

TOP OF THE WORLD



Donald Trump

US sets up space warfare command

Washington: President Donald Trump has launched the US Space Command, which he said will ensure America's dominance in space is "never threatened". The command's establishment comes as the US has grown increasingly concerned about threats to its satellites from countries like Russia and China. "Those who wish to harm the United States, to seek to challenge us on the ultimate high ground of space, it's going to be a whole different ballgame," he said on Thursday at a White House ceremony marking the command's establishment.

LIBYA UN chief fears 'full civil war'

United Nations: UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said Thursday that he fears Libya will end up in a "full civil war" unless moves are soon made to end the conflict. "Unless action is taken in the near term, it is highly likely that the current conflict will escalate into full civil war," Guterres said in the report. He acknowledged the need for the support of the international community in finding a political solution for the country, where forces loyal to strongman Khalifa Haftar launched an offensive to take the capital Tripoli from the UN-recognized Government of National Accord in early April.

UK Indian-origin man jailed for domestic abuse

London: An Indian-origin finance executive has been jailed for 22 months after admitting to a domestic abuse charge in a UK court. Tarang Katira had pleaded guilty to one charge of controlling or coercive behaviour, contrary to Section 76 of the UK's Serious Crime Act 2015, and sentenced at Isleworth Crown Court in London on Thursday. The 34-year-old was also ordered to pay 1,500 pounds in legal costs, and a restraining order has been placed on him to prohibit contact with the victim - an unidentified woman believed to be his partner.

TAIWAN Promoting indigenous defence: Tsai

Taipei: Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen says the island has been "aggressively promoting indigenous national defense". Tsai spoke Friday at Armed Forces Day in Taipei City. She said Taiwan has been locally building its own submarines and fighter jets. Tsai added Taiwan's determination to defend itself has won international support, as the US in recent months approved sales of M1A2 tanks and F-16Vs. Chinese President Xi Jinping has said he would not rule out using force in efforts to "unify" Taiwan and the mainland.

NO NOD FOR RALLY TO MARK 2014 UMBRELLA MOVEMENT

Hong Kong police arrest pro-democracy activists ahead of protest anniversary

AUSTIN RAMZY & EZRA CHEUNG
HONG KONG, AUGUST 30

THE POLICE in Hong Kong arrested at least three prominent activists ahead of a sensitive political anniversary Saturday, as the authorities intensified their crackdown on an opposition movement that has shaken the semi-autonomous Chinese city for months.

Joshua Wong and Agnes Chow, student leaders of the pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong five years ago that presaged the current protests, were arrested Friday morning, their political organization said.

Andy Chan, who led the now-banned Hong Kong National Party, was taken into custody Thursday night at the Hong Kong airport, he said on Facebook.

Carrie Lam, Hong Kong's chief executive, said Tuesday that the government was looking into "all laws in Hong Kong - if they can provide a legal means to stop violence and chaos,"



Pro-democracy activists Joshua Wong (right) and Agnes Chow in Hong Kong on Friday. AP

when asked whether she was considering use of the sweeping Emergency Regulations Ordinance.

Two days later, the Chinese military sent fresh troops in the early-morning darkness to its Hong Kong garrison.

Beijing described the move as a regular rotation of its forces, but in light of warnings

from mainland officials that the military could be used to quell unrest in Hong Kong, it raised questions about whether China was positioning its troops for a crackdown.

Opposition leaders were hoping to hold a large rally Saturday, the fifth anniversary of a decision by the Chinese legislature to impose strict limits on

elections in Hong Kong, but those plans were in doubt.

The police have rejected an application to hold a large rally and march to the Chinese government's representative office in Hong Kong to mark the anniversary of the decision, which helped inspire the 2014 Umbrella Movement. An appeal was turned down Friday. NYT

CHINA 'REJECTED' PLAN TO APPEASE PROTESTERS

EARLIER THIS summer, Carrie Lam, the chief executive of Hong Kong, submitted a report to Beijing that assessed protesters' five key demands and found that withdrawing a contentious extradition bill could help to defuse the situation

THE CHINESE central government rejected Lam's proposal and ordered her not to yield to any of the protesters' other demands at that time, three individuals with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters.

BEIJING'S REBUFF of Lam's proposal for how to resolve the crisis, detailed for the first time by Reuters, represents concrete evidence of the extent to which China is controlling the Hong Kong



Carrie Lam

government's response to the unrest.

OTHER DEMANDS analysed in Lam's report, which was submitted before an August 7 meeting in Shenzhen about the crisis, were: an independent inquiry into the protests; fully democratic elections; dropping of the term "riot" in describing protests; and dropping charges against those arrested so far

US-IRAN STANDOFF

Europe to step up efforts to save nuclear deal: Germany

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
HELSINKI, AUGUST 30

EUROPEAN COUNTRIES will step up diplomatic efforts to save the beleaguered Iran nuclear deal, Germany's foreign minister said Friday after talks with Britain and France.

Tensions have spiked recently in the Gulf, where Iran has seized Western tankers as Tehran and Washington have locked horns over the 2015 deal.

US President Donald Trump last year unilaterally pulled out of the accord that handed Iran relief from sanctions in return for curbs on its atomic programme.

The move alarmed European powers, which see the deal as the best way to stop Iran acquiring nuclear weapons, and infuriated the Islamic republic.

The foreign ministers of Britain, France and Germany - the three European parties to the deal - were joined by EU diplomatic chief Federica Mogherini for talks on the sidelines of an EU meeting in Helsinki.

Germany's Heiko Maas said the trio wanted to build on momentum from last weekend's G7 summit, where Trump indicated willingness to talk to Iran.

China expels WSJ reporter who wrote on Xi's cousin

SUI-LEE WEE
BEIJING, AUGUST 30

CHINA HAS effectively expelled a reporter working for *The Wall Street Journal* after he wrote an article about the cousin of the country's top leader, Xi Jinping, in the latest sign of a government clampdown on media freedoms.

The Chinese authorities declined to renew the press credentials of Chun Han Wong, a reporter in Beijing for *The Journal*, a spokesman from Dow Jones, the parent company of the newspaper, said in an emailed statement on Friday.

Wong, a Singaporean national, had reported on Chinese politics from Beijing for *The Journal* since 2014. Wong's expulsion comes amid a widening crackdown on journalists, both foreign and domestic.

The government has threatened others with expulsion or made reporters wait for months, and sometimes years, before their visas were approved.

China's Foreign Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Wong was the co-writer of an article in July about Ming Chai, a 61-year-old Australian citizen who is also Xi's cousin. The article, which quoted unnamed Australian officials, said that the authorities were scrutinising Chai's activities as part of a broad money-laundering and organised crime investigation. China's Foreign Ministry at the time called the accusations groundless. NYT

EU fear of no-deal Brexit soars as UK defends move to suspend parliament

ASSOCIATED PRESS
HELSINKI, AUGUST 30

BRITISH FOREIGN Secretary Dominic Raab defended Friday his government's decision to suspend parliament and rejected suggestions that the move will prevent lawmakers from debating the country's departure from the European Union as concern mounts that a costly and damaging Brexit without any agreement is now more likely.

Britain is due to leave the EU on October 31; a move that has divided the country and shaken the European project to its foundations. On Wednesday, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson got Queen Elizabeth II's approval to suspend parliament,



Anti Brexit protestors outside the cabinet office in London on Friday. AP

a move widely criticised by his political opponents who see it as a maneuver to give them even less time to block a chaotic no-deal Brexit.

Johnson previously had refused to rule out such a move, but the timing of the decision took lawmakers - many of whom are on vacation - by surprise.

At talks with EU foreign ministers in Finland, Raab said "the idea that this is some kind of constitutional outrage is nonsense. It's actually lawful. It's perfectly proper. There's precedent for it."

"We've been talking about nothing but Brexit. We're going to get a chance to scrutinise all aspects of Brexit between now and end of October," he told reporters.

JUDGE REJECTS BID TO STOP SUSPENSION OF UK PARLIAMENT

London: Opponents of Prime Minister Boris Johnson's move to suspend parliament in the final weeks before Brexit lost the first of several legal bids to stop him on Friday. Scottish judge Raymond Doherty rejected the request for a temporary injunction pending a full hearing on September 6. "I'm not satisfied that there's a need for an interim suspension or an interim interdict to be granted at this stage," Doherty said in his ruling. PTI

UK joins France, Germany to express concern over South China Sea tensions

ADITI KHANNA
LONDON, AUGUST 30

IN A rare show of unity, the UK has joined its European neighbours, France and Germany, to issue a joint statement expressing concern over brewing tensions in the South China Sea, which it warns could lead to "insecurity and instability" in the region.

The statement welcomes the efforts by members states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), of which India is a sectoral dialogue partner, to hold talks with China to achieve a rules-based Code of Conduct based on United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

"We are concerned about the situation in the South China Sea which could lead to insecurity and instability in the region," the statement reads.

"We call on all coastal States of the South China Sea to take steps and measures that reduce tensions and contribute to maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability and safety in the region, including as regards the rights of coastal States in their waters and the freedom and rights of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea," it notes.

As state parties of the UNCLOS, UK, France and Germany underlined their interest in the universal application of the Convention, which sets out the comprehensive legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas including in the South China Sea must be carried out. PTI



Chinese structures in Subi Reef at the South China Sea

Beijing refuses to budge, says Philippines

Beijing: Beijing told visiting Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte its position on the South China Sea was not up for negotiation, a spokesman said Friday. China claims most of the contested sea, including waters close to Philippine shores, and has rejected a UN-backed international tribunal ruling that said its assertion to the Sea is without legal basis. Duterte is under pressure at home to challenge China, with tensions high after a Chinese fishing trawler hit and sank a Filipino boat in June in the contested waters. PTI

What's Next for Brexit? Possible Outcomes

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's decision to suspend Parliament next month has brought a fresh wave of consternation and confusion to Britain's already chaotic efforts to leave the EU

1 LAWMAKERS TAKE CHARGE

A majority of MPs oppose what they consider a destructive "no-deal" departure. By suspending Parliament for weeks, an NYT report said the UK PM has galvanised several opponents into action, who have hinted they may copy Boris Johnson in using an arcane procedure to stop a "no-deal" Brexit

2 MOTION OF NO CONFIDENCE

Lawmakers can resort to a motion of no confidence, ousting Johnson from office. The problem is the opposition cannot agree on a caretaker PM. Even if it succeeded, Johnson could refuse to resign and schedule a general election for November, in effect forcing through a no-deal Brexit

3 A SNAP ELECTION

If lawmakers should succeed in passing legislation outlawing a no-deal Brexit, Johnson could try to outflank them again by calling a general election. To call an election, Johnson would need the support of two-thirds of the House of Commons, so he would need opposition votes

4 LEAVING EU WITH A DEAL

The critical date is October 17-18, when the bloc's leaders meet, providing a chance for last minute negotiations. If a no-deal Brexit is still a possibility, Johnson can put a gun to the heads of European leaders to get a revised deal, then put the gun to the heads of his lawmakers to get the measure passed

5 A NO-DEAL BREXIT

If European leaders offer too few concessions for his liking, Johnson might plow ahead with a no-deal exit. It is, after all, the default option. The risk, however, is that the predictions of economic chaos after a no-deal Brexit are borne out, making an election unwinnable for him, as per an NYT report

'10 YEARS OF RISING GREENHOUSE EMISSIONS... OF WATCHING THE REEF HEADING FOR CATASTROPHE'

Australia downgrades Great Barrier Reef to 'very poor' status

PAULINA DURAN
SYDNEY, AUGUST 30

AUSTRALIA'S GREAT Barrier Reef is in very poor condition because of climate change, over fishing and land clearing, a state agency said on Friday, as it downgraded the reef's status to the lowest level, which could jeopardise its World Heritage status.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) said the health of the world's largest coral reef system, off the northeast coast of the Queensland state, had deteriorated since its last review, in 2014, but the problems the reef faces were not insurmountable. "This report draws attention

to the fact that the outlook for the Great Barrier Reef, the long term outlook, is very poor - that's largely driven by climate change," GBRMPA's Chief Scientists David Wachenfeld told reporters in Sydney.

"Despite that, with the right mix of local actions to improve the resilience of the system and global actions to tackle climate change in the strongest and fastest way possible, we can turn that around."

The report, which is compiled every five years, painted a deteriorating picture of widespread coral bleaching, habitat loss and degradation caused by human-induced climate change, overfishing, poor water quality, and coastal land clearing for grazing.



A 2015 image of the Great Barrier Reef. Reuters/file

ing for grazing.

The reef stretching for more than 2,300 km (1430 miles) is

home to 400 types of coral, 1,500 species of fish and 4,000 types of molluscs.

Some parts of the reefs remained in good condition but many species including dol-

phins, dugongs, sharks, rays and turtles were being threatened.

UNESCO's World Heritage Committee last year called for global action on climate change to protect five large coral reefs, including the Great Barrier Reef.

The committee is due to consider the reef's heritage listing, considering its health and a possible "in danger" status.

"The Great Barrier Reef is one of the globe's most famous World Heritage Areas yet the report finds that its integrity is challenged and deteriorating," environmentalist group Australian Marine Conservation Society said in a statement.

"This is now the third Outlook Report. We've had ten years of warnings, ten years of

rising greenhouse emissions and ten years watching the Reef heading for a catastrophe," said the group's director of strategy, Imogen Zethoven.

"This report will be a major input into UNESCO's committee and here is a very strong case for the reef to be considered for the in danger list."

The inclusion of the reef on the in danger list would be an embarrassment for the government and could damage the tourist industry.

UNESCO's chief of the Asia and Pacific region, Feng Jing, said the organisation was following closely the state of the reef and progress made in protecting it and would consider its status in July next year. REUTERS