

ELSEWHERE



Ex-Afghan journalist shot dead in Kabul

KABUL
Unidentified gunmen shot and killed an adviser to the country's Parliament on Saturday, an official said. Nasrat Rahimi, a spokesman for the Interior Ministry, said that Mena Mangal, a cultural adviser and former TV presenter, was killed when she was on her way to work around 7.30 a.m. No one claimed responsibility for the attack. **AP**

'May will clarify plan for resignation within days'

LONDON
British Prime Minister Theresa May is expected to set out her departure plans within days, the leader of backbench lawmakers in her governing Conservative Party said on Saturday. Graham Brady said he expected Ms. May to provide clarity on her exit timetable at a meeting with him on Wednesday. **AFP**

Hong Kong Bill sparks scuffles in Parliament

HONG KONG
Anger over Hong Kong's controversial Bill to allow extraditions to the Chinese mainland boiled over in the city's legislature on Saturday as rival lawmakers, those from the pro-democracy and pro-Beijing camps, scuffled with each other in chaotic scenes. **AFP**

Trump orders tariff hike on remaining Chinese imports

Beijing says talks will continue, but rules out concessions on 'important principles'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump cranked up the heat in a trade battle with China on Friday, ordering a tariff hike on almost all remaining imports from the world's second-biggest economy, but Beijing said talks would continue to resolve the row.

After tweeting that two days of trade talks in Washington had been "candid and constructive", Mr. Trump changed tack and followed through on a threat he had been making for months.

"The President... ordered us to begin the process of raising tariffs on essentially all remaining imports from China, which are valued at approximately \$300 billion," U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said in a statement.

The move came less than 24 hours after Washington increased punitive duties on \$200 billion worth of Chinese imports, raising them to 25% from 10%, days after the Trump administration accused Beijing of reneging on its commitments.

Details on the process for public notice and comment will be posted on Monday, ahead of a final decision on the new tariffs, Mr. Lighthizer said. They were not expected to go into effect for several months.



Heating up: A worker assembling an air conditioner's case at a Haier factory in China's Shandong in 2017. **AP**

China's top trade negotiator, Vice-Premier Liu He, had warned earlier that Beijing "must respond" to any U.S. tariffs. The developments came as two days of talks to resolve the trade battle ended on Friday with no deal, but no immediate breakdown either, offering a glimmer of hope that Washington and Beijing could find a way to avert damage to the global economy.

"Over the course of the past two days, the U.S. and China have held candid and constructive conversations on the status of the trade relationship between both countries," Mr. Trump tweeted. "The relationship

between President Xi (Jinping) and myself remains a very strong one, and conversations into the future will continue."

The tariffs on China "may or may not be removed depending on what happens with respect to future negotiations!"

Three disagreements

Mr. Liu told reporters the talks had been "productive" and said the two sides would meet again in Beijing at an unspecified date, but he warned that China would make no concessions on "important principles".

"Negotiations have not broken down, but rather on the contrary, this is only a normal twist in the negotia-

tions between the two countries, it is inevitable," Mr. Liu said.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Mr. Lighthizer met for about two hours with Mr. Liu on Friday and then headed for the White House to brief Mr. Trump, who had said he was in no hurry to reach a deal, arguing the U.S. was negotiating from a position of strength.

"We have a consensus in lots of areas but to speak frankly there are areas we have differences on, and we believe these concern big principles," Mr. Liu said.

Mr. Liu pointed to three major areas of disagreement: whether to cancel all trade war tariffs when an agreement is reached, the exact size of Chinese purchases of U.S. goods, and a "balanced" agreement text.

"Any country needs its own dignity, so the text must be balanced," Mr. Liu said.

Mr. Liu and his backer Mr. Xi cannot be seen as giving in too much with trade concessions to the U.S. in fear of triggering comparisons to past "unequal treaties" forced on China in the 19th and 20th centuries. "Every country has important principles, and we will not make concessions on matters of principle," Mr. Liu said.

Easter attacks bring Sri Lanka's Tamil leadership together

TNA, TPA say they will stand by 'vulnerable' Muslims

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Two prominent political groups representing Sri Lanka's Tamil minority, in the north-east and the hill country, have decided to work together in the wake of the Easter terror attacks. The decision was taken following a meeting between leaders of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and the Tamil Progressive Alliance (TPA) on Friday.

"Such times warrant such collaboration," said Mano Ganesan, a Cabinet Minister and leader of the TPA, an alliance of three parties representing Malayaha Tamils, living mostly in the Central, Uva and Southern Provinces, and Colombo. Over 2,00,000 people of the nearly million-strong community work in the island's tea estate, earning foreign exchange for the country.

"In addition to old concerns and long-pending demands of our communities, a new challenge has emerged in the country, following the IS-claimed bombing. Addressing this threat is crucial, but Tamil concerns cannot take a back seat," he told *The Hindu* on Saturday.

Three TPA MPs hold ministerial positions in the government. The TNA, which has 14 legislators, is in oppo-



TNA lawmaker M.A. Sumanthiran. **AP**

sition. It has been the main political alliance representing Tamils in the war-hit north and east, demanding a political solution.

Pushed to a corner

The coming together of the two groups foretells a potential regrouping. Iconic hill country leader Savumiamoorthy Thondaman was one of the founder-members of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) that demanded a separate state for Tamils in the 1970s. However, in the past two decades, the political leadership of the two Tamil communities have largely remained apart, focussing on the specific demands of their respective constituencies.

M.A. Sumanthiran, TNA spokesman and Jaffna district parliamentarian, said

that the leaders of both alliances would continue to stand by Muslims, who are vulnerable after the attacks. They would "not fall prey" to attempts by some to drive a wedge between Tamils and Muslims, he added. "At the same time, the TNA and the TPA will look at ways of bringing to the fore the concerns of the Tamils that have now been pushed to a corner," he told *The Hindu*.

Pointing to heightened searches and checks in the north and east following the attacks, Mr. Sumanthiran said security forces appeared to be "relishing" the fact that they can "intimidate and harass Tamils in the guise of enhanced security". "We are not suspects in this instance."

Concurring with him, Mr. Ganesan said the emergency regulations that came into effect after the Easter bombings had given more clout to the security apparatus. "I have already conveyed to President [Maithripala] Sirisena that the focus should be on eradicating the new threat brought by the IS. The people in the north and the east have no appetite for another armed struggle or for separatism. We shouldn't allow the security sector to artificially create panic and fear in those areas," he said.

Baloch separatists target Gwadar hotel, kill guard

5-star hotel in Balochistan attacked

ASSOCIATED PRESS
QUETTA

Four insurgents armed with rifles and grenades attacked a luxury hotel in the south-western coastal town of Gwadar on Saturday, triggering an hours-long shootout in which one hotel guard and all the attackers were killed, officials said.

In a statement, the military said troops quickly responded to the attack on the Pearl Continental hotel and that all the guests were evacuated. The hotel guard was killed as the assailants opened fire with small arms.

4 fighters involved

A Baloch separatist group, the Baloch Liberation Army, claimed responsibility, saying its four fighters were involved. In a statement, the group released pictures of the attackers, who authorities say were killed in the ensuing gun battle.

"All four of the terrorists



The Pearl Continental hotel in Gwadar, Pakistan. **AFP**

have been killed," said a senior security official. The region has been the scene of a low-level insurgency by separatists who demand a greater share of the province's natural gas and mineral resources.

The attack came weeks after Islamabad claimed that a group of militants crossed the border from neighboring Iran and killed 14 security officials when they were on their way to Gwadar in buses. Pakistan at the time blamed a Baloch separatist group, Raji Aajoi Sangar, for the killings.

Houthis begin pullout from Hodeidah

REUTERS
HODEIDAH

Yemen's Houthi movement on Saturday started withdrawing forces from Saleef port in Hodeidah under a UN-sponsored deal that had been stalled for months, a witness said, reviving hopes for peace efforts. The move is yet to be verified by the UN and accepted by the Saudi-led coalition.

UN teams were overseeing the Houthi redeployment in Saleef, used for grain, as other teams headed to the second port of Ras Isa, used for oil, to start implementing the Houthi withdrawal from there, according to the witness.

The UN's Redeployment Coordination Committee has said that the Houthis would make an "initial unilateral redeployment" between May 11 and May 14 from Saleef, Ras Isa and Yemen's main port of Hodeidah.

Nasheed calls for screening of preachers visiting Maldives

Island nation is on high alert since the Sri Lanka bombings

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Mohameed Nasheed, former President of the Maldives, has called for thorough screening of Islamic priests visiting the island nation.

"While we are not certain if Zahran Hashim came to the Maldives in 2016 as a preacher, we should screen well before allowing people to come here posing as sheikhs and preachers," he tweeted on Friday, referring to the alleged mastermind of the Sri Lanka Easter attacks.

Following the incident, and subsequent reports of the suspects' movement in the region, security and intelligence agencies in the neighbourhood have enhanced scrutiny of travellers. Sri Lanka has expelled around 200 clerics for overstating their visas. Clarifying his tweet that was in Dhivehi, the language of Maldivians, Mr. Nasheed told *The*



Maldives ex-President Mohamed Nasheed. **REUTERS**

Hindu: "He [Zahran] might have travelled under another name, but the point is that we should be mindful in allowing preachers."

Earlier, some reports indicated to Hashim's likely travel to the Maldives. However, the Maldives Immigration authorities refuted the claim. An April 24 tweet from their official handle said: "Maldives Immigration can confirm that, based on our records, the Sri Lankan national known as Moulvi Zahran Hashim, involved in the Easter Sunday terrorist

attack in Sri Lanka, has not travelled to Maldives in the past five years or even beyond that."

The Maldives has remained on high alert since the terror attacks shook Sri Lanka and is working on a coordinated response mechanism, involving the military and police, to face any contingency. The National Counter Terrorism Centre in identified 69 individuals who joined foreign wars.

In addition to developing a rehabilitation programme for radicalised individuals, the government is closely monitoring potential links that radicalised individuals might have with Islamist militant groups abroad, according to Male-based official sources. Security forces and Immigration have heightened scrutiny, though authorities have said no imminent threat that has been detected.

U.S. positions Patriot missile off Iran

Missiles, B-52 bombers also arrive

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

The United States is deploying an amphibious assault ship and a Patriot missile battery to bolster an aircraft carrier and B-52 bombers already sent to the Gulf, ratcheting up pressure on Saturday on arch-foe Iran.

In response to alleged threats from Iran, the *USS Arlington*, which transports marines, amphibious vehicles, conventional landing craft and rotary aircraft, and the Patriot air defence system will join the *Abraham Lincoln* carrier group, the Pentagon announced on Friday. The carrier and a B-52 bomber task force were ordered towards the Gulf, as Washington reiterated that intelligence reports suggested Iran was planning some sort of attack in the region.

B-52 bombers arrive

CENTCOM, the U.S. forces for West Asia and Afghanistan, said Friday on Twitter that the B-52 bombers arrived at the area of operations on May 8, without saying where they had landed.



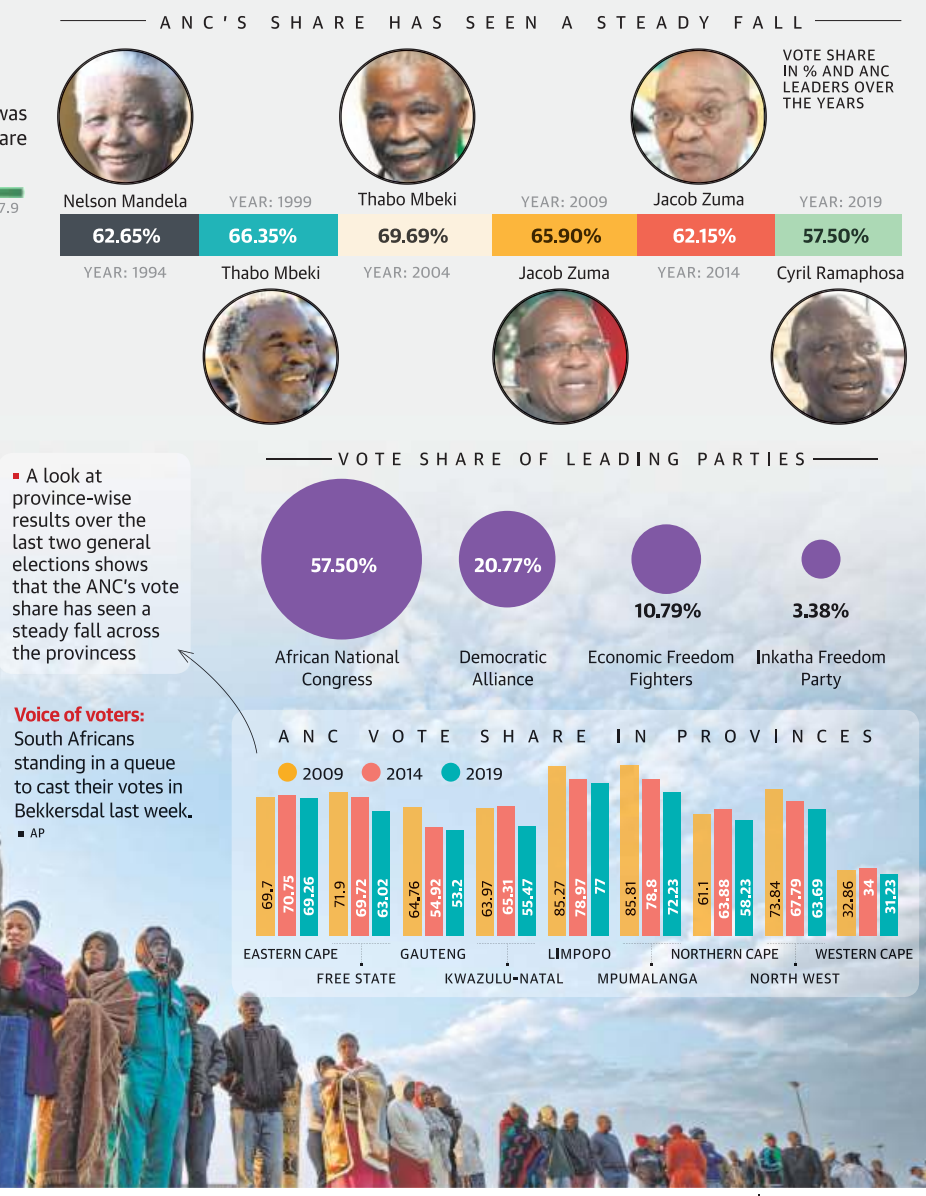
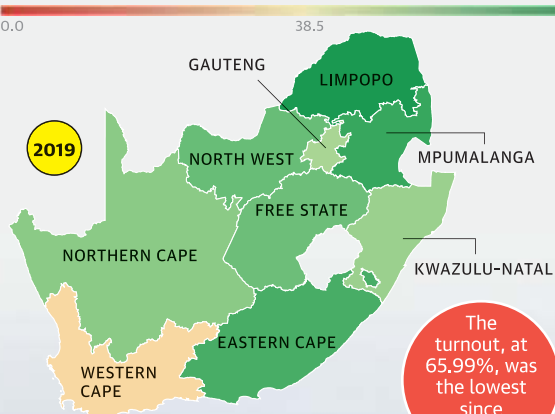
The *USS Arlington*, which has been sent to the Gulf region. **AFP**

National Security Advisor John Bolton has said that the deployment aimed to send a "clear and unmistakable" message to Iran about any attack against the U.S. or its partners in the region. Washington has not elaborated on the alleged threat, drawing criticism that it is overreacting and unnecessarily driving up tensions in the region.

There was no immediate reaction from Tehran, but earlier in the week it shrugged off the carrier deployment. "Bolton's statement is a clumsy use of an out-of-date event for psychological warfare," Iran's Supreme National Security Council spokesman Keyvan Khosravi said.

Reduced majority

South Africa's ruling African National Congress (ANC) won the national election* held on May 8 with 57.5% of the votes. This was the first time since the end of apartheid that the party's vote share fell in a national election below 60%



British-Indian man stuck in Sri Lanka

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON

British Indian Khilan Chandaria is stuck in Sri Lanka after his wife died from a mysterious illness when they were on their honeymoon.

Mr. Chandaria is being barred by the Sri Lankan authorities from leaving the country until an investigation into the death of his wife, Usheila Patel, is concluded. Mr. Chandaria has not been arrested or charged in connection with his wife's death.

The couple got married in London on April 19 and, on reaching Sri Lanka for honeymoon, stayed at a five-star beach resort called Amari in Galle. Both fell ill and vomitted blood after consuming some food and drinks at the hotel. They were rushed to a hospital. Ms. Patel was pronounced dead at a Galle hospital on April 25.

"A post-mortem said she died from dehydration, obviously from vomiting," said Mr. Chandaria, who had also noticed a weird "smell" in their hotel room before the suspected food poisoning.