

TOPOF THE WORLD



Chinese President Xi Jinping

ASIA

China's Xi visits Myanmar to drive home Belt and Road plan

Myitsone: China's President Xi Jinping arrives in Myanmar this week to nail down multi-billion-dollar infrastructure deals in a country abandoned by many in the West appalled at the "genocide" of Rohingya Muslims on leader Aung San Suu Kyi's watch. Xi's two-day visit, his first as President, will seek to cement Beijing's position as Myanmar's largest investor and strategic partner. The China-Myanmar Economic Corridor aims to connect the Middle Kingdom to the Indian Ocean, a key route in Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative that envisions Chinese infrastructure spanning the globe.

USA

Student shot dead at school, suspect arrested

Bellaire: A student was shot to death at a Texas high school, and a suspect was arrested hours later, officials said. Grenita Latham, interim superintendent of the Houston Independent School District, on Tuesday confirmed the shooting victim at Bellaire High School had died. She gave no other information and took no questions. A suspect was arrested Tuesday night, according to a school district statement. It provided no other details about the suspect.

CHINA

Uproar after destitute college student dies

Beijing: Angry Chinese social media users are demanding answers after news circulated that a university student who spent less than a dollar a day on food had died despite raising thousands of dollars in donations. Wu Huayan, who suffered from severe malnutrition and had lost both her parents, died on Monday, according to Chinese media reports. The 24-year-old reportedly spent just two yuan (\$0.29) per day on food in order to pay for her younger brother's medical treatment.

Russian PM resigns as Putin eyes constitutional rejig to retain power

President Putin, whose fourth term ends in 2024, seeks to give greater power to Parliament, PM

ANDREW OSBORN & VLADIMIR SOLDATKIN MOSCOW, JANUARY 15

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT Vladimir Putin proposed constitutional changes on Wednesday that would give him leeway to extend his grip on power after leaving the presidency, and picked a new prime minister after Dmitry Medvedev and his Cabinet resigned.

The dramatic moves were widely seen as preparing the ground for 2024, when Putin, now 67, is constitutionally obliged to leave the presidency after occupying the Kremlin or the prime minister's job continuously since 1999.

In a surprise development, Putin said he wanted Mikhail Mishustin, head of the tax service, to be the next prime minister. Mishustin, whose candidacy will be examined by parliament on Thursday, has a relatively low profile and had not been spoken of as a possible candidate.

Mishustin, 53, has played ice hockey with Putin and will inevitably be viewed as a possible presidential successor, as will members of the new government, many of whom are expected to be new.

Sikhs to be counted as separate ethnic group in US census for 1st time

LALIT K JHA WASHINGTON, JANUARY 15

FOR THE first time, Sikhs in the US will be counted as a separate ethnic group in the 2020 census, an organisation of the minority community said on Tuesday, describing it as a milestone moment.

President of the Sikh Society of San Diego, Baljeet Singh, said the Sikh community's efforts have come to fruition.

"This has paved the way forward nationally not only for the Sikh community but also for other ethnicities in the United States," he said.

Describing this as a milestone, the United Sikhs said that this will be the first time the minority group will be counted and coded in the decennial US Census.

A delegation of the United Sikhs has held several meetings with the US Census in the recent past with the last one being on January 6 in San Diego.

Gurdwara in US defaced with swastika graffiti

LALIT K JHA WASHINGTON, JANUARY 15

IN AN apparent hate crime, a new gurdwara in the US state of California has been defaced with a swastika graffiti.

Police officials took statements from the *granthi* of Guru Maneyo Granth Gurdwara Sahib in Orangevale, where the incident took place.

On Monday morning, a day after the Sikh temple was officially inaugurated, people saw the words "White Power" and a swastika sign graffitied on the property. The graffiti was removed later on the day.

"I strongly condemn the racist graffiti spray painted at a Sikh house of worship in Orangevale," Indian-American Congressman Ami Bara said.

Dimple Kaur Bhullar from the Guru Maneyo Granth Gurdwara Sahib Sangat said, "We began services as of mid-December 2019, the weekend of January 10-12 we had our official Grand Opening with Bhai Sahib Harjinder Singh Ji Sri Nagarwale, without any problems. There was no negativity before this." PTI

changes he set out, which he suggested should be put to a referendum, would give him the option of taking an enhanced role as prime minister after 2024 or a new role as head of the State Council, an official body he said he was keen to build up.

He could even become speaker of a new, supercharged Parliament.

Under his proposed constitutional changes, the powers of the presidency would be diminished

and those of the prime minister's office beefed up.

Opposition politician Leonid Volkov said it looked as though Putin was digging in.

"It's clear to everyone that everything is going exclusively towards setting Putin up to rule for life," Volkov wrote on social media. Dmitry Gudkov, another opposition politician, said Putin had decided to re-arrange everything around him now rather than wait until closer to 2024. REUTERS



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EXPLAINED

Move leaves open host of possibilities

PUTIN'S MOVE to rejig the constitution to give more power to the office of the PM and Parliament left analysts guessing what his next move is likely to be. He must leave the presidency after 2024, when his fourth term ends. It is speculated that he could make himself PM and continue his hold on power in Russia, or become leader of the Parliament whose powers are set to expand. However, some analysts say this could be a way for Putin to change the rules and stay on as President while making the decision more palatable to the public with the seemingly democratic reforms.

Prompted by the moderators, Warren and Senator Bernie Sanders continued a back-and-forth over the fraught subject of whether a woman could be elected president, an issue that in recent days had caused the first serious breach in their relationship. One day after she confirmed a report that Sanders had told her in a private meeting that he did not think a woman could defeat Trump, Warren trumpeted her Senate victory over an incumbent Republican and then gestured down the debate stage toward the four male candidates.

"Collectively they have lost 10 elections," she said, before acknowledging the only other female candidate present, Senator Amy Klobuchar. "The only people on this stage who have won every single election they have been in are the women: Amy and me. And the only person on this stage who has beaten an incumbent Republican in the past 30 years is me."

Sanders, Warren's top rival for progressive support, flatly denied that he had made the comment when the two lawmakers met in 2018. He said it was "incomprehensible that I would think that a woman couldn't be president of the United States," noting Hillary Clinton had won the popular vote in the 2016 general election.

Meeting less than three weeks before Iowa's vote, the Democrats disagreed over international affairs and keeping troops in West Asia, whether to support Trump's trade deal for North America, how aggressively to tackle climate change and, yet again, health care. NYT

MALACHY BROWNE, EVAN HILL, LOGAN MITCHELL & BARBARA MARCOLINI JANUARY 15

THE NEW York Times has verified security camera footage Tuesday that shows, for the first time, that two missiles hit Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 on Jan. 8. The missiles were launched from an Iranian military site around 8 miles from the plane.

The new video fills a gap about why the plane's transponder stopped working, seconds before it was hit by a second missile.

An earlier Times analysis confirmed what Iran later admitted: that an Iranian missile did strike the plane. The Times also established that the transponder stopped working before that missile hit the plane. The new video appears to confirm that an initial strike disabled the transponder, before the second strike, also seen in the video, around 23 seconds later. NYT

Nepal's Prachanda says he can be blamed for 'only' 5,000 deaths during civil war

Addressing a gathering in Kathmandu, Dahal said since he led a movement against the feudal system, he was ready to take responsibility for the killing of 5,000 people. The other 12,000, he said, were killed by the state.

The Maoists are now part of the ruling Nepal Communist Party and had joined the political mainstream in 2006.

Prachanda's statement comes amid demands by rival politicians that he should be tried for killing 17,000 people during the insurgency, which was led by Prachanda.

not responsible for all 17,000 deaths that took place during the decade-long armed insurgency led by the Maoists beginning February 1996.

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