

# International

MONDAY, JANUARY 13, 2020

## Quick View



### Thousands join Thai anti-government run

THOUSANDS OF Thais joined a run in the capital on Sunday in what appeared to be the biggest show of dissent against the government of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, although he also drew a big show of support at a rival event. Police estimated more than 12,745 runners and supporters gathered before sunrise at a park in Bangkok, wearing athletic outfits and colorful shoes, to participate in the “Run Against Dictatorship” event. Some of them shouted slogans such as “Prayuth, get out!” or “Long live democracy!” while running the 2.6-km course amid a sprinkling of security forces. Many also gave a three-finger salute of resistance to authority.

### Will not change position on Taiwan, says China

CHINA WILL not change its position that Taiwan belongs to it, Beijing said on Sunday, after President Tsai Ing-wen won re-election and said she would not submit to China’s threats, as state media warned she was courting disaster. The election campaign was dominated by China’s efforts to get the democratic island to accept Beijing’s rule under a “one country, two systems” model, as well as by anti-government protests in Chinese-ruled Hong Kong. “No matter what changes there are to the internal situation in Taiwan, the basic fact that there is only one China in the world and Taiwan is part of China will not change,” China’s foreign ministry said in a statement.

### Australian PM proposes high-powered inquiry

AFTER WEEKS of criticism over the handling of the bushfires scorching Australia, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said on Sunday he will propose a national review into the response to the disaster, as the fires claimed another firefighter’s life. The Australian bush has been burning for nearly three months and the fires have killed 28 people, claimed 2,000 homes and consumed millions of acres of land and wildlife. The crisis is becoming increasingly political as the country looks at the causes and the government’s response. “There is obviously a need for a national review of the response,” Morrison said in an interview with ABC television.

### Israel foreign minister postpones Dubai visit

ISRAEL’S FOREIGN minister has postponed a visit to Dubai this month due to security concerns, diplomats said on Sunday, linking the decision to Iran-US tensions. Israel Katz had been scheduled to attend mid-month meetings in the Gulf emirate ahead of its Expo 2020 Dubai but “on the instruction of security officials” would defer the visit, an Israeli diplomat said.

## ● PLANE SHOOTDOWN BY IRAN

# Protesters demand leaders’ apologies and resignations

PARISA HAFEZI  
Dubai, January 12

**PROTESTS ERUPTED ACROSS** Iran for a second day on Sunday, piling pressure on the leadership after the military admitted it had mistakenly shot down a Ukrainian airliner at a time when Tehran had feared US airstrikes.

“They are lying that our enemy is America, our enemy is right here,” a group of protesters outside a university in Tehran chanted, according to video clips posted on Twitter. Scores of demonstrators were shown outside another university in the capital and at gatherings in other cities.

Some state-affiliated media also carried reports of university protests, after Saturday’s demonstrations sparked by Iran’s announcement that its military had mistakenly brought down the Ukrainian plane on Wednesday, killing all 176 aboard.

Tehran residents told *Reuters* police were out in force in the capital on Sunday, as public anger boiled up following days of denials by the military that it was to blame, issued even as Canada and the US said a missile had brought the plane down.

Riot police fired teargas at thousands of protesters in the capital on Saturday, where many had chanted “Death to the dictator”, directing their anger at the Islamic Republic’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. “Apologise and resign,” Iran’s moderate Etemad daily wrote in a banner



Women shout slogans as they gather to show their sympathy to the victims of the Boeing 737-800 crash, in Tehran on Saturday

headline on Sunday, saying the “people’s demand” was for those responsible for mishandling the plane crisis to quit.

The latest upsurge in anger adds to challenges facing the authorities, which launched a bloody crackdown in November to quell protests. The leadership is also struggling to keep the crippled economy afloat under rigorous US sanctions. US President Donald Trump tweeted: “To the leaders of Iran - DO NOT KILL YOUR PROTESTERS. Thousands have already been killed or imprisoned by you, and the World is watching.”

The Ukraine International Airlines

plane was shot down minutes after taking off from Tehran on Wednesday, when Iranian forces were on alert for US reprisals following tit-for-tat strikes. Many on board were Iranians with dual citizenship, while 57 were holders of Canadian passports.

### ‘Revenge’

Iran’s president said it was a “disastrous mistake” and apologised. But a top Revolutionary Guards commander added to public fury when he said he had told the authorities on the same day as the crash that an Iranian missile had struck the plane. —**REUTERS**

## Saudi Aramco raises IPO to record \$29.4 billion by over-allotment of shares

REUTERS  
Dubai, January 12

**STATE-OWNED OIL COMPANY** Saudi Aramco said on Sunday it had exercised its “greenshoe option” to sell an additional 450 million shares, raising the size of its initial public offering (IPO) to a record \$29.4 billion.

Aramco initially raised a \$25.6 billion, which was itself a record level, in its December IPO by selling 3 billion shares at 32 riyals (\$8.53) a share. But it had indicated it could sell additional shares through the over-allotment of shares.

Aramco shares were flat at 35 riyals shortly after the market opened, according to Refinitiv data.

A greenshoe option, or over-allotment, allows companies to issue more shares in an IPO when there is greater demand from participants in the initial offer. Investors were allocated the additional shares during book-building, Aramco said.

“No additional shares are being offered into the market today and the stabilising manager will not hold any shares in the company as a result of exercise of the over-allotment option,” Aramco said.

Aramco shares have been volatile amid heightened tensions between the United States and Iran, which lies across the Gulf from Saudi Arabia.

Aramco shares fell to 34 riyals on January 8, its lowest since trading began on December 11, but closed at 35 riyals on



Thursday. Thursday’s closing price valued Aramco at \$1.87 trillion, above the IPO price but below Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s coveted \$2 trillion target for the IPO.

The oil and gas company, which is majority owned by the state, began publicly trading on the local Saudi Tadawul exchange on December 11. It hit upwards of \$10 a share on the second day of trading. This gave Aramco a market capitalisation of \$2 trillion, making it comfortably the world’s most valuable company.

Aramco’s additional sales mean the company has publicly floated 1.7% of its shares. It’s IPO, even before the added sales, was the world’s largest ever. The shares sold in the over-allotment option “had been allocated to investors during the bookbuilding process and therefore, no additional shares are being offered into the market today,” Aramco said.

(With inputs from Associated Press)

## Bank of England deputy governor warns financial sector of crackdown: Report

REUTERS  
London, January 12

**BANK OF ENGLAND** deputy governor Sam Woods on Sunday said that Britain’s financial sector could face a crackdown by regulators, seeking to enforce their rules more tightly.

“I think it’s possible that as we come out of the reform phase, and enter a phase where we’re defending the reforms that have been put in place, that you may see more enforcement activity,” Woods told the Telegraph newspaper.

Woods, who is the head of the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA), the BoE’s banking supervisory arm, also said the regulator wouldn’t necessarily be hostile to consolidation in the banking sector, according to The Telegraph report.

“We approach these things with caution, we’d have to be sure it made sense for the resulting entity,” he said. “It’s been quite



striking to me that really we’ve only had that one consolidation [in banking] – Virgin Money and Clydesdale. The possibility of others seems to me quite relevant and would not be problematic in principle.”

Woods, who was initially in the frame to replace Mark Carney as the British central bank governor, said he will have an eye on the job “next time around.” Andrew Bailey, chief executive of the Financial Conduct Authority, will succeed Mark Carney as the BoE’s governor on March 16.



## Nature's fury

Severe storms sweeping across parts of the US South are blamed for the death of at least nine people. High winds, tornadoes and unrelenting rain battered a large area, such as this in Greenville, Mississippi, on Saturday.

## UK’s Queen Elizabeth calls Prince Harry for crisis meeting

REUTERS  
London, January 12

**QUEEN ELIZABETH HAS** summoned her grandson Prince Harry for a crisis meeting to discuss future arrangements for him and his wife Meghan following the couple’s shock announcement that they want to step back from royal duties.

Harry’s father Prince Charles, the heir to the throne, and his elder brother Prince William, will also attend the meeting, due to take place on Monday at the queen’s Sandringham estate in Norfolk, eastern England, a Buckingham Palace source told *Reuters*.

Meghan, an American former TV actress, will try to join via telephone from Canada where she returned earlier in the week to rejoin the couple’s baby son, Archie.

Harry and Meghan, officially known as

the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, surprised the rest of the royal family on Wednesday by publicly announcing they wanted a “new working model” that would allow them to spend more time in North America and to be financially independent.

They did not consult the 93-year-old monarch or other members of the family before making their announcement on a new website, a move which hurt and disappointed the queen and other royals, according to a royal source.

The meeting on Monday will be the first time the senior royals have met in person to discuss the concerns raised by Harry and Meghan.

Officials had been holding talks behind the scenes since the bombshell statement to try to work out a new arrangement for the couple, and a royal source said those efforts progressed well.

The consultations, which also included



the British and Canadian governments, paved the way for a face-to-face meeting between Harry and the queen.

The palace source said it remained the

queen’s aim to find a resolution to the crisis in days rather than weeks but it would require “complex and thoughtful discussions” and any agreement would take time to be implemented.

The split between Harry and the other Windsors is the latest crisis the royal family has faced in a period described last month as “bumpy” by the queen in a televised annual address. Such is the global interest in Harry and Meghan that their news has overshadowed a scandal surrounding the queen’s second son Prince Andrew and his friendship with disgraced late US financier Jeffrey Epstein, who hanged himself in jail in August while awaiting trial on federal sex trafficking charges.

In an emotional TV interview last October, Harry admitted he and William had fallen out. The Sunday Times newspaper said the elder prince had spoken of his sad-

ness at the rift. The brothers were close for years following the death of their mother Princess Diana in a Paris car crash in 1997.

The newspaper quoted William as saying to an unnamed friend: “I’ve put my arm around my brother all our lives and can’t do that any more, we’re separate entities. I’m sad about that. All we can do, and all I can do, is try and support them and hope that the time comes when we’re all singing from the same page. I want everyone to play on the team.”

Earlier on Saturday, the Times newspaper reported that Meghan had agreed to do voiceoverwork for Disney in return for the company making a donation to a charity she supports that works to protect elephants.

A Buckingham Palace spokeswoman had no immediate comment on the report. Disney did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

## SELECTIONS FROM



**TOURISTS VISITING KENYA’S** lovely Lamu archipelago are normally stirred from their slumber by pleasant sounds, such as gently lapping waves or the call to prayer drifting across the water. But on January 5th some were woken by the less melodious rattle and crump of distant battle. Across Manda Bay, on the mainland, fighters from al-Shabab, a Somali jihadist group, were engaged in an unusually daring assault on American forces stationed at a Kenyan airbase.

The attack, which lasted several hours, was startlingly effective. The lightly armed jihadists—probably no more than 15 of them—managed to kill three Americans (one soldier and two security contractors) and wreck six aircraft, some used by America’s armed forces for snooping missions

across the Somali border. Never before had al-Shabab targeted a facility housing American troops outside Somalia.

The incident represents a worrying lapse in security. The last time so many Americans were killed in combat in Africa—in Niger in 2017—it led to investigations and recriminations. In a week in which America had not just killed Iran’s most prominent general, Qassem Suleimani, the attack in Kenya might have too. As it is, America may be looking to respond. Additional troops have been sent to the base. Air strikes against al-Shabab targets in Somalia have been reported.

As news of the attack came down, some Kenyans worried that they had been caught up in Iran’s tiff with America over the killing of General Suleimani. American officials quickly denied that al-Shabab had acted on Iranian orders. Al-Shabab concurred. As an al-Qaeda franchise, it takes the Sunni fundamentalist view that Shia Iran is almost as worthless as the infidel West.

Al-Shabab may not have been doing Iran’s dirty work this time. But some analysts believe the assassination of General

## MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA AL-SHABAB AND IRAN

# An attack on American forces in Kenya raises questions and concerns

But talk of an alliance between al-Shabab and Iran is probably just that

Suleimani has so profoundly changed the geopolitical landscape that some kind of future co-operation is possible. Rashid Abdi, an independent expert, reckons the attack in Kenya may have been a signal to Iran that al-Shabab is interested in a covert tactical alliance.

Under this theory, the two would set

aside their differences for the sake of expediency. Both are more pragmatic than is often assumed. Iran has made common cause with groups that do not share its theology, such as Hamas in Gaza. Al-Shabab’s younger leaders are flexible. “They would make a deal with the devil,” says Mr Abdi.

There are potential attractions for both



sides in a deal. Al-Shabab could gain access to sophisticated weaponry that other Iranian proxies enjoy. In return, Iran might persuade al-Shabab to strike at international shipping in the Red Sea. American and Kenyan security types say Iran has been trying to increase its influence in the Horn of Africa for some time. It may now have reason to redouble its efforts.

Others are sceptical. Even a covert relationship with Iran carries risks for al-Shabab. Its credibility rests, in part, on its anti-Shia credo. Moreover, it remains loyal to al-Qaeda. The latter has occasionally co-oper-

ated with Iran, but it would probably oppose one of its franchises doing so.

Al-Shabab, anyway, is doing well enough, by its bloody standards, without fancy Iranian weapons. It killed more people in 2019 than in any year since 2010. And it is rich enough to buy its own arms.

The attack in Kenya was probably driven by other motives. Al-Shabab had been itching to retaliate against a surge in American air strikes on its leaders. (It failed to breach an American base in Somalia last September.) By killing Americans, the group has also burnished its credentials as arguably the foremost al-Qaeda franchise, says Harun Maruf, author of a book on al-Shabab.

Some in the Trump administration want to draw down American troops fighting Islamist militants in Africa. Whether the attack in Kenya marks a big escalation or was merely a bit of one-off opportunism, one thing is clear: more than a decade of American intervention and air strikes has done little to blunt al-Shabab.

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