

ELSEWHERE



U.S. peace plan is a great betrayal: Khamenei

TEHRAN
Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Wednesday slammed the U.S.'s West Asia plan for peace between the Israelis and Palestinians as a "great betrayal of the Islamic world", and warned Gulf rivals not to back it. AFP

Sri Lanka proposes new law against fake news

COLOMBO
Sri Lanka's government will introduce five-year jail terms for those caught spreading fake news and hate speech on social media, the government said on Wednesday, following a surge in online vitriol and disinformation after the Easter suicide attacks. AFP

Sudan crackdown toll rises to 101

Protesters say they hold the militias of the military council responsible for the massacre

REUTERS
KHARTOUM

Sudan's military rulers offered to resume talks with Opposition groups on Wednesday, two days after security forces mounted a deadly raid on a protest camp, but the Opposition rejected the invitation.

Medics linked to the Opposition said the death toll from Monday's operation and subsequent unrest had risen to 101 and that it was expected to increase further. No official casualty figures have been released.

Fight for leadership

The raid, which followed weeks of wrangling between the ruling military council and Opposition groups over who should lead Sudan's transition to democracy, marked the worst outbreak of violence since the Army ousted President Omar al-Bashir in April after months



Protests go on: Sudanese men setting up a barricade in Khartoum on Wednesday. •REUTERS

of protests against his rule.

The Transitional Military Council cancelled all agreements it had reached with the Opposition immediately after the raid but on Wednesday it rowed back amid mounting criticism. "We in the military council extend our hand for negotiations without shackles except the

interests of the homeland," its head, Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, said.

But a Sudanese alliance of protesters and Opposition groups rejected the offer, saying the military could not be trusted. "Today the council invited us to dialogue and at the same time it is imposing fear on citizens in the

streets," said Madani Abbas Madani, a leader of the Declaration of Freedom and Change Forces. Mr. Madani said Lieutenant General Burhan's invitation had come before the arrest of one of the Opposition alliance members, Yasir Arman.

Bodies pulled out of Nile
Opposition medics said that 40 dead bodies had been pulled out of the Nile on Tuesday and taken to an unknown destination by pick-up trucks belonging to the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. That brings the total death toll from the recent violence to 101, the medics said. The mood in the capital Khartoum remained tense on Wednesday, with demonstrators blocking streets in several districts. Gunfire rang out in the distance.

The deputy head of the military council, General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo,

commonly known as Hemedti, said in a televised speech that it had launched "an urgent and transparent investigation" into the recent violence. The military has denied trying to clear the sit-in protest outside the Defence Ministry on Monday.

Saudi Arabia, which has close ties to Sudan's military council, said on Wednesday it was watching developments with great concern and called for more dialogue. U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton said in a Twitter post that Monday's violence by Sudan's security forces was "abhorrent" and demanded that the council facilitate moves towards a civilian-led government.

The main protest organiser, the Sudanese Professionals Association, has called for an international committee to investigate Monday's deaths in what it branded a "massacre".

China launches its first sea-based space rocket

It was fired from a ship in Yellow Sea

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

China launched a space rocket from sea for the first time on Wednesday, its space agency announced, the latest step in Beijing's push to become a major space power.

China now spends more than Russia and Japan on its civil and military space programmes – unveiling ambitious plans for missions to the moon and beyond in the coming decade.

2 experimental satellites

A Long March 11 rocket was launched from a ship in the Yellow Sea just after midday, the China National Space Administration said in a statement. "This is the first time that China has... (tested a) launch vehicle at sea," it added.

The rocket carried two experimental satellites and



A Long March 11 carrier rocket taking off on Wednesday. •REUTERS

five commercial ones.

The test marks another win for Beijing's space programme.

Earlier this year, China became the first nation to land a rover on the far side of the moon. It also unveiled ambitious plans to build a research base on the lunar surface, send a probe to Mars and build a space station in Earth orbit.

Hong Kong vigil marks crackdown on Tiananmen Square protests

Demonstrators hold up candles and placards

REUTERS
HONG KONG/BEIJING

Tens of thousands joined a sombre candle-light vigil in Hong Kong on Tuesday to mark the 30th anniversary of Chinese troops opening fire on protesters in and around Tiananmen Square.

Demonstrators gathered in the financial hub's Victoria Park, holding up candles and placards as others rallied next to a replica of the Goddess of Democracy statue, which was erected in Tiananmen Square during the 1989 demonstrations.

As tens of thousands thronged Hong Kong for the



A quiet event: A demonstration in Hong Kong on Tuesday to mark the crackdown on Tiananmen Square protests. •NYT

annual vigil, censors at Chinese Internet companies said tools to block content related to the crackdown

had reached unprecedented levels of accuracy. Police authorities put the turnout in Hong Kong at 37,000.

Pakistan military agrees to rare budget cut

REUTERS
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's military has agreed in a rare move to cut its budget for a year to help ease the country's "critical financial situation", Prime Minister Imran Khan said.

Pakistan has struck an agreement in principle with the International Monetary Fund for a \$6 billion loan but Islamabad is expected to put in place measures to rein in a ballooning fiscal and current account deficits to get access to the funds.

Pakistan's *de facto* finance chief, Hafeez Shaikh, on June 11 is due to announce spending plans for the financial year beginning in July.

Mr. Khan tweeted on Tuesday that he appreciated the military's "unprecedented voluntary initiative of stringent cuts in their defence expenditures" for next financial year because of the country's "critical financial situation". This will allow money to be spent on the development of the tribal regions and the Balochistan province, he added.

Mr. Khan did not say by how much defence spending would be trimmed.

A military spokesman tweeted that the "voluntary cut" would not be at the expense of security. "We shall (maintain) effective response potential to all threats," he said.

WWII veteran parachutes into Normandy, marks D-Day anniversary

Tom Rice, 97, jumps into the area he landed in 75 years ago

ASSOCIATED PRESS
CARENTAN

Parachutists jumped over Normandy again, just as soldiers did 75 years ago for D-Day – but this time without being shot at.

Engines throbbing, C-47 transport planes dropped group after group of parachutists, a couple of hundred in all – including 97-year-old D-Day veteran Tom Rice. "It went perfect, perfect jump," Mr. Rice said after his jump. "I feel great. I'd go up and do it all again."

The jumpers were honouring the airborne soldiers who descended into gunfire and death ahead of



Tom Rice, front, taking part in a parachute drop over Carentan on Wednesday. •AFP

the June 6, 1944, seaborne invasion. The landing zone for Wednesday's operation

was fields of wildflowers outside Carentan, one of the objectives of the thousands of paratroopers who entered occupied France.

Mr. Rice, of San Diego, jumped into roughly the same area he landed in on D-Day. He said it was dark when he touched down in 1944 and he can't be sure exactly where he was.

Other parachutists jumped with Second World War souvenirs, some carrying items their grandfathers took into battle. Many spectators wore war-era uniforms, and music of the time played over loudspeakers.

Xi begins Russia visit, meets 'best friend' Putin

'We would raise ties to a higher level'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MOSCOW

Chinese President Xi Jinping began a three-day visit to "best friend" Vladimir Putin on Wednesday with a touch of panda diplomacy and a raft of new Russian-Chinese business contracts.

"President Putin is for me a best friend," Mr. Xi told journalists during a joint statement following the meeting. "We decided that we would raise our bilateral relations to a new, higher level – increasing our mutual support and assistance, and promote our relations in a new era," he said.

Mr. Putin thanked his Chinese counterpart for an earlier loan of two pandas that are being housed at the Moscow Zoo.



Chinese President Xi Jinping with Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. •AFP

Major Russian and Chinese companies meanwhile signed cooperation agreements. China's Alibaba, Russian mobile phone operator Megafon, Internet group Mail.ru and the Russian sovereign investment fund RDIF closed a deal on a joint e-commerce venture.

YouTube to ban racist, supremacist videos

Move comes after call for regulation

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

YouTube announced on Wednesday that it would ban videos promoting or glorifying racism and discrimination as well as those denying well-documented violent events, like the Holocaust or the Sandy Hook elementary school shooting.

The announcement by the video-sharing platform was the latest of a series of technology industry moves to filter out hateful and violent content, which have spurred calls for tougher regulation. "YouTube has always had rules of the road, including a long-standing policy against hate speech," said the company.

"Today, we're taking another step in our hate

speech policy by specifically prohibiting videos alleging that a group is superior in order to justify discrimination, segregation or exclusion based on qualities like age, gender, race, caste, religion, sexual orientation or veteran status."

The move comes after a call by world leaders in Paris last month to curb extremism online, following revelations about the livestreaming of a mosque massacre in New Zealand.

YouTube and other platforms have also been seen as havens for conspiracy theorists denying Holocaust or the September 11 attacks.

The latest move is likely to eliminate numerous "channels" that use the platform for monetisation.

Australian police raid TV channel's office

REUTERS
SYDNEY

Australian police raided the office of the national broadcaster on Wednesday over allegations that it had published classified material, the second raid on a media outlet in two days, prompting complaints of assaults on press freedom.

The Australian Federal Police said its officers carried out a search warrant at the head office of the government-funded Australian Broadcasting Corp. (ABC) in Sydney.

The ABC said the raid was over its 2017 reports about alleged misconduct by Australian troops in Afghanistan, while News Corp said the raid at an editor's home on Tuesday related to a 2018 report about plans for surveillance of Australians' emails, messages and bank records.

High heels necessary for women at work places: Japan Minister

Remarks came in response to a petition against the practice

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TOKYO

Japan's Health and Labour Minister has defended work-places that require women to wear high heels to work, arguing that it is "necessary and appropriate" after a petition was filed against the practice.

The remark came when Takumi Nemoto was asked to comment on a petition by a group of women who want the government to ban work-places from requiring women job seekers and employees to wear high heels.

Occupational necessity

"It is socially accepted as something that falls within the realm of being occupationally necessary and appropriate," Mr. Nemoto told a legislative committee on Wednesday.



Japan's Health Minister Takumi Nemoto. •REUTERS

The petition was submitted to the Labour Ministry on Tuesday, and the campaign has been dubbed #Ku-Too, a play on words from the Japanese word *kutsu* – meaning shoes – and *kutsuu* – meaning "pain", and a reference to the global #Me-Too movement against sexual abuse.

The movement was launched by actor and free-

lance writer Yumi Ishikawa and quickly won support from thousands of people online. Campaigners say wearing high heels is seen as near-obligatory when job hunting or working at many Japanese companies. Some campaigners describe high heels as akin to modern foot-binding while others have urged a broader loosening of dress codes in the Japanese workplace, where business suits for men are ubiquitous.

In 2015, the director of the prestigious Cannes Film Festival apologised after a controversy blew up over women being denied access to the red carpet for not wearing high heels.

However, Cannes kept the dress code, despite a protest by Hollywood superstar Julia Roberts who went barefoot the next year.

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