

Protesters face life in prison over police car attacks in NY

US prosecutors on Friday filed multiple charges against three protesters accused of throwing Molotov cocktails at police cars during anti-racism demonstrations in New York -- charges that could lead to life sentences. The indictments, filed by federal prosecutors in Brooklyn, accuse Samantha Shader, Colinford Mattis and Urooj Rahman of throwing explosive devices at police cars in two separate incidents in late May. In both cases, no one was injured. The three are facing seven charges including arson, possession and use of explosives and destructive devices, and public disorder. All three are in custody without bail, though their attorneys have appealed that decision. The protests took place on the first weekend after George Floyd, an African American man, died after a police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes in Minneapolis on May 25.

Pompeo to meet China's top diplomat in Hawaii

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will meet China's top diplomat Yang Jiechi in Hawaii, trying to ease tensions between the world's two largest economies over various issues, according to media reports. Pompeo was planning the trip "quietly" and the arrangements were not yet finalized, Politico said. Pompeo has been vocal in criticizing China on a range of issues from the origins of the coronavirus pandemic to its Hong Kong policy to the treatment of its ethnic and religious minorities. The US State Department and the Chinese embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Hong Kong's South China Morning Post newspaper cited an unidentified source as saying that Yang, a state councilor and member of the Communist Party Politburo, will represent the Chinese side for the meeting.

Standoff with China under control: India army chief



Indian Army chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane yesterday said that the entire situation along India's borders with China is "under control" after top military level talks. Military-level talks between India and China continued for de-escalation in the Galwan region of eastern Ladakh on Friday with top army commanders from both sides meeting to resolve the face-off. The fifth round of military-level talks took place even as the troop build-up continued on both sides, days after a slight retreat by both armies at the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Earlier on Friday, Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh reportedly held a review meeting with Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat and the three Service Chiefs to understand the ground situation.

SOURCE: AFP, ANN

George Floyd's death 'sickened me': Bob Dylan

AFP, Los Angeles

Legendary US folk singer Bob Dylan said he was "sickened" to see unarmed black man George Floyd "tortured to death" by a white police officer in his home state, in a rare interview published Friday. Dylan spoke to The New York Times the day after Floyd's killing in Minneapolis, which has sparked mass anti-racism protests across the nation. It was the musician's only interview outside his own website since he won the Nobel Prize for literature in 2016. "It sickened me no end to see George tortured to



death like that," he said of Floyd, who died after a white policeman knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes during an arrest. "It was beyond ugly. Let's hope that justice comes swift for the Floyd family and for the nation," said Dylan, 79, who was born in Minnesota and attended university in Minneapolis. Several of Dylan's most beloved songs from the 1960s and 70s addressed issues of police brutality and racism, including "Hurricane" and "George Jackson." He is set to release his first album of original songs in eight years next Friday, entitled "Rough and Rowdy Days." Speaking from his Malibu home where he has been sheltering from the pandemic, Dylan described the coronavirus as an "invasion" and a "forerunner of something else to come." "Maybe we are on the eve of destruction. There are numerous ways you can think about this virus. I think you just have to let it run its course," he said.

BORDER DISPUTE WITH INDIA

Nepal parliament okays new map

REUTERS, Kathmandu

The lower house of Nepal's parliament yesterday approved a new map of the country, including areas disputed with India, the speaker of the national legislature said. The move signals a hardening of Nepal's position over a decades-long border row that has strained ties between the South Asian neighbours. India has rejected Nepal's new map, calling it a "unilateral act" that is not based on historical facts or evidence. Nepal published its revised map in May after India inaugurated a 80 km (50 miles) road connecting its northern Uttarakhand state with Lipulekh on the border with Tibet that passes through the land Nepal says belongs to it. The map shows a sliver of land on the northwest tip of Nepal as the Nepali territory. Agni Prasad Sapkota, Speaker of Nepal's House of Representatives, said the new map was approved by 258 out of 275 members of parliament, exceeding the required two thirds majority. There were no votes against. The map must also be passed by the National Assembly, the parliament's upper chamber, and approved by President Bidhya Devi Bhandari before it becomes a part of the constitution. Prachanda, a former prime minister and chief of the ruling Nepal Communist Party, said Nepal did not want to complicate the matter and seeks a peaceful settlement. "We want to resolve the issue with India through peaceful talks at the political and diplomatic levels," Prachanda, the former Maoist rebel chief, who still goes by his war nom de guerre, said in parliament yesterday.

Trump committed impeachable offences beyond Ukraine: Bolton

AFP, Washington

Defying the White House, former national security advisor John Bolton will release a book that suggests President Donald Trump committed impeachable offenses beyond Ukraine and alleges that his entire foreign policy is motivated by domestic politics, his publisher said Friday. Trump earlier this year warned Bolton not to publish his book while the president is still in the White House, whose lawyers have contended that large portions of the material in the memoir are classified. But publisher Simon and Schuster said it would go ahead and release "The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir" on June 23, teasing in a press release: "This is the book Donald Trump doesn't want you to read." "I am hard-pressed to identify any significant Trump decision during my tenure that wasn't driven by re-election calculations," Bolton writes in the book, according to the release. The publisher said that Bolton will document wrongdoing by Trump that goes beyond his pressure on Ukraine to investigate Democratic rival Joe Biden -- which triggered Trump's impeachment by the



Democratic-led House of Representatives.

Bolton "argues that the House committed impeachment malpractice by keeping their prosecution focused narrowly on Ukraine when Trump's Ukraine-like transgressions existed across the full range of his foreign policy," the publisher said. Bolton will describe Trump's "inconsistent, scattershot decision-making process," it said. Bolton, a veteran Republican policymaker known for his hawkish views, left in September after disagreeing with Trump's diplomatic outreach to adversaries, notably North Korea and Afghanistan's Taliban. Bolton, who favors a tough line on Russia, is known to have opposed the White House's freeze on \$400 million in military aid to Ukraine as it battled separatists backed by Moscow, privately accusing Trump's camp of a "drug deal." Trump in a phone call had pressed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to dig up dirt on Biden over the former vice president's son's business dealings in the country. Trump has called the impeachment a conspiracy against him, contending his effort on Ukraine was in the larger US interest.



A woman and a girl watch from window as demonstrators pass by protesting against racial inequality in in Salem, Massachusetts, US, on Friday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Minneapolis to disband police

New York introduces laws to end police brutality; Trump says cops generally should not use choke holds amid race protests

AGENCIES

Minneapolis leaders voted unanimously Friday to disband the US city's police force and replace it with a "community" safety department, a reaction to transformational changes demanded in mass protests against racial injustice. The plan comes three weeks after the death of African-American George Floyd while in Minneapolis police custody, a killing that sparked widespread calls for police reform. The Minneapolis City Council unanimously approved a resolution instructing it to "commence a year-long process of community engagement, research, and structural change to create a transformative new model for cultivating safety in our city." The council will bring together stakeholders addressing the issues of violence prevention, civil rights, race equity, community relations and 911



emergency services.

The move comes days after the council, with a veto-proof majority, pledged to disband the police department and create a community-oriented replacement. Friday's vote is the next step in formalizing the move. The state of New York on Friday also adopted a series of laws designed to put an end to police brutality against the African American community. Among the measures is a law forbidding chokeholds being used by law enforcement officers that was

named in memory of Eric Garner, a black man suffocated by New York police in 2014. The state also repealed legislation that designated as "confidential" any document pertaining to professional evaluations of police officers, including records of disciplinary proceedings. In future, the public, including members of the media, will be able to access such records through freedom of information requests, without requiring a court order. Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump said in an interview aired on Friday it would be a good thing if police use of choke holds was ended in most instances, although he suggested their use would be understandable in situations where an officer was in danger. Protests against police brutality and race discrimination were held yesterday in different parts of the globe.

Masks significantly cut infection risk

Study says practice better than social distancing, stay-at-home

REUTERS

Requiring the wearing of masks to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus in areas at the epicenter of the global pandemic may have prevented tens of thousands of infections, a new study suggests. Mask-wearing is even more important for preventing the virus' spread and the sometimes deadly COVID-19 illness it causes than social distancing and stay-at-home orders, researchers said, in the study published in PNAS: The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA. Infection trends shifted dramatically when mask-wearing rules were implemented on April 6 in northern Italy and April 17 in New York City - at the time among the hardest hit areas of the world by the health crisis - the study found. "This protective measure alone significantly reduced the number of infections, that is, by over 78,000 in Italy from April 6 to May 9 and over 66,000 in New York City from April 17 to May 9," researchers calculated. When mask-wearing went into effect in New York, the daily new infection rate fell by about 3% per day, researchers said. In the rest of the country, daily new infections continued to increase. Direct contact precautions - social distancing, quarantine and isolation, and hand sanitizing - were all in place before mask-wearing rules went into effect in Italy and New York City. But they only help minimize virus transmission by direct contact, while face covering helps prevent airborne transmission, the researchers say.

Mutation making virus more infectious: study

AGENCIES

Researchers in Florida say they believe they have shown that the new coronavirus has mutated in a way that makes it more easily infect human cells. They say more research is needed to show whether the change has altered the course of the pandemic, but at least one researcher not involved in the study says it likely has, and the changes may explain why the virus has caused so many infections in the United States and Latin America. It's a mutation that scientists have been worried about for weeks. The researchers at the Scripps Research Institute in Florida said the mutation affects the spike protein -- a structure on the outside of the virus that it uses to get into cells. If the findings are confirmed, it would be the first time someone has demonstrated that changes seen in the virus have significance for the pandemic. Just this week, the World Health Organization said the mutations seen so far in the new coronavirus would not affect the efficacy of vaccines under development. Last week, WHO said mutations had not made it more easily transmissible, nor had they made the virus more likely to cause serious illness. Meanwhile, a series of studies in mice of Moderna Inc's COVID-19 lent some assurance that it may not increase the risk of more severe disease, and that one dose may provide protection against the novel coronavirus, according to preliminary data released on Friday. Prior studies on a vaccine for SARS - a close cousin to the new virus that causes COVID-19 - suggests vaccines against this type of virus might have the unintended effect of causing more severe disease when the vaccinated person is later exposed to the pathogen, especially in individuals who do not produce an adequately strong immune response.



People are detained as pro-democracy protesters gather in the Causeway Bay district of Hong Kong. Thousands of Hong Kongers sang a protest anthem and chanted slogans across the city yesterday as they marked the one-year anniversary of major clashes between police and pro-democracy demonstrators.

PHOTO: AFP

NEWSIN brief

First woman to head human spaceflight

AFP, Washington

The Nasa official who managed the inaugural private crewed flight into space last month has been promoted to become the first female head of human spaceflight, the agency said Friday, as it prepares to return people to the Moon in 2024. "Kathy Lueders has been selected to lead @NASA's Human Exploration & Operations Mission Directorate," Nasa head Jim Bridenstine announced.

'Taliban attack' kills seven Afghan cops

AFP, Kabul

Seven police officers were killed when their checkpoint was attacked in central Afghanistan, officials said yesterday, blaming the Taliban for the assault. The attack happened late on Friday in Pasaband district of Ghor province. The attack was confirmed by the deputy governor of Ghor, Habibullah Radmanish, who blamed Taliban insurgents for the attack.



New spider species named after Greta

AFP, Paris

Swedish climate campaigner Greta Thunberg can add to her list of personal accolades, including TIME magazine's Person of the Year, a group of spiders named after her. Thunberga gen. nov. is a new genus of huntsman spiders from Madagascar, described by German arachnologist Peter Jäger, and named after the wunderkind in honour of her commitment to tackling climate change.