



“The truth is: the public aren’t convinced either main party deserves to win this election outright.”

— TONY BLAIR, former PM of Britain, on the choice between his own Labour Party and the ruling Conservative Party in the Dec 12 election.

TOP OF THE WORLD



The WikiLeaks founder is fighting extradition to the US

BRITAIN
Doctors fear Assange could die in UK jail

London: More than 60 doctors wrote an open letter published Monday saying they feared Julian Assange's health was so bad that the WikiLeaks founder could die inside a top-security British jail. The 48-year-old Australian is still fighting a US bid to extradite him from Britain on charges filed under the Espionage Act. In the letter to Home Secretary Priti Patel, Britain's interior minister, the doctors call for Assange to be moved from Belmarsh prison in London to a university teaching hospital. They based their assessment on "harrowing eyewitness accounts" of his October 21 court appearance.

UK TRUCK DEATHS
Man pleads guilty to immigration, property offences

London: A Northern Irish man, who is charged with the manslaughter of 39 Vietnamese nationals found dead in a truck near London last month, pleaded guilty on Monday to assisting unlawful immigration and to acquiring criminal property. Appearing by video link from Belmarsh Prison in east London, Maurice Robinson, 25, was not asked to enter a plea to 41 other charges, including 39 counts of manslaughter. The victims, 31 men and boys and eight women, were found on an industrial estate in Essex on October 23.

PHILIPPINES
UK man, wife held by IS-linked group rescued

Manila: Philippine soldiers on Monday rescued a British man and his wife from Islamic State-linked jihadists nearly two months after the couple was kidnapped from their beach resort in the nation's south, authorities said. Troops recovered the pair after a fire-fight with gunmen from the Abu Sayyaf group on the restive southern island of Jolo, which is a stronghold of the kidnap-for-ransom gang that has been behind some of the worst attacks in the Philippines. Regional army spokesman Arvin Encinas said no ransom was paid.

Landslide win for pro-democracy camp in Hong Kong local elections

Captures 389 of 452 district council seats in sharp rebuke of Beijing amid months-long mass protests

KEITH BRADSHER, AUSTIN RAMZY & TIFFANY MAY
HONG KONG, NOVEMBER 25

PRO-DEMOCRACY CANDIDATES buoyed by months of street protests in Hong Kong won a stunning victory in local elections Sunday, as record numbers voted in a vivid expression of the city's aspirations and its anger with the Chinese government.

It was a pointed rebuke of Beijing and its allies in Hong Kong, and the turnout — seven in 10 eligible voters — suggested that the public continues to back the democracy movement, even as the protests grow increasingly violent. Young Hong Kongers, a major force behind the demonstrations of the past six months, played a leading role in the voting surge.

With 3 million voters casting ballots, pro-democracy candidates captured 389 of 452 elected seats, up from only 124 and far more than they had ever won. With two races undecided, the government's allies held just 56 seats, a remarkable collapse from 300.

To many democracy advocates, Sunday was a turning point. "There has been a very deep awakening of the Hong Kong people," said Alan Leong, chairman of



People celebrate in Hong Kong on Monday. A winning candidate (right) from the pro-democracy camp argues with police as he walks towards the campus of the Polytechnic University. AP, Reuters

the Civic Party, one of the largest pro-democracy parties.

The elections were for district councils, one of the lowest elected offices in Hong Kong, and they are typically a subdued affair focused on community issues. The job mostly entails pushing for neighbourhood needs like bus stops and traffic lights.

But this election was viewed as a referendum on the unrest that has created the city's worst political crisis in decades. In a semi-autonomous part of China where democracy is one of the protesters' biggest demands, it gave res-



idents a rare chance to vote. The gains at the ballot box are likely to embolden a democracy movement that has struggled with how to balance peaceful and violent protests to achieve its goals. They are also likely to deepen

“The government will certainly listen humbly to citizens’ opinions and reflect on them seriously.”

— CARRIE LAM
HONG KONG CHIEF EXECUTIVE

the challenges for China's central government, which wants to curb the unrest in Hong Kong. And they might exacerbate Beijing's fears about giving the city's residents even greater say in choosing their government. NYT

EXPLAINED
Lam's 'silent majority' claim shattered

HONG KONG Chief Executive Carrie Lam said during the months of protests that there was a "silent majority" in the city that did not support the pro-democracy demonstrators. However, Sunday's elections saw a record turnout of over 70% and an overwhelming victory for pro-democracy candidates, undermining Lam's claim. On Monday, in a conciliatory message, she conceded that the result showed "people's dissatisfaction". But protesters, rejuvenated by the result, are set to continue the agitation. How China intends to deal with the situation, with public opinion seemingly against Beijing, will be crucial to what happens next in Hong Kong.

RAJAPAKSAS RETURN TO POWER

Lanka top investigator flees to Geneva after new govt takes charge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
COLOMBO, NOVEMBER 25

A SRI Lankan police officer, who handled the top-level investigations against the members of the previous Rajapaksa government between 2005 and 2015, has fled to Geneva following the change of government in the country.

A statement from the police headquarters said that investigations about how Inspector Nishantha Silva left the country on Sunday without obtaining formal approval are underway.

Silva was the top sleuth in many corruption and other investigations against members of the Rajapaksa family and top officials since 2015.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who was elected the country's new President after the November 16 polls, told a gathering Sunday that the chief investigator in all politically-motivated investigations against them had fled the country.

Sri Lanka's controversial Rajapaksa clan tightened its grip on political power after Gotabaya swore in his elder brother Mahinda as the Prime Minister.

Silva is thought have fled the country fearing reprisals from the new government.

"All police officers when leaving the country must obtain approval from the ministry secretary. This officer has not done so," the police statement said.

It said that Silva's "biased conduct" in carrying out investigations has been highlighted and many parties have asked for an investigation against him.



Gotabaya Rajapaksa

Gotabaya says will do nothing that harms India's interests

Colombo: Sri Lanka will work with India and it won't do anything that will harm its interests, newly elected President Gotabaya Rajapaksa said ahead of his visit to New Delhi later this week.

Rajapaksa, who is considered pro-China, said he wanted Sri Lanka to be a "neutral country" and work with all the countries.

"We will work with India as a friendly country and won't do anything that will harm India's interests," said Rajapaksa, who will travel to New Delhi on November 29 on his first official trip abroad as Sri Lankan President.

"We want to be a neutral country," Rajapaksa, who was sworn in as Sri Lanka's president last week, told Nitin Gokhale of BharatShakti.in and Strategic News International in an interview.

"We don't want to get in between the power struggles of superpowers... We are so small and we can't survive by getting into this balancing acts," he said. PTI



KIM ORDERS ARTILLERY DRILL, ANGERS SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un inspects a female company belonging to Unit 5492 of the army, in this picture released by state media on Monday. The North performed artillery drills near the disputed sea boundary with South Korea at the Kim's order, state media reported, drawing an immediate rebuke from the South amid stalled nuclear talks. Reuters

Israel to expel Human Rights Watch's country director

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
TEL AVIV, NOVEMBER 25

ISRAEL WAS set to expel the country director of Human Rights Watch on Monday after a lengthy court battle over claims he supports a boycott of the Jewish state.

American citizen Omar Shakir, the New York-based rights group's director for Israel and the Palestinian territories, arrived at Ben Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv on Monday afternoon, where he was greeted by around 20 supporters.

He denies the allegations and accuses the Israeli government of seeking to suppress dissent.

"Today culminates a two-and-a-half year effort to deport me over my human rights ad-

vocacy, an effort to muzzle Human Rights Watch," Shakir said at the airport.

"One day you will welcome me here, I hope, when it is a better day — a day in which all people, Israeli and Palestinian, have their human rights respected." He was due to fly out early on Monday evening.

Authorities say Shakir's expulsion was to be the first from inside Israel under its controversial 2017 law allowing the deportation of foreigners who support a boycott.

The European Union, United Nations and others had called on Israel to reverse course, with the UN warning of a "shrinking space for human rights defenders to operate" in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

Libya officials say US drone shot down by mistake

Cairo: Libyan forces trying to seize Tripoli shot down a US military drone over the capital by mistake last week, officials said Monday.

The US military said it lost the drone Thursday while it was assessing the security situation and monitoring extremist activity.

US Africa Command declined to elaborate, saying the incident was under investigation.

The self-styled Libyan National Army, led by General Khalifa Hifter, launched an offensive to capture Tripoli in April after seizing much of eastern Libya from militants in recent years.

The country was plunged into chaos when a NATO-backed uprising toppled longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi in 2011. AP

SECRET DOCUMENTS LEAKED

Preventing escapes, pushing Mandarin: How China runs mass detention camps

ASSOCIATED PRESS
NOVEMBER 25

THE WATCH towers, double-locked doors and video surveillance in the Chinese camps are there "to prevent escapes." Uighurs and other minorities held inside are scored on how well they speak the dominant Mandarin language and follow strict rules on everything down to bathing and using the toilet, scores that determine if they can leave.

"Manner education" is mandatory, but "vocational skills improvement" is offered only after a year in the camps.

Voluntary job training is the reason the Chinese government has given for detaining more than a million ethnic minorities, most of them Muslims. But a classified blueprint leaked to a consortium of news organisations shows the camps are instead precisely what former detainees have described: Forced ideological and behavioural re-education centres run in secret.

The classified documents lay out the Chinese government's deliberate strategy to lock up ethnic minorities even before they commit a crime, to rewire their thoughts and the language they speak.

The papers also show how Beijing is pioneering a new form of social control using data and artificial intelligence. Drawing on data collected by mass surveillance technology, computers issued the names of tens of thousands of people for interrogation or detention in just one week.

Taken as a whole, the documents give the most significant description yet of high-tech



China says the facilities give voluntary job training. Reuters

mass detention in the 21st century in the words of the Chinese government itself. Experts say they spell out a vast system that targets, surveils and grades entire ethnicities to forcibly assimilate and subdue them — especially Uighurs, a predominantly Muslim Turkic minority of more than 10 million people with their own language and culture.

"They confirm that this is a form of cultural genocide," said Adrian Zenz, a leading security expert on the far western region of Xinjiang, the Uighur homeland.

Zenz said the documents echo the aim of the camps as outlined in a 2017 report from a local branch of the Xinjiang Ministry of Justice: To "wash brains, cleanse hearts, support the right, remove the wrong."

The documents were given to the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists by an anonymous source.

They consist of a notice with guidelines for the camps, four bulletins on how to use technology to target people, and a court case sentencing an Uighur Communist Party member to 10 years in prison for telling colleagues not to say dirty words, watch porn or eat without praying.

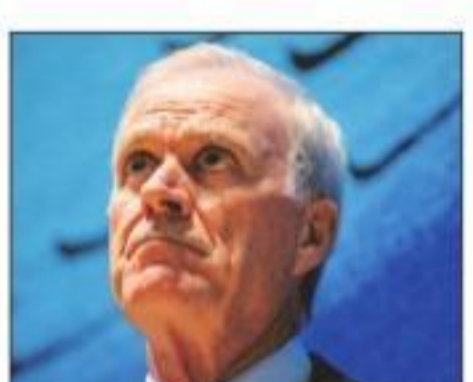
Pentagon chief fires Navy secretary over SEAL controversy

ROBERT BURNS
WASHINGTON, NOVEMBER 25

US DEFENCE Secretary Mark Esper has fired the Navy's top official, ending a stunning clash between President Donald Trump and top military leadership over the fate of a SEAL accused of war crimes in Iraq.

Esper said on Sunday that he had lost confidence in Navy Secretary Richard Spencer and alleged that Spencer proposed a deal with the White House behind his back to resolve the SEAL's case. Trump has championed the matter of Navy Chief Petty Officer Edward Gallagher, who was acquitted of murder in the stabbing death of an Islamic State militant captive but convicted of posing with the corpse while in Iraq in 2017. Gallagher was demoted after his conviction by a military jury. Trump, however, restored Gallagher's rank this month.

On Wednesday, the Navy notified Gallagher that he would face a Navy SEAL review board to determine if he should be allowed to remain in the elite force. While Trump then tweeted he would not allow the Navy to remove



RICHARD SPENCER
US Navy Secretary

Gallagher from the SEALs, the White House told the Navy it could proceed as planned, according to a Navy officer who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The Navy SEAL review board was due to hear Gallagher's case on Dec 2. Spencer, speaking Saturday at an international security forum in Halifax, Nova Scotia, said that he did not consider a tweet by Trump a formal order to stop the Navy review board.

But on Sunday, Esper said he had learned that Spencer had "privately" proposed to the White House that Gallagher be allowed to retire in his current rank and without losing his status as a SEAL. On Monday, Esper said Trump ordered him to allow Gallagher to remain part of the SEALs. AP

RESPONSE TO US REIMPOSING SANCTIONS AFTER EXITING 2015 NUCLEAR DEAL

'Time to take out our swords': Inside Iran's plot to attack Saudi oil sites

REUTERS
NOVEMBER 25

FOUR MONTHS before a swarm of drones and missiles crippled the world's biggest oil processing facility in Saudi Arabia, Iranian security officials gathered at a heavily fortified compound in Tehran.

The group included the top echelons of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, an elite branch of the Iranian military whose portfolio includes missile development and covert operations.

The main topic that day in May: How to punish the United States for pulling out of a landmark nuclear treaty and re-imposing economic sanctions on Iran, moves that have hit the Islamic Republic hard.

With Major General Hossein Salami, leader of the Revolutionary Guards, looking on, a senior commander took the floor.

"It is time to take out our swords and teach them a lesson," the commander said, according to four people familiar with the meeting.

Hardliners in the meeting talked of attacking high-value tar-

gets, including American military bases. Yet, what ultimately emerged was a plan that stopped short of direct confrontation that could trigger a devastating US response. Iran opted instead to target oil installations of America's ally, Saudi Arabia, a proposal discussed by top Iranian military officials in that May meeting and at least four that followed.

This account, described to Reuters by three officials familiar with the meetings and a fourth close to Iran's decision making, is the first to describe the role of Iran's leaders in plotting the Sept 14 attack on Saudi Aramco, the



Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei approved the operation, people familiar with the move told Reuters.

state-controlled oil company. These people said Iran's

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei approved the opera-

tion, but with strict conditions: Iranian forces must avoid hitting any civilians or Americans.

Reuters was unable to confirm their version of events with Iran's leadership. Tehran has steadfastly denied involvement.

Alireza Miryousefi, spokesman for the Iranian Mission to the United Nations in New York, rejected the version of events the four people described to Reuters. He said Iran played no part in the strikes, that no meetings of senior security officials took place to discuss such an operation, and that Khamenei did not authorise any attack. "No, no, no,

no, no, and no," Miryousefi said to detailed questions from Reuters on the alleged gatherings and Khamenei's purported role.

Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis rebels, at the centre of a civil war against Saudi-backed forces, claimed responsibility for the assault on Saudi oil facilities. That declaration was rebuffed by US and Saudi officials, who said the sophistication of the offensive pointed to Iran.

The plan by Iranian military leaders to strike Saudi oil installations developed over several months, according to the official close to Iran's decision making.

"Details were discussed thoroughly in at least five meetings and the final go ahead was given" by early September, the official said. All of those meetings took place at a secure location in Tehran, three of the officials told Reuters. They said Khamenei attended one of the gatherings at his residence.

The official close to Iran's decision making said the group settled on the plan to attack Saudi Arabia's oil installations because it could grab big headlines, inflict economic pain on an adversary and still deliver a strong message to Washington. REUTERS