided the internet giant broke its rules, according to people familiar with the matter. Facebook's app development was hobbled in a similar way for about 24 hours, a sign that Apple is flexing its muscle as the operator of the most lucrative US app store to push its approach to user privacy.

Employees at Alphabet's Google couldn't access test versions of iPhone apps they're making, or use internal apps related to transportation scheduling and food, the people said. Security alerts were limited too, one of the people said. They asked not to be identified discussing private matters.

Apple reinstated their access hours later on Thursday.

Apple offers an "enterprise certificate" that helps some companies work on iPhone apps without going through the usual app review process. Facebook and Google used this to collect data on user activity for internal research. When this was reported earlier this week by TechCrunch, both companies stopped the activity. Apple said Facebook had broken its rules and pulled the firm's certificate until Thursday. It's now punishing Google.

Google and Facebook rely on enterprise certificates to test the iPhone versions of the apps they're making. Without this option, some of the companies' most important development work is disrupted. BLOOMBERG

Venezuela opposition leader to police: Leave my family alone

Caracas: The Venezuelan opposition leader challenging Nicolas Maduro's claim to the presidency warned officers from a feared state security unit on Thursday to stay away from his family after he accused them of showing up at his apartment in a tense brush with the very force he is trying to persuade to switch allegiance and back him.

A visibly flustered but determined Juan Guaido told a crowd gathered at a university that members of a special police unit known for its brutal tactics had gone to his high-rise apartment in a middle-class neighbourhood of Caracas while his 20-month-old daughter was inside. "I hold you responsible for anything that



Guaido said his 20-month-old daughter was at their apartment when agents from the special forces arrived at the house

might happen to my baby," the 35-year-old lawmaker said as his wife stood beside him. He rushed home and emerged an hour later holding his smiling daughter, named for Francisco de Miranda. He described how four agents from the poli-

ce's Special Action Force had arrived at the building and asked security guards stationed there for his wife.

"Children are sacred," he admonished the agents as a crowd of supporters applauded. "Wives are sacred. So don't cross that red line."

In a statement on Twitter, Venezuela's police denied that special agents had gone to Guaido's home, dismissing the claim as "totally FALSE".

Guaido is at the centre of Venezuela's political upheaval as he presses forward with establishing a transitional government after swearing himself in as the nation's rightful president in a move denounced by Maduro as a US-backed coup. AP

AROUND THE WORLD

Men convicted for filming sex on London train

A porn performer has been convicted of "outraging public decency" after he and two other men filmed themselves having sex on a London Underground train in front of commuters. George Mason was sentenced to community service and fined 1,000 pounds for the July 2017 incident on the Northern Line. The incident was reported to police last year by a man who saw footage on Twitter. A second participant, Nicholas Mullan, was also given community service. Both men had pleaded guilty. Defense lawyer Howard Cohen said the men had faced a "virulent and quite disgusting campaign of hate" on social media over the incident.



ROYAL GREETING: Prince Harry and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, thanked crowds of well-wishers for braving the cold weather to welcome them to Bristol, England, on Friday. 'I hope everyone gets a nice cup of tea after this,' Meghan later joked

Gamer dies in balcony fall trying to get Wi-Fi signal

A 21-year-old student fell to his death after leaning over a fourth-floor balcony of a hotel in Bangkok to get better Wi-Fi signal. Pattanadej Homhuan, a student from Rajamangala University of Technology, was in the capital to attend a gaming tournament and was staying at Hip Bangkok hotel, the Daily Mail reported on Thursday. The accident took place on Wednesday when he was playing an online game with his friends when he complained that his smartphone had poor 4G reception. He climbed onto his room's bal-

cony to catch a better Wi-Fi signal, according to the report. Upon realising Pattanadej's on-screen character hadn't moved for several minutes, his friends visited his room to investigate. They looked out of the window and found the injured boy. Paramedics arrived but were unable to revive him.

Japan cops probe 'uranium' on online auction site Japanese authorities are investigating how a substance that appears to be uranium came to be offered for sale on an online auction site, a nuclear

official said on Thursday. Police are trying to confirm whether the product is radioactive, he said, with media reporting investigators are questioning "a number of people". An initial test of the confiscated powder found it to be radioactive, Kyodo News said. The Nuclear Regulation Authority received a report about a year ago about what was being billed as "uranium" on a popular auction site operated by Yahoo! Japan. "We called Yahoo!, which then took down the product," an official said. Officials at Yahoo! Japan were not available for comment.



Students participate in a rally in Berlin to demand better protection of the climate

Teens emerge as force in climate protests

Milan Schreuer, Elian Peltier and Christopher F Schuetze

Brussels: Tens of thousands of children skipped school in Belgium on Thursday to join demonstrations for action against climate change, part of a broader environmental protest movement across Europe that has gathered force over the past several weeks.

In Germany, France, Sweden, Switzerland and elsewhere, activists have come together on social media to gather in large numbers and without much apparent preparation, the pro-

tests taking a different shape in each country. In Germany, students have protested on Fridays, communicating mainly through the messaging app WhatsApp; in Belgium, they organize on Facebook and have skipped school by the thousands on four consecutive Thursdays. Sunday, climate protests in Brussels swelled to an estimated 100,000 people of all ages. That same day, an estimated 80,000 took part in cities across France — more than turned out for the "Yellow Vest" protests the day before.

The climate movement has no obvious leaders or structure, but a 16-

year-old Swede, Greta Thunberg, has drawn worldwide attention and inspired many of the protesters. She has called for school strikes to raise awareness of global warming, scolded world political and economic leaders at the gathering in Davos, Switzerland, and even has her own TED Talk.

"We come here with the right intentions, to protest in peace and to raise awareness about climate change, because we want to be on the right side of history," Elisa Kiambi, 19, said in Brussels. "It is time for the government to act." NYT NEWS SERVICE