

NEWSIN brief

Cholera outbreak kills 8 in Sudan

AFP, Khartoum

Eight people have died from cholera in Sudan including six in the war-torn state of Blue Nile, according to the World Health Organisation, amid a surge in the number of reported cases. A total of 184 cases of cholera have been reported in the northeast African country over the past month, including 128 cases from Blue Nile and 56 in Sennar state, WHO said in a statement late Wednesday citing health ministry records.

Heavy rains kill 17 in western India

AFP, Mumbai

Seventeen people were killed yesterday in flooding caused by torrential rains in western India including five who were sleeping in a mosque, officials said. Twelve people including a nine-year-old boy were killed in flash floods and as walls collapsed in various parts of Pune district in Maharashtra state, police said. The mosque was washed away in a rural part of the state, police official Sandip Patil told AFP. "We have recovered five bodies and are still looking for two missing people. Rescue operations are ongoing," he said.

Malaysian cops arrest 15 over links to IS

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia has arrested 15 people, mostly foreigners from neighbouring Indonesia, on suspicion of having links with the Islamic State militant group, police said yesterday. Malaysia has been on high alert since January 2016, when gunmen allied with Islamic State carried out a series of attacks in Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia. The suspects were arrested in several raids across the country between July and September, Malaysia's police counter-terrorism chief Ayob Khan Mydin Pitchay said in a statement.



A protester (C) runs out in front of Hong Kong's Chief Executive Carrie Lam's motorcade outside Queen Elizabeth Stadium in the Wanchai district of Hong Kong yesterday, ahead of a planned town hall meeting between Lam and some 150 people picked via lottery after more than 20,000 people applied to attend the event.

Shallow tremor rocks PoK again

53 injured in Mirpur, Jhelum

A shallow tremor yesterday sent terrified residents of northeastern Pakistan onto the streets, days after a powerful quake killed 38 people and caused widespread damage in the area. At least 53 individuals suffered minor injuries in Mirpur, Jhelum of Pakistan occupied Kashmir. The tremor stretched already-frayed nerves in Mirpur, in Pakistani-controlled Kashmir, as fears of aftershocks from Tuesday's quake sent hundreds into the streets and put local hospitals on alert. The US Geological Survey put the quake at 4.7 magnitude and 10 kilometres (six miles) deep, adding that it had struck just four kilometres outside of Mirpur. City residents huddled in streets following the quake, some still barefoot, while others recited verses from the Koran. "It's hell. I am running to save my life," Mohammod Bilal told AFP moments after the tremor. "I thought most of the building would have tumbled down," said Sagheer Ahmad. "Allah is very kind to us." Dozens of patients were evacuated from the main government hospital in Mirpur, some in wheelchairs or on stretchers. Dr Farooq Noor, the medical superintendent at the hospital, told AFP that 93 people were brought in after the tremor. Most were swiftly discharged with minor wounds or shock, but some with head injuries and broken limbs were admitted, he added. The city's hospitals were already packed with hundreds injured by the quake earlier in the week.

PHOTO: AFP

UN bans Lankan troops

The move comes after Colombo appoints a war veteran as army chief, accused of war crimes abuses

REUTERS, Colombo

The United Nations suspended Sri Lankan Army deployments in the world body's peacekeeping operations after the Indian Ocean island nation appointed a war veteran who has been accused of serious human rights violations, an official said on Wednesday. Sri Lanka's president in August appointed war veteran Shavendra Silva as its army chief, drawing sharp criticism from the United States and the United Nations over the appointment of an officer who has been accused of serious human rights violations. "We have expressed our concern to the government of Sri Lanka over the appointment of Lieutenant General Shavendra Silva to the position of commander of the Sri Lanka Army despite well-documented, credible allegations of his involvement in serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law," UN spokesman Farhan Haq said in New York. "In light of this appointment, the UN Department of Peace Operations is therefore suspending future Sri Lankan army deployments except where suspension would expose UN operations to serious operational risk."

Silva, 55, is credited with successfully leading an army division against dissident Tamil Tigers in the final phases of 26-year-long brutal civil war. His victory, however, was highly controversial. Thousands of civilians were killed in the last phases of the conflict, including in areas declared by the government to be a "no-fire zone" which came under sustained army shelling, including hospitals. A United Nations panel has accused Silva's division of suspected extrajudicial executions of unarmed rebels in the final week of the war, which ended in 2009. Silva has denied the accusations. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said in a statement in August that Silva's promotion "severely compromises Sri Lanka's commitment to promote justice and accountability."



PEACEKEEPING MISSION
Army chief Shavendra Silva denies accusations
Silva is credited with successfully leading an army division against dissident Tamil Tigers

The United States expressed its disapproval of Silva's appointment in a strongly worded statement and said "the allegations of gross human rights violations against him, documented by the United Nations and other organizations, are serious and credible."

'Fellas, work it out'

Trump urges India, Pakistan to settle their differences as anger mounts in PoK

AGENCIES

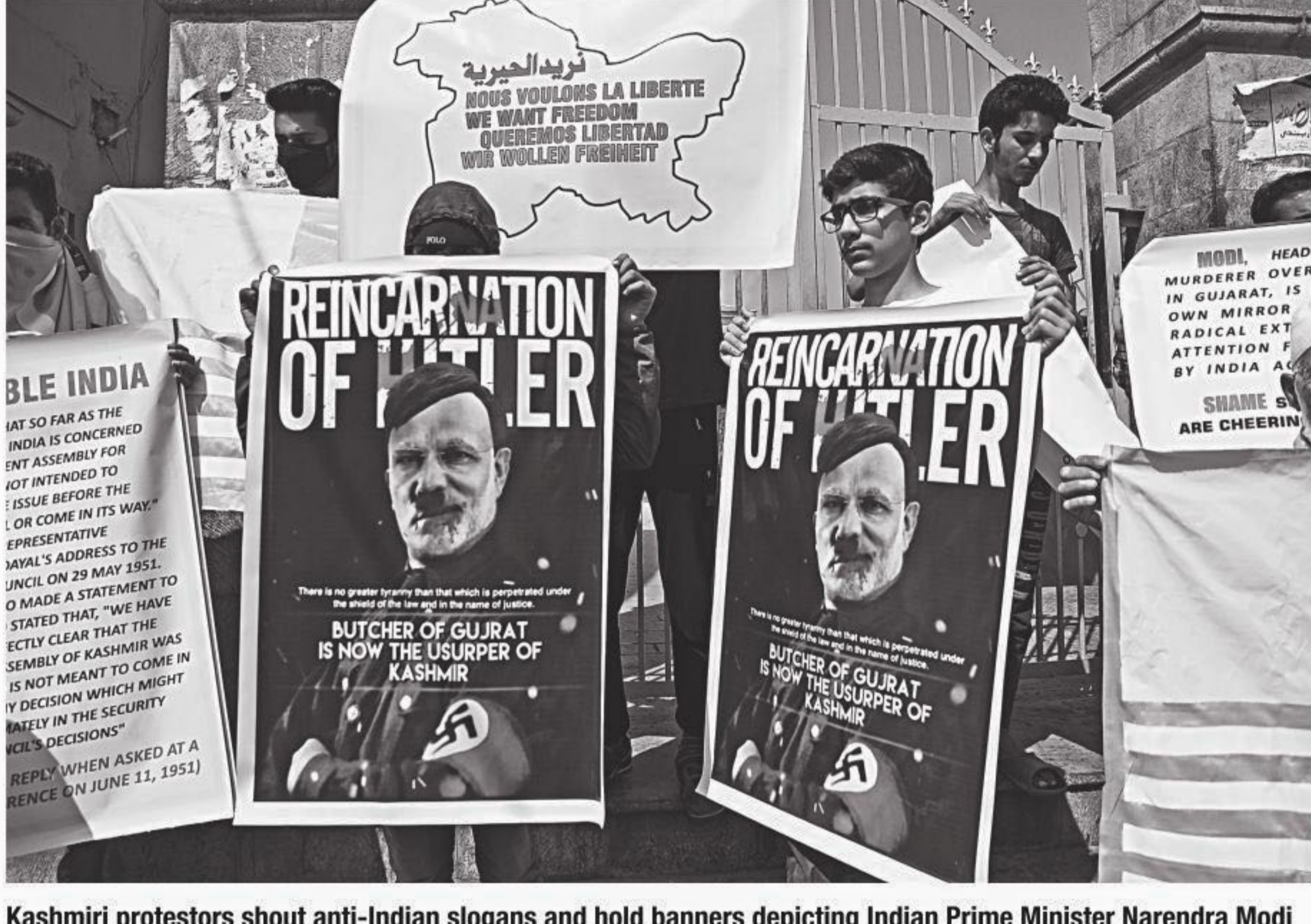
US President Donald Trump said Wednesday he encouraged India and Pakistan to work out their differences in separate meetings with their prime ministers this week. "I said, 'Fellas, work it out. Just work it out,'" Trump told a news conference after attending the UN General Assembly. "Those are two nuclear countries. They've gotta work it out," he said. Tensions have soared this year between India and Pakistan, which have fought three full-fledged wars, two over the divided Himalayan territory of Kashmir. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month revoked the Muslim-majority region's autonomy and imposed a clampdown that has snapped off most internet and cellular communications to ordinary people. Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan has urged the United States to take up Kashmir, but India has long refused outside mediation, reported AFP. Trump showed his support on Sunday for Modi by attending a rally with him before Indian-Americans in Houston, where the Hindu nationalist leader accused Pakistan of fomenting extremism. As Imran Khan prepares to deliver another appeal to the world to address the situation in Kashmir, he faces the risk that rising anger in his country's portion of the disputed region could spiral into a confrontation with India. Some people in Pakistan's portion of Kashmir said thousands of people were preparing to storm the line of control (LOC) - a ceasefire line agreed with India that is one of the most militarised frontiers in the world. Reuters could not independently verify the claims, reported Reuters. But regional tensions have swelled since India stripped its portion of Kashmir of autonomy in August, made mass arrests, limited communications and imposed curfew-like restrictions in some areas to contain a decades-long uprising against New Delhi's rule. Khan has appealed to Kashmiris to give him the chance to sway the international community and he is scheduled to address the United Nations General Assembly in New York today.



India deploys warships, jets to keep tabs on Pak

TNN, New Delhi

India has "forward deployed" some warships, submarines, maritime patrol aircraft and fighter jets to keep track of a major naval exercise by Pakistan in the north Arabian Sea, which will include missile and rocket firings as well as combat manoeuvres over the next few days. Top defence establishment sources on Wednesday said "close tabs" are being kept on the unfolding Pakistani exercise, with the Indian armed forces also being kept operationally ready "to prevent any misadventure" by the neighbouring country during it. "There is a heightened threat perception about strikes, whether by state or non-state actors, after India revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special status. Even if the Pakistani exercise is a regular one, like the joint naval-air one called 'Ribat' conducted every year, intentions can change very quickly," said a source. Pakistan, on its part, has issued a maritime alert for commercial shipping in the north Arabian Sea that it will be conducting "live" missile, rocket and gun firings between September 25 and 29. The entire exercise will be tracked, both in terms of "operational capabilities and any deviations from the routine", by "several assets" of the Indian Navy and IAF, said sources. The Navy, apart from warships and submarines, is also using its Poseidon-81 patrol aircraft for long-range maritime reconnaissance over the exercise area. "There are at least seven to eight Pakistani warships there," said a source. The Indian armed forces have been maintaining high operational readiness ever since the IAF conducted the pre-dawn air strikes against the major Jaish-e-Mohammed training facility at Balakot in Pakistan on February 26. The Balakot facility, incidentally, was revived for terror training earlier this month. "Though a conventional military conflict does not seem likely, we cannot take any chances. Moreover, after J&K's special status was revoked on August 5, there have been several intelligence inputs that a big terror strike could be in the offing," said an official.



Kashmiri protesters shout anti-Indian slogans and hold banners depicting Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi as German leader of the Nazi Party Adolf Hitler, during a lockdown in Srinagar yesterday.

Lanka PM backs down from presidential race

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Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe yesterday gave up his bid to become president in November's elections, conceding his party's candidacy to his deputy, Sajith Premadasa. Premadasa is the son of former president Ranasinghe Premadasa who was assassinated by suspected Tamil Tiger rebels in 1993. His main rival in the November 16 vote will likely be Gotabaya Rajapakse, the controversial younger brother of Sri Lanka's former strongman president Mahinda Rajapakse. Gotabaya Rajapakse, 70, is considered a strong contender even though he faces corruption cases in Sri Lanka and two civil actions in the United States. The US cases are over the murder of a newspaper editor and torture of Tamil

Two kids beaten to death in India

AFP, New Delhi

Two children were beaten to death in India for defecating in the open, police said yesterday, underlining the violence sometimes unleashed to enforce Prime Minister Narendra Modi's flagship cleanliness drive. The children from the Dalit community, India's lowest social caste previously known as "untouchables", were on their way to their grandfather's house in the Shivpuri district in the central state of Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday. "It was early morning and they had stopped to attend to nature's call" when they were attacked, police inspector general Raja Babu Singh told AFP by phone. "The kids were taken to the hospital but they succumbed to their injuries." Two brothers had been arrested, one of whom appeared to be "mentally unsound", Singh added. Modi is set to declare India free of open-air defecation on Wednesday, coinciding with the 150th birthday of independence hero Mahatma Gandhi, who also campaigned vigorously for better sanitation. Modi, currently in his second term, launched his pet Clean India Mission in 2014, promising to build toilets for all by 2019. His government says it has built more than 100 million toilets, particularly in rural areas, a major public health issue in the country of 1.3 billion people.

China harvesting organs from ethnic minorities

Lawyer for independent tribunal tells UNHRC

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The Chinese government is harvesting and selling organs from persecuted religious and ethnic minorities on an industrial scale, the UN Human Rights Council has been told. Speaking at the council's headquarters in Geneva on Tuesday, lawyer Hamid Sabi presented the findings of the China Tribunal, an independent tribunal on allegations of forced organ harvesting. Sabi told the council that UN member states have a "legal obligation" to act after the tribunal's final report in June found that "the commission of crimes against humanity against the Falun Gong and Uighur [minorities] had been proved beyond reasonable doubt". The China Tribunal was chaired by Sir Geoffrey Nice QC, a prosecutor at the international criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia who led the case against Slobodan Milosevic, and heard evidence from human rights investigators, medical experts and witnesses. It concluded that there was clear evidence China had been extracting organs from, and thereby killing, members of the Falun Gong spiritual group for at least 20 years, and that the practice was ongoing today. Detainees were "killed to order... cut open while still alive for their kidneys, livers, hearts, lungs, cornea and skin to be removed and turned into commodities for sale", the tribunal's final judgement said. The tribunal said there was also possible evidence, though in less volume, of forced organ harvesting in detainees from the Uighur Muslim minority, as well as Tibetans and some Christian sects.

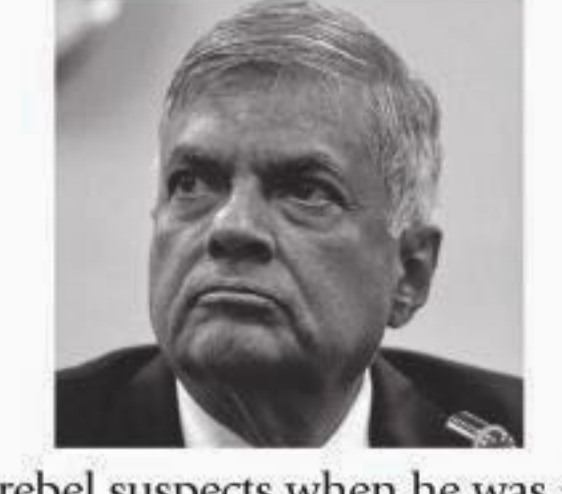


List of 13 IAS officers found

HONEYTRAP RING IN INDIA

TNN, Bhopal

The honeytrap ring that targeted powerful ministers and bureaucrats in MP -- perhaps the biggest such extortion syndicate in the country -- had a 'target list' of senior IAS officers, who they had marked under codes to record who all had fallen for their lure and could now be extorted. The question is, who pulled the strings? Who handled this all-woman sex and blackmail syndicate, and who gave them the targets? The SIT, which is probing the sex and blackmail syndicate, has come across a list of 13 IAS officers -- who served at different points of time in fisheries, agriculture, culture, industries, urban administration, labour, forest, water resources, public relations and general administration departments -- that the women kept, say sources. The ring handler had written the 'hit list' from pages of a government diary, with ticks & codes scribbled against their names. Names of some officers were circled, and some marked 'Imp' or 'Ok'. Some had ticks marked against their names. Police are trying to crack these signs and words meant to the gang, said an official. How many of them got hooked is still a matter of investigation, but police have recovered clips of a few officials from the women's cellphones, said sources.



rebel suspects when he was a top defence ministry official during his brother's rule. It is not clear if incumbent Maithripala Sirisena will seek a second term, reported AFP. His popularity has fallen since Islamic militant attacks in April killed at least 258 people, and also a political crisis in late 2018. Premadasa's nomination, strongly supported by back-bench members of parliament, followed months of internal division in the center-right United National Party, as the party also considered parliament speaker Karu Jayasuriya and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, reported Reuters.