

TOPOF THE WORLD



ANTONIO GUTERRES
UN Secretary-General

UNITED NATIONS
Guterres warns of ‘point of no return’ on climate change

Madrid: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Sunday that the world’s efforts to stop climate change have been “utterly inadequate” so far and there is a danger global warming could pass the “point of no return”. Speaking before the start Monday of a two-week international climate conference in Madrid, the UN chief said the impact of rising temperatures is already being felt around the world, with dramatic consequences for humans and other species. He noted that the world has the scientific knowledge and the technical means to limit global warming, but “what is lacking is political will”.

RUSSIA

19 killed as bus plunges onto frozen river in Siberia

Moscow: A passenger bus plunged off a bridge onto a frozen river in Siberia on Sunday, killing 19 of the more than 40 people on board, authorities said. A tyre on the bus burst as it was crossing the bridge over the Kuenga river in eastern Siberia’s Zabaikalsky region. The vehicle, which was travelling from Sretensk to Chita and carried 40 passengers, skidded off the road and onto the ice. “Nineteen people died and 21 received various injuries,” the office of the governor of the Zabaikalsky region said in a statement.

USA

Chicago cop suspended for slamming man to ground

A CHICAGO police officer was suspended this week after video recorded by a bystander showed him hurling a man forcefully onto the sidewalk during an arrest, in footage described by Mayor Lori Lightfoot as “highly disturbing.” The incident took place on Thursday, the US Thanksgiving holiday, when police approached a 29-year-old man drinking alcohol in the afternoon at a bus stop on Chicago’s South Side, CBS News reported.



Forensic personnel conduct a fingertip search at the cordoned off area on London Bridge on Sunday. *AP*

ISIS claims London attack

Stabbings carried out ‘in response to calls to target citizens of coalition countries’

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON, DECEMBER 1

THE ISLAMIC State terror group has claimed responsibility for the knife attack in central London where a convicted terrorist killed two people before being shot dead by police.

The group via its propaganda Amaq news agency said on Saturday that the attack was carried out by “a fighter from the Islamic State”, according to the Site Intelligence Group, which monitors jihadist activities. “The person who carried out the London attack... was a fighter from the Islamic State, and did so in response to calls to target citizens of coalition countries,” the IS statement read. However, it did not provide any evidence to support its claim.

The suspected attacker, identified as Usman Khan, was a convicted terrorist who was jailed seven years ago over a plot to bomb the London Stock Exchange and build a terrorist training camp on land owned by his family in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Khan had also discussed staging a Mumbai-style attack on the UK Parliament and de-

THE VICTIMS: CAMBRIDGE GRADUATES WHO SET OUT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The two who died in the attack were identified as Saskia Jones, 23, and Jack Merritt, 25. Both were involved in a programme to help prison inmates.



Saskia Jones, a graduate of Cambridge University, was described by her family as having “a great passion for providing invaluable support to victims of criminal injustice, which led her to the point of recently applying for the police graduate recruitment programme”.



The family of Jack Merritt, also a Cambridge University graduate and coordinator of the Learning Together programme, said he “lived his principles” and “believed in redemption and rehabilitation, not revenge, and he always took the side of the underdog”.

scribed by the judge who sentenced him for terrorism offences in 2012 as an ongoing risk to the public with a “serious, long term venture in terrorism”.

He went on a rampage on Friday and killed one man and a

woman and injured three others before being shot by police. “This individual was known to authorities, having been convicted in 2012 for terrorism offences. He was released from prison in December 2018 on licence and

clearly, a key line of enquiry now is to establish how he came to carry out this attack.” Scotland Yard’s Head of Counter Terrorism Policing Assistant Commissioner Neil Basu said Saturday.

The profile of Khan dating back to his conviction in 2012 reveals his links with terror groups. He had been secretly recorded talking about plans to recruit UK radicals to train at a camp in PoK, the region his family comes from.

He and two other co-conspirators had conducted a surveillance trip around central London as they talked about launching a Mumbai-style attack on UK Parliament. The then 20-year-old pleaded guilty to engaging in conduct for the preparation of terrorism, which included travelling to and attending operational meetings, fundraising for terrorist training, preparing to travel abroad and assisting others in travelling abroad. Khan had originally received an indeterminate sentence to be kept behind bars for public protection but this was quashed by the UK Court of Appeal in April 2013, after which he was given a determinate 16-year jail term and ordered to serve at least eight years in prison before being considered for parole.

Saudi Arabia takes over G20 presidency

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
RIYADH, DECEMBER 1

SAUDI ARABIA became the first Arab nation Sunday to take over the G20 presidency as it seeks to bounce back onto the world stage following global uproar over its human rights record.

The oil-rich kingdom has promoted a liberalisation drive, including granting greater rights to women, but faced strong crit-



The Saudi Crown Prince

icism over a crackdown on dissent and the murder last year of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Parliament approves Iraqi PM’s resignation

Protests continue in Baghdad, other southern regions; another protester killed

REUTERS

BAGHDAD, DECEMBER 1

IRAQ’S PARLIAMENT voted on Sunday to accept the resignation of Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi, following weeks of violent anti-government protests that have rocked the country.

Abdul Mahdi’s decision to quit on Friday came after a call by Iraq’s top Shia cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani for Parliament to consider withdrawing its support for Abdul Mahdi’s government to stem the violence.

Lawmakers said Abdul Mahdi’s government, including the PM himself, would stay on in



Timothy Weeks, 50, is an Australian teacher

their captivity, and were often kept in tiny, windowless cells.

While their lives were often at risk, he said he never gave up

hope of being rescued.

“I never, ever gave up hope, and I think in that sort of situation, that if you give up hope, there is very little left for you,” said Weeks, flanked by his sisters Alyssa and Jo Carter.

“I knew that I would leave that place eventually. It just took a little longer than I expected.”

While expressing thanks to President Donald Trump and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison for the work that led to their release, Weeks said some Taliban guards he had encountered were “lovely people”.

“I don’t hate them at all,” he

MEANWHILE

RELIC ‘FROM JESUS’ MANGER’ IN BETHLEHEM

A tiny wooden relic that some Christians believe to be part of Jesus’ manger arrived at its permanent home in the city of Bethlehem, 1,400 years after it was sent to Rome as a gift to the pope. Crowds greeted the relic before it entered the Franciscan Church of St. Catherine next to the Church of the Nativity, the West Bank site where tradition says Jesus was born.



After polls, new wave of protests in Hong Kong

Thousands take to streets after brief pause, police fire teargas

EILEEN NG

HONG KONG, DECEMBER 1

THOUSANDS TOOK to Hong Kong’s streets Sunday in a new wave of pro-democracy protests, but police fired teargas after some demonstrators hurled bricks and smokes bombs, breaking a rare pause in violence that has persisted during the six-month-long movement.

In the largest of three rallies, a key thoroughfare along the waterfront on the Kowloon side of Victoria Harbour was packed with demonstrators, from hardened masked protesters in all-black outfits to families and the elderly. They chanted “Five demands, not one less” and “Disband the police force” as they marched.

The rally followed two other marches earlier Sunday as protesters sought to keep the pressure on city leader Carrie Lam after the recent win by the pro-democracy camp in district council elections.

The Kowloon rally was cut short after riot police fired teargas and arrested a few people. A police statement said minimum force was deployed after “hundreds of rioters hurled smoke bombs” and bricks to cause chaos.

Marchers berated police as they scrambled to flee the tear gas, shouting “Dirty cops” and “Are you trying to kill us?”

Hong Kong’s protests have



Pro-democracy protesters flood a street during a rally in Hong Kong on Sunday. *AP*

EXPLAINED A good week for the protesters, but not much has changed

THE PREVIOUS week began with a sweeping victory for pro-democracy candidates in district elections. Days later, US President Donald Trump signed into law a Bill aimed at putting pressure on China to maintain Hong Kong’s autonomy. These have been celebrated by anti-government protesters as big wins. However, the demonstrators were out in full force again this Sunday, with placards reminding themselves to not forget what they were protesting for. Of their five major demands, only one has been fulfilled — the scrapping of a Bill that would have allowed those facing trial to be deported to mainland China. Other demands, such as universal suffrage and an investigation into the conduct of police, seem as far away as ever from being realised. So, despite having had a good week, not much has changed for the protesters.

been relatively peaceful during the two weeks around the Nov 24 elections, but Sunday’s disruption

indicated there may be more violence if Lam fails to yield to protesters’ demands. *AP*

21 killed in Mexico shootout between cartel gunmen, police

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MEXICO CITY, DECEMBER 1

MEXICAN SECURITY forces on Sunday killed seven more members of a presumed cartel assault force that rolled into a town near the Texas border and staged an hour-long attack, officials said, bringing the death toll to 21.

The Coahuila state government said lawmen were still chasing remnants of the force that arrived in a convoy of trucks and attacked the city hall of Villa Union on Saturday.

Governor Miguel Angel Riquelme said at least 14 people had died by that afternoon, four of them police officers. He also said then that several municipal workers were missing. It wasn’t clear if they had since been located.

The new statement did not give a new death total, but said seven more attackers were killed on Sunday in addition to 10 who reportedly died the day before.

The governor said the armed group stormed the town in a convoy of trucks, attacking government offices and prompting state and federal forces to intervene.

11 injured in New Orleans shooting

Washington: Eleven people were wounded in a shooting on Sunday in New Orleans’ French Quarter, US police said.

The shooting took place at about 3 am on a crowded commercial street. No fatalities had been reported.

The New Orleans Police Department said via its Twitter feed that no arrests had been made and investigations were ongoing. *PTI*

Starbucks worker fired after cops gets cup with ‘pig’ written on label

MARIEL PADILLA
DECEMBER 1

AN OKLAHOMA police officer working on Thanksgiving made a Starbucks run for emergency dispatchers to thank them for working during the holiday. When he got his order, he said, he saw the word “PIG” printed on a cup’s label.

The officer, a member of the Kiefer, Oklahoma, police department, took the order to the dispatchers and contacted the police chief, Johnny O’Mara, who was on vacation at the time, according to Jory Mendes, a Starbucks spokesman.

The word “PIG” was printed on all five cups, KTUL-TV reported. When O’Mara called the Starbucks, in Glenpool, Oklahoma, the manager offered to reprint the cups, which the chief said was an insufficient apology, the station reported.

The officer told the station that the barista contacted him, apologised and said it was meant as a joke.

O’Mara posted about the episode on Facebook, including an image of one of the cups, prompting Starbucks to investigate. He did not immediately respond to requests for comment Saturday.

“What irks me is the absolute and total disrespect for a police officer who, instead of being home with his family and enjoying a meal and a football game, is patrolling his little town,” he said in the post, which was widely circulated and has since been deleted.

Despite speculation on social media that the officer was responsible for the word on the label, a Starbucks statement expressly said that the barista “wrote this offensive word,” used “poor judgement” and was ultimately fired for violating company policy. *NYT*

TIMOTHY WEEKS AND KEVIN KING WERE RELEASED LAST MONTH IN A PRISONER SWAP

Freed hostage on Taliban: Some of them were compassionate, lovely

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SYDNEY, DECEMBER 1

AN AUSTRALIAN teacher held captive with an American colleague by the Taliban for more than three years believes US Navy SEALs tried and failed six times to free them.

Timothy Weeks was released last month in a prisoner swap along with Kevin King, ending an ordeal that began with their abduction in 2016 outside the American University in Kabul, where they worked.

Weeks, 50, told a news con-

ference on Sunday he believed SEAL teams tried repeatedly to rescue them, sometimes missing them only by “hours” after the two hostages were moved to other locations by their captors.

“I believe, and I hope this is correct, that they came in six times to try to get us, and that a number of times they missed us only by hours,” Weeks said.

One attempt came in April this year, Weeks said he was woken at 2 am by his guards, who told him they were under attack from Islamic State fighters, and moved him into a tunnel beneath where they were being held.

“I believe now that it was the Navy SEALs coming in to get us,” Weeks said.

“I believe they were right outside our door. The moment that we got into the tunnels, we were 1 or 2 metres underground and there was a huge bang at the front door. And our guards went up and there was a lot of machine-gun fire. They pushed me over the top into the tunnels and I fell backwards and rolled and knocked myself unconscious.”

Weeks said he and King were shifted through various remote locations in Afghanistan and neighboring Pakistan throughout