

Global spending on defence rose by four percent in 2019, the largest growth in 10 years, led by big increases from US and China, a study said Friday. Beijing's military modernisation programme, which includes developing new hard-to-detect hypersonic missiles, is alarming Washington and helping drive US spending, it added

## TOP OF THE WORLD



Police with the arrested man. AP

## THAILAND

## Days after deadly shooting, man fires gun

Bangkok: Multiple gunshots have been fired into the air by a man in the middle of the capital Bangkok, police said Friday. No one has been reported hurt, according to the city's Erawan Medical Center, which coordinates emergency response services. The man suspected of firing some 20-40 shots was refusing to surrender more than six hours later. Police have cleared the area around the building where the man is, and Thai TV Channel 3 said a family member was brought in to try to convince him to surrender.

## US

## Indian Uber driver jailed for transporting illegal migrants

New York: A 30-year-old Indian citizen, who worked as an Uber driver, has been sentenced to a year in prison for knowingly transporting individuals who had entered the US illegally in exchange for money. Jaswinder Singh most recently resided in Philadelphia. He was sentenced on Thursday to 12 months in prison for knowingly transporting illegal aliens within the United States for the purpose of financial gain, United States Attorney Grant Jaquith said. Singh admitted that he picked up several aliens whom he knew had crossed illegally into the US and transported them for payment.

## SRI LANKA

## US bans visits by army chief

Washington: The US said Friday it would refuse entry to Sri Lanka's army chief over "credible" evidence of human rights violations in the bloody 2009 finale to the civil war. Lieutenant General Shavendra Silva, whose appointment drew wide international criticism, will be ineligible to visit the US, as will his immediate family, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said. "The allegations of gross human rights violations against Shavendra Silva, documented by the United Nations and other organizations, are serious and credible," Pompeo said.

## AFGHANISTAN

## Avalanche kills 21 people

Kabul: A series of avalanches struck a central province in Afghanistan the previous day, killing at least 21 people, authorities said Friday. According to Ahmad Tameem Azimi, spokesman of the ministry for disaster management, seven people remain missing following the avalanches in central Daykundi province on Thursday while 10 were injured. The 21 killed were all from two families in the area, Azimi said. At least 50 houses were destroyed. Azimi added that search and rescue teams have been working since Thursday to find the missing and help the victims.

## 'WON'T BE BULLIED'

## US Attorney General says attacks by Trump make work impossible

KATIE BENNER

WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 14

ATTORNEY GENERAL William P Barr delivered an extraordinary rebuke of President Trump on Thursday, saying that his attacks on the Justice Department had made it "impossible for me to do my job" and that "I'm not going to be bullied or influenced by anybody."

"Whether it's Congress, newspaper editorial boards or the president, I'm going to do what I think is right," Barr said in an interview with ABC News, echoing comments he made a year ago at his confirmation hearing. "I cannot do my job here at the department with a constant background commentary that undercuts me."

Barr's remarks were aimed at containing the fallout from the department's botched handling of its sentencing recommendation for Trump's longtime friend Roger J Stone Jr, who was convicted of seven felonies in a bid to obstruct a congressional investigation that threatened the president. After career prosecutors initially recommended a sentence of seven to nine years



Reuters/FILE

**I cannot do my job here at the department with a constant background commentary that undercuts me... It's time to stop the tweeting about Department of Justice criminal cases"**

— WILLIAM BARR  
US ATTORNEY GENERAL

in prison, Trump spent days attacking them, the department and the judge presiding over Stone's case.

Such tweets "make it impossible for me to do my job and to assure the courts and the prosecutors in the department that we're doing our work with integrity," Barr said.

He added, "It's time to stop the tweeting about Department of Justice criminal cases."

The fallout from the Stone episode threatened to spin out of control after the four prosecutors on the case withdrew from it and Trump widened his attacks on law enforcement, thrusting Barr into a full-blown

crisis. Career prosecutors began to express worry that their work could be used to settle political scores and doubts that he could protect them from political interference.

The attorney general had been contemplating how to respond since he became aware of Trump's attacks on the department, according to a person familiar with his thinking. Speaking up could have put Barr at risk of losing the backing of the president, but remaining silent would have permitted Trump to continue attacking law enforcement. Ultimately, Barr concluded that he had to speak out to preserve his ability to do his job effectively, the person said.

President Trump asserted Friday that he had the legal right to intervene in federal criminal cases. In a morning tweet, Trump quoted Barr saying that the president "has never asked me to do anything in a criminal case." The president said he had "so far chosen" not to interfere in a criminal case even though he insisted that he was not legally bound to do so.

"This doesn't mean that I do not have, as President, the legal right to do so, I do, but I have so far chosen not to!" he said. **NYT**

## EXPLAINED

## Unexpected challenge

BARR'S REMARKS are perhaps the most public challenge of Trump by a member of his own cabinet (while holding office). This has come as a surprise, as Barr is seen as one of Trump's most loyal allies, for which he has often been criticised by Democrats. The remarks have met with mixed response. Republicans, including majority leader Mitch McConnell, spoke in support of Barr and called on the president to listen. However, certain sections groups have criticised Barr, leading to speculations about his future in the Trump administration.

## NEAR JAPAN COAST

## Third Indian on cruise ship tests positive for virus

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

ONE MORE Indian national on the cruise ship off the Japanese coast has tested positive for coronavirus, the Indian embassy said on Friday. Earlier, two Indians had tested positive.

The Indian embassy, however, said it is in touch with all three Indians, who are crew members of the ship, and reported that their condition is improving and is stable.

"I more Indian crew member on #DiamondPrincess tested positive for #COVID19 and hospitalised for treatment. Earlier, 2 more Indian nationals had tested positive. @IndianEmbTokyo is in contact with all 3, whose conditions are stable and improving," the Indian embassy in Tokyo tweeted.

The Diamond Princess Cruise ship, which is currently docked off the coast of Yokohama, has 3,711 people on board, including 132 crew members and six passengers who are Indian nationals.

The death toll in China's novel coronavirus outbreak has spiked to nearly 1,500, while the confirmed cases jumped to nearly

65,000, health officials said Friday.

The quarantine was conducted as one passenger who had disembarked at Hong Kong on January 25 was found to be infected with coronavirus on February 1. Taking into account the maximum incubation period of 14 days for the coronavirus, the Japanese government quarantined the cruise ship at Yokohama for two weeks.

During this period, the passengers have been kept under monitoring and requested to remain restricted to their rooms. They have been provided with protective masks, medicines, and necessary supplies, including water and food, regular phone and Internet services. Some quarantine officers have been deputised by the Japanese government on the ship, including doctors to attend to the needs of guests, as and when required.

"We understand that once the quarantine is over, everyone leaving the ship will be screened for temperature and other symptoms related to coronavirus infection. Thereafter, people will be free to go to a place of their choice..." a source said.

## Turkey to oppose Pakistan blacklisting at FATF meeting

ASIF SHAHZAD

ISLAMABAD, FEBRUARY 14

TURKISH PRESIDENT Tayyip Erdogan on Friday said he would help Pakistan stay off a terrorism financing blacklist at a meeting of a global finance watchdog, a move he suggested would counter "political pressure" from Islamabad's critics.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which tackles money laundering, told Islamabad late last year that it could face blacklisting if it continued to apply inadequate controls over terrorism financing.

The FATF is meeting next week in France, and support from Turkey and longtime allies like China, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia could help Pakistan re-



Tayyip Erdogan

main off the blacklist. A minimum of three votes are required for any country to escape the blacklisting.

If it joined the blacklist alongside Iran and North Korea, Islamabad would face sanctions and economic setbacks at a time when its economy is struggling with a balance of payment crisis.

"We will be supporting Pakistan at the Financial Action Task Force meetings, where Pakistan is subject to political pressure," Erdogan told Pakistan's parliament. **REUTERS**



## 'ONE BILLION RISING'

Thousands of Filipino students dance to take part in the One Billion Rising global campaign to end violence against women and children, in Manila on Friday. **Reuters**



A medical worker takes a break, in Wuhan. Reuters

## FIGHT AGAINST OUTBREAK TAKES TOLL ON CHINA'S HEALTH WORKERS

**1,716** No of infected health workers

**6** No of health workers who died

**1,102** health workers infected in Wuhan

- Many doctors in Wuhan have had to see patients without proper masks or protective body suits
- The risks medical staff are facing was highlighted on February 7 when Li Wenliang, a whistleblowing doctor, succumbed to the disease in Wuhan.

## Myanmar: School in Rakhine hit by shelling, at least 19 children injured

REUTERS

YANGON, FEBRUARY 14

AT LEAST 19 children were wounded when a primary school was hit by shelling in Myanmar's Rakhine state, a lawmaker and a military spokesman said on Thursday.

Clashes between government troops and ethnic insurgents have intensified in Rakhine, from where tens of thousands of people have been displaced since clashes began in December 2018, bringing new chaos to the region from which more than 730,000

Rohingya Muslims fled a military crackdown in 2017.

Artillery fire hit the school in Khamwe Chaung village in Buthidaung township on Thursday morning, Tun Aung Thein, a local member of parliament, told Reuters by telephone. He said he did not know who was responsible.

"According to the health department, 19 students are injured and one is seriously injured," the lawmaker said.

A military spokesman put the number of wounded at 20, and blamed the insurgents for the attack.

## 48 ROHINGYA HELD OFF MYANMAR COAST

Patheingyi: Nearly 50 Rohingya Muslims have been detained at sea by Myanmar's navy, a local official said Friday. Village administrator Myint Thein said the navy had picked up 48 Rohingya men, women and children, as well as five "traffickers", at sea Wednesday evening. "We don't know how authorities in Patheingyi town will proceed," Myint Thein said. **PTI**

## 20 killed at ethnic flarepoint in central Mali

Bamako: Twenty people were killed in an attack overnight on a village in central Mali, local officials said Friday, in an apparent spate of ethnic violence in the deeply troubled region.

The attack occurred in Ogossagou, a village mainly inhabited by Fulani people where around 160 died last March in a massacre blamed on Dogon militiamen. About 30 gunmen carried out the new attack, village chief Aly Ousmane Barry said.

"I counted the numbers while soldiers and the medical services were there," he said.

"We have 20 dead. Some of them have been burned." **PTI**

## Presidential race: Democrats step up attacks to blunt Bloomberg's rise

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 14

DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL candidates hoping to revive their flagging campaigns increasingly took aim at Mike Bloomberg, blasting their billionaire rival for trying to buy his way into the White House and raising questions about his commitment to racial equality.

Struggling to recover from poor showings in the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary, Elizabeth Warren and Joe Biden took the lead in attack-



Mike Bloomberg

ing Bloomberg. Biden, the former vice president, said on ABC's "The View" that "I don't think you can buy an election," while Warren took Bloomberg to task for his 2008 comments that ending redlining, a discriminatory housing practice, helped trigger the economic meltdown.

Biden and billionaire Tom

Steyer also joined forces in slamming Bernie Sanders after the Vermont senator and self-described democratic socialist won New Hampshire and essentially tied for the lead in Iowa with Pete Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana. Biden said Sanders hadn't done enough to explain how he'd pay for his "Medicare for All" proposal to replace private insurance with a government-run program. Steyer said that "refusal to tell us how he will pay for his plan adds unnecessary financial risk to achieving health care as a right for every person."

## VIDEO TRIGGERS FIERCE DEBATE ABOUT VOYEURISM, EXPLOITATION, MANY SUPPORT CONCEPT

## S Korean TV 'reunites' mother with dead daughter in VR show

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SEOUL, FEBRUARY 14

A TEARFUL reunion between a mother and her dead daughter via advanced virtual reality for a South Korean television has become an online hit, triggering fierce debate about voyeurism and exploitation.

The footage began with the girl — who died of leukaemia in 2016 — emerging from behind a pile of wood in a park, as if playing hide-and-seek.

"Mum, where have you been?" she asks. "I've missed you a lot. Have you missed me?"

Tears streaming down her face, Jang Ji-sung reached out towards her, wracked with emotion.

"I have missed you Na-yeon," she told the computer-generated six-year-old, her hands moving to stroke her hair.

But in the real world, Jang was standing in front of a studio green screen, wearing a virtual reality headset and touch-sensitive gloves, her daughter's ashes in a locket around her neck.

At times the camera cut to Jang's watching husband and their three surviving children, wiping away tears of their own.

A nine-minute clip of the Munhwa Broadcasting



A screengrab of the video. Reuters

Corporation (MBC) documentary "I met you" has been watched more than 13 million times in a week on YouTube.

Many viewers offered Jang their sympathy and support for the concept. "My mother unexpectedly passed away two years ago and I wish I could meet her through virtual reality," said one.

But media columnist Park Sang-hyun said the documentary amounted to exploitation of personal pain.

"It's understandable a grief-stricken mother would wish to meet her late daughter. I would do the same," he told AFP.

"The problem lies in that the

broadcaster has taken advantage of a vulnerable mother who lost a child for sake of viewer ratings."

"If the mother had been counselled before the filming," he added, "I wonder what kind of a psychiatrist would approve this."

It took eight months of filming and programming to create the virtual Na-yeon, but the makers of the documentary insisted the broadcast was intended to "console the family" rather than promote virtual reality in ultra-wired South Korea.

The technology presented a "new way to keep loved ones in memory," one of the producers told reporters.

Jang herself — who has her daughter's name and date of birth tattooed on her arm in memory — hoped the programme could "console" others who had lost loved ones.

"Even though it was a very brief... I was really happy in the moment," she wrote on her blog — which she has since turned private.

During the broadcast the two sat at a table to celebrate Na-yeon's missing birthday, singing "happy birthday" together.

Before blowing out the candles, Na-yeon made a birthday wish: "I want my mother to stop crying."