

TOP OF THE WORLD



Troops loyal to Libya's UN-backed government on the outskirts of Tripoli. Reuters

LIBYA
Battle for Tripoli killed 56 in a week, says UN

Geneva: Fighting in Libya's capital has killed 56 people and wounded 266 over the last six days, the World Health Organisation said, as the UN mobilised to support the country's hospitals. "Thousands of people have fled their homes, while others are trapped in conflict areas. Hospitals inside and outside (Tripoli) are receiving daily casualties," the WHO said in a statement. Military strongman Khalifa Haftar has launched an offensive to take Tripoli from the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA), intensifying the crisis in the country riven by divisions since the NATO-backed overthrow of dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

VENEZUELA
Maduro says deal reached with Red Cross

Caracas: President Nicolas Maduro has announced an agreement with the International Committee of the Red Cross to bring humanitarian aid into Venezuela. The oil-rich country is enduring acute shortages of food, medicine and other basics, and Maduro is locked in a power struggle with the increasingly popular leader of the opposition, national assembly speaker Juan Guaido. In an about-face, Maduro said on national TV and radio that his government and the Red Cross had agreed "to work together to bring into Venezuela.

SOUTH KOREA
Court overturns abortion law in landmark ruling

Seoul: South Korea's Constitutional Court on Thursday overturned a ban on abortion that has stood for more than 65 years, saying in a landmark ruling that current law unconstitutionally curbs women's rights. In a statement, it said the ban, as well as a law making doctors liable to criminal charges for abortions done with the woman's consent, were both unconstitutional. Seven of the nine justices ruled the law unconstitutional, and two dissented.

AUSTRALIA
Rush wins defamation suit against tabloid

Sydney: Oscar-winner Geoffrey Rush won damages of at least A\$850,000 (\$610,000) on Thursday after a court ruled that the Australian arm of News Corp defamed him by saying he behaved inappropriately toward a co-star in a production of King Lear. The Federal Court, which found News Corp's Daily Telegraph tabloid in Sydney failed to prove its stories were true, will later determine further damages for economic harm, such as Rush's loss of movie roles and the effect on his career.

Assange arrested in London after Ecuador ends asylum

Dragged out from Ecuador embassy for 'breach of bail' after 7 yrs, faces extradition

GUY FAULCONBRIDGE, KATE HOLTON & COSTAS PITAS
LONDON, APRIL 11



Assange outside Westminster Magistrates Court in London on Thursday after his arrest. Reuters

BRITISH POLICE dragged WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange out of Ecuador's embassy on Thursday after his seven-year asylum was revoked, paving the way for his extradition to the United States for one of the biggest ever leaks of classified information.

Hours after the frail-looking Assange, with white hair and a long beard, was carried head-first by at least seven men out of the London embassy and into a waiting police van, US officials announced he had been charged with conspiracy to commit computer intrusion.

As he was being hauled out of the embassy in a dramatic scene shortly after 0900 GMT, the Australian-born Assange was heard shouting, "This is unlawful, I'm not leaving."

British PM Theresa May, who said he was arrested for "breach of bail", hailed the news in Parliament, to cries of "Hear, hear!" from MPs.

Convicted of skipping bail, sentencing later

Assange gave a thumbs up in handcuffs as he was taken from a police station to a London court, where he pronounced himself not guilty of failing to surrender in 2012. District judge Michael Snow called Assange a "narcissist" and convicted him of skipping bail. Sentencing will be at a later date.

Police said they arrested Assange, 47, after being invited into the embassy following the Ecuadorian government's withdrawal of asylum. Assange was carried out of the building carrying a copy of Gore Vidal's *History of The National Security State*, which he continued reading in court.

It's not my thing, says Trump

But in Washington, President Donald Trump, who in 2016 said "I love WikiLeaks" after it released emails that US authorities

Julian Assange is no hero, he has hidden from the truth for years and years."

JEREMY HUNT
BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY

Assange's critics may cheer, but this is a dark moment for press freedom."

EDWARD SNOWDEN
WHISTLEBLOWER

have said were hacked by Russia to harm his election opponent Hillary Clinton, told reporters he had no opinion on the charges against Assange. "I know nothing about WikiLeaks. It's not my thing," Trump said.

Secret indictment

In Washington, the US Justice Department said Assange was charged with conspiring with former Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning to gain access to a government computer as part of a 2010 leak by WikiLeaks of hundreds of thousands of US

military reports about the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and American diplomatic communications. The indictment was made secretly last year and unsealed on Thursday. He faces up to five years in prison if convicted, with legal experts saying more charges were possible.

Ecuador suspended Julian Assange's citizenship and accused him and others at WikiLeaks of collaborating in attempts to destabilise the Andean nation's government, after years of offering him shelter. Lawyers for Assange said he

may risk torture and his life would be in danger if he were to be extradited to the US.

"Assange's critics may cheer, but this is a dark moment for press freedom," said Edward Snowden, a former US National Security Agency contractor who fled to Moscow after revealing massive US intelligence gathering.

Sweden asked to reopen rape case

Assange in June 2012 took refuge in Ecuador's embassy in London where authorities wanted to question him as part of a sexual assault investigation. Sweden dropped that probe in 2017.

A Swedish lawyer representing the alleged rape victim said she would push to have prosecutors reopen the case, but a retired senior prosecutor and chairman of NGO Victim Support Sweden said that may be difficult. **REUTERS**

Pak court says teenage Hindu sisters not forcibly converted

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, APRIL 11



The sisters outside the Islamabad High Court last month. Reuters

A PAKISTANI high court on Thursday declared that the two Hindu teenage sisters were not forcibly converted from Hinduism to Islam, and permitted them to live with their spouses, according to a media report.

The two girls, Raveena (13) and Reena (15), and their spouses petitioned the Islamabad High Court on March 25 against alleged harassment by police days after their father and brother alleged that the girls were underage, abducted, forced into changing their religion and then married off.

In their plea, the girls claimed that they belong to a Hindu family from Chotki, Sindh, but converted willfully as they were im-

pressed by Islamic teaching, Dawn reported. The counsel for the girls' parents, however, asserted that the case pertained to forced conversion.

Chief Justice Athar Minallah constituted a five-member commission to probe whether the conversion of the Hindu sisters to Islam was forced or otherwise.

The commission comprising Human Rights Minister Shireen Mazari, prominent Muslim scholar Mufti Taqi Usmani, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan Chairperson Dr Mehdi Hasan, National Commission on the Status of Women Chairperson Khawar Mumtaz and veteran journalist and human rights activist IA Rehman probed the matter and concluded that it was not a forced conversion, the report said.

Justice Minallah remarked that the case was a simple one, but a commission comprising eminent professionals and scholars was constituted keeping in view the sensitivity of the case since "the court wanted to ensure this was not a forced conversion".

The court sought further recommendations from the commission within four weeks and adjourned the case until May 14.

Pak: Britain must apologise for Jallianwala Bagh

Lahore: Pakistan on Thursday endorsed the demand that the UK government must apologise for the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the famine of Bengal ahead of the 100th anniversary of the mass killing.

While endorsing the demand for apology from the British government over the Jallianwala Bagh massacre on twitter, Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry also said the UK must return the Koh-i-Noor diamond to Lahore museum.

"Fully endorse the demand that British Empire must apologise to the nations of Pakistan, India and Bangladesh on Jallianwala Massacre and Bengal famine...these tragedies are the scar on the face of Britain, also Koh-e-Noor, must be returned to Lahore museum where it belongs," he tweeted. **PTI**

MEANWHILE 'BOMB CYCLONE' MOVES THROUGH US

A storm system known as a "bomb cyclone" slowly churned through the US interior Thursday for the second time in a month, unleashing a blizzard in parts of the Midwest while creating hazardous fire conditions farther south. As much as 18 inches of snow has fallen in parts of South Dakota, where Governor Kristi Noem has closed state offices in much of the state.

COUP FOLLOWING MASS PROTESTS



Demonstrators outside Sudan's Defence Ministry in Khartoum on Thursday. Reuters

Sudan's Bashir ousted by military, placed under arrest

KHALID ABDELAZIZ
KHARTOUM, APRIL 11



Omar al-Bashir ruled Sudan for three decades

PRESIDENT OMAR al-Bashir, who ruled Sudan in autocratic style for 30 years, was on Thursday overthrown and arrested in a coup by the armed forces.

In an address on state television, Defence Minister Awad Mohamed Ahmed Ibn Auf, announced a two-year period of military rule to be followed by presidential elections.

He said Bashir, 75, was being held in a "safe place" and a military council would now run the country. He did not say who would head it.

Seated on a gold-upholstered armchair, Auf announced a state of emergency, a nationwide ceasefire and the suspension of the constitution. Sudan's airspace would be closed for 24 hours and border crossings shut until further notice.

The main organiser of protests against Bashir, the Sudanese Professionals Association, rejected the minister's plans. It called on protesters to maintain a sit-in outside the defence ministry that started on Saturday, a source with the group said.

Sudanese sources said Bashir was at the presidential residence under "heavy guard". A son of Sadiq al-Mahdi, the head of the country's main opposition Umma Party, told al-Hadath TV that Bashir was being held with "a number of leaders of the terrorist Muslim Brotherhood group".

Bashir has been indicted by the International Criminal Court in

EXPLAINED
E
Volatile situation after coup

SUDAN'S DEFENCE Minister announced a two-year period of military rule following the ouster of Omar al-Bashir. Protesters' groups have, however, rejected the coup, saying it only brought cosmetic change and the "faces and institutions" they revolted against were still in power. They vowed to continue the protests. But the military has imposed a three-month state of emergency and protests during such a time could lead to a volatile and potentially violent situation in Sudan.

The Hague and is facing an arrest warrant over allegations of genocide in Sudan's Darfur region during an insurgency that began in 2003 and led to death of an estimated 300,000 people. **REUTERS**

Brexit: EU leaders give Britain six more months to leave bloc

ELIZABETH PIPER, GABRIELA BACZYNSKA & PHILIP BLENKINSOP
BRUSSELS, APRIL 11



The extension is more than what May asked for. Reuters

EUROPEAN UNION leaders gave Britain six more months to leave the bloc, more than Prime Minister Theresa May says she needs but less than many in the bloc wanted, thanks to fierce resistance from France.

The summit deal in Brussels in the early hours of Thursday meant Britain will not crash out on Friday without a treaty to smooth its passage. But it offers little clarity on when, how or even if Brexit will happen, as May struggles to build support in parliament for withdrawal terms agreed with the EU last year.

With German Chancellor Angela Merkel insisting Britain

would not be forced out and that a chaotic no-deal departure must be avoided if at all possible, there was never any real doubt that May would get an extension.

French President Emmanuel Macron, reprising a role he took

last month when May got a first, two-week delay, pushed leaders into hours of debate over dinner as he fought a largely solo campaign to persuade them not to give the British up to another year. **REUTERS**

HUMAN FAMILY TREE FURTHER EXPANDED TO INCLUDE A 3-FOOT TALL SPECIES THAT WENT EXTINCT 50,000 YEARS AGO

An ancient human species is discovered in a Philippines cave

CARL ZIMMER
APRIL 11

strange forms along the way. Our species, Homo sapiens, now inhabits a comparatively lonely world.

"The more fossils that people pull out of the ground, the more we realise that the variation that was present in the past far exceeds what we see in us today," said Matthew Tocheri, a paleoanthropologist at Lakehead University in Canada, who was not involved in the discovery.

In the early 2000s, Armand Salvador Mijares, a graduate student at the University of the Philippines, was digging at Callao Cave, on Luzon, for traces of the first farmers in the Philippines. He then decided to dig a little deeper.



Callao Cave on Luzon Island in the Philippines, where remains of a new species of hominin were found. Cave Archaeology Project

Researchers on the Indonesian island of Flores had discovered the bones of an extraordinary humanlike species about 60,000

years old. The scientists named it Homo floresiensis. Some features were similar to ours, but in other ways Homo flo-

resiensis more closely resembled other hominins.

Starting about 2.5 million years ago, one lineage of African hominins began to evolve new traits—a flatter face, bigger brains and a taller body. These hominins were the first known members of our own genus, Homo.

Only later, about 1.8 million years ago, do the first fossils of Homo appear outside of Africa. One common species was Homo erectus, a species that spread to East and Southeast Asia. The youngest Homo erectus fossils, discovered in Indonesia, may be just 143,000 years old.

Our own lineage kept evolving in Africa. Homo sapiens

emerged about 300,000 years ago, and only 100,000 years ago did we start leaving the continent.

One hypothesis, then, is that Homo floresiensis evolved from Homo erectus. So here was the question for Philippine archaeologists: Could hominins have reached Luzon as well as Flores?

"That inspired me to go back and go deep," Mijares, now a professor at the University of the Philippines, said in an interview. In 2007, he returned to Callao Cave. As his team dug into the cave floor, the researchers hit a layer of bones. When Philip Piper, an archaeologist at the University of the Philippines, later sorted through the finds, he noticed one

that resembled a human foot bone. It was small.

During later digs in 2011 and 2015 he and his colleagues found more humanlike fossils, including teeth, part of a femur and hand bones. All told, the fossils came from three individuals. And they were remarkable. The teeth were tiny. The researchers did not find enough bones to estimate how tall Homo luzonensis stood. But they do display their own strange mix of traits. One toe bone, for example, looks nearly identical to those of early hominins living in Africa more than 3 million years ago. Taken together, Mijares concluded, the evidence pointed to a new species of Homo. **NYT**