# THE INDIAN EXPRESS, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2019 THE WORLD

### MEANWHILE INSTAGRAM EXPANDS FACT-CHECKING GLOBALLY

Instagram on Monday announced it had gone global in its fight against misinformation, expanding its third-party fact-checking network around the world. The Facebook-owned social platform launched a fact-checking programme in the US early this year. "Today's expansion is an important step in our ongoing efforts to fight misinformation on Instagram," it said in an online post.

# TOPOFTHE WORLD



Chung Sye-kyun

### **SOUTH KOREA Seoul appoints** 'Mr Smile' as

Prime Minister

Seoul: South Korean President Moon Jae-in appointed an anodyne forparliamentary Speaker known as "Mr Smile" as Prime Minister Tuesday, after a previous Cabinet appointment triggered a corruption scandal and mass protests. Chung Sye-kyun — a six-term lawmaker and former commerce minister earned the soubriquet for his mild demeanour, and local reports say he has six times been voted the "most gentlemanly lawmaker" by reporters covering the National Assembly. "He has always

### **CHINA**

### 14 people killed in coal mine blast

pursued politics that listen,

by valuing dialogue and

compromise with his gen-

tle personality," Moon said.

Beijing: At least 14 miners were killed on Tuesday in a coal and gas outburst at a mine in southwest China with two workers still trapped underground, authorities said. The accident happened at around 1.30 am (local time) at the Guanglong Coal Mine in Anlong County, Guizhou province, when 23 workers were working underground, authorities were quoted as saying by the state-run Xinhua news agency. Seven workers have been rescued safely, while 14 were confirmed dead and two others still remain trapped, the report

### **PAKISTAN**

### Lawyer who fought for unlawfully held is abducted

Islamabad: A Pakistani lawyer known for pursuing cases of those unlawfully detained by the country's security agencies was abducted overnight from his home in the garrison city of Rawalpindi, his son said Tuesday. According to the son, several armed men knocked on the gate of the family's home on Monday night. When the family opened the door, the men barged in and took his father. Inamur Rehman, shoved him into a car and then sped away. Rehman, a lawyer and a retired military officer, was never a threat to anyone, said the son.

## US Defence Secy wants to cut troops in Afghanistan 'with or without' peace deal

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA** WASHINGTON, DECEMBER 17

**DEFENCE SECRETARY Mark** Esper said Monday he wants to reduce the number of US troops in Afghanistan "with or without" a peace agreement in order to give higher priority to strategic competition with China.

The Trump administration is expected to announce plans to withdraw around 4,000 troops from Afghanistan, according to US media, after peace talks resumed a week ago between the US and the Taliban.

Esper told reporters Monday that Austin Miller, the head of the NATO mission and US Forces

MICHAEL D SHEAR

trial in the Senate.

WASHINGTON, DECEMBER 17

SENATOR MITCH McConnell, the

Republican leader, on Tuesday

rejected demands by Democrats

to call four White House officials

as witnesses during US President

Donald Trump's impeachment

Wednesday that is all but certain

to result in Trump's impeachment

on two charges, McConnell said he

would not agree to call the wit-

nesses — all of whom have first-

hand knowledge of Trump's deal-

ings with Ukraine — including

Mick Mulvaney, the White House

chief of staff, and John Bolton, the

former national security adviser.

The White House blocked them

from appearing during the House

Schumer, the minority leader, had

insisted in a letter to McConnell

Democratic Senator Chuck

impeachment inquiry.

On the eve of a House vote



Afghanistan, "is confident that he can go down to a lower num-

ber" of troops. Miller "believes he can conduct all the important counterterrorism missions and train, advise and assist" the Afghan army, Esper said on a plane as he flew back from Belgium, where he had attended the 75th anniver-

Washington: Rudy Giuliani, US

President Donald Trump's per-

sonal lawyer, says he provided

the President with information

that the US ambassador to

Ukraine was impeding investi-

gations that could benefit

Trump politically. Within weeks,

she was recalled from her post.

*New York Times*, Giuliani por-

traved himself as directly in-

volved in the effort to oust

Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch,

and he indicated that Trump

But in remarks on the Senate

that they must be heard from.

floor Tuesday morning, McConnell

said there was no reason for the

Senate to immediately agree to

take testimony from officials who

In an interview, with *The* 

Senate majority leader rejects Democrats'

demands to call top Trump aides during trial

GIULIANI: TRUMP 'RELIED ON' HIS CLAIMS

knew of that effort.

said.

Giuliani said he passed

along information to Trump "a

couple of times" about how

Yovanovitch had frustrated ef-

forts that could help Trump, in-

cluding efforts to have Ukraine

investigate political rival Joe

Biden. Trump, in turn, passed

the information on to Secretary

of State Mike Pompeo, Giuliani

Yovanovitch was told Trump

had lost trust in her and she

might bolster Democrats' case

demand for witnesses "a strange

request at this juncture," leaving

open the possibility that the

McConnell called Schumer's

was recalled as ambassador.

against the President.

weeks,

Within

**ABOUT U.S. AMBASSADOR TO UKRAINE** 

**IMPEACHMENT SET TO MOVE FROM HOUSE TO SENATE** 

...The best solution for Afghanistan is a political agreement. But I think we can go down with or without that political agreement."

- MARK ESPER U.S. DEFENCE SECRETARY

sary of the Battle of the Bulge.

"I would like to go to a lower number because I want to either bring those troops home" to retrain for new missions or to "be redeployed to the Indo-Pacific to face off our greatest challenge in terms of the great power competition that's vis-a-vis China," he said.

"At the end of the day, the

best solution for Afghanistan is a political agreement" between the government and the Taliban, Esper added.

"But I think we can go down with or without that political agreement." Esper said he had not yet ordered any downsizing, noting that the decision was ultimately the responsibility of President Donald Trump.

About 13,000 US troops are currently in Afghanistan, though the number fluctuates according to rotations.

Trump said last month that he planned to cut the overall troop presence to 8,600, with further reductions possible. He had also insisted on the need for a ceasefire.

Senate could decide to call wit-

nesses after a trial is underway.

But McConnell made it clear that

making that decision before the

this deficient, this thin, the an-

swer is not for the judge and jury

to cure it here in the Senate," he

added. "The answer is that the

House should not impeach on

later, saying that holding a trial

without witnesses "would be an

aberration" and vowing to de-

mand votes by senators on

whether to call witnesses and sub-

poena documents during the trial.

as the most politically vulnerable

House Democrats in moderate

districts continued to announce

their support for the impeach-

ment charges, signalling that the

House vote expected Wednesday

is likely to be almost entirely

along party lines. **NYT** 

McConnell's comments came

Schumer responded moments

this basis in the first place."

"If House Democrats' case is

trial started was premature.

# Pope Francis scraps 'pontifical secret' in clergy abuse cases

'Epochal decision' takes away any excuse for Church to not comply with legal requests, says Vatican's top investigator

**NICOLE WINFIELD** 

VATICAN CITY, DECEMBER 17

POPE FRANCIS abolished the "pontifical secret" used in clergy sexual abuse cases Tuesday, responding to mounting criticism that the high degree of confidentiality has been used to protect pedophiles, silence victims and prevent police from investigating crimes.

"The carnival of obscurity is over," declared Juan Carlos Cruz, a prominent Chilean survivor of clergy abuse and advocate for victims.

In a new law, Francis decreed that information in abuse cases must be protected by church leaders to ensure its "security, integrity and confidentiality." But he said "pontifical secret," the highest form of confidentiality in the church, no longer applies to abuse-related accusations, trials and decisions under the Catholic Church's canon law.

The Vatican's leading sex crimes investigator, Archbishop Charles Scicluna, said the reform was an "epochal decision" that will facilitate coordination with civil law enforcement and open up lines of communication with victims.

While documentation from the church's in-house legal proceedings will still not become public, Scicluna said, the reform now removes any excuse to not cooperate with legitimate legal requests from prosecutors, police or other authorities.

Francis also raised from 14 to



Pope Francis also raised from 14 to 18 the cutoff age below which the Vatican considers pornographic images to be **child pornography.** Reuters

# EXPLAINED

### **How Church laws** worked in sex abuse cases

POPE JOHN Paul II issued a decree in 2001 stating that cases of alleged sexual abuse of minors by the clergy must be handled by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and that the doctrine of "pontifical secret" must apply to these cases. The Church justified this as a means to protect the privacy of the victims and the accused. However, this has been criticised as having been used as a means to hush up scandals. Moreover, under the Church's in-house canon law, the highest punishment for a priest was being defrocked. This is why there has been repeated demands in recent years to abolish "pontifical secret" in grave cases.

18 the cutoff age below which the Vatican considers pornographic images to be child pornography — a response to the Vatican's increasing awareness of the prolific spread of online child porn that has frequently implicated even high-ranking churchmen.

Tuesday, Francis' 83rd birthday, as he struggles to respond to the global explosion of the abuse scandal, his own missteps and demands for greater transparency and accountability from victims, law enforcement and ordinary Catholics alike. AP

UN medal given

peacekeepers

in South Sudan

UNITED NATIONS, DECEMBER 17

ABOUT 850 Indian peacekeep-

ers serving in South Sudan have

been awarded the prestigious

UN medal for their service and

to Indian

**YOSHITA SINGH** 

The new laws were issued

### Imran to skip Kuala Lumpur summit due to 'Saudi pressure'

**SAJJAD HUSSAIN** ISLAMABAD, DECEMBER 17

PAKISTAN PRIME Minister Imran Khan has decided to skip the Kuala Lumpur Summit due to pressure exerted by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, diplomatic sources said Tuesday. Khan was scheduled to share

the stage with leaders from Iran, Turkey and Qatar during the three-day summit beginning on Wednesday.

The Pakistani leader made a telephonic call to Malaysian leader Mahathir Mohammad and informed him about his decision, according to the Malaysian government.

Sources here said Pakistan decided to skip the summit after Saudi Arabia made it clear that Riyadh was against the summit of Muslim nations evolving into group rivalling the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which is dominated by the Gulf Kingdom.

The Saudis and Emirati leaders also objected that Pakistan would be sharing stage with Iran and Qatar, seen as challengers to



Pak PM Imran Khan

their dominance in the region,

according to sources. Initially, Pakistan was willing to send Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi to represent Khan at the summit, but officials said that it was decided to stay away from the event for the sake of the country's "core national interests".

Khan travelled to Riyadh over the weekend while Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa went to the UAE to persuade the leaders of the two Arab nations not to oppose Pakistan's participation in the summit but apparently both came back empty handed, sources said. PTI

# Boris to outlaw Brexit extension beyond 2020

UK PM holds 1st Cabinet meeting after election, says 'you ain't seen nothing yet'

**3 INDIAN-ORIGIN MINISTERS REMAIN IN CABINET AGENCIES** LONDON, DECEMBER 17

**BRITISH PRIME Minister Boris** Johnson was seeking Tuesday to outlaw extending the Brexit transition period beyond the end of 2020, as he prepared to put the EU divorce deal before MPs.

Johnson won a big majority in last week's general election on a promise to "get Brexit done" by taking Britain out of the European Union by the end of January. A transition period will then







and Brussels hope to negotiate a

follow, during which London trade agreement before the end of December next year.

European leaders have said the 2020 deadline would be too tight to complete a comprehensive deal, reviving fears of a "nodeal" outcome that could cause fresh uncertainty and chaos.

Johnson held his first Cabinet meeting since the election on Tuesday, welcoming back his ministers after what he called a "seismic" result. "We are going to be working to deliver on the priorities of the British people," he said. "The first 100 days were very busy ... it was a very frenetic time, but you ain't seen nothing yet folks."

contribution to building peace in the strife-torn nation and supporting the local communities. India is among the largest troop contributing countries to UN peacekeeping operations. Currently, 2,342 Indian troops and 25 police personnel are de-

> South Sudan (UNMISS). The UNMISS said the Indian nised for their strong contribution to building peace in conflict-afgoing above and beyond their du-

ployed with the UN Mission in

peacekeepers have been "recogfected South Sudan as well as for ties to support local communities.' The 850 Indian troops serving

with the UNMISS received the United Nations Medal for their dedication and sacrifice, "serving so far away from home to protect civilians and build durable peace in South Sudan," according to a statement by the UNMISS. The Indian troops were particularly praised for their efforts to support peace talks. **PTI** 

### 10 from Afghan family killed China's 2nd aircraft carrier while on their way to funeral joins service; focus on SCS

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA** KHOST, DECEMBER 17

TEN MEMBERS of the same family were killed Tuesday when their car detonated a roadside bomb as they were travelling to a funeral in eastern Afghanistan, officials said.

The victims had been driving in Khost province in a large station wagon-type vehicle when the blast occurred, according to local and national officials.

"The casualties include five men, two women and three chil-

dren all from one family," Talib Mangal, a spokesman for Khost's governor, said. "They were travelling to Logar province to attend a funeral." Provincial police spokesman Adil Haidar confirmed the toll and incident details, while interior ministry spokesman Nasrat Rahimi added it was a Taliban bomb placed by the side of the road.

The Taliban did not immediately comment. Deadly violence continues to grip Afghanistan even as the US and the Taliban negotiate a peace deal.

**KJM VARMA** BEIJING, DECEMBER 17

CHINA ON Tuesday launched its second aircraft carrier from a key base in the South China Sea (SCS), boosting its military ambition in the region where Beijing's claims of sovereignty is challenged by

the US and other nations. The ship named after Shandong Province in east China was launched from Sanya, located in the South China Sea coast by President Xi

General Secretary of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) and head of the country's military.

Jinping, who is also the

The aircraft carrier is China first domestically-built ship.

China currently has one aircraft carrier Liaoning, a re-fit of the Soviet era ship which was commissioned in 2012. It is largely used for training, specially to test the fighter jet J-15, which has been specifically developed to operate from the decks of the aircraft carriers. PTI

### ADULTS IN THE VILLAGE COMPENSATE FOR THE LACK OF CHILDREN WITH THE COMPANY OF HUNDREDS OF GIANT HANDMADE DOLLS

# There are no children in this Japanese village, just lots of life-size dolls

**MOTOKO RICH & NADIA SHIRA COHEN** NAGORO, DECEMBER 17

THE LAST children were born in the remote mountain village of Nagoro 18 years ago.

Now, a little more than two dozen adults live in this outpost straddling a river on the Japanese island of Shikoku. The elementary school closed its doors in 2012, shortly after the last two

students completed sixth grade. But on a recent bright autumn Sunday, Tsukimi Ayano brought the school back to life.

Ayano, 70, had arrayed more than 40 handmade dolls in a lifelike tableau on the grounds of the shuttered school. Recreating a school sports day known as "undokai," a staple of the Iapanese calendar, she had posed child-size dolls in a footrace, perched on a swing set and tossing balls.

It just so happened that she did

it with dolls rather than humans.

"We never see children here anymore," said Ayano, who was born in Nagoro, and has staged an annual doll festival for the last seven years.

"I wish there were more chil-

dren because it would be more cheerful," she said. "So I made the children."

Japan's population is shrinking and ageing, and nowhere is the trend felt more intensively than in its rural regions, where a low birthrate is exacerbated by dwindling employment opportunities and an inconvenient lifestyle. "There are no chances for

young people here," said Ayano, who remembers when the village had a medical clinic, a pachinko gambling parlor and a diner. Now, Nagoro does not have even one shop. "They can't make a living."



event. Japan's population is fast shrinking and ageing. Reuters

Some 350 dolls made by Avano and her friends outnumber the human residents by more than 10-to-1. All around

Nagoro, she has staged the dolls - made of wood and wire frames, stuffed with newspapers and dressed in old clothes donated from across Japan — in various scenes evoking the real people who once populated the village.

An old woman tends a roadside grave, while another rests in a wheelchair. Construction workers smoke cigarettes on break while others wait at the bus stop. A father pulls a wagon full of children. A mischief maker shakes chestnuts from a tree.

Inside the school, dolls loiter on the stairwells or sit at desks in front of teachers giving eternal lessons. Ayano has a playful touch, giving many of her dolls an impish mien. The overall effect, of a town dominated by dolls, is not as eerie as it might initially sound.

"I don't think it's creepy," said Fanny Raynaud, 38, a nurse from France who was travelling through Japan on a motorcycle with her husband, Chris Monnon, 55. They stopped in Nagoro after reading about the dolls on a travel blog. "I think it is a beautiful way

to make the village alive again, Raynaud said. Another visitor scrawled a more pointed message on a chalk-

board in one of the school's classrooms: "Where are the living?" Nagoro is one of several hamlets consolidated into a municipal area where more than 40% of the

residents are 65 or older. Even with child care subsidies, discounted medical bills and housing support, the area has lit-

tle luck attracting new residents or luring back adults who were born in the region. **NYT**