

## ELSEWHERE



## Boeing Max flight makes emergency landing

ORLANDO  
A Southwest Airlines Boeing 737 Max made a safe emergency landing Tuesday in Orlando, Florida, after experiencing an engine problem, the Federal Aviation Administration said. No passengers were on board, and the aircraft was being ferried to Victorville, California, where Southwest is storing the airplanes. AP

## China varsity suspends professor for criticising Xi

BEIJING  
Xu Zhangrun, a liberal law professor of China's Tsinghua University who openly criticised Chinese President Xi Jinping, has been suspended and placed under investigation, according to a report on Wednesday. In an opinion piece last year, Mr. Xu had questioned the decision by China's Parliament to scrap the term limit on the presidency. PTI

## Anti-Kim group claims responsibility for raid

SEOUL  
Cheollima Civil Defense, a shadowy group committed to overthrowing North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, claimed responsibility on Wednesday for a raid on the country's Embassy in Madrid last month, saying that it had shared "information of enormous potential value" with the FBI. AFP

## Brunei to punish adultery through death

KUALA LUMPUR  
Adultery and gay sex in Brunei will be subject to death by stoning from next week, authorities said. The tiny sultanate will implement the harsh new penal code — which also prescribes amputation of a hand and foot for theft — next Wednesday. AFP

## May to quit before next Brexit talks start

However, it remains unclear if this would be enough to make MPs back the government's deal

VIDYA RAM  
LONDON

Theresa May on Wednesday confirmed that she will not remain the British Prime Minister to oversee the next stage of Brexit negotiations, as she made a final attempt to persuade Conservative MPs to rally behind her Brexit deal, in a vote that could take place later this week.

She said she had taken the decision as the mood of Conservatives in Parliament had become clear. "I know there is a desire for a new approach — and new leadership — in the second phase of the Brexit negotiations, and I won't stand in the way of that," she told MPs of the Conservatives backbench 1922 Committee on Wednesday afternoon.

Speculation had been building that the Prime Minister could announce that she would step down earlier than previously indicated to persuade Brexit hardliners in her party to back the deal. While earlier this week, she had told MPs that she did not believe she had the sufficient numbers to get the withdrawal deal through, as discussions progressed it became clear that some — such as influential European Research Group chair Jacob Rees-

Mogg — were willing to change their stance and back her deal if she were willing to make way for a new Prime Minister.

**Can this swing the vote?**  
However, it remains unclear whether the shift will be enough to swing the vote in favour of the government. The Democratic Unionist Party of Northern Ireland is yet to signal its willingness to back the deal, which would be crucial in tipping the balance. In addition, Speaker of the House of Commons John Bercow on Wednesday reiterated his ruling that only a substantially different proposition could be put before MPs, adding another element of uncertainty.

This came as MPs on Wednesday sought to identify a route forward on Brexit as they voted on a series of eight alternative options — so-called indicative votes — that will range from pushing for a hard Brexit on April 12 to making the U.K. part of the EU customs union, to revoking Article 50 if the U.K. still doesn't agree on a route forward four days before the April 12 deadline.

Among those alternatives commanding considerable support was a cross-party



Call for a rethink: An anti-Brexit demonstrator demonstrating outside British Parliament on Wednesday. GETTY IMAGES

one that would push for a "Common Market 2.0" that would keep Britain in the European Free Trade Association, and in an effective customs union and single market with the EU (requiring the U.K. to keep freedom of movement with the EU).

The Labour Party also put forward a motion that would keep Britain in a permanent customs union, and "close alignment" with the single market. Yet another one that has commanded much attention was put forward by Labour MP Margaret Beckett and would require any deal and framework for the fu-

ture relationship with the EU to be put to the people in a "confirmatory public vote".

The government has steadfastly refused to commit to abiding by the outcome of the process — which could be followed by a second series of votes on Monday next week to identify one solution from a narrower selection.

Following an afternoon of debate, MPs were to at 7 p.m. local time vote on the options — all put to them at the same time on a ballot paper. Then on Monday afternoon again, MPs will take control of parliamentary business.

However, even if MPs were able to agree on one or two options, there remains much uncertainty. The government could still reject what is put on the table.

**Avoiding a no-deal Brexit**  
And while the government has indicated that it wishes to avoid a no-deal exit, there are no guarantees that a no-deal Brexit can be avoided. Under the extension granted by the EU, if the deal is rejected this week, the U.K. will have until April 12 to come up with alternatives, or risk crashing out without a deal.

The EU could still reject any extension. Speaking in the European Parliament on Wednesday, and rejecting the suggestion from some that any further delay would lead to uncertainty, European Council president Donald Tusk said that the EU had to be open to an extension were it needed to help the U.K. rethink its Brexit strategy.

"You cannot betray the six million people who signed the petition to revoke Article 50, the one million who marched for a People's Vote, or the increasing majority who want to remain in the European Union," he said.

## Pakistan acts to defuse tensions with Afghanistan

REUTERS  
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan moved on Wednesday to cool a row with Afghanistan over reported comments by Prime Minister Imran Khan that were taken to suggest that Kabul should set up an interim government to help smooth peace talks with the Taliban.

The comments, made to Pakistani journalists on Mon-

day, prompted a furious reaction in Afghanistan and led to the government recalling its Ambassador in protest at what it described as "irresponsible" remarks. It was the third time in just over a month that Kabul has demanded an explanation from Islamabad over comments related to peace talks.

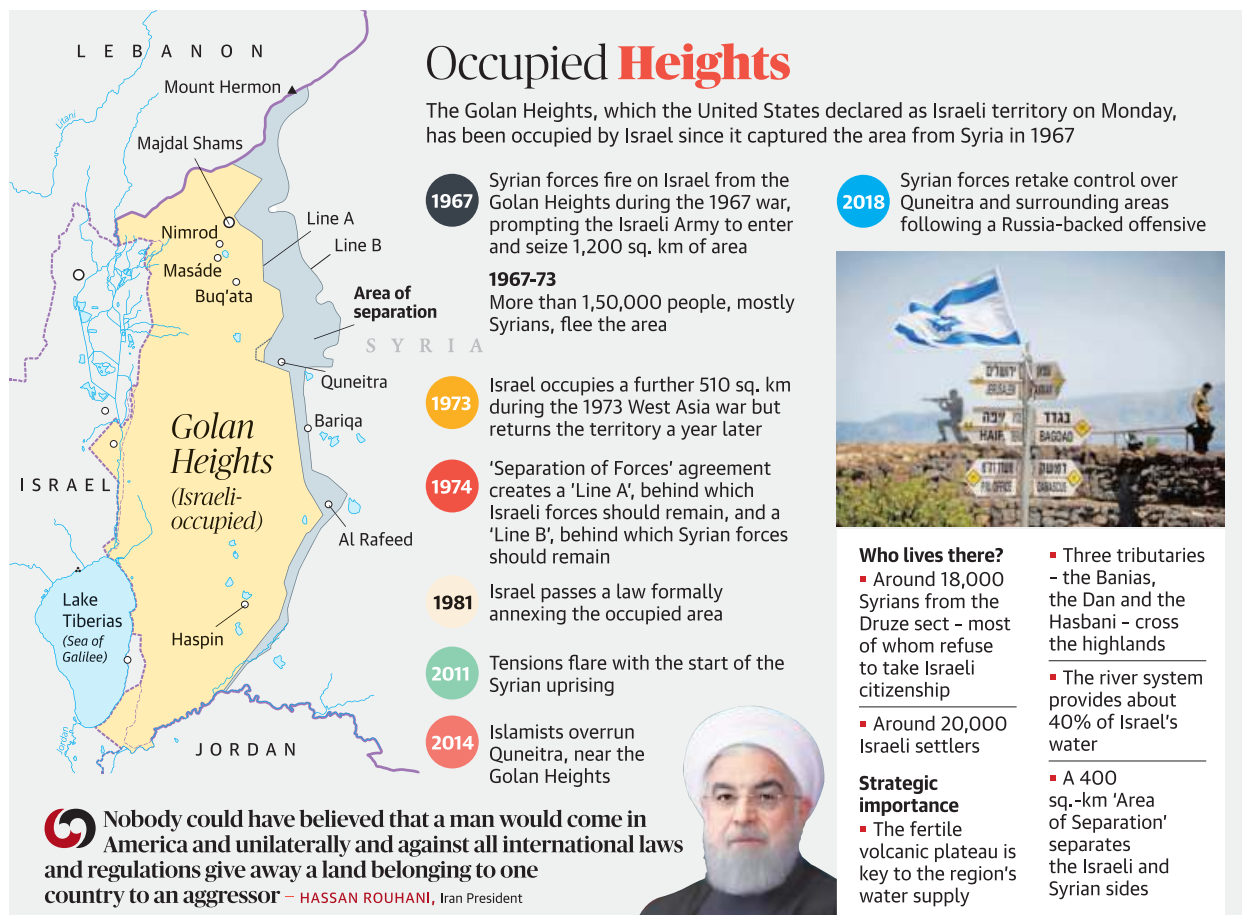
The Pakistani Foreign Ministry issued a statement say-

ing that Mr. Khan's comments, reported in various forms by Pakistani media outlets and picked up in Afghanistan, had been taken out of context. "In his comments, the PM had referred to Pakistan's model where elections are held under an interim government. The comments should not be misinterpreted to imply interference in Afghanistan's

internal affairs," the Ministry said. Afghan Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah did not appear to be appeased by Pakistan's clarifying statement. "The remarks about Afghanistan's future... that were expressed by Pakistan's Prime Minister, Imran Khan, are not acceptable for any Afghan citizen," he said.

U.S. and Taliban officials have held several rounds of

talks but the Taliban has refused to talk to the Afghan government which it considers an illegitimate "puppet" regime. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, whose mandate officially expires in May, faces a re-election battle this year, but amid gathering political uncertainty, the election date has been twice postponed and is now due to take place on September 28.



## Pak. MP moves Bills on forced conversion

PTI's Ramesh Kumar seeks enhanced punishment for those involved

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
ISLAMABAD

A Hindu lawmaker from Prime Minister Imran Khan's party has moved two Bills in Parliament seeking enhancement of punishment for those involved in forced conversion and for making child marriage a cognisable offence, amid the nationwide outrage over the alleged forced conversion of two teenage girls from the minority community.

Ramesh Kumar Vankwani from the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) submitted Child Marriage Restraint Act (Amendment) Bill

2019 and the Criminal Law (Protection of Minorities) Act 2019 in the National Assembly on Tuesday.

*Dawn* reported that the Bills, moved in the wake of alleged kidnapping of two Hindu girls and their forced conversion to Islam, were accompanied by a resolution with the support of minority lawmakers from all major political parties.

Besides Mr. Vankwani, PTI legislators Lal Malhi and Shunila Ruth, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz lawmaker Darshan and Pakistan Peoples Party's Ramesh Lal signed the resolution.



Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf MP Ramesh Kumar Vankwani

The five-point resolution called for immediate passage of the Bill against forced con-

versions, which had been unanimously passed by the Sindh Assembly in 2016 and then reverted due to pressure of extremist elements, in all the legislatures.

Through the resolution, the lawmakers demanded strict action against the culprits, including religious figures who are involved in forced conversions.

Mr. Vankwani, who is also patron-in-chief of Pakistan Hindu Council (PHC), later told the media that unfortunately the practice of child marriage was common in all parts of Pakistan, particularly in poverty-hit areas.

## Thai Opposition parties unite against junta

Seven-party alliance claims to have won a majority of parliamentary seats

REUTERS  
BANGKOK

Thailand's Opposition "democratic front" of seven parties on Wednesday said it had won a majority in the lower house of Parliament after a messy election, and had the right to try to form a government after five years of military rule.

But the Opposition alliance would still be unable to elect a Prime Minister, as parliamentary rules, written by the ruling military junta, require backing from a majority of upper and lower houses combined. Parliament's upper house, entirely appointed by the junta, is expected to endorse the pro-military party.

## Results delayed

With unofficial results of Sunday's vote still delayed, the ruling junta showed no sign giving up on its goal to keep former Army chief and



Ending military rule: Sudarat Keyuraphan, left, Pheu Thai party's PM candidate and Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, leader of the Future Forward party. REUTERS

coup leader Prayuth Chan-ocha as Prime Minister.

The post-election standoff could raise tension just as the Southeast Asian country prepares for the elaborate coronation of its new king in May. Sudarat Keyuraphan, the main prime ministerial candidate of the Pheu Thai party ousted by the 2014 Army coup, said the seven parties in the Opposition alliance would take at least 255 seats in the 500-member

House of Representatives. "We declare that the democratic front which opposes military rule commands the majority in the House," Ms. Keyuraphan told reporters. The largest alliance in the lower house should be given the right to try to form a government, she added.

Pheu Thai's secretary-general, Phumtham Wechayachai, told reporters the democratic front now included the Future Forward, Pheu

Chart, Prachachart, Seri Ruam Thai, Thai People Power and New Economy parties. A fuller picture of the lower house make-up could emerge on Friday, when the Election Commission releases vote tallies for each constituency, used to determine the allocation of the other 150 party seats under a complex formula.

After the conference, the alliance's party leaders petitioned the election commission to immediately release complete tallies, demanding transparency.

The pro-military Palang Pracharat party has also claimed the right to form the next government, based on its early lead in the popular vote, saying the count could still give it a majority. Its leader, Uttama Savanayana said Palang Pracharat was taking its time as there are six weeks until official results are published on May 9.

## New Zealand gunman donated to Austrian party

Far-right leader admits to receiving cash

REUTERS  
VIENNA

Austria's far-right Identitarian Movement received cash from the man charged with killing 50 people in mass shootings at mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said on Wednesday.

"We can now confirm that there was financial support and so a link between the New Zealand attacker and the Identitarian Movement in Austria," Mr. Kurz said.

A spokesman for prosecutors in Graz said the head of Austria's Identitarian Movement, Martin Sellner, received €1,500 (\$1,690) in early 2018 from a donor with the same name as the man charged over the March 15 Christchurch attacks.

New Zealand authorities were not immediately available for comment on Mr. Kurz's statement.

Mr. Sellner published two videos on YouTube in which he said he had received a donation which involved an

email address that matched the name of the Australian alleged to have carried out the Christchurch attacks. In one of the videos, he said: "I'm not a member of a terrorist organisation. I have nothing to do with this man, other than that I passively received a donation from him." He said the donation was from early 2018 and that he would give the money to a charitable foundation. Mr. Sellner said that police had raided his house over the possible links to the attacker.

**Identitarian movement**  
Austria's Identitarians, who say they want to preserve Europe's identity, are a relatively new, media-savvy far-right movement which uses the Internet to promote their actions on the streets.

Mr. Kurz said Austria was looking into dissolving the Identitarian Movement.

Austrian Vice-Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache, of the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ), said the FPÖ had nothing to do with the Identitarian Movement.

## U.S. House fails to override Trump's veto

Emergency was declared to build wall

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN  
WASHINGTON

The U.S. House of Representatives has failed to override President Donald Trump's veto on an earlier House and Senate measure to overturn Mr. Trump's national emergency declaration to build a border wall between the U.S. and Mexico.

Tuesday's House vote, 248-181 in favour of overriding Mr. Trump's veto, failed to meet the two-third majority mark despite 14 Republicans crossing the aisle and voting with Democrats against the veto.

It was expected that Mr. Trump would veto a House and Senate measure, passed in February and March, respectively, overturning his emergency. However, Tuesday's vote does not come as a surprise, as the prospects of a presidential veto being overridden were always bleak, requiring a two-third majority in both the House and the Senate.

On February 12, the House had passed a resolution overturning Mr. Trump's emergency. The Senate followed suit two weeks ago, with 12 Republicans voting with Democrats to end the emergency. Mr. Trump vetoed the measure.

Lawmakers had disagreed with Mr. Trump on the existence of a crisis at the southwestern border of the U.S., and there was concern that the President's emergency declaration would enable a diversion of military construction and other funds away from areas where they were needed towards funding more wall.

Several lawmakers, including GOP ones, had expressed concerns about the emergency declaration eroding the constitutional

separation of powers between the President and Congress by attempting to diminish Congress's power over the budget.

"The President's lawless emergency declaration clearly violates Congress's exclusive power of the purse, and Congress will work through the appropriations and defence authorisation processes to terminate this dangerous action and restore our constitutional system of balance of powers," Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, and author of the resolution, Democratic Congressman Joaquin Castro, said via a joint statement.

Democrats have suggested that the measure could be reintroduced in six months — an idea that was echoed in Ms. Pelosi and Mr. Castro's comments.

## Another opportunity

"In six months, Congress will have another opportunity to put a stop to this President's wrongdoing. We will continue to review all options to protect our Constitution and our Democracy from the President's assault," they said. At present, the emergency is also being challenged in the courts.

"Thank you to the House Republicans for sticking together and the BIG WIN today on the Border. Today's vote simply reaffirms Congressional Democrats are the party of Open Borders, Drugs and Crime!" Mr. Trump tweeted on Tuesday.

This is a second victory for Mr. Trump this week, who was partially exonerated a few days ago by Special Counsel Robert Mueller's probe into Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential elections.