

TOPOF THE WORLD



Benedict XVI retired in 2013, after which Francis was elected by cardinals as pope

VATICAN Retired pope lauds celibacy as Francis mulls married priests

Vatican City: Retired Pope Benedict XVI has reignited debate about the wisdom of having a reigning and retired pope living side-by-side, reaffirming the “necessity” of priestly celibacy at a time when Pope Francis is considering whether to ordain married men to address the Catholic priest shortage. Benedict co-authored a book, *From the Depths of Our Hearts: Priesthood, Celibacy and the Crisis of the Catholic Church*, along with Guinean Cardinal Robert Sarah, who heads the Vatican’s liturgy office and has been a quiet critic of Francis.

PAKISTAN Rain, snowfall wreak havoc, claim 14 lives in Balochistan

Islamabad: Heavy snowfall and incessant rain have left at least 14 people, including women and children, dead and over a dozen injured in several parts of Balochistan, Pakistan’s largest province, a media report said on Monday. The inclement weather has affected road and air traffic and disconnected Balochistan with rest of the world. Continuous snowfall in the provincial capital Quetta has led to the collapse of a large number of mud houses, claiming lives in the border towns of Chaman, Barshor and Bostan area of Pishin district.

SLOVAKIA Former soldier admits in court to killing journalist

Pezinok: Former soldier Miroslav Marcek admitted on Monday to the killing of a Slovak journalist and his fiancée, a crime that sparked mass protests leading to the resignation of Prime Minister Robert Fico. Marcek told the Special Criminal Court in Pezinok, north of the capital Bratislava, that he accepted guilt, an admission that could reduce his sentence from potential life imprisonment. Marcek was charged with shooting investigative reporter Jan Kuciak, 27, and his fiancée Martina Kusnirova in their house outside Bratislava in February, 2018.

ISRAEL Left parties merge ahead of March election

Jerusalem: Israel’s left-wing parties said they would join forces ahead of a March 2 national election to regain dwindling influence and pose a fresh challenge to PM Benjamin Netanyahu. Labour, which dominated Israeli politics for decades and spearheaded peace efforts with Palestine, will join with the veteran party Meretz after seeing their combined seats in the 120-seat Knesset reduce from 29 to 11 after two inconclusive elections this year.

3RD DAY OF PROTESTS AFTER MILITARY ADMITS TO SHOOTING PLANE

Iran cracks down as protesters rage over downing of airliner

Police deny reports that it opened fire on demonstrators; chants of ‘clerics get lost’ at universities

BABAK DEHGHANPISHEH DUBAI, JANUARY 13

PROTESTERS DENOUNCING Iran’s clerical rulers took to the streets and riot police deployed to face them on Monday, in a third day of demonstrations after authorities acknowledged shooting down a passenger plane by accident.

Demonstrations at home — some apparently met by a violent crackdown — have become the latest consequence of one of the most destabilising escalations between the US and Iran since the Iranian revolution of 1979.

Video from Iran showed students Monday chanting slogans including “Clerics get lost!” outside universities in the cities of Isfahan and Tehran, where riot police were filmed taking up positions on the streets of the capital. Images emerged from the previous two days of protests showing wounded people being carried and pools of blood on the ground, while the sound of gunfire could be heard. Authorities denied that police had opened fire. US President Donald Trump, who raised the stakes last week by ordering the killing of Iran’s most powerful military commander, tweeted to Iran’s leaders: “don’t kill your protesters.”

Tehran has acknowledged shooting down the Ukrainian jetliner by mistake on Wednesday, killing 176 people, hours after it had fired at U.S. targets in Iraq to retaliate for the killing of General Qassem Soleimani in a drone strike in Baghdad.

Iranian public anger, rumbling for days as Iran repeatedly denied it was to blame for the

INDIAN-ORIGIN PROFESSOR FIRED FOR FB POST ABOUT IRAN ATTACK ON U.S.

New York: An Indian-origin professor at a Massachusetts college was fired after posting on Facebook what he described as a joke suggesting that Iran pick sites in the United States to bomb.

Asheen Phansey wrote on his Facebook page on Jan 5 that Iran should “tweet a list of 52 sites of beloved American cultural heritage that he would bomb,” suggesting the Mall of America and a Kardashian house as targets.

The post was a response to US President Donald Trump’s comments that he would target Iranian cultural sites if Iran retaliated against the US for killing one of its top generals.

Babson College, where Phansey worked, fired him after learning of the post.

Phansey said in a statement that he regretted his “bad attempt at humour”.

plane crash, erupted into protests on Saturday when the military admitted its role.

Videos posted late on Sunday recorded gunshots in the vicinity of protests in Tehran’s Azadi Square. Wounded were being carried and security personnel could be seen running with rifles. Other posts showed riot police hitting protesters with batons as people nearby shouted “Don’t beat them!” **REUTERS**



CANADA MOURNS: Several vigils were held in Canada for the 57 Canadian victims of the Ukrainian airliner crash in Iran. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told a memorial event in Edmonton that “this tragedy struck our Iranian-Canadian community, leaving cities like Edmonton reeling, but this was truly a Canadian tragedy”. *Reuters*

‘Grieving nations’ consider legal action against Iran, says Ukraine

JOHN GEDDIE & ARADHANA ARAVINDAN SINGAPORE, JANUARY 13

FIVE NATIONS whose citizens died when an airliner was shot down by Iran last week will meet in London on Thursday to discuss possible legal action, Ukraine’s foreign minister told *Reuters*.

Speaking at the sidelines of an official visit to Singapore on Monday, Vadym Prystaiko said the countries would also discuss compensation and the investigation into the incident. All 176



USA BOOKER ENDS WHITE HOUSE BID

Democrat Cory Booker dropped out of the presidential race Monday, ending a campaign whose message of unity and love failed to resonate in a political era marked by chaos and anxiety. His departure now leaves a field that was once the most diverse in history with just one remaining African American candidate, former Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick.

Lahore High Court annuls Musharraf’s death sentence

LHC: Formation of special court in case against ex-president unconstitutional

M ZULQERNAIN LAHORE, JANUARY 13



A special court had sentenced him to death in a treason case last month

IN A major relief for Pakistan’s self-exiled former president, a top court here on Monday declared his trial in the high treason case as “unconstitutional” leading to the annulment of his death penalty by a special tribunal.

The special court of Islamabad on December 17 handed down the death penalty to 74-year-old Musharraf after six years of hearing the high-profile treason case against him. The case was filed by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz government in 2013.

A three-member full Bench of the Lahore High Court, comprising Justices Syed Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi, Mohammad Ameer Bhatti and Chaudhry Masood Jahangir, unanimously declared the formation of the special court against Musharraf as “unconstitutional”.

The court also ruled that the treason case against Musharraf was not prepared in accordance with the law.

“The Lahore High Court has declared unconstitutional all actions right from initiation of complaint and its conclusion against General (ret’d.) Musharraf by the special court,” Additional Attorney General of Pakistan Ishfaq A Khan told *PTI*. “Gen Musharraf is a free man now,” he added.

Khan earlier told the Bench that the special court was constituted without the formal approval of the Cabinet. He also maintained that the charges filed against the former president were flimsy since, under the emergency powers of the executive, fundamental rights could be suspended.

Justice Naqvi had asked the

federal government on Friday to submit a summary on the formation of the special court and had directed the government’s lawyer to present arguments on Monday.

Musharraf, who has been in Dubai in self exile for the last five years or so, hailed the court’s decision. The ailing retired general also said his health is improving.

Monday’s ruling came in response to a petition filed by him challenging the formation of the special court for the high treason case against him.

In his petition, Musharraf asked the court to set aside the special court’s verdict for being illegal, without jurisdiction and unconstitutional, while also seeking suspension of the verdict till a decision on his petition was made.

The special court had also ordered that corpse of the former military ruler be dragged to parliament and hang for three days if he dies before his execution.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan’s government was angered by the ruling and said it would move to the Supreme Judicial Council to unseat the “mentally unfit” head of the special court.

The verdict had also angered the Army, which said the ruling was against all human, religious and civilizational values. **PTI**

UK ROYALS HOLD CRISIS TALKS

Queen agrees to Harry’s wishes after meeting

TOBY MELVILLE & GERHARD MEY SANDRINGHAM, JANUARY 13

QUEEN ELIZABETH has given her blessing to her grandson Prince Harry and his wife Meghan’s wish for a more independent future after an urgent meeting on Monday to resolve the rift in the British royal family.

Harry and his American actress wife Meghan triggered the crisis by announcing last week that they wished to step back from royal duties and spend more time in North America.



Harry and Meghan had announced plans to step back from royal duties and spend more time in North America. *AP file*

After a meeting at the queen’s rural Sandringham estate in eastern England also attended by

Harry’s father and heir to the throne, Prince Charles, and his elder brother, Prince William, the

93-year-old Elizabeth said the family backed the couple’s plans.

“Although we would have preferred them to remain full-time working Members of the Royal Family, we respect and understand their wish to live a more independent life as a family while remaining a valued part of my family,” the monarch said in a statement. “Harry and Meghan have made clear that they do not want to be reliant on public funds in their new lives. It has therefore been agreed that there will be a period of transition in which the Sussexes will spend time in Canada and the UK.” **REUTERS**

Mistaken for staff: UK MPs call out racism

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA LONDON, JANUARY 13

BRITAIN’S NEW parliament may be the most diverse in its history but black and ethnic minority MPs say there is much room for improvement.

Abena Oppong-Asare, a new London MP for the opposition

Labour party, this weekend revealed her experiences on arriving at Westminster following last month’s election.

She said she was chatting to another MP in Parliament when a counterpart from the governing Conservative party “walked straight to me to put his bag in my hands, asking me to look after it”. On Twitter, she also recalled

how in her first week someone confused her with another black MP. When she corrected him, “he raised he eyebrows and said, wow there (are) more of you”. She added the hashtag: “#Thisiswhyrepresentationmatters”.

In response to Oppong-Asare’s tweets, a number of other MPs wrote back in sympathy.

“Girl, I also got confused for another black sista MP as we were coming out of the voting lobby,” said Florence Eshalomi, another new London Labour MP. Labour MP Rupa Huq said she had been mistaken for several colleagues by MPs of different parties and House of Commons staff. One in 10 of the 650 MPs are from an ethnic minority background.

24 NOMINATIONS FOR NETFLIX, BUT TRADITIONAL STUDIOS NOT FAR BEHIND

Academy Awards 2020: Joker and Irishman lead the nominees

BROOKS BARNES & NICOLE SPERLING LOS ANGELES, JANUARY 13

THE 92ND Academy Awards will be a showdown between old and new Hollywood: Netflix amassed a leading 24 nominations Monday, including best picture honours for *The Irishman* and *Marriage Story*, but traditional studios were only a heartbeat behind.

Despite a plethora of diverse films competing for Oscar love this year, the Academy largely maintained its traditional point of view, handing out the most nominations to four very male, very white films. *Joker* (Warner Bros.) led all films with 11 nominations, including ones for best picture, director

(Todd Phillips), actor (Joaquin Phoenix) and score (Hildur Guðnadóttir). The visually dazzling World War I epic *1917* (Universal) and Quentin Tarantino’s *Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood* (Sony) each received 10, including best picture recognition.

Black actors and actresses were largely overlooked, with British-Nigerian actress Cynthia Erivo (*Harriet*) as the sole nominee. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has mounted an effort to double female and minority membership, in large part by inviting in more film professionals from overseas. But even after four years of the initiative, the organisation remains 68% male and 84% white. The director’s branch again over-

looked women, bypassing acclaimed work from Greta Gerwig (*Little Women*), Lulu Wang (*The Farewell*) and others.

But the membership showed signs of progress with its recognition for Bong Joon Ho’s *Parasite*, which earned six nominations, including its best picture nomination — the first one for a South Korean film.

Over the last decade, the Academy Awards have become a bit superfluous, with a torrent of precursor ceremonies leaving fans exhausted and the contents of the envelopes unsurprising. The academy’s board of governors decided in 2018 to move up this year’s ceremony. It will be held Feb 9, two weeks earlier than the last go-round. **NYT**



BEST ACTOR ■ Joaquin Phoenix (*Joker*) ■ Adam Driver (*Marriage Story*) ■ Leonardo DiCaprio (*Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*) ■ Antonio Banderas (*Pain and Glory*) ■ Jonathan Pryce (*The Two Popes*)

BEST ACTRESS ■ Renee Zellweger (*Judy*) ■ Charlize Theron (*Bombshell*) ■ Scarlett Johansson (*Marriage Story*) ■ Saoirse Ronan (*Little Women*) ■ Cynthia Erivo (*Harriet*)

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR ■ Brad Pitt (*Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*) ■ Al Pacino (*The Irishman*) ■ Joe Pesci (*The Irishman*) ■ Tom Hanks (*A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*) ■ Anthony Hopkins (*The Two Popes*)

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS ■ Laura Dern (*Marriage Story*) ■ Margot Robbie (*Bombshell*) ■ Florence Pugh (*Little Women*) ■ Scarlett Johansson (*Jojo Rabbit*) ■ Kathy Bates (*Richard Jewell*)

BEST DIRECTOR ■ Martin Scorsese (*The Irishman*) ■ Quentin Tarantino (*Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*) ■ Bong Joon Ho (*Parasite*) ■ Sam Mendes (*1917*) ■ Todd Phillips (*Joker*)



BEST PICTURE ■ *The Irishman* ■ *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* ■ *Parasite* ■ *Marriage Story* ■ *1917* ■ *Jojo Rabbit* ■ *Joker* ■ *Little Women* ■ *Ford v Ferrari*