

## ELSEWHERE



## Canada to ban single-use plastics from 2021

Canada will ban single-use plastics from 2021, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced on Monday, declaring it a "global challenge" to phase out the plastic bags, straws and cutlery. "I am very pleased to announce that as early as 2021, Canada will ban single-use plastics from coast to coast," he said. AFP

## Probe panel submits report to Sirisena

A three-member committee appointed to probe the Easter Sunday attacks in Sri Lanka on Monday submitted its final report to President Maithripala Sirisena. Supreme Court Justice Vijith Malalagoda, who headed the committee, handed over the report to Mr. Sirisena. PTI

## Zardari arrested over fake bank accounts scam

Detention comes after former Pakistan President's bail plea was rejected by High Court; Opposition alleges 'witch-hunt'

MEHMAL SARFRAZ  
LAHORE

Former President and co-chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Asif Ali Zardari was arrested on Monday at his residence in Islamabad by a team of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) for his alleged involvement in a fake bank accounts scam.

Earlier in the day, his plea for bail extension was rejected by the Islamabad High Court. According to sources, the legal team of Mr. Zardari, who is also a Member of the National Assembly, will appeal against this order in the Supreme Court.

Several people are named as accused in the fake bank accounts case. They include Mr. Zardari's sister Faryal Talpur and some of his close associates.

## Money laundering

The case came to the fore in 2015 following an investigation by the Federal Investiga-

tion Agency (FIA). The FIA said fake accounts were used to park ill-gotten wealth, which was later sent out of the country through money laundering channels.

The PPP says the case is based on false evidence and is political in nature.

According to investigative journalist Zahid Gishkori, the fake accounts case involves around PKR 100 billion of black money, allegedly used by Mr. Zardari, his sister Ms. Talpur, their partners and other businessmen. The anti-corruption watchdog has arrested around two dozen accused so far.

A Joint Investigation Team (JIT) recommended 28 corruption references against the accused, and its report was also endorsed by the apex court. The JIT and the NAB are working jointly where they have found details of more than 25,000 transactions linked to over 54 fake accounts.

Mr. Gishkori told *The Hin-*



In the dock: Ex-Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari leaving the Islamabad High Court with daughter Asifa Bhutto-Zardari. •AP

du that it will be a litmus test for the NAB to prove the allegations against the accused in a court of law. "It is like a second Panama case in Pakistan's history where only politicians remain the prime target of accountability institutions, whether it is NAB, JITs or FIA."

He added that intelligence

who adjourned the session amidst protests by the Opposition. Mr. Bhutto-Zardari addressed a press conference later. He called for the resignation of both the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker for acting as an 'extension' of the government instead of being impartial.

## Bilawal's statement

Accusing the government of censoring journalists, social media activists and parliamentarians were being censored by the government, he said: "This isn't *azad* (free) Pakistan, this isn't *naya* (new) Pakistan. This is censored Pakistan!" Mr. Bhutto-Zardari reminded the government that his mother, Benazir Bhutto, had spent her youth in Sukkur jail while his father, Mr. Zardari, had spent more than a decade in prison where he was severely tortured.

Senior journalist Azaz Syed said that the NAB was keen on 'finishing' the politi-

cal Bhutto-Zardari dynasty. "However, the efforts of this anti-corruption agency are neither independent nor clean as it is visibly being used by the powers-that-be in Pakistan," he told *The Hindu*.

Khawaja Asif, senior leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), told *The Hindu* that there was a need to bring the political temperature in the country down if a revival of the economy was the objective. "Without going into the merits of the case, high-profile political arrests – especially when the government is being accused of witch-hunting – will further vitiate the environment."

Opposition leaders condemned the arrest of Mr. Zardari. Leader of the Opposition Shehbaz Sharif said that Mr. Zardari didn't use any delaying tactics and fully cooperated with the NAB while also appearing at all court hearings.

## Declare assets by June 30, says PM Imran

MEHMAL SARFRAZ  
LAHORE

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday warned of legal action against the Pakistanis who do not declare their undisclosed assets by June 30. He said that in the last 10 years, Pakistan's debt had risen from PKR 6,000 billion to PKR 30,000 billion.

"I appeal to you to take advantage of our assets declaration scheme. If we don't pay taxes, we can't move forward and rebuild this country," he said, adding that people have time till June 30 to use this opportunity. After that, he warned, the government will come after those who have hidden their assets.

"[W]e have treaties with other countries that have informed us of Pakistanis with properties and bank accounts in foreign countries; our agencies have information of *benami* accounts and properties."

## China concerned about 'trade protectionism'

Friction with U.S. will be discussed during Modi-Xi meet at SCO, says official

ATUL ANEJA  
BEIJING

China on Monday invited India to join a budding international effort to counter headwinds of "trade protectionism and unilateralism" and brainstorm ways to address "bullying practices of the United States".

In response to question ahead of a meeting of Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) that begins in Bishkek on Thursday, Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Zhang Hanhui said at a press confe-

rence that "trade frictions between China and the United States and the spectre of trade frictions between the United States and India" could become an "important topic" for talks. He added: "Trade protectionism and unilateralism are very much on the rise. How to respond to the bullying practices of the United States... its practices of trade protectionism is an important question."

## Hope for consensus

Mr. Zhang hoped that talks between the two leaders would yield "extensive consensus" to counter trade protectionism and uphold

"justice". He was upbeat that the upcoming dialogue between Mr. Xi and Mr. Modi would "not only enhance bilateral trade (but) also play an important role in promoting global economy".

The talks between the two leaders are likely to be part of broader dialogue between China and other countries at the summit.

The Chinese official also stressed that at a personal level, the two leaders are "good friends". He singled out last year's "very successful informal summit in Wuhan," which has imparted "strategic guidance for the development of China-India

relations, paving the way for stable growth of China-India relations in the long run".

An official source had earlier told *The Hindu* that China was keen to step up preparations for the next informal summit between Mr. Xi and Mr. Modi as a follow-up to the Wuhan enclave. During official discussions, Varanasi has been proposed as a possible venue for the summit.

The rising trade and technology tensions with the U.S. appear have spurred China to seek new allies and attempt forging new rules of international trade and commerce.

## Russian media outlets seek scribe's release

3 leading dailies publish identical front pages to protest against Golunov's arrest

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
MOSCOW

Russian authorities faced unprecedented pushback on Monday against the arrest of an investigative reporter on drugs charges, with independent as well as pro-Kremlin figures urging his release.

Journalist Ivan Golunov was detained on drug charges last week but says he is being punished for his work as an investigative reporter.

As his arrest unleashed a rare show of popular solidarity, the Kremlin said it was important to "admit mistakes" and not repeat them, but also defended its law en-



In solidarity: The front pages of Russia's three major newspapers read: "I'm/we are Ivan Golunov". •AP

forcement agencies. On Monday, three top newspapers *Kommersant*, *Vedomosti* and *RBK* published the same front page with the words "I am/we are Ivan Golunov" in giant letters – a bold act of

defiance in a country where most media toes the Kremlin line. The phrase was drawn from the slogan "I am Charlie" that emerged after the 2015 killing of 12 people at *Charlie Hebdo's* office.

Mr. Golunov, 36, a reporter with Meduza, an independent Russian-language media outlet, was detained last week on allegations that he manufactured and dealt in drugs. He faces up to 20 years in prison, but defence lawyers say drugs were planted on him.

In identical front page statements, the three newspapers said the journalist's arrest amounted to an act of intimidation, and demanded an investigation into the police officers who detained him. The dailies said they did not consider the evidence presented by investigators to be convincing.

## 95 killed in Mali village massacre

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BAMAKO

Nearly 100 people were killed in a gruesome overnight attack on a village in central Mali, officials said on Monday.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility but the massacre, targeting a village inhabited by the Dogon community, bore the hallmarks of tit-for-tat ethnic attacks that have claimed hundreds of lives.

It came less than three weeks after nearly 160 members of the Fulani ethnic group were slaughtered by a group identified as Dogon. "Right now we have 95 dead civilians. The bodies are burned, we are continuing to look for others," said an official in Koundou district.

## Johnson promises tax cuts for the rich as Tory leadership battle begins

Candidates pledge to resolve Brexit issue in three months

REUTERS  
LONDON

Leading Brexit advocate Boris Johnson promised tax cuts for higher earners if he becomes Britain's next Prime Minister as the contest to replace Theresa May – and take charge of the EU divorce – officially kicked off on Monday.

Ms. May stepped down as leader of the ruling Conservative Party on Friday, having failed three times to win Parliament's support for a European Union (EU) divorce deal that was supposed to address Britain's biggest political crisis in a generation.

## Campaign launch

At campaign launches on Monday, several candidates



Ex-British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson. •REUTERS

made their pitches. While all were keen to set out a domestic agenda, it was Brexit that dominated.

Nearly all promised that they could solve the Brexit conundrum – which eluded Ms. May in three years of EU talks – in just three months, between the new leader being chosen at the end of July

and the current exit date of October 31.

"Without Brexit, there will be no Conservative government and maybe no Conservative party," Foreign Minister Jeremy Hunt said at his campaign launch.

"From my conversations with European leaders, it is clear to me there is a deal to be done; they want us to come up with proposals."

Dominic Raab, who quit as Brexit Minister over Ms. May's divorce deal, said he too could get a new agreement but promised that the United Kingdom would leave the EU on October 31, even if that meant reverting to basic World Trade Organization trade terms. "I'm the Brexiteer that you can rely on," he said.

## 'Friendship tree' planted by Trump, Macron dead

France gifted it as a symbolic gesture

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
WASHINGTON

The photo of President Donald Trump and his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron planting an oak tree in the garden of the White House symbolised the friendship shown by the two leaders. But relations between them have since frayed – over issues ranging from Iran to trade – and the tree, a diplomatic source said, did not survive.

Mr. Macron offered the oak to Mr. Trump on the occasion of a state visit to Washington in 2018, and the two shovelled dirt around it. It was a symbolic gesture: the tree came from a northern French forest where 2,000 U.S. Marines died during the First World War.

But a few days later, the tree was nowhere to be seen, having disappeared



President Donald Trump planting the tree in Washington last year. •AFP

into quarantine. "It is a quarantine which is mandatory for any living organism imported into the U.S.," Gerard Araud, then the French Ambassador to the U.S., tweeted, adding that it would be replanted later. But it was never replanted: the tree died during its quarantine, the diplomatic source said.

## 'Iran has accelerated uranium enrichment'

IAEA says production rate is increasing

REUTERS  
TEHRAN/VIENNA

Iran has followed through on a threat to accelerate its production of enriched uranium, the head of the UN atomic watchdog said on Monday, departing from his usual guarded language to say he was worried about increasing tension.

IAEA chief Yukiya Amano said Iran was now producing more enriched uranium than before, but it was not clear when it might reach stockpile limits set in the pact. "Yes, (the) production rate is increasing," he told a news conference when asked if enriched uranium production had accelerated since the agency's last quarterly report, which found Iran compliant with the nuclear deal as of May 20. He declined to say how much it had increased by.

On Monday, Germany's Foreign Minister Heiko Maas became the most senior Western official to visit Iran since the new war of words erupted last month between Washington and Tehran. "The situation in the region here is highly explosive and extremely serious," Mr. Maas told a news conference alongside Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

Mr. Zarif blamed the U.S. for the escalation. He said talks with Mr. Maas were "frank and serious". But he added: "Tehran will cooperate with EU signatories of the deal to save it."

"We want to fulfil our obligations," Mr. Maas said during his joint news conference with Mr. Zarif. "We cannot work miracles, but we will try to avert a failure" of the nuclear deal.

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