



SOUTH KOREA
FAKE FUNERALS FOR A BETTER LIFE

A South Korean service is offering free funerals — but only to the living. More than 25,000 people have participated in mass “living funerals” at Hyowon Healing Centre since it opened in 2012, hoping to improve their lives by simulating their deaths. “Once you become conscious of death, and experience it, you undertake a new approach to life,” said a 75-year-old participant.

TOP OF THE WORLD

Rebuke for Trump in state polls seen as barometers for 2020 election

Democrats win both Houses in Virginia, claim gubernatorial win in Republican stronghold Kentucky

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON, NOVEMBER 6

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump and his Republican allies suffered stinging defeats Tuesday as Democrats were projected to win closely-watched elections in two states, results that signal troubling headwinds for his 2020 re-election campaign.

The Republican Governor Matt Bevin in deep-red Kentucky was ousted by his Democratic challenger Andy Beshear, who led by less than half a percentage point with 100 per cent of the vote counted, the official overseeing the election declared.

Doubling the hurt, Trump's party also lost control of both chambers of the legislature in increasingly blue Virginia, US media projected.

“We have called it for Attorney General Beshear to be the Kentucky governor-elect,” Secretary of State Alison Lundergan Grimes said on CNN.

The US President tweeted that Bevin “picked up at least 15 points in last days, but perhaps not enough (Fake News will blame Trump!)”. Beshear, whose father was the last Democratic governor in the state, claimed victory, but Bevin did not throw in the towel.



Democratic candidate for Kentucky governor, Andy Beshear (left), at his watch party in Louisville. Democrats (right) celebrate victory in the Virginia legislature. Reuters, AP

“This is a close, close race. We are not conceding this race by any stretch,” the governor said. Should Bevin's loss be certified, it would be a shock defeat for a conservative in a southern state that Trump won by 30 percentage points in 2016.

In Virginia, Democrats will now hold all major statewide offices and rule the state assembly, a comprehensive consolidation of power not seen in the state since the 1990s.

Democratic leadership swiftly portrayed the night as a massive boost for the party heading into next year's monumental battle against the president.

“This historic victory should

send a chill down the spines of Donald Trump and every Republican,” Democratic National Committee chairman Tom Perez said in a statement.

“Democrats are competing in every election and every state, running on our values, and channeling unprecedented energy into the voting booth — that's how we won tonight, that's how we'll beat Trump” in 2020.

Tuesday's elections — including a governor's race in Mississippi that US media projected Republican candidate Tate Reeves would win — were tests of enthusiasm ahead of 2020 for Trump, who is the subject of an impeachment investigation.

Trump's envoy to EU revises testimony, cites Ukraine quid pro quo

MICHAEL S SCHMIDT
WASHINGTON, NOVEMBER 6

A CRUCIAL witness in the impeachment inquiry reversed himself this week and acknowledged to investigators that he had told a top Ukrainian official that the country would most likely have to give US President Donald Trump what he wanted — a public pledge for investigations — in order to unlock military aid.

The disclosure from Gordon Sondland, an ally of Trump who is the US ambassador to the European Union, confirmed his role in laying out a quid pro quo to Ukraine that conditioned the release of security assistance from the US on the country's willingness to say it was investigating former vice president Joe Biden and other Democrats.

That admission, included in a four-page sworn statement released Tuesday, directly contradicted his testimony to investigators last month, when he said



Gordon Sondland

he “never” thought there was any precondition on the aid.

“I said that resumption of the US aid would likely not occur until Ukraine provided the public anticorruption statement that we had been discussing for many weeks,” Sondland said in the new statement, which was made public by the House committees leading the inquiry, along with the transcript of his original testimony.

Sondland's disclosure appeared intended to insulate him from accusations that he intentionally misled Congress during his earlier testimony. **NYT**

Pak protest leader threatens govt: Chaos will ensue if demands not met

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, NOVEMBER 6

FIREBRAND CLERIC Maulana Fazlur Rehman said on Wednesday that the massive sit-in, aimed at toppling Prime Minister Imran Khan's government, was being held to fulfil a “national responsibility”, warning that chaos would ensue if their demands were not met.

The Pakistan government should present its suggestions to the Opposition parties if it wants to find a middle ground and break the deadlock, said Rehman.

The right-wing Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) leader is leading the massive protest, which entered the sixth day on Wednesday. Protesters in the “Azadi March” demand Khan's resignation, accusing him of “rigging” the 2018 general elections.

“It is not as if we are holding *mujras* (dance performances) here each night. There are respectable people sitting here. They have not come here to indulge in debauchery. My decency does not permit me to repeat the scenes we all witnessed in Islamabad in the past,” he was quoted as saying by the newspaper *Dawn*.

Opposition parties, including the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and the Pakistan People Party, have also thrown their weight behind the anti-government rally comprising thousands of protesters in Islamabad.

Earlier, after his meeting with Punjab Assembly Speaker Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, Rehman said: “the stage for a positive reply has not yet arrived”.



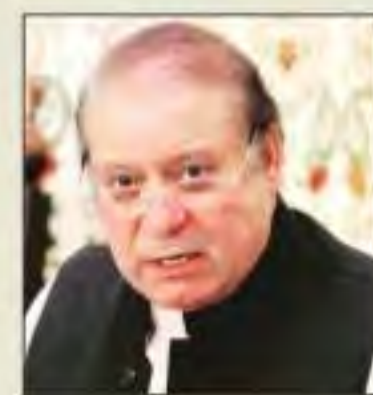
Fazlur Rehman said the protest was being held to fulfil a “national responsibility”. Reuters

US report says Pak views Afghan Taliban as reliable anti-India element

Washington: Pakistan considers Afghan Taliban as a “relatively friendly” and “reliable anti-India element” in Afghanistan as it fears strategic encirclement by New Delhi, whose interest in the war-torn country stems largely from its broader regional rivalry with Islamabad, a US Congressional report said.

In its latest report on Afghanistan, the independent and bipartisan Congressional Research Service identified Pakistan as the most important neighbour of Afghanistan.

However, it said Pakistan wanted a weak government in Kabul and has played an active, and by many accounts, a negative role in Afghan affairs for decades. **PTI**



Serving a 7-year jail term, Sharif spent the last two weeks in hospital after falling seriously ill. Reuters

PAKISTAN
Sharif shifted to his Lahore residence

Lahore: Pakistan's ailing former prime minister Nawaz Sharif was shifted to his Jati Umra Raiwind residence in Lahore on Wednesday after his two-week stay at a hospital for treatment of multiple illnesses. Sharif, 69, was admitted to the Services Hospital here on Oct 22 from Pakistan's anti-graft body custody after his platelets dropped to a critically low level of 2,000. Sharif's daughter Maryam, who was also being treated at the hospital, was also moved to his house. The Islamabad High Court had last week granted bail to Sharif for eight weeks in the Al-Azizia Steel Mills corruption case.

BRITAIN
Court revokes ban on Extinction Rebellion protests

London: Extinction Rebellion climate-change activists won a legal challenge in London's High Court on Wednesday against a police-imposed blanket ban on protests during its “Autumn Uprising” in the British capital in October. The court said separate gatherings, even if coordinated by one organisation, could not be defined as a single “public assembly” and the officer who set the ban was not present at the scene. Therefore barring their protest in London other than at Trafalgar Square was unlawful, it said.

USA
Kansas votes to remove MLK name from street

Kansas City: Kansas City voters on Tuesday approved removing Dr Martin Luther King's name from one of the city's most historic boulevards, less than a year after the city council decided to rename The Paseo for the civil rights icon. Those who pushed for the change celebrated when the street signs went up, which appeared to end Kansas City's reputation as one of the largest US cities without a street named for him. But a group of residents intent on keeping the historic Paseo name began collecting petitions to put the name change on the ballot and achieved that goal.



RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN
Turkey President

Erdogan says Turkey captured Baghdadi's wife

REUTERS
ANKARA, NOVEMBER 6

TURKEY HAS captured a wife of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, President Tayyip Erdogan said on Wednesday, more than a week after the former Islamic State leader killed himself during a raid by US special forces.

“The United States said Baghdadi killed himself in a tunnel. They started a communication campaign about this,” Erdogan said. “But, I am announcing it here for the first time: We captured his wife and didn't make a fuss like them. Similarly, we also captured his sister and brother in law in Syria,” he said at Ankara University. He gave no details.

A senior Turkish official said earlier this week that Turkey had captured Baghdadi's sister, her husband and daughter-in-law, and hoped to gain intelligence from them about Islamic State, although Ankara has not said what knowledge they may have had about the group's operations.

Baghdadi rose from obscurity to lead the terror group and declare himself caliph of all Muslims, holding sway over huge areas of Iraq and Syria from 2014-2017 before his control was wrested away by a US-led coalition.

Spike in H-1B visa denial for Indian firms under Trump admin: study

Visa rejections have gone up to 24% from just 6% in 2015

LALIT K JHA
WASHINGTON, NOVEMBER 6

THE TRUMP administration's restrictive immigration policies have led to a massive increase in the rejection of petitions for H-1B visas, with the highest denial rate among major Indian IT companies, according to a study by an American think-tank.

The study by the National Foundation for American Policy, based on data from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), showed that denial rates for H-1B petitions have quadrupled from just six per cent in 2015 to 24 per cent in the third quarter of the current fiscal.

The H-1B visa is a non-immi-

grant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. The technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

The study shows that denial rate for H-1B visas is highest among major Indian IT companies. For instance, the denial rate of H-1B petitions for initial employment for Amazon, Microsoft, Intel and Google in 2015 was just one per cent. In 2019, the same increased respectively to six, eight, seven and three per cent. The denial rate for Apple remained the same at two per cent.

During the same period, the denial rate jumped from four per

cent to 41 per cent for Tech Mahindra, from six per cent to 34 per cent for Tata Consultancy Services, from seven per cent to 53 per cent for Wipro and from just two per cent to 45 per cent for Infosys, the study showed.

At least 12 companies that provide professional or IT services to other US companies, including Accenture, Capgemini and others, had denial rates of over 30 per cent through the first three quarters of fiscal 2019. Most of these companies had denial rates between two per cent and seven per cent as recently as in 2015, it said.

The denial rate for H-1B petitions for continuing employment was also high for Indian IT companies. **PTI**

Nepal protests inclusion of Kalapani area in official India map

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, NOVEMBER 6

THE NEPAL government issued a statement protesting against “unilaterally” including the Kalapani area in the recently published official map of India.

Nepal's ministry of foreign affairs said the publication of the map when a joint ministerial commission had referred the matter to the foreign secretaries of the two sides for settlement was not proper and “absolutely not acceptable for Nepal”.

The government statement came after the youth wings of the ruling party and the Opposition staged protests against the publication of the map.

15 killed in southern Thailand's worst attack in yrs

SURAPAN BOONTHANOM
BANGKOK, NOVEMBER 6

SUSPECTED SEPARATIST insurgents stormed a security checkpoint in Thailand's Muslim-majority south and killed at least 15 people, including a police officer and many village defence volunteers, security officials said on Wednesday.

It was the worst single attack in years in a restive region where a long-running Muslim insurgency has killed thousands of people in a fight against central government rule in overwhelmingly Buddhist Thailand.

The attackers, in the province of Yala, also used explosives and scattered nails on roads to delay



The site where village defence volunteers were killed by suspected separatist insurgents in Yala province. Reuters

pursuers late on Tuesday night.

“This is likely the work of the insurgents,” Colonel Pramote Prom-in, a military regional security spokesman, told Reuters.

“This is one of the biggest attack in recent times.”

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, as is common with such attacks. **REUTERS**

EXPLAINED
Bloody 15-yr-old insurgency

WEDNESDAY'S ATTACK is one of the deadliest on government forces in the insurgency in southern Thailand that began in 2004. Since then, 7,000 people have died in the violence. The southern provinces of Pattani, Narathiwat and Yala are the only Muslim-majority provinces in the country. Residents have long complained of being treated as second class citizens and separatist movements have been periodically active.

Pro-Beijing lawmaker in Hong Kong stabbed while campaigning

EILEEN NG
HONG KONG, NOVEMBER 6

AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT assailant stabbed and wounded a pro-Beijing Hong Kong lawmaker who was election campaigning Wednesday, police said, in another escalation of violence surrounding the protests demanding political reforms in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory.

Junius Ho has become a hated figure by the protesters over his alleged links to violence against them. After receiving initial medical treatment, Ho told reporters the knife had been blocked by his rib cage and that he was left with a minor 0.79-inch-deep wound.

Police have arrested the assailant. Ho, two of his assistants and the attacker were all injured, hospital officials said.

At a news conference Wednesday in Beijing to wrap up her visit to mainland China, Hong Kong's embattled leader, Carrie Lam, condemned the attack on Ho and said she was concerned over rising public proclivity for violence. “How can protesters carrying out violent acts claim to be pursuing freedom and democracy? Their every move challenges the freedom and violates the rights of the majority of the



Junius Ho survived the knife attack. AP

Hong Kong people,” she said.

Lam, who earlier held talks with Vice Premier Han Zheng, said she was grateful for support from Chinese leadership during her trip and pledged to strictly enforce the law to restore order. She also met President Xi Jinping in Shanghai on Monday, seen as an endorsement of her government's handling of the crisis.

“The violent activities carried out by radical separatist forces have gone far beyond the bottom line of law and ethic,” Han Zheng said. “The most important work for the Hong Kong society now is to stop violence and restore order.”

China's foreign ministry recently dismissed a report that said Beijing planned to replace Lam next year. **AP**

OVER 90 INDIAN COMPANIES SET UP STALLS AT SHANGHAI EVENT

India showcases Kashmiri kahwa, chicken biryani at China import expo

SOWMIYA ASHOK
SHANGHAI, NOVEMBER 6

INDIA IS showcasing Kashmiri kahwa, the famous green tea from Kashmir, alongside chicken biryani, kachodis and Sula wine at the ongoing import expo in Shanghai.

“Kashmiri kahwa is a drink that can catch on in the Chinese market because the product is used during the winter and the Chinese drink a lot of green tea during the day,” Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) secretary Dr Sudhanshu told *The Indian Express*. “There is also a lot

of potential for import of buffalo meat, but we have been pursuing market access. This is an issue we have raised in bilateral meetings as well.”

While vannamee shrimps have gained a hold of the Chinese market, followed by ribbon fish, there is also potential to ship across human hair, castor oil and chemicals, industry experts said.

A day after India decided to not go through with the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) over concerns of Chinese imports and market access to China, more than 90 Indian companies set up stalls at the second edition of the China International Import Expo to pitch

to do business with China. The products include pharmaceuticals, auto components, agriculture and food processing items, textiles, handicrafts and even management consultancy services.

Marine products, specifically shrimps, appear to head the list of exports from India to China. The year 2018-19 saw 2,25,519 tonnes of marine goods crossing the border, raking up \$811.3 million, industry experts said.

An increase in seafood consumption domestically in China and a rejig of trade relationships owing to the US-China trade wars have worked in India's favour, said Marine Products Export Development Authority deputy



India's ambassador to China, Vikram Misri, inaugurates the Indian pavilion at the expo. Credit: Twitter profile of @VikramMisri

director M Shaji. “Earlier, the Chinese used to process the raw shrimps we would export to

China and convert them into value-added ready-to-eat goods and ship it to the US and European

Union markets. But now, consumption within China has increased so much more as more people are switching to consuming seafood,” he said. China, however, is the fifth's largest market for India's shrimps after the US, Southeast Asia, EU and Japan. “The market in China is only going to grow,” he said.

The Indian Pavilion at CIE, inaugurated by Indian Ambassador to China Vikram Misri on Tuesday afternoon, showcased India's potential in spices, gem works, and space exploration. While a mechanical version of the ‘Make In India’ lion roared at the entrance, signs advertised India as a conducive destination for invest-

ments. Apart from food items, wine bottles, and miniature statues of Sardar Patel, the pavilion offered a Kathak performance and a dance to one of Ranbir Kapoor's famous songs.

“Of late, we realised that China is a huge market for India and we have to dispel the notion that it is a threat. Rather, it is an opportunity,” Federation of Indian Export Organisation Director General and CEO Ajay Sahai told *The Indian Express*. The FIEO has 30,000 members representing two-thirds of the country's exporters, he said.

Mentioning the trade deficit with China, Sahai said the after-effects of the US-China trade war

has seen “more impressive” export figures to the US. “But China is in our medium- to long-term strategy, so showcasing at such expos become very important. We want to use such events as an opportunity to also attract investments in India,” he said.

Showcasing Indian gem stones, with bright lights in the background, Ajay Purohit from the Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council said exporters were keen on doing direct business with mainland China.

“All goods are currently coming through Hong Kong and there are high duties that are imposed,” he said. “We'd like more favourable conditions.”