

Seven get life for 2015
Tunisia terror attacks

AFP, Tunis

A Tunisian court has sentenced seven jihadists to life in prison over attacks at a museum and on a beach in 2015 that killed 60 people, prosecutors said yesterday. Four were sentenced to life in prison for the shooting rampage at a Sousse tourist resort in June 2015, which killed 38 people, mostly British tourists. Three were given life sentences for the earlier attack in March 2015 at the capital's Bardo National Museum, in which two gunmen killed 21 foreign tourists and a Tunisian security guard.

5 killed in eastern
Ukraine conflict

AFP, Donetsk

Pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine yesterday said that four of their fighters had been killed by Kiev's forces, while Ukraine announced the death of one of its soldiers. The conflict between the Ukrainian government and break-away Moscow-backed rebels began in 2014 after Moscow annexed Crimea and has already claimed some 13,000 lives.

Rio favela raids
kill 13 in Brazil

AFP, Rio De Janeiro

An operation by Brazilian military police in Rio de Janeiro on Friday left at least 13 people dead in a number of city center favelas, authorities said. In 2017, 1,127 people died during police operations in Rio state, the Public Security Forum NGO. Also in 2017, 104 security agents were killed, mostly when off duty.

BITS OF HISTORY
(FEBRUARY 09)

1996: A huge Irish Republican Army (IRA) bomb exploded in London's Docklands business district, killing two and injuring 100. The blast marked the end of a 17-month IRA ceasefire.

2002: Britain's Princess Margaret, the queen's sister, died at the age of 71.

Princess' bid for PM scuttled

Shinawatra-affiliated party to comply 'with royal command'

AFP, Bangkok

Thai Princess Ubolratana's unprecedented attempt to become the country's next prime minister was abruptly nixed yesterday after her party agreed to comply with a command from the king opposing the plan.

The party's announcement effectively blocking Ubolratana's candidacy came after an extraordinary rebuke by her brother King Maha Vajiralongkorn, and removes a hurdle for the ruling junta to hold onto power after the March 24 vote - the first since a 2014 coup.

The Thai Raksa Chart party announced Princess Ubolratana as its PM candidate on Friday

Thai king rebuked the move as 'highly inappropriate' and against royal tradition

Development seen as a blessing for Thai junta chief ahead of March 24 polls



The Thai Raksa Chart party, affiliated with the powerful Shinawatra political clan, had announced the princess as their candidate Friday morning.

The move rattled the status quo and threatened the ambitions of the generals who have controlled Thailand since they toppled the administration of Yingluck Shinawatra almost five years ago.

But the Thai king torpedoed his sister's bid in a sharply worded statement the same day that said bringing senior royal family members into politics was against tradition and "highly inappropriate."

Thai Raksa Chart responded



swiftly, cancelling a campaign event yesterday and issuing a statement saying it "complies with the royal command".

Thailand has some of the most severe lese majeste laws in the world and the king's word is seldom challenged.

Analysts say the events of the past day will help the military to consolidate power and tilt the odds in favour of junta chief Prayut Chan-O-Cha.

Prayut is standing as premier for the Phalang Pracharat party, a group aligned with the regime.

An Election Commission official said it is reviewing all candidate

applications and will finish the process this week, though few expect it to divert from the royal order.

The 67-year-old princess has yet to address the rebuke head on. She thanked supporters Saturday on her widely followed Instagram account, saying vaguely that she wanted Thailand to "move forward".

The king did not criticise the princess directly and seemed to focus blame on political party members who brought her on board.

Ubolratana is the first-born of former king Bhumibol Adulyadej.

She gave up her royal titles when she married an American in 1972, but they divorced and she moved back to Thailand.

Ubolratana is an unusually public figure for a royal, having starred in movies and maintaining an active social media footprint.

While she said she was exercising her rights as a commoner to stand for prime minister, the statement from the palace said she is she is "still a member of the House of Chakri," referring to the name of the dynasty.

Summit with Kim will be in Hanoi

Says Trump as US envoy ends three-day talks with North Korea

REUTERS, Washington

President Donald Trump said that US diplomats had a "very productive meeting" with North Korean officials, and he announced his summit later this month with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un would be held in Vietnam's capital, Hanoi.

"My representatives have just left North Korea after a very productive meeting and an agreed upon time and date for the second Summit with Kim Jong Un. It will take place in Hanoi, Vietnam, on February 27 & 28," Trump said on Twitter.

"I look forward to seeing Chairman Kim & advancing the cause of peace!" he said.

Earlier this week, Trump announced the dates for the second summit with Kim and said it would be held in Vietnam, but the city had not been disclosed.

Stephen Biegun, the US special representative for North Korea, held three days of talks in Pyongyang to prepare for the summit, the State Department said on Friday.

It said Biegun had agreed with his counterpart Kim Hyok Chol to meet again ahead of the summit.

In their talks in Pyongyang, from Wednesday to Friday, Biegun and Kim Hyok Chol "discussed advancing President Trump and Chairman Kim's Singapore summit commitments of complete denuclearization, transforming US-DPRK relations, and building a lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula," the State Department said.

Its statement gave no indication of any progress in the talks.

CONFERENCE ON MIDEAST IN POLAND

Palestinians snub US invitation

REUTERS, Washington

Palestinian officials have been invited to a US conference on the Middle East hosted by Poland next week, a senior US official said on Friday, but top Palestinian officials said they would not attend.

The senior administration official told reporters White House senior adviser Jared Kushner would discuss plans for peace between the Palestinians and Israelis at the event.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has called on the United States to reverse its recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and cuts in aid to the Palestinians, saying these had undermined efforts to reach a two-state solution to the longstanding conflict.

Kushner, who is US President Donald Trump's son-in-law, "will discuss the administration's efforts to advance peace between Israel and the Palestinians and also take questions from the audience," the official said.

Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat quickly rejected the invitation, writing on Twitter: "Regarding statements that we have been invited, we can say that only today there was some contact from the Polish side."

"Our position remains clear: We are not going to attend this conference and reiterate that we have not mandated anyone to talk on behalf of Palestine."

In another tweet on Friday, Erekat said: "The U.S. administration dismissed itself from sponsoring the peace process because of its decisions that are contradictory to the international law."

The State Department has said more than 40 countries will attend the conference in Warsaw from Feb 12 to 14.



Relatives of Palestinian teen Hassan Shalabi, 14, who was killed during a protest at the Israeli-Gaza border fence, mourn during his funeral in the central Gaza Strip, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'We'll do what's necessary'

Guaido refuses to rule out authorising intervention; US is in direct contact with Venezuela military

AGENCIES

Venezuela's self-proclaimed acting president Juan Guaido refused to rule out the possibility of authorizing United States intervention to help force President Nicolas Maduro from power and alleviate a humanitarian crisis.

National Assembly leader Guaido told AFP he would do "everything that is necessary... to save human lives," acknowledging that US intervention is "a very controversial subject."

The opposition leader launched a bid to oust Maduro last month, declaring himself interim president, a move recognized by the US and around 40 other countries, including 20 from the European Union.

Under Maduro's stewardship, oil-rich Venezuela's economy has collapsed leaving the country wracked by hyperinflation, recession and shortages of basic necessities such as food and medicine.

He is trying to bring in food and medi-

cines from the US but the supplies are stuck in warehouses in Colombia because the Venezuelan military has blocked their entry.

Earlier, Maduro vowed not to let in "fake humanitarian aid" and claimed Venezuela's crisis has been "fabricated by Washington" to justify intervention.

Guaido says 300,000 people could die if desperately-needed aid isn't brought in.

Guaido has dismissed

Maduro as illegitimate over his reelection last May in polls branded a fraud by the US, EU and many Latin American countries.

Meanwhile, a senior White House official said that The United States was holding direct communications with members of

Venezuela's military urging them to abandon Maduro and is also preparing new sanctions aimed at increasing pressure on him,

The Trump administration expects further military defections from Maduro's side, the official told Reuters in an interview, despite only a few senior officers having done so.

VENEZUELA POLITICAL CRISIS



No room for 'intruders'

Says Modi as nude protest, black flags greet him in Assam

AGENCIES

Amid intense resistance over the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2016, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday emphasised that there is no room for "intruders" in Assam as well as the country.

The PM also accused those who "destroyed the country", "betrayed Assam" and who weren't honest about implementing the Assam Accord of spreading misinformation about the bill. Whereas his government, Modi said, is committed towards safeguarding the rights and interests of the people of the northeast.

Meanwhile, a second day of protests yesterday tainted Modi's visit to north-east India.

Protesters waved black flags and burned effigies of the Hindu nationalist PM while some students staged a nude protest outside the state government complex in the Assam capital of Guwahati. Media reports said the nude protesters were detained while Assam student groups said police baton charged another group of activists.

Black flag protests -- considered a strong insult -- greeted Modi when he arrived in Guwahati on Friday night to

Indian PM warns misinformation being spread over citizenship bill
China protests his visit to Arunachal Pradesh



start the tour of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura ahead of national election.

His nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has faced a severe backlash in the region over a proposed change to a 1955 citizenship act which would give Indian nationality to Hindus and other minorities who have fled the neighbouring Muslim countries. The bill is expected to be tabled in the Rajya Sabha soon.

While groups in Assam want to block all outsiders, human rights activists have condemned the government law for not covering Muslims. They say it will be the first time religion has been a criteria for nationality in India, which is officially secular.

Last year the Assam government released the first draft of a state citizens' register that rejected four million mainly Muslim residents who were unable to prove they were living in the state before 1971, when millions fled Bangladesh's war of independence.

Meanwhile, China's foreign ministry yesterday condemned Modi's visit to the disputed northeastern border state of Arunachal Pradesh, saying it "resolutely opposes" activities by Indian leaders in the region, reported Reuters.

In response, the official spokesperson at India's foreign ministry said in a statement that Arunachal Pradesh was "an integral and inalienable part of India".

CHIT FUND SCAM CASES

CBI questions Kolkata top cop in Shillong

PTI, Shillong

The CBI began questioning the Kolkata police chief yesterday at highly secured agency's office here in connection with chit fund scam cases, officials said.

Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar, his counsel Biswajit Deb and senior IPS officers Javed Shamim and Murlidhar Sharma arrived at the probe agency's office at 11:00 am, they said.

Kumar's counsel and the two IPS officers were asked to leave the CBI office within 30 minutes, they said.

Kumar is being interrogated at the highly secured CBI office at Oakland area in the Meghalaya capital where three senior CBI sleuths from



Delhi reached on Friday.

The SC on Tuesday had directed the Kolkata police chief to appear before the CBI and "faithfully" cooperate in the investigation of cases arising out of the Saradha chit fund scam, while making it clear that he will not be arrested.

The CBI had alleged in the Supreme Court that Kumar, who was leading the SIT probe into Saradha chit fund scam, tampered with the electronic evidence and handed over documents to the agency, some of which were "doctored".

CBI officials had gone to Kumar's residence in Kolkata to question him on February 3 but their attempt was thwarted by the police, following which Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee staged a three-day dharna.

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim REMEMBRANCE



10th February, 2019 marks the 1st Death Anniversary of Late Mohammed Abu Tayab, Chairman, T. K. Group of Industries.

We fondly remember his hard works, ideals and memories with due respect and pray to Almighty Allah for His divine blessings for the salvation of his departed soul. May Allah grant him a place in Jannatul Ferdous. Ameen.

All staffs of Administrative office, T. K. Bhaban

Kuldip Nayar paid rich tributes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Glowing tributes were paid to late journalist-writer Kuldip Nayar on the occasion of the launch of his last book at a function here on Friday night.

India's senior federal minister Arun Jaitley describing him as an "iconic political journalist" who withstood government pressure and became the voice of the media fraternity during the Emergency in 1975.

Kuldip Nayar died in August last year at the age of 95. Releasing the book "On Leaders and Icons from Jinnah to Modi" by Nayar Jaitley, who attended the event through video link from New York where he is recuperating, said Nayar was a newsman with an ability to sniff out scoops.

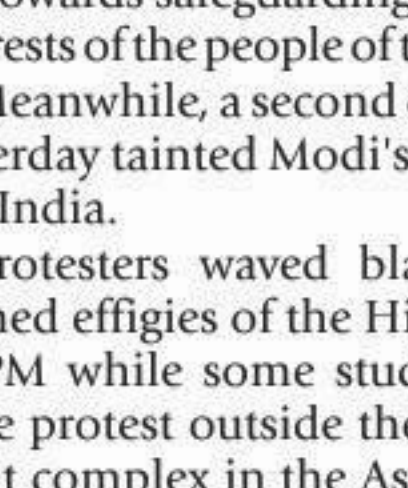
The event was also attended by former Indian Law minister Kapil Sibal of the Congress, serving Indian minister for Urban

Development and Housing Hardeep Singh Puri, Janata Dal (United) leader and writer Pavan Varma and diplomat Navtej Sarna.

Jaitley said some of Nayar's most significant contributions came during the Emergency.

"During the Emergency, when press censorship was imposed, and when the journalistic fraternity was looking for a leader, he became the natural choice. Therefore, he stood out, suffered detention, fought out in the courts, after some time got released, never looked back and never compromised his views," Jaitley said.

Nayar's book launch was also expected to be attended by former PM Manmohan Singh who declined to attend due to a reference to him in a chapter in the book which says during his tenure as PM, government files used to go to Sonia Gandhi, who was not a part of the government. Singh denied the allegation.



QUEBEC MOSQUE SHOOTING

Canadian gets life, no parole for 40 yrs

AFP, Quebec City

A 29-year-old who shot dead six worshippers at a Quebec City mosque in the worst anti-Muslim attack in the West got life in prison Friday. Alexandre Bissonnette will have to wait 40 years -- longer than usual -- before he can apply for parole.

In his decision, Judge Francois Huot rejected a prosecution request for a 150-year sentence, which would have been the longest ever in Canada, saying "subjecting a murder to a sentence that exceeds his life expectancy" would be a cruel and unusual punishment under Canadian law.

But he also noted the killer's "visceral hatred of Muslim immigrants."

"You killed six of your compatriots whose only crime was to be different than yourself," Huot said in court.

A university student at the time of the shooting, Bissonnette appeared to have been seduced by nationalist and supremacist ideologies into committing this "unjustified and deadly" massacre that sought to "undermine our fundamental societal values," the judge said.