

TOPOF THE WORLD



HONG KONG
Lam abandons speech as lawmakers jeer

Hong Kong: Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam had to abandon her policy speech in the legislature on Wednesday because of jeering lawmakers but later offered no direct olive branch to protesters, hoping instead to ease resentment by building public housing. Lam, who had to broadcast the annual address via a video link after the rowdy scenes in the assembly, hoped to restore confidence in her administration and address discontent after four months of often violent anti-government protests. She had to halt her initial attempts to deliver the address after lawmakers called out for “five demands, not one less” and projected the protest rallying cry onto a backdrop behind her.

EUROPE
‘Air pollution caused 400K premature deaths in 2016’

Brussels: Poor air quality caused about 400,000 premature deaths in Europe in 2016, the most recent year data is available, and almost every city-dwelling European is exposed to pollution levels that exceed healthy levels, according to a report on Wednesday. “Air pollution is currently the most important environmental risk to human health,” the European Environment Agency, the EU’s health agency, said in the report. The report’s author said that while the level of dangerous particles in European cities was dropping, it was not dropping fast enough.

AFGHANISTAN
Three killed, 20 children injured in truck blast

Jalalabad: At least three people were killed and about 20 children wounded when a Taliban truck bomb detonated near a police station and partially destroyed a religious school, Afghan officials said. The early morning attack happened in Alishing district in eastern Laghman province, said interior ministry spokesman Nasrat Rahimi. “Three people including two security forces were killed and 27 were wounded,” he added. According to the provincial government, the bomb exploded outside a police station and severely damaged a nearby madrasa.

IRAN
Rouhani’s brother starts 5-year jail term: report

Tehran: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani’s brother entered prison Wednesday to begin a five-year sentence after he was convicted of corruption, the ISNA news agency reported. Hossein Fereydoun, who served as an aide to the President, was arrested in July 2017 and put on trial in February this year on allegations of financial violations. In a final ruling, his sentence was reduced to five years from seven and he was ordered to pay a fine.

Turkey will never declare ceasefire in northern Syria, says Erdogan

US officials rush to Ankara; Turkey leader threatens to cancel US trip; Trump ‘fine’ with Russia role

TUVAN GUMRUKCU
ANKARA, OCTOBER 16

THE TRUMP administration dispatched its top officials to Turkey on Wednesday for emergency talks to try to persuade Ankara to halt an assault on northern Syria, while Russian troops swept into territory abandoned by Washington in a sudden retreat. Robert O’Brien, White House national security adviser since last month, arrived in Turkey aiming to meet Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu on Wednesday. Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo are expecting to meet the following day with President Tayyip Erdogan.

The administration is trying to contain the fallout from Erdogan’s decision to send forces last week to attack Syrian Kurdish militia that were Washington’s allies. Erdogan has insisted there will

Brexit deal at hand in Brussels, UK PM Johnson struggles to win support at home

GABRIELA BACZYNSKA & ALAN CHARLISH
BRUSSELS, WARSAW, OCTOBER 16

BRITISH AND EU officials were on the verge of a last-minute Brexit deal on Wednesday but Prime Minister Boris Johnson still has work to do at home to ensure parliament approves the plan. “The basic foundations of this agreement are ready and theoretically we could accept a deal tomorrow,” said European Council President Donald Tusk, who will chair a summit of leaders, including Johnson, on Thursday and Friday.

However, Tusk said in comments broadcast by Polish broadcaster TVN 24 that “certain doubts have appeared from the British side”, apparently a reference to Johnson’s need to win over politicians who fear he may have conceded too much.

French President Emmanuel Macron said an agreement was being finalised and he hoped it could be approved by the summit on Thursday.

“I want to believe an agreement is being finalised and that we will be able to endorse it tomorrow,” Macron said at a news conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Merkel said she believed slightly more that a deal was possible, based on what she had heard in the recent days.

The EU leaders are likely to sign off a deal at their summit but their approval would be conditional on the British House of Commons backing it at a special sitting on Saturday, EU diplomats said.

If Johnson fails to nail down the terms of Britain’s exit from the European Union he will almost certainly have to seek an extension of the October 31 departure deadline, more than three years after the country voted in a referendum to leave. **REUTERS**



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan addresses his ruling party legislators in Parliament in Ankara on Wednesday. *AP*

be no ceasefire, and said he might call off a visit to the US next month because of the “very big disrespect” shown by US politicians.

“They say ‘declare a ceasefire’. We will never declare a ceasefire,” Erdogan said. “They are pressuring us to stop the operation. They are announcing sanctions. Our goal is clear. We are not worried about any sanctions,” he said.

Syrian government troops ac-

panied by Russian forces meanwhile entered the city of Kobani, a strategically important border city and a potential flashpoint for a wider conflict, the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which monitors the Syrian war, reported.

Their reported arrival follows a deal cut between the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces militia, which has controlled the city, and Damascus to deploy the Syrian



army in border areas to help fend off the Turkish offensive.

Trump played down the crisis on Wednesday, saying the conflict was between Turkey and Syria and that it was “fine” for Russia to help its ally Damascus. Sanctioning Turkey would be better than fighting in the region, he said.

Washington announced sanctions to punish Turkey on Monday, but Trump’s critics said the steps were too feeble. **REUTERS**



ON SACRED PEAK, KIM VOWS TO FIGHT SANCTIONS

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un rides a horse at Mount Paektu. Pyongyang released a series of photos Wednesday showing Kim riding a white horse to the sacred mountain he has often climbed before making key decisions. Near the mountain, Kim reportedly vowed to overcome US-led sanctions that he said had both pained and infuriated his people.

DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

With focus on Warren, race enters new phase

ALEXANDER BURNS & JONATHAN MARTIN
WESTERVILLE (OHIO), OCTOBER 16

US SENATOR Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts faced a sustained barrage of criticism from her Democratic rivals at a presidential debate in Ohio on Tuesday, tangling with a group of underdog moderates who assailed her liberal economic proposals, while former Vice President Joe Biden appeared to fade from the fray after parrying President Donald Trump’s attacks on his family.

The debate confirmed that the primary race had entered a new phase, defined by Warren’s apparent strength and the increasing willingness of other Democrats to challenge her. She



Bernie Sanders, Joe Biden and Elizabeth Warren debate in Westerville, Ohio, on Tuesday. *Reuters*

has risen toward the top of the polls while confronting limited resistance from her opponents, and in past debates she attracted a fraction of the hostility that Democrats trained on Biden.

Warren sought to dispense

with her critics by casting them as lacking ambition.

Foreign policy played a greater role Tuesday than in any other debate, pushed to the foreground by the renewed outbreak of war in Syria. **NYT**

MEANWHILE

NASA UNVEILS NEW SPACESUITS

When US astronauts next touch down on the Moon, expect them to walk almost as they do on Earth, thanks to a new generation of spacesuits. Prototypes of the Orion Crew Survival Suit that will be worn on the journey was unveiled at NASA’s Washington headquarters Tuesday ahead of the agency’s planned return to the Moon by 2024.



US-Indian walks into police station with body in car, confesses to three more killings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SAN FRANCISCO, OCTOBER 16

A 53-YEAR-OLD Indian-origin IT professional has been arrested after he walked into a Northern California police station, with a dead body in his car, and confessed to have killed three others at his apartment over 350 kilometres away, according to US media reports.

All four victims are related to the suspect, Shankar Nagappa Hangud, Roseville Police Department Captain Joshua Simon said on Tuesday.

Hangud arrived at the police station in the city of Mt. Shasta shortly after noon and told officers that he had killed people at his apartment in the Placer County city of Roseville, police said.

Simon said Hangud, a Roseville resident, was in custody at the South Placer Jail after city detectives brought him back from Siskiyou County Monday and would face four charges of murder.

Hangud was a data specialist and had worked for several companies in the Sacramento area, according to his LinkedIn profile.

He is being held without bail and refused any interviews, the



Shankar Nagappa Hangud

Sacramento Bee reported.

“This incident has touched the lives of many in the area,” Simon told reporters at a news conference on Tuesday, adding that such a killing had not occurred in the Placer County city of 130,000 in his recent memory. “The suspect himself drove to the Mt. Shasta Police Department with one of the victims in his car and made a confession to them to start off this investigation,” Simon said. Mt. Shasta Police chief Parish Cross said he went to the car to verify what the man had said. “These are things that just don’t happen everyday, and when they do, it is upsetting,” said Cross.

IMPEACHMENT INQUIRY

Pompeo’s former adviser testifies, says diplomats hit by Trump politics: report

Another arrest in campaign financing case involving Giuliani’s associates

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 16

A FORMER adviser to US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo who abruptly resigned last week, on Wednesday spoke to an impeachment inquiry into allegations US President Donald Trump pursued political interests in his dealings with Ukraine.

The latest senior administration to give closed-door testimony to the Democratic-led inquiry testified as Republicans in Congress stepped up their attacks on a process that the White House has vowed to stonewall.

Lawmakers are examining whether Trump improperly pressured Ukraine to launch an investigation of Democratic former Vice President Joe Biden, a top political rival and a leading candidate for the Democratic 2020 presidential nomination.

McKinley, a veteran diplomat who had served as ambassador to Brazil and Afghanistan, was expected to tell investigators that some career diplomats had their careers derailed for political reasons while he served as adviser to Pompeo from May 2018 until last Friday, according to a report in the *Washington Post*.

The newspaper said he resigned over State Department leadership’s unwillingness to de-

The Washington Post said McKinley resigned over State Department’s unwillingness to defend ex-embassy to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch, against an effort to intervene in the country for Trump’s benefit

fend former US Ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch against an effort to intervene in the country for Trump’s political benefit. Yovanovitch, who was withdrawn earlier this year, told investigators last week that the President ousted her on “unfounded and false claims”.

Meanwhile, a Florida man wanted in a campaign finance case involving associates of Rudy Giuliani is in federal custody after flying Wednesday to Kennedy Airport in New York City to turn himself in, federal authorities said.

David Correia, 44, was named in an indictment with two Giuliani associates and another man arrested last week on charges they made illegal contributions to politicians and a political action committee supporting Trump. Giuliani, a former New York City mayor, is Trump’s personal lawyer.

TULAGI, PART OF THE SOLOMON ISLANDS, LEASED OUT TO BEIJING-BASED FIRM FOR 75 YEARS, WITH OPTION TO RENEW

China is leasing a Pacific island, leaving its residents shocked

DAMIEN CAVE
SYDNEY, OCTOBER 16

THE ISLAND of Tulagi served as a South Pacific headquarters for Britain, then Japan, and during World War II, its natural deep-water harbour across from Guadalcanal made it a military gem soldiers fought and died for.

Now, Tulagi is about to move into Chinese hands.

Under a secretive deal signed last month with a provincial government in the South Pacific nation, a Beijing-based company with close ties to the Chinese Communist Party has secured exclusive development rights for

the entire island and its surroundings.

The lease agreement has shocked Tulagi residents and alarmed US officials who see the island chains of the South Pacific as crucial to keeping China in check and protecting important sea routes. It is the latest example of China using promises of prosperity to pursue its global aspirations — often by funneling money to governments and investing in local infrastructure projects that critics call debt traps for developing nations.

“The geography tells you that this is a good location,” said Anne-Marie Brady, a China scholar at the University of Canterbury in



Tulagi was the scene of bloody battles between Allied forces and Japan during World War II

Christchurch, New Zealand. “China is expanding its military assets into the South Pacific and is

looking for friendly ports and friendly airfields just like other rising powers before them.”

Beijing’s ambitions in the South Pacific have economic, political and military ramifications.

The region is rich in natural resources, and China’s investments have provoked worries in the United States and Australia that the projects could give Beijing an opening to establish a military foothold for everything from ships and planes to its own version of the Global Positioning System.

China is also pushing to end the region’s status as a diplomatic stronghold for Taiwan. The Solomons cut ties to Taipei and allied with Beijing just a few days before the Tulagi deal. A second Pacific nation, Kiribati, followed suit the same week.

Even compared to previous Chinese development deals in nearby countries — including a wharf in Vanuatu, whose terms were not publicly released for years — the Tulagi agreement is remarkable for both its scope and lack of public input.

The renewable 75-year lease was granted to the China Sam Enterprise Group, a conglomerate founded in 1985 as a state-owned enterprise, according to corporate records.

A copy of the “strategic cooperation agreement,” obtained by *The New York Times* and verified by two people with knowledge of the deal, reveals both the immediate ambitions of China Sam and

the potential — just as in Vanuatu — for infrastructure that could share civilian and military uses.

The provincial governor who signed the deal, Stanley Maniteva, could not be reached for comment.

Many residents of Tulagi, an island of a little over 1,000 people, are outraged at the deal. “They cannot come in and lease the whole island like that,” said Michael Salini, 46, a business owner on Tulagi who is helping organise a petition to oppose the China Sam agreement.

“Everyone is really scared about the possibility of China turning the island into a military base,” he added. **NYT**