

# 13 THE WORLD

TOP OF THE WORLD



USA

Reuniting families separated at border could take 2 years, says govt

**San Diego:** The Trump administration wants up to two years to find potentially thousands of children who were separated from their families at the border before a judge halted the practice last year, a task that it says is more laborious than previous efforts because the children are no longer in government custody. The Justice Department said in a court filing late Friday that it will take at least a year to review about 47,000 cases of unaccompanied children taken into government custody between July 1, 2017 and June 25, 2018 — the day before US District Judge Dana Sabraw halted the general practice of splitting families.

SYRIA

15 killed as govt, rebels exchange fire, strain truce

**Beirut:** At least 15 people were reported killed on Sunday in shelling by government and insurgent forces in northwestern Syria, further straining a Russian-Turkish ceasefire deal for the region. The northwest is the last major foothold of insurgents opposed to President Bashar al-Assad, many of whom were forced to retreat there after military defeats at the hands of Syrian government forces backed by Iran and Russia.

SAUDI ARABIA

Stranded Indian goes home after travel ban lifted

**Dubai:** An Indian man in Saudi Arabia, who was barred from travelling over a car loan, left the country after community workers and the Consulate General of India in Jeddah helped lift his travel ban. Rajan Palakkundu Parambil, a 53-year-old from Kerala, was employed by a contracting company in Najran, a Saudi city near the border with Yemen. He said his employer had bought a car in his name on installments, but the firm ran into trouble as the Yemen war got worse. After he left the firm, he got to know he was placed under a travel ban due to the unpaid car loan.

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

## Nasheed makes political comeback in huge win for Maldives ruling party

Former president leads Maldivian Democratic Party to two-thirds majority, vows sweeping reforms

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA MALE, APRIL 7

THE FORMER Maldives president, Mohamed Nasheed, vowed sweeping reforms and an end to government corruption on Sunday after leading his party to a landslide victory just five months since returning from exile.

Nasheed, 51, made a dramatic return to the top of the national Parliament, with his Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) headed for a two-thirds majority in the 87-member Assembly.

Nasheed promised to use his party's mandate to usher in a new era of stability and democracy in the Indian Ocean archipelago as it emerges from years of strongman rule, political crises and corruption scandals miring the government and judiciary. "Our foremost duty is to bring peace to the government,"

### Poison would've killed everyone if Moscow used it, Russia envoy tells Novichok victim

REUTERS LONDON, APRIL 7

A BRITISH man whose partner died after being exposed to the Novichok poison was told by Russia's ambassador that Moscow could not have been behind the attacks because they would have "killed everyone", he told the *Sunday Mirror* newspaper.

Charlie Rowley, who was also exposed to Novichok after coming across a perfume bottle contaminated with the nerve agent last year, met Russian Ambassador Alexander Yakovenko Saturday to ask him why Moscow killed his girlfriend. "But I didn't really get any answers. I just got Russian propaganda," Rowley told the *Mirror*. "The ambassador kept saying the substance definitely wasn't the Novichok they had made because if it was, it would have killed everyone."

The embassy said in a statement Moscow still wanted a transparent investigation into the March 4, 2018 attacks in the English city of Salisbury but accused the British authorities of "hiding the circumstances of the incident". Last year, British prosecutors identified two Russians they said were operating under aliases — Alexander Petrov and Ruslan Boshirov — whom they accused of trying to murder former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter with a military-grade nerve agent. Dawn Sturgess, Rowley's partner, died in July.

Britain charged the two men in absentia with attempted murder and said the suspects were military intelligence officers almost certainly acting on orders from high up in the Russian state. Russia has denied any involvement in the poisonings.



Maldives President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih and former president Mohamed Nasheed arrive at a campaign rally in Male. Nasheed promised to use his party's mandate to usher in a new era of stability and democracy in the Maldives. Reuters

Nasheed told supporters in the capital Male on Sunday.

The comprehensive victory was another rebuke for Nasheed's arch-rival and autocratic former president Abdulla Yameen, who was dumped in a shock election

defeat in September under a cloud of corruption and embezzlement allegations.

Nasheed was barred from running in the election but his former deputy, President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, emerged tri-

### EXPLAINED Focus on last year's promises after MDP takes Parliament

MALDIVIAN DEMOCRATIC Party (MDP), whose Ibrahim Solih defeated strongman Yameen Abdul Gayoom in presidential elections last year, is projected to win 60 out of 87 seats in Parliament. During last year's elections, the MDP had promised reforms and justice for those who suffered under the previous regime. But, without a majority in Parliament, the MDP had failed to secure legislative approval for commissions to inquire into corruption, the disappearance of a journalist and the killing of a blogger during Yameen's rule. The MDP now has a majority, and the focus will be on whether the party can finally deliver on last year's promises.

umphant over Yameen. Yameen's Progressive Party of Maldives ended up with a poor showing, looking set to secure only four seats in the People's Majlis, or Parliament.

"The Parliament you have elected today possesses integrity," said Nasheed, who won a seat in the People's Majlis.

Preliminary results from Saturday's election showed the MDP winning nearly 60 out of the 87 seats.



### 25 YRS AFTER GENOCIDE, RWANDA HONOURS THE DEAD

(From left) Chairperson of the African Union Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat, Rwanda's President Paul Kagame, Rwanda's First Lady Jeannette Kagame, and President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, light the flame of remembrance at the Kigali Genocide Memorial in the Rwandan capital on Sunday. The country began a solemn commemoration of the lives of 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutus murdered during the Rwandan genocide, a three-month-killing spree that began 25 years ago. As many as 10,000 people were killed daily during that period. AP

### In possible first, Cuba allows activists' march

MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN HAVANA, APRIL 7

ON SUNDAY, a group of animal-lovers will march a mile down one of Havana's main thoroughfares waving placards calling for an end to animal cruelty in Cuba.

Short, seemingly simple, the march will write a small but significant line in the history of modern Cuba. The socialist government is explicitly permitting a public march unassociated with any part of the all-encompassing Communist state, a move that participants and his-



Grettel Montes de Oca Valdes, founder of the group Cubans in Defence of Animals. AP

torians call highly unusual and perhaps unprecedented since the first years of the revolution.

"It's a historic event," said Beatriz Del Carmen Hidalgo-Gato Batista, a 21-year public communications student who received the permit for the march from the Plaza of the Revolution borough of Havana.

There is no indication Cuba is moving toward unfettered freedom of assembly: The state still clamps down on unapproved political speech with swift and massive police mobilisations, waves of arrests and temporary detentions. So a march by independent civil society groups seeking government action will be a remarkable sight in a country where, for

nearly 60 years, virtually every aspect of life was part of a single chain of command ending in a supreme leader named Castro.

Since shortly after its foundation, the Cuban Communist government has only permitted the existence of what it calls "legitimate civil society" — groups overseen and sponsored by the state.

"What I believe is that, if I live in this country I should try to fight for what I want in this country, and what I want is to help Cuban animals," said Grettel Montes de Oca Valdes, founder of Cubans in Defence of Animals, whose members will march on Sunday. AP

ten cloaked in secrecy. With bacteria and fungi alike, hospitals and local governments are reluctant to disclose outbreaks for fear of being seen as infection hubs. C. auris, which infected the man at Mount Sinai, is one of dozens of dangerous bacteria and fungi that have developed resistance. Yet, like most of them, it is a threat that is virtually unknown to the public.

Other prominent strains of the fungus *Candida* — one of the most common causes of bloodstream infections in hospitals — have not developed significant resistance to drugs, but more than 90 per cent of *C. auris* infections are resistant to at least one drug, and 30 per cent are resistant to two or more drugs, the CDC said. Nearly half of patients who

## Indian peacekeepers pulled out of Tripoli amid Libya escalation

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, APRIL 7

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS minister Sushma Swaraj said on Sunday that India evacuated its entire contingent of peacekeeping forces, comprising 15 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel, from Tripoli after the situation there "suddenly worsened".

"The situation in Libya has suddenly worsened. There is fighting in Tripoli. Indian Embassy in Tunisia @IndiainTunisia has evacuated the entire contingent of 15 CRPF personnel yesterday itself. I appreciate the excellent work by the Indian Embassy in Tunisia. #Libya," Sushma Swaraj tweeted.

This came after Eastern Libyan Army Commander Khalifa Haftar on Thursday ordered his forces, the Libyan National Army (LNA), to take over Tripoli — the capital of the United Nations-backed government — amid reports of escalating political tension in the country.

The US also said Sunday that it had temporarily withdrawn some of its forces from Libya due to "security conditions on the ground". A small contingent of American troops has been in Libya in recent years helping local forces combat Islamic State and al-Qaida militants, as well as protecting diplomatic facilities.



Libyan National Army members head out of Benghazi to support the troops advancing to Tripoli on Sunday. Reuters

Haftar has been accused of violating agreements by Fayed Sarraj, the Prime Minister of the Tripoli-based UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA).

After years-long civil conflict, Libya currently has no single government. The LNA is backing the Tobruk-based Parliament, which governs the East of Libya, and the GNA controls Libya's western parts from Tripoli.

Even though a deal was signed in 2015 which created the GNA as the legitimate Libyan government, it was not fully implemented due to disagreements with the Tobruk-based Parliament.

Fighting between the LNA and forces backing the GNA was underway Sunday at the international airport, some 24 km from central Tripoli, after Haftar claimed to have seized the area.

— WITH AP INPUTS

### ISRAEL VOTES TOMORROW



Netanyahu had, until three days before elections, refrained from presenting a vision for the West Bank, viewed by Palestinians as the heartland of a future state. Reuters

## Netanyahu promises to annex settlements in West Bank if re-elected

ASSOCIATED PRESS DEAD SEA (JORDAN), APRIL 7

ISRAEL'S LEADER will face a "real problem" if he follows through with his election campaign promise to annex Jewish settlements in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, the Palestinian foreign minister said Sunday.

Riad Malki told *The Associated Press* on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Jordan that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's pledge was likely aimed at rallying his base ahead of Tuesday's elections. He added that Palestinians would "resist" such a policy if carried out.

"If Netanyahu wants to declare Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank, then you know he has to face a real problem, the presence of 4.5 million Palestinians, what to do with them," Malki said, apparently referring to the com-

bined Palestinian population of the occupied West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

In an interview Saturday, Netanyahu was asked why he hadn't annexed some of the larger Jewish settlements in the West Bank during his current term.

"The question you are asking is an interesting question, whether we will move to the next stage and the answer is yes," he said. "We will move to the next stage, the imposing of Israeli sovereignty."

Netanyahu has promoted Jewish settlement expansion in his four terms as PM, but until now refrained from presenting a detailed vision for the West Bank, viewed by Palestinians as the heartland of a future state.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu slammed Netanyahu's annexation pledge as an "irresponsible statement to seek votes".

THE RISE OF THE CANDIDA AURIS FUNGUS EMBODIES A SERIOUS PUBLIC HEALTH THREAT: DRUG-RESISTANT GERMS

## Mysterious infection sweeps the globe under a shroud of secrecy

MATT RICHTEL & ANDREW JACOBS APRIL 7

IN MAY, an elderly man was admitted to the Brooklyn branch of Mount Sinai Hospital for abdominal surgery. A blood test revealed that he was infected with a newly discovered germ as deadly as it was mysterious.

The germ, a fungus called *Candida auris*, preys on people with weakened immune systems, and it is quietly spreading across the globe. Recently *C. auris* reached New York, New Jersey and Illinois, leading the federal Centres for Disease Control and Prevention to add it to a list of germs deemed "urgent threats". The man at Mount Sinai died

after 90 days in the hospital, but *C. auris* did not. Tests showed it was everywhere in his room, so invasive that the hospital needed special cleaning equipment and had to rip out some of the ceiling and floor tiles to eradicate it.

*C. auris* is so tenacious, in part, because it is impervious to the overuse of antibiotics was reducing the effectiveness of drugs that have lengthened life spans by curing bacterial infections once commonly fatal. But lately, there has been an explosion of resistant fungi as well.

"It's an enormous problem," said Matthew Fisher, a professor of fungal epidemiology at Imperial College London. "We depend on being able to treat those patients with antifungals."

Simply put, fungi, just like bacteria, are evolving defences to survive modern medicines. A study the British government funded projects that if policies are not put in place to slow the rise of drug resistance, 10 million people could die worldwide of all such infections in 2050, eclipsing the 8 million expected to die from cancer.

Antibiotics and antifungals are essential to combat infections in people, but antibiotics are also used widely to prevent disease in farm animals, and antifungals are also applied to prevent agricultural plants from rotting. Some



Dr Shawn Lockhart, a fungal disease expert at the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, holds a microscope slide with inactive *Candida auris* collected from an American patient. NYT

scientists cite evidence that rampant use of fungicides on crops is contributing to the surge in drug-resistant fungi infecting humans.

Yet as the problem grows, it is little understood by the public — in part because the very existence of resistant infections is of-

contract *C. auris* died within 90 days, according to the CDC. Yet the world's experts have not nailed down where it came from in the first place. "It is a creature from the black lagoon," said Dr Tom Chiller, who heads the fungal branch at the CDC. "It bubbled up and now it is everywhere."

In late 2015, Dr Johanna Rhodes, an infectious disease expert at Imperial College London, got a panicked call from the Royal Brompton Hospital outside London. *C. auris* had taken root there months earlier, and the hospital couldn't clear it.

"We have no idea where it's coming from. We've never heard of it. It's just spread like wildfire," Rhodes said she was told. She agreed to help the hospital identify the fungus' genetic profile

and clean it from rooms.

It was spreading, but word of it was not. The hospital, a specialty lung and heart centre that draws wealthy patients from the Middle East and around Europe, alerted the British government and told infected patients, but made no public announcement.

This hushed panic is playing out in hospitals around the world. Individual institutions and national, state and local governments have been reluctant to publicise outbreaks of resistant infections, arguing there is no point in scaring patients — or prospective ones.

Dr Silke Schelenz, Royal Brompton's infectious diseases specialist, found the lack of urgency from the government and hospital in the early stages of the outbreak "very, very frustrating". NYT