

TOPOF THE WORLD



Muhammad Yunus

BANGLADESH Labour court orders arrest of Nobel laureate

Dhaka: A Dhaka court issued an arrest warrant on Wednesday against Nobel laureate and Grameen Bank founder Muhammad Yunus after he failed to appear in person before it in a case of alleged labour law violation. On July 10, the Dhaka 3rd Labour Court — which was hearing a case of sacking of three employees of Grameen Communications, the IT wing of Grameen Bank — ordered Yunus and two others to appear before it on October 8. Yunus is Grameen Communications' chairman. "Though two senior officials appeared before the court, Yunus failed to turn up, following which the chairman of the court, Rohibul Islam, issued the arrest warrant against him," a court official said.

DISCRIMINATION SUIT Halliburton to pay \$275,000 to two Muslim employees

New York: Leading American multinational corporation Halliburton will pay \$275,000 to two of its Muslim employees of Indian and Syrian-origins who were subjected to religious discrimination and accused of having links with terrorists by the company's employees. The Houston-based company, one of the world's largest providers of products and services to the energy industry with over 55,000 employees, has agreed to pay the amount and furnish significant relief to settle a national origin and religious discrimination lawsuit brought by the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

MALAYSIA Decades-old newspaper shuts

Kuala Lumpur: An eighty-year-old Malaysian newspaper, which had close links to the corruption-plagued former ruling party, halted publication Wednesday after years of financial struggle, with more than 800 staff affected. *Utusan Malaysia* was the country's oldest Malay-language newspaper, founded in 1939 during British colonial rule by Yusof Ishak, who went on to become the first president of neighbouring Singapore.

Turkey launches Syria offensive after US troops vacate region

Warplanes, artillery strike Kurdish militia positions; Erdogan says aim to eliminate 'terror corridor'

MERT OZKAN AKCAKALE (TURKEY), OCTOBER 9

TURKEY LAUNCHED a military operation against Kurdish fighters in northeast Syria on Wednesday just days after US troops pulled back from the area, with warplanes and artillery striking militia positions in several towns in the border region.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, announcing the start of the action, said the aim was to eliminate what he called a "terror corridor" on Turkey's southern border, but European countries immediately called on Ankara to halt the operation.

Thousands of people fled the Syrian town of Ras al Ain towards Hasaka province, held by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces. The Turkish airstrikes had killed two civilians and wounded two others, the SDF said.

Turkey had been poised to enter northeast Syria since US troops, who have been fighting with Kurdish-led forces against Islamic State, started to leave in an abrupt policy shift by US President Donald Trump. The withdrawal was criticised in Washington as a betrayal of America's Kurdish allies.

'Operation Peace Spring'

A Turkish security source told *Reuters* the military offensive, dubbed "Operation Peace Spring", opened with airstrikes. Turkish howitzer fire then hit bases and ammunition depots of the Kurdish YPG militia. The artillery strikes, which also



A Turkish military convoy near the Turkey-Syria border in Kilis on Wednesday. *Reuters*

targeted YPG gun and sniper positions, were aimed at sites far from residential areas, the source said. A *Reuters* cameraman in the Turkish town of Akcakale saw several explosions across the border in the Syrian town of Tel Abyad, where a witness reported people fleeing en masse.

The SDF said military positions and civilians in the city of Qamishli and the town of Ain Issa — more than 30 km inside Syria — had been hit, and said there were initial reports of civilian casualties.

World powers worried

World powers fear the action could open a new chapter in Syria's eight-year-old war and worsen regional turmoil. Ankara has said it intends to create a "safe zone" in order to return millions of refugees to Syrian soil. Erdogan earlier told Russia's President Vladimir Putin in a

phone call that the operation would help peace and stability in Syria.

In the build-up to the expected offensive, Syria had said it was determined to confront any Turkish aggression by all legitimate means. It was also ready to embrace "prodigal sons", it said, in an apparent reference to the Syrian Kurdish authorities who hold the northeast.

Turkey views Kurdish YPG fighters in northeast Syria as terrorists because of their ties to militants waging an insurgency inside Turkey.

Amid deepening humanitarian concerns, Germany said Turkey's action would lead to further instability and could strengthen Islamic State, while European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker called on Ankara to halt the military operation. **REUTERS**

STRIKES HIT BORDER TOWNS



KURDS IN SYRIA

■ Before the 2011 uprising in Syria, the Assad regime had deprived thousands of Kurds of citizenship rights and clamped down on Kurdish political activity.

■ During the war, Assad focused on crushing mainly Sunni Arab rebels with the help of Russia and Iran, turning a blind eye as Kurdish fighters carved out self-rule across the north.

TURKEY'S STANCE

■ The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) took up arms against the state in 1984, waging an insurgency for autonomy in Turkey's southeast. Since then, more than 40,000 people have been killed in the conflict.

■ Erdogan has said he will crush Syria's Kurdish militia, which Ankara sees as a branch of the PKK.



US visa curbs on China officials over Xinjiang

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA BEIJING, OCTOBER 9

BEIJING ON Wednesday decried a US decision to restrict visas for Chinese officials linked to the repression of Xinjiang Muslims and called on Washington to withdraw the measure.

The United States has stepped up its criticism of China's treatment of Uighurs and other mostly Muslim minorities in the western region, where rights group say more than one million of them are held in re-education camps.

Washington announced earlier this week the blacklisting of 28 Chinese entities involved in rights violations in Xinjiang, which China has said was based on "groundless" claims.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced the visa curbs on Tuesday, urging China to cease its "campaign of repression" in the region and release those interned in the camps.

China had until recently denied the camps existed, but later described them as "vocational education centres" where people learn job skills as necessary counter-terrorism measures.

'CHINA DESTROYING UIGHUR BURIAL GROUNDS'

Shayar: China is destroying burial grounds where generations of Uighur families have been laid to rest, leaving behind human bones and broken tombs in what activists call an effort to eradicate the ethnic group's identity in Xinjiang.

In just two years, dozens of cemeteries have been destroyed in the northwest region, according to an AFP investigation with satellite imagery analysts Earthrise Alliance. Some of the graves were cleared with little care — in Shayar county, AFP journalists saw unearthed human

bones left discarded in three sites. In other sites, debris of tombs lay scattered in cleared tracts of land.

While the official explanation ranges from urban development to the "standardisation" of old graves, overseas Uighurs say the move is part of a bid to control every element of their lives. "This is all part of China's campaign to effectively eradicate any evidence of who we are, to effectively make us like the Han Chinese," said Salih Hudayar, who said the graveyard where his great-grandparents were buried was demolished. **PTI**

problems in the wake of the Crimea annexation of 2014 has largely dissipated, and disposable incomes are effectively below what they were in 2013. Emboldened by cheap, expanding and mostly uncensored high-speed Internet access, Russians are becoming braver in speaking out, knowing that even if the state news media ignores their voices, millions can hear them online. That's why Dmitry Bairov, the cabbie whose tirade drew more attention to Gabyshev, rarely leaves home without two smartphones in his gray shoulder bag, a battery pack at his hip and a tripod clip dangling from a carabiner. "I see that there is injustice—I

hear it, I see it, and I talk about it," Bairov said, adding that YouTube "is the only medium of — what's it called? — freedom of speech." Gabyshev, 50, is a former welder, plumber and carpenter who took up shamanism in the tradition of his people, the Sakha, more than a decade ago, after his wife died. He said he had lived as a hermit in the Siberian forest for more than two years. By the time he reached Ulan-Ude in late August, he had travelled for nearly six months, covering 1,600 miles. He predicted that thousands would join him along the two-year, 5,000-mile march to Moscow, to help exorcise Putin. **NYT**

ON JUDAISM'S HOLIEST DAY

2 killed in shooting at German synagogue

STEPHAN SCHEPERS HALLE, OCTOBER 9

TWO PEOPLE were killed in shooting attacks on a synagogue and a nearby kebab shop in the eastern German city of Halle on Wednesday and one suspect was arrested, but two others fled in a hijacked a car, officials said.

The violence occurred on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the calendar in Judaism when Jews fast, seeking atonement. Broadcaster n-tv reported that two people were seriously injured in the attack, in addition to the two killed.

The two suspects on the loose headed out on a motorway that leads to Munich in the country's south, according to the mayor of

the town of Landsberg, adjacent to Halle. Gunfire was also heard in Landsberg, Focus Online reported.

A spokeswoman for the Halle municipal government said one shooting took place in front of the synagogue on Humboldt street and its accompanying cemetery, while a second burst of gunfire targeted the kebab bistro in the city in the province of Saxony.

Max Privorozki, Halle's Jewish community chairman, described how a gunman tried to shoot his way into the city's synagogue.

"We saw via the camera system at our synagogue that a heavily-armed perpetrator with a steel helmet and a gun tried to shoot open our doors," he told the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* newspaper. "But our doors held." **REUTERS**



At the site of the shooting in Halle, Germany. *Reuters*

EASTER ATTACKS

Re-arrest former police chief, defence secy: Sri Lanka court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA COLOMBO, OCTOBER 9

THE COLOMBO High Court on Wednesday ordered the re-arrest of ex-defence secretary Hemasiri Fernando and suspended police chief Pujith Jayasundera, exactly three months after they were granted bail by a local court which ruled there was no basis for their arrests for allegedly failing to prevent the Easter Sunday attacks.

Both Fernando and Jayasundera were arrested in July after Attorney General Dappula de Livera instructed the authorities to charge them for their failure to prevent the Easter terror attacks that claimed 258 lives.

The two have been remanded until October 23. The re-arrest order has come as a result of a revision application filed by the Attorney General.

Jayasundera and Fernando were suspended by President Sirisena for their alleged inaction on the intelligence shared by India, which warned of an impending attack by Islamic militants, and thereby, failing to prevent the suicide bombings on April 21.

AMID GROWING DISCONTENT IN RUSSIA

'An exorcism must be done': Anti-Putin shaman sets off prolonged unrest

ANTON TROIANOVSKI ULAN-UDE, OCTOBER 9

ALONG-HAIRED shaman arrived on foot from the frozen north, dragging a cart with yurt poles and a stove, and preaching that the President is a demon. Days later, a cabbie, invoking the shaman, strode up to the Kremlin-ally mayor of this Siberian city, yelled a string of grievances and posted his rant on YouTube.

Public protests erupted and continued for weeks, but the shaman kept walking west — headed to Moscow, "the heart of evil," he said, to exorcise Russia's President, Vladimir Putin. Then,

what he called "dark forces" — a SWAT team — packed him onto a plane to Yakutsk, a remote regional capital in eastern Siberia. "My tales coincided with the desperation of Russians who live with injustice, poverty and destitution," the shaman, Alexander Gabyshev, said in an interview at his sister's one-room log cabin off a muddy road on the outskirts of Yakutsk.

Referring to Putin, he added: "In him there is much evil, and he himself embodies the powers of evil, so an exorcism must be done."

That a mystic and a video-blogging taxi driver could touch off prolonged unrest in Ulan-Ude, a city of 400,000 people, under-

scored the depth and breadth of a new season of Russian discontent. A spike in dissent nationwide shows that after years of economic stagnation, Russians' patience with their government is wearing thin. Pollsters report a sustained slump in Putin's approval ratings in the last 12 months and a growing rejection of state television's propaganda drumbeat. Waves of protest have roiled Moscow since June, resulting in thousands of arrests and prompting the Kremlin to make rare concessions.

There is no unified nationwide protest movement that might threaten Putin's two-decade rule, but in a growing



Pollsters report a sustained slump in Putin's approval ratings in the last 12 months. *Reuters file*

number of flash points, years of pent-up grievances are being unleashed by previously unknown

figures, or by one indignity too many. And despite the threat of arrest, dissenters like Gabyshev

are willing to hold Putin directly responsible for their problems.

In an echo of how the Soviet Union treated dissidents, the shaman now faces incarceration in a mental institution. His lawyers say the Federal Security Service, a successor to the KGB, told them last week that their client required psychiatric treatment.

"This is most terrifying — what we really feared," said one of the lawyers, Boris Andreyev.

Gabyshev's team says it will fight the attempt to commit him, a process that could take months. In the meantime, he is under orders not to leave Yakutsk.

The patriotic fervor that overshadowed Russia's economic