

**Zuckerberg promises Facebook policy review**

Facebook chief executive Mark Zuckerberg on Friday promised to review the social network's policies that led to its decision to not moderate controversial messages posted by US President Donald Trump. The announcement, which came in the form of a letter to employees, appeared aimed at quelling anger inside the company that was so severe it prompted some to quit. The outrage was sparked when Zuckerberg said Facebook would not remove or flag Trump's recent posts that appeared to encourage violence against those protesting police racism. Zuckerberg's message Friday seemed to attempt to mollify that anger: "We're going to review our policies allowing discussion and threats of state use of force to see if there are any amendments we should adopt," Zuckerberg wrote. This, he said, includes "excessive use of police or state force. Given the sensitive history in the US, this deserves special consideration."

**Pakistan PM gets court notice for defamation**

A Pakistani court has issued a notice to Prime Minister Imran Khan in a defamation case filed by PML-N chief Shahbaz Sharif seeking early hearing of his suit against the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman, pending for three years. In April 2017, Khan alleged that Shahbaz Sharif allegedly offered him USD 61 million through a "common friend" to withdraw the Panama Papers case in the Supreme Court against 70-year-old former Prime Minister and his elder brother Nawaz Sharif. On Friday, Lahore's Additional District and Sessions Court took up Shahbaz Sharif's application for early hearing on June 10.

**Al-Qaeda chief in the Islamic Maghreb killed**



French forces have killed the leader of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Algerian Abdelmalek Droukdel, in northern Mali, France's defence minister said. Droukdel was killed on Thursday near the Algerian border, where the group has bases from which it has carried out attacks and abductions of Westerners in the sub-Saharan Sahel zone, Defence Minister Florence Parly said Friday. "Many close associates" of Droukdel -- who commanded several affiliate jihadist groups across the lawless region -- were also "neutralised", she added. AQIM emerged from a group started in the late 1990s by radical Algerian Islamists, who in 2007 pledged allegiance to Osama Bin Laden's al-Qaeda network.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



**Trump opens Atlantic sanctuary for fishing**

REUTERS, Washington

President Donald Trump announced on Friday he will open up a 5,000 square mile conservation area in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of New England to commercial fishing.

The move allows commercial fishing to resume in the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument, a sanctuary created in 2016 during the Obama administration. It also cancels a planned phase out of red crab and lobster fisheries in the area.

Trump signed a proclamation on opening the area during a visit to Maine in his latest move to appeal to working class and blue collar workers in an election year by touting regulatory rollbacks that he says can restore jobs and economic activity.

"We're cutting regulations from highways and roadways to fish," Trump said at a roundtable event in Bangor.

Trump, who won in Maine's rural 2nd Congressional district in the 2016 election, also announced he would create a task force to identify international markets for U.S. seafood.

Environmental groups and some recreational fishermen warned that allowing commercial fishing in these areas undermines the protections established by the monument designations, putting marine wildlife, including endangered whales and sea turtles, sharks and fragile corals in danger of harm and entanglement in fishing nets.

The commercial seafood industry and regional fishery management councils have pressed the Trump administration to restore commercial fishing in federal waters closed off under monument protections, citing the regulatory burden that they say forces fishermen to travel further with increased operational expenses and safety risks.



**People protest in London, Sydney and Paris against racism and police brutality to show solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement in the wake of the killing of George Floyd, an unarmed black man who died after a police officer knelt on his neck in Minneapolis, US, yesterday.**

PHOTO: AFP



**INDIA-CHINA BORDER STAND-OFF**

**Generals meet to end row**

AGENCIES

India and China yesterday held high-level talks, amid the border stand-off between the militaries of the two countries near eastern Ladakh. The talks were requested by India and were held at the Border Personnel Meeting Point in Maldo on the Chinese side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh.

The Indian delegation was led by Lieutenant General Harinder Singh, Commander of 14 Corps, while the Chinese side was headed by the Commander of the Tibet Military District. Multiple local-level talks by regional military commanders have not made any headway so far.

Without specifically mentioning the talks, the Indian Army in a statement said Indian and Chinese officials continue to remain engaged through the established military and diplomatic channels to address the current situation in the India-China border areas.

India says the Chinese military is hindering normal patrolling by its troops along the LAC in

Ladakh and Sikkim, and strongly refutes Beijing's contention that the escalating tension between the two armies was triggered by trespassing of Indian forces across the Chinese side.

The stand-off in eastern Ladakh is in at least five key areas where India and China have had traditional differences on the perception of the LAC in the region. The present tension between the two sides came into sharp focus when reports of skirmishes between the soldiers of both sides were reported in the Pangong Lake region on May 5 and May 6.

The likely trigger for the face-off was China's stiff opposition to India laying a key road in the Finger area around the Pangong Tso Lake and the construction of another road connecting the Darbuk-Shayok-Daulat Beg Oldie road in Galwan Valley. The road in the Finger area in Pangong Tso is considered crucial for India to carry out patrol. India has already decided not to stall any border infrastructure projects in eastern Ladakh in view of Chinese protests.

**Biden clinches democratic nomination for 2020 polls**

AFP, Washington

Joe Biden said Friday he had secured the delegates needed to clinch the Democratic nomination and face Donald Trump in November's US presidential election.

"Folks, tonight we secured the 1,991 delegates needed to win the Democratic nomination," the former vice president said on Twitter.

"I'm going to spend every day fighting to earn your vote so that, together, we can win the battle for the soul of this nation."

Biden passed the 1,991 threshold to secure his party's nomination as counting continued from Tuesday's round of Democratic primaries.

He had been the presumptive Democratic challenger since Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders dropped out of the race in April and endorsed his onetime rival's run at the



White House.

Biden reached the threshold with the country wracked by protests over the death of African-American George Floyd at the hands of police.

Floyd's death has reignited long-felt anger over police killings of African-Americans and unleashed a nationwide wave of civil unrest unlike any seen in the US since Martin Luther King Jr's 1968 assassination.

"This is a difficult time in America's history. And Donald Trump's angry, divisive politics is no answer," Biden wrote in a post on Medium. "The country is crying out for leadership. Leadership that can unite us. Leadership that can bring us together."

Biden's response to the protests has been in marked contrast to Trump, who threatened to deploy the military against American citizens.

**Melting permafrost: a pandora's box**

*An oil spill in the Arctic 'ticked a time bomb' threatening global health, environment*

AFP, Paris

Melting permafrost, suspected by Russia of being behind an unprecedented fuel spill that has polluted huge stretches of Arctic rivers, is a time bomb threatening health and the environment, and risks speeding up global warming.

A national-level state of emergency was announced after 21,000 tonnes of diesel fuel spilled from a reservoir, owned by Russian metals giant Norilsk Nickel, that collapsed on May 29.

The spill -- which has coloured remote tundra waterways with bright red patches visible from space -- has highlighted the danger of climate change for Russia as areas locked by permafrost for centuries thaw amid warmer temperatures.

Putin has declared a state of emergency in the region and complained of what he said was a bungled state response, while Russia's Prosecutor General's office on Friday ordered a review of all hazardous objects built on permafrost after saying it looked like the ground beneath a fuel tank had subsided.

In an online meeting, Putin asked officials to amend Russian law to try avoid similar accidents in future. Three criminal probes have been launched.

A vast Arctic state, Russia is warming 2.5 times faster than the world average. Sixty-five percent of the country is covered by permafrost and the environment ministry warned in 2018 that the melt threatens pipes and structures, as well as buried toxic waste, which can seep into waterways.



**What is permafrost?**

Permafrost -- soil that is frozen -- is found mostly in the Northern Hemisphere, where it covers about a quarter of exposed land and is generally thousands of years old. It covers a wide belt between the Arctic Circle and boreal forests, spanning Alaska, Canada, and Russia. It can vary in depth from a few metres to hundreds. Locked into the permafrost is an estimated 1.7 trillion tonnes of carbon in the form of frozen organic matter -- the remains of rotted plants and long-dead animals trapped in sediment and later covered by ice sheets. Permafrost soils contain roughly twice as much carbon -- mainly in the form of methane and CO2 -- as Earth's atmosphere.

**Speeding up global warming**

When permafrost thaws, this matter

warms up and decomposes, eventually releasing the carbon that it holds as carbon dioxide (CO2) and methane, gases which have a greenhouse warming effect on the planet.

The release of greenhouse gases threatens a vicious circle in the warming of the Earth. According to a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in September 2019 a large part of the permafrost could melt by 2100 if carbon pollution continues unabated, releasing a carbon bomb of greenhouse gases.

**Frozen diseases?**

The thawing of the permafrost also threatens to unlock disease-causing bacteria and viruses long trapped in the ice. There have already been some cases of this happening. In 2016 a child died in Russia's far northern Siberia in an outbreak of anthrax that scientists



**An aerial view of the large diesel spill in the Ambarnaya River outside Norilsk in the Arctic. Photo was taken on June 4. Inset, the Ambarnaya river running red due to the oil spill inside the Arctic circle.**

PHOTO: AFP

said seemed to have come from the corpses of infected reindeers buried 70 years before but uncovered by melting permafrost. Released from the ice, the anthrax seems to have been passed to grazing herds.

Scientists have also warned that other dormant pathogens entombed in frozen soil may be roused by global warming, such as from old smallpox graves.

In 2014 scientists revived a giant but harmless virus, dubbed Pithovirus sibericum, that had been locked in the Siberian permafrost for more than 30,000 years. A permafrost thaw could be a boon for the oil and mining industries, providing access to previously difficult-to-reach reserves in the Arctic. But in disturbing the subsoil too deeply, they could awake the viruses, scientists warn.

**Trudeau takes a knee**

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau joined thousands on Friday in taking a knee in front of Canada's parliament in solidarity with US protesters marching against racism and police brutality. It marked a rare public outing for the Canadian leader since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, as protests spread outside the United States after police in Minnesota killed an unarmed black man. Trudeau, holding a "Black Lives Matter" T-shirt, chanted from behind a mask along with the crowd that extended several blocks to the US embassy, and later stood in silence for eight minutes and 46 seconds. This was the length of time that a white police officer in Minneapolis knelt on the neck of George Floyd, an unarmed African-American, who died after pleading "I can't breathe." On Tuesday, Trudeau appeared at a loss for words, pausing for 20 seconds when pressed for



his thoughts on US President Donald Trump's threat of military mobilization against protest. "We all watch in horror and consternation what's going on in the United States," he said finally. Now "is a time to listen, it is a time to pull people together and a time to learn what injustices continue despite progress over years and decades," he added.

**US sues Chinese firm over 'fake' N95 masks**

The US Justice Department sued a Chinese company for selling nearly a half million fake and substandard N95 respirator to US buyers in April as the COVID-19 pandemic swept the country. In a complaint filed in federal court in Brooklyn, New York, the department said Guangdong-based King Year Packaging and Printing shipped three batches of purported N95 masks, needed to protect medical and other personnel from the coronavirus, to US buyers. The company falsely claimed the 495,200 masks it shipped were met the N95 standard and also falsely claimed they were certified by the US National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), according to the complaint. The complaint indicated the importer of the masks paid more than \$1 million for them. The Chinese company was charged with four counts of importing misbranded and substandard health products and making false to the US Food and Drug Administration. Each charge carries a maximum fine of \$500,000, or if greater, twice what the company earned in selling the masks.



**Landslide carries buildings into sea off Norway**

Several houses have been swept into the sea following a powerful landslide in Alta municipality, northern Norway, on Wednesday. Anders Bjordal, a Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate engineer, told CNN that he saw there had been a "big clay slide" after being called to the scene at 4 pm Wednesday to offer guidance to the police and rescue team. The slide was 650 meters (2,133 feet) wide and 150 meters (492 feet) deep, destroyed eight buildings, including four cabins which act as weekend residences, Bjordal added. No one was harmed and all people were evacuated from the buildings, he said. Alta municipality, located in the country's northernmost Finnmark county, is known for its forests, mountain plateaus, coastal landscapes, and Northern Lights.