

NEWSIN  
brief

Nirbhaya convicts  
to hang on March 3

NDTV ONLINE

The four convicts, who got death penalty for the gangrape and murder of a 23-year-old medical student in Delhi - dubbed Nirbhaya by the media -- more than seven years ago, will be hanged on March 3, at 6:00am. The death warrant was issued after the Tihar jail authorities informed the trial court that three of the four convicts -- Vinay Sharma, Pawan Gupta, Mukesh Singh and Akshay Singh -- have exhausted all legal options.

Taliban kill five  
Afghan soldiers

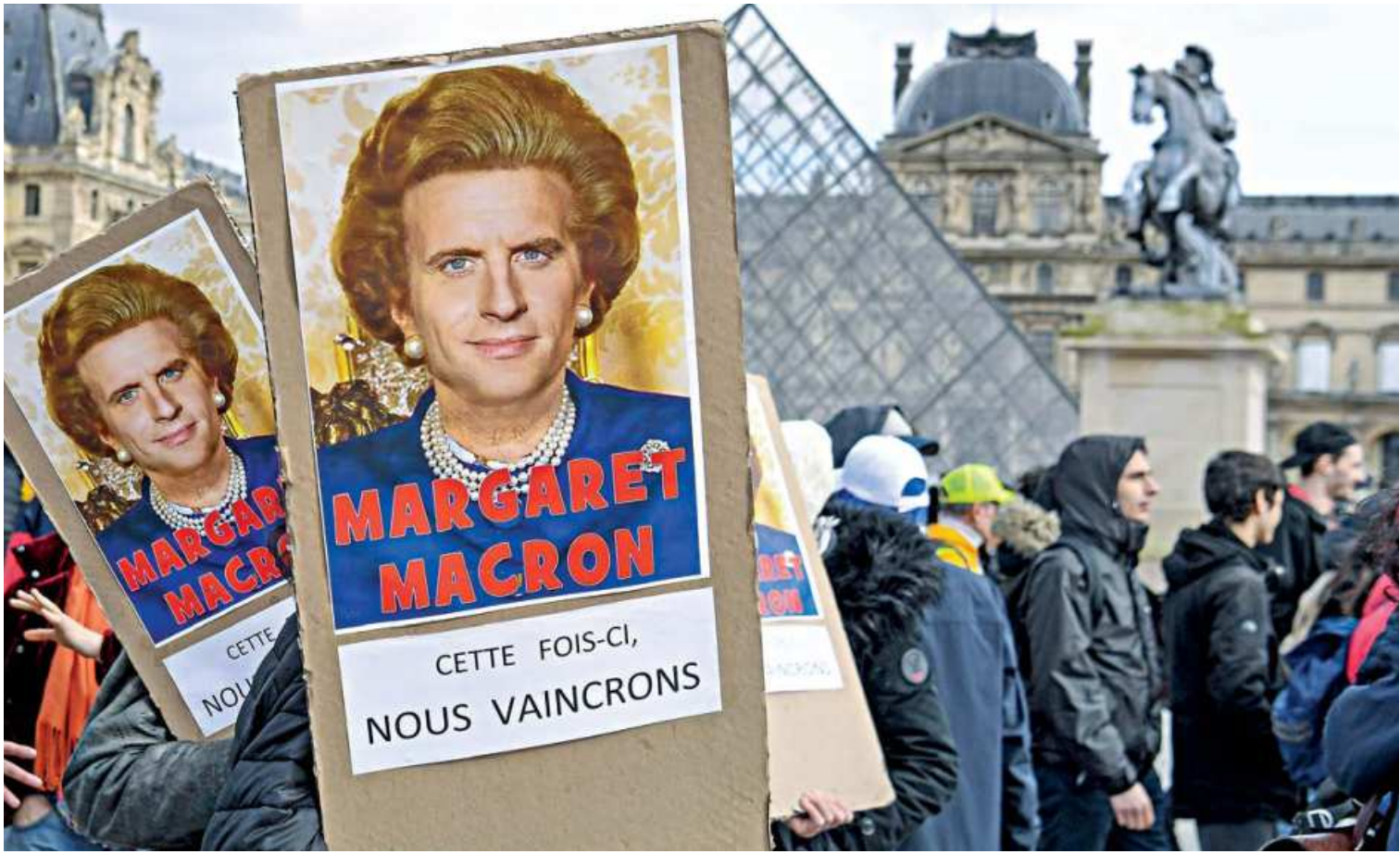
AFP, Kabul

At least five Afghan soldiers were killed when Taliban fighters stormed their base in northern Afghanistan, officials said yesterday, as the country waits for an expected "reduction in violence" before a US-Taliban deal. The attack happened in Shora Khak area of volatile Kunduz province on Sunday.

Somali journalist  
shot dead: police

AFP, Mogadishu

Several gunmen shot dead a Somali journalist near Mogadishu, police said yesterday, in the latest attack on press. Freelance journalist Abdiweli Ali Hassan, was killed yesterday in the town of Afgoye, some 30 kilometres from the capital. The journalist contributed to the London-based Somali channel Universal TV and the Mogadishu-based Kulmiye Radio Station. The murder comes just days after Amnesty International said in a report that journalists in Somalia are "under siege", facing bombings, beatings, attacks and arrests.



Protesters hold placards reading "Maragaret Macron, this time we will win" under a photomontage of both late British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and French President Emmanuel Macron as they demonstrate in front of Paris' Louvre Museum yesterday, in Paris as part of a multi-sector strike against the French government's pensions overhaul.

PHOTO: AFP

CRITICISM OF INDIA OVER KASHMIR

UK MP stopped at  
airport, deported

REUTERS, London

A British lawmaker, who chairs an all-party group on Kashmir, has been denied entry to India after she criticised the government's decision to strip the disputed region Himalayan region of its constitutional autonomy.

Debbie Abrahams, a member of parliament for the opposition Labour party, landed at New Delhi's international airport yesterday but claims she was unable to clear customs after her Indian visa was rejected.

Abrahams said she had no plans to visit Kashmir during what she called a "private visit" to India to see relatives, although she had been planning to journey on to the Pakistani capital Islamabad to discuss the issue.

She has been critical of the Indian government for revoking Kashmir's special status last August, which allowed the region to make its own laws, in an attempt to integrate the country's only Muslim-majority region more fully.

Abrahams said she was "treated like a criminal" and told to leave India before being marched on to a plane bound for Dubai.

"The immigration officer looked at his screen and started shaking his head and saying 'no, no, no'," she told Sky News.

"Then he said the visa had been rejected, took my passport, went off to consult with others, kept us waiting for about ten minutes and then said: 'No, you are being denied entry.'"

There was no immediate comment from the Indian government.

ERDOGAN'S REMARKS ON KASHMIR

India summons Turkey envoy

REUTERS, New Delhi

India yesterday summoned the Turkish ambassador to lodge a diplomatic protest over President Tayyip Erdogan's remarks on the disputed region of Kashmir and warned it would have a bearing on bilateral ties.

During a visit to Pakistan last week, Erdogan said the situation in Indian Kashmir was worsening because of sweeping changes New Delhi introduced in the Muslim-majority territory and that Turkey stood in solidarity with the people of Kashmir.

India, which considers all of Kashmir an integral part of the country, told Turkish envoy Sakir Ozkan Torunlar that Erdogan's comments lacked any understanding of the history of the Kashmir dispute, the Indian foreign ministry said.

"This recent episode is but one more example of a pattern of Turkey interfering in the internal affairs of other countries. India finds that completely unacceptable," foreign ministry spokesman Ravesh Kumar said.

He said that India had served a strong demarche, or formal diplomatic note.

India withdrew Kashmir's autonomy in August and brought it under federal rule as a way to integrate the territory fully into India and quell a 30-year revolt. Pakistan, which controls a part of Kashmir, slammed the measure, and other Muslim-majority countries such as Turkey and Malaysia joined in calls for India to reconsider its actions.



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration has put curbs on palm oil imports from Malaysia in retaliation and officials have said it is planning to cut some imports from Turkey as well.

India blames Pakistan for stoking the revolt in the territory in which tens of thousands of people have been killed. It accused Turkey of trying to justify its arch foe's use of "cross border terrorism."

"These developments have strong implications for our bilateral relations," the foreign ministry spokesman said, referring to Erdogan's comments.

Pakistan denies direct involvement in the rebellion, but says it provides diplomatic and moral support to the Kashmiri people in their struggle for self determination.

Women should serve  
as army commanders

Rules India SC, slams 'disturbing' govt stance

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's top court yesterday ruled that women could serve as army commanders, dismissing the government's stance that male soldiers were not ready to accept orders from female officers as "disturbing".

The Supreme Court also ordered the government to extend permanent service - which has only been applicable to men so far - to all women officers, signalling a move towards gender parity in the traditionally male bastion.

With this women will get the same opportunities and benefits as their male colleagues, including ranks, promotions and pensions, and be allowed to serve longer tenures.

Currently women are inducted through a short service commission that lets them work for up to 14 years, and only allowed permanent commission in the army's legal and educational wings.

Last week the government opposed women being appointed to top roles such as colonels and brigadiers, saying most soldiers were men from rural backgrounds who were not "mentally schooled to accept women officers in command". The government also argued that men and women officers were physically different and could not be treated equally.

The top court rebuked the government, describing its views as "disturbing" and urged "the need for change in mindsets to bring about true equality in the army". It, however, did not rule on deploying women in combat roles, saying a competent authority needed to decide.

India began recruiting women to non-medical positions in the armed forces in 1992, yet they make up about 4% of the army's more than one million personnel, according to latest data.



Pakistan not  
a militant  
safe haven

Says Imran Khan

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan yesterday insisted that his country is no longer a militant safe haven, and said his administration fully supports the Afghan peace process.

Khan's comments come as the US and the Taliban appear on the brink of a deal that would see US forces begin to pull out of Afghanistan. In return, the Taliban would enter talks with the Afghan government, stick to various security guarantees and work toward an eventual, comprehensive ceasefire.

Pakistan, which has long been accused of supporting the Taliban and other extremist groups along its border with Afghanistan, is seen as key to helping secure and implement any deal.

"I can tell you that there are no safe havens here," Khan said at a conference in the capital Islamabad.

"Whatever the situation might have been in the past, right now, I can tell you... there is one thing we want: peace in Afghanistan."

Khan's comments came after Sarwar Danish, Afghanistan's second vice president, accused Pakistan of allowing the Taliban to recruit new fighters from Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan.

While Pakistan cannot "completely guarantee" that no Taliban are hiding among the estimated 2.7 million Afghans living in Pakistan, Khan said his government had done all it can to prevent attacks in Afghanistan, including by building a border fence.



Farmer Bussa Krishna, 33, offers prayers to a statue of US President Donald Trump, at his residence in Jangaon district, some 120 km from Hyderabad, yesterday, ahead of the visit of US President Donald Trump to India. Trump and his wife Melania will start a high profile two-day visit to India in Ahmedabad, the home turf of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on February 24.

PHOTO: AFP

India's use of facial  
recognition  
tech during protests causes stir

REUTERS, Mumbai/New Delhi

When artist Rachita Taneja heads out to protest in New Delhi, she covers her face with a pollution mask, a hoodie or a scarf to reduce the risk of being identified by police facial recognition software.

Police in the Indian capital and the northern state of Uttar Pradesh - both hotbeds of dissent - have used the technology during protests that have raged since mid-December against a new citizenship law that critics say marginalises Muslims.

Activists are worried about insufficient regulation around the new technology, amid what they say is a crackdown on dissent under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose Hindu nationalist agenda has gathered pace since his re-election in May.

"I do not know what they are going to do with my data," said Taneja, 28, who created a popular online cartoon about cheap ways for protesters to hide their faces. "We need to protect

ourselves, given how this government cracks down."

Critics also accuse authorities of secrecy - highlighting, for instance, that the software's use during Delhi protests was first revealed by the Indian Express newspaper.

But police said worries about facial



recognition were unwarranted.

"I'm only catching targeted people," said Rajan Bhagat, a deputy commissioner of police at Delhi's Crime Records Office. "We don't have any protesters' data, nor do we plan to store it."

He declined to give details of

potential arrests, however.

When it comes to surveillance, India trails far behind neighbouring China. New Delhi, for example, has about 0.9 CCTV cameras for every 100 people, versus about 11.3 per 100 in China's commercial hub of Shanghai, a 2019 report by PreciseSecurity.com showed.

Despite the concerns, law enforcement across India could soon be using facial recognition technology.

Modi's government is seeking bids to create a nationwide database, the National Automated Facial Recognition System, to help match images captured from CCTV cameras with existing databases, including those of passport and police authorities.

The system will boost police efficiency, says the National Crime Records Bureau, which launched the tender that closes at the end of March.

But critics say it puts India on the path to China-style mass surveillance.

SINCE 1988

# Are you in safe hands?

Trust **Reliance** and make it your lifetime partner for your complete **general insurance solutions**

With our unwavering commitment to quality services we offer an array of products and services tailored to meet all your requirements

Property | Marine | Motor | Engineering | Health | Export Credit | Casualty and many more.....

*We care, we go beyond ...*

**বিস্বস্তি সুরক্ষা লিমিটেড**  
**RELIANCE INSURANCE LIMITED**

Head Office : Shanta Western Tower (Level-5), 186, Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208, Bangladesh  
PABX: +88 02 8878836-44, Fax: +88 02 8878831-34  
E-mail : info@reliance.com.bd, Web: www.reliance.com.bd