

33 Turkish soldiers killed in Syria strikes

Ankara threatens to send refugees to Europe as crisis in Idlib worsens; Erdogan asks Syria to pull back

REUTERS
OUTSIDE SARAQEB/ISTANBUL
Refugees in Turkey headed towards European frontiers on Friday after an official declared that borders had been thrown open, a response to the escalating war in Syria where 33 Turkish soldiers were killed by Russian-backed Syrian government troops.

Moscow and Ankara traded blame over the strike in northwest Syria, the deadliest attack suffered by Turkey's army in nearly 30 years.

The UN Security Council called an emergency meeting to avert open conflict between Russia and NATO member Turkey.

U.S. President Donald Trump, in a telephone conversation with Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, condemned Thursday's attack on Turkish troops and reaffirmed U.S. support for Ankara's efforts to avert a humanitarian disaster in Syria, a White House spokesman said. The two leaders also said Syria and Russia must halt their offences in north-



In search of safety: A group of migrants waiting on no-man's land at Turkey's Pazarkule border crossing with Greece's Kastanies on Friday. •REUTERS

west Syria, spokesman Judd Deere said. Turkey's neighbours Greece and Bulgaria reinforced their borders in response to Ankara's threat to reopen the frontier, shut under an accord that halted the 2015-16 migration crisis when more than a million people crossed into Europe by foot.

"We have decided, effective immediately, not to stop Syrian refugees from reaching Europe by land or sea," a senior Turkish official said on condition of anonymity.

Within hours, a column of dozens of migrants was heading on foot towards the European frontier in the early morning light.

Greece's Prime Minister said no unauthorised crossing would be allowed. Bulgaria's Prime Minister said the prospect of a new migration crisis was even more of a threat when European countries were struggling to respond to the coronavirus outbreak.

The EU noted that Ankara had made no formal announce-

ment of any change in policy at the border.

Direct confrontation

Inside Syria there was ample evidence of the renewed fighting that has caused perhaps the worst humanitarian crisis of the nine-year-old war. A million civilians have been displaced since December inside Syria near the Turkish border in desperate winter conditions. Turkey, already home to 3.7 million Syrian refugees, says it cannot take more.

Syria's civil war has worsened dramatically in recent months despite largely vanishing from Western countries' agendas. Government forces, backed by Russian air power, have launched an assault to capture the north-west, the last remaining territory held by rebels backed by Turkey. With diplomacy sponsored by Ankara and Moscow in tatters, Turkey has come closer than ever to direct confrontation with Russia on the battlefield.

Turkey's Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke by telephone on Friday. The Kremlin said they agreed on the need for a new arrangement to avert clashes. Turkey said the leaders agreed to meet as soon as possible.

Thursday's air strike was the worst on Turkey's military since a 1993 attack by Kurdish separatists.

Turkey's Defence Minister said it occurred despite coordination with Russia. Moscow said the Turkish troops should not have been in the area, and Ankara had failed to say where they were.

WHO raises global risk of virus to 'very high'

New COVID-19 cases fall in China but rise elsewhere

REUTERS
GENEVA/BEIJING

The rapid spread of the COVID-19 outbreak increased fears of a pandemic on Friday, with six countries reporting their first cases and the World Health Organization (WHO) raising its global spread and impact risk alert to "very high".

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said his organisation was not underestimating the risk. "That is why we said today the global risk is very high," he told reporters in Geneva.

WHO spokesman Christian Lindmeier said the scenario of the new strain of coronavirus reaching multiple or all countries "is something we have been looking at and warning against since quite a while".

The virus has now infected 83,000 globally, with cases being confirmed in around 50 countries. More



A cleaner sanitising a train wagon in Milan, Italy. •AP

than 2,800 deaths have been reported – the majority in China.

Mainland China reported 329 new cases in the past 24 hours, the lowest there in more than a month, taking its tally to 78,826. The death toll reached 2,788 as of the end of Thursday, up by 44 from the previous day. But as the outbreak eases in China, it is surging elsewhere.

Mexico, Nigeria, Estonia, Denmark, the Netherlands and Lithuania reported their first cases, all with travel history connected to Italy, the worst-affected European country. Mexico is the se-

cond Latin American country to register the virus, after Brazil.

Mr. Lindmeier said the WHO was looking very carefully into reports of some people getting re-infected.

In Europe, Germany warned of an impending epidemic and Greece, a gateway for refugees from West Asia, announced tighter border controls. The death toll in Italy rose to 17 and those testing positive rose to 655. Germany has nearly 60 cases, France about 38 and Spain 23.

South Korea has the most cases outside China. It reported 571 new infections on Friday, bringing the total to 2,337, with 13 people killed.

U.S. intelligence agencies are monitoring the spread of the virus in Iran and India, where only a handful of cases have been reported, sources said.

Confirmed cases in Japan have risen above 200, with four deaths, excluding the more than 700 cases on a quarantined cruise liner, *Diamond Princess*.

ELSEWHERE



Activism works, Greta tells school strikers

BRISTOL
Teen climate activist Greta Thunberg told tens of thousands of environmental protesters in Britain on Friday that "activism works" – the day after plans for a third runway at London's Heathrow airport suffered a setback. "World leaders are behaving like children, so it falls on us to be the adults in the room," she said at a rally in Bristol. AFP

U.S. professor charged with hiding link to China

WASHINGTON
U.S. authorities on Thursday charged a professor at a university in Tennessee with fraud and false statements, saying he hid his link to a Chinese institution while taking funding from NASA. The Justice Department said Anming Hu hid his ties to Beijing University of Technology while he taught and did research at University of Tennessee, Knoxville. AFP

Pakistan invites U.S. to invest in CPEC

ISLAMABAD
Pakistan has invited the U.S. to join the \$60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. P.M. Imran Khan's adviser on commerce Abdul Razak Dawood said the government made the offer during a meeting with the U.S. trade delegation led by Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross. *The Express Tribune* reported. PTI

Pro-democracy media tycoon arrested

Jimmy Lai accused of taking part in Hong Kong rallies

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HONG KONG

Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai, a high profile critic of Beijing, was arrested on Friday for taking part in last year's pro-democracy protests that rocked the city for seven months.

The 72-year-old owner of the *Apple Daily* newspaper is accused of joining a rally on August 31 that had been



Jimmy Lai

banned by the police for security reasons.

Mr. Lai was arrested and charged along with veteran pro-democracy activists Lee Cheuk Yan and Yeung Sum,

the police said. The trio could be jailed for up to five years if convicted of taking part in an "unauthorised assembly". They are due to appear in court on May 5.

Tens of thousands of protesters defied the police ban on the demonstration marking the anniversary of Beijing's rejection of a call for universal suffrage for Hong Kong that sparked the 2014 "Umbrella Movement".

Some gathered in the name of a religious procession – which does not require police approval –

while others claimed they were shopping.

In a separate charge, Mr. Lai was accused of intimidating a reporter in 2018 during a vigil for the victims of China's bloody Tiananmen crackdown on June 4, 1989.

Amnesty International said the legal action against the trio was politically motivated. "These unjustifiable arrests are a shameful attempt to harass and silence those in Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement," said the rights group's Man-kei Tam.

Malaysian king strikes down Mahathir's plan amid crisis

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KUALA LUMPUR

Malaysia's king struck down on Friday a power play by 94-year-old Mahathir Mohamad aimed at seizing momentum in a political crisis, capping a week of turmoil that has left the country effectively leaderless.

He rejected Mr. Mahathir's plan to convene Parliament to vote on the country's next Prime Minister, after it was widely criticised as against the Constitution.

Old foes Mr. Mahathir and Anwar Ibrahim are locked in a power struggle sparked by the elderly leader's resignation and their ruling coalition's collapse, following a failed bid to push out leader-in-waiting Mr. Anwar.



Mahathir Mohamad

Mr. Mahathir, currently interim leader, earlier announced that the Parliament session would take place on Monday and the monarch, who appoints the premier, agreed with the decision.

But after a meeting of the country's Islamic sultans, the king, Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, said the sitting would not take place,

according to a palace statement. The monarch has met all MPs this week to work out who they back for premier, but no candidate has emerged with enough support. A candidate must have support of at least 112 MPs.

Palace officials will now hold talks with the leaders of different parties and ask them to put forward candidates, extending the turmoil and heightening the chances of a snap poll. The party of Mr. Mahathir said it was nominating Muhyiddin Yassin. It signalled that Mr. Mahathir was giving up on returning as premier himself but wanted an ally in the role. The former ruling coalition meanwhile said it was nominating Mr. Anwar, 72.

Will America get its first Jewish President?

Sanders and Bloomberg vie to bust barrier

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

White House hopefuls Bernie Sanders and Michael Bloomberg could hardly be more different in their politics, but in one striking way they share a similarity marking a milestone in U.S. presidential campaigning: both men are Jewish.

Should Senator Sanders, the progressive torchbearer and current Democratic frontrunner, or centrist billionaire Bloomberg, who is polling in third, win the nomination and then the election against incumbent Donald Trump, America would have the first Jewish President in its history.



Face to face: Mike Bloomberg and Bernie Sanders. •AFP

And yet the fact that two Jews are in prominent positions in the 2020 race – 16 months after a white nationalist murdered 11 worshippers at a Pittsburgh synagogue – has been met with muted celebration within the Jewish community, and a sense of detachment among the broader public, observed Rabbi Adam Kligfeld. "It's amazing, stunning, surprising and odd how little is being made of that data point."

The two are also drawing concerns. Mr. Sanders is a self-described democratic socialist, while Mr. Bloomberg is a multi-billionaire accused of buying his way into the presidential race.

There is little love lost between them, as evidenced in January when Mr. Bloomberg sand-bagged Mr. Sanders during an address at a Miami synagogue.

"I know I'm not the only Jewish candidate running for

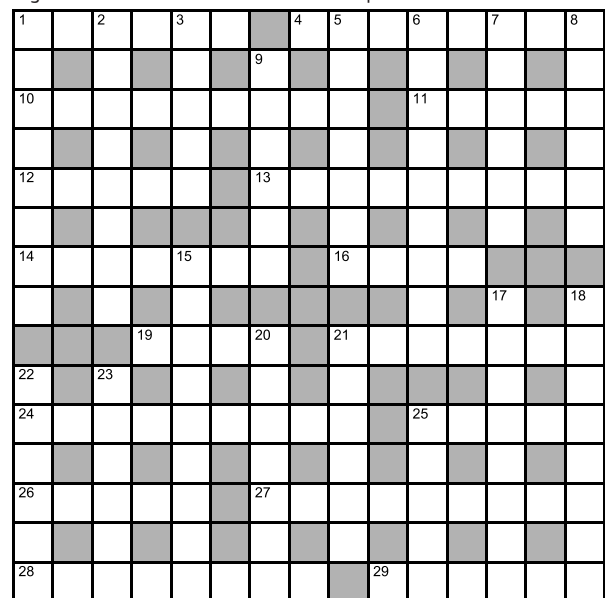
President," he said. "But I am the only one who doesn't want to turn America into a kibbutz."

The rise of Mr. Sanders has sparked a debate about whether values embraced by Jews, like social justice, are best achieved through policies, including universal health care, or by unwavering defense of Israel. He has repeatedly insisted he supports Israel but opposes policies that he says hurt Palestinians. In Tuesday's debate he branded Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a "reactionary racist".

For decades Jews have voted overwhelmingly Democratic. But only 11% of Jewish voters support Mr. Sanders, while 8% back Mr. Bloomberg, Pew Research Center polling from January shows.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12871

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



(set by Sunnet)

- 13 Reviewed Rajaji's papers? That's quite complicated (9)
- 14 Set rusk baked in ivory holders (7)
- 16 Dash of caramel anglaise (4)
- 19 Put on tailless deer (4)
- 21 Preferably detains criminal (7)
- 24 Fabulous offer on lamps (3,3,3)
- 25 Excellent meal with some primal cut (5)
- 26 A little goat to destroy a pasture (5)
- 27 Missile's failure to burn initially (5,4)
- 28 Play, novel and movie (3,5)
- 29 Field is without children now (6)
- 5 Right publicity to cut across is missing (7)
- 6 A jittery emir jails natives (9)
- 7 Union measure (6)
- 8 Fears some dark studies (6)
- 9 Half a month is taken to freeze some semi-solid extracts (6)
- 15 Mostly wide open mixer (9)
- 17 Footballer's mistaken hope to keep undesirables out using this (8)
- 18 Clever girl inside is charming (8)
- 20 Bigger food retailer for the auditor (7)
- 21 One of us is an independent Scotsman (6)
- 22 Caught dark warrior (6)
- 23 Sticky rotten waste yard (6)
- 25 Direction to put back a body (3-2)

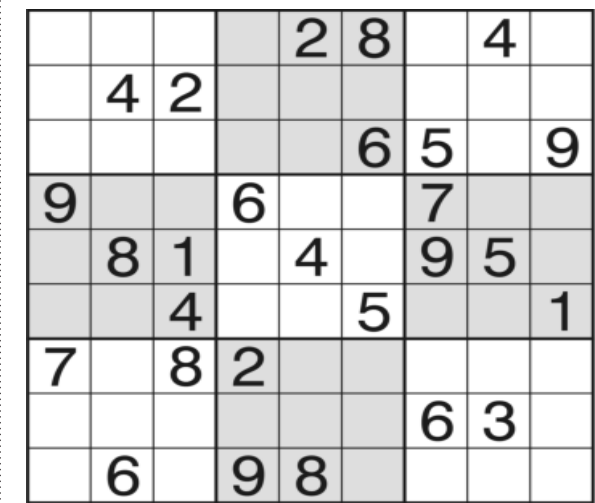
ACROSS

- 1 India supports unlimited consumption (6)
- 4 Shocked papal assembly was in the forefront (8)
- 10 Bond with beryllium implanted in false tooth (9)
- 11 Rub a seer wrongly (5)
- 12 Perhaps 3 comb-like devices (5)

DOWN

- 1 Show in order to get rid of the central character (8)
- 2 Plant's channel went upwards (8)
- 3 Relative goes with empty stomach to Lords (5)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12870

D	A	M	A	A	P	T	S	
E	C	H	O	M	R	O	A	
R	I	G	F	H	K	I	L	
A	B	S	E	N	T			
E	A	S	C	N	E	L		
B	L	A	S	P	H	E	M	E
P	I	N	A	S				
R	I	G	F	H	K	I	L	
C	O	I	F	F	E	U	R	
V	I	R	R	H	O	E	A	
L	O	G	O	R	H	O	E	
S	I	E	M	N	N	N		
T	O	D	A	T	E	P	A	

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

8	3	2	6	1	9	4	5	7
5	6	4	8	3	7	2	1	9
7	1	9	4	5	2	3	8	6
9	5	3	1	7	4	8	6	2
2	7	1	9	8	6	5	3	4
4	8	6	3	2	5	7	9	1
6	4	8	2	9	3	1	7	5
1	2	7	5	6	8	9	4	3
3	9	5	7	4	1	6	2	8

FAITH

Amazing qualities

Lord Mahavishnu is known by the name Maayan. Paripaadal addresses Him as Maayoye. And also, in Her Thiruppavai, refers to Krishna as Maayan. But why does the Lord have this name? Antariksha, one of the nava yogeśvaras featured in Srimad Bhagavatam, explains why such a name came about, said P.T. Seshadri in a discourse. Antariksha says that the three acts of creating the world, sustaining it and then dissolving it are done by Maya, and this Maya is Vishnu.

Thirumazhisai Azhvar lists many marvels and wonders, and says each of these is a cause for referring to the Lord as Maayan. The appearance of clouds, the retreat of waves, things moving due to wind, the waxing and waning of the Moon, the rising and setting of the Sun – all these are marvellous and these have earned for Vishnu the name of Maayan, for He is responsible for all these.

Thirumazhisai Azhvar also gives some other examples of His maya. His strength is amazing, and this is a maya. He made the world, and this is another maya. He gave us hands to worship Him, although we use our hands for other purposes. This is another maya. He dissolves the world and this too is a maya. His sankalpa fills one with awe and this too is a maya. When jivas go astray, He does not abandon them. This too is a maya. How can anyone be in possession of so many wondrous qualities? That itself is a maya, says Thirumazhisai Azhvar. So clearly, according to Thirumazhisai Azhvar, His maya means His qualities which fill one with awe. Svetasvatara Upanishad says that this world is responsible for creation. For this reason this world is called Maya. In the Gita, Krishna says that none can cross the Maya caused by the three gunas. Only those who surrender to Him can cross it.