

17 THE WORLD

TOP OF THE WORLD



HONG KONG
Carrie Lam: Main responsibility for ending crisis lies with govt

Hong Kong: Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said on Thursday she had to hold talks with the people no matter how difficult they may be, as she opened the first "open dialogue" session with the public in a bid to end nearly four months of sometimes violent protests. The biggest responsibility for resolving the crisis in the Chinese-ruled city lay with the government, she said, as pro-democracy protesters chanted slogans outside. "If we want to walk away from the difficulty and find a way out, the government has to take the biggest responsibility to do so," Lam said. Outside, about 100 protesters chanted: "Hong Kong people, add oil," a slogan meaning "keep your strength up".

BANGLADESH
Rohingya camps to be fenced

Dhaka: Bangladesh is set to erect barbed-wire fencing, guard towers and cameras around Rohingya camps, the home minister said Thursday citing security concerns, in a move critics said would turn the refugee settlements into prisons. Dhaka has been growing frustrated with the Rohingya in Bangladesh -- who number nearly a million -- since the collapse of a recent repatriation attempt to encourage them to return home to Myanmar. The stateless Muslim minority live in large camps in southeastern border towns.

SRI LANKA
Lanka's tallest tusker gets armed escort

Colombo: Nadungamuwa Raja, 65 years old, is a celebrated elephant towering around 10.5 feet in height, the tallest tamed tusker in Sri Lanka. And he has his own armed guards. Raja's owner said the government has allocated troops to provide security for his elephant as it ambles along main roads to attend temple festivals across the island. "In September 2015, a motorcyclist very nearly crashed into Raja. Then, the government offered protection for Raja when he gets on the road," Harsha Dharmavijaya said.

TRUMP IMPEACHMENT INQUIRY UNDERWAY OVER CALL TO ZELENSKIY

Whistleblower: White House tried to lock down Ukraine call details

Unnamed intel official, in his complaint, says 'unusual' handling of call by Trump aides was deliberate

EILEEN SULLIVAN
 WASHINGTON, SEPTEMBER 26

AFTER HEARING President Donald Trump tried to persuade Ukraine to investigate a 2020 campaign rival, senior officials at the White House scrambled to "lock down" records of the call, in particular the official complete transcript, a whistleblower alleged in an explosive complaint released Thursday.

In an attempt to "lock down" all records of the call, White House lawyers told officials to move an electronic transcript of the call into a separate system reserved for especially sensitive classified information, the complaint said. During the call, Trump asked President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine to investigate a political rival, former vice president Joe Biden.

These and other details surrounding the call were "deeply disturbing" to senior White House officials, according to the complaint. A day earlier, the White House released a reconstructed transcript of the July 25 call.

The whistleblower, an unnamed intelligence official, did not personally witness the actions but heard accounts from multiple American officials.

"This set of actions underscored to me that White House

EXPLAINED
Impeachment may dent some 2020 hopefuls' chances

DEMOCRATS HAVE long feared an impeachment inquiry could help Trump consolidate his base and win more votes. But in the crowded field of Democratic White House hopefuls, the lower profile candidates could face a further blow -- falling off the radar. With impeachment set to dominate the airwaves in the coming months, these candidates fear their messages on other issues, in which they try to stand out, could be drowned out.

officials understood the gravity of what had transpired in the call," the complaint said.

House Democrats took steps to impeach Trump before the contents of the call and complaint were disclosed.

The White House on Thursday dismissed the whistleblower's allegations, with Stephanie Grisham, the press secretary, de-



Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy with Trump on the sidelines of the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday. Reuters

scribing it as "nothing more than a collection of third-hand accounts of events and cobbled-together press clippings -- all of which shows nothing improper."

In the complaint, the whistleblower wrote that President's personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, was involved in the pressure campaign as well as Attorney General William Barr.

The whistleblower also wrote that the unusual handling of the call was deliberate. "They told me that there was already a discussion ongoing with White House lawyers about how to treat the call because of the likelihood, in the officials' retelling, that they had witnessed the President abuse his office for personal gain," the whistleblower wrote. **NYT**

ZELENSKIY THOUGHT ONLY TRUMP'S SIDE WOULD BE PUBLISHED

Kiev: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Wednesday he thought that only US President Donald Trump's side of their July phone call would be published. "I personally think that sometimes such calls between presidents of independent countries should not be published," Zelenskyy told Ukrainian media.

UKRAINE LAWMAKER FILES REQUEST FOR FULL TRANSCRIPT

Kiev: Ukrainian opposition lawmaker Oleksiy Goncharenko has filed an official request for President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's office to release a full transcript of Zelenskyy's July call with President Donald Trump, Interfax Ukraine said on Thursday. Goncharenko wants a full transcript, translated into Ukrainian, Interfax said, citing a Facebook post by the lawmaker.

UK's Johnson faces backlash over confrontational tone

GUY FAULCONBRIDGE & ELIZABETH PIPER
 LONDON, SEPTEMBER 26



Boris Johnson in Parliament on Wednesday. AP

BRITISH PRIME Minister Boris Johnson said on Thursday tempers needed to calm after a vitriolic session in Parliament the day before, maintaining that only Brexit could resolve deep divisions among lawmakers and across the country.

Parliament reached boiling point Wednesday when Johnson and his opponents engaged in hours of furious argument over Brexit, with lawmakers hurling allegations of betrayal and abuse of power across the chamber.

"We do need to bring people together and get this thing done," Johnson told BBC TV. "Tempers need to calm down and people need to come together because it is only by getting Brexit done that you will actually lance the boil of the current anxiety."

Johnson returned to the House of Commons on Wednesday after the Supreme Court ruled that his decision to suspend Parliament earlier this month was unlawful.

His opponents roared "resign" and some cast him as a cheating dictator who should stand aside after the court ruling.

'Surrender Bill'

Johnson provoked anger by repeatedly calling a law that forces him to ask the EU for a three-month Brexit delay next month unless he can strike a deal as the "Surrender Bill".

His critics say such language is often used in threats of violence or worse received by lawmakers, particularly women.

Johnson defended his use of the term to supportive Conservative lawmakers on Thursday, arguing that the legislation would hurt Britain's negotiating stance with the EU.

Remarks on Joe Cox

Many opposition lawmakers were still furious over his response on Wednesday to a question about Joe Cox, a 41-year-old Labour Party parliamentarian who was murdered in 2016 by a loner obsessed with Nazis and extreme right-wing ideology.

When an MP said she had had threats from people echoing the PM's rhetoric, Johnson replied: "I have never heard so much humbug in my life".

It was not just politicians who were angry. Johnson's sister Rachel described her brother's words as a "particularly tasteless" way to refer to the memory of a murdered lawmaker. **REUTERS**

Sri Lanka ruling party picks Premadasa as presidential candidate

REUTERS
 COLOMBO, SEPTEMBER 26

SRI LANKA'S ruling party on Thursday nominated its deputy leader, Sajith Premadasa, to run in a presidential election on Nov. 16, a move that appeared intended to win over Buddhist-majority voters.

Premadasa, 52, is also housing minister and son of former president Ranasinghe Premadasa who was assassinated by a Tamil Tiger rebel suicide bomber in 1993. He is popular among the rural poor, strengthening his position against opposition candidate Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

"The Prime Minister has nominated Sajith Premadasa as the presidential candidate and the party's working committee unanimously agreed to that," economic reforms minister Harsha De Silva, a member of the working committee, told Reuters.

The election is likely to be dominated by national security issues, after a wave of suicide bombings claimed by Islamic State killed more than 250 people in April, denting the island's critical tourism industry.

Premadasa's nomination, strongly supported by backbench members of Parliament, followed months of internal division in the centre-right United National Party, as the party also considered Parliament Speaker



Sajith Premadasa is the housing minister and son of former president Ranasinghe Premadasa, who was killed by a suicide bomber in 1993

Karu Jayasuriya and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe.

Premadasa has said he will eradicate poverty and improve housing in the country under a slogan of "shelter for all at 2025".

Premadasa, who did a degree in economics, politics and international relations in London, will challenge Rajapaksa who is also vying for the votes of the influential Buddhist majority.

Some ethnic minority parties have already pledged support to Premadasa.

"I don't think he is a man who can solve the problems of the common man but he is a powerful candidate because Sajith can appeal to the oppressed people," said Victor Ivan, an independent political columnist.

AT LEAST 20 KILLED IN INDONESIA QUAKE



A damaged traditional market in Ambon, Indonesia, on Thursday. Reuters

■ At least 20 people were killed and dozens injured on Thursday in a strong earthquake that rocked Indonesia's remote Maluku islands, triggering landslides, the disaster agency said.

■ Terrified residents ran into the streets as buildings fell in around them when the 6.5-magnitude quake hit.

■ "The impact was felt across Ambon city and surrounding areas," said Rahmat Triyono, head of the earthquake and tsunami division at Indonesia's Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysical Agency.

■ Last year, a 7.5-magnitude quake and a subsequent tsunami in Palu on Sulawesi island left more than 4,300 people dead or missing.

Khashoggi murder happened under my watch: MbS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
 WASHINGTON, SEPTEMBER 26

SAUDI ARABIA'S crown prince appeared to accept responsibility for the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, telling US television a few months later that it "happened under my watch," but denying any prior knowledge.

"It happened under my watch," Prince Mohammed bin Salman told a reporter in



December 2018, according to quotes released ahead of a new PBS documentary to be aired next week. "I get all the responsibility, because it happened under my

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince, however, denied that he had any prior knowledge of the journalist's killing

watch," the heir to the Gulf kingdom's throne is quoted as saying, following the October 2 murder.

Prince Mohammed, the kingdom's de facto ruler, has come un-

der huge international pressure after the US-based writer was killed and dismembered in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

Khashoggi's body was never found.

Asked during a conversation at a car race track outside Riyadh in December 2018 why he did not know about the murder, the prince replied: "We have 20 million people. We have three million government employees."

Indian woman among 16 terror suspects held by Malaysian police

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
 KUALA LUMPUR, SEPTEMBER 26

AN INDIAN woman was among 16 terror suspects arrested by the Malaysian police for allegedly planning to attack leaders of local political parties, a media report said on Thursday.

The suspects, some of whom were linked to the Islamic State, were arrested in an operation conducted between August 10 and September 25 in Kuala Lumpur, Sabah, Pahang, Johor, Penang and Selangor cities, state-run Bemama news agency reported.

The 16 terror suspects comprised 12 Indonesians, three Malaysians and one Indian, it said.

Quoting Ayob Khan Mydin, Assistant Director of Malaysian Police's counter-terrorism division, the report said the 38-year-old Indian Sikh woman, who worked as a cleaner, was a member of the secessionist Sikhs For Justice (SFJ) group.

India in July banned the pro-Khalistani group for its alleged anti-national activities. The US-based SFJ pushes for Sikh Referendum 2020. The group's primary objective is to establish an "independent and sovereign country" in Punjab.

He said two Malaysians detained in Sabah were responsible for spreading IS propaganda and acted as facilitators for those who carried out a suicide bomb attack on a church in Philippines in December last year.

'A PRESIDENT WHO IS AN ORDINARY PERSON, WHO GOES JOGGING, WHO RIDES A VESPA'

Jacques Chirac, French leader who championed European identity, dies at 86

JAMES F CLARITY & JOHN TAGLIABUE
 SEPTEMBER 26

JACQUES CHIRAC, who moulded the legacy of Charles de Gaulle into a personal power base that made him one of the dominant leaders of France across three decades and a vocal advocate of European unity, died on Thursday at his home in Paris. He was 86.

His death was confirmed by the Fondation Chirac in Paris. Chirac was elected to two consecutive terms as president, beginning in 1995, having already served as prime minister under centrist and Socialist presidents. At his death, he was most re-

membered for his defiant stand against the US-led war in Iraq, his ability to preside over a state in which power was divided between the left and the right -- comity that is hardly imaginable today -- and his championing the European Union.

His vision, he argued in 2000, was "not for a United States of Europe, but for a United Europe of States."

Chirac had also been a highly visible mayor of Paris for 18 years, using that office as a springboard into national politics. Only years later would his mayoralty emerge as the source of a damaged reputation: In 2011, he was convicted of embezzlement and misusing pub-

lic funds to finance his political party while running the city.

Historically, French politicians have seldom been tarnished by their financial peccadilloes, and that was the case with Chirac: He received a two-year suspended sentence, with his legacy largely intact. His presidency is generally recalled warmly in France, with many saying that he represented the nation well and in a manner that was "presidential".

Pascal Perrineau, a professor of political science at the Paris School of International Affairs, a part of Sciences Po, said there were three main reasons for Chirac's popularity. One was that he was able "to implant the idea of a president



Chirac served as both president and prime minister of France

who is an ordinary person: a president who goes jogging, a president who rides a Vespa."

"Second, he was able to bridge the left-right divide,"

Perrineau added. And third, "he presided over France in a relatively good time."

As mayor of Paris, starting in 1977, he had a spotlighted stage

from which to begin a national political career. With a huge staff and budget, he kept the city humming with festivals and exhibitions.

He boasted of an array of international acquaintances, describing Saddam Hussein and the Chinese leader, Deng Xiaoping, as his friends. He often upstaged his own president or prime minister, welcoming prominent guests like Pope John Paul II, President Ronald Reagan and the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and giving lavish dinners at City Hall.

By the time he left the mayor's office in 1995, there was increasing evidence that corruption and political skulduggery had been widespread during his tenure. But despite his later conviction in

court, there were no allegations while he was in office that he had enriched himself. There were suspicions, however, that he must have been aware of the corrupt schemes of his associates, particularly of Jean Tiberi, who succeeded him as mayor.

Jacques René Chirac was born in the Latin Quarter of Paris on November 29, 1932, a few years after his father, Abel, then a minor bank official, and his mother, Marie Louise Valette, had moved to the capital from a village in central France.

As a student, Chirac attended a summer course at Harvard in 1953 and worked at a Howard Johnson's in Boston. He became engaged to a Radcliffe woman,

whose father wrote him an angry letter telling him, basically, to get lost. On his return to Paris, he became engaged to his longtime girlfriend, Bernadette Chodron de Courcel, who was from a wealthy family in Corrèze, France. They were married, and she was later elected a regional councillor.

Their younger daughter, Claude, became her father's communications director when he won the presidency. Bernadette Chirac and Claude survive, as does a grandson. An elder daughter, Laurence, died in April 2016.

Chirac had largely disappeared from public view in recent years. "I have had an interesting life, full of events, and I am happy with it," he said in an interview in 2000. **NYT**