

12 THE WORLD

TOP OF THE WORLD



Benjamin Netanyahu

ISRAEL

Hope to make history in peace talks: Netanyahu

Jerusalem: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu voiced hope Sunday he can “make history” during talks on US President Donald Trump’s peace plan for Middle East. Netanyahu has been invited to meet Trump at the White House on Monday and Tuesday to discuss the project. “We are in the midst of very dramatic diplomatic developments, but the climax is still ahead of us,” Netanyahu said. “In a short while, I’ll leave...to meet my friend... Donald Trump, who will present his deal of the century... I’m full of hope that we can make history,” he added.

MALI

19 soldiers killed in attack on army base

Bamako: Armed men attacked an army camp in Mali near the border with Mauritania, killing 19 soldiers Sunday, the armed forces said. The camp in Sokolo in the Segou region remains under control by Malian Armed Forces, and the provisional toll includes five injured, the armed forces said in a statement on Twitter. Souleymane Maiga, a resident of Sokolo, said the attackers temporarily had taken control of the camp. “The army camp was attacked this morning by gunmen,” he said.

TURKEY

Death toll after earthquake rises to 31

Elazig: The death toll from a powerful earthquake which struck eastern Turkey rose to 31, officials said Sunday, as rescue efforts continued. The magnitude 6.8 quake hit on Friday evening, with its epicentre in the small lakeside town of Sivrice in Elazig province but also affected neighbouring cities and countries. The Turkish government’s disaster and emergency management agency (AFAD) said 31 people died, the majority in Elazig but at least four in nearby Malatya, and 1,607 were injured.

GERMANY

Military resumes training troops in northern Iraq

Berlin: The German military resumed training Iraqi troops in the country’s Kurdish north on Sunday, about three weeks after it was suspended following the US killing of a top Iranian general in Baghdad. The military said the commander of the international operation fighting the Islamic State group lifted the suspension. Germany resumed training in Irbil on Sunday morning together with its partners. The Bundeswehr has about 90 soldiers in Irbil. However, Germany’s training mission in central Iraq is still suspended.

HONG KONG BARS ENTRY OF HUBEI RESIDENTS

Coronavirus outbreak: 56 dead in China, confirmed cases near 2,000

AGENCIES

BEIJING, JANUARY 26

THE DEATH toll in the deadly new coronavirus in China rose to 56 on Sunday with confirmed cases of viral affliction reaching 1,975 and 324 of them being critical, Chinese health authorities said.

As of Sunday morning, the official count of confirmed cases across China stood at 1,975. The death toll in China was 56. The mayor of Wuhan, the city at the centre of the viral outbreak, said on Sunday that there could be about 1,000 more confirmed cases — a sign that the country’s monumental efforts to halt the disease may only just be starting.

Residents of China’s Hubei province, where the new coronavirus outbreak was first reported, will be banned from entering Hong Kong from Monday.

China’s National Health Commission Minister Ma Xiaowei said the incubation period for the virus can range from one to 14 days, during which infection can occur. “According to recent clinical information, the virus’ ability to spread seems to be getting somewhat stronger,” Ma told reporters.

Worldwide concern

In a sign of the growing global dread about the disease, Taiwan



In Hong Kong on Sunday. The city’s ban on entry of Hubei residents excludes its citizens. AP

said on Sunday it would bar all visitors from China’s Hubei Province to the self-governing island, where a few cases have been confirmed.

A Toronto hospital said Saturday it has a confirmed case of the deadly virus from China, Canada’s first. A hospital said it is “caring for a patient who has a confirmed case of the... coronavirus”.

Macau also announced that starting from Monday, it would restrict travelers from Wuhan.

A person in Orange County, California, has tested positive for the novel coronavirus. It is the third

confirmed case in the US.

Japan will evacuate all its nationals from Wuhan, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said Sunday.

Similarly, the US government offered details on its plan to evacuate American diplomats and private citizens Wuhan, saying on Sunday that it was arranging a flight that would leave Tuesday and travel to San Francisco.

The US State Department has ordered all American employees at the consulate in Wuhan to leave the city.

ANIMAL TRADE BAN

■ China on Sunday ordered a temporary ban on the trade in wild animals amid efforts to contain the virus, believed to have been spawned in a market that sold wild animals as food

■ Health experts say the trade poses a significant and growing public health risk as potentially dangerous animal-borne pathogens that people would normal not be exposed to make the jump to humans

EXPLAINED

What outbreak reveals about state machinery

CHINA’S MEASURES to tackle the outbreak has drawn praise for its swiftness after the initial period, as well as criticism over aspects of its bureaucracy and a lack of transparency. The country is now swiftly building hospitals, screening patients and taking other measures. However, experts said its delay in recognising the threat could be attributed to local officials playing down or delaying such reports out of fear of top leaders. The compartmentalised nature of local authorities could also have prevented officials from piecing together the big picture.

German minister warns of ‘mass exit’ of Jews if hatred persists

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
FRANKFURT, JANUARY 26

FOREIGN MINISTER Heiko Maas warned Sunday that Jews could leave Germany on a “massive” scale if urgent action was not taken to stem rising anti-Semitism.

Writing in Der Spiegel on the eve of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, Maas said anti-Jewish insults and attacks, in real life and online, had become “a daily occurrence”.

Almost one in two Jews has considered leaving Germany, he said. “We need to take urgent counter-measures to make sure such thoughts do not turn into a bitter reality and lead to a massive departure of Jews from Germany,” he wrote.

Germany will push for tougher legal consequences for anti-Semitic acts, he said, and for more EU nations to make Holocaust denial a crime.

GUAIDO IN MADRID

Thousands of Venezuelans gather at the Puerta del Sol square during a visit by Juan Guaido to Madrid, Spain. Guaido had a year ago launched a bid to oust Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro. AP

Petrol bombs, live fire amid protests in Iraq’s cities

AZIZ EL YAAKOUBI
BAGHDAD, JANUARY 26

IRAQI SECURITY forces fired teargas and live bullets in renewed clashes with protesters in Baghdad and other cities on Sunday, a Reuters witness and security sources said, following a push to clear a sit-in camps across the country.

Demonstrators are demanding the removal of what they see as a corrupt ruling elite and an end to foreign interference in domestic politics, especially by Iran,



At a protest in Najaf, Iraq, on Sunday. Reuters

which has come to dominate state institutions since the toppling of Saddam Hussein in a

2003 U.S.-led invasion.

Iraqi populist cleric Moqtada al-Sadr called for demonstrations against the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad on Sunday and in other cities. This followed a large march on Friday in which tens of thousands protested against the U.S. military presence in Iraq.

Protesters on Sunday threw petrol bombs and stones at security forces which responded by firing tear gas canisters and live rounds into the air.

The authorities’ latest attempt to push back protesters and restore order came after

Sadr, who has millions of supporters in Baghdad and the south, said on Saturday he would end his involvement in anti-government unrest. “We protest because we have a cause, I don’t think Moqtada Sadr or any other politician will change our mind,” said a protester in Baghdad who declined to give his name.

Sadr’s supporters had bolstered protesters and sometimes helped shield them from attacks by security forces and unidentified gunmen, but began withdrawing on Saturday following his announcement. REUTERS

5 ROCKETS CRASH NEAR US EMBASSY

Five katyusha rockets crashed into a river bank near the US Embassy in Baghdad’s Green Zone without causing any injuries, a statement from US Joint Operations Command said. An Iraqi official initially put the number of rockets at four. AP

IMPEACHMENT TRIAL

Massive election interference, say Trump lawyers

DAVID MORGAN &
RICHARD COWAN

WASHINGTON, JANUARY 26

LAWYERS FOR U.S. President Donald Trump told his Senate impeachment trial on Saturday that Democrats’ efforts to remove the president from office would set a “very, very dangerous” precedent in an election year.

White House Counsel Pat Cipollone, the head of the defense team, told senators they would be denying voters their right to give their opinion on Trump at the Nov. 3 presidential election if they found him guilty and ousted him now.

In only the third presidential impeachment trial in U.S. history, Democrats argued earlier this week that Trump should be removed for encouraging Ukraine to interfere in the election by pressuring its leader to dig up dirt on former Vice President Joe Biden, a leading 2020 Democratic presidential contender.

The defense tried to turn that election interference line against the Democrats in its opening argument on Saturday by warning against removing a president less than 10 months before Americans vote on whether to give him a second term.

“For all their talk about election interference... they’re here to perpetrate the most massive interference in an election in American history, and we can’t allow that to happen. It would violate our Constitution. It would vi-

Tape made public of Trump discussing ambassador’s firing, trade war, Ukraine

KENNETH P VOGEL &
BEN PROTESS

WASHINGTON, JANUARY 26

FOR MORE than an hour one evening in 2018, President Trump sat around a dinner table in a private suite in his Washington hotel with a group of donors, including two men at the centre of the impeachment inquiry, talking about golf, trade, politics — and removing the US ambassador to Ukraine.

The conversation, captured on a recording made public Saturday, contradicted Trump’s repeated statements that he does not know the two men, Lev Parnas and Igor Fruman.

The recording — a video shot on Fruman’s phone during the dinner in April 2018 — largely confirmed Parnas’s account of having raised with Trump criticisms of the ambassador to Kyiv at the time, Marie L Yovanovitch, and the president’s immediate order that Yovanovitch should be removed from the post.

“Get rid of her,” Trump can be heard responding.

The recording was made public by Parnas’s lawyer, Joseph A Bondy, hours after the president’s lawyers began presenting their defense in the impeachment trial.

After some conversation

Schiff has not paid the price yet: Trump

Washington: US President Donald Trump said on Sunday that the Democratic lawmaker leading the impeachment case against him, Representative Adam Schiff, has “not paid the price, yet” for his actions, a statement Schiff said he viewed as a threat.

“Shifty Adam Schiff is a CORRUPT POLITICIAN, and probably a very sick man. He has not paid the price, yet, for what he has done to our Country!” Trump said on Twitter.

Asked on NBC’s “Meet the Press” if he took the Republican president’s social media post as a threat, Schiff said, “I think it’s intended to be.” REUTERS

olate our history. It would violate our obligations to the future,” he said in a session that ran two hours, far shorter than the Democratic arguments.

Democrats rejected the concerns about impeaching a president in an election year. “That argument would say that the impeachment process does not belong in the Constitution,” said Representative Jerrold Nadler, part of the team that presented the House case. NYT

ALSO HEARD IN THE RECORDING

SLAMMING EU, WTO Trump lashed out at the EU for trying to “screw” the US, assailed the WTO as a “weapon” intended to harm America

CHINA TRADE WAR He defended aggressive actions against China. “They’re tough, but I always say when you’re \$500 billion down, you can’t lose the trade war.”

CANNABIS Parnas asked Trump to ease regulations related to cannabis and banking. Trump expressed scepticism, saying marijuana use has led to ‘more accidents’.

about Ukraine’s war with its hostile neighbor, Russia, and its efforts to establish energy security, Trump asked, “How long would they last in a fight with Russia?” “I don’t think very long,” Parnas responded. “Without us, not very long,” adding “they feel they’re going to be OK if you support them.” NYT

‘CRITICAL FOR CHILDREN AFFECTED BY TRAUMATIC EVENTS TO HAVE SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL SKILLS’

‘Sesame Street’ tries to help children displaced by Syrian war

ASSOCIATED PRESS
NEW YORK, JANUARY 26

“SESAME STREET” in the past year has tackled everything from foster care to substance abuse. Now its latest effort is trying to help children suffering as a result of the Syrian civil war.

Sesame Workshop — the nonprofit, educational organisation behind “Sesame Street” — has launched a new, locally produced Arabic TV program for the hundreds of thousands of children dealing with displacement



The cast of a new, locally produced Sesame programme for children in Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. AP

in Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon.

“The thing that became very apparent in our work on the ground is how critical the need was for the children of this region and children who have been affected by traumatic events to have the social and emotional skills they need,” said Sherrie Westin, president of Social Impact & Philanthropy at Sesame Workshop.

Called “Ahlan Simsim,” which means “Welcome Sesame” in Arabic, the show will feature Elmo, Cookie Monster and Grover, as well as two brand new

Muppets — the boy monster Jad, who had to leave his home, and Basma, a purple girl monster who befriends the young stranger. An adorable goat named Ma’zooza adds comic relief.

Each 26-minute show will explore emotions experienced by all kids but particularly relevant to those dealing with trauma and will offer coping skills for feelings like anger, fear, frustration, nervousness and loneliness. In one episode, Basma shares her toys with Jad, since he left his behind. Some of the strategies include belly

breathing and expression through art.

A variety show in the second half of each episode offers creators the chance to bring in local celebrities and attract an adult audience to hammer home the message. “The humour has to be there always, which is the ‘Sesame’ spirit,” said Khaled Haddad, an executive producer.

“Ahlan Simsim” will premiere Feb. 2 on MBC3, a pan-Arab satellite network that reaches 20 countries in North Africa, the Gulf and the Levant, as well as YouTube and national

broadcasters across the region.

Production is based in the Jordanian capital Amman, with input from writers and performers from across the region. Dialects will be diversified, from Jordanian to Saudi.

“We know a lot about children and children’s development and what’s needed. But we always want to learn from people on the ground,” said Westin. “We know that when children can see themselves, identify with these characters and when they can relate to the story lines, we are the most effective.”