

TOP OF THE WORLD



Sheryl Sandberg

USA
FB to tighten live stream access after mosque attacks

San Francisco: Facebook Friday said it is tightening live video streaming rules in response to the service being used to broadcast attacks on mosques in New Zealand. The Christchurch attacks claimed 50 lives. Many people have "rightly questioned how online platforms such as Facebook were used to circulate horrific videos of the attack," chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg said in an online post.

AFGHANISTAN
Vice president Dostum survives Taliban attack

Mazar-i-Sharif: Afghanistan's vice president, Abdul Rashid Dostum, escaped unhurt from an attack that killed one of his bodyguards on Saturday, dodging death for the second time since returning from exile last year. Attackers ambushed Dostum's convoy on the way from Mazar-i-Sharif, a city in Balkh province, to Jawzjan province in northern Afghanistan, said Bashir Ahmad Tayenji, spokesman for Dostum's Junbish Party. Two other bodyguards were wounded. Dostum was aware of a planned attack but decided to travel anyway, the spokesman added.

CHINA
New Silk Road critics biased: Top official

Beijing: China has never forced debt upon participants of its new Silk Road project as "prejudiced" critics have suggested, the country's top diplomat said on Saturday in a strongly worded defense of a key policy platform of President Xi Jinping. Xi's Belt and Road Initiative, as it is formally called, envisions rebuilding the old Silk Road to connect China with Asia, Europe and beyond with massive infrastructure spending.

JOHN ANDERSON
NEW YORK, MARCH 30

AGNÈS VARDA, a groundbreaking French filmmaker who was closely associated with the New Wave — although her re-imagining of filmmaking conventions actually predated the work of Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut and others identified with that movement — died Friday morning at her home in Paris. She was 90.

Her death, from breast cancer, was confirmed by a spokeswoman for her production company, Ciné-Tamaris.

In recent years, Varda had focused her directorial skills on non-fiction work that used her life and

Trump threatens to seal border with Mexico next week: Not playing games

KATIE ROGERS & ZOLAN KANNO-YOUNGS
PALM BEACH, MARCH 30

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump said Friday that there would be a "very good likelihood" that he will seal off the U.S. border with Mexico next week, escalating a sustained berating of a country he blames for being unable to stop the flow of migrants attempting to make their way north.

"I will close the border if Mexico doesn't get with it," Trump said to reporters who had gathered at Mar-a-Lago, his winter retreat in Florida. "If Mexico doesn't stop it."

Trump has threatened to close off the border several times before and has not followed through. But his comments Friday signaled a new escalation as his administration confirmed that it would review ways to reshuffle Border Patrol agents, shut down traffic lanes and close ports of entry at the southwest border. He began the day with a morning tweet saying that he would close the border "next week," and then told reporters that he was prepared to



President Donald Trump in Florida on Friday. NYT

close off trade and commercial ports of entry. A full or partial sealing of the border would effectively close off the United States from one of its largest trading partners, but it could leave American citizens who cross back and forth with a sluggish or potentially non-existent system of returning to the United States.

"If they don't stop it, we will keep the border closed," Trump said. "I'm not playing games."

The president has been emboldened since the release of a report by the special counsel, Robert Mueller, found that his campaign had not cooperated with the Russian government. And a partisan upholding of his national emergency declaration over a wall along the southwestern border has prompted Trump to ratchet up harsh words against immigration as he seeks to galvanize supporters ahead of the 2020

presidential election.

"How are we doing at the border?" he asked a military official on a tour of Lake Okeechobee, the site of a restoration project in the central part of the state.

"We have the most laughed-at immigration laws of anywhere in the world," Trump said to reporters as he and McMahon sat in the ornate front room of the club. "They're the Democrats' laws, and I got stuck with them." NYT

2 Indian-origin, hard-Brexit MPs blocking May's EU deal

ADITI KHANNA
LONDON, MARCH 30

TWO INDIAN-origin MPs, Priti Patel and Suella Braverman, are among a steadfast group of hard-Brexiters within Theresa May's Conservative Party that continues to stand in the way of her EU divorce bill as the UK Prime Minister faced yet another bruising defeat in Parliament.

As the UK crossed the initial Brexit Day deadline of March 29, the voting pattern for a third parliamentary vote on May's withdrawal agreement reveals that she was able to win over a number of high-profile Brexiters, including Boris Johnson and Jacob Rees-Mogg, but it did not prove enough in the end as she lost Friday's vote by a margin of 58.

Gujarati-origin Patel has been vehement in her opposition to the agreement because she believes

it is "not in our national interest, does not respect the referendum result and is harmful to the long-term future of our country".

Goan-origin Suella Braverman, who had stepped down as minister in the Department for Exiting the European Union last November, feels the deal is "fatally flawed".

They are both members of the Brexiteer wing of the Tory party, the European Research Group (ERG), and have been very vocal in favour of leaving the EU ever since campaigning for the June 2016 Brexit referendum.

While some ERG members have since been swayed to back May after her promise to step down as the Prime Minister for the next phase of Brexit negotiations, Patel and Braverman make up a group of 34 Tory rebels who are firmly opposed to the deal and are likely to oppose even a fourth vote now being planned. PTI

Slovakia set to elect anti-graft lawyer as first female president

TATIANA JANCARIKOVA
BRATISLAVA, MARCH 30

RIDING A wave of public fury over corruption, liberal lawyer Zuzana Caputova looked set to win Slovakia's presidential election on Saturday, bucking a trend that has seen populist, anti-European Union politicians make gains across the continent.

Corruption and change have been the main themes ahead of the run-off vote, which takes place a year after journalist Jan Kuciak, who investigated high-profile fraud cases, and his fiancée were murdered at their home.

Caputova, pro-European Union political novice who would become Slovakia's first female president, won the election's first round two weeks ago with 40.6 percent of the vote, ahead of



Zuzana Caputova

European Commissioner Maros Sefcovic on 18.7 percent.

Sefcovic, who is also pro-EU, is backed by the ruling party Smer, the largest grouping in parliament and which has dominated Slovak politics since 2006. Caputova campaigned to end what she calls the capture of the state "by people pulling strings from behind", a message that opinion polls show resonates with younger, educated voters. REUTERS

One man died near the border before dawn, hours before the main afternoon rally, they said, while a 17-year-old boy was killed by Israeli fire at a protest site east of Gaza City.

Palestinian protesters threw rocks, grenades and burning tyres towards soldiers across the bor-



Israeli forces fire tear gas at Palestinian protesters near the Israel-Gaza border fence on Saturday. Reuters

Tens of thousands gather at Gaza border to mark anniversary of 'March of Return'

NIDAL AL-MUGHRABI
GAZA, MARCH 30

TENS OF thousands of Palestinians rallied in heavy rain at the Israel-Gaza border on Saturday to mark the first anniversary of a new wave of protests, facing off against Israeli tanks and troops massed on the fortified frontier.

The 'Great March of Return' protests have been marked by sometimes deadly violence and Gaza medical officials said two Palestinians had been killed on Saturday.

One man died near the border before dawn, hours before the main afternoon rally, they said, while a 17-year-old boy was killed by Israeli fire at a protest site east of Gaza City.

Palestinian protesters threw rocks, grenades and burning tyres towards soldiers across the bor-

AT A GLANCE

■ About 200 were killed in Gaza by Israeli troops since protests started in March 2018

■ Protesters want an end to Israeli-Egyptian blockade and to have the right to return to land they fled from

■ The rally comes less than two weeks before Israeli election, in which security has been a key issue

derence, the Israeli military said.

Eager to get a big turnout on the anniversary, organisers set up loudspeakers at protest camps

along the border, blaring out Palestinian nationalist songs at full volume. Hamas leaders turned up at the rallies and ordered schools to shut for the day to encourage participation.

The protesters are calling for the lifting of a security blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt, and for Palestinians to have the right to return to land from which their families fled or were forced to flee during Israel's founding in 1948.

Israel rejects any such return, saying that would eliminate its Jewish majority. The Israeli military said 40,000 people had gathered in the frontier area but that most of them were keeping away from the border.

Despite the bad weather, an Israeli security official said the turnout was larger than for the usual weekly protests and that it also appeared organisers were trying to keep violence from

erupting.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said 17 people had been wounded by Israeli gunfire and scores more by tear gas and shrapnel.

Around 200 have been killed in Gaza by Israeli troops since the protests started on March 30 last year, according to Palestinian Health Ministry figures, and an Israeli soldier was killed by a Palestinian sniper.

Leaders of the armed Palestinian militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad said that progress has been made in the truce talks, but Hamas said they had a list of demands from Israel that they wanted to see fulfilled.

"In the coming days we hope to conclude the negotiations and achieve a real breaking of the blockade," Hamas chief in Gaza Yehya Sinwar told Reuters as he arrived at the protest. REUTERS

CHINA

'TOWER OF BABEL' HIGHLIGHTS E-WASTE

A Chinese artist on Saturday unveiled a sculpture made of discarded mobile phones and shaped like a cell tower in a bid to highlight the problem of electronic waste. The phones were rigged to a metal frame and synchronised so their screens would flash in various colours.

Members of Saudi team that killed Khashoggi got training in US: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, MARCH 30

MEMBERS OF the Saudi team that killed journalist Jamal Khashoggi received training in the United States, the Washington Post has reported, revealing other new elements in the death of the newspaper's former contributor.

A critic of the Saudi regime, Khashoggi was killed and dismembered October 2 in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul by a team of 15 agents sent from Riyadh. His body has never been recovered. After having denied the murder, Saudi Arabia said the operation was carried out by agents who were out of control. A trial of 11 suspects opened earlier this year in Saudi Arabia.

According to Washington Post columnist David Ignatius, a Saudi who closely read the transcript of a recording from a bug placed in the consulate by Turkish intelligence said it indicates the plan was to kidnap Khashoggi and bring him back to Saudi Arabia for detention and interrogation.

A note in the transcript says an injection was administered to



Jamal Khashoggi

Khashoggi, which the Saudi source said was probably a powerful sedative. A bag was then placed over his head, and Khashoggi screamed: "I can't breathe, I have asthma. Don't do this." According to the Post, he died soon after.

According to Ignatius, who said he interviewed more than a dozen American and Saudi sources who spoke on condition of anonymity, some members of the Saudi Rapid Intervention Group received training in the United States.

"The CIA has cautioned other government agencies that some of this special-operations training might have been conducted by Tier 1 Group, an Arkansas-based company, under a State Department license," he said.

Barr: Mueller report will be made public by mid-April

KATIE BENNER
WASHINGTON, MARCH 30

THE SPECIAL counsel's report on the investigation into Russia's election interference will be made public by mid-April, Attorney General William Barr told lawmakers Friday, adding that the White House would not see the document before he sends it to Congress.

"Everyone will soon be able to read it," Barr wrote in a letter to the chairmen of the congressional judiciary committees.

Prosecutors from the office of special counsel Robert Mueller and other law enforcement officials are scouring the report for sensitive information to black out before releasing it, including secret grand jury testimony, classified materials and information about other ongoing federal investigations, Barr wrote.

He said the report — which covers Moscow's campaign to sabotage the 2016 presidential race, whether any Trump associates conspired and whether the president obstructed the inquiry — was nearly 400 pages, plus supplements. He said he planned to testify on Capitol Hill in early May, shortly after the report's release, to discuss it with lawmakers.

Barr, who was sworn in as attorney general last month, has committed since his confirmation hearing to making public as much of the highly anticipated report as possible. But his declaration Sunday, two days after the report was delivered to him, that President Donald Trump had not illegally obstructed justice drew swift condemnation from Democrats. They accused him of stepping in where Mueller had declined to make a prosecutorial decision. NYT

AGNÈS VARDA (1928-2019)

Groundbreaking New Wave French filmmaker, emblematic feminist

career as a foundation for philosophical ruminations and visual playfulness. *The Cleaners* and *I, a 2000* documentary in which she used the themes of collecting, harvesting and recycling to reflect on her own work, is considered by some to be her masterpiece.

It was her early dramatic films that helped establish Varda as both an emblematic feminist and a cinematic firebrand — among them *Cléo From 5 to 7* (1962), in which a pop singer spends a fretful two hours awaiting the result of a cancer examination, and *Le Bonheur* (1965), about a young husband's blithely choreographed extramarital affair.

Varda established herself as a maverick cineaste well before

such milestones of the New Wave as Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* (1959) and Godard's *Breathless* (1960). Her *La Pointe Courte* (1955), which juxtaposed the strife of an unhappy couple with the struggles of a French fishing village, anticipated by several years the narrative and visual rule-breaking of directors like Truffaut, Godard and Alain Resnais, who edited *La Pointe Courte* and would introduce Varda to a number of New Wave principals in Paris.

Arllette Varda was born on May 30, 1928, in Ixelles, Belgium, the daughter of a Greek father and a French mother. She left Belgium with her family in 1940 for Sète, France, where she spent her teenage years. At 18, she changed



Varda often straddled the line between what was commonly accepted as fiction and nonfiction. NYT

her name to Agnès. She studied art history at the École du Louvre and photography at the École des

Beaux-Arts before working as a photographer at the Théâtre National Populaire in Paris.

"I just didn't see films when I was young," she said in a 2009 interview. "I was stupid and naïve. Maybe I wouldn't have made films if I had seen lots of others; maybe it would have stopped me."

"I started totally free and crazy and innocent," she continued. "Now I've seen many films, and many beautiful films. And I try to keep a certain level of quality of my films. I don't do commercials, I don't do films pre-prepared by other people, I don't do star system. So I do my own little thing."

Her "thing" often involved straddling the line between what was commonly accepted as fiction and nonfiction, and defying the boundaries of gender.

"She was very clear about her

feeling that the New Wave was a man's club and that as a woman it was hard for producers to back her, even after she made *Cléo* in 1962," T. Jefferson Kline, a professor of French at Boston University and the editor of *Agnès Varda: Interviews* (2013), said in an interview for this obituary. "She obviously was not pleased that as a woman filmmaker she had so much trouble getting produced. She went to Los Angeles with her husband, and she said when she came back to France it was like she didn't exist."

Varda was married to director Jacques Demy ("Lola," "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg") from 1962 until his death in 1990.

After Jacques Demy's death,

Varda made three films as a tribute: the biographical drama *Jacquot de Nantes* (1991) and the documentaries *Les Demeiselles Ont Eu 25 Ans* (1993), about the 25th anniversary of Demy's *The Young Girls of Rochefort*, and *L'Univers de Jacques Demy* (1995).

Alison Smith, author of the critical study 'Agnès Varda' (1998), called Varda "a poet of objects and how we use them." In an interview for this obituary, she added, "Varda as an artist intrigued, and intrigues, me by the constant freshness and curiosity which she brings to her inquiries into the everyday world and how we relate to it, particularly how she uses the detailed fabric of life." NYT