

Raids 'destroy' Yemen rebel targets in Sanaa

The Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen on the side of the government yesterday said it had "destroyed" rebel targets, including drone facilities, in Sanaa. This comes 10 days after the Iran-aligned Huthis killed seven loyalists in a drone attack on Yemen's largest air base in government-controlled Lahij province.

6.7 quake strikes Chile, kills two

A magnitude 6.7 earthquake hit the coast of north-central Chile on Saturday evening, the US Geological Survey said, with authorities reporting as many as 200,000 without power and two people dead of heart attacks. The quake struck at 10:32 pm about 16 km (10 miles) south-southwest of Coquimbo, the USGS said.

Mexico fuel pipeline blaze toll hits 73

An explosion and fire in central Mexico killed at least 73 people after hundreds swarmed to the site of an illegal fuel-line tap to gather gasoline amid a government crackdown on fuel theft, officials said. The blast -- which Fayad said injured 74 people -- occurred near Tlahuelilpan, a town of 20,000 people about an hour's drive north of Mexico City.

Car bomb kills 8 Afghan special force members

A car bomb attack claimed by Taliban on a convoy of the governor of Logar province killed at least eight Afghan security force members yesterday morning but left the provincial chief unharmed.

BITS OF HISTORY (JANUARY 20)

1981: Ronald Reagan became president of the United States at the age of 69 years and 349 days, the oldest to take office.
1996: Palestinians voted for the first time in elections that consolidated PLO chief Yasser Arafat's rule of the West Bank and Gaza.
2009: Hundreds of thousands gather for inauguration of first African-American US President Barack Obama.

'World's oldest man' dies in Japan at 113

"World's oldest man" Masazo Nonaka, who was born just two years after the Wright brothers launched humanity's first powered flight, died yesterday aged 113, Japanese media said. Nonaka was born in July 1905, according to Guinness World Records. Nonaka had six brothers and one sister, marrying in 1931 and fathering five children. The oldest verified person ever -- Jeanne Louise Calment of France -- died in 1997 at the age of 122, according to Guinness.

UK's Prince Philip, 97, back in news

Britain's Prince Philip has been spoken to by the police for driving without a seatbelt -- just two days after the 97-year-old was involved in a car crash. Images published in Sunday newspapers appeared to show him behind the wheel of a replacement Land Rover Freelander on his wife Queen Elizabeth II's private Sandringham estate on Saturday. A Norfolk Constabulary spokeswoman said the force was aware of the photographs and that "suitable words of advice have been given to the driver". Meanwhile, a woman who broke her wrist in Thursday's crash near the royal country residence in Norfolk, eastern England, has reportedly complained about not receiving an apology from the Prince.



Participants listen to speakers outside City Hall during the Women's March in a -22 Celsius (8 Fahrenheit) wind chill snowstorm in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, on Saturday. Thousands of women marched Saturday in US cities and around the world to convey a now-annual message opposing Donald Trump and supporting women's rights.

US air raid kills 52 Somali Islamists

United States military forces carried out an airstrike Saturday against Islamist group al-Shabaab, killing 52 militants, according to a statement from US Africa Command.
"US Africa Command conducted the airstrike in response to an attack by a large group of al-Shabaab militants against Somali National Army Forces. We currently assess this airstrike killed fifty-two militants," read the statement.
Military officials and local elders in Somalia said heavily-armed Shabaab militants had launched a dawn raid on a military camp, followed by a heavy exchange of gunfire which lasted hours.
"The terrorists attacked Bulogadud military base using heavy weaponry and explosives. The Somali military and Jubaland forces resisted the enemy before later retreating back from the base," Mohamed Abdikarin, a Somali military official told AFP by phone.
"Six soldiers were killed during the attack and two others died after a booby-trapped vehicle was detonated when the forces retook control of the base," he added. Sources at nearby villages said the militants looted the camp and took a military vehicle.
Shabaab militants claimed responsibility for the attack and claimed to have killed 42 soldiers.
The Shabaab have been fighting to overthrow the internationally-backed government in Mogadishu and on Tuesday carried out a deadly attack in neighbouring Kenya, which it has regularly targeted since Nairobi sent troops into Somalia.
Four gunmen and a suicide bomber left 21 dead and injured 28 in Nairobi.

Do not hijack Brexit

Warns minister as MPs plot to take control of process from beleaguered UK government

Parliament cannot be allowed to hijack Brexit, Trade Minister Liam Fox said yesterday, in a warning to lawmakers who want to take more control over Britain's departure from the European Union.
With just weeks to go before Britain is due to leave the EU, Prime Minister Theresa May will return to parliament today to set out how she plans to try to break the Brexit deadlock after her deal was rejected by lawmakers last week.
She was also to speak to ministers yesterday on a conference call, a government source said, as the prime minister tries to navigate a way through the competing visions for the future from a second referendum to staying in the EU.
Time is running out for Brexit, Britain's biggest shift in foreign and trade policy in more than 40 years, but so far there is little that unites a divided parliament beyond its rejection of May's deal that envisages close economic ties with the EU.
Britain's main opposition Labour Party is pressing for a new election and for May to rule out the possibility of a no-deal Brexit, while others in parliament are lobbying for anything from a second referendum to leaving without an agreement.
Britain voted with a 52 percent majority to leave the EU in a 2016 referendum.



Liam Fox

But with Labour refusing to take part until May rules out leaving without a deal, some lawmakers fear those talks will change little and instead have said they will launch attempts next week to force the government to change course.
Several are trying to make sure Britain does not "accidentally" leave without a deal on March 29, a scenario some businesses say would be catastrophic for the economy.
"What happens when you have a hung parliament is that power does pass from government ... to parliament and that's what we are seeing play out," Nicky Morgan, a Conservative former minister, told Sky News.
She said she was backing a bill that would force the government to extend Article 50, which triggered Britain's two-year talks to leave the EU, if it cannot get an agreement approved by parliament by the end of February.
Dominic Grieve, another Conservative lawmaker, is also looking at ways to stop Britain from leaving without a deal.

170 migrants 'dead or missing'

An estimated 170 migrants have been lost in the Mediterranean in two incidents involving dinghies that left from Libya and Morocco, migrants organisations said on Saturday.
One dinghy was spotted sinking in rough waters on Friday by an Italian military plane on patrol. The plane dropped two safety rafts into the water but had to leave due to a lack of fuel, Rear Admiral Fabio Agostini told TV channel RaiNews24.
A naval helicopter was dispatched and rescued three people who were suffering from severe hypothermia and taken to hospital on the island of Lampedusa.
The three survivors said they had left Gasr Garabulli in Libya on Thursday night as part of a group of 120 people, mainly from west Africa, according to Flavio Di Giacomo, spokesman for the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).
In another incident, 53 migrants who left Morocco on a dinghy were missing after what one survivor said was a collision in the Alboran Sea, in the western Mediterranean, according to Spanish non-governmental organisation Caminando Fronteras.
The United Nations' Refugee Agency said in a statement it was deeply saddened by reports of an estimated 170 people dead or missing. It said it had been unable to independently verify the death toll.



DRC POLLS

SC confirms Tshisekedi as winner

Regional powers hailed Felix Tshisekedi as DR Congo's incoming president yesterday, despite claims by his opponents of an election stitch-up and the African Union earlier warning of "serious doubts" over the result.
Announcing the final results of the much-delayed poll, the Constitutional Court threw out a legal challenge by runner-up Martin Fayulu in an overnight declaration early on Sunday.
It declared Tshisekedi the winner, paving the way for him to take over from the country's longtime leader Joseph Kabila, 47.
The election dispute has raised fears of fresh bloodshed in the vast and volatile central African nation.
The chairman of the African Union (AU), Rwandan President Paul Kagame, was due in Kinshasa on Monday after the AU questioned the election results.
The bloc had called for the final results to be delayed.
But the 16-nation Southern African Development Community congratulated Tshisekedi yesterday for being declared president-elect and called for a peaceful handover of power.
Hundreds of Tshisekedi's supporters celebrated by blowing whistles and horns near his party headquarters in the capital Kinshasa, where the atmosphere was otherwise calm yesterday.
Fayulu has described the outcome of the vote as an "electoral coup".

Democrats snub president's offer

US President Donald Trump on Saturday offered to temporarily shield a million immigrants from deportation if Congress authorizes funding for his Mexican border wall -- an idea Democrats rejected, making the US government shutdown likely to grind on.
Trump attempted to seize the initiative in ending the 29-day partial shutdown, a funding freeze that has left many important government departments relying on unpaid or highly reduced staff.
His bargain, announced in a televised White House address, held out the carrot of protection from deportation for two categories of immigrants.
These include 700,000 so-called "Dreamers," children of people who settled illegally in the United States, and who have become a favorite cause of the Democrats, as well as 300,000 other immigrants whose protected status is expiring, Trump said.
The president said these concessions would "build the trust and goodwill necessary to begin real immigration reform."
In return, Trump demanded the \$5.7 billion he says is needed to extend fences on the border with Mexico, something the opposition Democrats have repeatedly refused to authorize. That has prompted the president to retaliate with the government shutdown, which he triggered by not signing off on funding to swaths of departments.
The president also called for \$800 million in "urgent humanitarian assistance" and \$805 million for drug detection technology to help secure US ports of entry.
"I'm here today to break the logjam and provide Congress with a path forward to end the government shutdown and solve the crisis on the southern border," Trump said in his address.
Democrats, who accuse Trump of using his illegal immigration crackdown to score political points with his right-wing base, spurned the latest negotiating offer as soon as it was leaked in the media prior to the speech.
"His proposal is a compilation of several previously rejected initiatives, each of which is unacceptable and in total, do not represent a good faith effort to restore certainty to people's lives," said Nancy Pelosi, speaker of the House of Representatives and the face of Democratic opposition to Trump. "They are a non-starter."
And Chuck Schumer, the top Democrat in the US Senate, noted that Trump himself had scrapped previously existing protection for the immigrants whom he is now offering to shield.
"Offering some protections back in exchange for the wall is not a compromise but more hostage taking," Schumer tweeted.



Police forensic officers inspect the aftermath of a suspected car bomb explosion in Derry, Northern Ireland, on January 20, 2019. A suspected car bomb exploded in the Northern Irish city of Derry (Londonderry) on January 19, police said, with leading politicians alleging the blast was terror-related.

Opposition 'vilifying EVMs' to explain coming defeat

Says Modi as call grows to junk voting machines

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi today took on a projected opposition alliance for the coming Lok Sabha elections, which had a jumpstart yesterday following a massive 23-party rally held in Kolkata.
Accusing the opposition grand alliance of being about "corruption, negativity and instability", the PM said the rally was merely an effort to explain their inevitable defeat.
"The opposition is staring at defeat in the 2019 election... they are looking for excuses and so EVMs are being vilified," Modi said at a meeting with party workers in Congress-ruled Goa today.
A campaign against the Electronic Voting Machines was considered one of the key focus areas -- a list of which was drawn up after Saturday's rally.
Several opposition leaders, including Farooq Abdullah of the National Conference,

had labelled the EVMs "chor (thief) machine" -- an allegation that started last year following a string of BJP victories in assembly elections, especially the party's sweep in Uttar Pradesh. Later, Mayawati -- one of the key opposition leaders -- had demanded that paper ballots be re-introduced for elections and the EVMs junked.
The opposition, Modi said, has formed alliances with each other. "We've formed alliance with 125 crore countrymen. Which alliance do you think is stronger?" Modi said.
Several leaders who attended the opposition rally said the prospect of facing a united alliance was making the BJP extremely uncomfortable.
National Conference chief Omar Abdullah tweeted: "24 hours later the PM is still talking about #UnitedIndiaAtBrigade. Must say I'm surprised! I'd have thought he'd want people to forget the display of strength on @MamataOfficial didn't s'part."



Eight killed in Mali

Gunmen yesterday killed at least eight Chadian UN peacekeepers in an attack on one of their bases in northern Mali, multiple sources reported.
The UN spokesman in Mali condemned what he described as a vile and cowardly attack and called for a "robust" response.
"According to a new toll, still provisional, at least eight peacekeepers have been killed," a source close to the MINUSMA force said.
The attack happened early yesterday at the Aguelhok base 200 kilometres (125 miles) north of Kidal and towards the border with Algeria, the source added.
A diplomat in northern Mali told AFP that several of the attackers had also been killed.
Mahamat Saleh Annadif, the UN's special representative for Mali, condemned the attack in a statement.
"Peacekeepers of the MINUSMA force at Aguelhok fought off a sophisticated attack by assailants who arrived on several armed vehicles," he said.
The "cowardly" attack, he added, "illustrates the determination of the terrorists to sow chaos."
"It demands a robust, immediate and concerted response from all forces to destroy the peril of terrorism in the Sahel."
An attack at the same base last April killed two peacekeepers and left several others wounded.