

TOP OF THE WORLD



A day after the election, in Raszyn, Poland. Reuters

POLAND
Conservatives dominate vote

Warsaw: Poland's conservative ruling Law and Justice party capitalised on its popular social spending policies to do even better at the ballot box than when it swept to power four years ago, according to nearly complete results reported Monday. If confirmed, the results from Sunday's general election would be the strongest showing for a single Polish party in a parliamentary election in 30 years, since Poland threw off communism to establish democracy. Law and Justice won just under 44% of Sunday's vote, according to results.

PAKISTAN
PML-N lawyer 'kidnapped'

Lahore: Kashif Ali, a senior lawyer of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party was allegedly "kidnapped" by some unidentified persons, according to a police complaint lodged by his brother, days after he led a group of advocates in chanting anti-army slogans during a court hearing of jailed former prime minister Nawaz Sharif in a corruption case here.

JAPAN
Typhoon toll rises to 56

Tokyo: At least 56 people have been killed in Japan by Typhoon Hagibis, national broadcaster NHK said Monday, as rescuers worked into the night searching for survivors. The broadcaster said 15 people were still missing after the deadly storm, which slammed into Tokyo and surrounding areas Saturday night as one of the most powerful typhoons to hit the area in decades.

EGYPT
Prominent activist held

Cairo: An Egyptian rights lawyer says prosecutors have ordered a prominent pro-democracy activist to remain in custody for 15 days. Khaled Ali says Esraa Abdel-Fattah was brought before prosecutors late Sunday, after she was arrested by security forces in plain cloths a day earlier. Abdel-Fattah was a co-founder of the April 6 movement which played a crucial role in the 2011 pro-democracy uprising.

US troops pulling out, Syria steps in to halt Turkish assault

AGENCIES

TALL TAMR (SYRIA), OCTOBER 14

THE SYRIAN REGIME sent troops towards the Turkish border on Monday to contain Ankara's deadly offensive against the Kurds, stepping in for US forces due to begin a controversial withdrawal.

Outgunned and without US protection, the autonomous Kurds in northeastern Syria had few other options to stop the rapid advance of Turkish troops and their Syrian proxies.

Turkey wants to create a roughly 30-kilometre (20-mile) buffer zone along its border to keep Kurdish forces at bay and also to send back some of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees it hosts.

The United States and its partners, who spent years fighting alongside the Kurds against the Islamic State group in Syria before deserting them, have condemned the Turkish invasion, but their threats of sanctions have failed to stop it.

Washington says that it is planning to pull out 1,000 troops — almost the entire ground force — from Syria's north, in a move welcomed Monday by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as "a positive approach". The chaos in the areas targeted in the six-day-old Turkish assault has already led to the escape of around 800 foreign women and children linked to IS from a Kurdish-run camp, Kurdish authorities said.

The Kurds had repeatedly warned of that scenario when



A Syrian army soldier in the town of Tel Tamer in northeast Syria, on Monday. SANA/handout via Reuters



Western countries refused to repatriate their IS-linked nationals and when US President Donald Trump made it clear he wanted to end the US military presence.

Wasting no time to fill the void, Moscow — already the top broker in Syria — clinched a deal between the Kurds and

Damascus, whose ties had been icy since the minority threw its lot with Washington and unilaterally declared self-rule.

"In order to prevent and confront this aggression, an agreement has been reached with the Syrian government," the Kurdish administration said in a statement late Sunday.

In an editorial published in Foreign Policy magazine, the head of the main Kurdish force wrote: "If we have to choose between compromises and the genocide of our people, we will surely choose life for our people." By Monday morning, Syrian government forces were already moving to within several kilometres (miles) of the border, AFP correspondents on the ground said.

Residents around the town of Tall Tamr welcomed regime forces with cheers and Syrian state

'Kurdish forces emptied IS jail'

Ankara: Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar said Syrian Kurdish YPG fighters had emptied a jail holding IS prisoners in a part of Syria where Ankara is mounting an offensive, and that the prisoners there had been abducted. US president Donald Trump also tweeted that Kurdish forces might be freeing IS prisoners deliberately.

REUTERS

Syria welcomes India statement

New Delhi: Syrian Ambassador Riad Kamel Abbas on Monday welcomed India's statement on Turkey for its "unilateral military offensive" in northeastern Syria, saying New Delhi has a "strong voice" in the international community and Damascus looks forward to joining hands with it for further cooperation.

PTI

television showed some of them waving national flags and portraits of President Bashar al-Assad.

Syrian troops also deployed in the areas of Tabqa and Ain Issa in Raqa, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.



ECUADOR PROTESTS END AFTER DEAL

People in Ecuador celebrated a deal President Lenin Moreno and indigenous leaders struck late Sunday to cancel a disputed austerity package and end nearly two weeks of protests that have paralysed the economy and left seven dead.

Reuters

TRUMP DEMANDS WHISTLEBLOWER TESTIFY

Trump ex-Russia adviser testifies in impeachment probe

AGENCIES

WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 14

DONALD TRUMP demanded Monday that a whistleblower whose warning about the US president's call with Ukraine triggered the impeachment inquiry against him be identified and testify before Congress.

As the president menaced the person who exposed his potential wrongdoing, Trump faced a new setback with his former top Russia advisor, Fiona Hill, sitting for a closed-door



Fiona Hill arrives on Capitol Hill, Washington. AP

deposition Monday before Capitol Hill lawmakers.

Hill served in the National



K-POP STAR FOUND DEAD

Korean pop star and actor Sulli was found dead at her home in Seoul, South Korea. According to Variety, Sulli's manager found her body and informed the police. Police said that they are looking at the chances of suicide.

As Hong Kong erupts again, Xi says will crush any bid to split China

JOHN RUWITCH & JESSIE PANG

HONG KONG, OCTOBER 14

TENS OF thousands of mostly young pro-democracy activists rallied in Hong Kong on Monday in the first legal protest since the introduction of colonial-era emergency laws and pleaded for help from the United States.

They chanted "Fight for Freedom, Fight for Hong Kong" as they gathered peacefully near central government offices in the Admiralty district of the Chinese-ruled city only hours after police said violent protests had escalated to a "life-threatening level".

A small bomb exploded and a policeman was stabbed on Sunday night, the latest violence in four months of unrest in which police have responded to petrol bombs and rocks with tear gas, rubber bullets, water cannon and sometimes live rounds.

Emergency laws introduced on Oct. 5 banning face masks at rallies and carrying a maximum penalty of one year in jail sparked some of the worst violence since the unrest started.

On Monday night, many protesters wore face masks in defiance of the ban.

Speakers urged the United States to pass a Hong Kong human rights act to ensure democ-



Protesters urged the US to pass a Hong Kong human rights act to ensure democracy for the former British colony. Reuters

racy for the former British colony, which returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

"Make Hong Kong Great Again", read one poster. Some protesters waved the U.S. flag and carried "Uncle Sam" recruitment posters reading "Fight for Freedom, Stand with HK".

"All of the Hong Kong people feel hopeless and the government hasn't listened to our voices so we need the USA to help us," said protester Edward Fong, 28.

The protesters are angry at what they see as Beijing's tightening grip on the city which was guaranteed 50 years of freedoms under the "one country, two sys-

tems" formula under which it returned to China. Beijing rejects the charge and accuses Western countries, especially the United States and Britain, of stirring up trouble.

The unrest poses the biggest popular challenge to Chinese President Xi Jinping since he came to power in 2012. He warned that any attempt to divide China would be crushed.

"Anyone attempting to split China in any part of the country will end in crushed bodies and shattered bones," Xi said in a meeting on Sunday with leaders in Nepal, where he was visiting, according to China's state broadcaster CCTV.

REUTERS

Spain jails 9 Catalan independence leaders

EMMA PINEDO & JOAN FAUS

MADRID/BARCELONA, OCT 14

SPAIN'S SUPREME Court on Monday sentenced nine Catalan separatist leaders to between nine and 13 years in prison for sedition over their role in a failed independence bid, triggering protests across the region.

Three other defendants, who were also on trial for their involvement in the October 2017 referendum held in spite of a ban and a short-lived independence declaration, were found guilty only of disobedience and not sentenced to prison.

All defendants were acquitted of the gravest charge, rebellion, but leading separatists were quick to condemn the court's decision and the jailed men sent out messages of defiance, urging people to take to the streets.

"This sentence is an attack on democracy and the rights of all citizens," the head of the regional



Decision triggered protests in Barcelona on Monday. AP

parliament Roger Torrent said. "Today we are all convicted, not just 12 people."

Former head of Catalonia's regional government, Carles Puigdemont, said the prison sentences were an "atrocious".

In Barcelona, three main streets were blocked by protesters holding signs calling for "Freedom for political prisoners" and a crowd chanted "We'll do it again" — a slogan used by separatist supporters who want to hold another referendum.

REUTERS

Condemn violent video: US president

Meanwhile, the White House said that President Trump has yet to watch a graphically violent parody video that depicts a likeness of him shooting and stabbing his opponents and members of the news media, but says he "strongly condemns it." Journalists covering the White House have called on Trump to condemn the video, in which Trump's critics and media members are portrayed as parishioners in a church fleeing his gruesome rampage.

Hunt for 'Asia's El Chapo' at centre of meth ring

TOM ALLARD

BANGKOK, OCTOBER 14

THE LARGEST ever task force assembled to fight organised crime in Asia has identified a long-time drug trafficker, a China-born Canadian national, as the suspected kingpin of a crime syndicate that police say dominates the \$70 billion-a-year Asia-Pacific drug trade.

The suspected syndicate leader is Tse Chi Lop, 55, an ex-convict who formerly lived in Macau, Hong Kong and Taiwan in recent years, according to counter-narcotics officers from



Tse Chi Lop's group may be earning as much as \$17.7 bn annually

four countries as well as law enforcement documents reviewed by Reuters. Authorities have not publicly identified Tse as the boss of the drug trafficking group.

The syndicate he is suspected of running is known to its members as "The Company." Law enforcers also refer to it as "Sam Gor," or Brother Number Three in Cantonese, after one of Tse's nick-

names.

The Australian Federal Police (AFP), which has taken the lead in the sprawling investigation, has compiled a list of top syndicate members that identifies Tse as "the senior leader of the Sam Gor syndicate." The group, the list says, has "been connected with or directly involved in at least 13 cases" of drug trafficking since January 2015. The list, reviewed by Reuters, does not provide specific details of the cases.

A flow-chart of the syndicate in a Taiwanese law enforcement document identifies Tse as the "Multinational CEO" of the Sam Gor syndicate. A U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration

(DEA) alert circulated among regional government agencies this year says Tse is "believed to be" the leader of the syndicate.

"Brother Number Three is target number one," said one AFP officer.

Reuters was unable to contact Tse Chi Lop. In response to questions from Reuters, the AFP, the DEA and Taiwan's Ministry of Justice Investigation Bureau said they would not comment on investigations.

According to interviews with regional law enforcers from eight countries, as well as a review of law enforcement documents, the syndicate produces vast quantities of high-grade

methamphetamine in Myanmar and trafficks the drug to countries stretching from Japan to New Zealand. The group is "conservatively" raking in \$8 billion a year and could be earning as much as \$17.7 billion annually, according to an estimate by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). "Tse Chi Lop is in the league of El Chapo or maybe Pablo Escobar," said Jeremy Douglas, Southeast Asia and Pacific representative for UNODC, referring to Latin America's most legendary narco-traffickers. "The word kingpin often gets thrown around, but there is no doubt it applies here."

REUTERS

Hailing 'new revolution', political outsider set to be Tunisia president

BOUAZZA BEN BOUAZZA

TUNIS, OCTOBER 14

TUNISIA'S ELECTION commission says a preliminary count shows Islamist-backed law professor Kais Saied has won the country's presidential election by a significant margin.

The commission reported Monday that Saied, who hasn't held elected office before, received 72.71% of the vote. His opponent, media mogul Nabil Karoui, got 27.29%.

Saied's victory is a stinging rebuke for a governing elite that has



People celebrate in Tunis. Reuters

failed to improve living standards or end corruption since the 2011 revolution in the North African country that introduced democracy and ushered in the "Arab

Spring". A 61-year-old retired law professor, Saied has no political party and wants to introduce an experimental form of direct democracy. Supporters who celebrated in the streets hailed his triumph as a revival of the revolution.

Nabil Karoui, his only opponent in a run-off vote, spent much of the campaign period in detention and initially kept the door open to lodging an appeal against the results when exit polls on Sunday put Saied on more than 70% of votes.

"What I have done is a new revolution," Saied told a crowd of supporters.

AP