

TOP OF THE WORLD



He was on the forefront of the impeachment inquiry against Trump

USA

Dem lawmaker Elijah Cummings dies at 68

Baltimore: Maryland Representative Elijah E Cummings, a sharecropper's son who rose to become a civil rights champion and the powerful chairman of one of the US House committees leading an impeachment inquiry of President Donald Trump, died Thursday of complications from long-standing health problems. He was 68. Cummings was a formidable orator who advocated for the poor in his black-majority district, which encompasses a large portion of Baltimore and more well-to-do suburbs. Trump tweeted his "condolences to the family and many friends of Congressman Elijah Cummings".

PHILIPPINES

Duterte bruised, scratched from motorcycle fall

Manila: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte fell off his parked motorcycle on the palace grounds, suffering bruises and scratches, but the minor injuries won't affect his schedule, his spokesman said Thursday. "While it is true that the President roamed around with his motorcycle," he fell after he had already parked it Wednesday night, presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said. Duterte was reaching for his shoe when he fell and had "light bruises and slight scratches to his elbow and knee," he said.

GERMANY

Former Nazi guard, 93, set to go on trial

Hamburg: A 93-year-old former SS private is going on trial in Germany on 5,230 counts of being an accessory to murder, accused of helping the Nazis' Stutthof concentration camp function. Though he is not accused of any specific killing, Bruno Dey is charged as an accessory to those committed at Stutthof from August 1944 to April 1945 when he served as a guard there, because he helped prevent prisoners from escaping, according to the charges filed by Hamburg prosecutors.

UK, EU reach new Brexit deal

Johnson faces challenge to get agreement ratified by Parliament as N Ireland allies refuse backing

PHILIP BLENKINSOP & JONASEKBLOM
BRUSSELS, OCTOBER 17

EUROPEAN UNION leaders gave their unanimous backing to a Brexit deal with Britain on Thursday, putting the onus on Prime Minister Boris Johnson to secure the British parliament's approval for the deal in a vote in two days' time.

British and EU negotiators reached the agreement after successive days of late-night talks and nearly three years of heated discussions that have strained EU-UK ties.

After the deal was announced, Johnson joined the EU's 27 other leaders at a summit in Brussels, shaking each by the hand as he entered the room and laughing and joking with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron.

He then left them to decide whether they approved the deal. After a little over an hour of discussion, the leaders issued a joint statement endorsing it.

"Now is the moment for us to get Brexit done and then together to work on building our future partnership, which I think can be incredibly positive both for the UK and for the EU," Johnson told a joint news conference with Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker

How new deal is different from May's

NO IRISH BACKSTOP

■ The biggest problem for Brexiters with Theresa May's deal was the Irish backstop, which sought to solve the problem of a hard border in Ireland by keeping the whole of the UK inside the European customs union. ■ Johnson's deal takes the UK out of EU's customs union. But instead of having border infrastructure between the

UK's Northern Ireland and EU member Republic of Ireland, there will be a border in the Irish Sea, which separates the island of Ireland from the rest of the UK. Customs checks will take place at the ports instead of at a land border.

N IRELAND GETS VOTE

■ While the backstop under May's deal could have existed indefinitely with Northern Ireland lawmakers having no say in the matter,



European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker with Boris Johnson in Brussels. Reuters

Johnson's deal allows them to vote, four years after Brexit, on whether to keep the system. After that, there will be a vote every four years on whether to stick with the system or to look for alternatives. This is the biggest concession Johnson has got from the EU.

LEVEL PLAYING FIELD?

■ Level playing field refers to

the common standards applied across the EU for goods. Without a land border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, there is concern that the level playing field will be violated. ■ May was prepared to agree to a level playing field, but Johnson's deal does not mention the issue, leaving it to be addressed in the non-binding Political Declaration.

before the summit began.

"I hope very much... that my fellow MPs in Westminster do now come together to get Brexit

done, to get this excellent deal over the line and to deliver Brexit without any more delay."

Juncker said he wanted he

deal to be approved rapidly, with no need for any further extension of the Brexit deadline. Brexit was initially supposed to have hap-

In a first, Mexico deports 311 Indians

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MEXICO CITY, OCTOBER 17

IN A first, Mexico's migration authorities deported 311 Indians from various parts of the country amidst its stepped up efforts to check people illegally crossing its borders following pressure from the US.

According to a press release by the National Migration Institute (INM) on Wednesday, the Indian nationals, who did not have a condition of regular stay in the country, were deported from the Toluca City International Airport on a Boeing 747 aircraft to New Delhi.

The people were presented to the immigration authority in the states of Oaxaca, Baja California, Veracruz, Chiapas, Sonora, Mexico City, Durango and Tabasco, it said.

The move comes after US President Donald Trump in June threatened tariffs on all Mexican imports if the country did not put

Move comes after Trump threatened tariffs on Mexican imports if it did not put a check on those entering US through its borders

a check on people entering America through its borders.

Mexico had agreed to boost security on the border and expand its policy of taking back migrants.

"This was carried out, thanks to the excellent communication and coordination with the embassy of that Asian country, with which the recognition and return of these citizens was worked, under strict adherence to the Migration Law and its Regulations," the statement said, adding, "It should be noted that there is no precedent in the history of the INM."

35 foreigners die in Saudi crash, PM Modi condoles

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
RIYADH, OCTOBER 17

THIRTY-FIVE FOREIGNERS were killed and four others injured when a bus collided with another heavy vehicle near the Muslim holy city of Medina, Saudi state media said on Thursday.

The accident on Wednesday evening involved a collision between "a private chartered bus... with a heavy vehicle" near the western city, a spokesman for Medina police said, according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

Those involved were Arab and Asian pilgrims travelling from Medina to Mecca, according to local media.

The Okaz newspaper said that the victims were expatriates who lived in the kingdom and who were performing the umrah

The nationalities of the victims were not known, but Prime Minister Narendra Modi sent his condolences.

"Anguished by the news of a bus crash near Mecca in Saudi Arabia. Condolences to the families of those who lost their lives. Praying for a quick recovery of the injured," he tweeted.



CHAOS IN HONG KONG LEGISLATURE

A lawmaker tries to follow Hong Kong's Chief Executive Carrie Lam (bottom right, in white), as she leaves the Legislative Council in Hong Kong Thursday. The Legislative Council meeting was adjourned as pro-democracy lawmakers repeatedly heckled the city's embattled leader with several escorted from the chamber for the second day in a row. Reuters

White House: Trump to host next year's G7 summit at his golf resort

REUTERS

WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 17

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump will host next year's Group of Seven economic summit of developed world leaders at one of his own properties, the Trump National Doral golf resort near Miami, the White House said Thursday.

White House acting chief of staff Mick Mulvaney said Trump would not profit from use of the property and defended the decision, which comes as the President faces criticism and congressional investigations over his finances and potential conflicts-of-interest.



Trump National Doral resort in Doral, Florida. AP

Mulvaney told reporters the summit would take place at Doral on June 10-12, 2020, and that the administration selected Trump's resort after initially looking at about 12 potential locations in various other US states. "Doral was by far and away

the best physical facility for this meeting," he said at a news briefing. "It's almost like they built this facility to host this event." Mulvaney said using the Trump site would save millions of dollars and was cheaper than the other potential sites.

NOBEL LITERATURE PRIZE

SWEDISH ACADEMY DEFENDS CHOICE

The Swedish Academy has defended its decision to award the 2019 Nobel Prize for Literature to Austrian writer Peter Handke (pictured), saying he had made provocative comments but had not supported bloodshed. Handke's prize has attracted criticism, including from survivors of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, who called for the honour to be revoked.



US Vice President Mike Pence and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara on Thursday. AP

Turkey agrees to a ceasefire in Syria, says Pence

5-day truce to allow Kurdish fighters to withdraw 20 miles away from border

ZEKE MILLER

ANKARA, OCTOBER 17

US VICE President Mike Pence announced Thursday that the US and Turkey had agreed to a five-day ceasefire in northern Syria to allow for a Kurdish withdrawal from a security zone roughly 20 miles south of the Turkish border, in what appeared to be a significant embrace of Turkey's position in the week-long conflict.

After more than four hours of negotiations with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Pence said the purpose of his high-level mission was to end the bloodshed caused by Turkey's invasion of Syria, and remained silent on whether the agreement amounted to another abandonment of the US's former Kurdish allies in the fight against the Islamic State.

Turkish troops and Turkish-backed Syrian fighters launched their offensive against Kurdish forces in northern Syria a week ago, two days after Trump suddenly announced he was withdrawing the US from the area.

Pence and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo lauded the deal as a significant achievement, and Trump tweeted that it was "a great day for civilization". But the agreement essentially gives the



TURKEY'S SYRIA OFFENSIVE

Turks what they had sought to achieve with their military operation in the first place. After the Kurdish forces are cleared from the safe zone, Turkey has committed to a permanent ceasefire, but is under no obligation to withdraw its troops.

In addition, the deal gives Turkey relief from sanctions the administration had imposed and threatened to impose since the invasion began, meaning there will be no penalty for the operation.

Kurdish forces were not party to the agreement, and it was not immediately clear whether they would comply. Before the talks, the Kurds indicated they would object to any agreement along the lines of what was announced by Pence. But Pence maintained that the US had obtained "repeated assurances from them that they'll be moving out". AP

Kurds accuse Turkey of using banned weapons

'White phosphorus and napalm used'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BEIRUT, OCTOBER 17

THE EMBATTLED Kurdish authorities in Syria on Thursday accused Turkey of resorting to banned weapons such as napalm and white phosphorus munitions.

The use of such weapons since the start of the cross-border assault by Turkey and its Syrian proxies could not immediately be confirmed independently.

In a statement issued eight days into the deadly offensive, the Kurdish administration said Turkey had resorted to their use because of unexpectedly stiff resistance by Kurdish fighters in the border town of Ras al-Ain. "The Turkish aggression is using all available weapons against Ras al-Ain," the Kurdish statement said.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has agreed to a ceasefire, according to US Vice President Mike Pence who spent four hours on Thursday in nego-



Ras al-Ayn, Syria, after Turkish shelling. AP

tiations with Erdogan. But a day earlier, Erdogan had said he would "never" agree to a truce.

"Faced with the obvious failure of his plan, Erdogan is resorting to weapons that are globally banned such as phosphorus and napalm," the statement added.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights could not confirm the use of napalm or white phosphorus. But Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman said there had been a spike in burn wounds, mostly casualties brought in from the Ras al-Ain area.

CASE CAME TO POLICE ATTENTION AFTER A YOUNG MAN FROM THE FARM FOUND HIS WAY TO A LOCAL PUB

Family spent 9 years in Dutch farmhouse 'waiting for the end of days'

MARC SANTORA
OCTOBER 17

THE MAN immediately struck the bartender as a bit off.

His beard was dishevelled, he was in a daze, and his clothes seemed straight out of the 1980s. It was near closing time at Chris Westerbeek's small pub in a rural Netherlands village, Café De Kastelein, and he sent the stranger away.

But a short time later, on Sunday night, the man returned and this time, Westerbeek decided to find out his story.

And what a story it was. As the bearded man in the dated outfit quickly gulped down five beers, he said that for the last nine years, he and his siblings had barely seen the outside world. Instead, they were mostly confined to a small room in a Dutch farmhouse on the outskirts of the village of Ruinerwold "waiting for the end of days", Westerbeek told Dutch reporters.

"He said he was the oldest and wanted to end the way they were living," Westerbeek said.

By Monday, after the police went to the farmhouse and found the family living in

strangely isolated conditions, the bearded man's story had spread far and wide.

In a hyper-connected world, where people find it hard to put down their cellphones much less totally drop off the grid, there was immediate fascination with the strange tale of how a "doomsday family" could manage to go unnoticed for so long.

The police cautioned that much about the case remains under investigation, including why the family lived the way they did.

Many of the details have come from Westerbeek, who spoke to the local Dutch television station



At the remote farm in Ruinerwold, Netherlands. Reuters

RTV and the national newspaper De Telegraaf. He did not immediately respond to messages

seeking additional comment.

In the small village of just 4,000, the bearded man imme-

diately stood and "looked confused," Westerbeek said.

"He said he'd never been to school and hadn't been to the barber for nine years," he added.

The farm where the bearded man lived had a small vegetable garden and some livestock and was set back from the nearest road, shrouded from view by a line of trees.

The police confirmed that six adult siblings, between the ages of 18 and 25, who had been living on the farm were now receiving care. Their mother is believed to have died some time ago, officials said.

The father, according to local authorities, had suffered a stroke but was also living on the farm. Authorities also confirmed that the bearded man who fled the farm to seek help was the eldest of the six siblings.

A 58-year-old man, identified by local reports as a handyman connected to the property, was taken into custody, but it was unclear how he was involved in the case.

Mayor Roger de Groot, during a news conference on Tuesday, said that the family had been living "an isolated lifestyle" and had been largely confined to

their farm for at least nine years.

He added that several of the sibling's births had never been registered. The police said in a statement that the family had not been registered in the municipality.

"I have never come across anything like this before," he said. But the police urged caution, saying much remained unknown.

"There is a lot of speculation in the media about what happened, but as police we have to deal with facts," a police spokeswoman, Grietje Hartstra, said. "We still have a lot of unanswered questions." NYT