



People wave Catalan pro-independence 'estelada' flags during a demonstration against the trial of catalan separatist leaders in Madrid yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

# BOEING 737 MAX Airlines fear long grounding of jets

AFP, Paris/Jaddis Ababa

The grounding of Boeing's 737 MAX jets after the crash in Ethiopia has had no immediate financial impact on airlines using the planes, but it will get painful for the industry the longer they do not fly, companies and analysts said on Friday.

Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 crashed soon after take-off from Addis Ababa last weekend, killing 157 people, the second such calamity involving Boeing's flagship new model after a jet came down off Indonesia in October with 189 people on board.

Investigators in France on Friday

examined the black boxes of the jet that crashed in Ethiopia as the global airline industry waited to see if the cause was similar to the disaster in Indonesia.

Regulators have grounded the 737 MAX around the world, and the U.S. planemaker has halted deliveries of the several thousand on order for a model intended to be the future industry workhorse.

Air Canada and United Airlines on Friday became the first major carriers in North America to warn of negative financial implications to business as a consequence of the grounding of the Boeing planes.

# Right-wing terror threat

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The Sydney-based think tank in its Global Terrorism Index 2018 said the "threat of far-right political terrorism was on the rise". It cited statistics showing a significant increase in the number of attacks and fatalities over the preceding years.

"There were 66 deaths from terrorism caused by far-right groups and individuals from 113 attacks for the years from 2013 to 2017," the report said.

Of those, 17 deaths and 59 attacks occurred in 2017 alone. In Western Europe, there were 12 attacks in the UK, six in Sweden, and two each in Greece and France. In the US, there were 30 attacks in 2017 which resulted in 16 deaths.

The majority of the attacks were carried out by lone actors with "far-right, white nationalist or anti-Muslim beliefs".

Anti-Defamation League, a New York-based organisation which monitors antisemitism and other hate crimes, found that every terrorist murder in the USA last year was linked to far-right extremism. At least 50 people were killed by an attacker connected to right-wing extremism last year, an increase of 35 percent from the previous year.

It also reported that 71 percent of the extremist-related fatalities in the USA between 2008 and 2017 were committed by members of the far-right or white-supremacist movements. Islamist extremists were responsible for just 26 percent.

Data compiled by Global Terrorism Database, that has tabulated terrorist events around the world since 1970, showed that almost two-thirds of terror attacks in the US in 2017 were tied to racist, anti-Muslim, homophobic, anti-Semitic, fascist, anti-government, or xenophobic motivations.

Prof Imtiaz Ahmed of Dhaka University said many global leaders, including Donald Trump, in their speeches criticised minority community people which encouraged the far-right terrorism.

"The far-right terrorism did not get much focus like the way the religious terrorism got. This is the high time to give more focus on it as it is on the rise."

The teacher of international relations said nobody was talking about control of arms used by common people.

"A global pressure should be created on those countries where people have easy access to arms. If we look at the far-right terrorism incidents, we will see that most of those were carried out by using arms," he added.

Although the majority of deaths from terrorism in North America since the turn of the century have been related to Jihadist groups, there has been a resurgence of far-right political terrorism in the past few years, according to Global Terrorism Index 2018.

"In 2017, white power extremists were responsible for nine attacks and seven deaths in North America," it said.

The report said the most notable terror attack committed by white extremists in 2017 occurred in August during the "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, North Virginia, when a white extremist drove a car into a crowd and killed one person.

In October last year, a white power extremist shot dead 11 people at a Pittsburgh synagogue.

## BFF women

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charge of Motijheel Police Station, said, "A police team arrested her [Kiron] in Dhanmondi area around 11:00am."

She was later placed before a court, he added.

Metropolitan Magistrate Abu Sufian Md Noman sent Kiron to jail rejecting her bail petition, court sources said.

A private TV channel had aired a report on March 9 with an audio clip of Kiron where she was heard making remarks against the prime minister and criticising her lack of attention towards the women's football.

# Defiant terror suspect

FROM PAGE 1

The wounded included a two-year-old boy and a four-year-old girl, who was in critical condition.

The attack on the Al Noor and Linwood mosques has prompted an outpouring of grief and deep shock in this usually peaceful country, which prides itself on welcoming refugees fleeing violence or persecution.

Throughout the day people laid flowers at a makeshift memorial just beyond the police cordon around the Al Noor mosque, where most of the victims died.

Many offerings were accompanied by handwritten letters laden with sadness and disbelief, from residents of what one local driver called the "city of sorrow".

"I am so sorry that you were not safe here. Our hearts are breaking for your loss," read one of the notes.

When the police tape was lifted late yesterday, bystanders spontaneously joined police in moving the stack of bouquets closer to the mosque.

An imam who was leading prayers at the Linwood mosque at the time of the attack said the Muslim community would not be shaken by the massacre.

"It was a very bad day, not just all of us, all of New Zealand," said Ibrahim AbdulHalim. But, he added: "We still love this country".

Across New Zealand, Kiwis responded with interfaith solidarity -- crowdfunding millions of dollars, donating halal food and even offering to accompany local Muslims now scared to walk the streets.

Muslims make up just one percent of New Zealand's population.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern arrived in the city and, wearing a black headscarf, met with survivors and victims' families.

Ardern said the victims came from across the Muslim world, with Turkey, Bangladesh, and Malaysia among the countries rendering consular assistance.

At least one Saudi citizen, one Indonesian, four Jordanians and six Pakistanis were among the dead.

Sahra Ahmed, a New Zealander of Somali origin, said she was touched by the PM's gesture.

"It means a lot. It is a signal to say -- I am with you," she told AFP.

Police are now trying to piece together answers to the difficult questions of why and how this happened.

They want to know how it was possible for the perpetrator to remain undetected by the intelligence services despite his extremist views.

## Stop 'evil race'

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request all to abide by traffic rules while they are on roads."

She wondered how people are still unwilling to follow traffic rules despite seeing so many road accidents. "People have a serious lack of patience."

Mentioning that drivers are being held responsible initially for any type of accident, the PM said there should also be enquiries to find out the faults of victims.

Hasina also put emphasis on allowing drivers to take enough rest and providing food to them in due time.

Hasina asked the authorities concerned to install weighbridges and be strict on allowing overweight trucks to ply on the bridges in a bid to ensure their sustainability.

Briefly describing various development activities of the government for developing the communications system of the country, the PM said the government was sincere about the balanced development across the country.

Ardern said the shooter was "in possession of a gun licence" obtained in November 2017, and he started legally purchasing two semi-automatic weapons, reportedly AR-15s, two shotguns and a lever-action gun the following month.

Ardern said some of the guns had been modified to make them deadlier. "I can tell you one thing right now -- our gun laws will change," she said.

The suspect documented his radicalisation and two years of preparations in a lengthy, meandering and conspiracy-filled far-right "manifesto".

He live-streamed footage of himself going room-to-room, victim to victim, shooting the wounded from close range as they struggled to crawl away in the main Christchurch mosque.

Thirty-six minutes after the police received the first call, Tarrant was in custody.

Commissioner Mike Bush hailed the "absolute bravery" of both police and members of the public "who put themselves in harm's way" to apprehend the suspect.

"Their intervention may very likely have saved further lives."

Two other people remain in custody, although their link to the attack is not clear. One man, 18-year-old Daniel Burrough, has been charged with incitement.

Revulsion at the attack, and tributes to the victims poured in from around the world, including from Pope Francis and Britain's Queen Elizabeth II.

US President Donald Trump condemned the "horrible massacre" in which "innocent people have so senselessly died", but denied that the problem of right-wing extremism was widespread.

Australian police said they had visited Tarrant's childhood home in the town of Grafton, north of Sydney, and spoken to family members as part of their investigation.

The attack has prompted searching questions about whether right-wing extremism has been treated with enough seriousness by Western governments.

Ali Soufan, a former high-ranking FBI counter-terrorism agent, warned the West was "in the midst of a surge of right-wing terrorism that has been metastasising in plain sight while generating only a muted response from domestic counter-terrorism authorities".

## Where had

FROM PAGE 1

Maroof is among a few lucky people who returned home after being abducted or going missing.

Although families of some victims come up with some narratives of captivity and subsequent return of their dear ones, Maroof's family remains tight-lipped.

The ex-diplomat went missing on December 4, 2017 after he had left his Dhanmondi home in his car to receive his younger daughter Samiha Zaman at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 7:30pm.

Around that time, Maroof called the landline phone at his house and asked the house help "to allow a man to take his laptop", his brother Rifat had said earlier.

Three well-dressed men in caps went to his house and took his laptop, desktop and camera.

Maroof had been unreachable since then. His car was later found abandoned in the city's Khilkhet area, Rifat added.

Although there were CCTV footages of the tree men at the house, law enforcers could not identify them.

# Defying threats, Afghan singer Aryana comes home for women

REUTERS, Kabul

Each time Aryana Sayeed, one of Afghanistan's most famous singers, returns to the country of her birth, she braves threats and endures scrutiny right down to her choice of clothes.

Still, she returns often, as much to encourage women in a restrictive country as to share her music, a mix of pop and traditional songs.

"It's really hard for me as a female singer to carry on with my work in Afghanistan with the type of pressure that I have on my mind, the threats that I get on a regular basis, the attacks on social media," she said in an interview in Kabul.

"I get messages, scary ones actually."

Aryana, as she is usually known, had just finished performing last week on Afghan Star, a televised singing competition.

In 2017, Aryana enraged conservative Afghans when she was photographed wearing a self-coloured dress at a Paris concert. Clerics threatened that she would be killed if she returned to perform a scheduled concert in Kabul.

She performed anyway. "People love to hear her voice. But they don't love her," said filmmaker Sadam Wahidi, who is working on a documentary about Aryana, who is often compared to Hollywood reality star Kim Kardashian.

Aryana's success in Afghanistan and among Afghans living abroad illustrates how much the treatment of women has changed since the 2001 ouster of the Taliban by U.S.-led forces. But the vitriol she draws shows how intractable some attitudes remain.

Born in Kabul, she fled Afghanistan's civil war at age 8 with her family, stopping in Pakistan, then Switzerland. After the family's asylum case was rejected, they hired a smuggler to get to London, and settled down.

Aryana, 34, now splits her time between Kabul and Istanbul.

In her home city, Aryana travels by armoured vehicle, but more often she lives in isolation.

"I'm basically a prisoner in my own room," she said. "All I do is go to my room and back to the set and record the show."

Women have gained the right to work and girls can attend school since the Taliban government fell.

It is a stark contrast to life under the hardline Islamists, when women were banned even from appearing in public without a male relative or with faces uncovered. Playing musical instruments was also forbidden.

Still, rural Afghanistan remains more conservative than the cities, and many people object to Aryana's clothing and her promotion of women's rights.

"Aryana Sayeed's concerts are not in accordance with our society and Islam," said Layeq Khan Wahdat, 26, a resident of Paktika province. "Dress-up like this can promote prostitution and seduction."

Aryana's latest return to Afghanistan came as the United States discusses peace with the Taliban to end the 17-year war. The prospect of re-integration of the Taliban is chilling to the singer.

# US at UN takes aim at China's Belt and Road initiative

AFP, United Nations

The United States on Friday clashed with China at the UN Security Council over Beijing's Belt and Road initiative, saying the infrastructure investment scheme had "known problems" with corruption and debt distress.

The US-China spat soured negotiations on a resolution on Afghanistan, forcing the council to adopt a temporary rollover of the UN mission there for six months instead of a year.

Beijing's flagship initiative, which aims to develop new trade routes through major infrastructure projects such as airports and roads, has been described by critics as Chinese expansionism.

US Acting Ambassador Jonathan Cohen accused China of demanding that the resolution highlight the Belt and Road initiative "despite its tenuous ties to Afghanistan and known problems with corruption, debt distress, environmental damage, and lack of transparency."

Cohen bluntly accused China of holding UN negotiations hostage "by making it about Chinese national political priorities rather than the people of Afghanistan."

China shot back, with Deputy Ambassador Wu Haitao telling the council that Cohen's remarks were "at variance with facts and fraught with prejudice."

"This is an initiative of economic cooperation aimed at achieving common development and prosperity. It has nothing to do with geopolitics," said Wu.

The sharp exchange came as the United States and China are locked in negotiations aimed at ending a trade war that has left businesses struggling with tariffs on billions of dollars in two-way commerce.

The UN resolution on the Afghanistan mission has contained language on cooperation with the Belt and Road initiative since 2016.

The US insistence that the call for cooperation with the Chinese initiative be dropped from the resolution followed sharp criticism last year by Vice President Mike Pence who said the program had left countries drowning in debt.

The United States has sought to challenge the Chinese scheme but the initiative continues to draw support. On Monday, Italy said it would sign a memorandum of understanding to officially support the Belt and Road Initiative.

More than 123 countries have signed agreements to cooperate with China under the program, Wu said.

## This is my

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posts. Of the 18 hall unions, 12 went to the BCL, while independents swept in most of the five female halls, where the pro-ruling party's student body has little hold.

## RAID ON N KOREA EMBASSY

# Dissident group responsible

AFP, Washington

A shadowy dissident group dedicated to overthrowing Kim Jong Un was behind a raid on Madrid's North Korean embassy last month, the Washington Post has reported, offering the latest explanation for the mysterious event.

Ten men burst into the diplomatic mission on February 22, roughing up employees before making off with documents and computers in two embassy vehicles they later abandoned, just days before a high-stakes nuclear summit between North Korean leader Kim and US President Donald Trump that ultimately failed to reach an accord.

Speculation over the identity and motive of the assailants has swirled in the Spanish media, with a report in the El Pais daily this week citing the country's intelligence agency as saying at least two of them were linked to the CIA.

The Post however reported Friday that the operation was carried out by a group called the "Cheollima Civil Defense" (CCD), a secretive organization committed to overthrowing the Kim dynasty.