



RUSSIA
LAW AGAINST DISRESPECTING AUTHORITY

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday signed controversial legislation that allows courts to fine and briefly jail people for showing disrespect for authorities and block media for publishing "fake news". Putin signed off on the legislation against the advice of human rights activists, who warned the laws amounted to censorship and would be abused to crack down on freedom of speech.

TOP OF THE WORLD



A washed away bridge in Chimanimani, Zimbabwe. Reuters

AFRICA
Cyclone tears across southern Africa, 157 killed

Harare: Cyclone Idai killed at least 157 people in Zimbabwe and Mozambique as it tore across southern Africa, officials and state media said on Monday, and vast areas of land have been flooded, roads destroyed and communications disrupted. The Mozambican port city of Beira has suffered massive damage, the Red Cross said. The storm has also pounded Malawi. In Zimbabwe, the district of Chimanimani has been cut off from the rest of the country by torrential rains and winds of up to 170 km per hour that swept away roads, homes and bridges. Zimbabwean information ministry said 89 people died in the country. The Mozambican state news agency put the death toll in Beira at 68.

UNITED NATIONS
'Israel depriving Palestinians of clean water'

Geneva: Israel is depriving millions of Palestinians of access to a regular supply of clean water while stripping their land of minerals "in an apparent act of pillage", a United Nations human rights investigator said on Monday. Michael Lynk, UN special rapporteur on human rights in the Palestinian territories, said that Israel "continues full-steam with settlement expansion" in the West Bank, which the United Nations and many countries deem illegal. There are some 20-25,000 new settlers a year, he said.

MYANMAR
Military court to probe Rohingya atrocity claims

Yangon: Myanmar's army said on Monday it had set up a military court to investigate its conduct during a crackdown on the Rohingya Muslim minority in 2017 that forced more than 730,000 to flee to neighbouring Bangladesh. The court comprising a major-general and two colonels will investigate events in western Myanmar's Rakhine state in August 2017, the military said in a statement posted on the website of Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, the army commander-in-chief.

PHILIPPINES
Dead whale had 40 kg of plastic in stomach

Manila: A starving whale with 40 kilos of plastic trash in its stomach has died after being washed ashore in the Philippines, activists said Monday, calling it one of the worst cases of poisoning they have seen. Environmental groups have tagged the Philippines as one of the world's biggest ocean polluters due to its reliance on single-use plastic. That sort of pollution, which is also widespread in other southeast Asian nations, regularly kills wildlife like whales and turtles that ingest the waste.

CHRISTCHURCH TERROR ATTACK AFTERMATH

After Cabinet nod, New Zealand PM promises new gun laws within days

Families of victims frustrated over burial delays; lawyer says gunman lucid, understands situation

CHARLOTTE GREENFIELD & TOM WESTBROOK
CHRISTCHURCH, MARCH 18

NEW ZEALAND Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said on Monday she would announce new gun laws within days, after a lone gunman killed 50 people in mass shootings at two mosques in the city of Christchurch.

Australian Brenton Tarrant, 28, a suspected white supremacist, was charged with murder on Saturday. Tarrant was remanded without a plea and is due back in court on April 5 where police said he was likely to face more charges.

"Within 10 days of this horrific act of terrorism we will have announced reforms which will, I believe, make our community safer," Ardern told a news conference after her Cabinet reached in principle decisions on gun reform laws in the wake of New Zealand's worst ever mass shooting.

The owner of gun shop Gun City, David Tittle, said the suspected gunman had legally bought four weapons and ammunition online from it between December 2017 and March 2018, but it did not sell him the high-powered gun used in the killings.

Ardern did not give details on new laws, but has said she supports a ban on semi-automatic weapons following the Christchurch shootings.

She encouraged gun owners who were thinking of surrendering their weapons to do so.



Students gather for a vigil to commemorate victims of Friday's shooting outside the Al Noor mosque in Christchurch. AP



"The clear lesson from history around the world is that to make our community safer, the time to act is now," she said. "I strongly believe that the vast majority of gun owners in New Zealand will agree with the sentiment that change needs to occur."

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JACINDA ARDERN
NEW ZEALAND PM

Zealand will agree with the sentiment that change needs to occur." Tarrant had declined to be represented by a lawyer but the court appointed duty lawyer Richard Peters to handle the case.

Peters told media Tarrant was lucid and understood the situation facing him. "He was lucid," Peters told Australian TV network Channel Nine. He seemed to appreciate what he was facing and why he was there.

Frustration was building among the families of victims as under Islam it is custom to conduct burials within 24 hours, but bodies will not be released until post mortems are carried out.

About 60 volunteers, some who have flown in from Australia, have gathered to help with the ritual cleansing of the victims before burial. REUTERS

EXPLAINED

NZ laws allow easy access to powerful guns

VIOLENT CRIME is rare in New Zealand, but the country does have relaxed gun laws that allow citizens relatively easy access to weapons like semi-automatic guns — the kind used by the gunman in Friday's attacks on Christchurch mosques.

Reuters reports that in New Zealand, which has a population of 5 million, there are around 1.5 million firearms. Anyone over 16 can fill out an application for an A-category gun licence. The licence is for the gun owner and not for the weapon, which means people can buy any amount of guns with a single licence. These licences are given out after a background check and police vetting, but a media report citing police data says 99 per cent of licence applications in 2017 were successful.

BEIJING RELEASES WHITE PAPER ON XINJIANG

Mumbai attacks one of the most notorious terror strikes: China

SOWMIYA ASHOK
BEIJING, MARCH 18

CHINA ON Monday termed the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, carried out by Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), as one of the "most notorious terrorist attacks", and said the "global spread of terrorism and extremism over the years has inflicted agony on humanity".

The Mumbai attacks were mentioned alongside other "notorious" attacks such as the September 11, 2001 attacks in the US, the 2002 Bali bombings and the 2013 attack on the Westgate shopping mall in Kenya, as well as the 2015 attacks in Paris. These were listed in a white paper released by the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China on Monday.

The white paper, titled 'The Fight Against Terrorism and Extremism and Human Rights Protection in Xinjiang', said nearly 13,000 "terrorists" were arrested in the China's northwestern Xinjiang province since 2014.

Under a chapter titled 'International Counterterrorism Exchanges and Cooperation', the paper notes: "Throughout the world, terrorism and extremism

Beijing seeks global partners to fund BRI projects

Beijing: Ahead of its planned forum to promote the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China, for the first time, announced plans to seek global partners to join the project. "The China Investment Corporation (CIC), the country's \$940 billion sovereign wealth investment fund, is seeking global partners to jointly establish a special cross-border investment instrument which will further finance the Belt and Road projects," said Tu Guangshao, president of the CIC. PTI

gravely threaten peace and development, and endanger the life and property of individuals. Striking aggressively at terrorism and furthering the de-radicalisation effort is the common responsibility of the international community and essential to the protection of human rights." It also states that China "opposes all forms of terrorism and extremism", and "opposes double standards on fighting terrorism".

Further, it states: "As a responsible member of the international community, China supports the United Nations in playing a leading and coordinating role in international cooperation against terrorism. China upholds the UN Charter and other principles and norms of international law. It has supported a series of resolutions on combating terrorism adopted by the UN Security Council, and contributed to the full implementation of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy," the paper states.

The paper comes days after China put a technical hold on India's bid in the UNSC to designate Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar as a "global terrorist". The JeM had claimed responsibility for the February 14 Pulwama attack that killed 40 CRPF personnel and saw escalations between India and Pakistan. Meanwhile, a strategic dialogue between Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi is scheduled to take place in Beijing on Tuesday. "I believe the issues causing regional tensions will be discussed," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang said at the MFA's regular briefing here.

UK Speaker rules out third vote on May's Brexit deal

REUTERS
LONDON, MARCH 18

BRITISH PRIME Minister Theresa May's Brexit plans were thrown into further turmoil on Monday when the Speaker of Parliament ruled that she could not put her divorce deal to a new vote unless it was re-submitted in fundamentally different form.

In comments that blindsided May's office, Speaker John Bercow said the government could not bring forward proposals for a vote in Parliament that were substantially the same as had already been defeated twice before, in January and last week.

The ruling put Britain on a knife edge — Brexiters seeking a complete break from the European Union saw a "no-deal" exit as now more likely while others thought May might put off Brexit beyond the set March 29 departure date, if the EU approves.

One of the government's senior law officers, Solicitor General Robert Buckland, said: "We're in a major constitutional crisis here."

He told the BBC that one way to bring May's deal back for a vote in the House of Commons could be prorogation — ending the parliamentary session prematurely and starting a new one.

Saudi team that killed Khashoggi 'part of wider bid to curb dissent'

MARK MAZZETTI & BEN HUBBARD
WASHINGTON, MARCH 18

CROWN PRINCE Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia authorised a secret campaign to silence dissenters — which included the surveillance, kidnapping, detention and torture of Saudi citizens — more than a year before the killing of Jamal Khashoggi, according to US officials who have read classified intelligence reports about the campaign.

At least some of the clandestine missions were carried out by members of the same team that killed and dismembered Khashoggi in Istanbul in October, suggesting that his killing was a particularly egregious part of a wider campaign to silence Saudi dissidents, according to the officials and associates of some of the Saudi victims.

Members of the team that killed Khashoggi, which US officials called the Saudi Rapid Intervention Group, were involved in at least a dozen operations starting in 2017, the officials said.

Some of the operations involved forcibly repatriating Saudis from other Arab countries and detaining and abusing prisoners in palaces belonging to the Crown



The site of a shooting in Utrecht, Netherlands. Reuters

3 killed in Dutch tram shooting; suspect, a Turkish man, arrested

BART H MEIJER
UTRECHT, MARCH 18

DUTCH POLICE arrested a Turkish man suspected of shooting dead three people and wounding five on a tram in the Dutch city of Utrecht on Monday. Utrecht police announced the suspect, 37-year-old Gokmen Tanis, had been taken into custody.

The city was put into lockdown after the shooting, shortly after the morning rush hour, which authorities initially said was an apparent terrorist attack. Police conducted raids in several locations.

But hours after the shooting, the gunman's motive remained unclear. A prosecutor said it could be for "family reasons" and Turkey's state-run Anadolu news agency, quoting relatives of the gunman, said he had fired at a relative on the tram and had then shot at others who tried to help her.

Helicopters hovered over the usually quiet mediaeval town.

Authorities had raised the terrorism threat in Utrecht province to its highest level, schools were told to shut their doors and paramilitary police increased security at airports, other vital infrastructure and at mosques.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte convened crisis talks immediately after the incident, which came three days after a lone gunman killed 50 people in mass shootings at two mosques in the city of Christchurch, New Zealand.

"Our country has today been shocked by an attack in Utrecht... A terrorist motive cannot be excluded," Rutte said.

"The first reports have led to disbelief and disgust. Innocent people have been struck by violence... We are now doing everything we can to find the perpetrator or perpetrators as soon as possible. That is now our complete focus."

The mayor of Utrecht, Jan van Zanen, said three people had been killed and nine injured, three of them seriously. The number of injured was later lowered to five. REUTERS



Images of King Salman and his son projected on screens during a conference at the Ritz-Carlton in Riyadh in January. NYT

Prince and his father, King Salman, the officials and associates said.

One of the Saudis detained by the group, a university lecturer in linguistics who wrote a blog about women in Saudi Arabia, tried to kill herself last year after being subjected to psychological torture, according to US intelligence reports and others briefed on her situation.

Details about the operations come from US officials who have read classified intelligence assessments about the Saudi campaign, as well as from Saudis with direct knowledge of some of the operations. They spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of repercussions from disclosing classified information or, in the case of the Saudis, from angering the Saudi government.

A spokesman for the Saudi embassy in Washington said the kingdom "takes any allegations of ill treatment of defendants awaiting trial or prisoners serving their sentences very seriously".

Saudi laws prohibit torture and hold accountable those involved in such abuses of power, the spokesman said, and judges cannot accept confessions obtained under duress. The kingdom's public prosecutor and the Saudi Human Rights Commission are investigating "recent allegations", he said.

The Saudi government insists that the killing of Khashoggi was not an assassination ordered from Riyadh. Turkey and US intelligence agencies say the killing was premeditated. NYT

KEVIN TSUJIHARA ACCUSED OF HAVING PROMISED ACTING ROLES IN EXCHANGE FOR SEX

Warner Bros chief quits after sexual misconduct allegations

JAKE COYLE
NEW YORK, MARCH 18

WARNER BROS. chief Kevin Tsujihara, one of the highest ranking Hollywood executives to be felled by sexual misconduct allegations, stepped down from the studio Monday following claims that he promised roles to an actress in exchange for sex.

WarnerMedia chief executive John Stankey announced Tsujihara's exit as chairman and chief executive of Warner Bros., saying his departure was in the studio's "best interest".

"Kevin has contributed greatly to the studio's success over the past 25 years and for that we thank him," said Stankey. "Kevin acknowledges that his mistakes are inconsis-

tent with the company's leadership expectations and could impact the company's ability to execute going forward."

Earlier this month, WarnerMedia launched an investigation after a March 6 *Hollywood Reporter* story detailed text messages between Tsujihara and British actress Charlotte Kirk going back to 2013. The messages suggested a quid pro quo sexual relationship between the aspiring actress and the studio head in which he made promises that he'd introduce her to influential executives and she'd be considered for roles in movies and television.

In a memo to Warner Bros. staff on Monday obtained by *The Associated Press*, Tsujihara said he was departing "after lengthy introspection, and discussions with



Kevin Tsujihara, who has headed Warner Bros. since 2013, had apologised to the company's staff for "mistakes in my personal life that have caused pain and embarrassment to the people I love the most". AP

John Stankey over the past week."

"It has become clear that my continued leadership could be a distraction and an obstacle to the company's continued success," said Tsujihara. "The hard work of everyone within our organisation is truly admirable, and I won't let media attention on my past detract from all the great work the team is doing."

Tsujihara's attorney, Bert Deixler, said Tsujihara had no further comment. Tsujihara, who has headed the Burbank, California, studio since 2013, earlier apologised to Warner Bros. staff for "mistakes in my personal life that have caused pain and embarrassment to the people I love the most".

WarnerMedia, the studio's parent company, said Monday that its investigation into the sit-

uation, carried out by a third-party law firm, is continuing.

Kirk appeared in Warner Bros' *How to Be Single* in 2016 and *Ocean's 8* in 2018. She has denied any inappropriate behaviour on the part of Tsujihara or two other executives, Brett Ratner and James Packer, who she communicated with. "Mr Tsujihara never promised me anything," Kirk said in an earlier statement.

The scandal unfolded just as Warner Bros. was restructuring on the heels of AT&T's takeover of WarnerMedia, previously known as Time Warner. Tsujihara's role had just been expanded on Feb. 28 to include global kids and family entertainment.

Tsujihara, 54, has presided over a largely positive Warner Bros. era with little fanfare. A former home video and video game

executive at the company, he has leaned heavily on franchise creation, some of which have worked, some of which haven't.

After poor marks from fans and critics, the studio's DC Comics films have recently been retooled and found their footing in hits like *Wonder Woman* and *Aquaman*. Other franchises — like *The Lego Movie* and the *Harry Potter* spinoff *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* — have sputtered in their latest incarnations. The studio has also fostered its connection with filmmakers like Christopher Nolan (*Dunkirk*) and Bradley Cooper (whose *A Star Is Born* was Warner Bros' top Oscar contender).

Warner Bros. will now begin a search for a new studio chief as it also prepare to launch a streaming service designed to compete with Netflix. AP