

17 THE WORLD

TOP OF THE WORLD



BRITAIN
WikiLeaks says Assange being spied on at embassy
London: WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has been the subject of a sophisticated spying operation in the Ecuadorian embassy where he has been holed up since 2012, the group said on Wednesday. "WikiLeaks has uncovered an extensive spying operation against Julian Assange within the Ecuadorian embassy," Kristinn Hrafnsson, WikiLeaks editor-in-chief said, adding that Assange's "eviction" from the embassy could happen at any time. Hrafnsson did not immediately give evidence for his claims. Assange's relations with his hosts have chilled since Ecuador accused him of leaking information about President Lenin Moreno's personal life. Moreno has said Assange has violated the terms of his asylum.

SUDAN
11 killed as protesters clash with security
Cairo: Clashes between Sudanese security forces and protesters holding a large anti-government sit-in outside the military's headquarters in the capital Khartoum killed at least 11 people including six security forces, the government said Wednesday. Information Minister Hassan Ismail did not give further details on the violence a day earlier. Sudanese security forces tried again to break up the sit-in, which began over the weekend, killing at least 14 people on Tuesday, activists behind the protests said, disputing the government's figure.

JAPAN
F-35 wreckage found in Pacific, pilot still missing
Tokyo: Search and rescue teams found wreckage from a crashed Japanese F-35 stealth fighter in the Pacific Ocean close to northern Japan, as efforts to find the missing pilot continued, authorities said on Wednesday. The aircraft, less than one-year-old, was the first F-35 to be assembled in Japan and was aloft for only 28 minutes before contact was lost, a defence official said. The plane had logged a total of 280 hours in the air since its first flight, he added. It is only the second F-35 to crash in the two decades it has been flying.

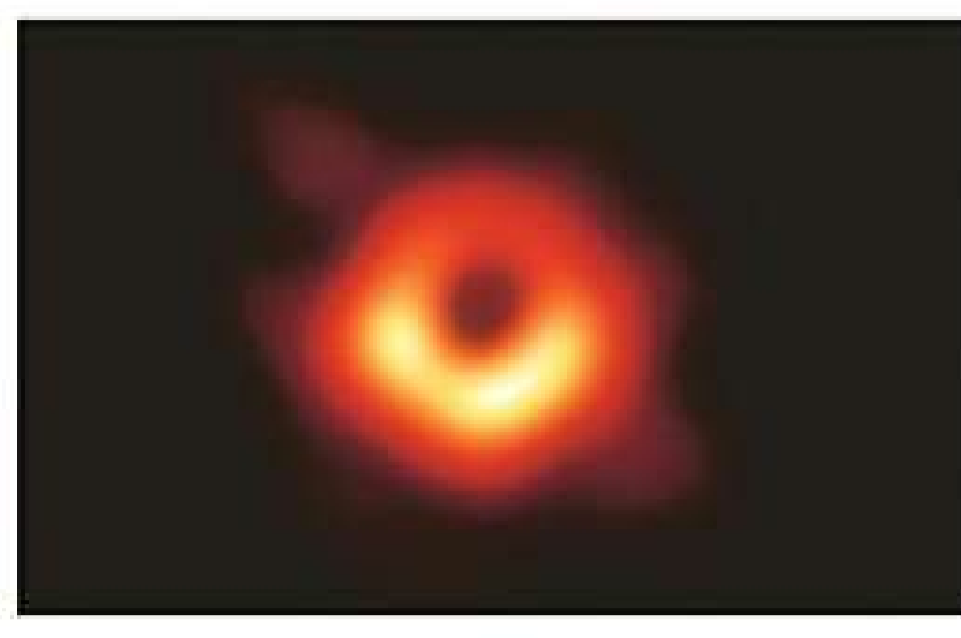
NORTH KOREA
Kim convenes meeting over 'tense situation'
Seoul: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un called a full meeting Wednesday of a top committee of the ruling Workers' Party to address what he described as the "prevailing tense situation", state media reported. The gathering of the Central Committee comes after Kim's Hanoi summit with US President Donald Trump broke up without agreement in February, and as South Korean President Moon Jae-in flies to Washington for talks with the US leader.

Seeing the unseeable: First image of a black hole released

AMITABH SINHA
PUNE, APRIL 10

ASTRONOMERS on Wednesday unveiled the first-ever direct image of a black hole, more than 100 years after these super-dense extreme-gravity regions of space-time were theorised as a consequence of General Theory of Relativity. The spectacularly bright-orange circular image with a dark central region was taken by the Event Horizon Telescope (EHT) Collaboration in April 2017, and revealed simultaneously at five press conferences in four different continents on Wednesday evening. Black holes, those unimaginably dense regions of space-time from where even light is unable to escape, are formed mainly by massive collapsing stars after they start extinguishing. The space-time around them gets so incredibly bent that nothing is

able to escape from its gravity. The black hole, whose image was captured, is located at the centre of the Messier 87 (M87) galaxy in the Virgo galaxy cluster. The black hole is at a distance of 55 million light-years from earth and has a mass 6.5 billion times that of the Sun. Scientists have also captured the image of another black hole, Sagittarius A*, which is very much in our own galaxy, the Milky Way, but that image is not as sharp as the one released Wednesday and needs further processing. It is not that black holes have been discovered for the first time. Quite the contrary. Scientists have gathered a pile of evidence from a variety of experiments over the decades that showed that black holes exist. They have not only been able to locate them in the universe but also calculated their sizes, masses and the impacts they have on their surroundings and other heavenly bodies. However, since these black



The first image of a black hole, from the galaxy Messier 87. NYT

holes are completely 'dark', and do not emit or reflect any light, nor any other electromagnetic radiation, they could not be 'observed' by any of the scientific instruments. Scientists had to build an elaborate and complex network of massive telescopes around the

world, and devise ingenious new techniques, to piece together a picture that now provides the first visual evidence of a black hole. "We have been studying black holes so long that it is easy to forget none of us has ever seen one before," said France Cordova, director of the National Science



Foundation of the United States. Sheperd S Doeleman, EHT Collaboration director, said the existence of black holes was now proven without any doubt. "We have today seen what we thought was unseeable," he said. The Event Horizon Telescope comprises of eight radio telescopes — located in Hawaii and Mexico, in the mountains of Arizona, in Spanish Sierra Nevada, in the Atacama Desert of Chile and near the South Pole in Antarctica — which captured very high frequency microwave radiation that had originated from near the black hole 55 million years ago. Each of these telescopes captured

only a small piece of the area. The data from all those were then fed into a central super-computer which, over several months, created a complete picture. The outer orange disk in the image represents the radiation being emitted by gases and other objects that exist just outside the black hole. The inner dark circular area in the image is actually the black hole. "It is the result of an incredible piece of science and engineering. This particular photo is the highest resolution picture ever taken by anyone anywhere in the universe," Somak Raychaudhuri, director of Pune-based Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics, said. Scientists said the image captured by the telescopes matched computer simulated images, created using mathematical models, in many respects, and therefore, corroborate the scientific theories, especially the General Theory of Relativity. But there were important differences as well. "For example, if you have seen *Interstellar* movie, there is an image of a black hole that has been used. That image was created using our existing theoretical knowledge. Someone of the stature of (Nobel prize winning scientist) Kip Thorne was associated in creating that image. That image is slightly different than the one that we saw today. So maybe this image will reveal some new things about physics," Raychaudhuri said. The unveiling of the black hole image comes three years after scientists, in a similar global announcement in Feb 2016, reported the discovery of gravitational waves, another prediction of the General Relativity. The first gravitational waves to be detected was produced by an event in which two black holes had merged into one 1.3 billion years ago. Several more gravitational waves have been detected after that.

ISRAELI PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Netanyahu headed for historic 5th term as PM, rival concedes defeat

With 99% votes counted, Likud Party and allies look set to win 65 of 120 seats after keen contest

JEFFREY HELLER
JERUSALEM, APRIL 10

ISRAELI PRIME Minister Benjamin Netanyahu secured a clear path to re-election on Wednesday, with religious-rightist parties set to hand him a parliamentary majority and his main challenger conceding defeat. With more than 99 per cent of votes counted — ballots cast by soldiers at military bases will be tallied over the next two days — Netanyahu's conservative Likud party looked likely to muster enough support to control 65 of the Knesset's 120 seats and be named to head the next coalition government. It would be Netanyahu's record fifth term as premier.



Netanyahu celebrates in Tel Aviv on Wednesday after the release of exit poll results. Reuters

In a televised statement, Yair Lapid, number two in the centrist Blue and White party led by former general Benny Gantz, said: "We didn't win in this round. We will make Likud's life hell in the opposition." US President Donald Trump, who Netanyahu featured on campaign billboards to highlight their close relationship, phoned to congratulate him on his re-election, the Israeli leader said, adding that he thanked his American ally for "tremendous support for Israel". Netanyahu tweeted that Trump had called him from Air Force One. The President was on

a flight to Texas. Trump told reporters at the White House that Netanyahu's re-election improved the chances of peace between Israel and the Palestinians. "He's been a great ally and he's a friend. I'd like to congratulate him on a well-thought-out race." A team led by Trump's adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner has been working on an Israeli-Palestinian peace plan, but it has not disclosed details. Palestinians, angered by what they see as Trump's pro-Israel bias, have called it a non-starter. Israeli President Reuven

Rivlin said on Twitter he would begin meeting next week with political parties that won parliamentary seats to hear who they support for prime minister. At the sessions, which Rivlin said would be broadcast live "to ensure transparency", he will then pick a party leader to try to form a coalition, giving the candidate 28 days to do so, with a two-week extension if needed. The close and often vitriolic contest was widely seen in Israel as a referendum on Netanyahu's character and record in the face of corruption allegations. He faces possible indictment in

BIBI'S FRIENDS OFFER CONGRATULATIONS



"My dear friend Bibi, congratulations! You are a great friend of India, and I look forward to continuing to work with you to take our bilateral partnership to new heights"
NARENDRA MODI



"I'd like to congratulate Bibi Netanyahu... Everybody said you can't have peace in the Middle East with Israel and Palestinians... I think we now have a better chance"
DONALD TRUMP

Thousands flee Tripoli as fighters battle on outskirts

AHMEDELUMAMI & TOM MILES
TRIPOLI, APRIL 10



Libyan National Army troops head out of Benghazi on Sunday. The LNA have now taken up positions about 11 km south of Tripoli's centre. Reuters

EASTERN FORCES and troops loyal to the government in Tripoli fought on the outskirts of Libya's capital on Wednesday as the battle forced thousands of residents to flee their homes. The Libyan National Army (LNA) forces of eastern commander Khalifa Haftar had taken up positions in the suburbs about 11 km south of the centre, with steel containers and pickups with mounted machine-guns blocking their way into the city. Residents reported LNA planes buzzing Tripoli and the sound of clashes in outskirts of the city. Haftar's forces briefly took the former international airport earlier in the week, but Serraj's fighters won that back and the LNA was entrenched further south, witnesses said. The United Nations said that at least 4,500 Tripoli residents had been displaced, most moving away from conflict areas to safer districts of the city. But many more were trapped, it said. The LNA forces moved out of their stronghold in east Libya to take the sparsely-populated but oil-rich south earlier this year, before heading a week ago towards Tripoli, where the internationally-recognised government of Prime Minister Fayez al-Serraj sits.

Libya has been split into rival eastern and western administrations since the 2011 toppling of former strongman Muammar Gaddafi. The United Nations wants to bring both sides together to plan an election and way out of the chaos. As well as the humanitarian consequences, renewed conflict in Libya threatens to disrupt oil supplies, boost migration across the Mediterranean to Europe, scupper the UN peace plan, and encourage militants to exploit the chaos. Islamic State killed three people in a remote desert town under LNA control two days ago. In Tripoli, nearly 50 people have died, mainly fighters but also some civilians including two doctors, according to latest U.N. casualty estimates. The toll is expected to rise. **REUTERS**

NZ Parliament votes to ban semi-automatic weapons following Christchurch attack

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WELLINGTON, APRIL 10

NEW ZEALAND'S Parliament on Wednesday passed sweeping gun laws that outlaw military style weapons, less than a month after mass shootings at two mosques in the city of Christchurch left 50 people dead and dozens wounded. A Bill outlawing most automatic and semi-automatic weapons and banning components that modify existing weapons was passed by a vote of 119 to 1 in the House of Representatives after an accelerated process of debate and public submission. The Bill needs only the approval of New Zealand's governor general, a formality, before becoming law on Friday. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern spoke emotionally during the Bill's final reading of the traumatic injuries suffered by victims of the March 15 attacks, whom she visited in Christchurch Hospital after the shootings. "I struggle to recall any single gunshot wounds," Ardern said. "In every case they spoke of multiple injuries, multiple debilitat-



I could not fathom how weapons that could cause such destruction and large-scale death could be obtained legally in this country."

JACINDA ARDERN
NEW ZEALAND PM

ing injuries that deemed it impossible for them to recover in days, let alone weeks. They will carry disabilities for a lifetime, and that's before you consider the psychological impact. We are here for them." "I could not fathom how weapons that could cause such destruction and large-scale death could be obtained legally in this country," she said. A 28-year-old Australian man, Brenton Tarrant, has been charged in the attacks.

2 DAYS AHEAD OF POSSIBLE NO-DEAL EXIT

EU to grant British PM May a Brexit delay, with conditions

REUTERS
BRUSSELS, APRIL 10

EUROPEAN UNION leaders will grant Prime Minister Theresa May a second delay to Brexit at an emergency summit on Wednesday but will argue over how long and on what terms as they struggle to end Britain's troublesome membership. French President Emmanuel Macron was pushing to withhold any commitment to extend Friday's deadline much beyond elections to the European Parliament on May 23-26 unless May binds herself, and any poten-



Theresa May with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Brussels on Wednesday. AP

tially more anti-EU successor, not to use Britain's final months to disrupt the Brussels machinery. The talks come just two days before Britain would otherwise leave the bloc with no divorce deal.

Earlier that night, Gantz had claimed victory. Tel Aviv Stock Exchange main indexes were up nearly one per cent in late trading on Wednesday, displaying confidence in a veteran Prime Minister who has overseen a humming economy and blunted various security threats, including from Syria. Netanyahu was now poised to become, in July, the longest-serving Israeli Prime Minister, overtaking the country's founding father, David Ben-Gurion. That could be scuppered if criminal charges are filed and force his removal. **REUTERS**

Scientists warn of nuclear fallout nestling in melting glaciers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
VIENNA, APRIL 10

RADIOACTIVE FALLOUT from nuclear meltdowns and weapons testing is nestled in glaciers across the world, scientists said Wednesday, warning of a potentially hazardous time bomb as rising temperatures melt the icy residue. For the first time, an international team of scientists has studied the presence of nuclear fallout in ice surface sediments on

glaciers across the Arctic, Iceland the Alps, Caucasus mountains, British Columbia and Antarctica. It found manmade radioactive material at all 17 survey sites, often at concentrations at least 10 times higher than levels elsewhere. "They are some of the highest levels you see in the environment outside nuclear exclusion zones," said Caroline Clason, a lecturer in Physical Geography at the University of Plymouth. When radioactive material is released into the atmosphere, it falls to earth as acid rain, some of



Radioactive material can collect as heavy sediments in glaciers. Reuters

which is absorbed by plants and soil. But when it falls as snow and settles in the ice, it forms heav-

ier sediment which collects in glaciers, concentrating the levels of nuclear residue. The Chernobyl disaster of 1986 — by far the most devastating nuclear accident to date — released vast clouds of radioactive material including Caesium into the atmosphere, causing widespread contamination and acid rain across northern Europe for weeks afterwards. "Radioactive particles are very light so when they are taken up into the atmosphere they can be transported a very long way," she said.

"When it falls as rain, like after Chernobyl, it washes away and it's sort of a one-off event. But as snow, it stays in the ice for decades and as it melts in response to the climate it's then washed downstream." The environmental impact of this has been shown in recent years, as wild boar meat in Sweden was found to contain more than 10 times the safe levels of Caesium. As well as disasters, radioactive material produced from weapons testing was also detected at several research sites.