

17 THE WORLD

TOP OF THE WORLD



Justin Trudeau

ASIA

Trudeau pledges assault rifle ban amid scandal

Toronto: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, embroiled in a blackface picture scandal, on Friday pledged to ban military-style assault rifles in a bid to get his campaign back on issue. The move comes two days after at least two images of him in blackface emerged, as well as a video showing him with blacked-up face and body. "Thoughts and prayers aren't going to cut it," Trudeau said. "We know you do not need a military-grade assault weapon, one designed to kill the largest number of people in the shortest amount of time, to take down a deer."

ALBANIA

Ship rescues 111 migrants in Aegean Sea

Tirana: Albania's Defense Ministry says one of its ships in the Aegean Sea has rescued 111 migrants trying to cross into Greece, and has handed them over to Turkish authorities. Defense Minister Olta Xhaka on Saturday wrote on her Facebook page that the Syrian, Iraqi and Palestinian migrants were "rescued in three different operations within a few hours in the waters between Turkey and Greece." She added the migrants were found late Friday evening in two speedboats and a small boat.

PAKISTAN

One detained in Iraq blast that killed 12

Baghdad: Iraq's prime minister says security forces have detained a man suspected of detonating a bomb on a minibus packed with passengers outside the Shiite holy city of Karbala. The Friday night blast killed 12 people and wounded five others. Adel Abdul-Mahdi in a statement released by his office Saturday gave no further details about the suspect. The blast was one of the biggest attacks targeting civilians since the extremist Islamic State group was declared defeated inside Iraq in 2017. On Saturday security was tight on the roads leading to Karbala.

People take to streets across Egypt in rare protests, chant: 'Down with Sisi'

Rallies held even as Egypt's leader flew to New York for UN Assembly

DECLAN WALSH
SEPTEMBER 21

RARE PROTESTS against President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi erupted in central Cairo and several smaller Egyptian cities Friday night as hundreds of young people, responding to online calls for demonstrations against government corruption, chanted "Down with Sisi" and "Leave now."

The protests occurred as el-Sisi flew to New York to attend the United Nations General Assembly next week. On Friday, police fired tear gas to disperse some groups, but others continued to clash with police into the early hours of Saturday.

At least four people were arrested near Tahrir Square, where Egyptians gathered to oust President Hosni Mubarak during the Arab Spring in 2011, said the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, which monitors the status of detainees.

Human rights groups regularly denounce el-Sisi as one of the harshest leaders in the Middle East. Packed prisons are filled with political detainees,



Groups of protesters gather in central Cairo and shout anti-government slogans. Reuters

hundreds of websites have been blocked, and the country's press has been largely suborned by the security services.

Still, el-Sisi has met with little resistance from Western allies, including President Donald Trump, who last week referred to him as "my favorite dictator."

The protests were prompted by a call from Mohamed Ali, a building contractor who had worked with the military and has been appearing in Facebook videos alleging widespread squandering of public funds un-

der el-Sisi and his close aides.

Hundreds of young Cairo residents heeded that call, flooding the streets Friday evening after a soccer match between two popular Egyptian teams. Witnesses and video recordings suggested the protests were not centrally organised, appearing instead to come from spontaneous gatherings of angry young people, many from working-class backgrounds, chanting anti-Sisi slogans.

In one place, protesters denounced el-Sisi as "the thief."

Pro-government television stations tried to play down the turbulence. Broadcasting from Tahrir Square, one anchor said that a small group had gathered to take selfies before leaving the scene. Other channels insisted the situation was calm.

But videos posted online showed that limited protests also erupted in Egypt's second city, Alexandria, in Suez on the Red Sea, and in Mahalla el-Kubra, a town of textile factories 70 miles north of Cairo that is known for its labor activism. **NYT**

EXPLAINED Tough times

THE PROTESTS in Egypt, while relatively small, were significant in that they occurred at all. The el-Sisi regime is known to crack down harshly on dissent, usually in the form of mass arrests.

The protests, attributed to anger over squandered public funds, come at a time when food prices have soared. El-Sisi has introduced harsh austerity measures, with the country reporting in July that 33 percent of Egyptians were living under the poverty line — up from 28 percent in 2015 and 17 percent in 2000. It is anticipated that Friday's rallies will be met with more arrests, though some experts have said the regime could see this as a chance to let people "blow off some steam".

'ACT ON CLIMATE CHANGE OR BE VOTED OUT'



Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg (centre) speaks to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres (left) during the Youth Climate Summit on Saturday. AP

■ Young climate change activists delivered a strong message to United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Saturday: If elected officials do not take strong actions to combat climate change, they will be voted out of office.

■ "We showed that we are united and that we, young people, are unstoppable," said Greta Thunberg.

■ Fijian climate change activist Komal Karishma Kumar complained that world leaders have been negotiating climate change treaties since 1992. "We will hold you accountable," she said. "And if you do not remember we will mobilise to vote you out."

China's Pacific influence grows as it signs agreement with Solomon Islands

BEN BLANCHARD
BEIJING, SEPTEMBER 21

CHINA AND the Solomon Islands signed an agreement on Saturday to establish diplomatic ties after the Pacific island nation ditched relations with Taiwan, which Beijing claims as a Chinese province and seeks to cut off from the international community.

The Chinese government's top diplomat, State Councillor Wang Yi, signed the agreement with Solomon Islands' Foreign Minister Jeremiah Manele at a government guest house in Beijing in front of reporters.

China this week won over two former Taiwanese allies, Solomon Islands and Kiribati, in a setback for the self-ruled island that finds itself further isolated amid continued pressure from Beijing.

"Right now there are only very few countries that have not established diplomatic relations with China," Wang told reporters after the signing as Manele stood by his side.

"We believe that in those countries there will be more and more people with vision who will step forward and their voice for justice and in line with the trend of history will be heard." **REUTERS**

Turkey prepared for Syria border operation: Erdogan

REUTERS
ISTANBUL, SEPTEMBER 21

Turkey is ready to act on its southern border with Syria, President Tayyip Erdogan said, after warning that it could take unilateral steps if the US does not establish a "safe zone" in northeast Syria this month.

"Our preparations along our borders are complete," Erdogan told reporters in Istanbul on Saturday before departing to attend a UN General Assembly meeting.

Turkey has been angered by US support for Kurdish-led forces which fought Islamic State in Syria. It considers the Kurdish YPG



Erdogan in Istanbul. AP

fighters a terrorist organisation.

Erdogan reiterated complaints over US support for the Kurdish fighters. "We have no wish to come face to face with the US" he said. "However, we cannot afford to overlook the support that the US is giving to a terrorist organisation."

Trump 'pressed' Ukraine's leader to launch probe into Biden's son

NEW YORK TIMES
WASHINGTON, SEPTEMBER 21

PRESIDENT TRUMP pressed the Ukrainian president in a July call to investigate former Vice President Joseph R Biden Jr's son, according to a person familiar with the conversation, an apparently blatant mixture of foreign policy with his 2020 re-election campaign.

Trump also repeatedly told the Ukrainian leader, Volodymyr Zelensky, to talk with his personal lawyer Rudolph W Giuliani, who had been urging the government in Kiev to investigate Biden and his family, according to two other people briefed on the call.

Trump's request is part of the secret whistle-blower complaint that is said to be about Trump and at least in part about his dealings with Ukraine, according to two sources. Trump opened a direct counterattack on Friday against the whistle-blower, whose identity is unknown, as are many details about the complaint. "It's a ridiculous story. It's a partisan whistle-blower," Trump said.

On Friday, Biden accused Mr. Trump in a statement of using the power of the United States to extract "a political favor."



Joe Biden

AFTER OIL FACILITIES HIT US to dispatch troops, defence systems to Saudi Arabia

MICHAEL CROWLEY & HELENE COOPER
WASHINGTON, SEPTEMBER 21

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump is sending a deployment of US troops to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, along with air and missile defense systems, in response to the attacks on Saudi oil facilities, which the administration blames on Iran.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper called the decision, which came Friday during a White House meeting with top national security officials, "defensive in nature." Defense Department officials said the Pentagon would deploy additional anti-missile batteries to Saudi Arabia and might also deploy additional warplanes. Aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln may extend its stay in the region as well, officials said.

General Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the precise number of US troops headed to the region had not been determined, but that it would be a "moderate deployment" in the hundreds, not thousands.

Trump had been weighing whether to take direct military action against Iran in response to the attacks on Saudi Arabia.

At the White House on Friday, Trump boasted that he could order a retaliatory strike "in one minute," and boasted equally that his current restraint should be seen as a sign of strength and toughness. **NYT**

WILL RESPOND IF PROBE CONFIRMS IRAN'S ROLE: SAUDI

Riyadh: Saudi Arabia will take appropriate steps to respond to an attack on its oil facilities if a Saudi investigation confirms Iran is responsible, a senior official said Saturday. Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel al-Jubeir said a probe would prove the strikes came from the north and that Iran bore responsibility, a charge Tehran denies. "The kingdom will take appropriate measures based on the results..." he said.

WILL PURSUE ANY AGGRESSOR: IRAN

Dubai: Iran will pursue any aggressor, even it carries out a limited attack, and seek to destroy it, the head of the elite Revolutionary Guards said Saturday. "Be careful, a limited aggression will not remain limited. We will pursue any aggressor," head of the Guards, Major General Hossein Salami, said. "We are after punishment and we will continue until full destruction of any aggressor." **REUTERS**

Trump says no trade deal before 2020 polls: 'China threat to world'

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON, SEPTEMBER 21

PRESIDENT TRUMP said on Friday that China was a "threat to the world" and suggested Beijing was eager to make a trade deal because his tariffs were hurting the Chinese economy, coarsening his tone as the two countries prepared to resume negotiations.

The Trump administration has closely tied economic policy and national security and, in remarks at the White House, Trump said that China was using money pilfered from the US through unfair trade practices to build up its military. The comments come as midlevel officials from both countries have been holding talks in Washington this week ahead of a planned meeting between senior trade negotiators next month.

"Obviously, China is a threat to the world in a sense, because they're building a military faster than anybody," Trump said. "I view China in many different ways. But right now, I'm thinking about trade. But, you know, trade equals military."

Trump has said he does not

Obviously, China is a threat to the world in a sense, because they're building a military faster than anybody... But right now, I'm thinking about trade. But, you know, trade equals military"

— DONALD TRUMP
US PRESIDENT

need feel the need to strike a trade agreement with China before the next year's presidential elections, emphasizing that he is looking for a complete and not a "partial deal" with Beijing. "No, I don't think I need it before the election," Trump told reporters on Friday at a joint news conference with Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison when asked if he feels the need for a trade deal with China before the 2020 presidential elections.

Trump insisted that he was looking for a complete trade deal. "We are looking for a complete deal. I am not looking for a partial deal," he said

IMMIGRANTS 'COLONISING' FRANCE BY GIVING BIRTH TO MORE CHILDREN, MAKING CITIES, TOWNS UNLIVABLE, HE SAYS

'Le grand remplacement': The man behind toxic slogan aiding white supremacy

NORIMITSU ONISHI
PLIEUX, SEPTEMBER 21

THOUGH THE writer had already lived in his castle for a quarter of a century, it was only three years ago that he finally restored it to its original purpose as a fortress.

The writer, Renaud Camus, rebuilt the top 10 feet of the 14th-century tower, giving him an even more commanding view of his surroundings: the village of 40 souls below; the Pyrenees, faintly visible some 100 miles south despite the midsummer haze; and, in every direction, the peaceful, rolling hills of the "eter-

nal France" that he describes as under assault from what he calls hordes of immigrants.

But up in his castle, the France that Camus imagines has made him one of the most influential thinkers on the far right in his own country and elsewhere. In his writings, he describes an ongoing "invasion" of France by immigrants bent on "conquest" of its white, European population. To him, the immigrants are "colonising" France by giving birth to more children and making its cities, towns — and even villages — unlivable.

Others have espoused similar ideas. But Camus' portrayal of

demographic change — le "grand remplacement," or the supposed "great replacement" of France's original population by newer arrivals, mostly from Africa — has become an extremist talking point, cited by mass killers in distant parts of the world.

The men held in two recent mass shootings — at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, and at a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand — both referred to the "great replacement" and the need to defend white populations against invading outsiders.

While decrying the killings, Camus said he had no regrets about coming up with the term.



Renaud Camus at his castle in the south of France. AP

"The great replacement has become a household word," he

said. "I take responsibility for it. I believe in its relevance."

Until a few years ago, Camus was known, mainly by other French writers, as a novelist and a pioneering writer of gay literature. An early book about his sexual experiences, called "Tricks," remains his most translated work.

He says he sees no contradiction between his earlier life as a gay writer on the left and his current role as an ideological beacon for the right, including violent extremists. He contends he has always told "the hard truths."

According to government data, immigrants now make up about 10% of France's population, many of them nonwhite, up from about 7% in the 1970s, or 5%

in 1946, the year of Camus' birth — a steady rise, though far from the overwhelming one described by Camus.

Even as Camus became toxic, his phrase gained traction, first on French far-right websites, like "Observatoire de Grand Remplacement." Politicians on the right and far right, including Le Pen, used the term.

Isolated in his castle, Camus grew even more removed from the actual France he purported to describe — one filled, he believes, with people of Arab and African descent burning with hatred for France and plotting its conquest. In fact, he acknowl-

edged that his understanding of such people was based mainly on Twitter and Facebook. He said he hardly ever read newspapers or watched television.

"Distance is very, very necessary for observation," he said. Like many other fortified castles, its military capability — including the top 10 feet of the tower — was eliminated following a government edict in the 17th century. Back then, the fear was an uprising by the nobility, the castle owners.

By rebuilding the tower, Camus had restored its defenses. But on this day, in this corner of France, there was no hint of a threat on the horizon. **NYT**