

# NEWSIN brief

## Man held over threats to kill Spain PM

AFP, Barcelona

A man who owned an "arsenal of weapons" was arrested in September for threatening online to kill Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, officials said yesterday. The *Publico* daily, which broke the story, said the man was 63 and among his weapons were sniper rifles and a submachine gun.

## 47 dead as buses collide in Zimbabwe

AFP, Harare

Forty-seven people were killed in Zimbabwe Wednesday when two buses collided on a road between the capital Harare and the eastern town of Rusape. "We confirm 47 people have died in a road traffic accident at the 166-kilometre peg along the Harare-Mutare highway," police spokesman Paul Nyathi said.

## Palestinian killed by Israeli fire in Gaza

AFP, Gaza City

A Palestinian was killed by Israeli fire during clashes along the border of the Gaza Strip yesterday. Israel's military said soldiers opened fire after "several suspects were spotted approaching the security fence in the southern Gaza Strip and attempting to sabotage it." At least 220 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire since major protests backed by Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas began in March.

## At least 27 killed in Tajikistan prison riot

REUTERS, Dushanbe

At least 25 inmates and two security officers have been killed after a riot broke out at a high-security prison in Tajikistan, three security sources said yesterday. The violence started late on Wednesday when an inmate believed to be a member of militant group Islamic State attacked a guard and seized his assault rifle.



PHOTO: AFP

Sri Lankan loyalists of deposed prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe stage a car rally in Colombo yesterday to protest against the actions of President Maithripala Sirisena. The loyalists demanded that the parliament be reconvened early to allow Wickremesinghe to prove his majority in the legislature.

# Sri Lanka crisis paralyses govt

Says key MP of Rajapakse's party

AFP, Colombo

A prolonged power-struggle between Sri Lanka's president and his sacked prime minister has paralysed the island's government and must be solved immediately, a key MP said.

President Maithripala Sirisena is yet to appoint several ministers since controversially dismissing Ranil Wickremesinghe's administration last month and appointing former strongman Mahinda Rajapakse in his place.

The move, which has been described as illegal by opponents, has triggered a constitutional crisis.

Sirisena has filled only 20 of 30 cabinet positions -- purposefully keeping some portfolios vacant to tempt legislators of Wickremesinghe's party to defect to his and Rajapakse's side ahead of a parliamentary vote on November 14.

The vote will determine whether Wickremesinghe or Rajapakse has a majority to form a government.

"Our country is going down the precipice. No one is working in government offices," Kumar Welgama, a senior member of Rajapakse's party and an influential Sri Lankan politician, told reporters in Colombo on Wednesday night.

"Public servants want to know who the real PM is. People are confused," he added, calling for the suspension of parliament to be lifted so that the issue of who is the rightful prime minister can be settled.

"Today, we are the laughing stock of the world. One prime minister is in the official residence and the other is in the PM's office."

"We need to settle this issue through parliament," he said.

# US-N Korea tensions rise

Nuclear talks stall as Trump declares he was 'in no rush'

AGENCIES

North Korea is getting increasingly angry at the US, as talks are deadlocked and tensions between the two countries are on the rise, a source familiar with the discussions told CNN.

US and foreign sources close to the talks paint a picture that's starkly different from the image President Donald Trump sought to convey Wednesday, when he told reporters the administration is "very happy with how it's going with North Korea. We think it's going fine."

Trump had been asked about the administration's announcement, in the middle of the night as Tuesday's midterm elections results were coming in, that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's meeting with a key aide to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un yesterday had been postponed.

"We're very happy with how it's going with North Korea. We think it's going fine. We're in no rush. We're in no hurry," Trump told reporters at a White House press conference. "The sanctions are on. The missiles have stopped. The rockets have stopped. The hostages are home. The great heroes are home."

South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha told lawmakers in Seoul Tuesday that she was told the North Koreans asked the US to postpone the talks, citing their busy schedules. A senior US official told CNN the North Korean delegation called Tuesday to postpone the meeting, but did not offer a clear explanation.

Another source familiar with the US-North Korea talks

and familiar with North Korean thinking said Pyongyang canceled because it came to the conclusion that it wasn't going to get anywhere with working level talks -- either through the Washington's special representative for North Korea, Stephen E. Biegun, or through Pompeo himself.

US military officials, foreign diplomats and sources familiar with developments say the two sides are locked in a stand-off over who will make concessions first, that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is "really angry" about the US refusal to offer sanctions relief and that personal friction between US and North Korean negotiators may be slowing progress.

"It doesn't bode well for the negotiations, which were already not proceeding well," said Bruce Klingner, a senior fellow at the Heritage Foundation.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford hinted Monday that if there's progress in US-North Korea talks, it could lead to a potential change in the US military presence on the Korean peninsula.

Meanwhile, the outgoing commander of US forces in South Korea yesterday urged Seoul and Washington to maintain their alliance as differences mount in their approach to the nuclear-armed North, reported AFP.

The US played a key role in defending the South after the North invaded in 1950, triggering the Korean War, and even now stations 28,500 troops in the country, a treaty ally, to protect it from its neighbour.

North asked to delay Pompeo talks: Seoul  
US commander urges Seoul, Washington to protect pact



# Fears grow over ethnic war in Afghanistan

Taliban, Shia Hazara minority clash in Ghazni

REUTERS, Ghazni

The Taliban have infiltrated a strategic district in southeastern Afghanistan and fought with members of the Shia Hazara minority, officials said yesterday, a week after militants and a Shia militia clashed in a central province.

Insurgents raided the Jaghori district in Ghazni province on Wednesday, aiming to regain control of a Shia-dominated region that allows women to move freely and encourages higher female participation in government.

The attacks on Jaghori by the Taliban, a militant group made up mainly of ethnic Pashtun Sunni Muslims, have heightened fears of a new surge of sectarian violence in Afghanistan.

The violence has also highlighted concerns that Hazaras, members of a mainly Shia minority, may take up arms in frustration at a lack of action by the central government.

Abdul Qayum Sajjadi, a lawmaker in Ghazni province, said President Ashraf Ghani's Western-backed government was negligent.

"I repeatedly urged the central government to send backup forces to Jaghori, but security departments were slow in sending reinforcements. The residents are forced to fight the battle," he said yesterday.

A senior interior ministry official said at least six policemen were killed and dozens of civilians and militia members were wounded in clashes with the Taliban that began on Wednesday.



Chinese President Xi Jinping meets former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China yesterday. During talks with Kissinger, Xi said he and Trump would have a deep exchange of views in Argentina, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# Begging in Beijing?

Pak sacks state TV chief after broadcast gaffe

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan has removed the acting chief of state-run television after a caption read "Begging" instead "Beijing" during a broadcast of Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to China, which has promised economic aid to the impoverished South Asian country.

Khan was in Beijing seeking financial aid to help end a spiralling balance of payments crisis after securing \$6 billion in support from Saudi Arabia and before Pakistan sat down to talks with the IMF.

An official Ministry of Information order seen by Reuters said the ministry had withdrawn the services of Hasan Immad Mohammadi, who had served as acting managing director of Pakistan Television for just a matter of weeks.

PTV apologised after "Begging" ran on screens for 20-25 seconds on Monday while Khan was making a speech, kicking off a debate on social media as to whether the misspelling was deliberate.

Khan has criticised Pakistan's many international bailouts and decried previous leaders as roaming the world with a begging bowl.

# Australia revamps Pacific strategy to counter China

REUTERS, Beijing

Beijing and Canberra should be cooperating in the South Pacific and not be cast as strategic rivals, China's top diplomat said yesterday, after Australia launched a multi-billion dollar fund to counter China's rising influence in the region.

Standing alongside Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne, Chinese State Councillor Wang Yi made the conciliatory remarks after a meeting in Beijing widely billed as a step toward resetting bilateral ties after a lengthy diplomatic chill.

Wang said that he had agreed with Payne that the two countries could combine their respective strengths and embark on trilateral cooperation with Pacific island countries.

"We are not rivals, and we can absolutely become cooperation partners," Wang told reporters, describing the meeting as impor-

tant after the recent "ups and downs" in the relationship.

Payne said the discussions were "valuable, full and candid".

But even as his foreign minister visited Beijing, Prime Minister Scott Morrison characterised the Pacific as its domain while offering the region up to A\$3 billion (\$2.18 billion) in cheap infrastructure loans and grants.

"This is our patch, this is our part of the world," Morrison said in his most detailed foreign policy speech since becoming prime minister in August.

Speaking in Queensland, Morrison said Australia would invest in telecommunications, energy, transport and water projects in the region.

He also said Australia would expand its diplomatic presence in the Pacific, posting staff to Palau, the Marshall Islands, French Polynesia, Niue and the Cook Islands.

Canberra offers Pacific island nations billions in loans, grants

Two nations should not be seen as rivals: China

# Maoist rebels kill 5 in India bus blast

AFP, Raipur

Indian Maoist rebels yesterday killed five people including a policeman by detonating a landmine under a bus in a restive central state that goes to the polls this month, police said.

It was the second attack in Chhattisgarh inside 10 days and came just a day ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the state where he will be campaigning for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The mineral-rich state goes to the polls on Monday with a second round on November 20, the election staggered because of the security situation.

The attack occurred in Dantewada district, a Maoist stronghold where the guerrillas killed two policemen and a journalist on October 30.

The Maoist rebels, who say they are fighting for the rights of landless labourers and poor farmers, have urged voters to boycott the polls.

In the latest incident, police said the victims were returning from picking vegetables and other rations for paramilitary forces deployed in the area.

"The bus was coming down a hill when it hit a landmine," police superintendent D. Raghushankar told AFP.

"Four civilians and one CISF (Central Industrial Security Force) personnel have lost their lives."

## ROHINGYA CRISIS

# Suu Kyi under microscope at SE Asia summit

REUTERS, Singapore

The customary cordiality of Southeast Asian summits may be missing when the region's leaders meet next week due to sharp differences over Myanmar, whose military has been accused of genocide against the country's Rohingya Muslim minority.

Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi is due to attend the November 11-15 Singapore meeting, and Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, a doyen of the group, has served notice he has lost faith in the Nobel peace laureate because of the Rohingya issue.

"We have made it quite clear we don't really support her any more," Mahathir said in an interview with Turkish news channel TRT World just over a month ago.

"Our policy in Asean is non-interference in the internal affairs of the countries, but this is ... grossly unjust," he said, referring to the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The Rohingya crisis is one of the biggest man-made disasters involving a member since Asean was founded in 1967, and it is one of the thorniest issues yet faced by a group that traditionally works by consensus.

Many diplomats and rights activists say Asean's credibility is at risk if it fails to tackle the matter head-on.

A UN report in August detailed mass killings and gang rapes with genocidal intent in a military crackdown that began in 2017 and drove hundreds of thousands of Rohingya from Myanmar's Rakhine state into neighbouring Bangladesh.

Outrage over what the United Nations branded "ethnic cleansing" has brought demands from Western nations for criminal charges and sanctions.