



USA  
NY SENATOR GILLIBRAND TO RUN FOR PRESIDENT

New York Senator Kirsten Gillibrand on Sunday officially announced she would seek the Democratic party's nomination for the 2020 presidential election, taking aim at Donald Trump as she formally joined the crowded field of challengers. In an election cycle where Democratic candidates are tilting heavily to the left, Gillibrand touted her vote against the Wall Street bailouts supported by both major parties, pledged to work for universal health care, and pass the so-called Green New Deal.

TOP OF THE WORLD



Protesters linked to the Yellow Vest movement vandalised stores and restaurants in Paris on Saturday. AP

FRANCE  
Parisians clean up after Champs Elysees rioting

Paris: Workers began cleaning up the Champs Elysees in Paris on Sunday after rioters ransacked stores and restaurants in a new flare-up of violence linked to the yellow vest protest movement. Cutting short a ski trip, President Emmanuel Macron returned to Paris late on Saturday for a meeting with ministers at which he ordered decisions to be taken rapidly "so this doesn't happen again". Cleaners swept up broken glass, while shop owners boarded up smashed windows after the worst unrest in Paris since violence peaked before Christmas in a weekly series of protests.

SERBIA  
Protesters break into Serbia TV building

Belgrade: Protesters briefly broke into Serbia's state television building in the capital Belgrade on Saturday demanding media freedom and unbiased coverage of more than three months of anti-government demonstrations. The protesters had been taking part in a demonstration by several thousand people against the rule of President Aleksandar Vucic and his Serbian Progressive Party, calling for media freedom as a condition for free and fair elections. State television news has given scant coverage to similar protests that have taken place every Saturday since early December.

PHILIPPINES  
Philippines to leave ICC over drug war inquiry

Manila: The Philippines was poised to officially quit the International Criminal Court on Sunday, though the beleaguered tribunal has pledged to pursue its examination of possible crimes in the government's deadly drug war. Manila's withdrawal is to become final a year after it told the United Nations that it was quitting the world's only permanent war crimes tribunal, the second nation to do so.

PAKISTAN  
4 killed in railway track blast in Balochistan

Karachi: A blast targeting a passenger train killed four people including a woman and her daughter, and injured six others in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province on Sunday. The improvised explosive device was planted on a railway track in Balochistan's Dera Murad Jamali area to target Jaffar Express coming from Rawalpindi to Quetta. As the passenger train reached Dera Murad Jamali, there was a huge blast. Officials said four people were killed and eight sustained injuries as five coaches of the train derailed due to the blast.

CHRISTCHURCH MOSQUE ATTACKS: TOLL RISES TO 50

'You are safe now': Heroism amid terror

PRAVEEN MENON & TOM LASSETER  
CHRISTCHURCH, WELLINGTON, MARCH 17

AS NEW Zealanders struggled to cope with the deadly mayhem in Christchurch, stories of heroism have emerged from the tragedy, including a worshiper who chased away the gunman armed only with a credit card machine. Fifty people were killed on Friday and dozens more injured. But the police and eyewitnesses say a second attack by 28-year-old Brenton Tarrant was partly thwarted by Abdul Aziz, 48, who was born in Kabul, Afghanistan. Aziz said he charged at Tarrant outside the Linwood mosque when someone shouted that a gunman had opened fire. Tarrant had already killed dozens at the Al Noor mosque nearby, and on the streets.

"He had on army clothes. I wasn't sure if he was the good guy or the bad guy. When he swore at me, I knew that he's not the good guy," Aziz said in an interview.

When he realised the mosque was being attacked, he ran towards Tarrant, picking up a credit card machine as a makeshift weapon. Tarrant ran back to his car and got another gun. Aziz said he threw the credit card machine, ducking between the cars as Tarrant opened fire.

He then picked up a gun dropped by Tarrant and pulled the trigger, but it was empty: "I was screaming at the guy, come over here, come over here — I just wanted to put his focus on me."

"When he saw me with the shotgun in my hands, he dropped the gun and ran away toward his car. I chased him," he said.

"He sat in his car and with the shotgun in my hands, I threw it through his window like an arrow. He just swore at me and took off." Aziz said four of his children were with him at the mosque when the attack occurred. Nearly 100 Muslim worship-

Pak to honour man who died trying to stop gunman

Islamabad: A courageous Pakistani national who died in the ghastly Christchurch terror attack on two mosques will be conferred with a national award posthumously for trying to tackle the gunman before being shot dead by him. "We stand ready to extend all our support to the families of Pakistani victims of the terrorist attack in Christchurch. Pakistan is proud of Mian Naeem Rashid who was killed trying to tackle the White Supremacist terrorist & his courage will be recognised with a national award," PM Imran Khan tweeted. PTI



Abdul Aziz

pers who had taken cover in the mosque as the rampage unfolded were left unharmed.

"When I came back in the mosque I could see that everybody was very frightened..." Aziz said. "I told them, 'Brother, you are safe now, get up, he's gone. He's just run away.' And after that everybody started crying."

Another hero died trying to stop the gunman.

Naeem Rashid, 50, was seen lunging at Tarrant in the livestream video from the Al Noor mosque. Rashid, from Abbottabad, Pakistan, and a New Zealand resident for nine years, was in the mosque with his 21-year-old son. Both were killed in the attack. REUTERS



New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern visits Kilbirnie Mosque in Wellington on Sunday to pay tribute to the Christchurch attack victims. AP

Families prepare to bury victims

New Zealand authorities set to begin handing over bodies

NICK PERRY & JULIET WILLIAMS  
CHRISTCHURCH, MARCH 17

ANGUISHED RELATIVES anxiously waited Sunday for authorities to release the remains of those who were killed in massacres at two mosques in the New Zealand city of Christchurch, while police announced the death toll from the racist attacks had risen to 50.

Islamic law calls for bodies to be cleansed and buried as soon as possible after death, usually within 24 hours. But two days after the worst terrorist attack in the country's modern history, relatives remained unsure when they would be able to bury their loved ones.

Police Commissioner Mike Bush said police were working with pathologists and coroners



Outside Masjid Al Noor mosque on Sunday. Reuters

to release the bodies as soon as they could. "We have to be absolutely clear on the cause of death and confirm their identity before that can happen," he said. "But we are so aware of the cultural and religious needs. So we are doing that as quickly and as sensitively as possible."

PM Jacinda Ardern said a small number of bodies would start be-

ing released to families Sunday evening, and authorities hoped to release all the bodies by Wednesday. But by the end of Sunday night, it was not clear if any bodies had been released. Police said they had released a preliminary list of the victims to families, which has helped give closure to some relatives who were waiting for any news. AP

Black boxes show similarities in Ethiopia, Lion Air crashes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
ADDIS ABABA, MARCH 17

BLACK BOX data indicate "clear similarities" between last week's crash of an Ethiopian Airlines jet and the October crash of an Indonesian Lion Air plane, Ethiopia's transport minister said Sunday.

The parallels will be "subject of further study during the investigation", Dagmawit Moges told journalists, without elaborating.

She said a preliminary report into last Sunday's Ethiopian Airlines crash that killed 157 people will be released in "30 days".

Flight 302 plummeted into farmland southeast of Addis Ababa minutes into its flight to Nairobi, killing all on board and leading to the worldwide grounding of Boeing's 737 MAX 8 aircraft.

Even before the black box data had been recovered, coun-



ETHIOPIA MOURNS: Mourners at the burial ceremony for the Ethiopian Airlines Flight ET 302 crash victims in Addis Ababa. Thousands mourned the crash victims Sunday, accompanying 17 empty caskets through the streets of the capital. Reuters

tries and airlines seized on the similarities between the Ethiopian and Indonesian crashes to order the Boeing model out of service worldwide.

Both planes reportedly experienced erratic steep climbs and descents as well as fluctuating

airspeeds before crashing shortly after takeoff.

Questions have homed in on an automated anti-stalling system introduced on the 737 MAX 8, designed to automatically point the nose of the plane downward if it is in danger of stalling.

VENEZUELA CRISIS

Guaido launches national tour in 'new phase' to oust Maduro

TIBISAY ROMERO  
VALENCIA, MARCH 17

VENEZUELAN OPPOSITION leader and National Assembly head Juan Guaido said on Saturday he was launching a "new phase" in his push to oust President Nicolas Maduro, pledging to travel across the country before "reclaiming" the presidential palace.

Guaido, who invoked the constitution in January to assume an interim presidency, saying Maduro's re-election was illegitimate, called on thousands of supporters to stay committed to what he dubbed "Operation Freedom."

"Very soon, when we have visited and organised every inch ... we will go to Miraflores and reclaim what belongs to the Venezuelan people," Guaido said, referring to the palace, in a speech in the industrial city of

EXPLAINED  
Guaido focuses on local support after West fails to force Maduro out

THE US and other Western countries, as well as many Latin American nations, have recognised Venezuelan Opposition leader Juan Guaido as the country's legitimate president. But he in Venezuela, Maduro still controls the state machinery and enjoys the support of the armed forces. Western sanctions and protests have not succeeded so far in driving Maduro out of power. And with the US struggling to end a number of military conflicts around the world, a military intervention in Venezuela looks highly unlikely. With Maduro having successfully withstood outside pressure, Guaido has entered a "new phase" of trying to ramp up the pressure from inside the country.

Valecia 176 km west of Caracas, where he toured shops and walked the streets.

Western countries, including the US, have recognised Guaido as the nation's legitimate head

of state and called on Maduro to step aside. But Maduro, who says he is the victim of an attempted US-led coup, retains the support of the armed forces and control of state functions. REUTERS

Flash floods kill at least 58 in Indonesia's Papua region

JESSICA DAMIANA  
JAKARTA, MARCH 17

FLASH FLOODS and landslides triggered by torrential rain in Indonesia's easternmost province of Papua have killed at least 58 people, injured dozens and displaced more than 4,000, authorities said on Sunday.

A search for more possible victims was under way in the town of Sentani, which was hit by flash floods late on Saturday. Fifty-one people were killed and 74 injured there, Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, spokesman of the national disaster agency, told a news briefing.

Heavy rain caused landslides in the nearby provincial capital of Jayapura, killing seven there, Nugroho said.

Soldiers pulled alive a 5-month old baby from under the rubble of his house and took him to hospital, Papua military spokesman Muhammad Aidi said.

The number of victims "will probably increase because the evacuation process is still taking place and not all affected areas have been reached," Nugroho said.

About 4,150 people are sheltering in six evacuation centres, he said. Hundreds of houses, three bridges and a Twin Otter airplane parked at the airport were damaged by the floods. The Sentani airport, the province's main transport hub, remained open.

Disaster authorities have warned local governments of flash flood risks due to deforestation in the mountains surrounding the town, Nugroho said. REUTERS

Afghan soldiers go missing after fleeing battle with Taliban

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
KABUL, MARCH 17

AROUND 100 Afghan soldiers fled their posts and tried to cross into neighbouring Turkmenistan during a weeklong battle with the Taliban, officials said Sunday.

Mohammad Naser Nazari, a provincial council member in the western Badghis province, said the soldiers were not allowed to cross the border and their fate remains unknown.

The Taliban have posted pictures of captured soldiers online. Jamshid Shahabi, the provincial governor's spokesman, said 16 soldiers have been killed and 20 wounded during the ongoing battle in the Bala Murghab district, in which the military carried out airstrikes and dispatched reinforcements.

He said a number of soldiers tried to flee, without providing an exact figure. Shahabi said more than 40 insurgents were killed in the fighting.

He said the provincial police chief and army commander are in the district and instructing the forces to root out insurgents and rescue soldiers. Officials said the fighting had largely subsided by Sunday, with sporadic clashes breaking out in remote areas.

BEIJING FOREIGN STUDIES UNIVERSITY STUDENTS LEARN CLASSIC TAMIL TEXTS, BUT THEY ALSO KNOW OF RAJINIKANTH

New course gives Chinese a taste of Tamil language, culture

SOWMIYA ASHOK  
BEIJING, MARCH 17

THE 2011 Tamil film 7aum Arivu came in handy when Zhou Xin, 33, taught her students how to describe beauty in the Tamil language. A picture popped up on the screen, of Tamil actor Surya who plays Bodhidharma — a master of martial arts and medical remedies — who is sent to China to stop the spread of a pandemic disease.

"The film was not that China-friendly," laughs Zhou, about a plot that revolves around a biological war against India. "All our language teaching is integrated with culture teaching. If I teach them about beauty, I won't pick a random picture but I will pick one of Surya or Rajinikanth and talk to them about the films they were in," says Zhou, known by her Tamil name Eswari, when she is teach-

ing at the Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU).

Learning about Tamil culture, or more broadly about India, is reserved for an hour on Wednesday afternoons. For instance, last week the students watched the Oscar winning documentary *Period. End of Sentence.* For the rest of the 11 hours each week, it is a challenging task to get ten enthusiastic 18-year-olds to twist their tongues in ways that will produce uniquely Tamil syllables.

The course is only six-months old and compared to Mandarin, the words are long. "One page of Chinese is almost two pages in Tamil!" says Zhou, and all of her students find Tamil numbers particularly difficult. During the listening segment last week, to test them on numbers, Suresh asked Jayanthi if she wanted to watch a film and which time she preferred.



Tamil classes at the Beijing Foreign Studies University. Express

Zhou played Jayanthi, her colleague V Kalathi, a native Tamil speaker from Kancheepuram in Tamil Nadu, played Suresh. "I write and record the audio and Kalathi helps me correct it," she says. Since there is a dearth of material on Tamil in China, including in the National Library, Zhou seeks out material from off the internet.

"The textbooks for native speakers may not be culturally very suitable since they start from the very basics — Amma, Appa — which my students will never really use here," she says. She still relies on a few conversational Tamil books.

The students learn from the greatest Tamil works instead: from Thiruvalluvar's *Thirukkural*,

a classic Tamil text comprising thousands of couplets, Subramania Bharati's poems and lines from Sangam literature. Three times a week, Zhou teaches them Tamil texts. Kalathi complements this with spoken Tamil on alternative days.

While Zhou, who previously worked as an announcer and translator for the Tamil section of China Radio International (CRI), travelled to India to learn Tamil for seven months in Puducherry, her colleague Kalathi, after an MPhil and PhD in Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University, travelled to Beijing to learn Chinese. "My JNU adviser, after asking me which place I came from, got me to see connections between Kancheepuram and China through the works of Buddhist monk Hiuen-Tsang. So I started getting interested in comparing the two languages," says Kalathi.

The idea to start a Tamil course in BFSU is 4-5 years old, but there was no faculty. "I came back from the UK in 2017 after completing my Master's and we had the idea that why not establish this department. Things finally took off six months ago," says Zhou.

BFSU's interest is not only in Tamil. There is a Hindi language course that has run for over ten years, Bengali recently started, and Punjabi will be introduced this year. "The interest is in pushing for all area studies, like African and South Asian languages. Even three years ago, we didn't have that many languages here, so they wanted to start as many languages as possible," she says.

Zhou has other concerns: "In China, there are a lot of scholars who know Sanskrit and Hindi, and have translated epics like *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. In Tamil, there are so many works

but no one is translating. My own effort is so limited, that is why my students are learning *senathamizh* (pure Tamil), so some of them I hope can join me in teaching and even translating some of the works," she says. "For the project on classic works, I have chosen the Tamil epic *Manimekalai*, which is about Buddhism, which is known by everyone in China."

Meanwhile, one of Zhou's students Durga (Yuan Mingxi) says she will now be called Rajashri. "My friends find it difficult to pronounce my name so I decided to change it." She sings the lyrics of a Shahrugh Khan song from Mohabbatein, "I started loving India in primary school when I heard this song." Would she have preferred to learn Hindi instead? She politely says in Tamil: "*Meendum solingal* (please repeat yourself)" and says: "I would like to learn both languages."