

TOPOF THE WORLD



Kenneth Roth

HONG KONG  
Human Rights Watch chief says barred from entering HK

*Hong Kong:* Human Rights Watch chief Kenneth Roth said Sunday he had been denied entry into Hong Kong, where he had arrived to launch the watchdog's annual report after months of civil unrest in the city. Hong Kong has been battered by nearly seven months of protests, its biggest crisis in decades. Roth was to give a press conference on Wednesday to unveil his organisation's latest global survey, which accuses China of prosecuting "an intensive attack" on human rights agencies. "I had hoped to spotlight Beijing's deepening assault on international efforts to uphold human rights," Roth said.

CHINA  
Beijing says no change in Taiwan position

*Taipei:* 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. While China says Taiwan is its territory, Taiwan maintains it is an independent country called the Republic of China, its formal name.

AUSTRALIA  
Cardinal moved to new jail after drone incident

*Melbourne:* Jailed Australian Cardinal George Pell, convicted over child sex offences, was moved to another prison last week after a drone flew over the facility where he was being held, local media reported. Pell is the most senior Catholic official imprisoned for child sex offences. The former Vatican treasurer is serving a six-year sentence for sexually assaulting two choir boys. "Corrections Victoria can confirm that there was an incident involving a drone flying over the Melbourne Assessment Prison on Thursday," a government spokesperson said.

ANGER MOUNTS AFTER DOWNING OF UKRAINIAN AIRLINER

# Iran protesters tell leaders to quit over shooting down plane

Demonstration held across the country for a second day

**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.

Posts showed other demonstrators outside a second university and a group of protesters marching to Tehran's Azadi Square. The videos also showed protests in other cities.

"Apologise and resign," Iran's moderate *Etemad* daily wrote in a banner headline on Sunday, saying the "people's demand" was for those responsible for mishandling the plane crisis to quit.

Some state-run media carried reports of the protests, after demonstrations sparked by Iran's announcement that it mistakenly brought down the Ukrainian plane, killing 176 people.

US President Donald Trump tweeted: "To the leaders of Iran- DO NOT KILL YOUR PROTESTERS. Thousands have already



Iranians gather to show their sympathy to the victims of the plane crash, in Tehran on Saturday. Reuters

EXPLAINED  
Iranians back on the streets as anger against govt intensifies

THE IRANIAN regime faced widespread mass protests last year, and was heavily criticised for the way in which it cracked down on protesters, with international agencies saying hundreds of people were killed in government action to quell the unrest. However, the US killing of Soleimani had brought a sense of unity in the country, with hundreds of thousands turning out, along with leaders of the regime, to mourn the general. But the accidental downing of the passenger jet has reignited anger against the regime, with large protests taking place soon after the military admitted responsibility. The US was also quick to a highlight the protests, seeking to put further pressure on Iran's leadership.

been killed or imprisoned by you, and the World is watching."

The Ukraine International Airlines plane was shot down min-

utes after taking off from Tehran Wednesday, when Iranian forces were on alert for US reprisals following tit-for-tat strikes. REUTERS

## Rockets slam into Iraqi base hosting US troops

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
SAMARRA, JANUARY 12

FOUR ROCKETS slammed into an Iraqi airbase north of Baghdad where US troops are based, military sources said on Sunday, with security forces saying four Iraqi airmen were wounded.

A majority of US airmen stationed at the Al-Balad airbase

north of Baghdad had already left, the military sources said, following tensions between the US and Iran over the last two weeks.

Military bases hosting US troops have been subject to volleys of rocket and mortar attacks in recent months that have mostly wounded Iraqi forces, but also killed one American contractor last month.

## UK envoy to Iran briefly detained over protest

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
TEHRAN, JANUARY 12

BRITAIN'S AMBASSADOR to Tehran denied Sunday that he took part in a demonstration that broke out at a memorial for the 176 people killed when a plane was shot down.

Students held a gathering at Tehran's Amir Kabir University on Saturday evening to honour those killed hours after Iran admitted the Ukrainian airliner was downed by mistake.

Iran's Mehr news agency said the ambassador, Rob Macaire, was arrested for his alleged "involvement in provoking suspicious acts" at the gathering in front of the university.

The British government said Macaire was arrested and detained briefly in the Iranian capital in what it called a "flagrant violation of international law".

Iran's armed forces said on Saturday the Ukraine International Airlines Boeing 737 was mistakenly shot down.

## PHILIPPINES VOLCANO SPEWS ASH; THOUSANDS FLEE



The Taal volcano eruption seen from Tagaytay, Philippines. Reuters

■ A volcano near Manila spewed a massive cloud of ash that drifted across the Philippine capital on Sunday, forcing the cancellation of flights and closure of schools and government offices as authorities warned of a possible "explosive eruption".

■ Thousands of people were evacuated from the area near Taal volcano after it suddenly shot a column of ash and steam as high as 15 km into the sky.

■ Taal, one of the world's smallest active volcanoes, sits in the middle of a lake about 70 km south of Manila. Authorities said there was a risk that an eruption could cause a tsunami in the lake.

## Nepal's new policy to bar NGOs running programmes opposed to India and China

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
KATHMANDU, JANUARY 12

NEPAL IS drafting a new policy "to discourage" international NGOs from undertaking programmes with potential to hamper its relations with India and China, officials said on Sunday.

While cross-border terrorism and criminal activities continue to be the major causes of concern for India, China has in the past complained about the Tibetans' movement via Nepal.

Based on Nepal's foreign policy of keeping balanced relations, the projects that are opposed by either country will not be implemented, according to the draft of the strategy policy which is being prepared by the Social Welfare Council, *The Kathmandu Post* reported.

"Nepal is a land-locked country and has two large countries with large populations in the north and south," the draft said.

The policy will discourage organisations from running programmes that can hamper Nepal's relations with the neighbouring countries, it said.

Council officials said the policy is still in the draft stage and some of its provisions are expected to be addressed by a new law on the registration of NGOs.

Durga Prasad Bhattarai, an information officer at the council, said the proposed policy is aimed at addressing the concerns of the

**Nepal's Social Welfare Council officials said the policy is still in the draft stage and some of its provisions are expected to be addressed by a new law on the registration of NGOs**

neighbouring countries regarding the activities of NGOs, particularly in the bordering regions.

"The objective of the proposed policy is to reassert that Nepal government is concerned about the strategic mobilisation of international non-governmental organisations, particularly in the bordering regions, in the name of building madrasas and monasteries," Bhattarai was quoted by the *Post*. According to the council, madrasas in the regions bordering India are receiving funds from countries like Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Rajendra Kumar Poudel, member secretary at the council, said India has raised concerns about the large presence of madrasas in the bordering region. "So we have stepped up the scrutiny of the source of funds and nature of programmes to be run in the madrasas while providing approval for foreign funding. We are in favour of addressing India's concerns, but we have not taken any opinion from the Indian embassy in Kathmandu," said Poudel.



Britain's Queen Elizabeth II arrives to attend a church service in Sandringham, England, on Sunday. AP

## Queen prepares for royal family summit over Harry, Meghan

**JILL LAWLESS**  
LONDON, JANUARY 12

ENSCONCED WITH aides at her royal retreat, Britain's Queen Elizabeth II prepared Sunday for a crisis family meeting to work out a future for Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, after their dramatic decision to walk away from royal roles.

Well-wishers cheered the monarch as she made her weekly trip to a church at her Sandringham estate in eastern England. Meanwhile, supporters of the royal family's feuding factions used the British media to paint conflicting pictures of who was to blame for the rift.

Royal officials said the queen had summoned her grandson Harry, his elder brother Prince William and their father Prince Charles to Sandringham, 100 miles (160 kilometers) north of

London, for a meeting on Monday.

The summit reflects the queen's desire to contain the fallout from Harry and Meghan's decision to "step back" as senior royals, work to become financially independent and split their time between Britain and North America. The couple, also known as the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, made the announcement Wednesday without telling the queen or other senior royals first.

William is expected to travel to Sandringham from London and Harry from his home in Windsor, west of the British capital. Charles will fly back from the Gulf nation of Oman, where he was attending a condolence ceremony Sunday following the death of Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

Meghan, who is in Canada with the couple's baby son Archie, is likely to join the meeting by phone. AP

## Storms sweep US Midwest, South; 11 dead

**JUAN A LOZANO**  
HOUSTON, JANUARY 12

SEVERE STORMS sweeping across southern portions of the US and up into the Midwest were blamed Saturday in the deaths of at least 11 people, including two first responders, as high winds, tornadoes and unrelenting rain battered large swaths of the country.

Storm-related fatalities were reported in Texas due to icy weather, in Alabama from a deadly tornado and in Louisiana, where winds were so strong that a trailer home was lifted off its foundation and carried several hundred feet. A man drowned in Oklahoma and the storms even



Emergency personnel survey the damage from toppled trees in Greenville, Mississippi on Saturday. AP

touched the Midwest with at least one death on an icy highway in Iowa. Hundreds of thousands of people were left without power from Texas to Ohio,

parts of highways were closed in Oklahoma and Arkansas due to flooding and hundreds of flights were canceled at Chicago's international airports.



A bulldozer is used to spread out burnt woodchip at the Eden Woodchip Mill in southern New South Wales, Australia, on Saturday. Reuters

the wildfires, joining many other tennis stars to pledge money, including Ash Barty, Nick Kyrgios, Novak Djokovic and Maria Sharapova.

Also on Sunday, news came that another firefighter had been killed. Bill Slade — one of the few professionals among mainly volunteer brigades battling blazes across southeast Australia — died after being hit by a falling tree on Saturday near Omeo in eastern Victoria state, Forest Fire Management Victoria Executive Director Chris Hardman said.

The 60-year-old married father of two was commended in

November for 40 years of service with the forestry agency.

"Although we do have enormous experience in identifying hazardous trees, sometimes these tree failures can't be predicted," Hardman said. "Working on the fire ground in a forest environment is a dynamic, high-risk environment and it carries with it significant risk."

The tragedy brings the death toll to at least 27 in a crisis that has destroyed more than 2,000 homes and scorched an area larger than the US state of Indiana since September. Four of the casualties have been firefighters.

The crisis has brought accusations that Prime Minister Scott Morrison's conservative government needs to take more action to counter climate change, which experts say has worsened the blazes. Thousands of protesters rallied Friday in Sydney and Melbourne, calling for Morrison to be fired.

The PM said Sunday his government was building resilience to the fire danger. He said the government was developing a national disaster risk reduction framework within the Department of Home Affairs that will deal with wildfires, cyclones, floods and drought. AP

COOLER TEMPERATURES, MILD WINDS FINALLY OFFER FIREFIGHTERS A CHANCE TO MAKE PROGRESS

# As weather changes, Australia turns from defence to offence in wildfire battle

**NICK PERRY**  
BODALLA, JANUARY 12

CREWS BATTLING Australia's wildfires said Sunday that they have been able to turn from defence to offence for the first time in weeks thanks to a break in the weather.

Dale McLean, who is helping manage the response to a fire near the town of Bodalla in New South Wales state, was part of team that was bulldozing down small trees and burning scrub ahead of the fire's projected path to try to stop it from reaching a major highway

by starving it of fuel.

"This fire took a major run about seven or eight days ago, and with the weather changing now, the weather settling down, the fire has settled down," he said. "The fire behaviour has changed. So we're able to get in front of the fire now, get on the offensive."

Other workers echoed McLean's comments, saying cooler temperatures and mild winds have finally offered them a chance to make progress. The weather is expected to remain benign for the next week, although any deterioration in conditions after that could see the

wildfires flare up again.

While battling the blazes, volunteer firefighting veteran Mick Stain found some moth larvae, or "witchetty grubs," and turned them into what's known in Australia as bush tucker by roasting them directly on the fire's burning coals.

"Bit creamy and nutty, but they're all right," Stain said. "They're not spew-worthy, so they're pretty good."

Meanwhile, US tennis star Serena Williams donated her \$43,000 winner's check from New Zealand's ASB Classic to the fundraising appeal for victims of