

TOPOF THE WORLD



Benjamin Netanyahu

'Israel has full right to annex Jordan Valley'

Lisbon: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Thursday that Israel has the "full right" to annex the Jordan Valley if it chose to, even as the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court warned the country against taking the step. Netanyahu said his proposal was discussed during a late-night meeting with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. He said they also agreed to move forward with plans for a joint defense treaty. The Israeli leader, beleaguered by a corruption indictment and political instability at home, is promoting the two initiatives as a justification for staying in office.

DR CONGO Militia fighters behead 16 in new massacre

Beni: Suspected militia fighters have decapitated 16 people in a new village massacre near Beni in northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo, civil society sources said on Friday. Three more civilians were wounded in Beni town by an explosive device on Thursday night, an official source said. The killings on Thursday in the Mbau region north of Beni have been blamed on the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a militia group responsible for a string of massacres since the start of November. The massacre targeted the small village of Mantumbi.

GREECE Libyan envoy expelled over maritime deal

Athens: Greece's foreign ministry on Friday said it was expelling the Libyan ambassador for failing to disclose the contents of a disputed maritime jurisdiction deal with Turkey that has raised hackles in the region. "I regret to announce that the Libyan ambassador was summoned to the ministry this morning and was informed of his expulsion," Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias told reporters, adding that the envoy had been given 72 hours to leave Greece. Dendias insisted the move does not constitute a break of relations with Libya.

RAPHAEL MINDER MADRID, DECEMBER 6

A CONTESTANT on a Spanish reality television show says she was sexually assaulted by another contestant while she was unconscious — an attack that was recorded. The show's producers then forced her to watch and filmed her reaction. Two years later, it has all burst into the open, with the recent leak of a video in which the woman, then 24, can be seen sobbing after the show's staff made her watch images of her own assault. The video of her pained reac-

Iran nuclear deal parties meet in Vienna as accord nears collapse

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA VIENNA, DECEMBER 6

THE SIGNATORIES to the Iran nuclear deal remain committed to the faltering accord, China and Russia said Friday, following crunch talks as Tehran has vowed to continue to breach limits on its nuclear programme. Envoys from Britain, France, Germany, China, Russia and Iran took part in the three-hour-long meeting in Vienna, which is the first time the six parties have gathered in this format since July. Since May, Iran has taken a series of measures, including stepping up uranium enrichment, in breach of the 2015 deal, with another such move likely in early January. Iran insists that under the agreement it has the right to take these measures in retaliation for the US's withdrawal from the deal in 2018 and reimposition of crippling sanctions. Since last month, European members have in turn begun raising the possibility of triggering the so-called "dispute resolution mechanism" foreseen in the accord, which could lead to the resumption of UN sanctions on Iran. On the eve of what was already likely to be a strained meeting, Britain, France and Germany accused Iran of developing nuclear-capable ballistic missiles, in a letter to the UN on Thursday.



At the summit, Friday. Reuters

Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif dismissed the allegation as "desperate falsehood". Chinese delegation head Cong Fu told reporters after the talks that all parties remained committed to the deal and the dispute resolution mechanism — which China is against activating — was not evoked. "All countries need to refrain from taking actions that may further complicate the situation," the senior diplomat said. "Bringing this issue to the (UN) Security Council is not in anybody's interest except the US maybe." Other envoys did not talk as they left the EU delegation, which hosted the meeting. Russia's representative, ambassador Mikhail Ulyanov, said on Twitter that meeting participants remained "fully united in their support and commitment" to the accord despite "all the difficulties and all the differences".

3,045 sexual assaults reported in US rides last year, says Uber

KATE CONGER SAN FRANCISCO, DECEMBER 6

UBER SAID on Thursday that it had reports of 3,045 sexual assaults during its rides in the United States in 2018, with nine people murdered and 58 killed in crashes, in its first study detailing unsafe incidents on the ride-hailing platform. The number of incidents represented a fraction — just 0.0002 percent — of Uber's 1.3 billion rides in the United States last year, the company said. There are few comparable figures to judge Uber's safety record against. The New York Police Department, which keeps a register of sex crimes and rapes that occur on transit systems, counted 533 in 2018. But even one of Uber's top executives said the company's findings were difficult to stomach. "The numbers are jarring and hard to digest," Tony West, Uber's chief legal officer, said in an interview. "What it says is that Uber is a reflection of the society it serves." The report did not give a comprehensive picture of safety across Uber's operations. It provided no information on the 65 countries outside the United States where Uber offers its services. In Brazil, India and elsewhere, murders and assaults stemming from ride-hailing services have been widely reported. Still, Uber's study establishes a benchmark for safety in an industry where such data has been scarce. NYT



This was Uber's first study detailing unsafe incidents

EXPLAINED Under pressure

SAFETY HAS always been an issue for companies such as Uber, as they rely on a large volume of "contractors" to operate. Initially, they purportedly flouted norms by allowing almost anyone with a car to join the platform. Under pressure, they began to implement safety measures in recent years. Uber has an automated system which checks its drivers' records and criminal history, based on which it said it has disqualified 40,000 drivers since 2018. Uber's study was ordered amidst this pressure.

Iranian regime may have killed over 1,000 amid protests: US

LALIT K JHA WASHINGTON, DECEMBER 6

IRANIAN SECURITY forces may have killed more than 1,000 people since protests over a steep hike in petrol prices erupted last month, the US has claimed, urging the international community to stand united with America against the regime's "abhorrent and unacceptable" treatment of its people. Violent protests broke out in Iran on November 15 after the government hiked fuel prices by as much as 200 per cent. The Iranian authorities have dismissed the high death tolls reported by foreign sources as "utter lies", but have acknowledged that five people, four security personnel and one civilian, were killed in the unrest. "As the truth is trickling out of Iran, it appears the regime could have murdered over 1,000 Iranian citizens since the protests began," State Department Special Representative for Iran Brian Hook said Thursday. The US has received more than 32,000 videos of protesters through a secure site and they reveal the brutality of the

IRANIAN FORCES WERE SHOOTING TO KILL: UN

■ Iranian forces were 'shooting to kill' in their crackdown, as per video footage, the UN human rights chief said Friday

■ Bachelet said footage appears to show people were shot while fleeing, or 'directly in the face and vital organs'

■ She urged Iran to allow independent probes into the violations, and release protesters who were unfairly stripped of liberty



Reuters/File

regime, Hook said, adding that the State Department was looking at each one of them. Iran has given no official death toll but Amnesty International said on Monday that it had documented the deaths of at least 208 protesters, making the unrest the bloodiest since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Tehran's clerical rulers have blamed "thugs" linked to its opponents in exile and the country's main foreign foes — the US, Israel and Saudi Arabia — for the protests. Referring to some of the videos, Hook said that in Mahshahr, a city in southwest

Iran, a number of Iranian demonstrators blocked a road when the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) opened fire without warning, killing several people. "Many of the protesters fled to nearby marshlands to escape. The IRGC tracked them down and surrounded them with machine guns mounted on trucks. They then sprayed the protesters with bullets. Between the rounds of machine-gun fire, the screams of the victims can be heard," he said. In this one incident, the regime murdered as many as 100 Iranians and possibly more, he said. PTI



BUSHFIRES NEAR SYDNEY WORSEN

Fire trucks during a blaze in Werombi. Bushfires fanned by winds combined into a single giant blaze north of Sydney late on Friday, blanketing it in hazardous smoke, prompting calls for outdoor workers to stay home. Reuters

Corbyn claims leaked paper exposes Brexit fraud, Boris dismisses allegation

REUTERS LONDON/DETING, DECEMBER 6

PRIME MINISTER Boris Johnson's deal to leave the European Union will be "highly disruptive" to Northern Ireland's economy and threaten its exporters, according to a confidential government document published by the opposition Labour Party on Friday. Johnson has repeatedly said there would be no customs



Boris Johnson

checks on goods moving between Northern Ireland and

mainland Britain under the divorce deal which he agreed with the European Union. But the document, marked "official, sensitive", says exporters would have to make customs declarations when moving goods between Northern Ireland and Britain and these new barriers will be "highly disruptive" to Northern Ireland's economy. The leaked analysis warns that 98 per cent of Northern Irish exporters to Britain are

Three shot dead in US naval base, gunman killed

PATRICIA MAZZEI & CHRISTINE HAUSER DECEMBER 6

THREE PEOPLE were shot dead by a gunman who opened fire early on Friday at Naval Air Station Pensacola, the authorities said. Sheriff David Morgan of Escambia County said one of his deputies killed the gunman at the base, which employs more than 16,000 military personnel and 7,400 civilians. Two deputies were shot, in the arm and the knee, but are expected to recover, the sheriff said. Capt Timothy F Kinsella Jr, the base's commanding officer, declined to identify the gunman or say whether he was a serviceman. The shooting took place in a classroom building on the base, where training is routinely conducted, he said. Captain Kinsella declined to "speculate" on whether the shooting was being investigated as an act of terrorism. Kathy Bowers, a spokeswoman for Baptist Hospital in Pensacola, said that the hospital had received eight patients. One of the victims transported to Baptist later died, according to Chief Deputy Chip Simmons of Escambia County. Two other victims died on the base, he said. The identities of the victims have not been released. "They're part of the Navy



At the site of the shooting

family," Captain Kinsella said. "They're part of us, and our heart goes out to those of you who may be affected by this tragedy." Officials began receiving calls about the shooting about 6:50 am, and the base was put on lockdown. "Walking through the crime scene was like being on the set of a movie," Sheriff Morgan said. He added that the authorities were not looking for any additional gunman. President Trump has been briefed about the shooting and was monitoring the situation, the White House said. Vice President Mike Pence said in a message on Twitter that he was "saddened" to hear about the "horrible" shooting. In an earlier incident this week, a sailor had opened fire at a dry dock at the base, the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, fatally shooting two shipyard workers and injuring another before killing himself, officials said. NYT

China hopes to 'strengthen cooperation' with Hong Kong police

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA BEIJING, DECEMBER 6

CHINA'S HEAD of public security called for stronger cooperation with Hong Kong's police on Friday, according to state media, as pro-democracy protesters vowed to hold another massive rally over the weekend. In a meeting with Hong Kong police chief Tang Ping-keung, Chinese public security minister Zhao Kezhi said he hoped to "strengthen cooperation" and "jointly safeguard national security and the social stability of Hong Kong." "The central government and public security ministry will always be a strong backup force for the Hong Kong police force," he told Tang in Beijing, according to a readout by the official news site of China's public security ministry. The protests are also backlit by fears Beijing may send in troops to squash the movement. At Friday's meeting, Tang thanked China's public security bureau for its "vigorous support and help" and told Zhao that the city's police force would "throw all of its energy" into stopping violence and unrest in Hong Kong. The force's reputation has suffered during the protests, with many accusing officers of brutality. A new poll released on Friday by the Hong Kong Public Opinion Programme showed new record disapproval for the force with 40 percent of respondents now giving it the lowest mark of zero.

'THEY ALLOWED HIM TO STAY BY MY SIDE FOR MANY HOURS' Spain's 'Big Brother' accused of filming sexual assault, making victim watch

RAPHAEL MINDER MADRID, DECEMBER 6

A CONTESTANT on a Spanish reality television show says she was sexually assaulted by another contestant while she was unconscious — an attack that was recorded. The show's producers then forced her to watch and filmed her reaction. Two years later, it has all burst into the open, with the recent leak of a video in which the woman, then 24, can be seen sobbing after the show's staff made her watch images of her own assault. The video of her pained reac-

tion has spread widely on social media, prompting a national backlash against the show, "Gran Hermano" — the Spanish version of "Big Brother" — and against what campaigners against sex crimes and harassment say is a culture that still does not take the problems seriously enough. The leaked video, shown in Spanish media and posted online, shows the woman watching the recording, then weeping, pacing and burying her face in her hands. She begs to go talk to "her friends out there," but an offscreen member of the show's staff tells her that she cannot see her friends and should not tell



A demonstration against the release on bail of five men cleared of a gang rape of a teenager in Madrid. Reuters/File

anyone what happened. The entire episode — her being confronted with the video of the assault, her horrified re-

sponse to it and her exchange with a staff member, who tells her to "relax" — all happened with the cameras rolling. The crew recorded the scene as if it were another part of the action, one of the interviews they conduct with contestants after key moments on the show. The leak coincided with news that an investigating judge had decided to pursue a criminal case, though so far no one has been indicted. Video of the alleged assault itself has not been seen publicly. But the unseen staff member in the leaked video said the male contestant, who had struck up a romantic rela-

tionship with the woman after meeting her on the show, offered her support, even as the camera tracked her pacing and crying. The production company reported the man to the police hours later, and expelled him from the show. The broadcaster released a statement explaining that he had been ousted for "intolerable" behavior, but gave no details. The production staff has been broadly condemned for the failure to intervene, and for treating the young woman in a way that she and critics of the show say traumatized her. Last week, Zeppelin TV, the company that produces "Big

Brother" in Spain, issued an apology to the woman and said it would put in place rules to avoid anything similar happening, notably by banning alcohol from the set. But the statement did not dampen public outrage, which has driven dozens of corporate sponsors to drop the show. "They allowed him to stay by my side many hours when they had sufficient proof to get him out immediately and then decide what to do with him," the young woman, Carlota Prado, said in an interview with *El Confidencial*, the publication that first obtained the leaked video. The production staff allowed

the man, José María López, who was also 24 at the time, "to laugh at my face by telling me that he looked after me," she said. In the interview, she said she had resisted López's advances in the presence of other contestants, and again in a bedroom before losing consciousness. "I cannot understand how the program allowed this," she said. Before showing her the video of assault, she said, the production team gave no hint of what she was about to see, magnifying the shock. Given a choice, she said, she would not have viewed it. A representative of López could not be reached for comment. NYT