

TOPOF THE WORLD



Soldiers patrol Santiago, Chile, on Sunday. Reuters

CHILE Three dead in protest violence

Santiago: Three people died in a fire in a super-market being ransacked in the Chilean capital early Sunday, as protests sparked by anger over social and economic conditions rocked one of Latin America's most stable countries. Santiago's Mayor Karla Rubilar told reporters two people burned to death in the blaze and another later died in hospital, after the huge store controlled by US retail chain Walmart was looted. They were the first deaths in two days of violent unrest in which protesters have set buses on fire, burned metro stations and clashed with riot police in the city of seven million — despite a curfew imposed overnight until 7 am Sunday.

UAE World's oldest pearl found in Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi: An 8,000-year-old pearl that archaeologists say is the world's oldest will be displayed in Abu Dhabi, according to authorities who said Sunday it is proof the objects have been traded since Neolithic times. The natural pearl was found in the floor of a room discovered during excavations at Marawah Island, off the capital of the United Arab Emirates, which revealed the earliest architecture found in the country. The excavation of the Marawah site has also yielded ceramics, beads made from shell and stone, and flint arrowheads.

MYANMAR Meth worth \$20 mn found floating in sea

Yangon: Sacks of crystal meth scooped from the sea by Myanmar fishermen who mistook it for a deodorant substance had a street value of \$20 million, an official said on Sunday, in a country believed to be the world's largest methamphetamine producer. The accidental drug haul off Myanmar's coastal Ayeyarwady region occurred when fishermen spotted a total of 23 sacks floating in the Andaman Sea on Wednesday. Each one contained plastic-wrapped bags labelled as Chinese green tea.

Pentagon chief in Afghanistan as US looks to kickstart Taliban talks

Says number of troops can be brought down to 8,600 from 14,000; US seeks 'political agreement'

IDREES ALI KABUL, OCTOBER 20

US DEFENCE Secretary Mark Esper arrived in Afghanistan on Sunday in a bid to bring talks with the Taliban back on track after President Donald Trump abruptly broke off negotiations last month seeking to end the United States' longest war. Esper's trip to Kabul comes amid questions about the United States' commitments to allies after a sudden withdrawal of US troops from northeastern Syria and Trump's long-time desire to get out of foreign engagements. "The aim is to still get a peace agreement at some point, a political agreement. That is the best way forward," Esper told reporters travelling with him to Afghanistan. He is due to meet President Ashraf Ghani and US troops while in Afghanistan. "I hope we can move forward



US Defence Secretary Mark Esper is greeted by US military personnel upon arriving in Kabul on Sunday. AP

and come up with a political agreement that meets our ends and meets the goals we want to achieve," Esper said, adding that talks were in the State Department's domain. He added that the United States could go down to about 8,600 troops, from the current 14,000, without affecting counter-terrorism operations, if needed. Trump halted talks with the Taliban, aimed at striking a deal for US and other foreign troops to withdraw in exchange for Taliban security guarantees, after it carried out a bomb attack in Kabul last month that killed 12 people, including a US soldier.

The United States says it has increased the pace of operations against militants in Afghanistan since Trump walked away from talks with the Taliban.

"US policy in Afghanistan is so confused right now because on the one hand we're hearing the messaging from Washington and particularly Trump about our endless wars, that it could be time to leave sooner or later," said Michael Kugelman, senior associate for South Asia at the Wilson Center think-tank.

"On the other hand, you have US military forces stepping up their pressure on the Taliban in more intense ways than ever before," Kugelman said.

A Taliban delegation met US special representative for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad for more than an hour in Pakistan this month, though officials said it did not represent a resumption of formal negotiations. REUTERS

EU calls for truce in Afghanistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA KABUL, OCTOBER 20

EUROPEAN UNION officials called Sunday for a ceasefire in Afghanistan, saying the breakdown in talks between the US and the Taliban presented an opportunity to push anew for a truce.

Roland Kobia, the EU special envoy for Afghanistan, said the talks' collapse provided a chance to push for a ceasefire which would, in turn, prove a big enough change in Afghanistan for Trump to consider resuming negotiations.

"It's the right moment and the right opportunity to maybe go one step beyond a simple reduction in violence and explore ways in which a ceasefire... will take place," Kobia told journalists in Kabul.



MEANWHILE

MEHTA BIDS ADIEU TO ISRAEL PHILHARMONIC

Mumbai-born superstar conductor Zubin Mehta, 83, takes to the Tel Aviv stage on Sunday for his final performance as music director of the Israel Philharmonic, retiring after 50 years with the orchestra. The Israel Philharmonic Orchestra appointed Mehta music advisor in 1969, music director in 1977, and music director for life in 1981.

US troops leaving Syria to go to Iraq

Clashes erupt amid efforts for Kurdish withdrawal from Syrian border town

ASSOCIATED PRESS KABUL, AKCAKALE, OCTOBER 20

US DEFENCE Secretary Mark Esper says that under current plans all US troops leaving Syria will go to western Iraq and the American military will continue to conduct operations against the Islamic State group to prevent its resurgence.

Esper, who arrived in the Afghan capital on Sunday, did not rule out the idea that US forces would conduct counterterrorism missions from Iraq into Syria. But he told reporters travelling with him that those details will be worked out over time.

His comments were the first to specifically lay out where American troops will go as they leave Syria and what the counter-IS fight could look like. Esper, who flew overnight to Afghanistan, said he has spoken to his Iraqi counterpart about the plan to shift the more than 700 troops leaving Syria into western Iraq. The developments made clear that one of US President Donald Trump's rationales for withdrawing troops from Syria was not going to come to pass any time soon. "It's time to bring our soldiers back home," Trump said Wednesday. But they are not coming home.

Meanwhile, Kurdish-led fighters and Turkish-backed forces clashed sporadically Sunday in northeastern Syria amid efforts to work out a Kurdish evacuation from a besieged border town, the first



TURKEY'S SYRIA OFFENSIVE

pull-back under the terms of a US-brokered ceasefire. Turkey said one of its soldiers was killed in the day's violence.

The planned evacuation of Kurdish fighters and civilians from the town of Ras al-Ayn would open the way to a pull-out of the fighters from a broader swathe of territory along the border, a senior official in the Kurdish-led forces told the Associated Press.

The official, Redur Khalil, said Saturday evening that the evacuation could take place Sunday if there were no new problems.

Both sides accuse each other of repeatedly violating the three-day old ceasefire. Turkey's Defence Ministry said the soldier was killed in a Kurdish attack with anti-tank weapons and small arms fire near the border town of Tal Abyad.

That brought the Turkish military's death toll to seven soldiers since it launched its offensive against Kurdish-led fighters in northeast Syria on October 9.

Trump drops plan to host G-7 at his Florida golf resort

ZEKE MILLER & JILL COLVIN WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 20

RESPONDING TO stinging criticism, US President Donald Trump has abruptly reversed his plan to hold the next Group of Seven world leaders' meeting at his Doral, Florida, golf resort next year.

Trump announced a rare backtrack Saturday night after facing accusations that he was using the presidency to enrich himself by hosting the international summit at a private resort owned by his family.

"Based on both Media & Democrat Crazy and Irrational Hostility, we will no longer consider Trump National Doral, Miami, as the Host Site for the G-7 in 2020," Trump tweeted. He said his administration "will begin the search for another site, including the possibility of Camp David, immediately".

The striking reversal raises further doubts about the position of the President's acting chief of staff, Mick Mulvaney, who held a press conference Thursday announcing the choice of Doral for the summit. He insisted his staff had concluded it was "far and away the best physical facility." Mulvaney said the White House reached that determination after visiting 10 sites across the country.

Trump had been the first administration official to publicly



Based on both Media & Democrat Crazy and Irrational Hostility, we will no longer consider Trump National Doral, Miami, as the Host Site for the G-7 in 2020 (sic)."

— DONALD TRUMP US PRESIDENT

float the selection of his property to host the summit when in August he mentioned it was on the short-list and praised its facilities and proximity to Miami's international airport. His comments, more than a month before the official announcement, drew instant criticism from good governance groups and Democrats, who said it raised concerns that Trump was using the White House to boost his personal finances. The criticism did not die down, even as Trump insisted he would host the summit at cost, though he refused to disclose financial details. AP

Johnson asks EU for a Brexit delay that he doesn't want

Writes one letter seeking extension, another saying he doesn't want it

MIKE CORDER & GREGORY KATZ LONDON, OCTOBER 20

BRITISH PRIME Minister Boris Johnson pressed ahead Sunday with plans to try to win parliamentary backing for his new Brexit deal even as the European Union began considering his grudging request to extend the looming Brexit deadline.

As the dust settled on a day of high drama in Parliament, the next steps in Britain's divisive, tortuous Brexit saga became clear. Monday will feature more legal action, more arm-twisting, cajoling and veiled threats by Johnson and his ministers and more amendments designed by lawmakers to stymie Johnson's plan to have Britain leave the 28-nation bloc on October 31.

In the midst of all this, EU leaders and officials across the Channel were pondering whether to grant the British leader a Brexit extension that he does not even want.

As required by law, Johnson sent a letter — which he left unsigned — to the EU at the last possible moment late Saturday seeking a delay to Britain's impending October 31 departure. But he followed it with a signed letter indicating that he does not favour another Brexit extension.

"My view, and the government's position, (is) that a further extension would damage the interests of the UK and our EU partners, and the relationship between us," Johnson wrote to European Council President Donald Tusk.

Johnson has long declared that he plans to take the UK out of the EU on October 31 with or without a divorce deal, and his minister in charge of Brexit again emphasised that stance. "We are going to leave by October 31st," Michael Gove told Sky News on Sunday. "We have the means and



Parliament has forced Boris Johnson to ask for a Brexit delay if the deal is not okayed by MPs before Oct 31

EXPLAINED E

Second letter may send Johnson back to the courts

JUST WEEKS after a court ruled that Johnson's long suspension of Parliament just before the Brexit deadline was unlawful, another case related to the issue is likely to end up in court. While the British PM complied with Parliament's order to seek a Brexit delay, the fact that he wrote another letter to the EU suggesting that such an extension must not be granted is being seen among Opposition leaders as a violation of the law. Johnson is also facing contempt of court allegations over the letter as the Opposition says he had promised a Scottish court he would not try to sabotage the request for an extension.

the ability to do so."

The EU's chief Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier, said Tusk would consult with other leaders "in the next days" about Johnson's request. AP



HK DESCENDS INTO CHAOS AGAIN

Protesters set a barricade on fire in Hong Kong on Sunday. The city's streets descended into chaotic scenes following an unauthorised pro-democracy rally Sunday as protesters set up roadblocks and torched businesses and police responded with teargas and water cannon. Reuters

Rohingya refugees agree to move to Bangladesh island, officials say

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA COX'S BAZAR, OCTOBER 20

THOUSANDS OF Rohingya living in Bangladesh refugee camps have agreed to move to an island in the Bay of Bengal, officials said Sunday, despite fears the site is prone to flooding.

Dhaka has long wanted to move 100,000 refugees to the muddy silt islet, saying it would take pressure off the overcrowded border camps where almost a million Rohingya live.

Some 740,000 Rohingya fled Myanmar in August 2017 in the face of a military crackdown, joining 200,000 refugees already in makeshift tent settlements at Cox's Bazar.

Bangladesh's refugee commissioner, Mahbub Alam, said officials overseeing the relocation would be posted to Bhashan



Thousands of Rohingya have taken asylum in Bangladesh after they fled Myanmar in the face of a military crackdown. Reuters

Char island in the next few days. "Approximately 6,000-7,000 refugees have already expressed their willingness to be relocated to Bhashan Char," Alam said from Cox's Bazar, adding that "the number is rising".

He did not say when the refugees would be moved, but a

senior Navy officer involved in building facilities on the island said it could start by December, with some 500 refugees sent daily.

Bangladesh has been planning since last year to relocate Rohingya to the desolate flood-prone site, which is an hour by boat from the mainland.



Hunters returning to Cape Dorset, an Inuit town in northern Canada famed for its art. NYT

knowledge that they are standing on traditional indigenous lands. In history classes,

Canada's young learn about their government's systematic attempts to erase indigenous cul-

tures. Buildings have been renamed, street signs changed and in one city, a statue of the country's first prime minister removed.

Canadians call this "reconciliation," and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who faces a reelection vote on Monday, has made it central to his government and image.

In Oolooisie Saila, many might see the embodiment of these aspirations: an accomplished artist being feted for her depictions of the Inuit landscape in brilliant pinks and oranges — a young indigenous woman who is making it. But the world she returned to after the opening,

the hamlet of Cape Dorset, is plagued by poverty, alcoholism and domestic abuse. The possibility of brutality is never far away. The relative raging in Saila's house on the eve of her trip has assaulted her repeatedly, and has gone to jail for it.

"I'm not afraid of him when he's sober," she said.

Cape Dorset — a community of about 1,400 on a bay cradled by low-lying, bald mountains — is synonymous in Canadian minds with art. Local artists churn out works that decorate the walls of corporate headquarters and the homes of the well-off. Cape Dorset

prints are featured on Canadian stamps and currency. Its sculptures are the standard gift of Canadian diplomats.

If any town could slip the bonds of poverty that have defined indigenous life in Canada for so long, it should be Cape Dorset. Instead, it reflects the vast disconnect between the country's aspirations and the grim reality on the ground.

Almost 90% of its residents live in public housing. Suicide is rife: The stony graveyard is dotted with crosses marking young people. More than half the residents rely on public assistance. NYT

INDIGENOUS WORK IS ALL THE RAGE IN THE CANADIAN ART WORLD, BUT THE LIVES OF THE INUIT ARE STILL FULL OF STRUGGLE

Drawn from poverty: Art was supposed to save Canada's Inuit, it hasn't

CATHERINE PORTER CAPE DORSET, OCTOBER 20

HOURS BEFORE flying off to her debut show in Toronto, Oolooisie Saila, a rising star in the Canadian art world, was hiding in her grandmother's room on the frozen edge of the Arctic Ocean, cowering in fear.

Between her and the future stood the man in the next room, a relative who was drunk and raging — again. She perched on the bed, terrified he would burst in. Then, she packed in a frenzy. She threw the hand-sewn

outfit she had chosen for the opening into a plastic garbage bag, pulled her two young sons out of bed, grabbed her art supplies and fled into the frigid night.

Four days and 1,425 miles found Saila at the Feheley Fine Arts gallery in Toronto, where the crowd sipped wine and gushed over her "bold use" of colour and negative space.

"It's an incredible way of depicting the landscape," said Stefan Hancherow, the associate art curator for the country's biggest bank. "The paper becomes a stand-in for minimalism but it's maximal in that it's

depicting snow and ice." He asked Saila, who is 28, what had given her the idea. "I just did it myself," she replied. Except for grade school, she has never taken an art class.

It is a golden moment for the indigenous people of Canada. At least, in theory.

The country is going through a period of atonement for its history of racism. While much of the world has turned inward, becoming more xenophobic, Canada has been consumed with making amends.

Public meetings across the country routinely start with an ac-