

Strong quake damages buildings in Alaska

AFP, Los Angeles
A powerful earthquake rocked Anchorage on Friday, violently shaking homes and businesses, sending scared residents into the streets and damaging buildings in Alaska's largest city.

Lopez to take charge as Mexico president

AFP, Mexico City
Anti-establishment leftist Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador will be sworn in as Mexico's next president on Saturday -- a dramatic change in direction for a country fed up with corruption, poverty and crime.

Michelle's memoir sells 2m copies

AFP, New York
Michelle Obama's memoir has sold more than two million copies in North America in two weeks. "Becoming" was released on November 13.

BITS OF HISTORY (DECEMBER 1)

- 1918: Iceland was proclaimed a sovereign state in full agreement with Denmark.
1925: The Locarno Treaties, guaranteeing peace and frontiers in Europe, were signed by France, Belgium and Germany and their terms guaranteed by Britain and Italy.
1959: Twelve nations signed the Antarctic Treaty preserving the area for peaceful purposes and scientific research.
1973: David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, died.
1988: Benazir Bhutto became the first woman elected to govern a Muslim nation.

G20 SUMMIT 5 KEY MOMENTS

Global leaders hunkered down for what threatened to be a fractious two-day summit in Buenos Aires with deep disagreements evident over world trade and climate change. But it wasn't all doom and gloom. Here are five moments from the first day of the summit Friday:



PUTIN-MBS HIGH FIVE
All eyes were on Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and how his fellow leaders would greet him in the wake of the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in his country's Istanbul consulate.

DRAFTING DIPLOMACY, PUTIN STYLE
During a meeting with Macron, Putin was said by a French aide to have drawn a map of the Kerch Strait off Crimea to buttress his position that the Ukrainian ships his navy seized on Sunday had intruded into Russian waters -- a claim denied by Kiev.



WHAT'S IN A NAME?
With the dark threat of a worsening trade war overshadowing the summit, the US, Canada and Mexico could point to a resounding success on day one, signing a new and improved NAFTA agreement.

MACRI'S TEARS
It was a tired and emotional Mauricio Macri who hosted his guests at a musical extravaganza in the sumptuous old Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires.

TRUMP EVER A WINNER IN ABE'S EYES
After Trump's shock 2016 victory, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe quickly mobilized to build warm ties with the real estate tycoon, but his flattery during their latest meeting raised eyebrows.



Demonstrators march during the Group 20 summit, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on Friday. Hundreds of thousands of anti-capitalist and other protesters marched against the summit through the Argentine capital Buenos Aires on Friday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

US, Japan, India in show of unity

G7 backs Ukraine over Russia standoff; Putin, Merkel agree 4-way talks

AGENCIES

The leaders of the United States, Japan and India met jointly Friday for the first time and called for open navigation in Asia, a show of unity with China clearly in mind.

The three right-leaning leaders -- US President Donald Trump, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe -- met on the sidelines of the summit of the G20 economic powers in Buenos Aires.

With the meeting lasting around 15 minutes, the three-way summit was more about symbolism than planning strategy, but it comes as all three share concerns on China's rising clout.

Japan and India both have longstanding territorial feuds with their neighbor, while Trump has been pressing China hard on trade and reiterating concerns over Beijing's assertive posture in the dispute-ridden South China Sea.

"Japan, the US and India share fundamental values and strategic interests," Abe said.

"By having three of us working together, we'll bring more prosper-

CHINA THREAT TO FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION IN ASIA



not take place while Ukrainian sailors were still in captivity.

Meanwhile, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Putin yesterday agreed to hold further talks about the issue at the adviser level among Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany, the spokesman said.

The spokesman said Merkel and Putin also discussed the situation in Syria, and agreed more effort should be made to work toward implementation of agreements by Germany, France, Turkey and Russia at a summit in Istanbul in October.

Russia on Sunday blocked three Ukrainian military vessels from passing through the Kerch Strait on their way from the Black Sea to the Sea of Azov - the shared internal waters of both countries.

The confrontation escalated after Russia seized the three vessels and captured 24 Ukrainian crew members. Russia insists the Ukrainian sailors crossed into Russian waters illegally.

As the threat of a "total war" grew, Kiev introduced martial law in 10 of its 27 regions for 30 days "to avoid an all-out Russian invasion".

firming their "unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity".

A statement by G7 members - the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the High Representative of the European Union - on Friday said there was "no justification" for Russia's use of military force against Ukrainian ships and naval personnel.

The G7 statement came a day after US President Donald Trump cancelled his meeting with Russia's Vladimir Putin, saying the much-anticipated talks at the G20 could

India, despite decades of territorial disputes with China, has historically shied away from joining alliances with major powers

Meanwhile, foreign ministers from the world's seven biggest economies, known as the Group of Seven or G7, have condemned Russia's actions in Kerch Strait as they reaf-

DEATH OF HW BUSH TRIBUTES



Tributes have poured for former US president George H.W. Bush following his death on Friday at the age of 94.

"George HW Bush was a man of the highest character and the best dad a son or daughter could ask for."

SON GEORGE W BUSH
"Through his essential authenticity, disarming wit, and unwavering commitment to faith, family, and country, President Bush inspired generations of his fellow Americans to public service."

US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP
"I am profoundly grateful for every minute I spent with President Bush and will always hold our friendship as one of my life's greatest gifts."

FORMER US PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON
"We had the chance to work together during the time of enormous changes. And this was a dramatic time which called for huge responsibility from everyone. The result was the end of the Cold War and the arms race... He was a true partner."

FORMER SOVIET LEADER MIKHAIL GORBACHEV
"President George HW Bush's ethos of public service was the guiding thread of his life and an example to us all. (...) Today Britain remembers a great statesman and a true friend of our country."

BRITISH PRIME MINISTER THERESA MAY
"In 1989, at a time of upheaval and challenges, when the blocs were staggering and the decades-long confrontation was beginning to crumble, he bravely seized the opportunity to end the Cold War. He is among the architects of German unity. We will never forget that."

GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER HEIKO MAAS
"He was a world leader, who strongly supported the alliance with Europe. Our sympathy to his family and beloved ones."

FRENCH PRESIDENT EMMANUEL MACRON
"I will never forget the role he played in making Europe a safer and more united place following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain."

EUROPEAN COMMISSION HEAD JEAN-CLAUDE JUNCKER



Demonstrators stand in front of a burning car during a protest of Yellow vests against rising oil prices and living costs in Paris, yesterday. Inset, Riot police officers stand in position during clashes. Groups of masked protesters battled police through clouds of tear gas near Paris' Champs Elysees yesterday as thousands took part in a third weekend of "yellow vest" demonstrations, which have morphed from anger over fuel taxes into a broader anti-government movement.



MBS communicated with adviser during Khashoggi killing: WSJ

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) sent 11 messages to his closest adviser, who reportedly oversaw the operatives who killed journalist Jamal Khashoggi, in the hours before and after the journalist's murder on October 2, according to a Wall Street Journal report.

The Journal yesterday said it had reviewed excerpts of an intelligence file that was classified as "highly confidential", which cites electronic intercepts and other covert information between Prince Mohammed and his aide, Saud al-Qahtani.

However, the content of the messages between the two parties is unknown.

"To be clear, we lack direct reports that the crown prince issued the order of murder," the assessment notes, according to the Journal.

The assessment reports that Qahtani, who supervised the 15-man team that killed Khashoggi, was also in direct communication with the team's leader in Istanbul.

"We assess it is highly unlikely this team of operators ... carried out the operation

without Mohammed bin Salman's authorisation," it says.

Khashoggi, an outspoken critic of the Saudi crown prince, was murdered inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. He had left Saudi Arabia in self-imposed exile last year and settled in the US state of Virginia, where he was a regular contributor to The Washington Post.

According to the assessment, Prince Mohammed told associates in August 2017 that if efforts to persuade Khashoggi to return to Saudi Arabia were not successful, saying, "We could possibly lure him outside Saudi Arabia and make arrangements." The assessment said that this "seems to foreshadow the Saudi operation launched against Khashoggi".

The Wall Street Journal said it was not clear from the extracts whether the 2017 comments on luring Khashoggi to a third country were mentioned directly by MBS.

Last month, it was reported that the CIA determined MBS had likely ordered Khashoggi's killing. However, President Donald Trump later cast doubt on the reported CIA conclusion about the prince, saying "maybe he did; and maybe he didn't."

Another UK minister quits over Brexit

AFP, London

British government minister Sam Gyimah quit late Friday over Prime Minister Theresa May's "naive" Brexit plan, dealing her another blow in her fight to pass it through parliament.

The universities and science minister is the seventh member of May's government to quit since she brought back the draft Withdrawal Agreement from Brussels.

Gyimah, who voted to remain in the EU, said the deal was "not in the British national interest".

UK MPs are holding a vote on December 11. May commands a wafer-thin majority in parliament, and around 100 of her own MPs have already promised to rebel.

Tainted and isolated, Suu Kyi calls for culture of peace

AFP, Kathmandu

Myanmar's civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who is facing international criticism over her country's crackdown on Rohingya Muslims, yesterday called for "a culture of peace" to end conflict between communities.

The Nobel Peace prize winner did not mention the Rohingya crisis -- which has led the United Nations to call for a genocide investigation -- in her keynote address to an international meeting organised by a group linked to the Unification Church.

"At the basis of conflict is ill-will which seeks to hurt and to destroy and thus to open the way to conflict, which in turn spews out an ever-renewing cycle of hate and fear, snuffing out the light of peace," Suu Kyi said.

Suu Kyi called for cooperation between nations to seek peace and mutual prosperity. "Only by promoting a culture of peace in this world of interdependence will it be

possible to create harmony between diverse countries and societies," she said.

Suu Kyi, whose position of state counselor in Myanmar is considered the equivalent of a prime minister, has faced a wave of condemnation since Myanmar launched its military crackdown on the Rohingya in August 2017.

A UN rights team found evidence of widespread murder, rape, torture and arson, and called for top generals to be prosecuted for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Her speech at the Kathmandu meeting, backed by the Universal Peace Foundation, came a day after Paris announced will it strip her of her honorary freedom of the French capital over her failure to speak out against the Rohingya crackdown.

The British cities of Glasgow, Edinburgh and Oxford have taken similar action against Suu Kyi over her refusal to condemn the military violence.

Iran navy unveils stealth warship

REUTERS, Dubai

Iran's navy yesterday launched a domestically made destroyer, which state media said has radar-evading stealth properties, as tensions rise with arch-enemy, the United States.

In a ceremony carried live on state television, the Sahand destroyer -- which can sustain voyages lasting five months without resupply -- joined Iran's regular navy at a base in Bandar Abbas on the Gulf.

The Sahand has a flight deck for helicopters, torpedo launchers, anti-aircraft and anti-ship guns, surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles and electronic warfare capabilities, state television reported.

Iran launched its first locally made destroyer in 2010 as part of a programme to revamp its navy equipment which dates from before the 1979 Islamic revolution and is mostly US-made.

Iran has developed a large domestic arms industry in the face of international sanctions and embargoes that have barred it from importing many weapons.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said last week Iran should increase its military capability and readiness to ward off enemies, in a meeting with Iranian navy commanders.

Iran's navy has extended its reach in recent years, launching vessels in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden to protect Iranian ships from Somali pirates operating in the area.

