

ELSEWHERE



Brazil's ex-President Michel Temer detained

RIO DE JANEIRO
Brazil's ex-President Michel Temer was arrested Thursday, an official said, as part of a sprawling anti-corruption probe. Police arrested Mr. Temer in Sao Paulo, a spokesman for the federal prosecutor's office in Rio de Janeiro said. Former Mines and Energy Minister Moreira Franco was also detained. AFP

Indian-origin man jailed for investment fraud

NEW YORK
Amrit Jaswant Singh Chahal, an Indian-origin businessman, has been sentenced to two-and-a-half years in federal prison for orchestrating a \$1.3 million Ponzi scheme that caused losses to more than 40 victims. He operated an investment fraud scheme through a company established by him. PTI

4 mosques vandalised in Birmingham

LONDON
Four mosques in the central English city of Birmingham have been attacked overnight, with a man wielding a sledgehammer seen smashing windows at two places of worship, the police said. West Midlands Police said the incidents "are being treated as linked". AFP

72 killed as overcrowded ferry sinks in Iraq

MOSUL
At least 72 people died when an overloaded ferry sank in the Tigris river near Mosul in Iraq, medical sources said on Thursday. Most of the casualties on the ferry were women and children who could not swim, said the head of Mosul's Defence Authority Husam Khalil. REUTERS

New Zealand bans semi-automatic weapons

The new laws are set to be in place by April 11 and a buy-back scheme costing up to NZ\$200 mn would be established: PM

REUTERS
CHRISTCHURCH

New Zealand will ban military-style semi-automatic and assault rifles under tough new gun laws following the killing of 50 people in its worst mass shooting, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said on Thursday.

In the immediate aftermath of last Friday's shootings at two mosques in the city of Christchurch, Ms. Ardern labelled the attack as terrorism and said New Zealand's gun laws would change.

"On March 15, our history changed forever. Now, our laws will too. We are announcing action today on behalf of all New Zealanders to strengthen our gun laws and make our country a safer place," Ms. Ardern told a news conference.

All semi-automatic weapons



Sharing the grief: People hugging each other as they attend the burial ceremony of the victims of last week's mosque attacks in Christchurch on Thursday. •REUTERS

used during the terrorist attack on Friday March 15 will be banned."

Ms. Ardern said she expected the new laws to be in place by April 11 and a buy-back scheme costing up to NZ\$200 million (\$138 million) would be established for banned weapons.

All military style semi-automatics (MSSA) and assault rifles would be banned, along with parts used to convert weapons into MSSAs and all high-capacity magazines. Under existing gun laws, a standard A-category gun licence allows semi-automatics limited to seven

shots. Live-streamed video of a gunman in one of the mosques showed a semi-automatic weapon modified with a large magazine.

Australia banned semi-automatic weapons and launched a gun buy-back after the Port Arthur massacre in 1996 in which 35 people were killed.

Ms. Ardern said similar to Australia, the law would allow for strictly enforced exemptions for farmers for pest control and animal welfare. "I strongly believe that the vast majority of legitimate gun owners in New Zealand will understand that these moves are in the national interest, and will take these changes in their stride."

New Zealand, a country of five million people, has an estimated 1.2-1.5 million firearms, about 13,500 of

them MSSA-type weapons. Most farmers own guns while hunting deer, pigs and goats is popular. Gun clubs and shooting ranges dot the country.

Powerful lobby

That has created a powerful lobby that has thwarted previous attempts to tighten gun laws. Federated Farmers, which represent thousands of farmers, said it supported the new laws.

"This will not be popular among some of our members but... we believe this is the only practicable solution," a group spokesman, Miles Anderson, said in a statement.

The main Opposition National Party, which draws strong support in rural areas, said it also supported the ban. The changes exclude two general classes of

firearms commonly used for hunting, pest control and stock management on farms.

"I have a military-style weapon. But to be fair, I don't really use it, I don't really need it," said Noel Womersley, who slaughters cattle for small farmers around Christchurch. "So I'm quite happy to hand mine over."

Ms. Ardern said more reforms would cover the firearm registry and licensing.

The first victims were buried on Wednesday and burials continued on Thursday, with the funeral of a school boy. The bullet-riddled Al Noor mosque was being repaired, painted and cleaned ahead of Friday prayers. Ms. Ardern will attend the Muslim call to prayer and a two-minute silence at Hagley Park, opposite the mosque. The call to prayer will be telecast nationally.

Utrecht killer to be charged with terror

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
THE HAGUE

Dutch prosecutors are to charge the suspect in a gun attack in a packed Utrecht tram with "terrorist" killings, saying he will appear for the first time before a judge on Friday.

"The 37-year-old suspect will appear before a judge on Friday, charged with multiple murders with terrorist aims, as well as attempted murder and a terrorist threat," the public prosecution service said in a statement on Thursday.

Prosecutors and police are still investigating whether the suspect, previously identified as Turkish-born Gokmen Tanis, "acted out of a single terrorist motive or whether from personal problems in combination with radicalised ideas," it said.

May's attack on MPs draws criticism from across political spectrum

Prime Minister had accused Parliament of doing "everything possible to avoid making a choice" on Britain's exit from the European Union

VIDYA RAM
LONDON

British Prime Minister Theresa May's attempt to blame MPs for the political chaos the country is in backfired as she faced criticism from across the political spectrum.

In a statement from Downing Street on Wednesday night, Ms. May pointed the finger at MPs, accusing Parliament of doing "everything possible to avoid making a choice." "Motion after motion and amendment after amendment have been tabled without Parliament ever deciding what it wants," she said following another rocky day in which the European Council and the European

Commission indicated concerns with her request to delay Brexit. The British government has sought extension till the end of June, which is after the European parliamentary election, due to take place on May 23, but before the new European parliamentary session opened.

Her comments provoked sharp criticism, including from within her own party and the Speaker of the House of Commons, John Bercow, who defended MPs in the House on Thursday morning. "None of you is a traitor. All of you are doing your best... I believe passionately in the institution of Parliament, in the rights of mem-

bers of this House and their commitment to their duty... the sole duty of every Member of Parliament is to do what he or she thinks is right."

'Blame game'

Sam Gyimah, who resigned as Universities Minister in November, described her "blame game" as a "low blow". "Democracy loses when a PM, who has set herself against the House of Commons and then blames MPs for doing their job."

Wes Streeting, a Labour MP, condemned the speech as "incendiary and irresponsible", pointing to the "credible" death threats that members of the House had been



Theresa May in Brussels on Thursday. •AFP

subject to as a result of their Brexit stance. "If any harm comes to any of us, she will have to accept her share of responsibility."

Ms. May headed to Brus-

sels to seek the extension from EU leaders, following the letter sent to European Council president Donald Tusk earlier this week. Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn also held talks in Brussels to discuss alternative arrangements for Brexit.

Meanwhile, a petition started just on Wednesday, following her comments, calling for Article 50 to be revoked and for the U.K. to remain in the EU rapidly gained thousands of signatories, with the website crashing at one point because of the activity. By early afternoon on Thursday, signatories had crossed 9,00,000. The petitions committee said that nearly 2,000 signatures

were being added each minute.

Public pressure for the government to either revoke Article 50 or hold a referendum has continued to grow amid concern that the conditions under which the EU are set to offer the U.K. an extension to Article 50 to avoid crashing out of the EU are impossible to fulfil.

They are expected to say they will allow an extension but only till May 22, the day before the European parliamentary elections, and only if the U.K. backs the withdrawal deal.

At the moment, despite efforts to woo Conservative backbenchers and the Democratic Unionist Party, Ms.

May does not appear to have the numbers to get her deal through in a vote next week. Several have warned that her comments blaming MPs will not help her chances of success.

This would mean that with no extension available, the U.K. could crash out of the EU on March 29, against the explicit wishes of the House of Commons which last week voted to rule out a no-deal exit.

On Saturday, a march is set to take place in central London calling for a second vote on whether Britain should leave the EU, with thousands from up and down the country expected to attend.

'Time to recognise Israeli hold over Golan Heights'

Trump seeks U.S. recognition for move

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump on Thursday announced that the U.S. should recognise Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, an area seized from Syria and annexed in a move never recognised by the international community.

"After 52 years, it is time for the United States to fully recognise Israel's Sovereignty over the Golan Heights," Mr. Trump tweeted. He called the territory "of critical strategic and security importance to the State of Israel." Mr. Trump will host Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House next Monday and Tuesday. Mr. Netanyahu, who is running for re-election, will be in Washington

for the annual conference of the powerful American Israel Public Affairs Committee pro-Israel lobbying group.

The Golan Heights move was hinted at a week ago when the State Department changed its usual description of the area as "occupied" to "Israeli-controlled".

The Trump State Department has also dropped previous definitions of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip as being "occupied" by Israel.

Israel occupied the Golan Heights, West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 Six-Day War. It later annexed the Golan Heights and East Jerusalem in moves never recognised by the most countries.

Welcoming spring



Turkish Kurds celebrating Nawroz in Diyarbakir. The festival, which marks the first day of spring, is celebrated across regions that once made up the ancient Persian empire, including parts of Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Iran and Afghanistan. •AFP

Guaidó says his Chief of Staff has been detained

'His Caracas residence was raided'

REUTERS
CARACAS

Venezuelan Opposition leader Juan Guaidó said on Thursday that intelligence agents had detained his Chief of Staff following a pre-dawn raid, signalling that President Nicolás Maduro may be cracking down on the Opposition's challenge to his rule.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, in a post on Twitter on Thursday, called for Roberto Marrero's immediate release and said "we will hold accountable those who involved".

"They have kidnapped @Robertomarrero, my Chief of Staff," Mr. Guaido said in a post on Twitter, adding that the Caracas residences of Mr. Marrero and Opposition legislator Sergio



Roberto Marrero. •AP

Vergara had been raided before dawn. "Look after the President," Mr. Marrero said in a voice message sent to reporters by Mr. Guaido's press team, as he reported that agents were trying to enter his house.

The press team also sent a video of another Opposition lawmaker showing damage to the door of Marrero's home and a broken lock.

Crashed Boeing jets lacked 2 key safety features

The company charges extra for these but has now decided to make one of them a standard component

HIROKO TABUCHI
DAVID GELLES

As the pilots of the doomed Boeing jets in Ethiopia and Indonesia fought to control their planes, they lacked two notable safety features in their cockpits.

One reason: Boeing charged extra for them.

For Boeing and other aircraft manufacturers, the practice of charging to upgrade a standard plane can be lucrative. Top airlines around the world must pay handsomely to have the jets they order fitted with customised add-ons.

Many airlines, especially low-cost carriers like Indonesia's Lion Air, have opted not to buy them — and regulators don't require them.

Now, in the wake of the two deadly crashes involving the same jet model, Boeing will make one of those features standard.



A costly miss? Low-cost carriers like Indonesia's Lion Air have opted not to buy the features. •REUTERS

It is not yet known what caused the crashes of Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 on March 10 and Lion Air Flight 610 five months earlier, both after erratic take-offs. But investigators are looking at whether a new software system added to avoid stalls in Boeing's 737 Max series may have been partly to blame.

Faulty sensor data

Faulty data from sensors on the Lion Air plane may have caused the system, known as MCAS, to malfunction, authorities investigating that crash suspect.

The optional upgrades, the angle of attack indicator, displays the readings of the two sensors. The other, called a disagree light, is activated if those sensors are at odds with one another.

Updating the software Boeing will soon update the MCAS software, and will also make the disagree light standard on all new 737 Max planes, according to a person familiar with the changes, who spoke on condition of anonymity. The angle of attack indicator will remain an option.

Add-on features can be big moneymakers for plane manufacturers. Boeing charges extra, for example, for a backup fire extinguisher in the cargo hold. Past incidents have shown that a single extinguishing system may not be enough to put out flames that spread rapidly through the plane.

Both Boeing and its airline customers have taken pains to keep these options, and prices, out of the public eye. Airlines frequently redact details of the features they opt to pay for — or exclude — from their filings with financial regulators.

Boeing is making other changes to the MCAS software. When it was rolled out, MCAS took readings from only one sensor on any given flight, leaving the system vulnerable to a single point of failure. One theory in the Lion Air crash is that MCAS was receiving faulty data from one of the sensors, prompting an unrecoverable nose dive.

In the software update that Boeing says is coming soon, MCAS will be modified to take readings from both sensors. If there is a meaningful disagreement between the readings, MCAS will be disabled. NY TIMES

Italy in shock after bus hijacking

Driver took 51 children hostage but they were all rescued

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
CREMA

Italy was in shock on Thursday after the dramatic rescue of 51 children taken hostage by their school bus driver, who torched the vehicle in protest at Mediterranean migrant deaths.

The Italian driver of Senegalese origin on Wednesday hijacked the bus as it was taking the children from a gym to school in Crema, east of Milan.

Armed with two petrol canisters and a cigarette lighter, Ousseymou Sy threatened the youngsters, took their telephones and told the adults to tie them up with electric cable.

40-minute ordeal

The 40-minute ordeal, during which the bus also slammed into a car, was brought to an end when police managed to smash windows open and get those on



The wreckage of the bus, which was transporting 51 children when it was torched by the bus driver, in San Donato Milanese, southeast of Milan. •AFP

boarded just as the driver set fire to the vehicle. A dozen children and two adults were taken to hospital for smoke and fume inhalation, according to emergency services. The driver's lawyer said his client had wanted to "draw attention to the consequences of (Italy's) migration policies".

Italy has clamped down on immigration under far-

right Interior Minister Matteo Salvini. Police were alerted to the situation after one of the students held on the bus called them from his mobile phone.

The driver had no links with Islamist terrorism and "acted as a lone wolf", Alberto Nobili, head of counter-terrorism at the Milan public prosecutor's office, told a press conference.