

TOP OF THE WORLD



Hafiz Saeed

PAKISTAN

Terror financing trial: Saeed gets brief breather

Lahore: Mumbai terror attack mastermind and chief of the JuD Hafiz Saeed could not be indicted by Lahore's anti-terrorism court for terror financing charges as the authorities strangely failed to produce the other co-accused at the high profile hearing on Saturday. The development came a day after India said it was aware that the mastermind of the Mumbai terror attack was "roaming freely" and enjoying "Pakistan's hospitality". The court here has now fixed December 11 as date for framing the charges against LeT founder and co-accused Malik Zafar Iqbal.

SYRIA

Air strikes kill at least 20 people in Idlib

Beirut: Air strikes by Syrian government and Russian forces killed at least 20 people in rebel-held northwestern Syria on Saturday, activists and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. The attacks hit five villages in Idlib, part of the last major foothold of the insurgency against President Bashar al-Assad. Russian jets killed at least nine people in an attack that hit a market in the village of Balyoun and another four people in a strike on the village of al-Bara, the Observatory said. Five more people were killed in a barrel bomb attack by Syrian government helicopters on the village of Abdita, it added.

KENYA

Eight killed in bus attack

Nairobi: Several police officers were among at least eight people killed in an attack on a bus in northeast Kenya believed to have been staged by the Somali Islamist Shebaab group, a presidential spokesperson said Saturday. President Uhuru Kenyatta had been briefed on the "brutal" murders of eight people, including police, during the jihadist attack in Wajir county, the spokesperson said in a statement. "We lost seven police officers in the bus attack," a senior police source told AFP. "The total number of the people killed are 10," the source said.

AT LEAST 130 WOUNDED IN NIGHT OF VIOLENCE

Gunmen kill 25 in Baghdad attack, protesters turn out in defiance

AGENCIES

BAGHDAD, DECEMBER 7

GUNMEN IN cars opened fire Friday in Baghdad's Khilani Square, leaving at least 25 people dead and 130 wounded, Iraqi security and medical officials said. At least two of the dead were policemen.

Protesters fearing for their lives ran from the plaza to nearby Tahrir Square and mosques to take cover. It wasn't immediately clear who did the shooting.

"Government forces were one kilometre away and didn't interfere," said a young volunteer medic who had treated wounded people overnight.

The attack came as anti-government demonstrators occupied parts of Jumphuriya, Sinak and Ahar bridges in a standoff with security forces. All the bridges lead to or near the heavily-fortified Green Zone, the seat of Iraq's government.

After the attack, Iraqi protesters defiantly turned out on Saturday across the country's south and in the capital.

The assailants briefly ousted demonstrators from a building they had occupied for weeks in Baghdad, despite the presence of



A protester checks the site of the attack in Baghdad on Saturday. AP

security forces nearby who did not intervene.

The panicked protesters rushed out into the street, sending out calls through social media for people to come to their main gathering place in Tahrir Square. Before dawn on Saturday, hundreds had arrived.

"I came after the incident and there were tons of people in Tahrir and by Al-Sinek," a nearby

bridge, one demonstrator told AFP, adding he was shocked by the lax security measures.

"The police were there but didn't even search me," he said.

The tensions continued into Saturday, when truckloads of armed men briefly blocked a main road near Tahrir, firing their weapons and shouting, witnesses said. Army units then deployed on the street.

Further south in Nasiriyah, the usual rallies swelled with crowds also upset over the previous night's developments, an AFP correspondent said.

"We are coming in solidarity with Baghdad," one said.

In Diwaniyah, another protest hotspot, thousands turned out early on Saturday but security forces, too, deployed in larger numbers.

DRONE HITS IRAQ CLERIC'S HOME AS TENSIONS RISE

AN ARMED drone targeted the home of prominent Iraqi cleric Moqtada Sadr on Saturday, hours after his supporters deployed in Baghdad in response to an attack that left 25 protesters dead

SADR HAS backed the protests, but demonstrators have been wary of his support as they feared it could pave the way for confrontations with pro-government forces

HE HEADS Saraya al-Salam (Peace Brigades), a paramilitary group. They are nicknamed 'blue helmets' for their headgear. A source within Saraya told AFP one of its own members had died in the overnight clash

PRISONER SWAP

Iran frees American held since 2016

MICHAEL CROWLEY

WASHINGTON, DECEMBER 7

IRAN ON Saturday freed an American graduate student who had been imprisoned in Tehran for more than three years on suspicion of being a spy, in an exchange of prisoners at a moment of high tensions with Washington.

The American, Xiyue Wang, was flown in a Swiss government airplane from Tehran to Zurich, where he was met by Brian H Hook, the State Department's special representative for Iran, according to two senior United States officials.

Wang, 38, was a fourth-year Princeton University graduate student conducting research in Iran when he was arrested there in August 2016. He was charged



Xiyue Wang. AP/File

with espionage and sentenced to 10 years in prison. United States officials deny that Wang was a spy.

In exchange for Wang's release, the US freed Masoud Soleimani, an Iranian scientist who was arrested at a Chicago airport last year and was convicted on charges of violating American trade sanctions against Iran.

The White House confirmed the prisoner swap early on Saturday with a statement from President Trump. Iran's foreign minister, Javad Zarif, also confirmed the deal on Twitter. NYT

‘Is his body here?’: Pak on London Bridge attacker being buried in PoK

M ZULQERNAIN & SAJJAD HUSSAIN

LAHORE/ISLAMABAD, DEC 7

USMAN KHAN, the convicted terrorist of Pakistani origin who killed two people in the London Bridge attack before being shot dead by the Scotland Yard, has been buried at his ancestral village in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

However, the Foreign Office said it was not aware if Khan's body was in Pakistan.

The body of the 28-year-old London Bridge terrorist, who was a British citizen, was flown to Islamabad from London and

Khan's body was shifted to Islamabad from London aboard a PIA flight PK-792. Later, it was handed over to his family"

— ABDUL HAFEEZ

PIA GENERAL MANAGER (PR)

then handed over to his family on Friday.

"Usman's family didn't want to bury him in the UK," one of his relatives said, adding that his funeral prayers were earlier offered in a mosque in UK's Birmingham city.

According to Dawn newspaper, Khan's body was brought by his family from the Islamabad airport to Kijlani village in PoK's Kotli district where the funeral took place on Friday afternoon, following which he was buried in a local graveyard.

His family members refused to speak to the media, saying they had already given their statement through the London police on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the Foreign Office said it was not aware if Khan's body was in Pakistan. "Is his body in Pakistan? I have no confirmation of this," the Dawn quoted the Foreign Office spokesperson as saying. PTI

US resumes talks with Taliban in Doha, ceasefire a focus area

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

DOHA, DECEMBER 7

WASHINGTON RESUMED talks with the Taliban in Qatar Saturday, both sides said, three months after President Donald Trump abruptly halted diplomatic efforts that could end America's longest war.

In September, the United States and the Taliban had appeared on the verge of signing a deal that would have seen Washington begin withdrawing thousands of troops in return for security guarantees.

It was also expected to pave the way towards direct talks between



A Taliban delegation during a Doha meeting in May. File

tween the Taliban and the government in Kabul and, ultimately, a possible peace agreement after more than 18 years of war.

"The US rejoined talks today in Doha. The focus of discussion

Protesters clashed with police as thousands took to the streets of Chile's capital for a demonstration that marked 50 days since the outbreak of the country's worst civil unrest in decades

Protesters held up a Chilean flag with a closed eye, a symbol of the people who suffered optical injuries during the violence. Some, armed with stones and Molotov cocktails, clashed with police, who scattered them with tear gas and water cannons

The crisis is the worst in three decades of Chilean democracy and has led to 26 deaths and more than 12,000 injuries, according to the Organisation of American States, with 20,600 people detained PTI

EXPLAINED

What is the operation?

OPERATION SECONDARY Infektion is an alleged Russian effort to use fake accounts and false papers to target various interests in Western nations. The methodology, identified by a research lab, involves planting stories in the far reaches of the internet and using accounts on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Medium to amplify them, as per a report. The operation appeared to range from fuelling anti-immigrant sentiment in Germany to stoking tensions between NATO allies.

clined to comment on how the party obtained the leaked documents. "These documents reveal the plot against our NHS. And of course neither the UK nor the US government have denied their authenticity," he said. REUTERS

White House: Won't take part in Trump impeachment proceedings

LALIT K JHA

WASHINGTON, DECEMBER 7

THE WHITE House on Friday informed the House Democrats that it would not participate in the impeachment proceedings against President Donald Trump.

In a letter to House Judiciary Committee chair, Jerrold Nadler, White House Counsel Pat Cipollone said it would be a "reckless abuse of power" for them to adopt the articles of impeachment. This "would constitute the most unjust, highly partisan, and unconstitutional attempt at impeachment in our Nation's history," he wrote.

"As the President has recently stated: 'if you are going to impeach me, do it now, fast, so we can have a fair trial in the Senate,'" he wrote and slammed the ongoing impeachment inquiry as "completely baseless."

Expressing disappointment over the White House response, Nadler said that American people deserve answers. "The House invited, and then subpoenaed, his top advisors. The President ordered them not to show and continues to block key evidence from Congress. We are disappointed that the President has once again failed to provide those answers here," he said.

"If the President has no good response to the allegations, then he would not want to appear before the Committee. Having declined this opportunity, he cannot claim that the process is unfair. The President's failure will not prevent us from carrying out our solemn constitutional duty," Nadler said. PTI

Don't meddle after deciding to withdraw, developing countries tell US



EXPRESS IN MADRID

AMITABH SINHA

DECEMBER 7

A NUMBER of developing countries on Saturday took exception to the United States' efforts in trying to steer the negotiations in meeting rooms, saying it no longer had a stake in the effective imple-

mentation of the Paris Agreement, having walked out of it.

The US had announced its decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement within months of Donald Trump becoming president. In the first week of November, the US had formally moved an application for withdrawal. The withdrawal will be effective from November 4 next year.

"The US is sitting in meeting rooms and trying to influence the agenda. This was objected to in several meetings today, by Tuvalu on behalf of small island nations, by some African group countries, and also by India and some other developing coun-



During a demonstration in Madrid. AP

tries," an Indian negotiator said. "They would be out of the Paris Agreement by next year, so

it is not right for them to influence decisions..." he said.

The US remains a party to the

UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the mother agreement on climate change. Annual climate change talks, like the one in Madrid, include meetings on issues relating to framework agreement as well as the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, the two international climate arrangements that the framework gave birth to. The US is not a party to the Kyoto Protocol either, having never ratified it. From next year, the US will only be able to attend meetings under the framework agreement, and not those under the Paris Agreement. The Kyoto Protocol is expiring next year.

Meanwhile, India on Saturday reiterated its demand that the unfulfilled promises of the developed countries in the pre-2020 period, under the Kyoto Protocol, must not be forgotten now that the Kyoto Protocol was ending.

"None of the developed countries are fulfilling their commitments under the Kyoto Protocol, while now everyone is being asked to do more, be more ambitious, under the Paris Agreement. But there should be greater emphasis on delivery of commitments. We had promised a set of actions under the Paris Agreement, and all current analy-

ses by independent international agencies show India is one of the best performers on its climate action plan. Developed countries, however, have failed us consistently," India's Environment Secretary CK Mishra said.

India, along with some other countries, is demanding that the final decisions of these talks should include provisions calling on developed parties to fulfill their Kyoto Protocol targets.

A week into negotiations, the Madrid talks have reported little progress on their main agenda — an agreement over the creation of a new carbon market under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.

Carbon markets allow countries to trade emissions reductions between themselves. A country which is over-achieving its targets can do more and sell its extra efforts, translated into carbon credits, to a country that is struggling to meet its targets.

India and some other countries have been demanding that their unsold carbon credits from Kyoto Protocol regime should be transitioned to the new market under the Paris Agreement, a demand that is opposed by the developed world, which has been raising questions over the "quality" of the carbon credits under Kyoto Protocol.