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TOP OF THE WORLD



Mark Esper

UK
US defence secy cautions Europe about China

London: US Defense Secretary Mark Esper cautioned European allies against cozying up to China, arguing on Friday that Beijing seeks greater global influence by leveraging economic power and stealing technology. "The more dependent a country becomes on Chinese investment and trade, the more susceptible they are to coercion and retribution when they act outside of Beijing's wishes," Esper said. "I would caution my friends in Europe — this is not a problem in some distant land that does not affect you," he said.

PAKISTAN
IMF to send SOS team to Pakistan

Islamabad: The IMF is sending its SOS mission to Pakistan this month for suggesting ways to curtail the yawning budget deficit being faced by the country, according to a media report on Friday. In July, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) formally approved a USD 6 billion loan to Pakistan, which is facing "significant" economic challenges on the back of "large" fiscal and financial needs and "weak and unbalanced" growth. The decision was taken in the wake of the worsening fiscal situation of Pakistan's economy.

US
Sherin murder: Adoptive father denied new trial

Houston: Wesley Mathews, the Indian-American foster father of 3-year-old Sherin Mathews, will continue to serve his life sentence after a Texas court denied a new trial in the tragic death of the Indian toddler in 2017, in a case that attracted much international attention. Mathews, 39, who was sentenced to life by a Dallas County jury on June 26 in connection with the death of his adopted daughter, was denied a motion for a new trial on Thursday, US media reported. In June, Mathews pleaded guilty to injuring a child by omission.

Rather be dead in a ditch than delay Brexit, says Boris, as Oppn gathers

Labour to vote against election on Monday; PM says not thinking of resigning

HOUSE CLEARS LAW

London: The British parliament's upper chamber Friday approved a bill aiming to block a no-deal Brexit by forcing Prime Minister Boris Johnson to seek a delay to Britain's European Union departure. The bill, which requires Johnson to ask for an extension to Britain's EU membership if parliament has not approved a deal by Oct 19, is expected to be signed into law by Queen Elizabeth Monday



Prime Minister Boris Johnson in Darnford on Friday. Reuters

tion is a new election, which he wants to take place on October 15, allowing him to win a new mandate with two weeks left to leave the bloc on time. He needs two-thirds of parliament's lawmakers to back an early election. But opposition parties, including the Labour Party, said they would either vote against or abstain on calls for an election until the law to force Johnson to seek a Brexit delay is implemented. Johnson failed to win enough support in a vote on

Wednesday for an election. Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn held a call with other opposition leaders on Friday to discuss their plans. "We will have that election when the time is right but I will make you this promise, we are not going to have a long wait," the leader in the British parliament of the opposition Scottish National Party, Ian Blackford, said. Johnson has said he would rather "die in a ditch" than delay Brexit. "I'll go to Brussels, I'll get a

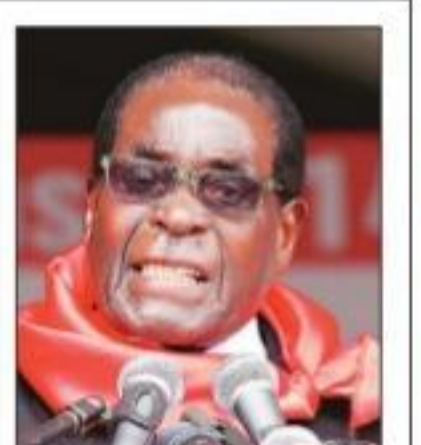
deal and we'll make sure we come out on October 31, that's what we've got to do," he said. When asked if he would resign if he could not deliver that, Johnson said: "That is not a hypothesis I'm willing to contemplate." England's High Court rejected a challenge, against Johnson's move to shut down parliament, on Friday. But the issue could be taken to the Supreme Court for a final appeal. REUTERS

EXPLAINED
Road ahead narrowing

THE APPROVAL of a bill blocking no-deal Brexit by the British upper chamber has left fewer viable options on the table for Boris Johnson. Opposition parties have persisted with their strategy of not allowing an election until Boris goes back on his decision to not seek a Brexit delay. However, recent events, have left Johnson without a working majority in parliament. The UK PM still has options, such as the parliament shut-down, which the London High Court on Friday declined to act against. However, the matter is still in the air, as the Supreme Court will soon begin hearings on the issue.

Robert Mugabe, strongman who said Zimbabwe is mine, dies at 95

ALAN COWELL
SEPTEMBER 6



ROBERT MUGABE 1924-2019

ROBERT MUGABE, the first prime minister and later president of independent Zimbabwe, who traded the mantle of liberator for the armor of a tyrant and presided over the decline of one of Africa's most prosperous lands, died Friday. He was 95. The death was announced by his successor, President Emmerson Mnangagwa. "It is with the utmost sadness that I announce the passing on of Zimbabwe's founding father and former President, Cde Robert Mugabe," he wrote on Twitter on Friday, using the abbreviation for comrade. "Mugabe was an icon of liberation, a pan-Africanist who dedicated his life to the emancipation and empowerment of his people. His contribution to the history of our nation and continent will never be forgotten." In August, Mnangagwa had said Mugabe had spent several months in Singapore getting treatment for an undisclosed illness. Mugabe, the world's oldest head of state before his ouster in 2017, was the only leader Zimbabweans had known since independence, in 1980. Like many who liberated their countries, Mugabe believed that Zimbabwe was his to govern until the end. In a speech before the African Union in 2016, he said he would remain at the helm "until God says, 'Come.'"

In his final years in power, Mugabe presided over a shattered economy and a fractured political class that was jockeying for influence in anticipation of his death. Mugabe had in his early days belonged to a generation of African nationalists whose confrontation with white minority rule fomented guerrilla warfare in the name of democracy and freedom. But once he won power in Zimbabwe's first free elections, in 1980, after a seven-year war, he turned, with a blend of guile and brutality, to the elimination of adversaries, real and imagined. Mugabe morphed into a caricature of dictatorship: vain and capricious, encircled by the flashy spending of his second wife and other family members, who lived in luxury at home and went on shopping sprees and long annual vacations in the Far East. "His real obsession was not with personal wealth but with power," British writer Martin Meredith observed in his book "Our Votes, Our Guns: Robert Mugabe and the Tragedy of Zimbabwe" (2002). "I will never, never sell my country," he declared in 2008. "I will never, never, never surrender. Zimbabwe is mine, I am a Zimbabwean, Zimbabwe for Zimbabweans." NYT

Hong Kong police disperse rally using tear gas, leader says Bill withdrawal first step

MARIUS ZAHARIA & JESSIE PANG
HONG KONG, SEPTEMBER 6



During a demonstration in Hong Kong on Friday. Reuters

HONG KONG police fired rubber bullets and tear gas on Friday to clear renewed protests outside a subway station on the densely populated Kowloon peninsula, the latest clashes in 14 weeks of sometimes violent anti-government unrest. Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam announced concessions this week to try to end the protests, including formally scrapping a hugely unpopular extradition bill, but many said they were too little, too late. Hundreds of demonstrators, many of them masked and dressed in black, took cover from

the tear gas behind umbrellas and barricades made from street fencing. Some had broken through a metal grill to enter the station where they pulled down signs, broke turnstiles and daubed graffiti on the walls. "We're angry at the police and angry at the government," said Justin, 23, dressed in black and wearing a hoodie. "Police was very brutal with us at this station

on August 31. We cannot let them get away with it." Protesters gathered outside Prince Edward station in Mong Kok, one of the world's most densely populated regions, 3 km (two miles) from the harbourside hotel and shopping district of Tsim Sha Tsui. On the night of August 31, police stormed trains at the station, using batons against passengers covering on the floor, to make arrests. On Friday, the protesters withdrew when police fired rubber bullets, but regrouped in smaller pockets to light fires in the street from wooden pallets, cardboard boxes and other debris. Some protesters smashed up an elevator and entrance at the nearby Yau Ma Tei MTR station and traffic lights outside. REUTERS

Christian girl forced to convert to Islam in Pak

M ZULQERNAIN
LAHORE, SEPTEMBER 6

IN A third incident of conversion of girls from minority communities in over a week, a 15-year-old Christian girl was allegedly forced to convert to Islam by her teacher in Pakistan's Punjab province. According to a complaint filed by the girl's father Mukhtar Masih at a police station, Faiza was taken to a seminary in the Sheikhupura city, some 50 kms from Lahore, by her school principal Saleema Bibi, who forced her to embrace Islam. Mukhtar said the girl had gone to school on Wednesday but did not return home. "We contacted the school to inquire about her. A class teacher told us that Principal Saleema Bibi had taken our girl to a madrasa (seminary) to convert her to Islam," he said. Mukhtar said they visited at least three seminaries and found her in one of them but the staff did not allow her to return with them. Police raided the seminary on the basis of the complaint, recovered the girl and shifted her to a Darul Aman (shelter home) in Sheikhupura. "We took action and recovered the girl on Mukhtar Masih's complaint but FIR has not been registered against any one yet. However, we are investigating the matter," Muhammad Nawaz, the police official investigating the case said. "The principal had also offered us to convert to Islam and in return she would compensate us by paying for our needs but we refused," Mukhtar said. The parents of the girl have appealed to authorities to allow their daughter to return home. PTI

PICKING UP THE PIECES IN THE BAHAMAS



At the Abaco Islands in the Bahamas, which were hit with winds up to 220 mph. NYT

- The death toll from Hurricane Dorian has risen to 30 in Bahamas, Prime Minister Hubert Minnis told CNN on Thursday.
- Authorities had previously reported 20 dead, but have warned that the final figure is sure to be far higher.
- So many people have been pushed from their homes by the hurricane that in Marsh Harbour, the main town on Abaco, as many as 2,000 were seeking shelter in a clinic and a government complex.
- Norwegian energy company Equinor said an oil storage terminal on the island of Grand Bahama had been damaged. AGENCIES

2 killed as Taliban attack third Afghan province this week

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KABUL, SEPTEMBER 6

THE TALIBAN attacked a third provincial capital in Afghanistan in less than a week, killing at least two civilians, an official said Friday as a US envoy was back in Qatar for unexpected talks on a US-Taliban deal he had described as complete just days earlier. Farah provincial governor Mohammad Shoab told The Associated Press that another 15 people were wounded in the latest attack, citing local hospitals, and that airstrikes had been carried out against the militant group. Small clashes continued in the city, he said. This week's spike in violence, including two shattering Taliban car bombings in the capital, Kabul, comes after US envoy Zalmay Khalilzad said he and the insurgents had reached a deal "in principle" that would begin a US troop pullout in exchange for Taliban counter-terror guarantees.

PEACE DEAL STATUS

AFGHANISTAN'S PRESIDENT has postponed a planned visit to Washington early next week where he was to discuss the US-Taliban talks on ending America's longest war, an official said Friday. THIS EMERGED after the US envoy negotiating with the Taliban, Zalmay Khalilzad, abruptly returned to Qatar for unexpected talks on the deal he had described as complete just days ago

TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, 2019

On Day 1, horror flicks take the spotlight with Parasites, The Long Walk



SHUBH GUPTA
TORONTO, SEPTEMBER 6

FOR SOME of us returning 'foreign press', it's like the festivities never really ended: there's the same bustle on Kings Street where the TIFF Bell Lightbox is situated, the same smiling volun-

teers in neon orange jackets, the same fevered glint in the eyes of the delegates, all debating that impossible question: how do you watch 40 films in a day? On Day 1 at the latest edition of the Toronto International Film Festival, among the many excellent choices, the one that will stay with me was Bong Joon-ho's Parasites. It created major buzz at Cannes 2019, and you can see exactly why the South Korean director is one of the most exciting filmmakers currently. His storytelling is distinctive, each frame almost like a painting demanding multiple viewings. Parasites is many things rolled into one: a sharply observed

satire, black comedy, thriller, tragedy. We are introduced to two families, so far apart on the social ladder as to be on different planets. Ki-woo is a young man who lives with his sister and parents in an overcrowded basement in a sorry part of town. The Parks, husband, wife, and two kids, are also four to a house, but what a house — all chrome, glass, classy, expensive interiors, surrounded by lawns where each blade of grass feels manicured. A stroke of luck gets Ki-woo into the Parks' home, and from here we see the fortunes of the two families collide and change. With great stealth and imagination, the family which has nothing



Parasites director Bong Joon-ho with one of the film's actors, Song Kang-ho, at the Cannes Film Festival in May. Reuters/file

begins preying upon the family which has everything, and we see the parasites at work, nibbling, tasting, burrowing deep, fattened with bile and blood. Social inequities exist. We know. There will always be those who have and those who don't.

There will be men who give orders and women who execute. Parasites doesn't preach; it just shows how its characters behave when opportunities present themselves, and gets us to vantage where it is difficult to judge. Aspiration is now a handy weapon which knows no class. Anyone can aspire to anything and a WhatsApp message can change a life. But what Bong Joon-ho, who has become a global festival darling, manages, is remarkable: we are left asking uncomfortable questions. Who, really, are the parasites? The poor who are waiting on the sidelines, planning their moves, or the rich who amassed wealth battenning on the labours

of those less fortunate? The elements of subterranean horror that play out in Parasites are brought to the surface in another, very different film — The Long Walk by Mattie Do, who has also been making a name for herself on the international circuit. The Laotian American director has used horror to tell her stories from the start (Chanthilly, 2013), but it is in the way she subverts tropes that makes her creations interesting. The Long Walk is not an easy film, featuring a strangely impassive middle-aged man, a young woman in a black-and-white striped dress, another young woman who is brutally injured and a boy,

all criss-crossing each other in a rural outpost. It takes a while to get into this weird world: is it real, are these people alive or dead, is it the past or present or future? But slowly you settle in, and see, somewhat, where the director is going with her strange, unsettling tale. And then you realize that it is a universal story of how differences can drive people apart, and get them together, and how pain can sometimes be a great reliever, and how time is merely maya. The Long Walk is a tough, demanding film and reveals its rewards slowly. An odd but good way to kickstart one of the most rewarding film festivals there is.