

[Iraq unveils ancient stone tablet returned by Italy](#)

Baghdad: Iraq unveiled on Sunday a 2,800-year-old stone tablet returned by Italy, as the war-ravaged country works to recover from abroad antiquities looted from its territory.

The tablet – whose text is written in cuneiform, the Babylonian alphabet – bears the insignia of Shalmaneser III, the Assyrian king who ruled the region of Nimrod, in present-day northern Iraq, from 858 to 823 BC.

[Palestinian anger as Israeli minister gets a free hand over West Bank settlement policy](#)

RAMALLAH: Israel's nationalist-religious government on Sunday tabled plans to approve thousands of building permits in the occupied West Bank, despite US pressure to halt settlement expansion that Washington sees as an obstacle to peace with Palestinians.

The plans for approval of 4,560 housing units in various areas of the West Bank were included on the agenda of Israel's Supreme Planning Council that meets next week, although only 1,332 are up for final approval, with the remainder still going through the preliminary clearance process.

[UK govt floats bill banning councils from boycotting Israel](#)

London: The UK government is expected to present a bill this week banning local councils from launching boycotts of Israeli products, The Guardian reported.

The proposed law would forbid councils from taking part in the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, which aims to pressure Israel through economic activism.

Michael Gove, the minister overseeing local government, is introducing the legislation on the grounds that boycotting Israeli goods leads to "appalling antisemitic rhetoric and abuse."

Lebanon's top Christian cleric slams failed attempt to elect a president

BEIRUT: Lebanon's top Maronite Christian cleric said on Sunday the country's constitution and democratic system had been violated in "cold blood" during a failed attempt to elect a new president last week, and warned that divisions in the nation had widened.

Patriarch Bechara Boutros Al-Rai spoke in his first sermon since the Iran-backed Shiite group Hezbollah and its closest allies thwarted an attempt by factions including the main Christian parties to elect an IMF official as president.

Violent crime within Israel's Palestinian minority reaches new heights under Netanyahu's government

LOD: A relentless wave of violent crime within Israel's Palestinian minority is turning cities and towns into bloody battlefields, exasperating a community feeling increasingly forsaken by Israeli authorities.

Anger over the mounting insecurity is directed at Israel's government and its ultranationalist minister in charge of police, Itamar Ben-Gvir. Critics say that with his history of anti-Arab rhetoric, he cannot be trusted to combat the rising scourge.