

# NEWSIN brieF

## UAE pardons Briton jailed for spying

AFP, Abu Dhabi

The United Arab Emirates yesterday pardoned British academic Matthew Hedges just days after sentencing him to life in prison for spying in a case that stunned Britain and his family. The UK thanked its Gulf ally and Hedges's wife expressed her joy after he was among more than 700 prisoners pardoned by UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan for next month's National Day.

## Eight Maoists, two cops killed in India

TNN, Raipur

Two security personnel and eight Maoists were killed in a gunbattle that took place in forests of Kistaram area of Sukma district of Bastar on the borders of Telangana yesterday morning. Police said, "A gunbattle broke between Maoists and security personnel at around 10:00 am near Saklar village in Kistaram when group of armed Maoists triggered firing upon jawans."

## Iran quake injures more than 700

AFP, Tehran

More than 700 people were injured in a 6.4-magnitude earthquake that shook western Iran, state television reported in an updated toll yesterday. The quake struck Kermanshah province late Sunday, with an epicentre 17 kilometres (11 miles) southwest of the city of Sarpol-e Zahab, according to the country's institute of geophysics.

## BITS OF HISTORY (NOVEMBER 26)

**1940:** Nazi German occupiers began walling off the Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw, sealing in its 400,000 inhabitants.  
**1998:** Japan expressed deep remorse for its actions in China during World War Two in a joint declaration during a visit by Chinese President Jiang Zemin.  
**2001:** Nepal's King Gyanendra imposed a state of emergency after at least 100 people were killed in three days of violence carried out by Maoist guerrillas fighting to topple the monarchy.



A migrant family, part of a caravan of thousands traveling from Central America en route to the United States, run away from tear gas released by US border patrol in front of the border wall between the US and Mexico in Tijuana, Mexico on Sunday. Inset, migrants return to Mexico after being hit by tear gas while attempting to illegally cross the border wall into US.

PHOTO: REUTERS



# New pressure on Pakistan

US urges Islamabad to sanction terrorists, offers \$5m reward for helping secure their capture as India pays tribute to victims

AFP, Washington

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Sunday urged Pakistan to take action against those responsible for the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks as Washington offered a new reward of \$5 million for helping secure their capture.

The announcement came as India yesterday marked the tenth anniversary of the terror attacks, which left 166 people dead and hundreds injured after Islamist militants from Pakistan unleashed a wave of violence across India's financial capital lasting three days.

"It is an affront to the families of the victims that, after ten years, those who planned the Mumbai attack have still not been convicted for their involvement," Pompeo said in a statement.

"We call upon all countries, particularly Pakistan, to uphold their UN Security Council obligations to implement sanctions against the terrorists responsible for this atrocity, including Lashkar-e-Tayyiba and its affiliates."

"We stand with the families and friends of the victims, whose loved ones were lost in this act of barbarism, includ-

ing six American citizens," he added.

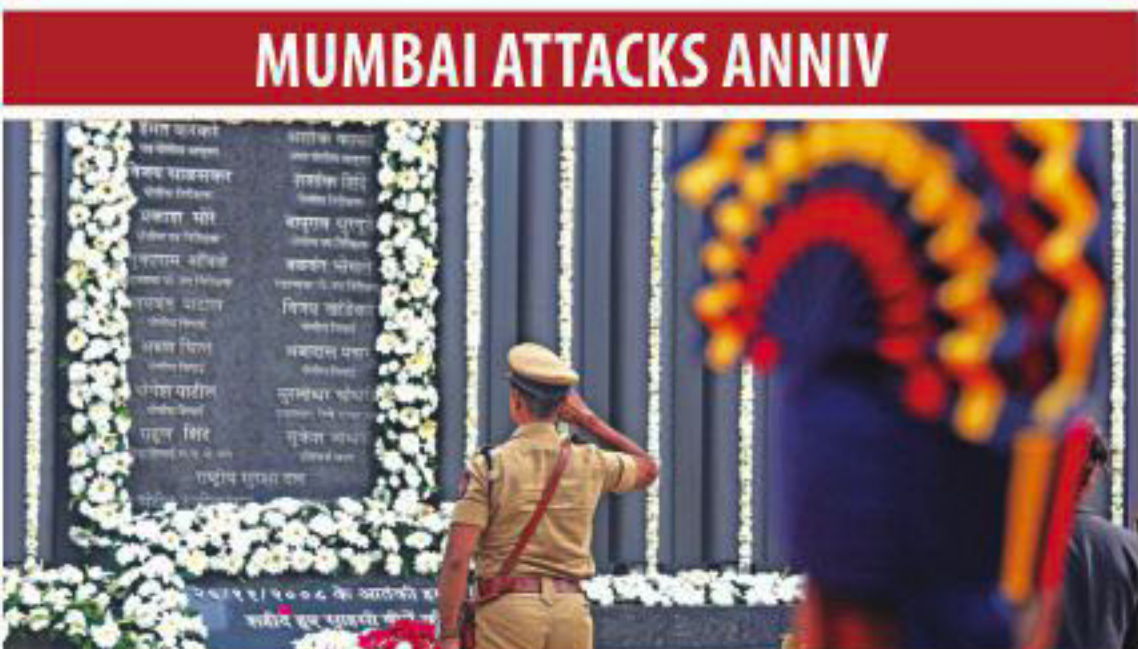
The Department of State's Rewards for Justice (RFJ) Program meanwhile said it was offering up to \$5 million "for information leading to the arrest or conviction in any country of any individual who committed, conspired to commit, or aided or abetted" the execution of the attack.

It is the third such reward offered by the US after the State Department announced bounties of \$10 million for Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) founder Hafiz Mohammad Saeed and \$2 million for Hafiz Abdul Rahman Makki, another senior leader of the group.

At a solemn ceremony Mumbai's police yesterday remembered more than a dozen officers and commandos killed in the operation against the militants.

Relatives of the victims and local dignitaries laid wreaths at a police memorial honouring the dead while the force's brass band played the "Last Post".

"A grateful nation bows to our brave police and security forces who valiantly fought the terrorists during the Mumbai attacks," said Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



# Ousted PM's party vows to take over state finances

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's ousted prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe yesterday initiated moves to take control of state finances as a power struggle with the country's president entered a second month.

Wickremesinghe's United National Party (UNP) said it would call a parliamentary vote this week to block spending by the new administration installed by President Maithripala Sirisena.

The UNP says that as Sri Lanka does not have a recognised government all spending powers should revert to parliament, where the UNP and its allies have a majority.

Sirisena set off the constitutional crisis on October 26 by sacking Wickremesinghe, naming the country's former strongman president Mahinda Rajapakse as prime minister, and seeking to dissolve parliament.

But the Supreme Court and legislators have blocked Sirisena and the parliament's speaker

has declared that neither Wickremesinghe nor Rajapakse are prime minister.

Wickremesinghe, who occupies the prime minister's residence, and Rajapakse, who has the premier's offices, have both refused to back down.

UNP spokesman Champika Ranawaka said a majority in the 225-member legislature would vote on Friday to freeze spending by Rajapakse's disputed ministerial team. The UNP and its allies have 122 MPs.

"In the absence of a government, all financial control transfers to parliament," Ranawaka told reporters. "We will directly have control over government spending through the legislature."

Rajapakse has lost two no-confidence motions and two other votes in parliament but still insists he is in charge.

Ranawaka said the fifth motion against Rajapakse on Friday would seek to stop him from spending state funds.

## LANKA POLITICAL CRISIS



Israeli policemen inspect the scene of a car ramming attack near Hebron, in the occupied West Bank yesterday. A Palestinian man rammed his car into three Israeli soldiers before being shot dead by another soldier, Palestinian medics said.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# Mars probe set for 7 minutes of terror

AFP, Los Angeles

Nasa's top scientists admitted to sleepless nights, sweaty palms, stomach aches and moments of pure terror as their \$993 million Mars Insight spacecraft approaches a high-drama finale: landing on Mars.

The high drama of the entry, descent and landing phase was set to begin at 1940 GMT yesterday at Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California.

A carefully orchestrated sequence -- already fully preprogrammed on board the spacecraft -- takes place over the next several minutes, coined "six and a half minutes of terror."

The site is roughly 373 miles (600 km) from the 2012 landing spot of the car-sized Mars rover Curiosity, the last spacecraft sent to the Red Planet by Nasa.

Mars Insight's goal is to listen for quakes and tremors as a way to unveil the Red Planet's inner mysteries, how it formed billions of years ago, and by extension, how other rocky planets like Earth took shape.

The unmanned spacecraft launched nearly seven months ago, and is Nasa's first to attempt to touch down on Earth's neighboring planet since the Curiosity rover arrived in 2012.

# Home 'most dangerous place' for women: UN

Study says women in Africa, America most vulnerable

AFP, Vienna

More than half the women who were murdered worldwide last year were killed by their partners or family members, making home "the most dangerous place for a woman," a new UN study said Sunday.

In statistics released on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime calculated that of a total 87,000 female homicide cases worldwide in 2017, some 50,000 -- or 58 percent -- were committed by the victims' intimate partners or family members.

Around 30,000, or 34 percent, were committed by intimate partners alone. "This amounts to some six women being

killed every hour by people they know," the Vienna-based body said.

The vast majority -- around 80 percent -- of homicide victims worldwide were men, but "women continue to pay the highest price as a result of gender inequality, discrimination and negative stereotypes," said UNODC chief Yury Fedotov.

"They are also the most likely to be killed by intimate partners and family... making the home the most dangerous place for a woman," he said.

The UNODC calculated that the global rate of female homicide victims stood at around 1.3 victims per 100,000 female population.

The study found that Africa and the Americas were the regions where women were most at risk of being killed by intimate partners or family members.



# California wildfire finally tamed

Death toll rises to 85

AFP, Los Angeles

The deadliest and most destructive fire in California's history was finally brought totally under control by firefighters, more than two weeks after it erupted, authorities said on Sunday.

The so-called Camp Fire, which broke out on November 8, is so far known to have killed 85 people.

The Butte County Sheriff's department said that they had mistakenly added two people to an earlier death toll of 87.

However late Sunday they increased the number of missing people to 296 from 249 -- still considerably lower than the 474 reported missing on Friday.

"#CampFire ... is now 100% contained," Cal Fire, the state fire authority, said in a bulletin on Twitter.

Only 54 of the fatalities have been identified, according to the local sheriff's office in Butte County, a rural area north of the state capital Sacramento.

A total of 153,336 acres were affected by the fire, with nearly 14,000 homes and hundreds of other structures destroyed.

Heavy downfalls that have soaked the fire zone in the past days helped douse the remaining flames, but also made it more difficult for crews searching for bodies.

# May campaigns to sell Brexit deal at home

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Theresa May convened her cabinet and was to face parliament on the newly-agreed Brexit deal yesterday, as she begins the tricky task of selling the plan to a sceptical country.

May returns to a mutinous parliament after sealing the agreement with European Union leaders at a summit in Brussels, where both sides insisted the divorce deal was the best and only option available.

But she faces a big battle to win MPs' approval ahead of a vote next month, with lawmakers from all parties, including many of her Conservative colleagues, opposed.

"We can back this deal, deliver on the vote of the referendum and move on to building a brighter future... Or this house can choose to reject this deal and go back to square one."

"It would open the door to more division and more uncertainty, with all the risks that will entail," she is to



warn lawmakers, according to advance excerpts released by her Downing Street office.

The agreement sealed Sunday prepares for Britain's smooth exit from the EU on March 29, 2019, and sets out a vision for "as close as possible a partnership" afterwards.

May will now embark on an intensive nationwide campaign to promote it -- and the risks of no-deal -- ahead of a vote by lawmakers on or around December 12.

However, the disparate anti-deal forces are readying for a fight, including the Labour main opposition.

Its Brexit spokesman Keir Starmer told BBC radio that if parliament rejected the deal, May would either have to re-negotiate or hold a general election.

## TERROR CONVICTION

# Maldives top court clears Nasheed

AFP, Colombo

The Maldives top court yesterday overturned a terrorism conviction against the country's first democratically elected leader Mohamed Nasheed, who fled into exile after being sentenced to 13 years behind bars.

The Supreme Court said Nasheed was wrongfully charged and should not have been convicted in the 2015 trial described by the United Nations as politically motivated.

Nasheed went into exile a year later while abroad seeking medical treatment, and was branded a fugitive from justice.

"President Nasheed's entire trial was a politically-motivated sham," his lawyer, Hisaan Hussein, said



after his conviction was quashed.

"It is appalling that an innocent man was unjustly forced to spend a year in jail, 35 months in exile, and was prevented from standing for political office."

The opposition icon only returned to the Maldives this month after his political rival Abdulla Yameen, who ruled the Maldives with an iron fist for five years, was beaten in a presidential election.

The strongman president jailed or exiled most of his opponents but since he departed office political prisoners have been freed and opponents abroad have returned.