

ELSEWHERE



Nasheed elected Maldives Speaker
MALE
The Maldives's Parliament on Tuesday overwhelmingly voted Mohamed Nasheed as the Speaker of the house. He received 67 votes from among 87 members. The Speaker in Maldives also has a role in the Judicial Services Commission that regulates the Supreme Court. **AP**

Myanmar hard-line monk summoned
YANGON
Ultra-nationalist monk Wirathu was summoned for reprimand by Myanmar's top religious council, as police pursue him on charges of stirring up unrest. A court issued an arrest warrant for the abbot late on Tuesday under article 124(a) which targets anyone who "excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the Government". **AFP**

Bangladesh police seek death penalty for 16 over girl's killing

She was set on fire after complaining of sexual harassment

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DHAKA

The Bangladesh police on Wednesday sought the death penalty for 16 people accused of killing a school girl, who was burnt to death by her madrasa principal for reporting a sexual harassment case against him, according to a media report.
The 18-year-old girl was set on fire at her school (madrasa) on April 6 by four burqa-clad assailants, days after she complained against principal Siraj-ud-Daula for inappropriately touching her.
The Police Bureau of Investigation submitted the chargesheet in the court of senior judicial magistrate,



A protest in Dhaka against the killing of the girl. **AP**
seeking death sentence for Siraj-ud-Daula, and 15 others accused of murdering the girl. "The court has set tomorrow (Thursday) for the hearing of the case. Soon after, it will be transferred to be processed under the Women and Children Preven-

Iran behind attacks on ships: Bolton

Oil tankers belonging to Saudi Arabia, UAE and Norway were targeted near the Strait of Hormuz



Fixing the blame: An Emirati-flagged bunkering tanker off the coast of Fujairah, UAE, earlier in the month. **AP**

age of four vessels, including two Saudi tankers, near Fujairah emirate, a major bunkering hub just outside the Strait of Hormuz.
Riyadh has accused Tehran of ordering the drone strikes, which were claimed by the Iran-aligned Houthis who have been battling a Saudi-led coalition in Yemen in a four-year conflict seen as a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran.
Iran has denied involve-

ment in either attack.
"I think it is clear these (tanker attacks) were naval mines almost certainly from Iran," Mr. Bolton said. "There is no doubt in anybody's mind in Washington who is responsible for this and I think it's important that the leadership in Iran know that we know."
A UAE bunker barge and a Norwegian-registered oil products tanker were also hit. France has a naval base

in Abu Dhabi. Mr. Bolton said the tanker attacks were connected to the strike on oil pumping stations on the kingdom's East-West pipeline and a rocket attack on the Green Zone in the Iraqi capital Baghdad.
He said there had been a fourth unsuccessful attack on Saudi Arabia's Yanbu port a few days before the tanker operation but that it was unclear if it was linked to the others. Saudi officials were not immediately available to comment.
Iran strongly rejected Mr. Bolton's accusations. "Making such laughable claims... is not strange" coming from the U.S., Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said in a statement on its official website. "Mr. Bolton and other warmongers and chaos seekers should know that the strategic patience, high vigilance and complete defensive readiness of the Islamic Republic of Iran... will prevent the fulfilment of their evil desires for chaos in the region," he added.

'Talks possible if sanctions are lifted'

REUTERS
LONDON

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani signalled on Wednesday that talks with the U.S. might be possible if Washington lifted sanctions, days after U.S. President Donald Trump said a deal with Tehran was conceivable.
Mr. Rouhani said in remarks carried by state television: "Whenever they lift the unjust sanctions and fulfill their commitments and return to the negotiations table, which they left themselves, the door is not closed... But our people judge you by your actions, not your words."
Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi had said on Tuesday that Iran saw no prospect of negotiations with the U.S.

U.S. digs its heels on Iran oil sanctions

No new exemptions after May 2

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

The U.S. has said that there is no change to its position on the import of Iranian oil by other countries. State Department spokesperson Morgan Ortagus reiterated the U.S. stand in response to reports in the Indian media that New Delhi was trying to continue limited imports of Iranian oil which it intended to pay for in rupees.
"...I would just say that the Secretary has been very clear since April 22nd that we are going to zero," Ms. Ortagus told reporters on Tuesday.
"We have stated that there are no new exemptions after May 2nd as it relates to importing Iranian oil. The U.S. position there remains quite firm."

Six-month waiver
India was one of eight countries that had a six-month waiver from sanctions against buying Iranian oil,

which went into effect in early November last year, months after the United States pulled out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), an international deal to curb Iran's nuclear programme. That waiver expired on May 2.
During the press briefing, Ms. Ortagus also said that the Secretary of State Michael Pompeo "will have a very robust discussion on a range of issues".
It is unclear which discussion she was referring to. *The Hindu* had reported that Mr. Pompeo is expected to lead a delegation to New Delhi in the third week of June, which would set the stage for talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S. President Donald Trump in Osaka, Japan, on the sidelines of the G-20 summit on June 28-29.
The State Department did not confirm Mr. Pompeo's New Delhi visit for *The Hindu*.

India removed from currency monitoring list

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON

The U.S. on Tuesday removed India from its currency monitoring list of major trading partners, citing steps being taken by New Delhi that addressed some of the Donald Trump administration's major concerns.
Switzerland is the other nation that was removed from the list.
"India has been removed from the monitoring list in this report, having met only one out of three criteria - a significant bilateral surplus with the United States - for two consecutive reports," the Treasury Department said in its report on macroeconomic policies.

Charging Trump was not an option: Mueller

Special Counsel on the Russia probe makes his first public comments

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

Special Counsel Robert Mueller has said that charging President Donald Trump for obstructing the probe into Russian meddling in the 2016 elections was not an option for his team. "...Under long-standing Department [of Justice] policy, a President cannot be charged with a federal crime while he is in office. That is unconstitutional," Mr. Mueller said.
"...The Constitution requires a process other than the criminal justice system to formally accuse a sitting President of wrongdoing," Mr. Mueller said, presumably referring to Congress which has the power to start impeachment proceeding against the President and the power - which it is currently



Special Counsel Robert Mueller. **APF**

exercising - to investigate the President's activities.

No exoneration
Mr. Mueller also reiterated what the report concludes - that was not enough evidence to exonerate Mr. Trump. Yet the report,

which was partially released in April, had detailed several instances of potential obstruction of justice. "And as set forth in the report, after that investigation, if we had confidence that the President clearly did not commit a crime, we would have said so. We did not, however, make a determination as to whether the President did commit a crime," Mr. Mueller said.
These are Mr. Mueller's first public remarks since his investigation began in 2016, and he said they were to be his last on the subject. "Now, I hope and expect this to be the only time that I will speak to you in this manner. I am making that decision myself. No one has told me whether I can or should testify or speak further about

this matter," Mr. Mueller said, adding that the scope of any testimony to Congress would not exceed what was presented in the report.
The U.S. House of Representatives has been attempting to get Mr. Mueller to testify but that has not happened yet. While Attorney General William Barr, who is Mr. Mueller's boss, has said that he will not prevent Mr. Mueller from testifying, Mr. Trump has left the decision to the Attorney General, although he has pushed back against the idea. "Why does he have to testify? That's ridiculous," Mr. Trump said.
Mr. Mueller, who said he will retire shortly, ended his remarks with a reminder about the probe's findings that Russia had sought to interfere in the elections.

Johnson faces court hearing over 'Brexit lies'

Accused of misleading the public

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Boris Johnson, the frontrunner to become Britain's next Prime Minister, must attend court over allegations that he knowingly lied during the Brexit referendum campaign, a judge announced on Wednesday.
Mr. Johnson will be summoned to appear before a court over allegations of misconduct in public office, Judge Margot Coleman said in a written decision, without specifying the date.
The case is over the claim that Britain sends £350 million (\$440 million) a week to the European Union (EU).
Businessmen Marcus Ball has crowd-funded the private prosecution.
Judge Coleman's decision follows a hearing last week



Boris Johnson **APF**

at Westminster Magistrates Court in London.
The summons application made by Mr. Ball's lawyers alleges that Mr. Johnson "repeatedly lied and misled the British public as to the cost of EU membership" and "knew that such comments were false or misleading".
The maximum penalty for misconduct in public office is life imprisonment.

Violence in Pakistan after Hindu doctor is accused of blasphemy

Veterinarian Ramesh Kumar was arrested on a complaint by a cleric

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KARACHI

Mobs set ablaze shops in Sindh belonging to Hindus after a veterinary doctor from the community allegedly tore pages of a holy book and wrapped medicines in them, according to a report.
The doctor, identified as Ramesh Kumar, was arrested on Monday under the country's strict blasphemy laws after a local cleric filed a police complaint.
Under Pakistan's blasphemy laws, anyone accused of insulting Islam can be sentenced to death.

Shops set on fire
The doctor was taken into custody while angry protesters set fire to a clinic and shops owned by Hindus and burnt tyres on a road in Phuladyon town in Mirpurkhas district in the province, *The Express Tribune* reported. There



A protest in 2011 in Lahore against the blasphemy laws. **APF**

were reports that the protesters also looted some shops.
With the situation spiralling out of control, local authorities called in the paramilitary Rangers

to deal with the mob violence.
Police also registered a case against those engaged in rioting.
"It's an unfortunate incident. We have taken the doctor into custody and are investigating incident," Senior Superintendent of Police Mirpurkhas Javed Baloch said. He said a case has been registered and police have established a picket in the town to deal with any untoward incident.
"The situation is now normal," he said, adding that the police would take action against those who have ransacked properties of the Hindu community. "We have detained some suspects on charges of damaging properties," he added.

The Mirpurkhas Deputy Commissioner said the government would compensate those whose properties were damaged during the violence.

18 killed in Taliban strike near Jam Minaret

Militants shut off telcom towers, cut access to the UNESCO heritage site

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HERAT

Taliban fighters have stormed many security posts providing protection to Afghanistan's historic minaret of Jam, cutting access to the UNESCO World Heritage Site and killing 18 security forces, officials said on Wednesday.
The attack comes less than a week after the revered 12th-century minaret, located in a remote part of the western province of Ghor, was threatened by surging floodwaters.
"The Taliban have captured some checkpoints around the minaret. We had to retreat because more fighting would cause damage



Vulnerable state: Located in an area under Taliban control, the Jam Minaret is the world's second tallest brick tower. **APF**

to the minaret," said Sayed Zia Hussaini, the deputy police chief of Ghor.

Abdul Hai Khatebi, the provincial Governor spokesman, said 15 pro-govern-

ment militias and three policemen had been killed in the attacks, which started on Monday. "The Taliban have shut off telecommunication towers and have cut any access to the area," said Fakhruddin Ariapur, the Ghor province director of information and culture.
On Monday, the government said it had hired about 300 local workers to channel floodwaters away from the tower. The work appeared to have saved the minaret from imminent danger. Located in an area largely under Taliban control, the Jam Minaret is the world's second tallest made of bricks, reaching a height of 65 m.

Pakistan man murders HIV-positive wife

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KARACHI

A Pakistani man killed his HIV-positive wife on Wednesday in southern Pakistan, where hundreds of people have tested positive for the virus in recent weeks.
Police said the murder took place in a village near the epicentre of the outbreak on the outskirts of Larkana city in Pakistan's Sindh province.
The victim tested positive in recent days, according to a local police officer, with her husband accusing her of having an extramarital affair.
"This morning the husband strangled (the victim) with a rope and then hung her from a tree outside his home," said Roshan Ali, a police officer in Shikarpur, adding that the suspect was now in custody.
Health officials say nearly 700 people have tested positive in recent weeks as experts warn of a surge in infection rates due to the use of unsanitary equipment and rampant malpractice.