

TOPOF THE WORLD



Joshua Wong at a press conference in Hong Kong Tuesday. AP

HONG KONG

Top democracy activist barred from local polls

**Hong Kong:** Hong Kong democracy activist Joshua Wong was barred Tuesday from standing in upcoming local elections after months of huge and frequently violent protests in the city. Wong, one of the most prominent figures in the otherwise leaderless movement, accused the government of “political screening” after an election officer ruled invalid his nomination for the November poll. The 22-year-old was sent to prison earlier this year over the democracy protests he helped lead in 2014. He immediately joined the historic anti-government protests rocking the city upon his release in June.

SRI LANKA

Supreme Court stays death penalty till Nov 10

**Colombo:** Sri Lanka’s Supreme Court on Tuesday extended the stay order till November 10 against a move by President Maithripala Sirisena to reinstate capital punishment in the country for the first time since 1976 before he leaves office next month. Sri Lanka has maintained a 43-year moratorium on capital punishment. However, Sirisena in June this year announced that he has signed the death warrants of four drug convicts and that the executions will take place soon. Later, the move was stayed till October 29 by the Supreme Court.

PHILIPPINES

6 killed in strong earthquake

**Manila:** An earthquake struck the southern Philippines Tuesday, killing six people, cracking buildings and injuring dozens in a region still reeling from a previous deadly tremor. Locals ran into the streets after the 6.6-magnitude quake, which hit the island of Mindanao as schools and offices opened for the day. The shaking lasted up to a minute in some areas, damaging homes, multi-storey buildings and classrooms in a region where hundreds are still displaced by a quake that killed five earlier this month. The Philippines suffers regular tremors as part of the Pacific “Ring of Fire”.

TRUMP CONFIRMS KILLING OF ISIS CHIEF’S ‘SUCCESSOR’

US officials: Baghdadi buried at sea, afforded religious rites

PHIL STEWART

WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 29

THE UNITED States has given the remains of Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi a burial at sea and afforded him religious rites according to Islamic custom after he was killed in a US commando raid in Syria on Saturday, three officials told *Reuters*.

Baghdadi, an Iraqi jihadist who rose from obscurity to declare himself “caliph” of all Muslims as the leader of Islamic State, died by detonating a suicide vest after fleeing into a dead-end tunnel as elite US special forces closed in, according to the US government.

The US officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, did not disclose where the ritual was performed or how long it lasted. Two officials said they believed his remains were delivered to the sea from an aircraft.

US Army General Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told a Pentagon news briefing on Monday that the US military disposed of Baghdadi’s remains “appropriately, in accordance with our (standard operating procedures)

TRUMP SHARES PHOTO OF DOG IN ISIS RAID



The photo of a military dog wounded in the raid on Baghdadi was released by the White House. AP

**U.S. PRESIDENT** Donald Trump shared a photograph on Monday of the dog who participated in the raid against Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the Islamic State leader, but said the dog’s name remained classified.

**“WE HAVE** declassified a picture of the wonderful dog that did such a GREAT JOB in capturing and killing the Leader of ISIS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi!” Trump tweeted.

**THE CANINE** became famous overnight after it cornered the terrorist leader in a dead-end tunnel during the raid on Saturday.

**EARLIER, THE** Pentagon had said it was not making public the name of the service dog injured in the raid in Syria.

and in accordance with the law of armed conflict.”

Given the gruesome nature of Baghdadi’s death, it was unlikely the US military followed as

complete a process as it did after Navy SEALs killed al Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden in a 2011 raid into Pakistan. Bin Laden was killed by a gunshot

wound to the head, according to the US government.

In the case of bin Laden, his body was transported to the aircraft carrier *USS Carl Vinson*. It was washed before being covered in a white sheet, and religious remarks translated into Arabic were read over bin Laden’s corpse.

Milley did not enter into details about any of Baghdadi’s last rites. He said that before the disposal of Baghdadi’s remains, they had been transported to a secure facility to confirm his identity with DNA testing.

Meanwhile, Trump confirmed on Tuesday the US military had killed the person who likely would have succeeded Baghdadi as the leader of Islamic State.

“Just confirmed that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi’s number one replacement has been terminated by American troops,” Trump wrote on Twitter. “Most likely would have taken the top spot.”

Trump did not specify who he was referring to, but the United States on Monday confirmed the killing of Abu al-Hassan al-Muhajir, Islamic State spokesman and a high-ranking figure within the jihadi group. **REUTERS**

Sharif is fighting for his life, says doctor

8-week bail for Pak ex-PM in graft case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LAHORE, OCTOBER 29

NAWAZ SHARIF is “fighting for life” after a drastic drop in his blood platelet count, a media report quoted his personal doctor as saying on Tuesday, days after Pakistan’s former prime minister was rushed from prison to a hospital.

Sharif, 69, was admitted to the Services Hospital on Monday night from the anti-graft body’s custody after his platelets dropped to a critical low level of 2,000.

Sharif’s personal physician Dr Adnan Khan said in a series of tweets that “Former PM #NawazSharif, critically unwell, is fighting the battle for his health & life. Thrombocytopenia (Low Platelet Count) & NSTEMI (Heart Attack) is further complicated by deteriorating Kidney functions. Poor Blood Sugar & Blood Pressure control is taking its toll,” Geo News reported.

The three-time prime minister on Saturday also suffered



He was admitted to hospital Monday after a drastic drop in his platelet count

angina attack while undergoing treatment. Angina is a type of chest pain caused by reduced blood flow to the heart.

Khan said that the poor blood sugar and blood pressure had also taken a toll on the former premier’s health, the report said.

Meanwhile, the Islamabad High Court suspended the sentence of Sharif for eight weeks in the Al Azizia case, in which he is serving a seven-year imprisonment, *Dawn* reported. A plea for bail had been filed by Sharif’s brother Shehbaz Sharif.

Lebanon’s PM resigns after mass protests

REUTERS

BEIRUT, OCTOBER 29

SAAD AL-HARIRI resigned as Lebanon’s Prime Minister Tuesday, declaring he had hit a “dead end” in trying to resolve a crisis unleashed by huge protests against the ruling elite and plunging the country deeper into turmoil.

The move points to rising political tensions that may complicate the formation of a new government able to tackle Lebanon’s



Lebanon PM Saad al-Hariri hands over his resignation letter to President Michel Aoun. Reuters

worst economic crisis since its 1975-90 civil war.

The resignation of Hariri, who has been traditionally

MEANWHILE

NEPAL MAN SETS MOUNTAINEERING RECORD

A Nepalese man shattered the previous mountaineering record for successfully climbing the world’s 14 highest peaks, completing the feat in 189 days. Nirmal Purja scaled the 8,027-metre Mount Shishapangma in China on Tuesday, which was the last of the 14 peaks that are more than 8,000 metres in height. The previous record was seven years, 10 months and six days.



18 killed as masked gunmen attack protesters in Karbala

Worst attack on a protest in Iraq since stir erupted this month

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, OCTOBER 29

MASKED GUNMEN opened fire at Iraqi protesters in the Shia holy city of Karbala on Tuesday, killing 18 people and wounding hundreds, security officials said, in the deadliest single attack since anti-government demonstrations erupted earlier this month.

The overnight attack came as Iraqis took to the streets for a fifth straight day after a hiatus in the demonstrations that began earlier this month to protest government corruption, a lack of jobs and municipal services and other grievances. The earlier protests also saw violence against protesters, and a total of 240 people have been killed since the unrest began.

But the bloodshed in Karbala could mark a turning point because of the high death toll and because the city is a major pilgrimage site where a revered Shia figure was killed in a seventh-century battle.

There were differing accounts and death tolls, and details were still emerging from the scene.

It was not immediately clear who was behind the attack, and



Mourners wait outside the building of forensic medicine on Tuesday for the coffin of a protester, who was killed overnight at anti-government protests in Kerbala, Iraq. Reuters

protesters said they did not know whether the masked men were riot police, special forces or Iranian-linked militias. The protesters said Iraqi soldiers had been stationed around the protest site but withdrew after the attackers began firing tear gas and live ammunition.

Amid a clampdown by security forces, it was difficult to piece together what exactly prompted the attack although eyewitnesses said that masked gunmen opened fire on the camp.

Provincial governor Nassif al-Khutabi denied any protesters were killed but said there were in-

juries among security forces.

He said videos posted online were fabricated and not from Karbala. The footage purported to show the aftermath of the attack, with fires and people running away to the sound of heavy gunfire. Al-Khutabi’s description contradicted those from people who were at the scene.

At least 73 people — not including the latest fatalities in Karbala — have been killed since anti-government demonstrations resumed Friday, while 149 were killed during the earlier wave of protests this month.

Brexit election nears as UK Opposition backs early poll

ELIZABETH PIPER & GUY FAULCONBRIDGE

LONDON, OCTOBER 29

BRITAIN WAS heading towards a December election on Tuesday after Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s bet on breaking the Brexit deadlock with an early vote gained support from Opposition parties.

As the European Union finalises a third delay to the divorce that was originally supposed to take place on March 29, the United Kingdom, its Parliament and its voters remain divided on how, or indeed whether, to go ahead with Brexit.

Johnson, who had promised to deliver Brexit on Oct 31, has repeatedly demanded an election to end what he casts as a nightmare paralysis that is sapping public trust by preventing any Brexit outcome at all.

After Parliament refused Johnson his third demand for an election on Monday, he will try to force a Bill through Parliament on Tuesday that calls for a December 12 election. It needs a simple majority in Parliament.

In a move that raises the chances of a rare parliamentary success for Johnson, Opposition



Boris Johnson speaks to MPs during the election debate in the House of Commons on Monday. AP

Labour Party’s leader Jeremy Corbyn said its condition of ruling out a no-deal Brexit had been met, so it would support an election.

“Labour will back a general election,” said Corbyn, a veteran socialist campaigner. “The Labour Party loves a debate, but they also love the end of the debate, and this is the end of the debate: We are going out there to win.”

Lawmakers could bring significant changes to Johnson’s Bill. Opposition parties are squabbling over which day in early December is best for an election and whether to allow settled European Union citizens a vote. **REUTERS**

EXPLAINED

Early election still faces obstacles in Parliament

THE MAIN Opposition party, Labour, has agreed to support an early election to be held in December, potentially giving the government the number of votes it needs to pass a Bill to declare snap polls. But that Bill, which was voted down by MPs three times earlier, still faces considerable obstacles. While the election Bill is debated in Parliament, MPs could suggest amendments. Some have suggested amendments to expand voting rights to allow 16- and 17-year-olds, as well as EU nationals, to take part in the elections. The government has publicly declared that if such amendments were passed, it would abandon its attempt to hold early polls.

Texas robbery gang leader who targeted homes of US-Indians gets 37 yrs in jail

YOSHITA SINGH

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 29

A TEXAS woman has been sentenced to 37 years in prison for leading a gang that carried out targeted robberies of Indian-American homes across the US.

Chaka Castro, 44, was sentenced on Monday by US District Court Judge Laurie Michelson of the Eastern District of Michigan, who presided over the trial.

After a five-week trial, Castro was convicted of one count of Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organisations (RICO) conspiracy, four counts of assault with a dangerous weapon in aid of racketeering and four counts of use of a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence.

According to evidence presented at trial, from 2011 to 2014, Castro and her robbery crews committed a string of home invasions in Georgia, New York, Ohio, Michigan and Texas.

The leader of the gang was Castro, who would generate lists of robbery targets in various states around the country, specifically families of Asian and Indian ancestry, and then assign her accomplices to carry out the armed robberies of these families within their homes. **PTI**

MATERNAL DNA DATA FROM 1,200 PEOPLE INDIGENOUS TO SOUTHERN AFRICA HELP NARROW DOWN LOCATION

Humankind’s ancestral homeland pinpointed in Botswana

WILL DUNHAM

WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 29

A LARGE ancient wetlands region spanning northern Botswana — once teeming with life but now dominated by desert and salt flats — may represent the ancestral homeland of all of the 7.7 billion people on Earth today, researchers said on Monday.

Their study, guided by maternal DNA data from more than 1,200 people indigenous to southern Africa, proposed a central role for this region in the early history of humankind starting 200,000 years ago, nurturing our

species for 70,000 years before climate changes paved the way for the first migrations.

A lake that at the time was Africa’s largest — twice the area of today’s Lake Victoria — gave rise to the ancient wetlands covering the Greater Zambezi River Basin that includes northern Botswana into Namibia to the west and Zimbabwe to the east, the researchers said.

It has been long established that *Homo sapiens* originated somewhere in Africa before later spreading worldwide.

“But what we hadn’t known until this study was where exactly this homeland was,” said



Vanessa Hayes with a man from an extended Ju/hoansi family, who provided genome data for a study identifying the ancestral homeland in southern Africa of all living members of the human species. Reuters

geneticist Vanessa Hayes of the Garvan Institute of Medical Research and University of Sydney, who led the study published in the journal *Nature*.

The oldest-known *Homo sapiens* fossil evidence dates back more than 300,000 years from Morocco. The new study suggests that early members of our species, as represented by the Morocco remains, may not have left any ancestors living today, the researchers said.

“There is no contradiction between the presence of an early *Homo sapiens*-like skull in northern Africa, which may be from an extinct lineage, and the

proposed southern African origin of the *Homo sapiens* lineages that are still alive,” added study co-author Axel Timmermann, a climate physicist at Pusan National University in South Korea.

The ancient lake Makgadikgadi began to break up about 200,000 years ago, giving rise to a sprawling wetland region inhabited by human hunter-gatherers, the researchers said.

“It can be viewed as a massive extension of today’s Okavango Delta wetland area,” Timmermann said.

Changes in Earth’s axis and

orbit caused climate, rainfall and vegetation shifts that set the stage for early migrations of this ancestral group of people away from the homeland region, first toward the northeast 130,000 years ago, then toward the southwest 110,000 years ago, Timmermann added.

“Our study provides the first quantitative and well-dated evidence that astronomically driven climate changes in the past caused major human migration events, which then led to the development of genetic diversity and eventually cultural, ethnic and linguistic identity,” Timmermann added. **REUTERS**