



In addition to the pain of wars and conflicts there have been the victims of the horrible attack against two mosques in NZ

POPE FRANCIS
OFFERING HIS PRAYERS TO THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	34	25
HONG KONG	22	19
TOKYO	14	4
LONDON	12	3
DUBAI	23	19
SAN FRANCISCO	20	11
NEW YORK	8	0
MOSCOW	5	1

S= sunny, CL= clear, H=hazy, R= rainy...

THUMBNAILS



A man dressed as St Patrick poses with a female Irish police officer at the annual St Patricks Day parade through in Dublin on Sunday.

China landslide: The toll from Friday's landslide in China's Shanxi Province increased to 10 while an equal number of people were reported to be missing, according to a media report on Sunday. The accident in the township of Zaoling in Linfen City, when a landslide toppled two residential buildings, a makeshift house and a public bathroom. Later, seven bodies were found at the site.

Earthquake in Greece: The Greek geological experts said an earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 4.5 has hit the western island of Zakynthos, but no damage has been reported. The tremor struck at 1:49 p.m. (1149 GMT) on Sunday. The epicenter was 16 km east of Zakynthos. Later, seven bodies were found at the site.

NZ prepares to bury dead as toll reaches 50

34 injured victims are still in Christchurch Hospital, 12 in critical condition

ASSOCIATED PRESS
CHRISTCHURCH, 17 MARCH

Anguished relatives were anxiously waiting on 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 authorities 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 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." 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.

The scale of the tragedy and the task still ahead became clear as supporters arrived from across the country to help with the burial rituals in Christchurch and authorities sent in backhoes to dig new graves in a Muslim burial area that was newly fenced off and blocked from view with white netting.

The suspect in the shootings, 28-year-old white supremacist Brenton Harrison Tarrant, appeared in court on Saturday amid strict security, shackled and wearing all-white prison garb, and showed no emotion when the judge read him one murder charge and said more would likely follow.



People gather in front of floral tributes at a memorial for victims of the mosque attacks, in Christchurch on Sunday.

Another 34 victims remained at Christchurch Hospital, where officials said 12 were in critical condition. And a young child who was in a children's hospital in Auckland was also listed as critical.

Dozens of Muslim supporters gathered at a center set up for victims, families and friends across the road from the hospital, where many had flown in from around New Zealand to offer support. About two dozen men received instructions on their duties Sunday morning, which included Muslim burial customs.

Nine Pakistani nationals have been killed in the terror attack, authorities said.

Hero refugee chased mosque gunman away: When Afghan refugee Abdul Aziz saw a man brandishing a gun outside his mosque in Christchurch, he ran towards the attacker armed with the only weapon he could find—a hand-held credit card machine. But the death toll could have been much higher if not for the heroic actions of Aziz, an Australian citizen, whose efforts to distract and chase the gunman away have attracted widespread praise.

"You don't have much time to think, whatever you think of, you just do it, you know," Aziz said as local Muslims gathered to thank him for saving relatives and friends.

"I just wanted to save as much lives as I could, even if I lose my life," Aziz said. Initially thinking someone was setting off firecrackers, Aziz became suspicious and ran out, grabbing a small credit card processing device. Outside, he was stunned to find an armed man. "When he saw the gun in my hands, I don't know what happened, he dropped the gun and I chased him with my own gun... I managed to throw the gun on his car and smash the car window, then he was a bit frightened."

'Suspicious package' shutters NZ airport



CHRISTCHURCH, 17 MARCH

New Zealand police closed Dunedin airport late Sunday after a suspicious device was reported on the airfield.

"Dunedin Airport is currently closed," a statement said. "Police are at the scene and specialist teams have been deployed to determine the nature of the package."

New Zealand is currently on a state of high alert after a gunman, who is believed to have lived in Dunedin, killed 50 people in two mosques filled with worshippers.

An Air New Zealand staff member on the scene, who was not authorized to speak to the press, said the terminal building had not been evacuated. Only a handful of flights were due to arrive to the airport in the southeastern city, as the scare came in the late evening.

According to tracker Flightaware, Air New Zealand flight 691 from Wellington had been circling about the city for almost an hour before returning to its destination.

FAIRYTALESQUE



The silhouette of a woman is reflected in a puddle as she crosses a square in front of the Peter and Paul Cathedral in Saint Petersburg on Sunday.

Theresa May hopes to be third time lucky with Brexit vote

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON, 17 MARCH

British Prime Minister Theresa May on Sunday called on her rebellious MPs to do the patriotic thing to strike an honourable compromise over Brexit as she prepares to table her twice-defeated withdrawal agreement to another Parliament vote next week, hoping it would prove third time lucky for her.

Her latest plea came at the end of a frenetic week in Westminster as MPs voted on a flurry of motions, not just ruling out leaving the European Union with May's deal but also without any deal in place at all, calling for a delay to the March 29 Brexit Day deadline.

May warned deeply divided Brexiters within her own party and across the House of Commons that failure to once again support her deal, which was defeated

May warned that failure to once again support her deal would mean the UK may not leave the EU for many months and may rule out Brexit altogether

by a resounding 230-vote margin in January and a smaller 149-vote margin last week, would mean the UK may not leave the EU for many months and may even rule out Brexit altogether.

She urged MPs to get behind her improved deal before a European Council summit in Brussels next week, with legally binding changes to the controversial Irish backstop clause addressing concerns that the UK could be tied to EU rules indefinitely.

If Parliament can find a way to back the Brexit deal before European Council, the UK will leave the EU

this spring, without having to take part in the European elections. If it cannot, we will not leave the EU for many months, if ever, she writes in *The Sunday Telegraph*.

As things stand, May is hoping to return to Brussels with a Parliament-backed deal to seek a short delay until June 30 to complete procedures.

It is for the EU to decide the terms and conditions of any extension because legally the UK is still due to leave the economic bloc on March 29. With European Parliament elections scheduled to take place towards the end of May, if the UK Parliament remains deadlocked over an exit strategy, the EU is expected to agree to only a lengthy delay to the Article 50 Brexit mechanism.

Such a move would necessitate Britain's participation in the European Parliament polls.

Biden's verbal slip about campaign draws Dems cheers



Former US Vice President Joe Biden speaks during the first State Democratic dinner in Dover on Saturday.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
DOVER, 17 MARCH

Did Joe Biden accidentally reveal his plans to run for the White House? Or was it just another slip of the tongue by the former vice president with a reputation for veering off script?

In a keynote speech at a dinner for the Delaware Democratic Party, Biden boasted Saturday that he has "the most progressive record of anybody running." The only problem is that Biden hasn't announced whether he will launch a third run for the White House, despite repeatedly teasing the possibility.

He quickly corrected himself, clarifying that he meant to say "anybody who would run," then adding "I didn't mean it" while a cheering crowd in his home state nearly drowned him out.

Although Biden has been known to go off script, his remark is likely to be viewed as a Washington-style gaffe—a case of accidentally telling the truth.

During the rest of his speech he sounded very much like a candidate-in-waiting. He repeatedly attacked President Donald Trump, accusing him of stoking division and anger, and bemoaned that the ascendant "new left" of his own party has criticized him for being cordial toward Republicans. "The only thing strong enough to tear America apart is America itself and we've seen its start," he said.

Biden accused Trump of backing away from America's role as a leader on the world stage and abandoning its allies. He said it's no coincidence that "fake news"—one of Trump's favorite labels—has become the phrase of choice for every despot terrorizing his people. "We're literally in a battle for the soul of America," he said.

More than a dozen Democrats have already launched formal 2020 presidential campaigns. After former Texas Rep. Beto O'Rourke's entered the race last week, Biden, who is his party's best-known and best-connected presidential prospect, is the last major contender to remain on the sidelines. But that didn't stop the friendly home-state crowd from reveling in the idea that will jump in.

Delaware Gov. John Carney said Biden "doesn't just look like he's back. He looks like he's ready for a fight."

Just minutes before Biden's slip of the tongue, though, Carney raised the possibility of a Biden campaign with a bit more delicacy.

"I am not up here to break any news tonight," Carney told the crowd. Then he added: "In my humble opinion, we have never needed Joe Biden more than we need him right now."

NY senator announces presidential run: 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.

Catalonia: Thousands march in support of separatist leaders

THE INDEPENDENT
MADRID, 17 MARCH

Thousands of supporters of Catalan independence marched on Madrid to support politicians and activists who are on trial for their role in an attempt to secede from Spain. Organisers said 120,000 people marched in Spain's capital, while Spanish police put the number much lower at only 18,000.

Twelve Catalan politicians and activists are standing trial for staging a banned independence referendum for the northeastern region of Catalonia. Nine of those on trial are accused of rebellion, which could see them sentenced to up to 25 years in prison. The October 2017 referendum passed with overwhelming support, with 92 per cent in favour and a turnout of 43 per cent of the electorate.

However, Spain had already declared the referendum unconstitutional and some observers said the vote failed to meet international standards for elections.

Large pro-independence protests have previously taken place in Catalonia and some European cities, but Saturday's march was the first major separatist protest in the capital. The 120,000 crowd size quoted by organisers was well beyond expectations.

There were no reports of violence at the march. A banner reading "Self-determination is not a crime" opened the demonstration, which was led by Catalan politicians and organised by more than 60 civil society groups across Spain. Catalonia's regional president, Quim Torra, told reporters that the



Demonstrators carry banners showing portraits of imprisoned Catalan separatist leaders during a pro independence demonstration in Madrid on Saturday.

march was needed to decry a trial which he has described as a "farce". Spain has insisted the judicial process is fair and its courts are fully independent from the government, but critics of the trial believe the 12 defendants are political prisoners who are being tried for their beliefs.

The trial is about to enter the fifth week of hearings and has attracted close attention across the country. A sentence is not expected until after Spain's 28 April general election, in which the issues of Catalonia's

At least 50 killed in flash floods in Indonesia's Papua

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
JAYAPURA, 17 MARCH

At least 50 people have been killed by flash floods in Indonesia's eastern Papua province, an official said Sunday, as rescuers raced to find more victims of the disaster.

The floods in Sentani, near the provincial capital of Jayapura, were triggered by torrential rain and subsequent landslides on Saturday, and also left 59 people injured.

Dozens of homes were damaged by floodwaters, national disaster agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho said.

"The number of casualties and impact of the disaster will likely increase as search and rescue teams are still trying to reach other affected areas," he added.

"The floods were likely caused by a landslide. The waters had receded but officials were still trying to evacuate people." The joint search and rescue teams are still doing evacuations and not all affected areas have been reached because of fallen trees, rocks, mud and other material," Nugroho said.

Video footage from the scene showed rescuers administering oxygen to a victim who appeared trapped beneath a fallen tree. Uprooted trees and other debris were strewn across muddy roads, while at Jayapura's small airport a propeller plane partly crushed on a runway. Papua shares a border with independent Papua New Guinea on an island just north of Australia.

Flooding is not uncommon in Indonesia, especially during the rainy season which runs from October to April.

In January, floods and landslides killed at least 70 people on Sulawesi island, while earlier this month hundreds in West Java province were forced to evacuate when torrential rains triggered severe flooding. The Southeast Asian archipelago of some 17,000 islands is one of the most disaster-prone regions on Earth, straddling the Pacific Ring of Fire, where tectonic plates collide.

Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are common. In December, the western part of Java island was slammed by a deadly volcano-triggered tsunami that killed about 400 people.

Orban grapples with EU as corruption concerns rise



Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban gives a speech on Friday in Budapest.

BUDAPEST, 17 MARCH

As the Hungarian Prime Minister's conflicts with the European Union appear headed to a breaking point, calls are increasing for greater scrutiny of his government's spending of the bloc's funds.

An opposition lawmaker in Hungary has gathered more than 470,000 signatures to pressure Prime Minister Viktor Orban into joining the budding European Public Prosecutor's Office as Orban's Fidesz party may be suspended or expelled next week from the main center-right group in the European Parliament.

The EU has allocated Hungary 25 billion euros (\$28.3 billion) in the 2014-2020 budget period, but critics say funds are often spent on overpriced or unnecessary projects padding the pockets of the allies of Orban, whose anti-EU campaigns over migration policies and national sovereignty have gotten him into trouble with the European People's Party as well as with the EU itself, which Orban accuses of increasing its powers to the detriment of the member states.

Despite the conflicts with EU, Hungary has been among the most successful EU countries in retrieving the bloc's support, with 32 percent of available funds drawn down from the current budget. An EU proposal for the 2021-2027 period, however, could see Hungary's subsidies cut by 24 percent compared to the current seven-year cycle—a budget restructuring necessitated in part by Brexit.

