



"I told myself repeatedly in the last three months that I and my team should stay on to help Hong Kong."

— CARRIE LAM, Chief Executive of Hong Kong, saying she will not resign amid protests

TOP OF THE WORLD



Police fired teargas after unrest broke out in Johannesburg. AP

SOUTH AFRICA
Govt promises to stop xenophobic attacks after five deaths

Johannesburg: Five people have been killed in xenophobic violence in South Africa, police said on Tuesday, as President Cyril Ramaphosa vowed to clamp down on the attacks and the African Union and Nigeria sounded their alarm. Hordes of people — some armed — gathered in Johannesburg's central business district for a third day of unrest directed against foreigners, hours after mobs burned and looted shops in the township of Alexandra. Five deaths — most of them South Africans — have been reported, police said, adding 189 people had been arrested.

USA
Teen shoots dead 5 members of his family

A 14-YEAR-OLD American boy shot and killed five family members at their home in Alabama, before throwing away the pistol and calling police, officials said on Tuesday, in the latest high-profile gun crime. The shooting occurred on Monday night in the town of Elkmont, a spokesman for the Limestone County Sheriff's Office told media, including an ABC affiliate. The sheriff's office said five people were shot, with three dying at the scene and two later in hospital.

RUSSIA
Blogger jailed over tweets

Moscow: A Russian court sentenced a blogger to five years in jail on Tuesday after convicting him of inciting violence against the children of police officers, and charged two Kremlin critics with organising an illegal protest. The court action follows a summer of protests demanding free elections to Moscow's city legislature on Sept. 8. On Tuesday, a court found blogger Vladislav Sinita guilty of extremism after he wrote a Twitter post on July 31 that suggested officers who used violence against protesters might find their children targeted.

Johnson's govt loses working majority amid Brexit showdown

Cross-party alliance of MPs try to take charge of UK Parliament to stop possibility of no-deal exit

ELIZABETH PIPER, KYLIE MACLELLAN & WILLIAM JAMES
LONDON, SEPTEMBER 3

BRITISH MPs on Tuesday began a bid to stop Boris Johnson pursuing a 'no-deal' Brexit, a challenge that a senior government source said would prompt the Prime Minister to press for a snap election on October 14. Johnson's government also lost its working majority on Tuesday as a Conservative MP switched over to the Liberal Democrats.

More than three years after the United Kingdom voted in a referendum to leave the European Union, the outcome of the Brexit crisis remains uncertain, with possible outcomes ranging from a turbulent no-deal exit to abandoning the whole endeavour.

Johnson implicitly warned lawmakers on Monday that he would seek an election if they tied his hands in talks to negotiate a last-minute divorce deal, ruling out ever countenancing a further delay to Brexit, which is now scheduled for Oct. 31.

On Parliament's first day back from its summer break, an alliance of opposition MPs and rebels in Johnson's Conservative Party put forward a motion to launch their bid to block a no-deal exit, and appeared confident of victory.

Johnson cast the challenge as an attempt to force Britain to sur-



Boris Johnson speaks in Parliament on Tuesday. Reuters

THE LEAD-UP TO BREXIT

SEPTEMBER 3: On Tuesday, Parliament convened again after a break. An alliance of opposition MPs and rebel Conservative MPs attempt to pass legislation that will rule out a no-deal Brexit on Oct 31.

SEPTEMBER 6: This is essentially the last day in which legislation will be possible before Parliament is

suspended, as the next two days are Saturday and Sunday on which the House does not convene.

SEPTEMBER 9: Parliament is suspended till the Queen's Speech takes place.

OCTOBER 14: The Queen's Speech on upcoming government policies.

OCTOBER 21: Parliament starts work again, but will debate the Queen Speech for two days.

OCTOBER 23: Legislation can begin again in Parliament, during which time MPs will vote on a potential EU Withdrawal Agreement.

OCTOBER 31: Brexit day.

render to the EU just as he hopes to secure concessions on the terms of the divorce.

Just as Johnson began speaking, he lost his working majority

in parliament when one of his own Conservative lawmakers, Phillip Lee, crossed the floor of the House of Commons to join the pro-EU Liberal Democrats.

Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn told parliament that Johnson's was a government with "no mandate, no morals and, as of today, no majority". REUTERS

EXPLAINED Govt's lack of majority further complicates Brexit

AS BORIS Johnson's government lost its narrow majority, the already complicated questions regarding Brexit have been compounded by new questions of whether there will be an election soon or if a new government will be formed. The government will only fall if it loses a no-confidence vote. If such a vote takes place and the government loses it, the opposition gets the chance to form a new government. Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn is a divisive figure even among his own MPs, so there is no guarantee that a government formed by him will be able to survive a confidence vote. If the opposition does not form a government, that gives Johnson the chance to set an election date. Many Brexit opponents worry that, given the chance, Johnson may request an election for Oct 14, but then switch the date until after Oct 31 as part of a move to ensure a no-deal withdrawal.

Israel PM cancels Sept 9 visit to India over polls

HARINDER MISHRA
JERUSALEM, SEPTEMBER 3

PRIME MINISTER Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday cancelled a planned day-long visit to India on September 9 to meet his counterpart Narendra Modi, citing scheduling issues due to an unprecedented repeat polls in Israel.

A statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office said the two leaders spoke over phone and they "agreed that due to scheduling constraints, the Prime Minister's visit will take place after the (September 17) elections."

This is the second time this year that the Israeli leader has



Benjamin Netanyahu

cancelled a visit to India, doing so earlier before the April elections.

Israeli lawmakers in May voted to dissolve Parliament and hold re-elections on Sept 17 after Netanyahu failed to form a government after the April 9 polls. PTI

8 schoolchildren killed in knife attack in China

KJM VARMA
BEIJING, SEPTEMBER 3

EIGHT STUDENTS of a primary school in central China were killed and two others injured in a knife attack carried out by a man, released recently from jail, state-run media reported on Tuesday.

The incident happened at around 8 am on Monday at Chaoyangpo grade school in the town of Baiyangping at Enshi county in Hubei province, on the first day of the new academic year, according to

the *Global Times*. Eight children were stabbed to death, while two other students suffered injuries in the attack, it said.

The suspect, a 40-year-old local resident, was arrested immediately after the incident.

The man was an ex-convict who had spent over eight years in jail for attempting to gouge out his girlfriend's eye, the report said. He was released from jail in May.

The incident sparked public outrage as Monday marked the start of classes for school students. PTI

Hindu group claims girl abducted, converted to Islam in Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KARACHI, SEPTEMBER 3

A HINDU girl has been allegedly abducted and converted to Islam in Pakistan's Sindh province, the second incident of forced conversion in the Muslim-majority country within a week.

The girl, identified as Renuka Kumari, was abducted from the Institute of Business Administration in Sukkur on August 29 and has been missing since then, the All-Pakistan Hindu Panchayat, a non-profit organisation, claimed in a Facebook post.

An official, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed that Renuka was abducted from the institute where she was doing graduation in the business administration.

"Our information is that it's

In July, the Sindh Assembly had unanimously passed a resolution demanding that the practice of forced conversions of Hindu girls be stopped

another case of a Hindu girl being abducted and forcibly converted to Islam in Sindh province," the official said.

The brother of the girl said they had filed a formal report with the police.

"A fellow student, Babar Aman, is said to be involved in the abduction and police have arrested his brother," the girl's brother said.

A senior police official said that they were investigating the matter and did not know as yet whether the Hindu girl left on her own will or was abducted.

There have been numerous

cases of Hindu girls, some under the age of 18, being abducted and forcibly converted to Islam before being married to Muslim men.

In Punjab province, a 19-year-old Sikh girl was abducted and converted to Islam before being married to a Muslim man last week, triggering protests by the minority community.

In July, the Sindh Assembly unanimously passed a resolution demanding that the practice of forced conversions and abductions of Hindu girls must be stopped and action be taken against those involved in such activities.

Priest in US school bans Harry Potter books on exorcist's advice

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, SEPTEMBER 3

EXORCISTS ADVISED a Nashville school priest to ban the *Harry Potter* books, over fears the popular children's novels could be used to summon spirits.

Reverend Dan Reehil contacted exorcists in Rome and the US, who recommended removing the fantasy novels from St Edward Catholic School's library



'The curses and spells used in the books are actual curses and spells,' the priest said. Reuters

in Tennessee.

Launched in 1997, the series of books spins an epic tale of

good and evil focused on the adventures of the eponymous bespectacled young wizard as he



Afghan policemen at the site of the blast in Kabul. Reuters

Taliban attack kills 16 in Kabul, casting shadow on peace deal

SAYED HASSIB
KABUL, SEPTEMBER 3

A TALIBAN attack on a housing complex used by international organisations in the Afghan capital, Kabul, late on Monday killed at least 16 people and angered local residents who demanded the heavily fortified compound be moved.

The blast, which shook buildings several kilometres away, happened just as Zalmay Khalilzad, the special US envoy for peace in Afghanistan, was outlining details of a draft accord with the insurgents in a television interview.

Following major Taliban attacks on two northern cities over the weekend, the bombing of the Green Village compound in a mixed business and residential area added to questions around the peace deal reached between US and Taliban negotiators in the Qatari capital, Doha.

Habib Jan, who was in his house nearby when the blast occurred, said the area has been attacked repeatedly and many residents wanted the compound, used by foreign staff of international groups including aid organisations, moved.

"This isn't once or twice, it's the fourth or fifth time, all by the Taliban. A lot of my friends, a lot of my family have been wounded or killed," he said, as smoke spiralled into the sky from burning tyres lit by protesters demanding that the complex be moved.

"Our young people have been killed, our children have been killed, our old men have been killed, our girls have been killed. What can we do?"

Interior ministry spokesman Nasrat Rahimi said the blast was caused by a tractor packed with explosives but armed attackers, who planned to follow up the blast, were killed by security forces.

He said around 400 foreign nationals were evacuated from the heavily protected site, located off a major road in an area



US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad (left), with Afghanistan Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah in Kabul. Reuters

U.S. ENVOY REVEALS DRAFT PEACE DEAL

The US will withdraw 5,000 troops from Afghanistan and close five bases within 135 days under a draft peace accord agreed with the Taliban, chief US negotiator, Zalmay Khalilzad, said.

In exchange for the phased withdrawal, the Taliban would commit not to allow Afghanistan to be used by militant groups such as Al Qaeda or Islamic State as a base for attacks on the United States and its allies.

Khalilzad declined to say how long the rest of the roughly 14,000 US troops would remain in Afghanistan.

Several details of the agreement remain to be clarified, including the status to be accorded to the Taliban.

of houses and shops. Like other compounds built to house the thousands of foreign contractors and agency staff who work in Kabul, Green Village is a fortified complex of concrete blast walls and steel gates protected by armed guards. REUTERS

LONGYEARBYEN IN NORWAY'S SVALBARD ARCHIPELAGO IS THE FASTEST-WARMING TOWN IN THE WORLD

On the front lines of climate change in the world's northernmost town

ALEX FRASER
SVALBARD, SEPTEMBER 3

ICEBERGS FLOAT liked doomed islands past the small boat as it makes its way through a fjord filled with the slush of a melting glacier. Occasionally, as the warming waters dissolve the bottom of one of the icebergs, it becomes top-heavy and does a somersault, as if it were playing instead of dying.

The Wahlenberg glacier above the fjord naturally calves, sheering off icebergs into the water. But here it is happening at an increasing rate because of warming waters, says Kim Holmen, the international director of the Norwegian Polar Institute.

Holmen, wearing a woollen hat with a hot-pink pom-pom against the chill of an Arctic summer day, has lived in the northern Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard for three decades. He describes the changes he's seen as "profound, large and rapid."

"We are losing the Svalbard we know. We are losing the Arctic as we know it because of climate change," he says amid the constant crackle and trickle of the ice dissolving. "This is a forewarning of all the hardship and problems that will spread around the planet."

Since 1970, average annual temperatures have risen by 4 degrees Celsius in Svalbard, with winter temperatures rising more than 7 degrees, according to a re-

port released by the Norwegian Centre for Climate Services in February. The "Climate in Svalbard 2100" report also warns that the annual mean air temperature in Svalbard is projected to increase by 7 to 10 degrees Celsius by the end of this century.

Since 1979, the Arctic sea ice extent has declined by nearly 12% per decade, with the most pronounced winter reduction in the Svalbard and Barents Sea area.

That's not good news for Svalbard's main town, Longyearbyen. With a population of slightly more than 2,000 people, it is the northernmost town on the planet.

It is also the fastest-warming. Rows of simple white wooden crosses cling to a hillside over



The town of Longyearbyen is the world's northernmost. Reuters

Longyearbyen, a sparse cemetery that appears vulnerable even on a sunny day in August.

Var Smedsroed is the summer vicar at Svalbard Church. Inside

the Lutheran house of worship, which claims to be the world's northernmost church, stained glass paints the snow-topped mountains nearby in a pastel hue.

He worries about the effects of thawing permafrost beneath his feet at the graveyard, which he calls "a place of memories, a place of remembrance."

"As the permafrost thaws, things that are in the ground tend to be pulled up," Smedsroed says matter-of-factly as he sits on the ground near the graves. "That is happening more or less all of the time, so we might see that the graves literally come up, the coffins."

There has been talk of relocating the graveyard after a landslide missed wiping it out by meters in October 2016.

Thawing permafrost isn't just a problem for the dead: It has caused problems for current residents of Longyearbyen too.

Houses in the valley are built on small wooden stilts instead of deep foundations. Softening ground can lead to collapses, landslides and avalanches.

On December 19, 2015, an avalanche killed a man and a child in their homes.

Erosion also threatens homes here. Three years ago, as winter approached, 13 meters of coastline fell away overnight, leaving Christiane Huebner's cabin perilously close to the fjord. Huebner, her family of three and their husky dogs abandoned the home.

"It was a wake-up call since it happened very quickly," she says. They returned the following spring and had to relocate the cabin from the shore.

The spectre of climate change

looms large also over Audun Salte's dog farm. During the summer, with no snow on the ground, the dogs pull sleds on wheels along the bumpy gravel road, rattling past the few cars on the island. "If climate change should be the end of humanity, I really don't care, but if climate change is the end of any animal species who hasn't contributed anything towards the speeding up of this process, that's why I am reacting," he says.

He compares climate change to an accident we can't help starting, feeling lucky we weren't the victim: "When people slow down to look at a car crash, climate change is like that because everyone is slowing down to look at the accident, not realising that we are actually the car crash." REUTERS