

**Simmering unrest** A cross-section of people in the autonomous territory of Hong Kong are protesting against a controversial extradition Bill that would allow suspects to be sent to mainland China**The Bill**

The government is pushing a Bill through its legislature to allow extradition of alleged criminals to jurisdictions with which Hong Kong does not already have a treaty, including mainland China.

The government says such a law is needed to plug existing loopholes and prevent Hong Kong from becoming a haven for fugitives.

Those accused of offences punishable by seven years or more in prison could be extradited. The power to take such an action would be with the territory's Chief Executive.

**The immediate trigger**

The Hong Kong government says the killing last year of a Hong Kong woman in Taiwan, allegedly by her boyfriend, hastened the move towards the drafting of the Bill.

The Hong Kong-based boyfriend cannot be tried in Taiwan as the territory does not have an extradition request with the country.

**Relations with China**

Under the 1997 handover agreement with Britain, China has agreed to a 50-year deal under which the territory is able to retain key liberties, such as freedom of speech and independent judiciary, not available in mainland China.

There are accusations Beijing is renegeing on that deal.

**The only responsible thing to do now is for Carrie Lam to withdraw the evil bill, or at least to shelve it in order to solve the crisis**

FERNANDO CHEUNG,  
Pro-democracy lawmaker

**What happens next?**

Chief Executive Carrie Lam has shown no signs of backing down, refusing calls to shelve the Bill.

A vote was expected on June 20. But on Wednesday, in the face of the fresh protests, the city's legislature announced that it would delay a lengthy final debate.

**The objection**

China's opaque and politicised courts, where conviction rate is said to be as high as 99%, are a cause for major concern.

Many Hong Kongers fear that the law will be used to target Beijing's political opponents.

Above all, they fear an erosion of the 'one country, two systems' policy under which the sovereignty of Hong Kong was handed over by the U.K. to China in 1997.

**Violence erupts at Hong Kong protest**

Opposition to extradition Bill triggered unrest; police fire tear gas, rubber bullets at crowd

REUTERS  
HONG KONG

Hong Kong police fired rubber bullets and tear gas at demonstrators, who threw plastic bottles, on Wednesday as protests against an extradition Bill that would allow people to be sent to mainland China for trial descended into violent chaos.

Tens of thousands of protesters had gathered peacefully outside the Chinese-ruled city's legislature before tempers flared, some charging police with umbrellas. Police warned them back, saying: "We will use force."

**10 wounded**

Ambulances sped towards the protest area as panic spread through the crowd, with many people trying to flee the stinging tear gas, according to a witness. More than 10 people were wounded in the clashes, Cable TV reported.



**Police action:** Protesters outside the Hong Kong government's office disperse after tear gas was fired on Wednesday. • AFP

Police used pepper spray, tear gas and batons to force the crowds back.

Civil Human Rights Front, which organised a protest on Sunday that it estimated saw more than a million people take to the streets in protest against the extradition Bill, accused police of using un-

necessary violence. The violence had died down by early evening under light rain, but tens of thousands still jammed the streets in and around Lung Wo Road, a main east-west artery near the offices of embattled Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam.

Opposition to the Bill on Sunday triggered Hong Kong's biggest political demonstration since its handover from British to Chinese rule in 1997 under a "one country, two systems" deal guaranteeing it special autonomy, including freedom of assembly, free press and independent judiciary.

**China's meddling**

But many accuse China of extensive meddling since, including obstruction of democratic reforms, interference with local elections and of being behind the disappearance of five Hong Kong-based booksellers, starting in 2015, who specialised in works critical of Chinese leaders.

Ms. Lam has vowed to press ahead with the legislation despite deep concerns in the Asian financial hub, including among business leaders, that it could under-

mine those freedoms and investor confidence and erode the city's competitive advantages.

In a brief evening televised address, Ms. Lam "strongly condemned" the violence and urged the city to return to normal as soon as possible.

In a separate interview recorded earlier on Wednesday before the worst of the violence, she repeatedly stood by the introduction of the Bill, and said the time was right for it to be debated. "I have never had any guilty conscience because of this matter, I just said the initial intention of our work is still firmly right."

The government said debate on the Bill that was due to take place in the city's 70-seat Legislative Council on Wednesday would be delayed until further notice. The legislature is controlled by a pro-Beijing majority.

**'Easter suspects were funded by Rajapaksa-era intelligence unit'**

Ex-Governor says the wing worked closely with the NTJ

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

A former Governor and prominent Muslim politician has accused the Rajapaksa government of being complicit while its military intelligence unit "worked closely" with the National Thowheeth Jamaath (NTJ), the radical Islamist organisation behind the Easter bombings.

Azath Salley was one of the two Muslim Governors who stepped down from office earlier this month, following a fasting Buddhist monk's demand that they resign over alleged links with Easter suspects. They have denied the accusation.

**Testimony to PSC**

Testifying before a Parliament Select Committee (PSC) probing the terror attacks, Mr. Salley said on Tuesday that he had informed top authorities in government about the activities of extremist elements several times. Further, he claimed that the Defence Ministry of the previous Rajapaksa administration had been funding the NTJ for some years now.

Following the April 21 attacks, some reports speculated that military intelligence under the Rajapaksa



Former Governor Azath Salley. • TWITTER

government had paid the NTJ and the Bodu Bala Sena (Buddhist Power Force), a hard-line group that has in the past been accused of instigating anti-Muslim violence. So far, investigators have not shared any evidence or documentation to substantiate the claim.

"Dr. Rajitha Senarathne [one of the members of the PSC] asked me if Easter blasts mastermind Zahran Hashim was among the Islamist radicals said to have been funded by military intelligence. I told the panel that I didn't know about Zahran, but reports say Abdul Razik was among those paid," he told *The Hindu* on Wednesday.

Mr. Salley was referring to R. Abdul Razik, a prominent member of the Ceylon Tha-

wheed Jamaath, a splinter group of the Sri Lanka Thowheeth Jamaath (SLTJ).

The PSC held its fourth sitting on Tuesday, amid escalating tensions between the executive and the legislature. President Maithripala Sirisena wanted the Speaker to scrap the PSC, on the grounds that it could hinder court proceedings on the Easter attacks.

**Sirisena's concerns**

In an emergency Cabinet meeting last week, Mr. Sirisena also raised concern over security officials providing evidence to the parliamentary panel in front of the media. Further, he sacked Chief of National Intelligence Sisira Mendis, who testified to the inquiry that the Easter attacks could have been averted.

The suspended Inspector General of Police and former Defence Secretary too told the committee that prior intelligence on the attacks had been available, pointing to serious lapses in acting on intelligence. As tensions appear to escalate between the President and Parliament — with the Speaker and PSC firmly backing its proceedings — President Sirisena cancelled the weekly Cabinet meeting on Tuesday.

**More than 400 arrested at Russia rally**

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
MOSCOW

More than 400 people, including Russian Opposition leader Alexei Navalny, were detained in Moscow on Wednesday, a monitor said, as authorities sought to break up a rally urging police reform after the framing of a

journalist on drugs charges.

Many Russians had hoped to harness the widespread outrage over last week's arrest of respected reporter Ivan Golunov on trumped-up drugs charges to press for genuine reform of Russia's tainted law enforcement and justice systems.

But a much smaller crowd of protesters had turned up in central Moscow on Russia Day. OVD Info, which tracks arrests, said more than 400 people were detained.

Moscow police said earlier around 1,200 took part in the march and more than 200 people were arrested.

**ELSEWHERE****Macron promises to send Trump a new tree**

PARIS  
French President Emmanuel Macron promised to send a new oak to President Donald Trump after the tree he gave him during last year's state visit to the U.S. died. Mr. Macron said the death of the tree shouldn't be read as an indication of the up-and-down relationship between the two countries. • AP

**U.S. President to meet Putin at G20 in Japan**

WASHINGTON  
President Donald Trump said on Wednesday that he would meet his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Japan later this month. He had said last month that he would meet with Mr. Putin, but the Kremlin indicated that there was no agreement on a bilateral meeting. • AFP

**South Asia budget of U.S. is set to fall**

Allocation for India to be raised and for Pakistan to be rationalised, says official

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN  
WASHINGTON

The U.S.'s top South Asia diplomat will testify on Thursday before the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) in a hearing on "U.S. Interest in South Asia and FY 2020 Budget".

The budget request for India will be increased and those for Afghanistan and Pakistan will be "rationalized" as per the statement Alice Wells, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia, will make. A copy of the statement was released by the HFAC.

The overall budget request of \$1.07 billion is 16% below the FY2019 request.

The annual exercise formally articulates the budget request to Congress but also, in reality, is a forum to discuss foreign policy in the region.

Ms. Wells will testify that the budget request for India



Alice Wells, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia. • THE HINDU

"reflects its pre-eminent role in the Administration's Indo-Pacific vision and our two countries' commitment to shared principles and values".

**Coherent India policy**

The Trump administration and the HFAC are not in agreement on how foreign policy in South Asia is being conducted. Significantly, a group of House Democrats had written to President Donald Trump in mid-May highlighting the fact that the State Department did not

have an Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia and said the Department had failed to come up with a "coherent" India policy (Ms. Wells is currently running the department in an acting capacity).

The statement talks about the growing bilateral trade with India, a deepening defence relationship but notes the challenges. The U.S. is looking to India to take stronger action on crimes based on religion — and this is expected to contribute to a stronger relationship.

"We look to India's democratically elected leaders and institutions to swiftly condemn acts of violence on the basis of religion and hold perpetrators accountable. This will help further India's security and economic interests and strengthen our bilateral relationship," the statement reads. "We took note of PM [Narendra] Modi's comments following his

re-election highlighting his government's commitment to inclusiveness..."

The statement also refers to market access issues and tariff and non-tariff barriers being "longstanding concerns".

**Smaller budget**

The State Department will make a smaller budget request for Afghanistan. Ms. Wells will testify that the U.S. is decreasing the size of its portfolio and calling for funds from other donors, such as the EU and the World Bank.

"The smaller request for FY 2020 for Afghanistan anticipates this more focused portfolio; however, significant prior year resources in the pipeline will allow us to avoid program disruptions as we transition to a smaller portfolio and have flexibility to respond to a political settlement," the statement reads.

**China launches Internet 'clean-up' campaign**

It will punish sites for 'illicit actions'

REUTERS  
BEIJING

China has launched a campaign to clean up its Internet, state media said on Wednesday, amid a fresh wave of apparent censorship. Authorities have, in recent days, blocked more foreign media websites and shut down domestic accounts on social media.

The "rectification" effort was launched in May by the cyberspace administration, the Information Technology Ministry, the public security bureau and the markets regulator and will run until the end of the year, the official Xinhua news agency said.

The campaign will punish and expose websites for "illegal and criminal actions", failing to "fulfil their obligation" to take safety mea-

sures or the theft of personal information, it added. The campaign follows a series of shutdowns and blockages of certain websites and social media accounts.

Several foreign media beyond Beijing's control, such as *The Washington Post* and *The Guardian*, have not been accessible online since last weekend, adding to a list of blocked sites.

Online Chinese financial news publication Wallstreetcn.com said on Monday it took its website and mobile app offline at the authorities' request, but gave no details of the rules it may have broken.

Social media accounts ranging from those publishing politically sensitive material to financial news have also been shut.

**Johnson begins leadership bid**

No-deal Brexit will be a last resort, says the frontrunner

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

Boris Johnson said on Wednesday that he would only take Britain out of the European Union (EU) without a deal as a "last resort", launching his campaign to be Prime Minister with a promise to unify a country deeply divided over Brexit.

Mr. Johnson is the favourite among the 10 candidates vying to succeed Theresa May. At a launch event in London packed with senior members of the ruling Conservative party, Mr. Johnson insisted that Brexit must happen on October 31.

He said Britain must prepare to leave with no new arrangements if need be, but softened his previous rhetoric, suggesting that this was "a last resort, not something that anybody desires".

However, Mr. Johnson of-



Boris Johnson. • AFP

ferred no details of how to break the deadlock in Parliament that prevented Ms. May from getting her deal through. He said a new government with "new optimism" and "total conviction about the way forward" could find a way.

The EU has insisted repeatedly that it will not renegotiate the terms of the divorce, while Parliament has voted against leaving without an accord. On Wednes-

day, a cross-party group of lawmakers made a fresh bid to block such a scenario.

**Hammond's warning**

Finance Minister Philip Hammond warned Mr. Johnson and other leadership rivals not to make promises on Brexit they could not keep.

In his speech, Mr. Johnson skipped over an underwhelming two-year stint as Foreign Secretary and instead drew on his eight years as Mayor of London, which he said gave him the experience to govern.

Conservative lawmakers will hold the first of a series of secret ballots on Thursday on the leadership candidates. They will whittle down the field to two by June 20, and that pair will then be put to a ballot of around 1,60,000 Conservative Party members.