

Pak PM trolled after he quotes Tagore as Gibran

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday was trolled after he posted a quote by Rabindranath Tagore on his official Twitter account, but attributed it to Lebanese writer and poet Kahlil Gibran. Khan posted the inspirational quote on Twitter that read, "I slept and I dreamed that life is all joy. I woke and I saw that life is all service. I served and I saw that service is joy." He captioned the quote saying, "Those who discover and get to understand the wisdom of Gibran's words, cited below, get to live a life of contentment." The original quote, "I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and beheld, service was joy," however, is by Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore.

Turkey sentences 151 to life in 'coup ringleaders' trial

A Turkish court yesterday gave life sentences to 151 people including senior military officers in one of the biggest trials over the 2016 failed bid to overthrow President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Among them is US-based Muslim preacher Fethullah Gulen, who Turkey accuses of ordering the attempted putsch which left hundreds dead and thousands more injured in July 2016. Former air force chief Akin Ozturk were among the 151. One suspect, Lieutenant Colonel Levent Turkkan, who was the aide to then Chief of Staff General Hulusi Akar, was given one aggravated life sentence, Anadolu reported.

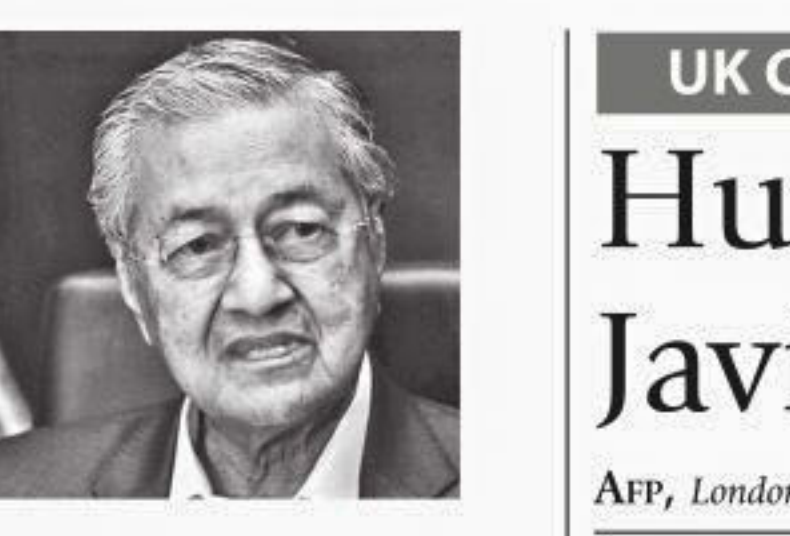
25 dead as Indian bus plunges into gorge

At least 25 passengers were killed and 35 injured Thursday after their vehicle fell in a gorge in a mountainous region of India's northern Himachal Pradesh state, officials said. The private bus was filled with more than 60 people, some of them sitting on the roof, when it plunged into a 150-metre (500-foot) deep gorge in Kullu district of the Himalayan state. Kullu police chief Shalini Agnihotri told AFP that authorities launched a rescue operation immediately and moved the injured to hospitals. She said the toll could rise further. In India an average of 150,000 people die in road accidents each year.



Syria regime bombardment kills 15 civilians: monitor

Regime bombardment killed 15 civilians including seven children and three rescue workers in jihadist-run north-west Idlib province yesterday, as fighting killed dozens on the edges of the anti-government bastion. Yesterday, a regime air strike targeted an ambulance in the town of Maaret al-Numan, killing three rescue workers inside, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. A woman also died in the ambulance while she was being transported for treatment. The Syrian government and Russia have upheld their bombardment of the region since late April, killing more than 440 civilians, according to the Observatory. SOURCE: AFP



'Ridiculous' Mahathir criticises decision to charge 3 Russians over MH17

Malaysia's prime minister yesterday criticised the "ridiculous" decision to charge three Russians in connection with the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17. International investigators charged the men on Wednesday, the first people to face justice over the tragedy five years ago in which 298 people were killed. The Boeing 777 was travelling between Amsterdam and Kuala Lumpur when it was hit by a missile over part of eastern Ukraine held by pro-Russian rebels. "We are very unhappy because from the very beginning it became a political issue on how to accuse Russia of wrong-doing," Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad told reporters in administrative capital Putrajaya. "It is a ridiculous thing," he added. "As far as we are concerned we want proof of guilt. So far there is no proof. Only hearsay." Moscow has slammed the "absolutely unfounded accusations", while the US urged Russia to ensure that those charged with murder face justice. The trial of the men with military and intelligence links will start in the Netherlands in March next year, although they are likely to be tried in absentia as neither Russia nor Ukraine extradites their nationals.

US-N KOREA TENSIONS

World hopes talks can succeed

Xi tells N Korea's Kim ahead of meeting with Trump in Japan next week

REUTERS, Beijing

The world hopes North Korea and the United States can talk to each other and for those talks to be successful, Chinese President Xi Jinping told North Korean leader Kim Jong Un yesterday, praising Pyongyang's efforts towards denuclearisation. Xi is visiting China's reclusive neighbour North Korea, seeking to bolster a long-time ally hit by UN sanctions over its nuclear and missile programmes, a week before Xi and US President Donald Trump meet amid a bitter trade dispute.



Xi, whose entourage includes the head of China's state economic planner, will be in North Korea for two days, the first Chinese leader to visit in 14 years, and could bring fresh support measures for its floundering, sanctions-bound economy. Kim Jong Un and his wife, Ri Sol Ju, greeted Xi at the airport, Chinese state TV said. Kim's sister, Kim Yo Jong, and officials who played prominent roles in recent nuclear talks with the United States were also on hand. Xi was driven through Pyongyang in a convertible car, standing with

Kim at his side, and greeted warmly by massed, cheering crowds on his way to the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun, a complex that serves as the mausoleum for North Korea's founder, Kim Il Sung, the report said. Xi told Kim he had come to consolidate a traditional friendship and to promote the political process for a resolution of the Korean peninsula issue, it added. Xi "positively appraised" North

Korea's efforts to safeguard peace and stability on the peninsula and promote denuclearisation, state television said. "The situation on the Korean peninsula concerns regional peace and stability," the report paraphrased Xi as telling Kim at their formal meeting. "The international community hopes that North Korea and the United States can talk and for the talks to get results." Since a failed summit between US President Donald Trump and Kim in

Hanoi earlier this year, Pyongyang has resumed some weapons tests and warned of "truly undesired consequences" if the United States is not more flexible. China is willing to provide what help it can to resolve North Korea's reasonable security and development concerns, Xi said. Kim told Xi that in the last year or so North Korea had taken many positive steps to avoid tensions. "But these didn't get a positive response from the relevant side. This is not something North Korea wished to see," Chinese television cited Kim as saying. "North Korea is willing to exercise patience, and at the same time hopes the relevant side can meet North Korea halfway, seek a solution that accords with both sides' reasonable concerns, and promote results for the talks process of the peninsula issue." China is the North's only major ally and the visit comes amid renewed tension on the Korean peninsula as the United States seeks to persuade Pyongyang to give up its nuclear weapons, which it pursued for years in defiance of UN Security Council resolutions.

Saudis can do more

Says US after UN probe report on Khashoggi murder, stops short of blaming crown prince

AGENCIES

A US official said Wednesday that Saudi Arabia should do more to ensure accountability over the death of dissident writer Jamal Khashoggi but stopped short of blaming the crown prince after a UN probe linked him to the killing. Brian Hook, who is in charge of pushing President Donald Trump's hawkish line on Iran, was asked about US support of Tehran's regional rival Saudi Arabia as he testified before Congress.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo "has made it very clear that we are determined to hold every single person materially responsible accountable," Hook said. "The Saudi prosecutor has taken important steps toward accountability for the tragic killing of Jamal Khashoggi but more needs to be done," Hook said. The UN special rapporteur on

extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Agnes Callamard, earlier Wednesday said there was "credible evidence" that tied the powerful Crown Prince Salman to the killing. Meanwhile, British government said yesterday it would suspend issuing new Saudi licenses for the sale of arms that might be used in the Gulf kingdom's bombing campaign in Yemen. The US Senate was set to vote on yesterday on legislation seeking to block Trump's plan to complete \$8 billion in arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, lawmakers said, making clear they want a harder line against what they see as human rights abuses by the two countries, reported Reuters. Trump declared an emergency tied to threats from Iran in order to go ahead with the military sales in defiance of congressional objections.



Rahul makes clear he'll quit as Congress chief

NDTV ONLINE

Congress's Rahul Gandhi, who decided to step down from the position of the party chief after the abysmal performance in the Lok Sabha election, made it clear today that he is sticking to his resolve and would not be involved in the process of the selection of the new party chief. Underscoring that there has to be "accountability in the system", he told NDTV, "I am not going to get involved in that process, otherwise it will complicate things and the party has to decide".

A dynastic control combined with a lack of accountability has been the critics' big grouse against the Congress, which became loud after the party's rout in the national election. For the second time in a row, the party got decimated, getting only 52 seats - a marginal rise over its score of 44 in the 2014 election. Days after the results were declared, Rahul Gandhi took "100 per cent" responsibility for the party's failure and told the 52-member Congress Working Committee that he would like to exit as its top boss. But the Congress refused to accept Gandhi's decision and over the last weeks, has stuck to the template. The party's senior leaders have indicated that only members of the Gandhi family can hold the Congress together. But Gandhi has negated that option too, declaring that his mother or sister Priyanka Gandhi cannot be given the responsibility. Gandhi, however, has assured that he would remain in the Congress and work for the party.



UK CONSERVATIVE LEADERSHIP RACE

Hunt, Gove survive, Javid voted out

AFP, London

Two cabinet ministers were left fighting it out yesterday to join Boris Johnson in the run-off vote to become Britain's next leader, amid fresh warnings of the risk of a "no deal" Brexit. Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt and Environment Secretary Michael Gove are vying to compete against frontrunner Johnson in a ballot of members of the governing Conservative Party next month. All three contenders have promised to take Britain out of the European Union as quickly as possible, with the current exit date set for October 31. All have refused to rule out leaving without a deal on future arrangements with Brussels, although Hunt and Gove say they might delay Brexit for a short time if a deal was close. The race to succeed Prime Minister Theresa May began with 10 candidates, but Conservative MPs have whittled these down in a series of secret ballots. In the fourth round of voting yesterday morning, interior minister Sajid Javid was knocked out. Johnson cemented his lead by winning the support of 157 Tory MPs. There are 313 in total, but two ballots were spoiled. A fifth and final round of voting will take place on Thursday afternoon, after which Johnson and either Hunt or Gove turn their sights on wooing 160,000 Conservative party members.



Yoga enthusiasts practice yoga in the mountain village of Qiqi in Zhangjiajie, China's central Hunan Province, yesterday ahead of International Yoga day today. PHOTO: AFP

Himalayan glaciers melting alarmingly

Says major study; Greenland ice sheet may completely melt within next millennium

AFP, Washington

Himalayan glaciers are melting twice as fast now as they were before the turn of the century, according to a new study that relied on recently declassified Cold War-era satellite imagery. The study, which appeared in Science Advances on Wednesday, is the latest indication that climate change is eating the Himalayan glaciers, threatening water supplies for hundreds of millions of people downstream across South Asia. "This is the clearest picture yet of how fast Himalayan glaciers are melting over this time interval, and why," said lead author Joshua Maurer, a doctoral candidate at Columbia University in New York. Scientists combed 40 years of satellite observations spanning 2,000 kilometers (1,243 miles) across India, China, Nepal and Bhutan, and found that the glaciers have been losing the equivalent of a foot-and-a-half (45 centimeters) of ice each year since 2000. Many of the 20th-century observations came from recently declassified US spy



satellite imagery. The figure is double the amount of melting that took place from 1975 to 2000. Past research has found similar trends, but the latest work is bigger in its geographic and historic scope. It concluded that rising temperatures are the biggest factor. Though temperatures vary from place to place, average temperatures were one

degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) higher between 2000 to 2016 than they were between 1975 and 2000. Other factors the researchers blamed were changes in rainfall, with reductions tending to reduce ice cover, and the burning of fossil fuels which lead to soot that lands on snowy glacier surfaces, absorbing sunlight and hastening melting. "It shows how endangered (the Himalayas) are if climate change continues at the same pace in the coming decades," said Etienne Berthier, a glaciologist at France's Laboratory for Studies in Geophysics and Spatial Oceanography, who was not involved in the study. A separate study also published Wednesday found Greenland's ice sheet may have completely melted within the next millennium if greenhouse gas emissions continue at their current rate. The Greenland ice sheet holds the equivalent of seven meters (yards) of sea level. "If we continue as usual, Greenland will melt," said lead author Andy Aschwanden, a research associate professor at the University of Alaska Fairbanks' Geophysical Institute. It is the most recent warning about warming in the world's coldest regions. The study, which used data from NASA's Operation IceBridge airborne campaign and was published in Science Advances, is the latest to suggest a much greater rate of melt than was estimated by older models.

HK protesters call for new demo

AFP, Hong Kong

Hong Kong opposition groups yesterday called for another major demonstration after the pro-Beijing government did not respond to demands of protesters who have shaken the city with massive rallies. Millions have marched this month to oppose a proposed law that would have allowed extraditions to the Chinese mainland. Under-fire chief executive Carrie Lam has apologised and suspended the controversial bill, but that has failed to quell the opposition, with protesters demanding she step down and completely withdraw the legislation.

Three killed as fresh violence rocks Kolkata

AFP, Kolkata

Armed mobs rampaged through a town in India's West Bengal state yesterday, hurling homemade bombs and firing weapons in new political clashes that left at least three people dead, police said. Police ordered a curfew in Barrackpore, near the state capital Kolkata, amid accusations by one political leader that the three were killed by police firing.

China's ex-Interpol chief pleads guilty to bribery

AFP, Beijing

Former Interpol chief Meng Hongwei yesterday pleaded guilty at a trial in China to accepting \$2.1 million in bribes -- a remarkable fall from grace for the former vice minister of public security. The Tianjin No.1 Intermediate Court said Meng "showed repentance" during the hearing, which was the culmination of a dramatic case that shook the international police organisation. The verdict will be announced at a "select date or time", said court in northern China in a statement, without specifying further.

EASTER TERROR ATTACKS

Sri Lanka to charge police for 'lapses'

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lankan authorities yesterday ordered the first criminal charges against security personnel for "lapses" before the Easter Sunday suicide bombings that killed 258 people. Nine police officers will face "criminal investigations" for failing to act on warnings ahead of the April 21 bombings on three churches and three hotels carried out by Islamic State-backed jihadists. In a notice ordering the probe, Attorney General Dappula de Livera said an inquiry commission appointed by President Maithripala Sirisena had found the officers liable for criminal negligence. All nine were senior officers in the districts where the attacks were carried out. Authorities have admitted that warnings sent by neighbouring India of an impending attack by a local group, the National Thowheeth Jama'ath (NTJ) were ignored. Forty-five foreign nationals were among the dead and 500 people were injured in the attacks. The tourist hotspot has been under a state of emergency since. Sri Lanka's State Intelligence Service (SIS) has been criticised for failing to act on the Indian warnings. Sirisena, who is also defence minister and law and order minister, has also faced allegations that he could have prevented the attacks. The president has objected to a parliamentary investigation into the attacks and ordered police not to cooperate. But the hearings have gone ahead and police have testified before legislators.