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TOP OF THE WORLD



During a protest in Hong Kong on Saturday. *Reuters*

HONG KONG

Protests draw thousands, down from earlier rallies

Hong Kong: Protesters are marching again in Hong Kong but in numbers that so far seem significantly reduced from rallies that drew many thousands as recently as last weekend. A march in Kowloon on Saturday afternoon drew a couple of thousand people who marched peacefully, chanting slogans and braving a ferocious downpour. Outside the police headquarters on Hong Kong Island, about 200 people, many of them retirees, also gathered peacefully, although some shouted abuse at officers who did not intervene.

USA

Senator: Pak must end support to terror groups

Washington: Pakistan must end support to terrorist groups, a top US Senator has said, a day after meeting Prime Minister Imran Khan and the army chief, discussing with them what more can be done to preempt terror attacks and prevent the spread of radicalism. Senator Maggie Hassan also called for finding ways to de-escalate the tension between India and Pakistan that spiked after New Delhi revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir in August. Hassan had met Pakistan PM Imran Khan, Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa and officials from the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir on Thursday.

ECUADOR

Indigenous group rejects talks to end protests

Quito: The indigenous group leading mass protests in Ecuador on Friday rejected an offer of direct talks from President Lenin Moreno to end days of deadly protests against fuel price hikes. “The dialogue that he’s seeking lacks credibility,” the indigenous umbrella group CONAIE said in a statement, adding that it would negotiate with the government only when a decree to remove fuel subsidies has been “revealed.” Moreno earlier Friday proposed the direct talks as the protests stretched into a 10th day.



TYPHOON HAGIBIS: TOKYO SHUTS DOWN

Strong wind caused extensive damage in Ichihara, Chiba, near Tokyo, on Saturday. A heavy downpour and strong winds pounded Tokyo and surrounding areas as Typhoon Hagibis, forecast to be Japan’s worst in six decades, made landfall and passed over the capital, where streets, nearby beaches and train stations were long deserted. *AP*

Trump orders troops, arms to Saudi Arabia in message to Iran

ERIC SCHMITT & DAVID E SANGER
WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 12

THE UNITED States is sending about 3,000 additional troops to Saudi Arabia in the latest military response by the Trump administration after it accused Iran of attacks last month on Saudi oil facilities, the Pentagon said Friday.

The move came only five days after US President Donald Trump said that his desire to terminate America’s “endless wars” led to his decision to pull back from the border area between Syria and Turkey about 50 troops who were working to create a “safe zone” between Turkish and Kurdish troops.

“The troops that we are sending into Saudi and the enhanced assets are defensive,” said Brian Hook, the State Department’s special representative for Iran. “They are there to defend our interests and to help Saudi defend itself.”

At the Pentagon, Defence Secretary Mark Esper said he was dispatching two Air Force fighter squadrons, or about four dozen warplanes, as well as Patriot antimissile batteries and



Trump has been a close ally of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman. *Reuters*

other air and missile defences to the Persian Gulf kingdom.

“Saudi Arabia is a long-standing security partner in the Middle East and has asked for additional support to supplement their own defences,” Esper told reporters at the Pentagon, noting that he had called Saudi officials Friday to notify them.

In the wake of the drone and missile strikes, which temporarily crippled about half of Saudi’s oil production, Trump initially weighed taking direct military action against Iran. The attacks, which Secretary of State Mike Pompeo recently called “an act of

war,” rattled global energy markets. For the past two weeks, however, there has been no discussion of taking direct US military action against Iran for the strikes, apart from some consideration of proportionate cyberattacks.

Last month, Trump opted for a modest deployment of a couple of hundred troops, along with Patriot air and missile defence systems. Friday’s announcement builds on those forces, although the fighter jets essentially will replace warplanes now flying off the carrier *Abraham Lincoln*, which will leave the Gulf of Oman. **NYT**

Xi’s India visit dominates China’s news cycles

SOWMIYA ASHOK
BEIJING, OCTOBER 12

INDIA DOMINATED headlines of the Chinese Communist Party’s official newspaper, a video released by a Chinese state tabloid featured Indian people saying “I love China”, and 360-degree panoramic views of Chennai’s landmark sites were captured by a Chinese news agency.

Elsewhere, Buddhism, Bollywood and Aamir Khan featured in varying degrees, alongside pieces on Chennai-Fujian ties that date back to the Tang Dynasty. The Tamil film industry too got a mention.

As the second informal summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping took place on Friday and Saturday, the Chinese state media plastered front pages and online resources



Xi met Modi for the second informal summit between the two on Friday and Saturday. *PTI*

with content capturing Xi’s time in Tamil Nadu.

“Xi given warm welcome in India,” read *China Daily*’s front-page headline, which noted that such a summit is “expected to enhance political trust between the world’s two most populous countries.” *People’s Daily*, the CCP’s official mouthpiece carried two photos on its front page of Modi

and Xi shaking hands, and of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister E K Palaniswami handing over a bouquet of pink flowers. “The president received a warm welcome on his arrival, with local people holding up photos of the two leaders and waving the countries’ national flags along the roads,” said a piece in *China Daily*.

Chinese state broadcasters offered the same level of detail as Indian news channels on describing Xi’s route to Mahabalipuram from the airport. The choice of venue was also discussed in a state media report, which said: “Though the Indian authorities did not highlight why the meeting venue was selected, analysts have said that New Delhi wants to revive the stories of centuries-old trade and cultural links between China and India to boost bilateral ties amid some thorny issues in their relations as well as the changing

4 killed, 3 injured in shooting at illegal gambling site in New York

ASSOCIATED PRESS
NEW YORK, OCTOBER 12

FOUR PEOPLE were killed and three others were wounded in an early Saturday shooting at an illegal gambling club in New York City, police said.

The six men and one woman were shot just before 7 am inside a building in the Crown Heights neighbourhood of Brooklyn.

Chief of Detectives Dermot Shea said four men were dead at the scene and the others were taken to hospitals with injuries that were not life-threatening.

The victims, who have not been identified, ranged in age from 32 to 49, Shea said at a briefing near the shooting.

Two may have lived out of state and the rest were from neighbourhoods throughout Brooklyn, Shea added. One additional person was injured fleeing.

No arrests have been made, and police do not know the motive for the shootings, Shea said.

He said two guns were found at the scene.

Mayor Bill de Blasio said on Twitter that the city “awoke to senseless gun violence”.

MEANWHILE

CALIFORNIA POWER OUTAGES EASE

The lights were back on Friday for many of the nearly 2 million Northern California residents who lost electricity when the state’s largest utility switched it off this week in an effort to prevent wildfires, as the first death linked to the outages was reported — a man who relied on oxygen.

Turkish forces seize key Syria border town

Pentagon says US troops came under fire, Turkey denies

AGENCIES

CEYLANPINAR, ISTANBUL, OCTOBER 12

TURKEY’S MILITARY said it captured a key Syrian border town under heavy bombardment Saturday in its most significant gain, as its offensive against Kurdish fighters pressed into its fourth day with little sign of relenting despite mounting international criticism.

Turkish troops entered central Ras al-Ayn, according to Turkey’s Defence Ministry and a war monitor group. The ministry tweeted: “Ras al-Ayn’s residential centre has been taken under control through the successful operations in the east of Euphrates” river. It marked the biggest gain made by Turkey since the invasion began Wednesday.

The continued push by Turkey into Syria comes days after US President Donald Trump cleared the way for Turkey’s air and ground offensive, pulling back US forces from the area and saying he wanted to stop getting involved with “endless wars”. Trump’s decision drew swift bipartisan criticism that he was endangering regional stability and risking the lives of Syrian Kurdish allies who brought down the Islamic State group in Syria. The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces was the main US ally in the fight against IS and lost 11,000 fighters in the nearly five-year battle against the extremists.

Meanwhile, Turkey denied on Saturday targeting a US base in northern Syria after the Pentagon said its troops had come under artillery fire.

“There was no shot fired whatsoever on the US observation post,” Defence Minister Hulusi Akar said in a statement to state news agency Anadolu. He said Turkey had returned fire on



Syrian rebels prepare ammunition near Tal Abyad, Syria. *Reuters*



TURKEY’S SYRIA OFFENSIVE

Friday after Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG) shelled a Turkish border police station from hills located one kilometre away from the US observation post in Syria.

The Pentagon said an explosion occurred “within a few hundred meters” of a US position near the Syrian town of Kobani, and warned that the US was prepared to meet aggression with “immediate defensive action”.

Akar said: “All necessary precautions were taken so as not to damage the US post.” He said the Turkish forces had stopped firing “as a precaution” after the Americans contacted them.

“Anyway, the necessary co-ordinations are being conducted between our command centres and the Americans,” Akar added.

GERMANY BANS EXPORTS OF ARMS TO TURKEY

Frankfurt: Germany banned arms exports to Turkey over its assault on Kurdish militias in Syria, a foreign ministry spokeswoman said on Saturday. The US and EU have already warned Turkey of possible sanctions over the offensive. “Against the backdrop of the Turkish military offensive... the Federal Government will not issue any new permits for all military equipment that could be used by Turkey in Syria,” Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said.

PAK BACKS TURKEY

Islamabad: Pakistan has offered rare backing to Turkey in its offensive against Kurdish forces in Syria, with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan expected to visit Islamabad later this month. Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan called Erdogan on Friday to “convey Pakistan’s support and solidarity,” his office said.

Islamic State rears head, adding to chaos in Syria

EXPLAINED How Kurds’ assault on IS eventually led to Turkish invasion

HAVING JOINED with US forces, the Kurdish militias led a successful campaign against the Islamic State. They were able to capture vast areas of north Syria that were previously held by the IS. This allowed the Syrian Kurds, who were subjugated under the Assad regime in Syria before the civil war, to create an autonomous region that was effectively independent of Syria. However, this led to fear from Turkey, which shares Syria’s northern border, that militias it considers as terrorist groups were too close to its frontiers. This has led to the Turkish invasion of northern Syria.

cause a re-emergence of the IS.

Since pulling out, US officials have expressed growing concern at the direction the Turkish incursion has taken, with officials warning Friday that the US would respond forcefully if Islamic State fighters were allowed to escape from prisons in the area. Although US and Kurdish forces have defeated Islamic State militants in northeastern Syria, the group has sleeper cells in the region that could use the turmoil to retake the land they controlled in the early years of the Syrian civil war.

And the Kurdish militia has diverted soldiers to fight the in-

vasion and abandoned joint operations with US troops as it prioritises the defence of its land.

On Friday, a car bomb exploded on a residential street in Qamishli, the de facto capital of the Kurdish-held region — a rare act of IS terrorism in a city that was relatively free of trouble before the Turkish assault began. The Turkish bombardment also endangered the security of several Kurdish-run prisons for Islamic State militants, with at least three in the vicinity of continuing Turkish airstrikes. It is widely feared that in the chaos, Islamic State fighters will escape captivity, as the five did Friday. **NYT**

REACTION TO OLGA TOKARCZUK’S WIN WAS AS DIVIDED AS THE COUNTRY ITSELF

For Poland, Nobel Prize is cause for conflict as much as congratulation

MARC SANTORA & JOANNA BERENDT
WARSAW, OCTOBER 12

WINNING A Nobel Prize in literature is usually a cause for celebration in the writer’s home country, a point of pride and a justification for a bit of patriotic pomp. But in Poland, where the nation is engaged in a bitter and consequential battle over the question of what it means to be Polish, the prize has led to controversy, instead.

When Olga Tokarczuk of Poland won it on Thursday, the reaction was as divided as is the country itself. To some, she is an eloquent writer who captures Poland’s tragic and inspiring 20th-century history. To others, she is a traitor.

Tokarczuk has documented Poland’s long history of pluralism and ethnic mixing at the same time as her government has cast migrants as a mortal danger to the nation. She has denounced attacks on gays and globalists, even as leaders in

Poland’s governing Law and Justice Party have sought to convince voters that a “rainbow plague” backed by decadent Western leaders presented an existential threat to both families and the nation itself.

So with national elections scheduled to take place in Poland on Sunday, perhaps it was not surprising that Poland’s competing factions sought to use the prize announcement to bolster their own sides.

Rafal Ziemkiewicz, a right-wing journalist, took to Twitter



to excoriate Tokarczuk and other artists, including Oscar-winning director Pawel Pawlikowski.

“With all due respect, they owe their awards to the fact that Western left-wing salons want

to support Polish agents in the fight against the “nationalist regime,” Ziemkiewicz wrote. “And great, take it, just don’t spit on Poland.”

Those who oppose Poland’s government and its attempts to shape the cultural landscape with nationalist dogma hoped to use the moment to show the world that Poland would not be defined by the government.

Donald Tusk, the president of the European Council and a critic of Poland’s current government, made a point of noting on

Twitter that he read her books “from start to finish”.

“What a joy and pride!” he wrote. “I will boast about it in Brussels as a Pole and a faithful reader.” He signed it with a grinning emoji.

Tokarczuk said that she would like to dedicate her award to Poles. “We are just a few days before the elections, very important elections. They can change the future of this country,” she told journalists at a news conference in Bielefeld, Germany. “I would like to say to my friends in

Poland: Let’s make good choices, vote for democracy.”

Tokarczuk became Poland’s sixth winner of the Nobel Prize in literature and only the 15th woman to receive the distinction since 1901.

She is best known for works such as *Primeval and Other Times*, *The Book of Jacob*, *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead* and *Flights*, an experimental novel for which she received in 2018 the Man Booker International Prize for translated fiction. **NYT**