

# 'Think it over'

## Trump warns Iran over rocket strike on embassy in Iraq

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump has warned he would hold "Iran responsible" in the event of a fatal attack on Americans in Iraq, as the first anniversary of the killing of a top Iranian general in a US air strike approaches.

"Our embassy in Baghdad got hit Sunday by several rockets," Trump said on Twitter on Wednesday, referring to an attack that caused damage but no deaths.

"Guess where they came from: IRAN," he added. "Now we hear chatter of additional attacks against Americans in Iraq," he added, before offering "some friendly health advice to Iran: if one American is killed, I will hold Iran responsible. Think it over," he said.

Responding to Trump, the Iranian foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif yesterday tweeted: "Putting your own citizens at risk abroad won't divert attention from catastrophic failures at home."

He also attached an image of years-old Trump tweets that claimed ex-president Barack Obama would have started a war with Iran to win re-election, as well as a screengrab of a graph that purported to show the severity of the coronavirus pandemic in the US.

Trump ordered the drone attack on January 3, 2020 to kill the powerful Iranian general while he was in Baghdad. The air strike came after Iranian-backed militias had fired rockets at US targets in Iraq, in a scenario echoed by the latest strikes against the US embassy.

After Soleimani's killing, the entire region held its breath in anticipation of an uncontrolled escalation which ultimately did not materialize. But tensions are rising again as the first anniversary of the strike nears and the US leader -- in his final weeks in office -- is sticking to his "maximum pressure" approach toward the Iranian regime.



People wearing face shields and masks amid the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic visit a popular shopping market hours before Christmas eve in Manila, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Trump vetoes \$740 billion US defense bill

US President Donald Trump vetoed a broad defense funding bill sent to him by Congress Wednesday, complaining that it helps Russia and China and objecting to provisions to rename military bases. The bipartisan bill was passed by high enough margins in both chambers of Congress for lawmakers to -- in theory -- override the president's rejection. The veto of the \$740 billion measure to fund the military for fiscal 2021 came a day after the US leader, with less than one month left in office, threw a separate \$900 billion Covid-19 relief bill and overall funding for the government into question. The Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi slammed Trump's veto as "an act of recklessness that harms our troops, endangers our security & undermines the will of Congress." Both the House and the Senate set aside time next week to vote to override the veto -- which would be the first such rebuff from Congress in Trump's nearly four years in office.

#### Macron free of Covid symptoms: presidency



French President Emmanuel Macron is free of Covid-19 symptoms, his office said yesterday, a week after he tested positive for the coronavirus. The president, who was in self-isolation at an official residence near Paris from where he ran meetings remotely, no longer needs to remain in quarantine, the Elysee Palace added. Macron "shows no symptoms at this stage," the statement said, and "the isolation of the President can therefore end after seven days." Macron, who had tested positive for the virus last Thursday showing symptoms of fatigue, coughing and muscle aches, promised daily updates on his health. A vaccination campaign is to start in France on Sunday, with health workers and older people among the first to get jabs, the government said.

#### Brazilian institute says Chinese CoronaVac vaccine effective

Clinical trials of the CoronaVac coronavirus vaccine developed by Chinese laboratory Sinovac have "reached the efficacy threshold" demanded by the World Health Organization, the Brazilian institute charged with its production and distribution said on Wednesday. However, the Butantan Institute didn't publish the results of those trials -- the last before authorization. The WHO's efficacy threshold is 50 percent but other laboratories, such as Pfizer and BioNTech that are collaborating on a vaccine that has already been administered to thousands of people in the United States and Britain, have reached 90 percent efficacy.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

# Trump pardons more allies

## Fresh outrage as Kushner's father, Manafort, Stone among 26 pardoned; top aides rewarded for Arab-Israeli deals

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump issued new pardons Wednesday for allies including the father of his son-in-law Jared Kushner and two confidants caught up in the probe into Russian meddling in the 2016 election that brought him to power.

The pardons added to a long list he has granted in his waning days in office and sparked fresh outrage.

Among those pardoned were Charles Kushner, who pleaded guilty to charges including tax evasion and witness tampering in 2004, as well as former campaign manager Paul Manafort and longtime adviser Roger Stone. The trio were among 26 people pardoned.

They come only a day after Trump pardoned another 15 people and commuted sentences for five, including corrupt Republican congressmen and security guards convicted of killing 14 civilians in a 2007 Baghdad massacre.



Paul Manafort



Charles Kushner



Roger Stone

Trump's pardon of Manafort, who was at the heart of the investigation by Robert Mueller into allegations of Russian interference in the election four years ago, triggered fury that Trump was trying to erase the probe.

Trump is believed to be weighing other pardons including members of his family, his personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani, and potentially himself, to protect from potential litigation after he steps down on January 20.

Trump also gave national security awards to several top advisers for their role in helping broker deals aimed at normalizing relations between Israel and four countries in the Arab world. Trump awarded the National Security Medal to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, national security adviser Robert O'Brien, senior adviser Jared Kushner, Middle East envoy Avi Berkowitz, US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman.

# Gunmen kill more than 100 in Ethiopia attack

## Govt claims killing 42 alleged attackers

REUTERS, Addis Ababa

Ethiopia's military killed 42 armed men accused of attacking a village in the western Benishangul-Gumuz region, state-affiliated Fana TV reported yesterday, as the government sent in more troops to contain ethnic tensions.

Government forces seized bows and arrows and other weapons from the armed men, Fana said in its report that cited unnamed regional officials. It did not say when the clash took place or which group was involved.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed yesterday said he was sending forces to Benishangul-Gumuz, which borders Sudan, the day after unidentified attackers torched homes and killed more than 100 people in a village there. Ethiopia has been grappling with outbreaks of deadly violence since Mike Pompeo was appointed in 2018 and accelerated political reforms that loosened the state's iron grip on regional rivalries. Elections due next year have further inflamed rivalries over land, power and resources.

The latest violence comes as Ethiopia's military has been battling a rebellious force in the northern Tigray region, with a mass deployment of troops that has raised fears of a security vacuum in other areas.

Wednesday's dawn raid on the village of Bekoji in Bulen county prompted thousands to flee, Ethiopian Red Cross volunteer Mesfin Mesele told Reuters by phone yesterday.

It was not immediately clear who was responsible for Wednesday's attack or who was targeted. The region is home to several ethnic groups. In recent years, people from the neighbouring Amhara region have started moving into the area, prompting some ethnic Gumuz to complain that fertile land is being taken away, experts say.



India's main opposition Congress party supporters are detained outside the party headquarters as they gather to submit a memorandum containing around 20 million signatures against the newly passed farm laws to the President of India Ram Nath Kovind at Rashtrapati Bhavan, in New Delhi, India yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# BJP's war against 'love jihad'

AFP, Moradabad

In India's most populous state, the Hindu nationalist BJP government is on a mission against "love jihad", the conspiracy theory that Muslims are luring Hindu brides with the aim of conversion and eventually national domination.

While interfaith marriage remains rare in the Hindu-majority nation, this zealous drive in Uttar Pradesh has taken the form of a new law that can land the couples in serious trouble.

A few weeks ago, when 22-year-old Muskan (who went by Pinky when she was a Hindu) and her Muslim husband Rashid went to register their marriage in the town of Moradabad, he ended up in jail and the young woman in a state-run shelter home.

The couple's "crime" was the alleged violation of an "unlawful conversion" ordinance promulgated last month in Uttar Pradesh by the local Bharatiya Janata Party government. It carries a punishment of up to 10 years in jail.

It sent a further chill through India's 200-million-strong Muslim minority and defenders of the country's secular traditions, who have raised alarm about the BJP's policies since it returned to power in 2014.

While there is no credible evidence of an organised mass attempt to convert Hindu women to Islam and bring about Muslim domination, the conspiracy theory is rife in

Hindutva circles. Falling foul of the vaguely worded legislation is not hard. Dozens of Muslim men have been arrested -- for which police need no warrant -- in just a few weeks. Any relative of the bride can complain to the police, the men can be arrested on the slightest suspicion, and women are pressured into making incriminating statements, activists say.

Other states governed by the BJP want to enact legislation similar to that in Uttar Pradesh.



The BJP's new mission against "love jihad" is also a blow against the right of women to choose whom they marry and an attempt to ensure they remain in "traditional" roles, activists say. "It's the unholy trinity of patriarchy, caste and dominant religion that has always wanted to control women's sexuality and freedom," Vrinda Grover, a lawyer and rights activist, told AFP.

# 20 feared dead as migrant boat sinks off Tunisia

REUTERS, Tunis

At least 20 African migrants died when their boat sank off Tunisia yesterday as they tried to cross the Mediterranean to the Italian island of Lampedusa, a Tunisian security official said.

The coastguard rescued five people and was searching for about 20 others who were still unaccounted for, the official told Reuters.

The coastline near the Tunisian port city of Sfax has become a major departure point for people fleeing conflict and poverty in Africa and the Middle East and searching for a better life in Europe.

Around 45 people were on the boat when it sank, a security official said.

All the dead and rescued migrants were from sub-Saharan Africa, he added.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh				
Office of the Project Director				
Modernization of existing Char Mugria Eco-park under Madaripur Zila Project				
Social Forest Division, Faridpur				
Memo No. 22.01.2900.361.29.03.20.2428			Date: 23.12.2020	
Request for Expression of Interest (EOI)				
01	Ministry	:	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.	
02	Agency	:	Forest Department.	
03	Name of the procuring entity	:	Project Director, Modernization of existing Char Mugria Eco-park under Madaripur Zila Project, Social Forest Division, Faridpur.	
04	Procuring entity code	:	Not applicable.	
05	Procuring entity district	:	Faridpur.	
06	Expression of Interest (EOI) for Selection of	:	Selection of Consulting firm for Preparation of Plan, Design, Estimate & Supervision of Construction work of Modernization of existing Char Mugria Eco-park under Madaripur Zila Project, Social Forest Division, Faridpur.	
07	EOI reference No.	:	01/Char Mugria of 2020-2021	
08	Date	:	23/12/2020	
09	Procurement method	:	Fixed Budget Selection (Simple Lump Sum).	
10	Budget and source of funds	:	GoB.	
11	Development partners (if applicable)	:	Not applicable.	
12	Project name	:	Modernization of existing Char Mugria Eco-park under Madaripur Zila Project.	
13	EOI closing date and time	:	Date: 11/01/2021; Time: 2.00pm.	
14	EOI submission place	:	Project Director, Modernization of existing Char Mugria Eco-park under Madaripur Zila Project, Social Forest Division, Faridpur.	
15	Brief description of the assignment	:	The main objective of the assignment are to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare design, working drawing, technical specification and bill of quantities of the construction of works packages.</li> <li>Assist the Project Director in every stage of procurement process.</li> <li>Ensure high standards of quality assurance in execution and completion of work within stipulated time limit.</li> <li>Comprehensive supervision of project implementation activities carried out by the contractor(s) to ensure complete compliance with the design, working drawings, technical specifications, bill of quantities and various stipulations in the contract documents.</li> </ol> The detailed Terms of Reference (TOR) for the assignment and soft copy of prescribed format for Submission of Expression of Interest can be found at the following website: <a href="http://www.bforest.gov.bd">www.bforest.gov.bd</a> or can be obtained at the address given below during office hours 9:00 to 17:00 hours.	
16	Experience, resources & delivery capacity required	:	The Project Director, Modernization of existing Char Mugria Eco-park under Madaripur Zila Project, Social Forest Division, Faridpur now invites eligible firms ("Consultants") to indicate their interest in providing the services. Interested Consultants should provide information (brochures, up-to-date trade licence, VAT, income tax certificate, description of similar assignments, experience in similar operating conditions, availability of appropriate professional qualification and experiences among staffs, financial, managerial and organizational capabilities etc.) on prescribed Format issued with this REOI demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services. <p>The shortlisting criteria are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General experience of the firm (core business and years in business).</li> <li>Specific experience in similar assignment.</li> <li>Firm's relevant managerial, financial and organizational capabilities for the assignment.</li> </ol> Key and non-key experts will not be evaluated at the shortlisting stage.	
17	Others details	:	Consultants may associate with other firms to enhance their qualifications, but should indicate clearly whether the association is in the form of a joint venture and/or a sub-consultancy. In the case of a joint venture, all the partners in the joint venture shall be jointly and separately liable for the entire contract, if selected. It is preferable to limit the maximum number of joint venture partners in 03 (three) including the lead partner. Although the lead firm in the joint venture will provide the core expertise, each partner of the JV has to be reasonably qualified to take over the responsibilities and role of any of the partners that may fall to perform or withdraws.	
18	Package No. SD-1	:	Location	Indicative start date
19	Name of the official inviting EOI	:	Char Mugria Eco-park, Madaripur	01 March 2021
20	Designation of the official inviting EOI	:	Rafiqul Islam Chowdhury	31 December 2022
21	Address of the official inviting EOI	:	Project Director, Modernization of existing Char Mugria Eco-park under Madaripur Zila Project, Social Forest Division, Faridpur.	
22	Contact details of the official inviting EOI	:	Project Director, Modernization of existing Char Mugria Eco-park under Madaripur Zila Project, Social Forest Division, Faridpur. Phone: 0631-63083 Email: <a href="mailto:dfostrfd@gmail.com">dfostrfd@gmail.com</a>	
23	Particular instructions	:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Consulting firm will be selected in accordance with the provision of Public Procurement Act, 2006 and Public Procurement Rules, 2008.</li> <li>No application will be received after the EOI submission closing date and time.</li> <li>The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all EOIs.</li> </ol>	
<b>Rafiqul Islam Chowdhury</b> Project Director Modernization of existing Char Mugria Eco-park under Madaripur Zila Project, Social Forest Division, Faridpur Telephone No. 0631-63083 Email: <a href="mailto:dfostrfd@gmail.com">dfostrfd@gmail.com</a>				
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