

# 17 THE WORLD



## BORIS THROWS PUNCHES AHEAD OF DEBATE

Ahead of a televised debate, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson took a pugilistic approach, stepping into a boxing ring in Manchester and throwing punches for the cameras. Suddenly wary of sending the wrong message, however, Johnson paused to explain to the attending media: "I don't want to be too aggressive here. This is more therapeutic boxing than aggressive boxing. This is boxing as therapy."

### TOP OF THE WORLD



Jeffrey Epstein

### US Two jail workers charged in Epstein suicide

New York: Two federal workers who were on duty the night Jeffrey Epstein killed himself in a Manhattan jail were charged on Tuesday in connection with their alleged failure to check on him every half-hour. The two federal Bureau of Prisons employees were expected to appear in US District Court in Manhattan. A person briefed on the case had said early on Tuesday that the two federal workers had already been arrested, but others said later the arrests had not yet been carried out.

### IRAN Three killed as unrest shows no signs of ending

Tehran: Three security personnel have been killed by "rioters" in Iran, the latest deaths in protests that showed no sign of subsiding on Tuesday despite a wave of arrests and an internet shutdown. The deaths take to at least five the number of people confirmed to have been killed in the nationwide demonstrations that erupted on Friday against a shock decision to impose petrol price hikes. The situation on the streets remains unclear largely due to the government-imposed internet outage.

### MALAYSIA Men caned for gay sex under Islamic law

Kuala Lumpur: Four Malaysian men have been caned for having gay sex in violation of Islamic laws, with activists Tuesday condemning "vicious punishments" they said highlighted a crackdown on the LGBT community. Rights group say there is a worsening climate for gays in the Muslim-majority country, where authorities have maintained a colonial-era ban on sodomy and mete out harsh physical punishments for same-sex relations. The men, aged 26 to 37, received six strokes of the cane each in a prison outside Kuala Lumpur.

### MALI 24 soldiers and 17 jihadists die in clashes

Bamako: Twenty-four Malian soldiers and 17 jihadists fighters were killed Monday in clashes in the east, the army said, as security in the nation deteriorates further. Mali and Niger forces were carrying out a joint operation when a patrol was attacked by "terrorists" near the town of Tabankort, the army said on social media. According to the military the total toll was "24 dead, 29 injured and material damage" while 17 of the jihadists were killed and a hundred more suspects captured. The prisoners are in the hands of Niger soldiers, the statement said.

### DAY 3 OF STANDOFF AT UNIVERSITY

# Over 1,100 protesters arrested, Hong Kong leader calls for peaceful resolution



Protesters abseil onto a highway and escape before being forced to surrender during a siege of the campus in Hong Kong; (right) other protesters walk out to surrender. Reuters



## China appoints new police chief who called on public to condemn the agitators; about 600 protesters have left campus of besieged university

AGENCIES HONG KONG, NOVEMBER 19

ABOUT 100 protesters remained holed up inside a Hong Kong university on Tuesday evening, after a three-day standoff between the students and the police turned a prestigious institution into a battlefield and ended with hundreds of young people behind bars.

Police have arrested about 1,100 people in the past day on charges including rioting and possession of offensive weapons, they said. Heavily armed officers surrounded the school on Sunday and gave the protesters few options but to surrender and face arrest.

Nevertheless, a number of students managed a daring escape, rappelling from a nearby bridge to be whisked away by waiting motorbike drivers. Others failed in an attempt to

**“If the protesters are coming out in a peaceful manner... then there is no situation when that sort of violence would happen”**

— CARRIE LAM HONG KONG LEADER

flee through a sewage pipe.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong's embattled leader Carrie Lam said on Tuesday she hoped a standoff between police and a hold-out group of anti-government protesters at a university could be resolved and she had told police to handle it humanely. About 100 protesters remained in the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Some 280 injured were taken to hospitals on Tuesday, the Hospital Authority said.

Lam spoke shortly after the

**“We keep trying to think how to escape, but every time we pick a spot we see many police nearby... But if we give up, we're finished”**

— MARCUS A PROTESTER

city's new police chief urged the support of all citizens to end more than five months of unrest that was triggered by fears that China's central government is stifling the city's special autonomy and freedoms.

Lam said her government was very much on the "reactive side" in dealing with the protests but she did not rule out more violence even as she urged peace.

"If the protesters are coming out in a peaceful manner... then there is no situation when that

sort of violence would happen," she told a press briefing.

However, police would have to take "necessary action" if the situation changed, she said. Lam said she had been shocked that campuses had been turned into "weapons factories".

On the sprawling Polytechnic campus, a sense of despair prevailed amid the shriek of fire alarms on Tuesday afternoon. In the campus central square, a giant "SOS" call for help was spelled out in pink, blue and yellow bath towels. Lam said 600 protesters had left the campus, including 200 below the age of 18.

On Tuesday, about a dozen protesters tried to flee through the university's sewerage system. A Reuters witness who saw them lower themselves into a tunnel wearing gas masks and plastic sheets to cover their bodies. They were not able to escape and had to climb back out of the tunnel.

### BEIJING DISPUTES RULING ON MASKS



Reuters/Julie

**SOLE AUTHORITY** China insisted it alone held the authority to rule on constitutional matters and condemned a decision by the high court to overturn a ban on face masks

**NPC STANCE** Zang Tiewei, a spokesman of the National People's Congress, said only the legislature had the right to rule on whether a law is in accordance with Basic Law

**COLONIAL LEGISLATION** The ban on face-covering came into force in October, when the city's leader invoked colonial-era legislation for the first time in over 50 years

**HIT TO GOVERNANCE** Zang further said the ruling had "severely weakened the governance" of Hong Kong chief executive Carrie Lam and the city government

## Sweden drops Assange rape inquiry after nearly 10 years

REUTERS STOCKHOLM, NOVEMBER 19

A SWEDISH prosecutor dropped a rape investigation against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, ending the near decade-old case that had sent the anti-secrecy campaigner into hiding in London's Ecuadorian embassy to avoid extradition.

Although the prosecutor's decision can be appealed, it probably closes the case, which was launched in 2010. The accuser's lawyer said she was studying whether to appeal it.

Assange skipped bail in Britain to avoid possible extradition and took refuge in the embassy in 2012. He was dragged out by police in April this year, and is now in jail fighting extradition to the United States on computer hacking and espionage charges.

While Assange was in the embassy, the statute of limitations ran out on investigating all but one of several Swedish sex



Julian Assange

crime complaints originally filed by two women. Deputy Chief Prosecutor Eva-Marie Persson reopened the remaining case after Assange left the embassy, but she said on Tuesday the passage of time meant there was not enough evidence to indict Assange.

"After conducting a comprehensive assessment of what has emerged during the course of the preliminary investigation I then make the assessment that the evidence is not strong enough to form the basis for filing an indictment," she told a news conference. "Nine years have passed. Time is a player in this decision."

Assange, a 48-year-old Australian, has repeatedly denied the sex crime allegations, calling them part of a plot to discredit him.

"Let us now focus on the threat Mr Assange has been warning about for years: the beligerent prosecution of the United States and the threat it poses to the First Amendment," WikiLeaks editor-in-chief, Kristinn Hrafnsson, said in a statement.

Assange's Swedish lawyer, Per Samuelson, said as far as he was aware British lawyers had not yet been able to contact Assange in jail to inform him of the Swedish decision.

"This is the end of Assange's association with the Swedish justice system," Samuelson said. "But he is not happy with the way he's been treated. He lost faith in the Swedish justice system years ago."

## In shift, US declares Israeli settlements in West Bank do not violate international law

LARA JAKES & DAVID M HALBFINGER WASHINGTON, NOVEMBER 19

THE TRUMP administration declared on Monday that the United States does not consider Israeli settlements in the West Bank a violation of international law, reversing four decades of American policy and removing what has been an important barrier to annexation of Palestinian territory.

The announcement by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was the latest political gift from the Trump administration to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has vowed in two elections this year to push for the annexation of the West Bank.

Pompeo said that ruling "hasn't advanced the cause of peace." "We've recognized the reality on the ground," he told reporters at the State Department. Netanyahu praised the deci-

### EXPLAINED US move at odds with allies, global bodies

GLOBAL BODIES such as the European Union, United Nations and Red Cross have rejected the Trump administration's position on Israeli settlements, saying they remain in breach of international law. The move also puts the US at odds with almost every country as well as all UN Security Council resolutions on the issue, as per reports. While experts said the US position could provide political aid to Netanyahu, it is unlikely to cause significant changes to the global approach towards Israel, which will likely continue to be that the West Bank is considered occupied territory.

and said it reflected "historical truth - that the Jewish people are not foreign colonialists in Judea and Samaria," a term for the West Bank.

Palestinian officials, by now used to unwelcome policy shifts from Trump, nonetheless summoned new outrage. "We cannot express horror and shock

because this is a pattern, but that doesn't make it any less horrific," said Hanan Ashrawi, a veteran Palestinian Liberation Organization official.

"It sends a clear signal that they have total disregard for international law, for what is right and just, and for the requirements of peace." NYT

### OFFICIAL SAYS ATTACKS BY TRUMP, ALLIES ON WITNESSES ARE 'VILE', 'PREPHERSIBLE'

# 'Inappropriate': White House officials on Trump's Ukraine call

NEW YORK TIMES NOVEMBER 19

TWO SENIOR national security officials at the White House challenged Trump's description of his call with the Ukraine president as "perfect," testifying on Tuesday about how concerned they were as they listened in real time to Trump appealing for investigations into a political rival.

Lt Col Alexander S Vindman, the top Ukraine expert on the National Security Council, testified that he was so disturbed by the call that he reported it to the council's top lawyer.

"What I heard was inappropriate, and I reported my con-



Lt Col Alexander S Vindman prepares to testify. NYT

cerns to Mr Eisenberg," Colonel Vindman said, referring to John Eisenberg, the top lawyer at the National Security Council. "It is

improper for the president of the United States to demand a foreign government investigate a US citizen and political opponent."

Anticipating attacks from critics, Colonel Vindman, who appeared for his testimony wearing his dark blue Army dress uniform, said he expressed his concerns "in official channels" through his chain of command, adding that "my intent was to raise these concerns because they had significant national security implications for our country."

Jennifer Williams, a national security aide to Vice President Mike Pence, said she found the president's call unusual because it included discussion of a "domestic political matter."

Williams said that during a September 1 meeting, Zelensky told the vice president that the

security aid was a symbol of support for Ukraine's sovereignty and told lawmakers Ukraine's president "was stressing that to the vice president to really underscore the need for the security assistance to be released."

Republicans attacked the loyalty and professionalism of Vindman as he testified about his deep concerns about President Trump's dealings with Ukraine. They quoted negative comments from colleagues about Colonel Vindman, a decorated Iraq war combat veteran, and pointed out that a top Ukrainian official had asked him repeatedly to serve as Ukraine's defense minister, offers that the colonel said he rebuffed and reported.

"Every single time, I dismissed it," he said, adding that "I'm an American. I came here when I was a toddler. And I immediately dismissed these offers, did not entertain them."

He said: "The whole notion is rather comical."

Vindman used his opening statement before impeachment investigators to denounce the attacks leveled by President Trump and his allies against those who have appeared, or are scheduled to testify, in the impeachment inquiry.

"The vile character attacks on these distinguished and honorable public servants is reprehensible," he said.

His remarks came after Trump has lashed out repeatedly

## 2 Western hostages freed in deal with Taliban

DAVID ZUCCHINO & ADAM GOLDMAN KABUL, NOVEMBER 19

THE TALIBAN freed two Westerners they had held for more than three years on Tuesday, in exchange for the release of three senior insurgent leaders, officials said, in a deal that officials hoped could pave the way for Afghan peace talks with the Taliban.

The Westerners were released to American forces by the Taliban, and included an American, Kevin C. King, 63, and an Australian, Timothy J. Weeks, 50, teachers at the American University in Kabul who were abducted in 2016. The key figure being returned to the Taliban is Anas Haqqani, the younger brother of the Taliban's military operations leader and a leading fund-raiser and propagandist before he was captured in 2014.

The exchange was brokered, in part, by the American peace envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, who had earlier negotiated a tentative agreement with the Taliban that would have included terms of an American troop withdrawal. But those talks were abruptly aborted by President Trump in September.

Now, the prisoner exchange could be a step toward restarting talks between the United States and the Taliban, who have said they will stand by the terms negotiated with Mr. Khalilzad.

In announcing that he was willing to free the senior Taliban figures, President Ashraf Ghani said last week that the exchange was intended to "facilitate direct peace negotiations" between the Afghan government and the Taliban. NYT

## Mahinda Rajapaksa asks Sri Lankan PM to step down

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA COLOMBO, NOVEMBER 19

SRI LANKA'S former strongman President Mahinda Rajapaksa has sought the resignation of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe after his younger brother Gotabaya Rajapaksa became the President, asserting that governance will improve if the President and the Cabinet are from the same party.

Addressing the media after a ceremony organised for his 74th birthday Monday, the Opposition Leader in Parliament said it would be more effective to have a government where the President and the Cabinet are from one party.

"I think it is better if we have General Elections. Many Cabinet members have already stepped down. I think it is more effective to have a Government where the President and Cabinet are from the same party," the Daily Financial Times quoted him as saying.

Rajapaksa also said that the public's decision at the ballot box needed to be respected.

Gotabaya was on Monday sworn in as Sri Lanka's seventh President at an ancient Buddhist temple, a venue chosen to reflect the massive mandate he got from the Sinhalese majority.