

16 THE WORLD

TOPOF THE WORLD



Police gather in Saint-Raphael, France. *Reuters*

FRANCE

After 4-hour standoff, man threatening to make museum 'hell' arrested

Saint-Raphael: Police in southern France on Wednesday detained a man who had broken into a museum overnight and threatened to turn it into a “hell”, provoking a four-hour standoff, authorities said. A search was still on for a possible accomplice at the archeology museum in the town of Saint-Raphael, the top regional official said. Officer’s from an elite crisis intervention unit and a bomb disposal squad had surrounded the site, where several messages in Arabic had been scrawled on the walls, including: “The museum is going to become a hell”.

TUNISIA

New President sworn in after upstart poll win

Tunis: Tunisia’s new President Kais Saied took the oath of office on Wednesday after his surprise election victory over champions of the political establishment. Saied, a conservative academic with no previous political experience who won the overwhelming support of younger voters in an October 13 runoff, was sworn in before members of the constituent assembly and other top state bodies. The poll followed the death in July of Beji Caid Essebsi, Tunisia’s first president freely elected by universal suffrage.

ITALY

Couple saved from landslide by their cats

Rome: An Italian couple survived a landslide that caused their house to collapse after being woken by their cats, giving them time to escape, media reported Wednesday. “My wife got up because Simba and Mose, our cats, were making a noise and woke us up,” Claudio Piana told the *Secolo XIX* newspaper, as violent storms lashed northern Italy, killing a taxi driver and forcing dozens of people from their homes. “She realised they were playing with a piece of plaster which had just fallen off the ceiling. Then we saw cracks opening in the walls,” he said.

Google claims ‘quantum supremacy’ in breakthrough that can change computing

DOUGLAS BUSVINE
BERLIN, OCTOBER 23

GOOGLE SAID on Wednesday it had achieved a breakthrough in computer research, by solving a complex problem in minutes with a so-called quantum computer that would take today’s most powerful supercomputer thousands of years to crack.

Official confirmation of the breakthrough in quantum computing came in a paper published in science journal *Nature*, after weeks of controversy following the leak of a draft, over whether Google’s claim of “quantum supremacy” was valid.

Computer scientists have for decades sought to harness the behaviour of sub-atomic particles that can simultaneously exist in different states — in contrast to the “real” world that people perceive around them. So, whereas tradi-



Sundar Pichai with one of Google’s quantum computers at the Santa Barbara lab in California. *Reuters*

tional computing relies on bits, or ones and zeros, quantum computing uses quantum bits, or qubits, that can be both one and zero at the same time.

Google CEO Sundar Pichai compared the achievement to building the first rocket to leave the Earth’s atmosphere and touch the edge of space, an advance that

brought interplanetary travel into the realm of the possible.

“For those of us working in science and technology, it’s the ‘hello world’ moment we’ve been waiting for — the most meaningful milestone to date in the quest to date to make quantum computing a reality,” Pichai wrote in a blog. **REUTERS**

QUANTUM MACHINES

WHAT ARE THEY?

■ A quantum machine operates in a very different manner from regular computers. It relies on the ways in which some objects act at the subatomic level when exposed to extreme cold, like the metal chilled to 460 degrees below zero inside Google’s machine.

WHAT CAN THEY DO?

■ A mathematical calculation that the largest supercomputers could not complete in under 10,000 years was done in 3 minutes, 20 seconds, Google said.

■ One day, they could power advances in AI, or overwhelm the encryption that protects computers vital to national security.

Top US diplomat in Ukraine testifies Trump tied aid to investigations of political rivals

MICHAEL D SHEAR & NICHOLAS FANDOS
WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 23

WILLIAM TAYLOR, the United States’ top diplomat in Ukraine, told impeachment investigators privately Tuesday that President Donald Trump held up vital security aid for the country and refused a White House meeting with Ukraine’s leader until he agreed to make a public pledge to investigate Trump’s political rivals.

In testimony built around careful notes he took during his tenure and delivered in defiance of State Department orders, Taylor sketched out in remarkable detail a quid-pro-quo pressure campaign on Ukraine that Trump and his allies have long denied, in which the President conditioned the entire US relationship with Ukraine on a promise that the country would investigate former US Vice



William Taylor’s testimony was built around notes he took during his tenure and delivered in defiance of State Department orders. *AP*

President Joe Biden and his family, along with other Democrats.

His account implicated Trump personally in the effort, citing multiple sources inside the government, including a budget official who said during a secure National Security Council conference call in July that she had

EXPLAINED

Big blow to Trump’s no quid pro quo claim

TRUMP AND his allies have repeatedly said that his dealings with Ukraine did not involve any kind of quid pro quo, a latin phrase that means a favour for a favour. The question of whether there is any link between aid to Ukraine and Trump’s request for investigations into the Bidsens and the Democratic National Committee has been central to the impeachment inquiry against him in the House of Representatives. The US’s top diplomat in Ukraine testifying that aid was contingent on Ukraine conducting the investigations severely dents Trump’s claims that there was no quid pro quo and strengthens the Democrats’ resolve to move ahead with impeachment proceedings.

been instructed not to approve a \$391 million security assistance package for Ukraine, and that, Taylor said, “the directive had come from the President”.

Taylor described the situation as “a rancorous story about whistleblowers, Mr Giuliani, side channels, quid pro quos, corrup-

tion and interference in elections,” to which Ukraine was subjected by the Trump administration, with Rudy Giuliani, the President’s personal lawyer, at the centre of what he called an “irregular policy channel” that operated outside of normal US foreign policymaking. **NYT**

189 KILLED IN LAST YEARS PLANE MISHAP IN INDONESIA

Boeing flight control system key factor in Lion Air crash, investigators tell victims’ kin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAKARTA, OCTOBER 23

MECHANICAL AND design problems with a Boeing flight control system were key factors in the crash of a Lion Air plane last year, Indonesian investigators told victims’ families in a briefing Wednesday on their findings.

All 189 on board were killed when the Boeing 737 MAX crashed into the Java Sea shortly after takeoff from Jakarta last October.

Indian national Bhavye Suneja, the pilot of the plane, was also killed in the crash.

A few months later, the model was grounded worldwide after an Ethiopian Airlines 737 MAX crashed, killing 157 people aboard. Preliminary investigations into both accidents implicated the variant’s Manoeuvring Characteristics Augmentation System (MCAS), an automated flight-handling mechanism that



A relative of a victim speaks to reporters after Indonesian investigators told victims’ families mechanical and design issues contributed to the crash of the 737 MAX jet. *Reuters*

pilots were unable to control.

Details of a final report on the Lion Air crash were shown to grieving relatives at a closed-door meeting in the Indonesian capital.

In a slide-show presentation, Indonesia’s National Transportation Safety Committee said their report would include

problems with the MCAS as a “contributing factor”. “During the design and certification of the (737 MAX), assumptions were made about pilot response to malfunctions which, even though consistent with current industry guidelines, turned out to be incorrect,” said the presentation.

USA

PAINTING STOLEN BY NAZIS RECOVERED

A painting that was stolen by the Nazis has been recovered from an upstate New York museum by the FBI. The work *Winter* by American artist Gari Melchers was part of the collection at the Arkell Museum before it was recovered. Court documents say German publisher and philanthropist Rudolf Mosse acquired the painting in 1900. The Nazi government had seized the painting in 1933.

Hong Kong officially kills extradition Bill

Move, one of protesters’ 5 demands, unlikely to end unrest

JESSIE PANG & TWINNIE SIU
HONG KONG, OCTOBER 23

HONG KONG’S legislature on Wednesday formally withdrew planned legislation that would have allowed extraditions to mainland China, but the move was unlikely to end months of unrest as it met just one of five demands of pro-democracy protesters.

The rallying cry of the protesters, who have trashed public buildings in the Chinese-ruled city, set street fires and thrown petrol bombs at police, has been “five demands, not one less”, meaning the withdrawal of the Bill made no difference.

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam had said many times the Bill was as good as dead and said that other demands, including universal suffrage and an amnesty for all those charged with rioting, were beyond her control.

Protesters are also calling for her to stand down and for an independent inquiry into perceived police brutality during a long hot summer of running battles on the streets.

The extradition Bill would



Secretary of Security John Lee Ka-Chiu announces the withdrawal of the extradition Bill in Hong Kong. *Reuters*

have allowed defendants charged with serious crimes to be sent for trial abroad, including to Communist Party-controlled courts in China.

China to replace Lam?

China, which has many times expressed confidence in Lam and her government to end the unrest, was drawing up a plan to replace her with an “interim” chief executive, the *Financial Times* reported, citing people briefed on the deliberations.

Lam has become a lightning rod for protests and another of

the protesters’ demands has been for her to stand down.

The leading candidates to succeed Lam include Norman Chan, the former head of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, and Henry Tang, who has also served as the territory’s financial secretary and chief secretary for administration, the report said.

A senior official in Beijing said the *FT* story was wrong and none of the suggested candidates in the story could take over from Lam based on the Basic Law, Hong Kong’s mini-constitution. **REUTERS**

Suspect whose case led to unrest freed from prison in Hong Kong

ASSOCIATED PRESS
HONG KONG, OCTOBER 23

A MURDER suspect whose case indirectly led to Hong Kong’s ongoing protests was freed from prison on Wednesday and told reporters he was willing to surrender to authorities in Taiwan, where he is wanted for the killing of his girlfriend.

Chan Tong-kai was released after serving a separate sen-



Chan Tong-kai

tence for money laundering offences. He could not be sent to Taiwan because the semi-au-

tonomous city of Hong Kong has no extradition agreement with self-ruled Taiwan.

He bowed deeply to the journalists waiting outside the prison, apologised to the victim’s family and the people of Hong Kong, then got into a waiting van that drove away.

Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council said Wednesday that allowing a murder suspect to fly on his own would ignore the safety of other passengers.

Russian forces deploy at Syrian border under new accord

SUZAN FRASER & LEFTERIS PITARAKIS
AKCAKALE, OCTOBER 23

RUSSIAN MILITARY police began patrols on part of the Syrian border Wednesday, quickly moving to implement an accord with Turkey that divvies up control of northeastern Syria. The Kremlin told Kurdish fighters to pull back from the entire frontier or else face being “steamrolled” by Turkish forces.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan echoed those warnings, saying his military would resume its offensive against Kurdish fighters if the new arrangements are not carried out.

Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin reached an agreement Tuesday that would transform the map of northeast Syria, installing their forces along the border and filling the void left by the abrupt withdrawal of American troops. The Kurdish fighters, who once relied on the U.S. forces as protection from Turkey, were given



Russian and Syrian flags seen near the northern Syrian village of Zor Magar. *Reuters*

a deadline of next Tuesday evening to pull back from border areas they have not already left.

Iraq, meanwhile, closed the door on the US military’s attempt to keep the troops leaving Syria on its soil. Iraqi Defense Minister Najah al-Shammari told The Associated Press that those troops were only “transiting” Iraq and would leave within four weeks, heading either to Kuwait, Qatar or the United States.

Al-Shammari spoke after meeting US Defence Secretary Mark Esper, who earlier this week had said the American forces from Syria would remain in Iraq. **AP**

EASTER ATTACK



Lanka’s Sirisena undermined national security: Parliament probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
COLOMBO, OCTOBER 23

SRI LANKAN President Maithripala Sirisena “actively undermined” national security, a parliamentary committee that probed the Easter suicide bombings said on Wednesday as it blamed the spy chief for the intelligence failure that led to the country’s deadliest terror attack in April.

Nine suicide bombers carried out a series of blasts that tore through three churches and three luxury hotels on Easter Sunday, killing 277 people. The Islamic State claimed the attacks, but the government blamed local extremist group National Thowheeth Jamaath for the bombings.

Sirisena suspended police chief Pujith Jayasundara as well as the defence secretary as part of the revamping of the security establishment following the attack.

In its 1,649-page report, the Parliament Select Committee (PSC) on the Easter attacks said that the Director of State Intelligence Service (SIS) is primarily responsible for the intelligence failure that led to the attacks.

“The PSC notes that intelligence information related to the attacks was first received by the Director SIS on April 4, 2019 but there were delays from his end to share it with relevant intelligence and security personnel,” it said.

The report said that apart from the SIS, the secretary to the ministry of defence, the police chief, the chief of national intelligence and directorate of military intelligence had also failed in their duties.

DESPITE THE ARREST OF JOAQUIN GUZMAN, THE SINALOA CARTEL IS GOING STRONG

In Mexico, El Chapo’s sons add brash new chapter to crime family

DAVID ALIRE GARCIA
CULIACAN, OCTOBER 23

THE MUG shot-style photo of Ovidio Guzman that appeared as he was apprehended oozed defiance. Chin jutting out, eyes trained on the camera, the handsome youth bore a strong resemblance to his infamous father, jailed drug lord Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman.

He had reason to be cocksure. In response to his capture in an upscale neighbourhood, hundreds of heavily-armed Sinaloa Cartel henchmen, guns blazing,

were pouring into Culiacan, briefly taking the modern city of about a million people near Mexico’s Pacific coast hostage.

Within hours they had pried him loose from authorities.

It was like nothing Mexico had seen before, a military-style operation that outfitted and outnumbered security forces, leaving the city shocked and smoldering. The show of strength dashed hopes the cartel was seriously weakened by the life sentence the elder Guzman received in the United States this year.

Not only were the new gen-



A burning bus, set alight by cartel gunmen in Culiacan, Sinaloa state, Mexico, on October 17. *Reuters*

eration of Guzmans, collectively known as Los Chapitos, keeping alive their family’s outlaw repu-

tation, they were doing it with a brazenness akin to open warfare. “We’re facing a new genera-

tion of organised crime that doesn’t respect civilians,” Cristobal Castaneda, head of Sinaloa state security, said after the attacks.

Four surviving sons of El Chapo were already regulars in Culiacan’s nightclubs and restaurants, despite US indictments against them, before last Thursday’s dramatic act of armed insurrection.

A concrete monument in the parking lot of a Culiacan supermarket marks the spot where a fifth son was shot dead in 2008.

None of the four are older than their mid-thirties. They have already survived kidnappings, ar-

rest attempts and cartel infighting to establish themselves as the city’s most prominent traffickers, with the support of cartel elders.

Thursday’s attacks showed they were capable of taking on the Mexican Army, state police and National Guard. Using a mixture of firepower, speed, discipline and the underlying threat of mass civilian deaths, they won.

Castaneda pointed to how over several hours gunmen stormed into businesses and sprayed police with bullets in crowded areas, on a scale unprecedented in the country’s drug war. Remarkably, the

government says just 13 people were killed, including a soldier and several cartel gunmen.

Finally, a humbled Mexican government was forced to order Ovidio’s release, opting against a bloodier confrontation that officials later said could have claimed hundreds of lives.

For many, Ovidio’s celebrity elevated him and his brothers, to the status of Sinaloa Cartel heavyweights, with Ovidio’s exploits placing just him a few notches below his father in the pantheon of those who outsmarted the government. **REUTERS**