

'Annexation is illegal. Period'

UN rights chief tells Israel, warns of 'disastrous' consequences

AFP, Geneva

Israel's aim to annex parts of the occupied West Bank was clearly "illegal", the UN's human rights chief said yesterday, warning that the consequences could be "disastrous".

Just days before Israel intends to kick-start plans to annex its West Bank settlements and the Jordan Valley, Michelle Bachelet added her voice to the chorus urging Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to drop the proposal.

"Annexation is illegal. Period," the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said in a statement.

"Any annexation. Whether it is 30 percent of the West Bank, or five percent," she said, urging Israel to "listen to its own former senior officials and generals, as well as to the multitude of voices around the world, warning it not to proceed along this dangerous path."

International condemnation of the possible Israeli annexations has mounted ahead of July 1, when the Jewish state could take its first steps toward implementing part of a US-proposed Middle East peace plan.



US President Donald Trump's proposals, rejected outright by the Palestinians, pave the way for annexing key parts of the West Bank, including settlements long considered illegal by the majority of the international community.

Bachelet urged Israel to shift course, warning that "the shockwaves of annexation will last for decades,

and will be extremely damaging to Israel, as well as to the Palestinians."

"The precise consequences of annexation cannot be predicted," she said. "But they are likely to be disastrous for the Palestinians, for Israel itself, and for the wider region."

The UN rights chief warned that "any attempt to annex any part of the occupied Palestinian territory will

not only seriously damage efforts to achieve lasting peace in the region, it is likely to entrench, perpetuate and further heighten serious human rights violations that have characterised the conflict for decades."

Her statement cautioned that such a move would almost certainly lead to increased restrictions on Palestinians' right to freedom of movement, as their population centres would become enclaves.

In addition, significant tracts of private land would likely be illegally expropriated, and even in cases where this does not occur, many Palestinians could lose access to cultivate their own lands.

Bachelet said illegal annexation would not change Israel's obligations under international law as an occupying power towards the occupied population.

"Instead, it will grievously harm the prospect of a two-state solution, undercut the possibilities of a renewal of negotiations, and perpetuate the serious existing human rights and international humanitarian law violations we witness today."

ROCKET ATTACK AT AFGHAN CATTLE MARKET

At least 23 killed, dozens wounded

REUTERS, Kabul

At least 23 civilians were killed in Afghanistan's southern Helmand province and dozens were wounded when rockets hit a cattle market yesterday, Afghan government and Taliban officials said.

The warring sides blamed each other for the attack on the open-air weekly cattle market in Sangin district, where hundreds of villagers from neighbouring districts had gathered to trade sheep and goats.

A spokesman for Helmand's governor said several rockets fired by Taliban insurgents landed close to the cattle market, killing 23 civilians, including children.

Qari Yousuf Ahmadi, a Taliban spokesman said the Afghan army fired several rounds of mortar bombs on civilian houses and the cattle market, killing dozens of villagers.

Khushakyar, who goes by a single name, said he was trying to sell a calf when the rockets hit the market. He said his two nephews were killed and his son was wounded.

Some residents of Helmand province, a Taliban stronghold, said the shelling occurred during fierce clashes between Taliban militants and government security forces in residential areas surrounding the market.

There has been an uptick in violence by the Taliban against the Afghan government, even though the insurgents, fighting to reintroduce strict Islamic law after being ousted from power in 2001, signed a troop withdrawal agreement with the United States in February designed to lead to peace negotiations with the Afghan government.

NEWS IN brief

Covid vaccine okayed for China military use

REUTERS, Beijing

China's military has received the greenlight to use a COVID-19 vaccine candidate developed by its research unit and CanSino Biologics after clinical trials proved it was safe and showed some efficacy, the company said on Monday. The Ad5-nCoV is one of China's eight vaccine candidates approved for human trials at home and abroad for the respiratory disease. No vaccine has yet been okayed for commercial use against the illness.

Exit poll brings good news for Putin

AFP, Moscow

Russian state pollster VCIOM on Monday published an exit poll showing a vast majority of Russians backing proposed constitutional reforms, days before the end of voting. Some 76 percent of respondents voted for the package of amendments, which range from better pensions and minimum wages to a reset of term limits that would allow President Vladimir Putin to run again in 2024 and potentially stay in power until 2036. The vote began last week and is due to end on Wednesday.

Three J&K terrorists killed: India police

THE STATESMAN/ANN

A commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen was among 3 people killed in Indian Kashmir yesterday, police officials said, as security forces step up a clampdown in the disputed region. They were killed in separate operations. India has bolstered counter-insurgency efforts in the restive territory, with nearly 40 separatist militants killed this month.

New Delhi conspiring to topple govt in Nepal

Alleges PM Oli as ties between neighbours sour

AGENCIES

Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli has alleged that India wants to topple his government after he issued the new map that shows Indian territories of Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura as Nepalese territories.

Speaking at an event to commemorate the 69th birth anniversary of late Madan Bhandari at the Prime Minister's residence in Kathmandu, Oli said, "Listen to the media in Delhi... Activities have been stepped up in hotels and at the Indian mission (in Kathmandu)... If anyone dreams of unseating the prime minister of this country for publishing the map and including the map in the constitution... Don't even think of it!"

"I did not commit any mistake by claiming our land, which has been snatched from us for the past 58 years after Nepal enjoyed the rights over these areas for 146 years," Oli said.

This month Nepal completed the process of redrawing the country's political map adding the disputed territories.

Calling attempts to overthrow him as "illusion", Oli highlighted how his government was toppled in the past for signing transit agreement with China.

His comments come even as pressure is growing from within his party and in the country over failures at several fronts including inaction on dealing with Covid-19 crisis, and rampant corruption in the country.

The India-Nepal bilateral ties came under strain after the inauguration of the 80-km-long road connecting Lipulekh pass with Dharchula in Uttarakhand by Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on May 8.

Nepal criticised the move claiming that it passed through Nepalese territory. India has rejected the claim asserting that the road lies within its territory.



Lawmakers from Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) scuffle with lawmakers from the main opposition Kuomintang (KMT) party, who have been occupying the Legislature Yuan, in Taipei, Taiwan, yesterday. More than 20 KMT lawmakers occupied the legislature overnight, blocking entry to the main chamber with chains and chairs, saying the government was trying to force through legislation and demanding the president withdraw the nomination of a close aide to a high-level watchdog.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'Demographic genocide' in Xinjiang

China forces birth control on persecuted Uighurs to suppress population

ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Chinese government is taking draconian measures to slash birth rates among Uighurs and other minorities as part of a sweeping campaign to curb its Muslim population, even as it encourages some of the country's Han majority to have more children.

While individual women have spoken out before about forced birth control, the practice is far more widespread and systematic than previously known, according to an AP investigation based on government statistics, state documents and interviews with 30 ex-detainees, family members and a former detention camp instructor. The campaign over the past four years in the far west region of Xinjiang is leading to what some experts are calling a form of "demographic genocide."

The state regularly subjects minority women to pregnancy checks, and forces intrauterine devices, sterilization and even abortion on hundreds of thousands,



the interviews and data show. Even while the use of IUDs and sterilization has fallen nationwide, it is rising sharply in Xinjiang.

The population control measures are backed by mass detention both as a threat and as a punishment for failure to comply. Having too many children is a major reason people are sent to detention camps, the AP found, with the parents of three or more ripped away from their

families unless they can pay huge fines. Police raid homes, terrifying parents as they search for hidden children.

After Gulnar Omirzakh, a Chinese-born Kazakh, had her third child, the government ordered her to get an IUD inserted. Two years later, in January 2018, four officials in military camouflage came knocking at her door anyway. They gave Omirzakh, the penniless wife

of a detained vegetable trader, three days to pay a \$2,685 fine for having more than two children.

If she didn't, they warned, she would join her husband and a million other ethnic minorities locked up in internment camps.

"God bequeaths children on you. To prevent people from having children is wrong," said Omirzakh, who tears up even now thinking back to that day. "They want to destroy us as a people."

Outside experts say the birth control campaign is part of a state-orchestrated assault on the Uighurs to purge them of their faith and identity and forcibly assimilate them into the dominant Han Chinese culture.

Some go a step further. "It's genocide, full stop. It's not immediate, shocking, mass-killing on the spot type genocide, but it's slow, painful, creeping genocide," said Joanne Smith Finley, who works at Newcastle University in the UK. "These are direct means of genetically reducing the Uighur population."

A sweet remedy

West Bengal coming up with immunity-boosting 'Arogya Sandesh' sweet

THE STATESMAN/ANN

Bengalis, known for having sweet tooth, have a good news to cheer about during this ongoing coronavirus pandemic times as the West Bengal government decided to come out with a "sandesh" which will contain honey from Sunderbans to increase immunity, an official said on Sunday.

"Cotton cheese made from cow milk will be mixed with pure honey from the Sunderbans to prepare the 'Arogya Sandesh' which will also have extracts of tulsi leaves" news agency PTI quoted an official of the Animal Resources Development Department as saying.

No artificial flavours would be added to the sweetmeat which will be available in the department's outlets in the city and neighbouring districts, he said.

"The sandesh will boost the immune system as a whole but it is not a COVID-19 antidote," the official said.

Sunderbans Affairs Minister Manturam Pakhira said the honey for making Arogya Sandesh will be collected from beehives in places such as Pirkhali, Jharkhali and other parts of the Sunderbans and it will be stored in a scientific manner.

The sandesh is expected to hit the shelves in another two months and the pricing will be within the reach of the common man, according to the animal resources development department official.

Earlier this month, Kolkata's famous sweetmeat chain also came out with "Immunity Sandesh" claiming that it contains various herbs and spices such as haldi (turmeric), tulsi, saffron, and cardamom and Himalayan honey, which will boost immunity to fight COVID-19.

There are total 17,283 positive cases of Coronavirus in West Bengal with 5,451 active cases. 11,193 people have recovered and 639 people have died in the state so far due to the infection.



'Dad, I can't breathe'

Indian man video message father before he dies of coronavirus in hospital compalining negligence

THE STATESMAN/ANN

A heart-wrenching video message by a dying, young coronavirus patient saying goodbye to his father has gone viral in India over social media, where he is complaining of negligence by a state-run hospital in Hyderabad, he was admitted to, after refusal by several other private hospitals, has left the people of city and neitzens in shock and pain.

"Though I told them that I can't breathe, they removed the ventilator. I am fed up. It's been three hours, daddy. It's like my heart has stopped beating. Bye daddy bye. Bye everyone," the 34-year-old man can be seen saying, in the video.

Ravi's father P Venkateshwarlu was staying in the hospital premises. He said his son sent him a selfie video late on the night of June 26. He watched this around 2.30 am and went inside the ward but by then his son had breathed his last.

Venkateshwarlu said they shared the video so that the world knows what's happening in hospitals. "No other family

should go through this ordeal," he added. The hospital authorities, however, denied that there was any negligence. They said he died of cardiac complications. According to them, he was given medicines and put on supplementary oxygen but he developed heart related complications.

Hospital Superintendent Dr Mahboob Khan clarified that the patient was not put on a ventilator and hence was incorrect to say that it was removed.

Venkateshwarlu said his son started complaining of breathlessness on June 23. He took him from one hospital to another but no one admitted him. "We went to 11 hospitals but they refused to admit without a coronavirus test," he recalled.

The next day he took Ravi to a private lab and was tested for COVID-19 but the result of the test was awaited. The same night his condition started worsening and his father took him to Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS) but authorities there told him to go to Chest Hospital. He was finally admitted to that hospital.

Four killed in attack on Pak Stock Exchange

AFP, Karachi

Baloch separatists opened fire and hurled a grenade at the Pakistan Stock Exchange in Karachi yesterday, authorities said, killing four people including a policeman.

Three security guards were killed in the melee, while local police chief Ghulam Nabi Memon said all four assailants were shot dead.

The city's police force had earlier said six people died in the firefight but later revised the figure.

The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility in a message sent to AFP.

Following yesterday's attack Pakistani authorities vowed to strike back against any group found responsible for the onslaught, promising to dismantle their networks and destroy their bases.

'Battle for nation's soul'

Trump tweets, then deletes video of supporter yelling 'white power'

AGENCIES

As the presidential election in the United States is slated for November, Donald Trump on Sunday shared a video of a stand-off between anti-Trump protesters and his supporters in which a man chants "white power" before deleting it amid an outcry.

"Thank you to the great people of The Villages," Trump tweeted alongside the video clip. "The Radical Left Do Nothing Democrats will Fall in the Fall."

The footage, apparently shot in a Florida retirement community, shows a man driving a golf-cart bearing "Trump 2020" and "America First" signs being heckled by a roadside protester chanting "racist."

As they yell at each other, the driver repeatedly mouths the words "white power" with a raised fist.

"White power! There you go, white power. Did you hear that?" the protester yells back at him.

The phrase "white power" is considered synonymous with a call for white supremacy. The phrase has been espoused by neo-Nazis, skinheads and Ku Klux Klan members.

Trump tweeted the video shortly

after 7:30 am and deleted it at around 11 am and the White House shortly after issued a statement saying the president had not heard the "white power" chant before sharing the footage.

A wave of nationwide rallies calling for racial justice has swept the United States since the May 25 death

immediate backlash.

Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden reacting on the incident took to Twitter and said, "Today the President shared a video of people shouting 'white power' and said they were 'great.' Just like he did after Charlottesville."

"We're in a battle for the soul of the nation — and the President has picked a side. But make no mistake: it's a battle we will win."

Trump allies, meantime, were pressed to defend his tweet on the Sunday morning talk shows.

The Republican Party's only black senator, Tim Scott, called the entire video "offensive" while being interviewed on CNN's "State of the Union."

"We can play politics with it or we can't. I'm not going to. I think it's indefensible. We should take it down. That's what I think."

In a series of polls conducted in April, Biden leads Trump in head-to-head general election matchups by an average of 5.9 percent.

The 2020 US presidential election is scheduled for Tuesday, November 3.

