



World news in brief



A human rights group has described Narendra Modi's comments as hate speech (AFP/Getty)

Modi accused of Islamophobia during election campaign

Narendra Modi made Islamophobic remarks in more than 100 campaign speeches during India's general election in his desperate bid to return to power for a rare third term, a report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) said. Out of a total of 173 campaign speeches, the Indian prime minister allegedly made inflammatory remarks targeting Muslims and other minorities in at least 110, the international human rights group claimed following a survey of Mr Modi's campaign speeches released yesterday.

“The hate-speech rhetoric by the Indian leader has real-world consequences for people who have had their homes demolished, who have been physically attacked in some cases, and have actually been killed,” Elaine Pearson, Asia director at HRW, told *The Independent*. India’s estimated 200-million-strong minority represents the world’s third-largest population of Muslims, and roughly one-seventh of India’s 1.42 billion people.

The claims by Mr Modi against Muslims and other minorities were “blatantly false” and his “inflammatory speeches have further normalised abuses against Muslims, Christians, and others” amid a decade of discrimination against these groups under his administration, HRW said.

Pakistan arrests former spy chief

Pakistan has arrested its former spy chief, retired Lieutenant General Faiz Hameed, and started court martial proceedings against him. The detention of a high-ranking officer is unusual in a country where the military has ruled for over 30 years and continues to hold considerable sway.

Lt Gen Hameed’s arrest is widely seen as part of a crackdown on the allies of former prime minister Imran Khan, who was ousted in 2022 and jailed on corruption charges. Mr Khan, who had reportedly handpicked Lt Gen Hameed to head the ISI spy agency, has accused the military of orchestrating his removal at the behest of the US.

The former spy chief’s arrest was ordered by the Supreme Court, the military claimed in a statement, adding that he was also accused of violating the Pakistan Army Act. It did not specify the charges, though, or the date of his arrest. He was reportedly implicated in a housing scheme launched by Mr Khan’s government.

“The process of field general court martial has been initiated and Lt Gen Faiz Hameed has been taken into military custody,” the statement read. The head of the ISI is generally considered to be

the second most powerful military officer in Pakistan after the army chief.

Chinese woman wins right to visit daughter in landmark case

A Beijing court has granted a woman visiting rights to her daughter, marking the first instance of the Chinese judiciary legally recognising a child as having two mothers. The ruling is a major victory for LGBT+ rights in a country where same-sex marriage is not legal.

The 42-year-old woman, known only by her nickname Didi, was engaged in a custody battle for two children, reported *The Guardian*. Didi and her wife married in 2016 in the US, and both underwent IVF treatment using her wife's eggs and a donor's sperm. They both conceived. Didi gave birth to a daughter in 2017 and her wife gave birth to a son.

After their relationship ended, Didi's wife took both children and moved to Beijing, severing contact with her. In March 2020, Didi, who now lives in Shanghai, filed China's first same-sex custody dispute. Four years later, in May 2024, the Beijing Fengtai People's Court ruled that Didi should be permitted monthly visits with her daughter. But she was not given visitation rights to her son, since she only has genetic ties with her daughter.

While China decriminalised homosexuality in 1997, same-sex couples cannot marry or adopt children.

Melbourne bans rental e-scooters

Melbourne has banned rental electric scooters for posing an "unacceptable" safety risk to the public. The decision comes two years after the Australian city introduced them in February 2022, initially on a trial basis.

"Too many people are riding on footpaths," mayor Nicholas Reece told local radio station 3AW. He said he was "fed up" with the bad behaviour of some scooter users, which he said was

increasingly causing accidents. The scooters are scattered around the city “like confetti”, posing a public safety risk, the mayor said.

The growing popularity of electric scooters is reflected in the number of injuries reported by the city’s hospitals. The Royal Melbourne Hospital said in a 2023 report that its emergency department had seen nearly 250 patients who had been injured riding scooters the previous year.

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