

TOP OF THE WORLD



After the dam collapse on Saturday. AP

SIBERIA
15 die in dam collapse at gold mine

Moscow: Fifteen people were killed and another 13 missing after an illegally built dam collapsed at a gold mine in a remote Siberian settlement on Saturday, in the latest deadly accident to hit Russia. The dam on the Seiba River in the Siberian region of Krasnoyarsk burst and flooded several cabins where the victims lived, Russian authorities said. About 300 people, six helicopters and six boats were involved in a search and rescue mission, the emergencies ministry said.

EGYPT
Over 100 held in crackdown freed: Lawyers

Cairo: Egyptian rights lawyers say authorities have released over 100 people who were among hundreds more arrested in a sweeping crackdown following small but rare anti-government protests last month. Lawyers Mustafa el-Demiry and Khaled Ali say the detainees were released late Friday, pending an investigation into claims they took part in the activities of a banned group and disseminating false news on social media platforms. The Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights says around 3,700 people including journalists, activists and foreign nationals, were arrested in the past month.

SRI LANKA
Lanka removed from FATF's Grey List

Colombo: Sri Lanka has been removed from the "Grey List" of terror financing watchdog FATF, according to a report. The nation will no longer be subject to the force's monitoring under its on-going global anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) compliance process, the Colombo Gazette reported on Saturday. The FATF, whose five-day plenary concluded in Paris on Friday, said Sri Lanka made significant progress in addressing the strategic AML/CFT deficiencies identified earlier, the daily said.

FURTHER DELAY POINTLESS, EXPENSIVE, CORROSIVE: BORIS

UK PM defiant after lawmakers vote to force delay in Brexit plan

In new twist, amendment proposed by expelled Conservative Party member passes 322-306

AGENCIES

LONDON, OCTOBER 19

PRIME MINISTER Boris Johnson suffered a humiliating defeat on Saturday as Parliament rebuffed his campaign to take Britain out of the European Union by the end of the month and forced him to seek an extension that he had vowed never to pursue.

The events left Johnson's agreement in limbo and threw British politics again into chaos, with any number of outcomes possible: a no-deal exit from the European Union, a second referendum on whether to leave at all, or a general election that could shift the balance in Parliament. The only sure result was continuing frustration and confusion among the British public.

Johnson argued that it was the best deal Britain could hope to strike — one that, in his telling, would position the country for a thriving future as an agile, free agent in the global economy — and that any further delay would be "pointless, expensive and deeply corrosive of public trust."

Instead, by a vote of 322 to 306, lawmakers passed a last-minute amendment, brought by Oliver Letwin, an expelled member of Johnson's Conservative Party. According to the amendment passed by the House, the vote means Johnson is obliged to write to the EU seeking a delay beyond Britain's scheduled departure date of October 31.

But Johnson has repeatedly



Boris Johnson speaks in parliament, Saturday. Reuters

said he will not do this and on Saturday he stuck to that line.

"I will tell our friends and colleagues in the EU exactly what I have told everyone else in the last 88 days that I have served as prime minister: that further delay would be bad for this country, bad for the European Union and bad for democracy."

The European Commission urged Johnson's government to quickly explain how it wants to proceed with Brexit preparations after losing another parliamentary vote. Spokeswoman Mina Andreeva said Brussels "takes note of the vote in the House of Commons today on the so-called Letwin Amendment meaning that the Withdrawal Agreement itself was not put to vote today.

"It will be for the UK government to inform us about the next steps as soon as possible," she tweeted.



EU supporters march as parliament sits to discuss Brexit in London on Saturday. Reuters

'NEW REFERENDUM'

THE BATTLE over Brexit spilled onto London streets Saturday when tens of thousands gathered to demand a new referendum. "I am incensed that we are not being listened to. Nearly all polls show people want to remain in the EU. We feel we are voiceless," said Hannah Barton, 56, a cider maker from central England, draped in an EU flag.

EXPLAINED

What is the Letwin amendment?

THE LETWIN amendment, proposed by Conservative rebel Oliver Letwin, delays a vote on the Brexit deal until the House passes the required legislation to implement it properly. It is intended to be a safety net to prevent hardline Brexiters from engineering a no-deal situation.

The legislation requires Johnson to write to the EU, requesting a delay till January 31, 2020. The PM has, however, ruled out "negotiating" for an extension. Saturday's vote does not mean the PM's deal is dead, as he has vowed to introduce the required legislation next week. Whether it will pass within the original deadline remains to be seen.

CHILE DECLARES EMERGENCY IN CAPITAL



A demonstrator clashes with riot police during a protest in Santiago, Chile. Reuters

■ Residents of Chile's capital awoke Saturday to a ravaged city as burned-out buses, bikes and garbage littered the streets after a day of violent protests that prompted the government to declare a state of emergency and call out soldiers to maintain order for the first time in decades

■ The stunning spasm of unrest was triggered by an increase in metro fares but reflected a much broader anger over economic and social conditions, including a yawning gap between rich and poor in a country considered one of the most stable in Latin America.

Pak oppn leader plans countrywide protests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KARACHI, OCTOBER 19

PAKISTAN'S OPPOSITION leader Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has announced that his party would hold nationwide anti-government protests to press Prime Minister Imran Khan to resign and restore "real democracy" in the country.

Bilawal, the chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party, said the government had lost its credibility in the masses as it did not fulfil any of its promises. "Our demand is to restore democracy [in the country]," he said in his address at a party rally here.

"We don't accept this artificial democracy, the democratic and socio-economic rights of the masses shall be restored, and for that Imran Khan has to resign."

Bilawal, 31, said all opposition parties had decided that the government must step down.

"Our anti-government movement has started from Karachi," he said, as he announced his plan for further protests across the country.

He said the PPP will protest in Thar on October 23, demonstrate in Kashmir in Sindh province on October 26 whereas rallies in Punjab will begin from November 1.

Erdogan vows to 'crush the heads' of Kurdish forces if no pullout

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISTANBUL, OCTOBER 19

PRESIDENT RECEP Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday warned that Turkey would "crush the heads" of Kurdish forces if they did not withdraw from a proposed safe zone along the border under a US-brokered deal.

If the pullout does not happen by Tuesday evening, "we will start where we left off and continue to crush the terrorists' heads," Erdogan said in a televised speech in central Anatolian city of Kayseri.

Turkey has agreed to suspend its Syria offensive for five days and to end the assault if Kurdish-led forces withdraw from the proposed safe zone away from the border.

Erdogan also provided some details from his talks with the Americans, adding that Ankara agreed to the 120 hour time deadline after its initial demand of "one night" for the withdrawal.

"If the promises given to our country are not kept, as we did in the past we will not wait and restart the operation as soon as the time we have given ends," he said.

The Turkish leader said he also informed US President Donald Trump of Ankara's position during a phone call late Friday.



TURKEY'S SYRIA OFFENSIVE

'TURKS PREVENTING WITHDRAWAL OF FORCES, CIVILIANS'

Beirut: The commander of Kurdish forces in Syria accused Turkey of sabotaging a US-brokered truce Saturday by blocking the withdrawal of his forces from a flashpoint border town in northeastern Syria. "The Turks are preventing the withdrawal from the Ras al-Ain area, preventing the exit of our forces, the wounded and civilians," Mazloum Abdi, head of Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) said in a phone interview from Syria. PTI



Pro-Kurdish demonstrators protest against Turkey's military action, in Germany on Saturday. Reuters

Syria withdrawal strategic nightmare, says McConnell

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 19

US SENATE majority leader Mitch McConnell Friday attacked President Donald Trump's decision to pull troops from Syria as "a strategic nightmare" that will help Washington's foes and hurt its allies.

"Withdrawing US forces from Syria is a grave strategic mistake," McConnell, the top Republican in Congress, wrote in an op-ed published in *The Washington Post*.

"It will leave the American people and homeland less safe, embolden our enemies, and weaken important alliances." His comments come after Trump Wednesday defended his decision to pull US troops out of Syria as "strategically brilliant."

McConnell, usually a staunch supporter of the president, had



Mitch McConnell

earlier in the month condemned Trump's withdrawal of troops from northeast Syria. "The combination of a US pullback and the escalating Turkish-Kurdish hostilities is creating a strategic nightmare for our country," he wrote.

"Even if the five-day ceasefire announced Thursday holds, events of the past week have set back the United States' campaign against the Islamic State and other terrorists," he said.

McConnell did not mention Trump by name, though he did liken the Syria withdrawal to the foreign policy of Trump's Democratic predecessor Barack Obama.

'MADAME HAS AMPLE TIME TO WEAR HER VEIL AT HOME, ON THE STREET, BUT NOT HERE, NOT TODAY'

Another hijab furore hits France, this time over a mother on a school trip

AURELIEN BREEDEN

PARIS, OCTOBER 19

A HEATED debate over France's values reignited across the country this week, the latest fight in a culture war that has raged for years in universities, the halls of government and even on the beach.

This time, it started with a mother wearing a hijab on a school trip.

Veils and head scarves are political and social lightning rods in France, touching on issues so sensitive — secularism, feminism and the integration of

Muslims — that they seem to inspire anger wherever they appear. Although the mother broke no laws by wearing the garment, which does not cover the face, she enraged far-right members of the local assembly that the schoolchildren were visiting.

During the visit last week, in the central city of Dijon, one of the politicians, Julien Odoul, asked that the woman uncover herself.

"Madame has ample time to wear her veil at home, on the street, but not here, not today," he said, citing France's values of secularism, known as laïcité.

In a post on Twitter that in-

cluded video of the incident, Odoul said wearing the veil was a "provocation" that couldn't be "tolerated" after a fatal attack on Paris police officers this month by a Muslim among their ranks.

A commotion broke out. Other members of the assembly, including the president, objected to the request. The far-right politicians, who belong to the National Rally party, stormed out. And in a moment captured by a picture that soon spread widely, the woman's son cried in her arms.

She has declined to speak to the news media, but the confrontation quickly gained na-



Veils and head scarves are political and social lightning rods in France. Reuters/File

tional attention. Battle lines were swiftly drawn.

On one side, there are those who say the veil is a symbol of female submission or religious radicalism, an archaic garment that has no place in France's secular republic. On the other are those who argue that veiled women are subjected to barely hidden racism and religious discrimination by people who refuse to accept French multiculturalism.

To some, the tone of the debate has become increasingly alarming. One group of public figures, including actors, artists and

academics, asked in an open letter in the newspaper *Le Monde* this week, "How far will we let the hatred of Muslims go?"

"How long are we going to accept that citizens be insulted, assaulted, attacked, stigmatized because of their religion?" they asked. The letter was later turned into a petition, which has gathered over 180,000 signatures so far.

In an interview with the Collective Against Islamophobia in France, an advocacy group, the mother who went to Dijon said the incident had "destroyed her life." The mother, identified by

the group as Fatima E., also intends to file a legal complaint.

"Today, I have a negative opinion of what we call the republic," she said, arguing that the episode would reinforce the belief held by some descendants of immigrants that "France is against them."

"I have always argued against that discourse," she said. "When we left the regional council, they came up to me to say: 'You see, we told you so! They don't like us!' And then, I couldn't even speak. The children had come there to learn: What did they learn?" NYT