

## ELSEWHERE



## Man held over attack on N. Korean Embassy

WASHINGTON  
U.S. authorities have arrested Christopher Ahn, a former marine and member of a group dedicated to the overthrow of Kim Jong-un, in connection with a raid on North Korea's Embassy in Spain in February, *The Washington Post* reported on Saturday. AFP

## Indians held for trying illegally to enter U.S.

NEW YORK  
Two Indian nationals have been apprehended by patrol agents at the U.S.-Mexico border in Arizona after they got stranded while trying to enter America illegally, authorities said. Agents assigned to the Ajo Border Patrol Station rescued them following the activation of a U.S. Border Patrol rescue beacon on Wednesday. PTI

## 7 killed as gunmen target Afghan Ministry building

Attack follows suicide bombing near the compound; Taliban denies responsibility

REUTERS  
KABUL

At least seven people were killed in an attack on the Afghan Communications Ministry in central Kabul on Saturday, breaking months of relative calm in the capital and underlining the continued security threats despite efforts to open peace talks with the Taliban.

The attack began shortly before midday when a suicide bomb was detonated at the entrance to the multi-storey building housing the Ministry in a busy commercial area of the city, followed by gunfire which could be heard over a mile away.

## 8 civilians wounded

Among the dead were four civilians and three police officers, while another eight civilians were wounded, a government official said. "We



Security personnel rescuing people after Saturday's attack at the Communications Ministry building in Kabul. AP

saw a gunman trying to break open an office door and as we were running out, he was trying to shoot us and he started shouting 'I will kill everyone here'," said Syeda Rashid, an office administrator in the Ministry who escaped with several of her colleagues. She said at least

six women had been wounded. Television images showed people fleeing after gunfire and explosions began near the 18-storey government tower.

The area around the building was sealed off by police as at least three attackers battled security forces

for several hours before the attack was finally suppressed in the late afternoon, Interior Ministry spokesman Nasrat Rahimi said.

The Interior Ministry said in a statement that more than 2,800 employees of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and the Ministry of Information and Culture were evacuated during the clearance operation.

The blast, which security officials said appeared to have been caused by a suicide bomber, was also close to the heavily fortified Serena Hotel, one of the very few Kabul hotels still used by foreign visitors.

There was no claim of responsibility but the Taliban issued a statement denying any involvement. Many such attacks have been claimed by the Islamic State group.

## Foreign Secretary visits Beijing for 'bilateral consultations'

Vijay Gokhale to hold talks with Chinese Minister Wang Yi

ATUL ANEJA  
BEIJING

Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale will arrive in Beijing on Sunday for "bilateral consultations", amid signs that China may review its position on lifting its "technical hold" on listing Jaish-e-Mohammad founder Masood Azhar as an international terrorist.

Mr. Gokhale is arriving ahead of the Belt and Road Forum (BRF) — a mega event hosted by China that begins on April 25, in which 37 heads of state or government are participating.

The Foreign Secretary will hold talks with China's State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Monday.

On Friday, Mr. Wang said at a briefing on the BRF that the two countries were preparing for a second edition of a leadership summit as a follow-up to last year's informal summit at Wuhan.

India has been pressing



Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale. REUTERS

China to designate Azhar as a global terrorist after his outfit claimed responsibility for the February 14 Pulwama attack, in which 40 CRPF personnel were killed.

On March 13, China placed a "technical hold" on designating Azhar in the 1267 committee of the United Nations Security Council, despite stating that it was engaged in "mediation efforts" to ease tensions between India and Pakistan that spiked on February 27 following the

Indian cross-border air strike on Balakot in Pakistan.

## Consensus emerging

Since April 1, China has been saying that a consensus was emerging within the 1267 committee on designating Azhar, after rejecting a parallel initiative by the United States, backed by Britain and France, to seek a ban on him through a separate resolution in the Security Council plenary.

On Wednesday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said the Azhar issue was "moving towards the direction of settlement".

Analysts point out that it is unlikely that China will lift its "technical hold" on Azhar before the BRF concludes on April 27, so as not to embarrass Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, who will be participating in the international event.

## Balochistan gunmen came from Iran: Pak.

'We have shared evidence with Tehran'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
ISLAMABAD

The gunmen who killed 14 members of Pakistan's security forces in the country's southwest earlier this week came from Iran to carry out the attack, officials said on Saturday.

Some 20 people wearing uniforms from the paramilitary Frontier Corps stopped buses in Balochistan province, which were travelling along the coast to Karachi, before gunning down the security officials.

Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said Pa-

kistan had evidence the "terrorist outfits" that carried out the attack have "training and logistic camps inside Iranian areas bordering Pakistan".

"We have shared this actionable evidence with Iran after due authentication and identified (the) location of the camps," Mr. Qureshi said.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan will make an official visit to Tehran from Sunday, with topics of discussion to include ways to prevent recurrence of such incidents in future.

## Bangladeshis protest for 10th consecutive day

Killing of teenager, who had accused a teacher of sexual assault, has caused outrage

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
DHAKA

Demonstrations were held across the Bangladeshi capital on Saturday for the 10th consecutive day after a teenager who accused a head teacher of sexually harassing her was burned to death.

The killing of 19-year-old Nusrat Jahan Rafi has sparked outrage across the country and put police action in the case under the spotlight.

Protesters in Dhaka chanted slogans demanding the death sentence for the killers of the girl, who police say was lured to the rooftop of the Islamic seminary she at-



Raising the voice: People form a human chain to demand justice for the teenager. REUTERS

tended in Feni, south of the capital. Police said the attackers then ordered her to withdraw a police complaint against the head of the school. When she refused, she was doused in kerosene and set on fire.

Eighteen people, including the head teacher, have been arrested. Many believe the murder has exposed a "culture of impunity" surrounding sex crimes against women and children, while those who complain often

feel a backlash. "Rapes and sexual assaults have risen alarmingly in the country," protester M. Rahman Apu said. "Nusrat Rafi's murder proves that the even the bravest of girls do not get justice."

Garment union leader Kamrun Nahar, who had also joined the protests, said Rafi's murder has awakened the nation's conscience.

"We won't stop protests until the killers of Nusrat, and other perpetrators, are brought to book," Mr. Nahar said. The local head of the ruling Awami League party has been detained for allegedly helping the killers.

## N. Korea slams Bolton for 'stupid' comments

'Remarks show a lack of understanding'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
SEOUL

A senior North Korean official slammed U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton on Saturday, accusing him of making "stupid" comments on stalled denuclearisation talks and warning "nothing good" would come of them.

Mr. Bolton is the second, top ranking U.S. politician to be criticised by Pyongyang in recent days, after it labelled Secretary of State Mike Pompeo as "reckless" on Thursday, demanding his removal from talks.

In an interview with Bloomberg published on Wednesday, Mr. Bolton had urged Pyongyang to give a "real indication" it is willing to give up nuclear weapons.

In comments cited by the official KCNA news service, Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui said Mr. Bolton's remarks may have showed a "lack of understanding about the intentions of the two leaders". But, "they all sound uncharming and stupid to me", she said.

"Nothing good would come to you if such insensitive remarks persist."

## Two men arrested over killing of Northern Ireland journalist

McKee was killed during attack by Irish nationalist youths

REUTERS  
LONDONDERRY

Two men have been arrested in Northern Ireland over the killing of a journalist during a riot, police said, with politicians calling for calm after the shooting added to concerns about the stability of the region's 21-year-old peace deal.

Lyra McKee was shot dead on Thursday as she watched Irish nationalist youths attack police following a raid. Her death, which follows a large car bomb in the city in January, raised fears that small marginalised militant groups are trying to exploit political tensions caused by Britain's decision to leave the European Union.

Northern Ireland's political parties issued a joint call for calm. "Lyra's murder was an attack on all the peo-



A plaque and flowers are left in tribute to Lyra McKee near the scene of her shooting in Londonderry. GETTY IMAGES

ple of this community, an attack on the peace and on the democratic processes," leaders of the main six parties said in a statement. "This is a time for calm heads."

McKee was watching with a crowd of bystanders as local youths attacked police with petrol bombs and set

cars on fire, video footage showed. Police said she was hit when a gunman opened fire in the direction of officers. The Police Service of Northern Ireland said on Saturday that two men, aged 18 and 19, had been arrested under the Terrorism Act in connection with the murder.

## Solih to visit Bengaluru for IPL match

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

President of the Maldives Ibrahim Mohamed Solih will fly to Bengaluru on Sunday to catch the IPL match between Royal Challengers Bangalore and Chennai Super Kings.

In February, this year, Mr. Solih led the Maldivian team in a friendly match against a visiting Air India team.

Maldivian Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid said Mr. Solih's presence at Sunday's match would reflect "the rejuvenation of the bilateral ties" between the two nations.

Further, Mr. Shahid said the visit was an opportunity to explore and deepen the cricketing ties between the two countries.

The Maldives is planning to build a cricket stadium with Indian assistance.

## Egyptians vote on giving President Sisi more powers

He can seek another term if he wins

REUTERS  
CAIRO

Egyptians voted on Saturday in a three-day referendum on constitutional changes that could allow President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to stay in office until 2030 and boost the role of the powerful military.

Mr. Sisi's supporters say the changes are necessary to give him more time to complete major development projects and economic reforms. Critics say they concentrate more power in Mr. Sisi's hands.

If approved, the amendments would extend Mr. Sisi's current term to six years from four and allow him to run again for a third six-year term in 2024.

They would also grant the



An Egyptian woman casting her ballot in Cairo on Saturday. AFP

President control over appointing head judges and the public prosecutor from a pool of candidates.

They would task the military with protecting "the Constitution and democracy and the fundamental make-up of the country and its civil nature".

## Russian officials hold meeting with Assad

Trade, renting of Tartus port discussed

REUTERS  
BEIRUT/MOSCOW

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad met senior officials from his ally Russia in Damascus on Friday and Saturday to discuss upcoming peace talks, renting out Tartus port and trade between the two countries, state media in Syria reported.

Russia has helped Mr. Assad's forces to take back most of the country but the eight-year-long war continues. Russia's Foreign Ministry said late on Friday that Mr. Assad had met Moscow's Syria envoy Alexander Lavrentiev, Deputy Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Vershinin and several Russian officials.

However, while it said they had discussed the for-

mation of a constitutional committee, which Syria's opposition last year agreed to join under UN auspices after a Russian-hosted peace conference, Syrian state media did not mention it.

Syria's official SANA news agency said meetings had focused on the next round of talks in Kazakhstan involving Syria, its allies Russia and Iran, and the rebels' backer Turkey.

SANA said Mr. Assad had met Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yury Borisov to discuss trade and economic cooperation, "particularly in the fields of energy, industry and increasing trade". Mr. Borisov said Russia hoped to sign the deal to rent the Tartus port within a week, according to TASS.