



'Lord Ram is Nepali not Indian'

NDTV ONLINE
Ayodhya, the ancient city believed by millions of Hindus to be the birthplace of Lord Ram, is actually a small village near Kathmandu, Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli said Monday. The PM also claimed Lord Ram was actually Nepali. Speaking at a cultural programme at his residence, Oli then accused India of cultural oppression and encroachment, and said Nepal's contribution to science had been undervalued. 'We still believe we gave Sita to Prince Ram but we gave the prince too, from Ayodhya, not India. Ayodhya is a village a little west (of) Birgunj (a district in Nepal that is around 135 km from capital Kathmandu),' he said. According to news agency ANI, which quoted Nepalese media sources, Oli also said: 'Real Ayodhya lies in Nepal, not in India. Lord Ram is Nepali not Indian'. Ayodhya is a town in Uttar Pradesh, around 135 km from state capital Lucknow. The Nepal PM's remarks come amid a row between the two countries over overlapping territorial claims. Last month the Nepal parliament voted, unanimously, to pass a constitutional amendment to update the country's map including the disputed lands irking New Delhi.

US rejects China's 'maritime empire'

Pompeo declares Beijing's claims in South China Sea 'unlawful'

REUTERS, Washington /Beijing

The United States has rejected China's claims to offshore resources in most of the South China Sea, drawing criticism from China which said the US position raised tension in the region, highlighting an increasingly tense relationship. China has offered no coherent legal basis for its ambitions in the South China Sea and for years has been using intimidation against other Southeast Asian coastal states, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement on Monday. 'We are making clear: Beijing's claims to offshore resources across most of the South China Sea are completely unlawful, as is its campaign of bullying to control them,' said Pompeo, a prominent China hawk within the Trump administration. The United States has long opposed China's expansive territorial claims on the South China Sea, sending warships regularly through the strategic waterway to demonstrate freedom of navigation there. Monday's comments reflect a harsher tone. 'The world will not allow Beijing to treat the South China Sea as its maritime empire,' Pompeo said.



The US statement supports a ruling four years ago under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) that invalidated most of China's claims for maritime rights in the South China Sea. Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian condemned the US rejection of China's claim. 'It intentionally stirs up controversy over maritime sovereignty claims, destroys regional peace and stability and is an irresponsible act,' he said at a regular briefing.



French elite acrobatic flying team 'Patrouille de France' (PAF) performs a flying display of the French national flag over the Louvre pyramid designed by Chinese architect Ieoh Ming Pei, during annual Bastille Day military ceremony on the Place de la Concorde in Paris, yesterday. France yesterday held a reduced version of its traditional Bastille Day parade this year due to safety measures over the COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) pandemic.

PHOTO: AFP

Canada PM apologizes for 'mistake' amid charity uproar

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau apologized on Monday for taking part in a Cabinet decision to use a charity he and his family have worked with to administer a \$900 million (\$663.4 million) student grant program. Trudeau, 48, is facing a third investigation for conflict of interest in a little over three years after his government tapped WE Charity Canada on June 25 to manage the program. The charity backed out about a week after the contract was announced. WE Charity disclosed last week that from 2016-2020 it paid honoraria to Trudeau's mother, Margaret, amounting to C\$250,000 for speaking at some 28 events, while his brother, Alexandre, received about C\$32,000. Trudeau and his wife, Sophie Gregoire Trudeau, have regularly participated in WE Charity events.

Hagia Sophia's 'Christian icons aren't obstacles to prayers'

Turkey's Hagia Sophia could open to visitors outside prayer times and its Christian icons will remain, religious officials said yesterday, after a court ruling paved the way for it to become a mosque. The sixth-century Istanbul landmark's museum status -- in place since 1934 -- was revoked on Friday and control was handed to the religious authority, Diyanet. Hagia Sophia spent almost 1,000 years as a cathedral before being converted into a mosque in 1453 and later a museum. Diyanet said in a statement on Tuesday that Christian icons in Hagia Sophia were "not an obstacle to the validity of the prayers". "The icons should be curtained and shaded through appropriate means during prayer times," it said.

Weinstein accusers call \$18.9m NY settlement a 'cruel hoax'

Six women who claim they were sexually abused by Harvey Weinstein urged a US judge on Monday to reject an \$18.9 million settlement with the disgraced movie producer, the board of his former studio and other accusers. The settlement announced on June 30 would end litigation by New York Attorney General Letitia James and separate class-action litigation, and permit accusers to claim \$7,500 to \$750,000 each. But in a Manhattan federal court filing, the six women said accusers would receive just \$11.2 million after deducting legal fees and costs, with typical awards of just \$10,000 to \$20,000, while shielding the defendants' insurers from big payouts. Weinstein, 68, is serving a 23-year prison term following his Feb 24 conviction for sexually assaulting a former production assistant and raping a onetime aspiring actress. He is appealing, and still faces rape and sexual assault charges in Los Angeles.

SOURCE: AFP

'There is a Trump effect'

UN expert accuses White House of mounting 'onslaught' against global press freedom

REUTERS, Geneva

The UN special rapporteur on freedom of expression on Monday accused the White House of mounting an "onslaught" against the media and referred to a negative "Trump effect" on global press freedom. In his last official press briefing before his six-year tenure ends later this month, David Kaye said in a series of forthright comments that he hoped "attacks" on US journalists would end when President Donald Trump leaves office. "Clearly the signature issue over the past four years now has been the way in which this particular president addresses the media: The way he denigrates the media, denigrates freedom of expression," he told journalists in Geneva. Kaye specified that the so-called onslaught consisted



of criticism of reporters and spreading "disinformation," as well as partnerships with conservative media organizations. When Kaye was asked about the impact of that on press freedom around the world, the special rapporteur said: "There clearly is a Trump effect, a very negative one," adding that the Trump administration has created a global culture of permissiveness. Kaye also raised broad concerns about government crackdowns that has worsened with the COVID-19 pandemic in a trend he described as "very disturbing" and contributing to the spread of the disease. "Unfortunately often under the guise of trying to restrict disinformation, governments have resorted to old tools of clamping down on the free flow of information," he said, without naming specific countries.

TRUMP'S NEW STUDENT VISA RULE US tech giants join Harvard lawsuit

THE STATESMAN/ANN

Google, Facebook, Microsoft and more than a dozen technology companies of United States (US), on Monday joined a lawsuit filed by the Harvard University and the MIT against the Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) latest rule that bars international students from staying in America unless they attend at least one in-person course. Seeking a temporary restraining order and a preliminary injunction, these companies, along with the US Chamber of Commerce and other IT advocacy groups asserted that the July 6 ICE directive will disrupt their recruiting plans, making it impossible to bring on board international students that businesses, had planned to hire, and disturb the recruiting process on which the firms have relied on to identify and train their future employees.

Man who read independence

caliphs" -- Shajahan Siraj, ASM Abdur Rob, Abdul Kuddus Makhon and Nur-e-Alam Siddique -- of Liberation War. He was also the commander of Bangladesh Liberation Force. In independent Bangladesh, Siraj played the role of minister for environment and forest between 2001 and 2006. He was also a former vice president of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). He left behind his wife Rabeya Siraj, daughter barrister Sarwat Siraj, son Rajiv Siraj and a number of relatives, followers and well-wishers to mourn his death. Born in Tangail on March 1, 1943, Siraj entered into the political arena through the movement against Hamidur Rahman Education Commission in 1962. He was a student of Sadat College of Karatia in Tangail at that time. He was elected as the VP of the college twice in 1964-65 and 1966-67. He participated in the 1969 mass upsurge movement and became the general secretary of undivided Chhtra League in 1970-1972. Siraj was one of the key figures of Swadhin Bangla Biplabi Parishad, a secret organisation that was formed by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1962 with an aim to liberate the country from Pakistan.

The then Pakistan government on March 2 placed curfew in Dhaka but students of Chhtra Sangram Patishad, led by vice president ASM Abdur Rob and general secretary Shajahan Siraj, held a massive rally. They then hoisted a flag of Bangladesh. Saluting the flag, they all expressed their solidarity with the liberation movement. After the country got independence, he played a role to form Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal and was the acting general secretary and then president. Siraj was elected lawmaker from Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal thrice from Tangail-4. He joined the BNP in 1995 and got elected from the same constituency that year. When he was environment minister, some good initiatives were taken including banning of polythene and withdrawal of two-stroke scooters from Dhaka. During the army backed caretaker government in 2007, Siraj was arrested for corruption charges and he was convicted. The BNP expresses deep condolences saying the nation has lost a great leader. His body will be taken to his constituency of Tangail Kalihati.

The first Namaj-e-Janaza will be held at Kalihati college ground. His another Janaja will be held at Gulshan Society mosque. He will be buried at Banani graveyard after Isha prayer. Meanwhile, President M Abdul Hamid yesterday expressed profound shock and sorrow at the death of the veteran freedom fighter and former minister. In a condolence message, the President recalled with due respect his outstanding contribution to Bangladesh's politics and the country's Liberation War in 1971. The head of the state prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed profound sympathy to the bereaved family, reported BSS. Gonoforum President Dr Kamal Hossain and General Secretary Reza Kibria expresses deep condolence and said Siraj had a significant role after Liberation War. Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Janata League President Bangabir Kader Siddiqui expresses his deep condolence too.

Covid 'killed' 3,000 health workers'

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

More than 3,000 healthcare workers are known to have died of the new coronavirus, according to Amnesty International, as it raises concerns about unsafe working conditions, low pay, long hours and violence against medical workers in some countries. In a new report published on Monday, the United Kingdom-based rights group said Russia at 545 had the highest numbers of healthcare worker deaths from COVID-19. Russia was followed closely by the UK (540, including 262 social care workers), and the United States (507). But the global toll was much likely higher, Amnesty added, because of under-reporting.

"With the COVID-19 pandemic still accelerating around the world, we are urging governments to start taking health and essential workers' lives seriously," said Sanhita Ambast, Amnesty's researcher and adviser on economic, social and cultural rights, in a statement. "It is especially disturbing to see that some governments are punishing workers who voice their concerns about working conditions that may threaten their lives." Brazil, which has emerged as the country with the second-highest number of coronavirus cases and deaths after the US, has so far reported 351 healthcare worker deaths, while Mexico, another Latin American hotspot, has 248. Amnesty said there was a shortage of PPE in nearly all of the 63 countries it surveyed.

Advertisement for Bangladesh Bank (বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক) regarding a public hearing (উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি) for the appointment of a new chairman. It includes details about the bank, the hearing process, and contact information.

Advertisement for Dhaka South City Corporation (ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশন) regarding a public hearing (কার পার্কিং ইজারা পুনঃ বিজ্ঞপ্তি) for parking permits. It includes a table with details about the hearing process, dates, and locations.