

TOP OF THE WORLD



Terry Jones

UK

'Monty Python' star Terry Jones dies aged 77

London: Terry Jones, one of the British Monty Python comedy team, has died at the age of 77, the BBC said on Wednesday. Born in Wales, Jones was also a film director and historian. He had long suffered from a rare form of dementia, FTD. Jones was one of the creators of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, the British TV show that rewrote the rules of comedy with surreal sketches, characters and catchphrases, in 1969. He co-directed its first film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* with fellow Python Terry Gilliam, and directed the subsequent films *Life of Brian* and *The Meaning of Life*.

AFGHANISTAN

US airstrike killed 10 civilians in Herat

Kabul: A drone attack carried out by US forces earlier this month in western Afghanistan that apparently targeted a splinter Taliban group also killed at least 10 civilians, including three women and three children, an Afghan rights official and a council member said on Wednesday. According to the Afghan official, who is on the country's Human Rights Commission, the strike took place in western Herat province, in the district of Shindanad. Five other civilians, including two children, were wounded, he said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

IRAN

Gunmen kill local commander of security forces

Tehran: Masked gunmen on Wednesday ambushed and killed the local commander of a paramilitary security force in south-western Iran, an associate of Iran's top general recently killed in an American drone strike in Baghdad, the official IRNA news agency reported. The slain commander, Abdolhossein Mojaaddami, headed the Basij forces, a paramilitary wing of the Revolutionary Guard used for internal security and other tasks, in the town of Darkhoein. He was gunned down in front of his home in the town in the country's oil rich Khuzestan province.

NEPAL

After avalanche: Search for missing resumes

Kathmandu: Rescuers took advantage of improved weather on Mount Annapurna to press ahead with a search for four South Korean climbers and three Nepali guides and have a possible location for them, officials said Wednesday. Nine soldiers and seven civilian rescuers were digging through ice and snow on the Annapurna trekking trail and had made progress in determining their possible whereabouts, said army spokesman Bigyan Dev Pandey.

U.S. SENATE PROCEEDINGS

Impeachment: After scrap over rules, formal arguments to start

THE NEW YORK TIMES
WASHINGTON, JANUARY 22

A DIVIDED Senate began the impeachment trial of President Trump on Tuesday in utter acrimony, as Republicans blocked Democrats' efforts to subpoena witnesses and documents related to Ukraine and moderate Republicans forced last-minute changes to rules that had been tailored to the president's wishes.

In a series of party-line votes punctuating 12 hours of debate, Senate Republicans turned back every attempt by Democrats to subpoena documents from the White House, State Department and other agencies, as well as testimony from White House officials that could shed light on the core charges against Trump.

The debate between the House impeachment managers and the president's legal team stretched into the early hours of Wednesday morning in a Senate chamber transformed for the occasion, with Chief Justice John G Roberts Jr presiding from the marble rostrum and senators sworn to silence looking on from desks piled with briefing books. Tensions grew so raw after



During the impeachment trial proceedings in the Senate. AP

midnight that Chief Justice Roberts cut in just before 1 am to admonish the managers and the president's lawyers to "remember where they are" and return to "civil discourse." "They are addressing the world's greatest deliberative body," he said.

Meanwhile, the White House on Wednesday passed up a chance to force a vote to dismiss the impeachment charges.

The president's defense lawyers and House Democratic impeachment managers had until 9 am to offer motions related to the trial, except for ones

that would call for witnesses and new evidence. Neither side did so, aides in both parties said.

The White House's silence was more significant. Though Republican leaders have been discouraging the president's team from seeking a swift dismissal, Trump had endorsed the idea and his conservative allies said the Senate ought to vote promptly to do so. A dismissal vote this week would almost certainly have failed to attract a majority of senators, dividing Republicans and dealing Trump an early symbolic defeat.

EXPLAINED

Clear party lines, some limits

THE REPUBLICANS have largely voted along party lines so far, dismissing over 10 amendments suggested by Democrats. One proposal received support from a single Republican, but still failed. However, a section of moderate Republicans had pressured McConnell to make last-minute changes to his proposed rules for the trial. His revised resolution provided three days for opening arguments instead of two, and allowed House records to be entered as evidence automatically, instead of going through a separate vote.

TAIWAN ASKS BEIJING TO SHARE 'CORRECT' INFORMATION

China virus outbreak: 17 dead, 540 cases flagged

REUTERS

BEIJING/TAIPEI, JANUARY 22

DEATHS FROM China's new virus rose to 17 on Wednesday with more than 540 cases confirmed, increasing fears of contagion from an infection suspected to originate from illegally-traded wildlife.

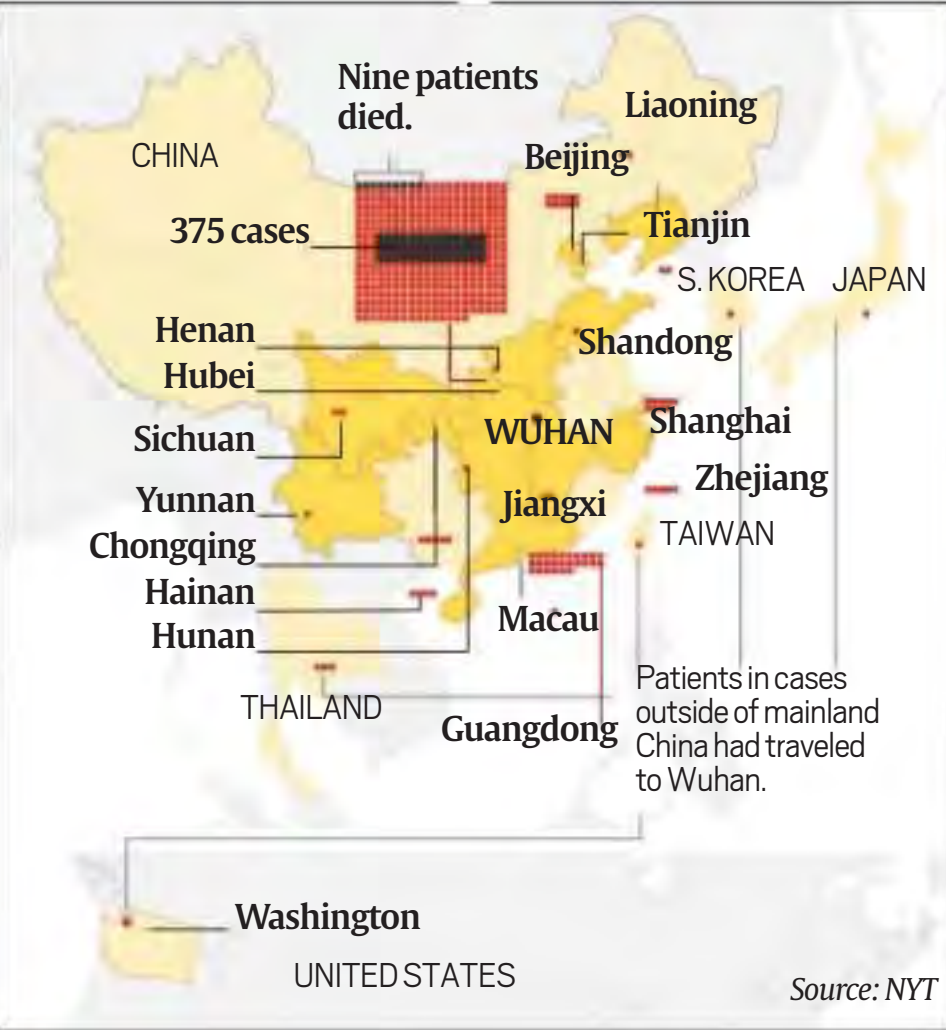
The previously unknown, flu-like coronavirus strain is believed to have emerged from an animal market in central Wuhan city, with cases now detected as far away as the United States.

Contrasting with its secrecy over the 2002-03 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) that killed nearly 800 people, China's communist government has this time given regular updates to try to avoid panic as millions travel for the Lunar New Year.

"The rise in the mobility of the public has objectively increased the risk of the epidemic spreading," National Health Commission vice-minister Li Bin said.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) was meeting to rule if the outbreak was a global health emergency. The virus has spread from Wuhan to population centres including Beijing, Shanghai, Macau and Hong Kong.

The latest death toll in Hubei province, of which Wuhan is the



capital, rose from nine to 17 by midday on Wednesday, state television quoted the provincial government as saying.

Official newspaper China Daily said 544 cases had now been confirmed in the country. Abroad, Thailand has confirmed four cases, while the United States, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan have each reported one. Meanwhile, Taiwan

President Tsai Ing-wen called on China on Wednesday to share "correct" information about a new coronavirus and for the World Health Organisation (WHO) not to exclude Taiwan from collaboration on the outbreak for political reasons.

Tsai said she hoped for transparency and that China would "share with Taiwan correct information about the virus".

75 YEARS AFTER HOLOCAUST, ISRAEL REMEMBERS



German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier (third from right) meets people, including Holocaust survivors, in Jerusalem. Reuters

■ Jerusalem is overflowing with Western presidents, premiers and potentates, all descending to recall the Holocaust and speak out against anti-Semitism some 75 years after the liberation of Auschwitz

■ The kings of Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands, Britain's Prince Charles and the presidents of Russia, France, Germany, Italy and Ukraine are among those leading nearly 50 delegations

■ The turnout points to the seriousness with which anti-Semitic rhetoric is viewed in the West and in Israel — and offers representatives of countries considered hotbeds of anti-Jewish hatred a chance at least to demonstrate their revulsion for it. NYT

Indian-origin man charged over street fight killings of 3 compatriots in UK

ADITI KHANNA
LONDON, JANUARY 22

A 29-YEAR-OLD Indian-origin man has been charged by Scotland Yard in connection with the killing of three compatriots originally from Punjab in a street fight in east London over the weekend.

Gurjeet Singh was charged on Tuesday evening with possessing an offensive weapon in a public place to appear before Redbridge Magistrates' Court in London on Wednesday.

He remains under investigation in connection with the murders, while a second man aged

“We now believe all those involved were known to each other and from the Sikh and Hindu community... At this early stage, I do not believe this was gang or race-related.” — LEAD INVESTIGATOR

39 remains in police custody.

"Enquiries around motive for this incident continue, however we do not believe it to be gang related. Officers at this stage are not seeking to make any further arrests for murder," the Metropolitan

Police said in its update.

The three murdered men, originally from Punjab, are yet to be formally identified by police but have been locally named as builders Narinder a.k.a. Nik Singh, Harinder a.k.a. Honey Kumar, and Baljit Singh.

Earlier, the Met Police had said that their investigation revealed that the attack was the result of an "ongoing dispute" involving men from the local Sikh and Hindu communities who were known to each other.

An altercation at a wedding reception a day before is believed to be linked to the fatal incident on Sunday night when three men, aged in their late 20s

US hits out at CPEC: Projects not transparent

SAJJAD HUSSAIN
ISLAMABAD, JANUARY 22

SENIOR US diplomat Alice Wells has renewed the criticism of the \$60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), emphasising there is no transparency in the projects and it will increase Pakistan's debt burden.

Speaking at an event here on Tuesday during her four-day visit to Pakistan, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia also said companies blacklisted by the World Bank have got contracts under the CPEC.

The CPEC is a planned network of roads, railways and energy projects linking China's resource-rich Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region with Pakistan's strategic Gwadar Port on the Arabian Sea.

Wells' recent remarks were made after Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi sought closer engagement and a robust trade and investment relationship between Pakistan and the US. Qureshi had also sought help to get Pakistan off the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) grey list.

Commenting on her remarks, the Chinese embassy here on Wednesday rejected the "negative propaganda" by the US diplomat against the CPEC.

"Although you can never wake up a person who is pretending to be asleep, we have to make our position clear and reject the negative propaganda by the US," the embassy's spokesperson said in a statement. The embassy also rejected her remarks that CPEC was burdening Pakistan with debt. PTI

Gotabaya wants probe into civil war missing cases

Colombo: Gotabaya Rajapaksa wants a probe into the disappearances of over 20,000 people in the country's brutal civil war with Tamil Tiger rebels, his office has said in a clarification after the Sri Lankan President declared the missing persons "dead" in a first-ever admission to a UN official.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa, the former wartime defence secretary who played a key role in ending Sri Lanka's civil war with the Tamil separatist rebels, had told UN Resident Coordinator Hanaa Singer last week that after the necessary investigations are completed steps would be taken to issue death certificates to the missing persons. PTI

'I WILL CONTINUE TO FIGHT UNTIL THE DAY I CAN REMAIN TO SERVE IN THE ARMY'

S Korea military discharges first transgender soldier

SANGMICA HA
HYONHEE SHIN
SEOUL, JANUARY 22

SOUTH KOREA'S first transgender soldier said on Wednesday she would sue the military after it announced it would dismiss her for undergoing gender reassignment surgery last year.

Byun Hui-su, who holds the rank of staff sergeant and is stationed in Gyeonggi Province, north of Seoul, had the operation in Thailand last year while on leave, and had expressed hope of continuing to serve in the female



Byun Hui-su

corps. In her first public appearance since her case was publicized last week, Byun said she would pursue a lawsuit against the army, all the way to the country's high-

“I thought I would finish serving in the army and then go through the transition surgery and then reenter the army as a female soldier. But my depression got too severe

est court if necessary.

"I will continue to fight until the day I can remain to serve in the army," she said. "I'll challenge the decision until the end, to the

Supreme Court."

The army said in a statement that while it will make efforts to protect soldiers' human rights and prevent discrimination, the surgery left Byun unable to continue to serve.

Byun broke down in tears as she described the decision to undergo surgery after suffering from gender dysphoria, which medical experts define as distress from the internal conflict between physical gender and gender identity. "It was an extremely difficult decision to let my base know of my identity, but once I did, I felt much better," she told reporters at a

news conference in Seoul after the military announced its decision.

"I thought I would finish serving in the army and then go through the transition surgery and then reenter the army as a female soldier. But my depression got too severe."

One army official with knowledge of the deliberations told Reuters that there should be no reason for the military to deny Byun if she reapplied to serve in the female corps after completing the legal process to formally become a woman.

A human rights organisation had filed a petition with a national

QUOTE
UNQUOTE

"The past decade was the hottest on record. Scientists tell us that ocean temperatures are now rising at the equivalent of five Hiroshima bombs a second... Our planet is burning"

— ANTONIO GUTERRES,
United Nations Secretary General