

NZ MOSQUE MASSACRE

Killer visited Israel in 2016
The Australian white supremacist accused of carrying out a massacre at two mosques in New Zealand briefly visited Israel in 2016, Israeli officials said yesterday.
Brenton Tarrant arrived on a three-month tourist visa and stayed in Israel for nine days in October 2016, immigration authority spokeswoman Sabine Haddad said.
She was not able to provide further details on the visit by the 28-year-old. Tarrant grew up in the small town of Grafton in Australia, but had travelled widely in recent years.
Social media posts suggested his travels included trips as far afield as Pakistan and North Korea. He had also visited Greece, Croatia and Bulgaria, among other countries.

Terrorism film pulled from NZ cinemas

Following the recent terrorist attacks in Christchurch on Friday, upcoming film Hotel Mumbai has been pulled from New Zealand cinemas.
Hotel Mumbai, which stars Dev Patel and Armie Hammer, is based on a co-ordinated terror attack carried out in 2008 by a Pakistani terrorist cell in Mumbai, which left more than 160 people dead.
In a press release, Icon Film Distribution announced the suspension of the film from all New Zealand cinemas following the Christchurch mosque shootings. They have also suspended all advertising around the film.

'Egg Boy' now a worldwide hero

An Australian teen who egged a far-right senator over his offensive comments about the Christchurch mosque attacks has been hailed as "heroic" by internet users, who have raised thousands of dollars in support of his protest.
William Connolly, now better known as "Eggboy", cracked an egg over Fraser Anning's head at a press conference in Melbourne Saturday, prompting the senator to hit him in the face repeatedly.
The controversial politician had a day earlier triggered outrage by claiming the attack in New Zealand that killed 50 people at two mosques was the result of Muslim immigration to the country.
Connolly's act has spawned viral memes and drawn support from social media users around the world, with one setting up a GoFundMe page which quickly raised Aus\$44,000 (US\$31,000) to cover "legal fees" and "more eggs".
SOURCE: AFP



A child sits among flowers and candles left in tribute to the victims after a vigil in Christchurch yesterday, three days after a shooting incident at two mosques in the city that claimed the lives of 50 Muslim worshippers. Inset, students write messages on a large tarpaulin during the vigil.

PHOTO: AFP

Australia police search home of suspect's sister

REUTERS, Sydney
Australian police have searched two homes in towns on the New South Wales (NSW) mid-north coast linked to the investigation into Friday's mass shootings at mosques in the New Zealand city of Christchurch.
Police said that a search warrant was executed yesterday morning by the state's Joint Counter Terrorism Team (JCIT) at a home in the town of Sandy Beach, near Coffs Harbour, and shortly after another warrant was executed at a home in Lawrence, near Maclean.
The Australian Federal Police (AFP) and NSW Police declined to identify the owners of the homes.
"The primary aim of the activity is to formally obtain material that may assist New Zealand Police in their ongoing investigation," the agencies said in a joint statement.
They said the family of the Australian man arrested in Christchurch over the shootings were assisting police.
Australian media said one of the homes belonged to the sister of white supremacist Brenton Tarrant, who was charged in New Zealand with murder on Saturday.

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump yesterday complained that he is being blamed by journalists for the massacre of 50 people in attacks on two mosques in New Zealand.
"The Fake News Media is working overtime to blame me for the horrible attack in New Zealand," Trump told his more than 59 million followers on Twitter.
"They will have to work very hard to prove that one," he tweeted. "So Ridiculous!"
Trump appeared to be referring to criticism of his response to the attack, which was allegedly carried out by a 28-year-old white supremacist claiming to be resisting genocide against white people.
In a lengthy written rant, the alleged killer had referred to Trump as "a symbol of renewed white identity."
Trump did on several occasions tweet and speak to condemn the "horrible" attack and offer any US assistance to New Zealand's authorities.
However, he courted controversy Friday when he played down the wider implications of the gunman's ideology, saying that violent white national-

ism is not a growing problem.
"It's a small group of people," he said.
This led to a flurry of criticism from Democrats who said he was sending mixed signals when he should be more clearly standing up against what many independent experts say is the mounting problem of white nationalists targeting Muslims, Jews, immigrants and other minorities.
With controversy swirling over Trump's tepid response to the massacre, White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney was forced to deny any affinity between the president's anti-immigration rhetoric and the accused Christchurch shooter's extremist views.
"The president is not a white supremacist," Mulvaney said in an interview with Fox News Sunday.
But on a separate Sunday talk show, Rashida Tlaib, a Democrat from Detroit and one of the first two Muslim women ever elected to the US Congress, charged that the president's failure to speak out forcefully against white supremacy was making the country less safe.
"Trump is the most powerful man in the world right now," she said on CNN's "State of the Union."
"He, from the Oval Office, from that power position, can be able to send a signal very loud and clear."



Sin Chew editor killed in quake in Indonesia

THE STAR ONLINE, Petaling Jaya
The deputy executive editor-in-chief of Sin Chew Daily Tai Siew Kim was killed in a landslide caused by a 5.8-magnitude earthquake in Lombok Island of Indonesia on Sunday.
The Sin Chew Daily is a leading Chinese-language newspaper in Malaysia and also a member of Asia News Network.
Tai was among a group of Malaysians visiting the Tiu Kelep Waterfall in Bayan district in north Lombok when the earthquake struck at 2:07pm local time.
Six other Malaysians are still missing, Wisma Putra said in a statement. They were on the island since March 14 and supposed to fly back to Kuala Lumpur yesterday.
Tai's son who was with her suffered minor injuries and is reported to be receiving treatment at a hospital.
According to initial reports, there were about 40 tourists, including domestic visitors, at the waterfall.
"Most of the victims were Malaysians and domestic tourists," said reports quoting an administration spokesman.
China Press reported that Tai, 56, the wife of its editor-in-chief Datuk Teoh Yang Khoo, was in Lombok with her ex-classmates from SRJK (C) Jementah.
There were a total of 28 of them in the group. Sin Chew Daily executive reporter E Met Yeat said Tai was a helpful and caring superior. "She took good care of her colleagues. We are very sad to hear about the news," she said.

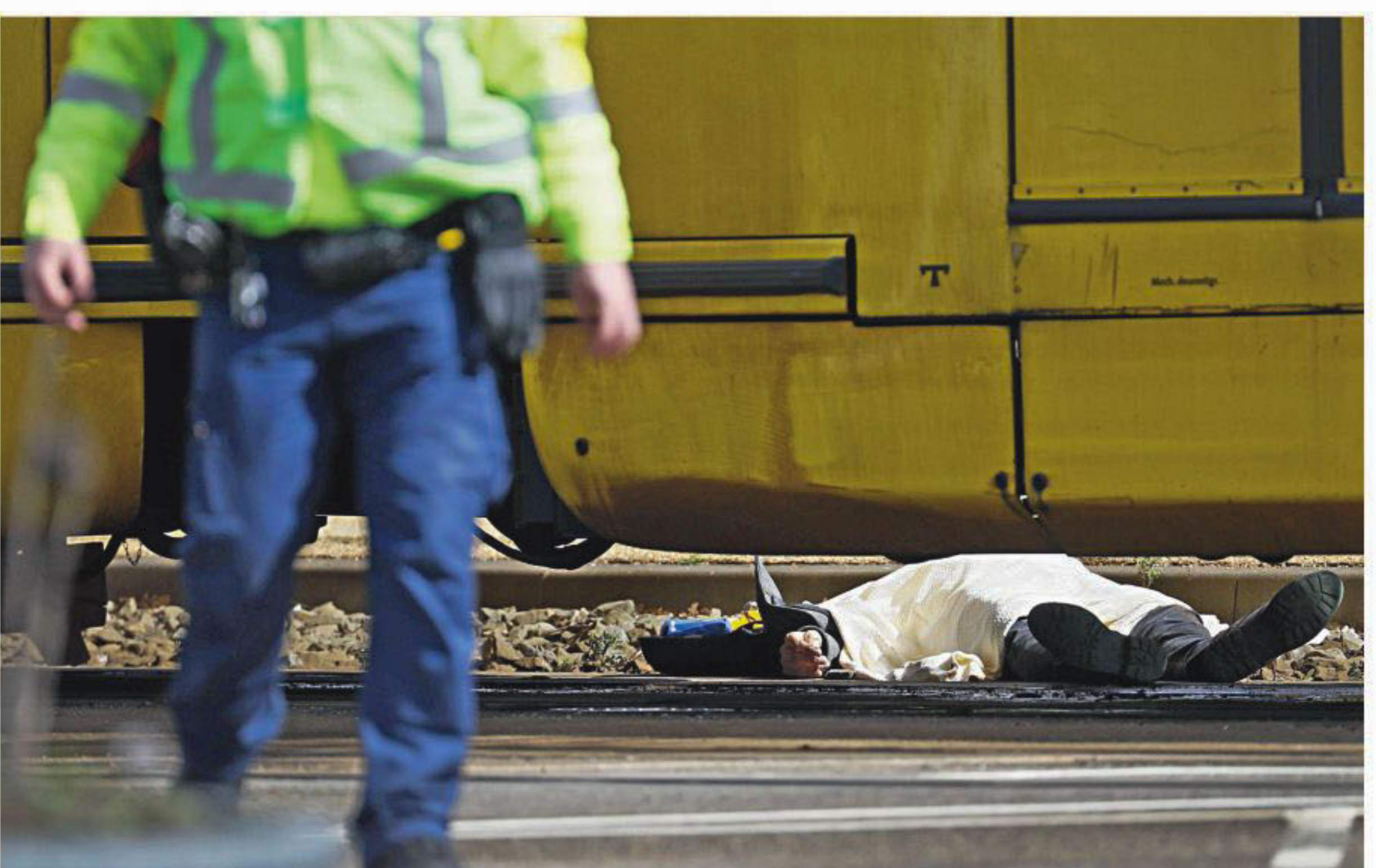
CYCLONE, FLOODING

1,000 feared dead in Mozambique

ALJAZEERA ONLINE
The death toll for Cyclone Idai may be more than 1,000 President Filipe Nyusi said on state broadcaster Radio Mocambique yesterday.
The president said that, while the number of people confirmed dead stood at 84, the scale of the disaster was "huge" and he had seen bodies floating in rivers while flying over the affected region.
The total death toll has risen to at least 215 after the storm tore into central Mozambique last week before continuing on to Zimbabwe and Malawi, bringing flash floods and ferocious winds.
At least 126 people were killed in Mozambique and Malawi, according to the Red Cross, and Zimbabwe's information ministry yesterday put the number of dead at 89 in the country.
Most of the deaths in Mozambique happened in the central port city of Beira, 90 percent of which was destroyed, according to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).
A large dam burst on Sunday in the city, cutting off the last road to the city of about 530,000 people, the IFRC said in a statement.

Dead whale 'ate 40kg of plastic'

AFP, Manila
A starving whale with 40 kilos (88 pounds) of plastic trash in its stomach has died after being washed ashore in the Philippines, activists said yesterday, calling it one of the worst cases of poisoning they have seen.
Environmental groups have tagged the Philippines as one of the world's biggest ocean polluters due to its reliance on single-use plastic.
That sort of pollution, which is also widespread in other southeast Asian nations, regularly kills wildlife like whales and turtles that ingest the waste.
In the latest case, a Cuvier's beaked whale died on Saturday in the southern province of Compostela Valley where it was stranded a day earlier, the government's regional fisheries bureau said.
The agency and an environmental group performed a necropsy on the animal and found about 40 kilograms of plastic, including grocery bags and rice sacks.
The animal died from starvation and was unable to eat because of the trash filling its stomach, said Darrell Blatchley, director of D' Bone Collector Museum Inc., which helped conduct the examination.



A body lying on the ground is covered near a tram at the 24 Oktoberplace in Utrecht, Netherlands where a shooting took place yesterday. A gunman opened fire on the tram, killing at least three people and wounding nine others in what officials said was a possible terrorist incident.

PHOTO: AFP

Congo train derailment kills 24

AFP, Kinshasa
At least 24 people were killed and 31 injured Sunday when a freight train carrying stowaways derailed in the Democratic Republic of Congo, police and medical services said.
The accident occurred in Kasai province, in the centre-west of the central African country.
"We have retrieved 24 bodies, mostly children. It is a provisional toll because the wagons are still overturned," a railway police official in Bena Leka, 140 kilometres north of Kananga, told AFP.
"Most of the passengers are stowaways because it is a freight train. We have suspended the search because night has just fallen in the area," said the source, who was at the site.

MBS okayed 'intervention' against dissidents: report

AFP, Washington
More than a year before the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, Saudi Arabia's powerful Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman approved a secret campaign to silence dissenters, The New York Times reported on Sunday.
The campaign included surveillance, kidnapping, detention and torture of Saudis, said the report which cited US officials who have read classified intelligence reports about the effort.
American officials referred to it as the Saudi Rapid Intervention Group, the Times said.
At least some of the clandestine missions were carried out by members of the team that killed and dismembered Khashoggi in October at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, suggesting his murder was part of a wider campaign against dissidents, the report said, citing the US officials and associates of some Saudi victims.
The murder of Khashoggi, a Washington Post contributing columnist, generated global outrage including an order from US senators for President Donald Trump to designate and punish those responsible.
He did not comply.
The senators, briefed by the heads of US intelligence agencies, said they were convinced that Prince Mohammed was responsible for the Khashoggi killing.
Saudi Arabia has stressed the prince was not involved. The kingdom initially said it had no knowledge of Khashoggi's fate but later blamed rogue agents for his death.
Saudi Arabia's public prosecutor has charged 11 people over his murder.
Among its activities, the Rapid Intervention Group appears to have been involved in the detention and abuse of prominent women's rights activists arrested last year, the Times said.
The intervention team was so busy that in June its leader asked a top advisor to Prince Mohammed whether he would give them bonuses for Eid al-Fitr.



NEWS ANALYSIS

WILL THAI POLLS EASE OR MAGNIFY CONFLICT?

Experts believe lack of a clear mandate from voters could complicate the current scenario.
Next Sunday will be a crucial day for Thailand, as voters cast their ballot to decide on the country's future. But what happens after the ballot boxes are closed remains uncertain. Will this election end a decade-long political conflict, or will it just create a new round of battles?
With voting just a week away, observers and political scientists believe that the most likely scenario after the poll is that General Prayut Chan-o-cha will return as prime minister, thanks mainly to support from Phalang Pracharat Party and its allies.
Based on this scenario, Uttama Savanayana's Phalang Pracharat along with its allies — Ruam Palang Prachachat Thai Party of Suthep Thaugsuban and the People Reform Party of Paiboon Nititawan, plus the 250 new senators — will most certainly vote for Prayut as prime minister.
With the advantage accorded by the current charter — which allows the new Senate, hand-picked by the National Council of Peace and Order, to vote for the next PM — it will not be difficult for Prayut to secure the post, said Titipol Phakdeewanich, dean of political science at Ubon Ratchathani University.
But for him to sail through, his camp must secure at least 126 seats in addition to the 250 senators to win the required 376 votes, Stithorn Thananithichot, a political scientist from King Prajadhipok's Institute, said.
The academics all agree that Prayut and his allies can easily win backing from the three medium-sized parties, namely Bhujithai, Charthapattana and Chart Pattana, as well as the Democrat Party.
In this scenario, Stithorn estimates this camp will have obtained about 270 seats or more than half of the 500 seats in Parliament, which is enough to form a secure government. The number could vary, with 220 seats to Phalang Pracharat, its allies and the Democrats, plus 50 seats from the three medium parties. However, this scenario will only material-

Observers believe the most likely scenario after Sunday's polls is that General Prayut Chan-o-cha will return as PM



A woman casts an early vote for the upcoming election at a ballot station in Bangkok, Thailand on Sunday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

ise if Phalang Pracharat wins more seats than the Democrats, or becomes the second largest party after Pheu Thai, Stithorn said.
The Democrats have in the past proved that they are willing to compromise with the military, so if the party were to be offered key ministerial posts now in exchange for backing Phalang Pracharat, why will they not do it? Titipol asked.
ODDS AGAINST PHEU THAIS
Will Pheu Thai be able to form a government? Yes, say the observers, but they see this as the least possible scenario. For this formula to materialise, the Thaksin Shinawatra-backed party and allies namely — Future Forward, Seri Ruam Thai, Puea Chat and Prachachart — must secure at least 250 seats, Stithorn said.
However, Pheu Thai and its allies can only be expected to garner 220 to 230 seats at most, or 120 or 160 directly from Pheu Thai and 60 to 70 from allies. This, according to Stithorn, will not be enough to form a government. However, all the academics agree that there is only a slim possibility of a government being jointly formed by Pheu Thai and the Democrats, as they will need at least 376 seats to fight against the 250 senators when it comes to voting for a PM. As they say, Thai politics is not one plus one equals two and anything unexpected can happen. There is also a clear possibility of a political deadlock if people do not accept the election results or if a new government cannot be formed.
SOURCE: THE NATION

NEWSIN brief

Priyanka Gandhi starts LS poll campaign in UP

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi
Congress party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra yesterday began her party's campaign for the coming Lok Sabha elections in the key battleground state of Uttar Pradesh after offering prayers at a Hanuman temple near Sangam in Prayagraj (formerly Allahabad).

May battles to bring Brexiteers inside

AFP, London
Britain's government yesterday scrambled to convince Brexit hardliners to give in at last and back Prime Minister Theresa May's EU divorce deal, though key opponents were refusing to blink. With less than two weeks to go until a chaotic departure on March 29, May was struggling to turn the trickle of Brexiteers coming inside into a flood.

Indonesia flood death toll hits 77

AFP, Entani
Flash floods in Indonesia's eastern Papua province have killed at least 77 people, the disaster agency said yesterday as it raised the death toll from 58. More than three dozen people remain missing, while scores have been injured in the disaster, triggered by torrential rain and landslides.

BITS OF HISTORY (MARCH 18)

1940: The German and Italian leaders Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini met at the Brenner Pass in the Alps and agreed that Italy should enter World War Two within months alongside Nazi Germany.
1965: Soviet cosmonaut Alexei Leonov made the first space walk.
2011: Bahrain tears down Pearl Square statue in Manama.