

TOPOF THE WORLD



Anwar Ibrahim

ASIA
Malaysia drops sex assault probe of PM-in-waiting Anwar Ibrahim

Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia's leader-in-waiting Anwar Ibrahim will not face charges over claims he sexually assaulted a male former aide, prosecutors said Tuesday, the latest such scandal to tarnish the veteran politician's career. Muhammed Yusoff Rawther last month accused Anwar of trying to force him to have sex and filed a police complaint, but officials said there was not enough evidence to make a criminal case. Anwar, seen as the likely successor to Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, spent almost a decade in jail after being convicted of sodomising a young male aide, allegations that supporters say were aimed at ruining his political career.

UK
Boris rejects Scotland call for new referendum

London: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Tuesday rejected a request by Scotland's devolved government for powers to hold another referendum on independence. In a letter to First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, the leader of the Scottish National Party, Johnson noted that a previous referendum held in 2014 had been billed as a "once in a generation" vote. Scots voted then by 55% to 45% against breaking away from the rest of the United Kingdom.

VATICAN
Benedict wants name removed from book

Vatican City: Former Pope Benedict wants his name removed as co-author of a controversial book on the issue of priestly celibacy, his personal secretary said on Tuesday. Archbishop Georg Ganswein told Reuters that, at the former pope's behest, he had asked the principal author of the book, Cardinal Robert Sarah, to ask the publishers to remove Benedict's name from the cover, the introduction and the conclusion. Some Roman Catholic scholars had rebuked the former pope for his comments in the book, saying his words risked destabilising the reigning Pope Francis.

CHINA
Bus falls into sinkhole, 10 dead or missing

Beijing: A bus plunged into a sinkhole on a city street in northwestern China, killing at least six people and leaving four missing, authorities said. Some 1,000 emergency workers and 30 vehicles were sent to the site, the emergency management bureau in the city of Xining said. A crane was called in to lift the bus above the sinkhole so rescue workers could look for victims. Video apparently shot by security cameras just after the accident showed the bus gradually settling into the hole while people nearby scrambled for safety.

Iran makes arrests over plane disaster as protests continue

30 protesters also held on 4th day of demonstrations

PARISA HAFEZI & BABAK DEGHANPISHEH
DUBAI, JANUARY 14

IRAN SAID on Tuesday it had arrested people accused of a role in shooting down a Ukrainian airliner and had also detained 30 people involved in protests that have swept the nation for four days since the military belatedly admitted its error.

Wednesday's shooting down of Ukraine International Airlines flight 752, killing all 176 people aboard, has led to one of the biggest public challenges to the Islamic Republic's clerical rulers since they took power four decades ago.

President Hassan Rouhani promised a thorough investigation into the "unforgivable error" of shooting down the plane, in an address on Tuesday. It was the latest in a series of apologies by the leadership that has done little to quell public anger.

Tehran has faced an escalating confrontation with the West and a wave of unrest since the United States killed Iran's most powerful military commander in a drone strike on January 3.

Iran shot down the plane on Wednesday when its military was on high alert, hours after firing missiles at US targets in Iraq. It admitted the mistake on Saturday after days of denials.

Judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili said some



As anger rises against Iran's leaders, students walk around, instead of across, US and Israeli flags at the Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran. *Reuters*

IMMINENT THREAT FROM SOLEIMANI? DOESN'T REALLY MATTER, SAYS TRUMP

Washington: US President Donald Trump fuelled controversy on Monday over his decision to kill Iranian commander Qassem Soleimani by saying "it doesn't really matter" whether Soleimani posed an imminent threat to the United States.

"The Fake News Media and their Democrat Partners are working hard to determine

whether or not the future attack by terrorist Soleimani was 'imminent' or not, & was my team in agreement," Trump wrote on Twitter. "The answer to both is a strong YES, but it doesn't really matter because of his horrible past!"

Democrats are trying to pass a Bill to rein in Trump's ability to wage war on Iran. **REUTERS**

of those accused of having a role in the plane disaster had been arrested, although he did not say how many or identify them.

Since the official admission, protesters, many of them stu-

dents, have held daily demonstrations, chanting "Clerics get lost!" and calling for the removal of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in power for more than 30 years. **REUTERS**

Trump retweets image of Dems in 'Muslim garb'

ANNIE KARNI
WASHINGTON, JANUARY 14

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump on Monday morning promoted a manipulated image of Democratic Congressional leaders Senator Chuck Schumer and Nancy Pelosi wearing a turban and a headscarf in front of an Iranian flag, claiming it showed "the corrupted Dems trying their best to come to the Ayatollah's rescue #NancyPelosiFakeNews."

The retweeted image was the most extreme version of a sentiment that Trump spent the morning advancing by retweeting criticism of Pelosi, and suggesting she was a supporter of the Iranian government.

Dana Shell Smith, a former US envoy to Qatar, said Trump was engaging in "hate speech against an entire religion". **NYT**

NATASHA CHAKU
MELBOURNE, JANUARY 14

THE AIR quality in Melbourne deteriorated to the "worst in the world" on Tuesday as smoke from massive bushfires engulfed Australia's second biggest city with authorities issuing health warnings advising people to stay indoors and take precautionary measures.

The raging Australian bushfires, one of the worst in its history, has killed at least 26 people,

France, Germany, UK trigger Iran n-deal dispute mechanism

STEVEN ERLANGER
BRUSSELS, JANUARY 14

BRITAIN, FRANCE and Germany triggered the dispute resolution mechanism in the 2015 Iran nuclear deal on Tuesday, a tough warning to Tehran and the first step toward reimposing further United Nations sanctions on Iran.

The move, which had been expected for more than a week, was delayed when the US killed Iran's General Qassem Soleimani.

Triggering the dispute resolution mechanism will set the clock running on what could be some 60 days of negotiations with Iran about coming back into full compliance with the deal, and could end up with a "snapback" of United Nations sanctions on Iran, including an arms embargo.

US President Donald Trump withdrew from the deal in 2018 and has imposed several rounds of US sanctions on Iran. In response, Tehran has repeatedly moved beyond the limits that the agreement had placed on its nuclear program, raising fears that it could be close to building an atomic bomb.

The Europeans want to save the deal and persuade both

WEINSTEIN TRIAL

GIGI HADID SHOWS UP FOR JURY DUTY

More than 100 potential jurors showed up in a Manhattan court for the rape trial of former movie producer Harvey Weinstein, including model Gigi Hadid. Hadid told the judge she had met Weinstein before, as well as actress Salma Hayek who may be called as a witness or be mentioned during the trial. Despite this, Hadid said she could remain impartial.



Hafiz Saeed pleads not guilty in terror financing cases

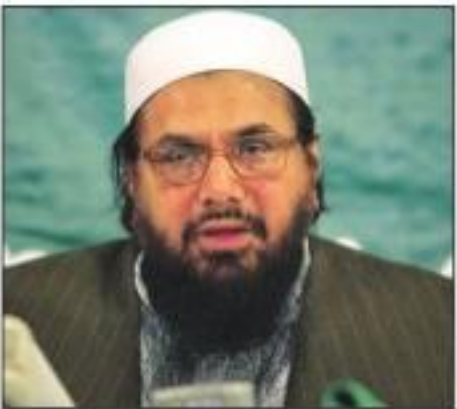
M ZULQERNAIN
LAHORE, JANUARY 14

MUMBAI ATTACK mastermind Hafiz Saeed on Tuesday pleaded "not guilty" in two terror financing cases against him, as the Jamaat-ud-Dawah (JuD) chief recorded his statement in a Pakistani anti-terrorism court here, amidst mounting international pressure on Islamabad to rein in militant groups.

The Counter Terrorism Department had registered 23 FIRs against Saeed and his accomplices on charges of terror financing in different cities of Punjab province and arrested him on July 17. He is held at the Kot Lakhpat jail in Lahore.

The Saeed-led JuD is believed to be the front organisation for the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) which was responsible for carrying out the 2008 Mumbai attack that killed 166 people.

"In response to a questionnaire handed over to him by the Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Lahore regarding terror financ-



The JuD chief was arrested on July 17, last year

ing charges against him, Saeed on Tuesday submitted his reply in which he dismissed all charges against him. He pleaded not guilty," a court official told *PTI* after the in-camera hearing.

The official said the ATC adjourned the hearing till Wednesday for final arguments.

The cases of terror financing have been registered against Saeed in Lahore and Gujranwala cities in Punjab province on the application of the Counter Terrorism Department of Punjab Police. **PTI**

Heavy snowfall, rain in Pak: Death toll rises to 84

Islamabad: Avalanches and landslides triggered by heavy snowfall and incessant rain across Pakistan have left over 80 people, including women and children, dead, and destroyed many houses, officials said on Tuesday.

Harsh weather conditions continue across Pakistan over

the last three days, bringing normal life to a halt as road transport and communication remain severely affected.

At least 84 people have died across the country after a severe cold wave brought life to a standstill in numerous areas, officials said on Tuesday. **PTI**



Nawaz sharif, with brother Shahbaz and other family members at a restaurant in London. *Twitter* (@fawadchaudhry)

Sharif's London restaurant photo goes viral, draws criticism

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, JANUARY 14

A PHOTOGRAPH of ailing former Pakistan prime minister Nawaz Sharif at a London restaurant along with some family members has gone viral on social media, leading to speculation over the "serious nature" of his health. Sharif, 69, left for London on November 19 in an air ambulance to seek medical treatment, a month after he was released on bail from a seven-year prison sentence for corruption.

In the photo leaked Monday, Sharif appeared to be sitting in a restaurant with his son Hasan, PML-N president Shahbaz Sharif, his son Salman and former finance minister Ishaq Dar.

Pakistani minister Fawad Chaudhry uploaded the photograph on his Twitter account. "In London's intensive care unit, the treatment against plundering is underway and all patients present (there) are feeling better," he said.

WHO says China coronavirus may spread, warns hospitals worldwide



There is no specific treatment for the new virus, but anti-virals are being considered and could be "re-purposed", WHO said

THERE MAY have been limited human-to-human transmission of a new coronavirus in China within families, and it is possible there could be a wider outbreak, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Tuesday.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause infections ranging from the common cold to SARS. A Chinese woman has been quarantined in Thailand with a mystery strain of coronavirus, Thai authorities said on Monday, the first time the virus has been detected outside China.

In all, 41 cases of pneumonia have been reported in the central Chinese city of Wuhan, which preliminary lab tests

cited by state media showed could be from a new type of coronavirus. One of the patients has died.

"From the information that we have it is possible that there is limited human-to-human

Melbourne air 'worst in world', warnings issued



Melbourne covered in smoke haze from bushfires. *Reuters*

burned over 10 million hectares of land, destroyed over 2,000

homes and pushed many species towards extinction.

THE TINY DUST GRAINS ARE ABOUT 7 BILLION YEARS OLD — 2.5 BILLION YEARS OLDER THAN THE SUN

Oldest material on Earth found inside meteorite that hit Australia

WILL DUNHAM
WASHINGTON, JANUARY 14

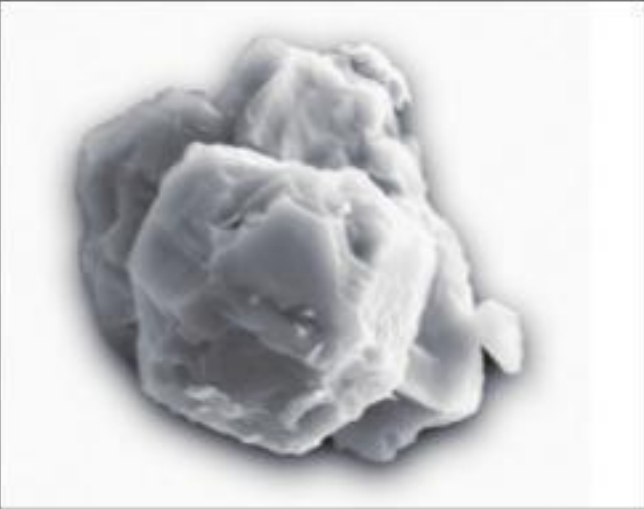
A METEORITE that crashed into rural southeastern Australia in a fireball in 1969 contained the oldest material ever found on Earth, stardust that predated the formation of our solar system by billions of years, scientists said on Monday.

The oldest of 40 tiny dust grains trapped inside the meteorite fragments retrieved around the town of Murchison in Victoria state dated from about 7 billion years ago, about 2.5 billion years before the sun, Earth

and rest of our solar system formed, the researchers said.

In fact, all of the dust specks analyzed in the research came from before the solar system's formation — thus known as "presolar grains" — with 60% of them between 4.6 and 4.9 billion years old and the oldest 10% dating to more than 5.6 billion years ago.

The stardust represented time capsules dating to before the solar system. The age distribution of the dust - many of the grains were concentrated at particular time intervals - provided clues about the rate of star formation in the Milky Way galaxy,



the researchers said, hinting at bursts of stellar births rather than a constant rate.

"I find this extremely exciting," said Philipp Heck, an asso-

ciate curator at the Field Museum in Chicago who led the research published in the scientific journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

A scanning electron micrograph of a silicon carbide grain, about 8 micrometres in its longest dimension, from a meteorite that crashed into Australia in 1969

survived intact until now only in asteroids and comets.

The researchers detected the tiny grains inside the meteorite by crushing fragments of the rock and then segregating the component parts in a paste they described as smelling like rotten peanut butter.

Scientists have developed a method to determine stardust's age. Dust grains floating through space get bombarded by high-energy particles called cosmic rays. These rays break down atoms in the grain into fragments, such as carbon into helium.

These fragments accumulate over time and their production

rate is rather constant. The longer the exposure time to cosmic rays, the more fragments accumulate. The researchers counted these fragments in the laboratory, enabling them to calculate the stardust's age.

Scientists previously had found a presolar grain in the Murchison meteorite that was about 5.5 billion years old, until now the oldest-known solid material on Earth. The oldest-known minerals that formed on Earth are found in rock from Australia's Jack Hills that formed 4.4 billion years ago, 100 million years after the planet formed. **REUTERS**