

ELSEWHERE

**'No need to resume drills with S. Korea'**

SEUL
Acting U.S. Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan said on Sunday that for now it was not necessary to resume military exercises with South Korea that were suspended last year to support diplomatic efforts with North Korea. He said he had been told by military leaders that troops on the Korean peninsula had the required military readiness. REUTERS

Sri Lanka to hold election later this year

COLOMBO
The presidential elections in Sri Lanka would be held between November 15 and December 7, Election Commission Chairman Mahinda Deshapriya has said, clarifying that according to constitutional provisions, the polls must be held one month before the end of the current President's term. PTI

China defends Tiananmen crackdown

Defence Minister says the country has enjoyed stability and development due to the govt.'s action

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SINGAPORE

China on Sunday defended the bloody Tiananmen crackdown on student protesters in a rare public acknowledgement of the event, days before its 30th anniversary, saying it was the "correct" policy.

After seven weeks of protests by students and workers, soldiers and tanks chased and killed demonstrators and onlookers in the streets leading to Beijing's Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989.

Hundreds, or possibly more than 1,000, were killed, although the precise number of deaths remains unknown.

"That incident was a political turbulence and the central government took measures to stop the turbulence which is a correct policy," Chinese Defence Minister General Wei Fenghe told a regional security forum in Singapore.

Gen. Wei asked why people still say that China "did



Tanks and soldiers guarding the Chang'an Avenue, which leads to Tiananmen Square in Beijing, on June 6, 1989, two days after the crackdown; right, Defence Minister Wei Fenghe. •AFP



not handle the incident properly". "The 30 years have proven that China has undergone major changes," he said, adding that because of the government's action at that time "China has enjoyed stability and development".

Inside China, an army of online censors have scrubbed clean social media, removing articles, memes, hashtags or photos alluding to the Tiananmen crackdown.

Discussions of the 1989

pro-democracy protests and their brutal suppression are strictly taboo, and authorities have rounded up or warned activists, lawyers and journalists ahead of the anniversary each year.

Warning to U.S.

In a wide-ranging speech that came a day after acting U.S. Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan addressed the same forum, Gen. Wei vowed that China will not be bullied by the United States,

issuing a combative defence of its policies on Taiwan, the South China Sea and the restive region of Xinjiang.

China will not renounce the use of force in the reunification of self-ruled Taiwan, he said, calling it "very dangerous" to underestimate Beijing's will. "We will strive for the process of peaceful reunification with utmost sincerity and greatest efforts but we make no promise to renounce the use of force," he said.

Twitter issues apology for blocking users

REUTERS
SHANGHAI

Twitter apologised on Saturday for suspending accounts critical of Chinese government policy, days ahead of the 30th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square crackdown.

In a statement, Twitter said "a number of accounts" had been suspended as part of efforts to target accounts engaging in "platform manipulation... Some of these were involved in commentary about China. These accounts were not mass reported by the Chinese authorities — this was a routine action on our part".

Such actions sometimes "catch false positives," it added. It said it was working to "ensure we overturn any errors".

Walk away if you don't get fair deal on Brexit: Trump

President speaks ahead of U.K. visit

REUTERS
LONDON

U.S. President Donald Trump said Britain should refuse to pay a \$50 billion European Union divorce bill and "walk away" from Brexit talks if Brussels does not give ground.

Mr. Trump told *The Sunday Times* newspaper ahead of a state visit to Britain, which starts on Monday, that Britain's next leader should send Nigel Farage to conduct EU talks.

Once Britain leaves the EU, which Mr. Trump said must happen this year, then he would go "all out" to agree a trade deal. "They've got to get it done," he said in the *Sunday Times* interview. "They have got to get the deal closed."

British Prime Minister Theresa May will step down shortly after this week's Trump visit. Mr. Trump said her successor should pursue a "no-deal" Brexit if he or she could not get more concessions from Europe by



U.S. President Donald Trump and British Prime Minister Theresa May. •AP

the end of October, when Britain is due to leave.

"If they don't get what they want, I would walk away," he said. "If you don't get a fair deal, you walk away."

Mr. Trump said the U.S. could work "very, very quickly" on a trade deal if Britain was not constrained by a transition period agreed with Brussels. He also said that it was a mistake for the Conservatives not to involve Mr. Farage, the Brexit Party leader, in negotiations with Brussels after his success in European Parliament elections.

Suspended police chief blames Sirisena over terror attacks

Says his agency was asked to stop inquiry against Islamists

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
COLOMBO

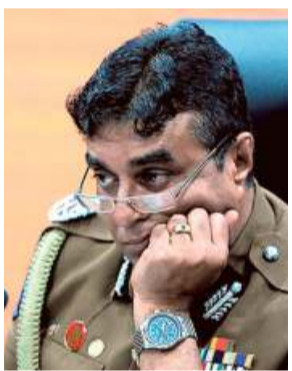
Sri Lanka's suspended police chief has petitioned the Supreme Court, accusing President Maithripala Sirisena of failing to prevent the Easter bombings that killed 258 people.

In a 20-page complaint, Inspector-General Pujith Jayasundara disclosed serious communication gaps between intelligence agencies and security arms of the government, all which fall under Mr. Sirisena.

Jayasundara's petition

In the petition submitted to court last week, Mr. Jayasundara said the country's premier spy agency, the State Intelligence Service (SIS), ordered him last year to stop ongoing police investigations into Islamic militants.

The SIS, which reports directly to Mr. Sirisena, wanted the police Terrorist Investigation Department to stop all inquiries into extremist Muslim factions, including



Sri Lanka's ex-police chief Pujith Jayasundara. •AFP

the National Thowtheeth Jama'ath (NTJ), which was blamed for the Easter Sunday bombings.

Mr. Jayasundara said the head of the SIS, Nilantha Jayawardena, did not take seriously the intelligence shared by neighbouring India which warned of an impending attack by the NTJ.

Mr. Jayasundara said despite the SIS not sharing information warnings with the police department, he had initiated action to alert his

senior men, but he had no input from the main spy agency.

Pinning responsibility

Mr. Sirisena suspended Mr. Jayasundara after he refused to accept responsibility for the deadly attacks. The Attorney General has asked for a full bench of the apex court to decide the case.

Mr. Jayasundara said he was offered a diplomatic post if he took the fall and stepped down, but he refused as he said he was not responsible for the catastrophic intelligence failure.

He said he had been sidelined by the President since a political rift between the President and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe emerged in October.

Mr. Jayasundara's petition came days after Mr. Sirisena publicly rebuked another intelligence official, Sisira Mendis, after he told a parliamentary panel that the Easter suicide bombings could have been avoided.

No talks until U.S. changes behaviour: Iran

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TEHRAN

Tehran on Sunday ruled out talks with Washington unless it changes its "general behaviour", after U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said his country was ready for negotiations.

"The change of the general behaviour and actions of the United States of America regarding the Iranian nation is the criterion" required for any talks to take place, said Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran ignores word games and the use of new language to express secret aims," said Mr. Mousavi.

Mr. Pompeo appeared to soften the U.S. stance somewhat on Sunday. "We are prepared to engage in a conversation with no preconditions," he said. But he appeared to immediately back-pedal, stating that the U.S. was "certainly prepared to have (a) conversation when the Iranians will prove they are behaving as a normal nation."

Easter attacks may have swept aside these struggles for justice in Sri Lanka

Hope has faded for those affected by wartime crimes like disappearances

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

The enormity of Sri Lanka's Easter bombings was pretty clear by the end April 21. At least 250 lives had been lost and the island was jolted into realising that its relative post-war peace was far from secure.

Over a month since, as Sri Lankans grapple with lingering fear and get used to heightened security all around, some worry that the attacks could have had an impact deeper than apparent.

For those pushing for accountability in cases of wartime disappearances and murders, the prospect of justice has further paled.

According to Sandya Eknaligoda, wife of dissident cartoonist Prageeth Eknaligoda who was forcibly disappeared about a decade ago, many struggles for justice have been "swept aside or marginalised" after the Easter Sunday bombings.

Imminent change

Pointing to an "imminent political change", she said: "Gotabaya [Rajapaksa ex-Defence Secretary] is planning to contest presidential elections. Some military personnel accused of crimes may want to hinder progress in those cases [linked to military] as they feel they can en-

joy impunity. Rule of law and justice will be even more uncertain in future."

The recent reinstatement of military intelligence officer Prabath Bulathwatte, accused of carrying out targeted attacks against high-profile journalists, has amplified apprehensions. Named as a key suspect, Mr. Bulathwatte, arrested in 2017, was out on bail before he was re-inducted into a team probing the Easter bombings.

The apparent impunity, activists fear, is not confined to war-era military officers linked to the high-profile cases. The presidential pardon for reactionary monk Gnanasara Thero, weeks after the Easter attacks, sparked similar concern.

Last summer, the controversial monk — accused of instigating anti-Muslim violence in the past — was convicted for contempt of court. He had stormed the courtroom and openly threatened Ms. Eknaligoda in January 2016, when a magistrate court was hearing a case of her disappeared husband.

In her view, the pardon is a "serious blow" to the judiciary and the administration of justice. "It is a rejection of rule of law and not what we expected when we advocated for 'good governance'."



Sandya Eknaligoda, wife of Prageeth Eknaligoda. •AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

she said, referring to the central promise made by President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, before their coalition rose to power, unseating Mahinda Rajapaksa from office in 2015. The other key promise was their pledge to probe high-profile murders and disappearances during the Rajapaksa regime.

On its part, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) made "significant progress" in many of the cases, said a top official source familiar with the investigations. The "complete" file on the 2008 abduction of investigative journalist Keith Noyzahr was submitted to the

Attorney General's department almost a year ago. More recently, the probe findings of the abduction of 11 youth in 2008-09 were handed over to the AG's department.

'No progress'

"So much [of evidence] came out in the investigation, but nothing progressed beyond a point," said Ayesha Thajudeen, sister of rugby star Wasim Thajudeen, whose body was found in his car in 2012, fully charred. The case drew much attention, especially since the probe pointed to Mr. Rajapaksa's family members having had an alleged role in the murder — a charge they squarely denied.

Last week, the Colombo High Court issued summons on former Senior DIG Anura Senanayake linked to the case. Ms. Thajudeen said: "I don't know what will come of it. The CID has worked very hard on this case. Our family went through a lot... dealing with our brother's body being exhumed, for the sake of justice. They say justice delayed is justice denied," adding that the current situation gave little hope. "Elections are due this year. Maybe leaders will yet again promise justice for my brother's murder," she said.

Harris' speech interrupted by protester

Activist Aidan Cook grabs microphone from the presidential candidate

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON

Indian-American Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris was interrupted on stage by a protester, who grabbed the microphone from her hand while she was answering a question on equal pay at an event in San Francisco.

Approximately 10 minutes into her speech at MoveOn's Big Ideas Forum on Saturday, Ms. Harris was asked about her proposal to address the gender pay gap by moderator Stephanie Valencia when she was ap-

proached by a tall man wearing a press badge who jumped on the stage, the CNN reported.

Ms. Harris appeared puzzled but remained calm as the protester grabbed the mic from her hand, it said.

Calling attention

While taking the microphone, the protester, identified as animal rights activist Aidan Cook, 24, said he wanted her attention for a "much bigger idea" than the gender gap she had been speaking about.

"We were protesting just a



Presidential candidate Kamala Harris. •AFP

few minutes ago asking for your attention to a much bigger idea...." Mr. Cook said, as

the moderator tried to intervene.

Ms. Harris calmly walked away from the protester as the security staff and some other people, including Ms. Harris's husband Douglas Emhoff, managed to remove the protester from the event.

No charge was imposed on Mr. Cook for his action. After Mr. Cook's removal, Ms. Harris returned to the stage and continued her speech. Meanwhile, MoveOn, the liberal advocacy group behind the event, have said they "severely regret" the security failing.

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