



USA

Greta Thunberg is Time person of the year for 2019

New York: Greta Thunberg, the Swedish 16-year-old who began a global movement by skipping school to demand action on climate change, and angrily thundering “How dare you” at the world’s most powerful leaders during a UN Climate Summit for their inaction, was on Wednesday declared as *Time* magazine’s 2019 Person of the Year. “For sounding the alarm about humanity’s predatory relationship with the only home we have, for bringing to a fragmented world a voice that transcends backgrounds and borders, for showing us all what it might look like when a new generation leads, Greta Thunberg is *Time*’s 2019 Person of the Year,” the US publication said.

HONG KONG

Foreign experts quit police probe, questioning its independence

Hong Kong: Foreign experts said they had quit advising a Hong Kong police watchdog on Wednesday due to doubts over its independence and ability to conduct an investigation into police conduct during months of anti-government protests. The panel of five experts from Australia, Britain, Canada and New Zealand was recruited in September by the Independent Police Complaints Council (IPCC) to help ensure its probe into allegations of police brutality was credible. “We ultimately concluded that a crucial shortfall was evident in the powers, capacity and independent investigative capability of IPCC,” the foreign experts panel said in a statement.

AFGHANISTAN

Blast damages hospital near biggest US base

Kabul: At least one person was killed and dozens wounded when a bomb exploded close to the largest US military base in Afghanistan Wednesday, damaging homes and a hospital under construction near Bagram Airfield, officials said. The attack — which has not yet been claimed — comes as Washington resumed talks with the Taliban on Saturday, three months after President Donald Trump abruptly halted efforts that could end America’s longest war.

Pak court indicts Hafiz Saeed on terror financing charges

JuD chief and three of his aides charged amid mounting international pressure on Islamabad

M ZULQUERNAIN
LAHORE, DECEMBER 11

HAFIZ SAEED, the Mumbai terror attack mastermind and chief of the banned Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), was indicted on Wednesday by a Pakistani anti-terrorism court here on terror financing charges, amidst intense international pressure on Islamabad to bring him to justice. The anti-terrorism court (ATC) Lahore indicted Saeed and three of his top aides — Hafiz Abdul Salam bin Muhammad, Muhammad Ashraf and Zafar Iqbal — on terror financing charges.

ATC judge Arshad Hussain Bhutta directed the prosecution to produce the witnesses and adjourned the hearing till Thursday. Saeed, 69, along with the other accused, were presented before the court on Wednesday under tight security. “Saeed and his aides’ lawyers made their arguments, requesting the court not to indict their clients,” a court official told PTI after the hearing.

“Deputy Prosecutor General Punjab Abdur Rauf, pleading for framing charges against the ac-



Saeed was arrested after 23 FIRs were registered against him and his accomplices on July 17 related to terror financing

cused, said Saeed and others are involved in terror financing and the Counter Terrorism Department of Punjab police has presented evidence for it,” the official said.

The official said the accused were also provided the copies of the chargesheet.

Like the previous hearings, journalists were not allowed to enter the court premises to cover the proceedings. Saeed is detained at the high-security Kot Lakhpat jail here.

On December 7, the ATC

could not indict Saeed, and others as one of the co-accused, Zafar Iqbal, was not produced before the court by the authorities.

Saeed’s indictment comes amidst growing international pressure on Pakistan to rein-in terror groups operating from its soil and bring to justice terror group leaders like Saeed.

In October, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) warned Pakistan that it would be blacklisted if it did not control terror funding by February, voicing serious concern over the

US BLACKLISTS PAK’S ‘ENCOUNTER SPECIALIST’ OFFICER OVER HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Washington: The US has black-listed a retired Pakistani police officer, known as an “encounter specialist”, for committing serious human rights violations by staging fake killings in Sindh province.

Accused of extrajudicial killings, Rao Anwar Ahmed Khan served as senior superintendent of police in the Malir District of Karachi in Sindh.

Anwar is designated for being responsible for or complicit in, or having directly or indirectly engaged in, serious human rights abuse, the US Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) said on Tuesday on the occasion of International Human Rights Day. He was also responsible for extortion, land-grabbing, narcotics and murder, it said. **PTI**

ing, *Dawn* newspaper noted.

Counter terrorism police in Pakistan’s Punjab province on July 17 registered 23 FIRs against Saeed and his accomplices on the charges of terror financing and arrested Saeed.

The cases have been registered in Lahore, Gujranwala and Multan for collection of funds for terrorism financing through assets/properties made and held in the names of Trusts/Non Profit Organisations (NPO) including Al-Anfaal Trust, Dawatul Irshad Trust and Muaz Bin Jabal Trust. **PTI**

6 killed in attack on Jewish market in US

One of the assailants had published anti-Semitic, anti-police posts online: official

AGENCIES
JERSEY CITY, DECEMBER 11

SIX PEOPLE, including a police officer and three bystanders, were killed in a furious gun battle that filled the streets of Jersey City with the sound of heavy fire for hours, authorities said.

The dead included the two gunmen, Jersey City Police Chief Michael Kelly said.

The slain officer, Detective Joseph Seals, 40, was killed by



At the scene of gunfire in Jersey City. AP

gunfire that erupted near a cemetery, authorities said.

The shooting then continued at a kosher market about a mile away, where five more bodies were found, Kelly said.

Jersey City Mayor Steven Fulop’s said on Wednesday it was “clear” that gunmen targeted the kosher market. Kosher is a term that describes food that comply with the dietary standards set out in Jewish law.

The *New York Times* quoted a law enforcement officer as saying that an assailant involved in

the shooting had published anti-Semitic and anti-police posts online and investigators believe the attack was motivated by those sentiments. Investigators also found a manifesto-style note inside the assailants’ van, the law enforcement official said, according to the NYT.

So far, authorities have not identified the attackers, who were killed in the firefight. None of the three victims inside the store have been publicly identified by officials.

Trump poised to sign order that interprets Judaism as a nationality

Order aimed at ‘targeting anti-Semitism’ on US campuses

PETER BAKER & MAGGIE HABERMAN
WASHINGTON, DECEMBER 11

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump plans to sign an executive order Wednesday targeting what he sees as anti-Semitism on college campuses by threatening to withhold federal money from educational institutions that fail to combat discrimination, three officials said on Tuesday.

The order will effectively interpret Judaism as a nationality, not just a religion, to trigger a federal law penalising colleges and universities deemed to be shirking their responsibility to foster an open climate for minority students, according to the officials.

In signing the order, Trump will use his executive power to take action where Congress has not, essentially replicating bipartisan legislation that has stalled on Capitol Hill for years. Prominent Democrats have joined Republicans in promoting such a policy change at a time



Trump’s order also targets the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement against Israel. NYT

of rising tension on campuses over anti-Semitism as well as the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement against Israel.

But critics have complained that such a policy could be used to stifle free speech and legitimate opposition to Israel’s policies toward Palestinians in the name of fighting anti-Semitism. The definition of anti-Semitism to be used in the order, which matches the one used by the State Department, has been criticised as too open-ended and sweeping. **NYT**



New interpretation for protection under Civil Rights Act

THE CIVIL Rights Act of 1964 allows the government to withhold federal funding to educational institutions that discriminate on the basis of race, colour or national origin. Religion is not covered under this part of the law. The Trump administration’s Department of Education has already ordered two universities to remake their Middle East studies programmes over perceived anti-Israel bias. In order to allow the Department to go further and invoke the Civil Rights Act, Trump’s executive order interprets Judaism as a nationality, not just a religion.

Israel faces 3rd election in less than a year

JEFFREY HELLER
JERUSALEM, DECEMBER 11

ISRAEL HEADED on Wednesday towards a third national election in less than a year with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu facing the fight of his life for political survival after a criminal indictment.

After giving its preliminary approval, and barring last-minute progress in deadlocked efforts to form a new government, parliament was set to vote for its dissolution later in the day and approve a March 2 election date already agreed by the two major parties.

What had once seemed nearly impossible to many Israelis — a third visit to polling stations after inconclusive elections in April and September — carries a heavy economic price: it will be well into 2020 before a new budget is passed, which will mean months of cutbacks that weigh on growth.

Neither Netanyahu’s Likud party nor the Blue and White party led by his main rival, Benny Gantz, won enough seats for a governing majority in the previous two contests. **REUTERS**

HEARINGS ONGOING AT ICJ



Aung San Suu Kyi attends a hearing in a case filed by Gambia against Myanmar alleging genocide at the International Court of Justice in The Hague on Wednesday. Reuters

Suu Kyi: Genocide case brought against Myanmar misleading

SHOON LEI WIN NAING & TOBY STERLING
THE HAGUE, DECEMBER 11

MYANMAR LEADER Aung San Suu Kyi said the case brought against her country at the World Court was “incomplete and misleading” as she began her defence to accusations of genocide against the Rohingya Muslim minority on Wednesday.

Gambia, a small West African country, has launched a case against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice, the UN’s highest court, alleging it has violated the 1948 Genocide Convention.

Leading Myanmar’s defence herself at the court in The Hague Suu Kyi, Myanmar’s top political leader and a Nobel Peace prize laureate acknowledged disproportionate force may have been used at times by the military, but said the conflict in the western

Gambia has placed an incomplete and misleading picture of the factual situation in Rakhine state in Myanmar

— AUNG SAN SUU KYI
MYANMAR LEADER

Rakhine state was “complex and not easy to fathom”.

“Gambia has placed an incomplete and misleading picture of the factual situation in Rakhine state in Myanmar,” she said.

More than 730,000 Rohingya fled Myanmar after the military launched a crackdown in western Rakhine state in August 2017. Most now live in crowded refugee camps in Bangladesh.

Myanmar argues the military “clearance operations” in Rakhine were a justifiable response to acts of terrorism and that its soldiers have acted appropriately. **REUTERS**

EU hikes its 2030 climate targets; what about 2020, BASIC countries ask



EXPRESS IN MADRID

AMITABH SINHA
DECEMBER 11

WITH THE proceedings in the meeting rooms bringing little reason for hope, the Madrid climate talks was on Wednesday energised by news from Brussels where the European Union announced its intention to increase its climate targets and make an additional 10% reduction in its emissions by 2030 from 1990 levels.

The announcement by the EU, which is the world’s third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases, came on a day when a group of about 200 climate activists and protesters, increasingly impatient with the reluctance of countries to increase their climate action, barged inside the conference venue and inside the main negotiating hall where UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres was among those present and listening to ministers making their statements. The protests resulted in many activists being barred from entering the conference venue.

In its announcement, EU said it would bring in legislation by March next year to commit itself to a net-zero emission status by

2050, and a comprehensive plan by middle of next year on increasing its emission reduction targets from the current 40% of its 1990 levels by 2030 to at least 50 or 55%.

The EU, however, skirted the question of fulfilling its pre-2020 climate targets, including providing technology and finance to developing countries. EU had promised to reduce its emissions by 20% by 2020 on 1990 levels but it is not on track to meet that target

The issue of unfulfilled pre-2020 climate action has been repeatedly raised by India and other developing countries, and it was reiterated in the statement of the BASIC countries — the grouping of Brazil, South Africa, India and China — after their ministers met on Tuesday.

Their statement, released on Wednesday, said progress on pre-2020 agenda would “be the benchmark of success” for the Madrid meeting. It also said the Madrid meeting, in its final decisions, must “urge developed country parties to fulfil their commitments on providing finance, technology development and transfer of capacity building support to developing countries”.

“Commitments made by developed countries in the pre-2020 period must be honoured because the completion of pre-2020 agenda is of critical importance in building the basis for mutual trust and ambition in the post-2020 period,” the ministers said.

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NEARLY 98% BACK INDEPENDENCE

‘We are reborn’: Bougainville votes for independence from Papua New Guinea

JONATHAN BARRETT
SYDNEY, DECEMBER 11

THE SOUTH Pacific islands of Bougainville have overwhelmingly voted to be independent from Papua New Guinea, the referendum commission said on Wednesday, in a historic poll that will embolden separatists as they start negotiating the terms of their sovereignty.

Almost 98% of the 181,067 votes cast backed independence in the non-binding poll that is part of a peace pact struck in the

aftermath of a decade-long war between Bougainville’s rebel fighters and PNG forces, which ended in 1998.

The referendum gave voters in the island cluster a choice between independence and greater autonomy.

“There’s tears, tears of joy, raw emotion — people have waited a long time,” referendum Chairman Bertie Ahern said in the town of Buka. “The pen is always mightier than the sword.”

Bougainville’s quest for independence is one of dozens of separatist movements in play around

the world. There is a strong movement in Scotland seeking independence from the United Kingdom, while Catalan separatists in Spain remain active.

Thousands of protesting Papuans also recently called for an independence vote, seeking to separate from Indonesia.

The comprehensive vote in Bougainville will be used to strengthen the hand of negotiators as they start discussions on the terms of independence with the PNG government.

Any agreement struck in the negotiations would still need to



Officials count ballots in Buka, Bougainville. Reuters

pass through PNG’s parliament. Just 3,043 voters backed the other option on the ballot — greater autonomy — while a small number of informal votes were recorded.

Pajomile Minaka, from Bougainville’s southern region, told Reuters he was taking a law course to equip himself to help rebuild his homeland.

“That’s my dream, to go and rebuild,” said the 36-year old, who was a child during the conflict. “We need the best policies, the best laws, to be the best country. We are reborn.”

The islands are still recovering from the conflict, which killed 20,000 people in a fight over land royalties and pollution in rivers near the now-shuttered Panguna gold and copper project.

It was the deadliest conflict in the area since World War II.

There was a mood of celebration throughout the two-week referendum, which ended on Dec. 7, with many voters carrying Bougainville’s predominantly blue flag to polling stations.

The crowd that assembled at a vote count centre in Buka on Wednesday to hear the results

broke out into cheers and applause after the numbers were released.

The referendum commission said the vote was orderly and peaceful. “We witnessed voting that was informed, free of fear and accessible,” it said.

Ballots from different areas were mixed before officials tallied the results to eliminate the risk of reprisals.

Once the economic engine of PNG, Bougainville has fallen to the bottom of almost every financial indicator, despite boasting mineral riches, fertile volcanic soil and stunning geography. **REUTERS**