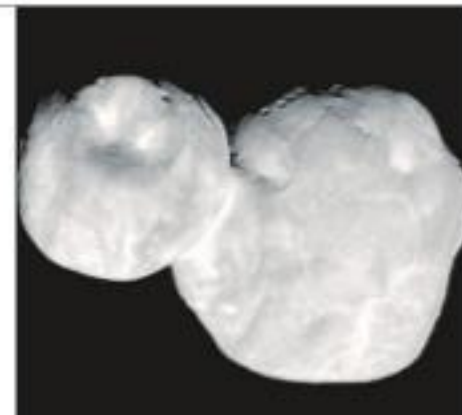


17 THE WORLD



MEANWHILE NASA RENAMES OBJECT AFTER UPROAR

NASA announced that a space rock formerly known as Ultima Thule, would now be named Arrokoth, a Native American word meaning "sky". Ultima Thule is a Latin term that means "a place beyond the known world", but it was also the name given by Nazis to what they believed was a prehistoric Aryan utopia. NASA renamed the object after uproar over the Nazi connection.

TOP OF THE WORLD



A kookaburra perches on a burnt tree after a bushfire in Wallabi Point, New South Wales. Reuters

AUSTRALIA

Australians told to flee as fires rage in east, west
 Sydney: Australian officials on Wednesday ordered residents and tourists to get out of the way of fast-approaching flames as firefighters struggled to contain more than 150 bushfires raging on both the east and west coasts. While cooler weather overnight brought some relief for firefighters in New South Wales state, of which Sydney is capital, attention shifted to its northern neighbour, Queensland, where more than 80 fires threatened lives and homes. Authorities issued a "leave immediately" warning, the highest level, for several areas including Noosa, a beachside holiday destination 150 km north of Brisbane.

U.S. HOUSE BEGINS TELEVISED PROCEEDINGS

Trump impeachment hearings go public

President's preoccupation with investigating Biden influenced his Ukraine policy, testifies top US diplomat in Kiev

MICHAEL D SHEAR
 NOVEMBER 13

WILLIAM TAYLOR, the top US diplomat in Ukraine, offered dramatic new testimony Wednesday about how President Donald Trump's preoccupation with investigating former Vice President Joe Biden was affecting his actions toward Ukraine as hearings began on Capitol Hill as the House Intelligence Committee considers whether to impeach Trump for what Democrats say was an effort to use the power of his office for political gain.

Taylor said a member of his staff overheard a telephone conversation in which the President mentioned "the investigations" to Gordon Sondland, the US ambassador to the European Union, who told him "that the Ukrainians were ready to move forward." After the call, the aide asked Sondland what the President thought of Ukraine, in Taylor's telling. The ambassador "responded that President Trump cares more about the investigations of Biden, which Giuliani was pressing for".

He was referring to Rudy Giuliani, the President's personal lawyer, who Taylor described as the leader of an "highly irregular" policymaking channel on Ukraine that ran counter to goals of long-standing US policy.



Diplomats George Kent and William Taylor at the House Intelligence Committee hearing. Reuters

TRUMP 'TOO BUSY' TO WATCH

President Donald Trump said Wednesday he skipped the first televised hearings in his impeachment investigation because he was "too busy". "I'm too busy to watch it. It's a witch hunt, it's a hoax, I'm too busy to watch it. So, I'm sure I'll get a report," Trump told reporters. He later greeted Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the White House. PTI

Much of the rest of Taylor's testimony was consistent with what he told the panel previously, an account that included vivid details of how he discovered Trump was conditioning "everything" about the US relationship with Ukraine — including military aid and a White House meeting for Ukraine's President — on the country's willingness to commit publicly to investigations of his political rivals.

The revelation came as Democrats opened the first public impeachment hearing in more than two decades, moving into the public's direct glare the clash between Trump and Democrats that has so far unfolded in private.

EXPLAINED The major issues set to dominate public hearings

THE PHONE CALL

The impeachment inquiry was triggered by a whistleblower complaint about the July 25 phone call between Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Transcripts of the call released by the White House show that Trump asked Zelenskyy to investigate his political rivals. However, the Republicans say that since there was no mention of withholding aid in the conversation, it does not prove there was quid pro quo.

MILITARY AID

\$400 million in military aid to Ukraine, which was approved by Congress, was frozen ahead of the Trump-Zelenskyy phone call. Witnesses have testified during closed-door hearings that it was made clear to the Ukrainians that the aid would only be released if Ukraine publicly announced the investigations that Trump wanted.

AMBASSADOR'S OUSTER

Marie Yovanovitch, a respected career diplomat, was



Trump with Zelenskyy on the sidelines of the UNGA in September. Reuters

US ambassador to Ukraine between Aug 2016 and May 2019. She was abruptly recalled to Washington after an alleged smear campaign by Trump officials who considered her an impediment to the President's Ukraine policy.

RUDY GIULIANI

Multiple officials have testified that Trump's personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, led the US policy towards Ukraine, bypassing official state department channels in order to promote Trump's political agenda.



Jeanine Anez on the balcony of the Presidential Palace in La Paz, Bolivia. Reuters

Bolivian Senator assumes interim presidency

REUTERS
 LA PAZ, NOVEMBER 13

THE HEAD of Bolivia's Senate, Jeanine Anez, took office as interim president on Tuesday as former leader Evo Morales pledged to keep up his political fight from exile in Mexico after resigning in what he has alleged was a coup.

Anez, 52, assumed leadership before other lawmakers in Congress, invoking a constitutional clause that dictates that she would be next in line to rule after Morales and his vice president, Alvaro Garcia, resigned on Sunday. A parliamentary session scheduled to formally appoint her was boycotted by lawmakers from Morales' leftist MAS party.

"Before the definitive absence of the president and vice president... as the president of the Chamber of Senators, I immediately assume the presidency as foreseen in the constitutional order," said Anez, a right-wing leader.

VENICE DEVASTATED BY 2ND HIGHEST TIDE EVER



A greengrocer pulls his cart through high water in Venice on Wednesday. AP

■ Venice's mayor called the city a disaster zone Wednesday after the second highest tide ever recorded swept through it overnight, flooding its historic basilica and leaving many areas deep under water.

■ Officials said the tide peaked at 187 cm (6ft 2ins) at 10.50 pm Tuesday, just short of the record 194 cm set in 1966. Night footage showed a torrent of water whipped up by high winds raging through the city centre.

■ Saint Mark's Square was submerged by more than one metre of water, while the adjacent Saint Mark's Basilica was flooded for only the sixth time in 1,200 years, but the fourth in the last 20.

Israel airstrikes: Gaza death toll goes up to 23

Gaza City: Israeli airstrikes killed 13 Palestinians in Gaza on Wednesday, medical officials said, raising the Palestinian death toll to 23 over a two-day escalation in violence since Israel launched strikes to kill an Islamic Jihad commander.

From early morning Gaza militants fired rockets into Israel and the Israeli military struck from the air, resuming after an overnight lull. There were reports of injuries but no deaths inside Israel, where the military said it shot many of the rockets down with air defences.

The bodies of six people were brought to Gaza's Shifa hospital early Wednesday, as relatives wept and screamed. Medics and witnesses said they were civilians who lived in densely populated neighbourhoods. REUTERS



After a suicide bomb blast in Kabul Wednesday. Reuters

AFGHAN PRISONER SWAP

Uncertainty over fate of Western hostages, Taliban prisoners

'Hostages will only be released when prisoners reach their destination'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
 KABUL, NOVEMBER 13

TWO WESTERN hostages of the Taliban, who are expected to be freed in a prisoner swap for three militants, will be released only when the insurgents "reach their destination", a spokesman for the Islamist group said Wednesday.

The fate of the American and Australian hostages — both professors at the American University in Kabul when they were kidnapped in 2016 — remained unclear a day after Afghan President Ashraf Ghani announced the exchange.

"When our captives reach their destination, the American University professors will be released," Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said. He did not specify what that destination would be.

Afghan authorities declined to comment further on Wednesday, while the US embassy in Kabul said it had no further information after its ambassador had welcomed the news a day earlier.

Australia's foreign ministry said it did not want to give a "running commentary" on the process. "We sincerely appreciate President Ghani's concern for Tim Weeks and Kevin King, and hope the Taliban immediately releases the hostages," a spokesperson said.

Ghani said Tuesday that three prisoners — including Anas Haqqani, brother to the leader of one of the Taliban's most feared factions — would be freed. The move was in apparent exchange for the release of the two Western hostages, American Kevin King and Australian Timothy Weeks.

But Ghani did not say when or where any swap would take place.

Children among 12 killed in Kabul car bomb

RAHIM FAIEZ & TAMEEM AKHGAR
 KABUL, NOVEMBER 13

A CAR bombing in Kabul during morning rush hour Wednesday targeted a private security company's convoy, with officials later saying that 12 people were killed, including children.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, but both the Taliban and the Islamic State group are active in the Afghan capital and have claimed many previous attacks in the city.

The explosion occurred in the Qasaba area, in the Afghan capital's police district 15. The GARDAWORLD security company was the apparent target, according to Nasrat Rahimi, an Interior Ministry spokesman.

The attack also wounded 20, including four of the company's foreign staff, he said but declined to reveal their nationalities. Reports in the immediate aftermath of the attack said seven had died but Marwa Amini, the ministry's deputy spokeswoman, later released the new death toll in a tweet.

A vehicle belonging to the security company and two private cars were damaged in the attack, Rahimi added and said an investigation was underway into the bombing. Ambulance sirens were heard shortly after the car bomb went off and a large plume of smoke rose from the area — scenes all too familiar for Kabul and other cities and towns across Afghanistan. AP

Sikhs most targeted religious group in US after Jews, Muslims: FBI report

LALIT K JHA
 WASHINGTON, NOVEMBER 13

AROUND 60 incidents of hate crimes against Sikhs were reported to the FBI in 2018, making the community the third most commonly targeted religious group after Jews and Muslims in the US, according to an annual report released by the bureau.

A total of 7,120 hate crimes were reported by law enforcement agencies around the country last year, slightly down from 7,175 in 2017, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) said on Tuesday, adding that this involved 8,496 offences.

HATE CRIMES IN 2018

Total reported: 7,120, down slightly from 7,175 in 2017

Targeting Jews: 835 cases

Targeting Muslims: 188 cases

Targeting Sikhs: 60 cases

Other religions: 91 cases in total, including 12 targeting Hindus and 10 Buddhists

According to a press release issued by the FBI, the 2018 data, submitted by 16,039 law en-

forcement agencies, provide information about the offences, victims, offenders, and locations of hate crimes.

The crimes were being motivated by bias toward race, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, sexual orientation, disability, gender, and gender identity, it said.

The largest number of hate crimes based on religion were reported against Jews (835), followed by Muslims (188) and Sikhs (60).

Of the 4,047 hate crimes based on ethnicity, the most 1,943 hate crime incidents were against African-Americans, followed by anti-White (762) and anti-Hispanic crimes (485). PTI

Students from mainland China flee Hong Kong

ASSOCIATED PRESS
 HONG KONG, NOVEMBER 13

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS from mainland China and Taiwan are fleeing Hong Kong, while those from three Scandinavian countries have been moved or urged to leave as college campuses become the latest battleground in the city's five-month-long anti-government unrest.

Marine police used a boat Wednesday to help a group of mainland students leave the Chinese University of Hong Kong, which remained barricaded by demonstrators after violent clashes with police on Tuesday.

Authorities announced that primary and secondary school

classes would be suspended Thursday as clashes turn increasingly violent.

The protests have taken on a strong anti-China bent, with radical demonstrators trashing branches of mainland banks, China's official Xinhua News Agency and restaurant chains whose owners support the Beijing government.

For the third day in a row, protesters widely disrupted train service, blocked streets and rallied in the central business district. They hunkered down for possible clashes with police at university campuses.

Mainland students have said in online posts that they were being targeted by protesters who broke into their dormitories.

OFFICIAL VIDEO HAD BRANDED FEMINISM, HOMOSEXUALITY AND ATHEISM AS EXTREMIST IDEAS

Saudi backpedals on video labelling feminism as extremism

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
 RIYADH, NOVEMBER 13

SAUDI AUTHORITIES have distanced themselves from an official video that sparked controversy after it branded feminism, homosexuality and atheism as extremist ideas.

Saudi Arabia's state security agency posted the animated video on Twitter last weekend at a time when de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is seeking to open up the austere kingdom to foreign tourists and overhaul its ultra-conservative image.

The tweet has since been taken down. The security agency said the video contained "many mistakes" and suggested that those behind it would face a formal investigation, according to a statement posted late Tuesday by the official Saudi Press Agency.

It also rejected a report in *Al-Watan*, a local daily, that said feminists would be jailed and subject to flogging.

In a separate statement, the kingdom's Human Rights Commission stressed that "feminism is not criminalised" and that it accords "the utmost importance to women's rights".



Saudi Arabia has long faced international criticism over its treatment of women. Reuters

The two statements made no mention of homosexuality or atheism, which are both illegal and punishable by death in the

Muslim kingdom.

The video sparked criticism from campaigners, with Amnesty International saying it was "extremely dangerous" and had "serious implications for the rights to freedom of expression and life, liberty and security in the country".

Saudi Arabia has long faced international criticism over its treatment of women. Prince Mohammed has sought to ease restrictions on women with multiple reforms including a historic decree that ended a decades-old ban on female motorists.

In August, Saudi Arabia also allowed women to obtain passports

without seeking the approval of their "guardians" — fathers, husbands or other male relatives.

The move, part of Prince Mohammed's plan to revamp the national image, ended a long-standing rule that prompted some extreme attempts by women to flee the kingdom.

But observers say loopholes still allow male relatives to curtail their movements and, in the worst cases, leave them marooned in prison-like shelters.

Alongside a string of pro-women reforms, Saudi authorities have also cracked down on female activists.