

TOP OF THE WORLD



Yasuhiro Nakasone

JAPAN

Former PM Nakasone dies at 101

Tokyo: Former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, an ardent conservative who worked to forge a stronger military alliance with the US, died Friday at the age of 101, an official at his son's office said. In office for five years from November 1982 to November 1987, he was known for trying to transform the nation defeated in World War II into a full-fledged member of the West during the Cold War era. His efforts to strengthen security ties with Washington came at a time of intensifying trade friction with the United States, the world's biggest economy.

SOUTH KOREA

Two K-pop stars sentenced to prison for rape

Seoul: South Korean singer-songwriter Jung Joon-young was convicted Friday of gang rape and distributing videos of the assaults and other sexual encounters, and was jailed for six years. Jung and Choi Jong-hoon, a former member of boy band FT Island, were found guilty of gang-raping two different victims on two occasions in 2016. Separately, 30-year-old Jung was also convicted of filming himself having sex with other women without their knowledge and sharing the footage without their consent.

SOUTH AFRICA

Zuma loses bid to appeal against corruption trial

Johannesburg: A South African court on Friday dismissed former president Jacob Zuma's attempts to appeal against a corruption trial in which he faces charges related to a 1990s arms deal. The High Court ruled that "Mr Zuma's leave to appeal is dismissed with costs". Zuma filed an appeal last month ahead of the initial October 15 trial date, dragging on a case that has seen numerous legal turns over a decade and a half. He is alleged to have taken bribes worth four million rand related to a \$3.4 billion arms deal.

CANADA

Seven dead in plane crash

Toronto: Five Americans and two Canadians were killed when a light aircraft crashed in a wooded area on the north shore of Lake Ontario, Canada's transport safety agency said Thursday. The US-registered single-engine Piper PA-32 departed Toronto's Buttonville Airport and was apparently headed to Quebec City when it crashed on approach to the Kingston, Ontario airport on Wednesday just after five pm (2200 GMT). Transportation Safety Board (TSB) investigator Ken Webster said. Emergency services were dispatched to locate the downed plane, which was found in thick brush.

DURING VISIT TO AFGHANISTAN

Reopened talks with Taliban, says Trump, months after ending them

MICHAEL CROWLEY
BAGRAM AIR FIELD,
NOVEMBER 29

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump paid an unannounced Thanksgiving visit to US troops in Afghanistan on Thursday and declared that he had reopened peace negotiations with the Taliban less than three months after scuttling talks in hopes of ending 18 years of war.

"The Taliban wants to make a deal, and we're meeting with them," Trump said during a meeting with Afghanistan's president, Ashraf Ghani, at the main base for US forces north of Kabul. "We're going to stay until such time as we have a deal, or we have total victory, and they want to make a deal very badly," Trump added even as he reaffirmed his desire to reduce the US military presence to 8,600 troops, down from about 12,000 to 13,000.

Trump's sudden announcement on peace talks came at a critical moment in the United States' long, drawn-out military venture in Afghanistan, a time when the country is mired in turmoil over disputed election results and Americans at home are increasingly tired of an operation that began shortly after the September 11 attacks.



President Donald Trump at a US base in Kabul. NYT

EXPLAINED Diplomatic channels at work since September

Since September, when the US broke off talks for a peace deal with the Taliban, diplomatic efforts have been on to foster dialogue, including in Doha over the last few days.

A recent hostage exchange in which the Taliban handed over two Western hostages was seen as a positive step to resuming talks. At a time when Afghanistan is seeing turmoil over its election process, it is unclear how soon formal peace talks would begin. An expert said the demand for a ceasefire was one the US would face difficulty with, as "violence is leverage for the Taliban".

White House officials gave few details beyond Trump's sudden revelation. On the flight to Afghanistan, Stephanie Grisham, the White House press secretary, had insisted

that the secret trip was "truly about Thanksgiving and supporting the troops" and "nothing about the peace process" with the Taliban.

The Taliban made no official comment immediately after the late-night visit and Ghani said little afterward about any peace talks. But while the Afghan government has long demanded that the Taliban agree to a cease-fire, no evidence has emerged that the group was willing to grant one. Instead, it has said it would discuss the possibility in negotiations with Afghanistan's political leaders over the future of the country once the Americans agree to leave.

The president carried out the traditional role of feeding turkey and mashed potatoes to troops in fatigues, then dined, mingled and posed for photographs before delivering remarks celebrating the US military before about 1,500 troops in an aircraft hangar.

But his visit also had an important political dimension. Trump, who angrily called off talks with the Taliban in September just as the sides appeared close to an accord, is searching for foreign policy achievements he can celebrate on the campaign trail over the next year. NYT

AHEAD OF UN MEETING

CLIMATE CHANGE PROTESTS ACROSS GLOBE

Tens of thousands of protesters hit the streets of Europe and Asia on Friday to make a fresh call for action against global warming, hoping to raise pressure on world leaders days before a UN climate summit. Carrying signs that read "One planet, one fight" and "The sea is rising, so must we", thousands flocked to Berlin's Brandenburg Gate for the latest "Fridays for Future" protest inspired by 16-year-old campaigner Greta Thunberg.



During the funeral of a protester on Friday. Reuters

After weeks of protests, Iraq PM says will resign

ALISSA JURUBIN
BAGHDAD, NOVEMBER 29

PRIME MINISTER Adel Abdul Mahdi of Iraq announced on Friday that he would submit his resignation to Parliament, following weeks of nationwide antigovernment protests that have left hundreds dead.

The announcement prompted jubilant celebrations at the main protest site, Tahrir Square in Baghdad, the capital.

While Parliament is likely to accept his resignation, the timing is unclear. But the resignation of Mahdi, 78, would lead Iraq into uncharted territory, since no prime minister in the country has ever resigned from office.

In a statement issued by his office, Mahdi said he was stepping down so that the government could "reconsider its options" and "preserve the blood of its people, and avoid slipping into a cycle of violence, chaos and devastation."

The decision comes one day after dozens were killed in a violent crackdown on protesters as the government confronted an attack on the Iranian Consulate in the southern Iraqi city of Najaf that soon spread to other areas.

At least 400 protesters have been killed since antigovernment protests began at the beginning of October. On Thursday, 40 protesters were shot dead by security forces in Baghdad and the southern cities of Najaf and Nasiriyah, a sharp escalation of violence that continued on Friday.

It has been just more than a



Adel Abdul Mahdi

400

■ The number of people killed during the largest and deadliest grassroots movement that Iraq has seen in decades. More than 15,000 were wounded in the capital and Shiite-majority south, according to an AFP tally. Thursday was the bloodiest day of the protests so far, with 44 demonstrators killed and nearly 1,000 wounded

year since Mahdi first entered office. So far, there is no agreement on who would take his place. One idea floated is for him to remain in a caretaker role, which would further weaken his government.

At least 35 protesters were killed Thursday in violence centered on Nasiriyah. Instead of using tear gas or sound bombs, the Interior Ministry's Quick Reaction Forces opened fire on mostly unarmed protesters as they held a sit-in. NYT

Man shot dead by police on London Bridge in 'terror-related incident'

MEGAN SPECIA
LONDON, NOVEMBER 29

A police officer shot and killed a man wearing a fake bomb on London Bridge on Friday, after several people were stabbed in what the police called a terrorist incident, which paralyzed one of the busiest arteries through the city.

The chaotic clash, in a country where shootings are rare, involved several officers and civilians, and sent scores of people fleeing from the bridge and areas near it on both sides of the River Thames. It also revived memories of recent terrorist attacks in London, including one on the same bridge in 2017 that killed eight people.

"It has been declared a terrorist incident," Neil Basu, assistant commissioner of the



Police cordon off the bridge during the incident. Reuters

Metropolitan Police, said of the episode on Friday.

Video posted on social media showed a crowd surrounding a man whom they appeared to be wrestling with and holding to the ground as police officers arrived.

One man can be seen carrying a large knife away from the area as at least three police officers respond with their guns drawn.

The police pulled the other people away from the man on the ground, and then an officer ap-

peared to fire at least one shot, hitting the man and prompting screams from bystanders.

"Due to reports that the suspect may have had an explosive device, specialist officers also attended the scene," Mr. Basu said. "However, I can confirm at this time, we believe a device strapped to the body of the suspect is a hoax explosive device."

The man died at the scene, he said.

Mayor Sadiq Khan of London said in a statement that he was in close contact with the police, and urged those in the city to follow police directions.

"We must — and we will — stay resolute in our determination to stand strong and united in the face of terror," he said. "Those who seek to attack us and divide us will never succeed." NYT

EU to be more assertive: New Council chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BRUSSELS, NOVEMBER 29

EUROPE WILL become more "assertive" on the world stage, the new head of the European Council, Charles Michel, vowed Friday as he took over from Donald Tusk.

They staged a formal handover in a ceremony featuring the symbolic ringing of a bell that Tusk handed over to Michel in front of EU staff and reporters.

"We live in peace, but we must remain vigilant, very vigilant," Michel said. This matches comments by French President Emmanuel Macron, who argues Europe should have defence capabilities to match its economic heft.

"I want Europe to become the global leader of the green movement," he added.

Stay out of UK election, Boris tells Trump

MICHAEL HOLDEN
LONDON, NOVEMBER 29

PRIME MINISTER Boris Johnson said it was best if US President Donald Trump did not get involved in Britain's upcoming election when he visits London for a NATO summit next week.

"What we don't do traditionally as loving allies and friends, what we don't do traditionally, is get involved in each other's election campaigns," said Johnson, whose Conservative Party has a lead in polls ahead of December 12.

"The best (thing) when you have close friends and allies like



Boris Johnson

the US and the UK is for neither side to get involved in each other's election," he told LBC radio.

Trump has already waded into the election, saying in October left-wing opposition leader Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, would be "so bad" for Britain and that Johnson should do a pact with Brexit Party leader Nigel

Farage. Corbyn has used Trump's praise of Johnson as one of his messages to attack the Conservatives in his campaign, saying they would sell off parts of the much-loved National Health Service to the US businesses after Brexit if they win the election.

The Sun newspaper reported on Friday senior Conservative Party figures feared he could say something during his two-day visit that upsets their campaign.

The president has not shied away from wading into British politics on previous visits, including criticism of Johnson's predecessor Theresa May's Brexit policy. REUTERS

'AUSTRALIA-STYLE' VISA POLICY FROM 2021

BRITISH PRIME Minister Boris Johnson on Friday promised to have a post-Brexit Australian-style points-based visa policy in place by January 1, 2021, which would block entry to unskilled people and cut immigration figures.

The Conservative party has pegged its skills-based visa plans as one that would be equally applied to nationals of all countries, including India, after the

current European Union rules come to an end.

"We'll take steps to ensure that the Australian-style points-based immigration system is in place by January 1, 2021. By lowering the number of unskilled immigrants who have been able to come here with no job lined up, the system will remove a major force that puts a downward pressure on wages," he said. PTI

ABOUT 80,000 VISITORS ARE EXPECTED THIS SEASON, AN INCREASE OF 40 PC

In frigid Antarctic waters, tourists swim among penguins

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
HALF MOON ISLAND,
NOVEMBER 29

"IT'S LIKE getting stabbed," a tourist exclaims as he plunges into the three degree Celsius (37 Fahrenheit) water, all under the intrigued gaze of a group of penguins.

All around Half Moon Island, off the Antarctic Peninsula, blocks of ice of all sizes float by on a calm sea, their varying forms resembling weightless origami shapes. To reach the Antarctic destination the 58-

year-old Norwegian, Even Carlsen, travelled 14,000 kilometres (8,700 miles), and spent thousands of euros.

Mostly indifferent to the bipeds donning neon-coloured windbreakers, wildlife abounds in the deafening silence of the icy landscape. All around are penguins, as awkward on land as they are agile in water. Massive and majestic whales slip through the waves, and sea lions and seals laze in the sun.

Antarctica, a land of adventure without rulers, is "like the heart of the Earth," according to Marcelo Leppe, director of the



All around are penguins, as awkward on land as they are agile in water. Reuters/file

Chilean Antarctic Institute.

He said it expands and contracts like a beating heart, while the mighty current which revolves around the continent is like a circulatory system absorbing warm currents from other oceans and redistributing cold water.

But this long tongue of land that stretches towards South America is warming rapidly. Its glaciers are melting and its ecosystem has been invaded by microplastics carried by currents.

Tourists are also flocking to the area in greater numbers. This season nearly 80,000 visitors are expected, a 40 percent increase

compared to last year.

Antarctic tour operators however insist they are promoting responsible tourism.

"Take nothing but photographs, leave nothing but footprints, keep nothing but memories," is their motto.

Even Antarctica's vulnerability is attracting more visitors, with tourists hoping to catch a glimpse of what one day might be gone.

But critics question this sort of tourism, as the emissions from world-crossing flights and soot or black carbon in the exhaust gases of cruise ships are

part of what is putting the region under threat.

On Half Moon Island, chinstrap penguins — named for the black stripe on their chin — strut about in the spring breeding season, raising their beaks and screeching from their rocky nests.

"This is to tell other males 'this is my space' and also, perhaps, 'this is my female'," ornithologist Rebecca Hodgkiss tells AFP.

The colony of 2,500 penguins has been gradually declining over the years. It is not known if it is the fault of humanity.