

**NEWS IN**  
*brief*

**Trump to join Modi in mass Houston rally**

President Donald Trump will join Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a massive gathering of Indian-Americans in Houston, the White House said Sunday, in a symbolic show of the bond between the two leaders and countries. The September 22 rally -- dubbed, with a touch of Texan twang, "Howdy, Modi!" -- will mark a rare joint appearance between a US president and a foreign leader before an ethnic community, and be the pair's third meeting this year.

**Russia deploys S-400 missiles in Arctic**

Russia has placed S-400 missile defence systems at the Novaya Zemlya archipelago as Moscow seeks to increase its military presence in the Arctic, the defence ministry said yesterday. The surface to air-missile regiment of the Northern Fleet's air defence forces based on the archipelago's southern Yuzhny Island has been fully equipped with new S-400 systems, the fleet said. The regiment was earlier equipped with S-300 systems, a previous version of the missile.

**Cambodia arrests more opposition activists**

Cambodian authorities arrested six political activists over the weekend for alleged plots to rally in support of former opposition politician Sam Rainsy if he returns from exile as planned in November, police said yesterday. The latest arrests bring to 26 the number of activists for the banned opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) who have been detained this year. Critics have called Cambodia essentially a one-party state since the Supreme Court dissolved the CNRP in late 2017.



Migrants helped by rescuers arrive on the Greek island of Lesbos after crossing the Aegean Sea from Turkey, yesterday. Migration is a hot political issue in Europe, which experienced a wave of more than a million asylum-seekers in 2015, most of them from war-ravaged Syria.

**ANNEXATION OF WEST BANK**

**OIC rejects Israeli PM's pledge**

AFP, Riyadh

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on Sunday expressed its "total rejection" of the Israeli prime minister's pre-election pledge to annex part of the West Bank, Saudi state media said.

Battling to win re-election in polls today, Benjamin Netanyahu made a deeply controversial promise last week to annex the strategic Jordan Valley, which accounts for around a third of the occupied West Bank.

He also repeated his intention to annex Israeli settlements in the wider West Bank, but in coordination with US President Donald Trump.

After an emergency foreign ministers' meeting in the Red Sea city of Jeddah, the OIC expressed "its total rejection and strong condemnation of the Israeli Prime Minister's declaration".

"This dangerous declaration... deliberately undermines international efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace... and pushes the whole region towards further violence and instability," the 57-member pan-Islamic body added in a statement carried by Saudi state media.

The emergency meeting of OIC foreign ministers was called at the request of Saudi Arabia, which has unilaterally condemned Netanyahu's pledge as a "dangerous escalation".

The multilateral statement comes as Netanyahu's government on Sunday approved a new settlement in the occupied West Bank.

The Israeli cabinet agreed to turn the wildcat settlement of Mevoot Yericho in the Jordan Valley into an official settlement, the premier's office said.

**Still no viable proposals**

*Says EU after talks with UK PM on Brexit deal*

AFP, Brussels

Britain has still not proposed any workable alternatives to the Northern Ireland "backstop" provisions of its Brexit withdrawal agreement, the EU said yesterday after talks between bloc chief Jean-Claude Juncker and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

The first face-to-face encounter between Johnson and European Commission president Juncker failed to yield any major breakthrough, although Downing Street insisted it had been a "constructive meeting".

Johnson says Britain will not agree to a divorce deal that includes the backstop, a provision which temporarily keeps the UK in the EU customs union to keep the Irish border open, and will not delay Brexit beyond October 31, even if it means leaving with no deal.

Juncker's office said he used the lunch meeting in Luxembourg to reiterate the EU view that it is Britain's responsibility to come up with a workable alternative to the backstop, which was agreed by Johnson's predecessor Theresa May but rejected by MPs.

"President Juncker recalled that it is the UK's responsibility to come forward with legally operational solutions that are compatible with the Withdrawal

Agreement," a statement from Juncker's office said.

"President Juncker underlined the Commission's continued willingness and openness to examine whether such proposals meet the objectives of the backstop. Such proposals have not yet been made."

However, Johnson said there is the good shape of a Brexit deal but it is not necessarily "in the bag".

"Yes there is a good chance of a deal, yes I can see the shape of it, everybody can see roughly what could be done," Johnson told reporters.

"This is a difficult moment, clearly we are very, very keen to do it but I don't want people to think that it is necessarily in the bag. It isn't necessarily in the bag, there will be hard work to be done."

Alongside the main meeting, EU chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier also held talks with British Brexit Minister Stephen



**Restore normalcy in J&K**

*India's top court asks Centre; Haryana CM hints at implementing NRC in the state*

AGENCIES

India's Supreme Court yesterday asked the Centre and Jammu and Kashmir authorities to see that normalcy is restored on a selective basis in the state while keeping in mind national interest.

A bench of Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and justices SA Bobde and SA Nazeer asked authorities to restore normal life in the Valley and ensure people have access to welfare facilities.

The court said the restoration will be on a selective basis keeping in mind national interests.

The court asked the Centre to make all endeavours to restore normalcy in Kashmir as soon as possible and said that as the so-called shutdown is in the Valley itself, then it can be dealt with by the Jammu and Kashmir High Court.

The court's directions came on a plea by Anuradha Bhasin, executive editor of Kashmir Times seeking removal of communication restrictions in Jammu and Kashmir.

Attorney General KK Venugopal, appearing for the Centre, told the bench

that not a single bullet has been fired and there are some localised restrictions in place, adding that restrictions have been lifted in over 88 per cent police stations in Kashmir division, reported PTI.

Meanwhile, Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Sunday announced that National Register of Citizens (NRC) will be implemented in his state on the lines of Assam.

The announcement came days after Jharkhand chief minister Raghubar Das on Tuesday last pushed for the implementation of NRC in his state, reported Hindustan Times online.

Dass said illegal Bangladeshi migrants were eating away the benefits of the state's legal Muslim residents and raised the pitch on a simmering political issue ahead of assembly elections due in Jharkhand along with Haryana and Maharashtra later this year.

"We will implement NRC in Haryana," Khattar said. He was talking to reporters in Panchkula after meeting Justice H S Bhalla (ret'd) and former Navy chief Admiral Sunil Lanba at their residences.

**SC says restoration will be on a selective basis**

**Asks J&K authorities to ensure people have access to welfare facilities**

**Hindu temple, school ransacked in Pakistan**

REUTERS, Karachi

A crowd in Pakistan ransacked a school and Hindu temple after a Hindu principal was accused of blasphemy, police said yesterday, the latest case to raise concern about the fate of religious minorities in the predominantly Muslim country.

The violence erupted in the southern province of Sindh after a student accused the Hindu principal of blasphemy in comments about the Muslim Prophet Mohammad (pbuh). The enraged crowd ransacked the school and damaged a nearby temple, a district police chief said.

The principal had been taken into protective custody and police were investigating both the alleged blasphemy and the rioters, he added.

"It seems the principal had not done anything intentionally," the district police chief, Furrugh Ali, told Reuters.

Insulting Islam's Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) carries a mandatory death penalty in Pakistan, which is about 95 per cent Muslim and has among the harshest

blasphemy laws in the world.

No executions for blasphemy have been carried out in Pakistan but enraged mobs sometimes kill people accused of it.

Rights groups say the blasphemy law is often exploited by religious hardliners as well as ordinary Pakistanis to settle scores.

The independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan condemned the weekend violence, footage of which was recorded in a video and circulated on social media. It called on authorities should take prompt action.

"The video ... is chilling: mob violence against a member of a religious minority is barbaric, unacceptable," the commission said in a post on Twitter.

Hindus make up about 1.6% of Pakistan's population of 208 million, the majority of whom are Sunni Muslims.

In January, the Supreme Court upheld the acquittal of a Christian woman who spent years on death row after being convicted of blasphemy in a case that had drawn alarm from religious and human rights advocates.

**BLASPHEMY RIOTS**



Main opposition Liberty Korea Party leader Hwang Kyo-ahn (C) has his head shaved during a protest outside the presidential Blue House in Seoul yesterday. South Korea's main opposition party leader shaved his head to protest a recent controversial appointment of the new justice minister despite allegations of corruption against his family.

**Outsider leads after decisive Tunisia presidential polls**

Political outsider Kais Saied was leading Tunisia's elections with just over a quarter of votes counted, the electoral commission said yesterday, in the country's second free presidential vote since the Arab Spring. Saied was on 19 percent, leading imprisoned media magnate Nabil Karoui, who was on 14.9 percent, and ahead of the candidate from the Islamists-inspired Ennahdha party Abdelfattah Mourou (13.1 percent), according to the electoral organ (ISE). Prime Minister Youssef Chahed, a presidential hopeful whose popularity has been tarnished by a sluggish economy and the rising cost of living, could well turn out to be the election's biggest loser.

**Australian man dies after bird attack**

A cyclist died in Australia on Sunday after being startled by a swooping magpie, a native Australian bird that gets aggressive in the spring around breeding season. The 76-year-old man was riding his bike in Nicholson Park in Wollongong, south of Sydney, when he veered off the path to avoid a swooping magpie, according to Wollongong Police. He then crashed into a fence post, was thrown to the ground, and suffered serious head injuries. The man was airlifted to Sydney's St. George Hospital and died that evening, police said. Magpie swooping season occurs each year across the country in September and October, during Australia's springtime.

**RAGING FOREST FIRES**

**Indonesia arrests nearly 200 people**

AFP, Jakarta

Indonesia has arrested nearly 200 people over vast forest fires ripping across the archipelago, police said yesterday, as toxic haze sends air quality levels plummeting and sparks flight cancellations.

Jakarta has deployed thousands of personnel to battle blazes that are turning land into charred landscapes and consuming forests in Sumatra and Borneo islands, where thousands of schools have been shut over health fears.

The fires -- usually started by illegal burning to clear land for farming -- have unleashed choking haze across Southeast Asia, triggering diplomatic tensions with Indonesia's neighbours.

Yesterday, authorities said they had arrested some 185 people suspected of being involved in activities that led to out-of-control fires sweeping the country.

"Indonesian Police will enforce the law against anyone who is proven to have carried out forest and land burning, whether it was done intentionally or through negligence," National Police spokesman Dedi Prasetyo told reporters in Jakarta.

"This is a last resort. The most important thing is prevention."

Four corporations were also being investigated, he added.

**Probe 'police abuse'**

*HK legislator urges UN rights body*

AFP, Geneva

A Hong Kong lawmaker yesterday called on the UN to launch an international investigation into a police crackdown on pro-democracy protests, voicing alarm at escalating "brutality".

"Hong Kong is on the verge of a humanitarian crisis," Tanya Chan told the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, asking it to urgently discuss the situation and to dispatch investigators to probe abuses.

Chan, the founder of Hong Kong's pro-democracy Civic Party, was earlier this year handed a suspended eight-month jail sentence over her role in creating a civil disobedience campaign known as "Occupy Central" in 2013 and the student-led Umbrella Movement that brought parts of the city to a standstill a year later.

She was invited by the non-governmental organisation UN Watch to take its allotted spot and briefly address the council after more than three months

of huge, sometimes violent rallies calling for greater democratic freedoms and police accountability.

Pointing out that she was speaking as Hong Kong yesterday entered its 100th day of protests, Chan cautioned that "there is no sign that police will exercise restraint".

"This is a result of the lack of democracy in Hong Kong, as the government is not held accountable for its endorsement of police abuse," she said, maintaining that police "call protesters cockroaches" and see violence against them as "acceptable pest control".

She urged UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet to "support our appeal for this council to convene an urgent session and to establish a mission of inquiry to ensure the human rights of the people of Hong Kong."

Bachelet has voiced measured concern over violence by all sides in Hong Kong and urged the authorities to conduct a "prompt, independent, impartial investigation" into alleged excessive force by police against protesters.



**US AIR STRIKES IN AFGHANISTAN**

**2 Taliban shadow governors killed**

REUTERS, Kabul

Afghan security forces, backed by US air strikes, killed two of the movement's shadow provincial governors on Sunday, as fighting stepped up in the wake of the collapse of talks aimed at ending the conflict, officials said.

The operations, launched on Saturday night, were aimed at foiling attacks planned by the Taliban on Afghan forces, said a senior security official in the capital Kabul, adding that clashes have escalated following the collapse of diplomatic talks between the United States and the Taliban.

The defence ministry in a statement said at least 85 Taliban fighters were killed in a joint ground and air operation in southern Paktika province on Saturday night.

The figure was rejected by the Taliban, who said seven fighters had been killed and 11 wounded while casualties among the security forces were over 20.

"The rest of the claims are baseless," the movement's spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said.

**Maduro abandons talks with false excuses: Guaido**

Venezuela's opposition said on Sunday a dialogue mediated by Norway's Foreign Ministry to try to resolve the country's political crisis had ended, six weeks after President Nicolas Maduro's government suspended participation. Maduro's representatives walked away from the table in August to protest US President Donald Trump's tightening of sanctions on the OPEC nation. "The dictatorial regime of Nicolas Maduro abandoned the negotiation process with false excuses," Guaido's office said in a statement posted on Twitter. "After more than 40 days in which they have refused to continue, we confirm that the Barbados mechanism is finished." Neither Venezuela's Information Ministry nor Norway's Foreign Ministry immediately responded to a request for comment.

