

NEWSIN
brief

500 arrested in Indonesia

AFP, Jakarta
More than 500 people were arrested after clashes in Indonesia's capital amid nationwide protests against a raft of divisive reforms -- including banning pre-marital sex and weakening the anti-graft agency -- authorities said yesterday. Since last week, at least two students have died and hundreds more have been injured as a wave of unrest swept across the Southeast Asian archipelago.

Taliban attack kills 11 Afghan cops

AFP, Balkh
At least 11 policemen were killed and over 13 captured yesterday when Taliban fighters stormed their headquarters in northern Afghanistan, officials said. A column of more than 400 Taliban fighters on motorbikes attacked Shortepa district police headquarters in Balkh province in the early hours, triggering a lengthy gunfight, provincial spokesman Munir Farhad told AFP. The attack comes days after millions of Afghans went to the polls to vote for their next president.

US air strike kills 7 IS jihadists in Libya

AFP, Washington
The US military command for Africa announced Monday it had killed seven suspected Islamic State jihadists in an air strike in southern Libya, the fourth such operation in two weeks. In a statement it said the strike was carried out in coordination with the UN-backed Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli, and brings to 43 the number of suspected IS members killed by US forces in Libya since September 19.



(From top left, clockwise) Chinese participants take part in a gala in Tiananmen Square in Beijing yesterday, to mark the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China; Police detain demonstrators in Hong Kong; DF-41 intercontinental ballistic missiles drive past Tiananmen Square during the parade; Supporters of Uighurs hold an anti-China protest in front of the Chinese consulate in Istanbul; and Indian police detain Tibetan activists in New Delhi.

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF KHASHOGGI KILLING

Son defends Saudis

AFP, Dubai
The son of murdered Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, who has denied a financial settlement with the government, spoke out in defence of the kingdom yesterday ahead of the first anniversary of the killing.
Khashoggi -- a royal family insider turned critic -- was killed and dismembered at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul on October 2, 2018, in an operation that reportedly involved 15 agents sent from Riyadh. His body was never found.
Eleven unidentified suspects have been on trial in Riyadh, with five of them facing the death penalty.
Salah Khashoggi said he had "full confidence" in the judicial system, and hit out at opponents he said were seeking to exploit the case.
The Washington Post reported on April 1 that Khashoggi's children, including Salah, had received multimillion-dollar homes and were being paid thousands of dollars per month by authorities.
Both the CIA and a UN special envoy have directly linked de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to the murder, a charge the kingdom denies. Prince Salman said in an interview with US broadcaster CBS he had "absolutely not" ordered Khashoggi's killing, although he bore responsibility as leader of his country.
Meanwhile, President Tayyip Erdogan insisted on Monday that Turkey will keep pushing for the truth behind the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, saying some of his killers appeared to be evading justice.

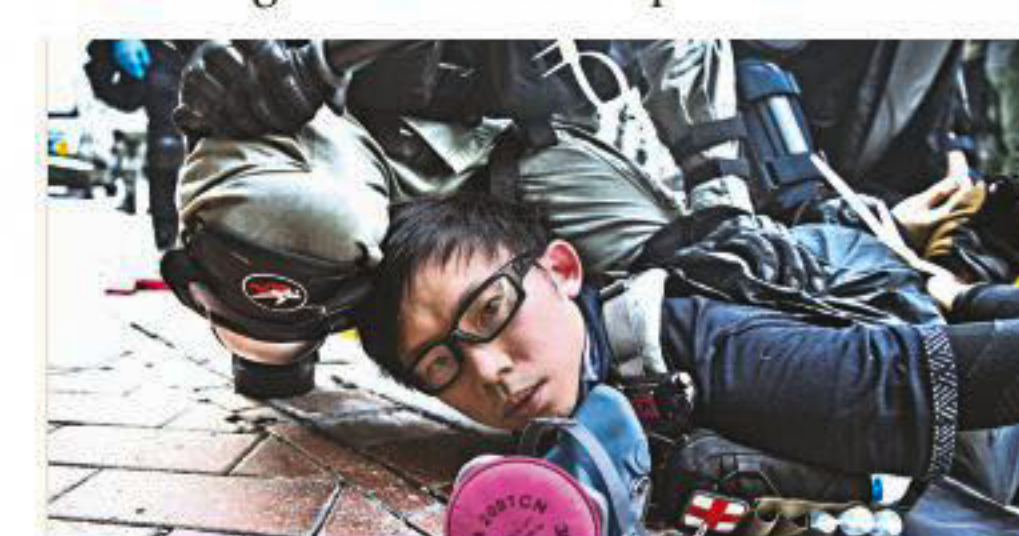
HK erupts on China's 'birthday'

Police shoot protester for the first time as restive territory marks 'Day of Grief'

AFP, HONG KONG
Hong Kong police shot a pro-democracy protester yesterday as the city was lashed by its worst unrest of the year, hours after China celebrated 70 years of Communist Party rule with a massive military parade.
It was the first such shooting in nearly four months of increasingly violent protests and threatened to strip the spotlight from China's carefully choreographed birthday party, designed to underscore its status as a global superpower.
While President Xi Jinping took salutes from some 15,000 troops in the capital, pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong threw eggs at his portrait, with tens of thousands of people defying police orders to disperse.
Running battles raged for hours across multiple locations, with some hardcore protesters hurling rocks and petrol bombs, while police responded for the most part with tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannon.
In Tsuen Wan district, a police officer unloaded his weapon at close range into a young man after his unit was attacked by protesters armed with poles and umbrellas, videos filmed by student reporters showed.

Police said the officer feared for his life when he fired the weapon, hitting an 18-year-old man. The wounded protester received first aid from officers before paramedics arrived and took him to hospital, police added.
Medical authorities said 31 people were admitted to hospital, two in a critical condition. Burning barricades sent a pall of black smoke over the city, a regional hub for some of the world's biggest banks.
Former colonial ruler Britain, who handed Hong Kong back to China in 1997, decried the use of live ammunition as "disproportionate". Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said that "it only risks inflaming the situation".
The violence cast a shadow over the lavish

parade in Beijing where tanks, new nuclear missiles and a supersonic drone were paraded as Xi and other top officials -- including Hong Kong chief executive Carrie Lam -- watched from a rostrum overlooking Tiananmen Square.
The event was meant to showcase China's journey from a poor nation broken by war to the world's second largest economy.
Xi, who wore the distinctive "Mao suit", delivered a speech invoking the "Chinese dream" of national rejuvenation -- his grand vision of restoring the country to perceived past glory.
"There is no force that can shake the foundation of this great nation," Xi said from the Tiananmen rostrum where Chairman Mao Zedong proclaimed the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949.
Helicopters flew in a "70" formation as troops goosestepped across Tiananmen Square in what state media described as the country's biggest military parade, featuring 580 pieces of armament and 160 aircraft.
The People's Liberation Army brought out its newest hardware, including a nuclear-capable intercontinental ballistic missile with range enough to reach the entire United States and a launcher for a hypersonic glider.



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UK to table Brexit plan shortly: PM

AFP, Manchester
Britain will give the EU new proposals for a Brexit deal "shortly", Prime Minister Boris Johnson said yesterday, but rejected reports it would see customs posts along the Irish border.
With 30 days to go until Britain is due to leave the European Union on October 31, Johnson is racing for an agreement to avoid yet another delay.
"We are going to make a very good offer. We will be tabling it formally very soon," Johnson told BBC.
He declined to give details but media reports said they could be proposed as early as today.
He is focusing on the most controversial element, the so-called backstop plan to keep Britain subject to EU customs rules to allow goods to flow freely between British Northern Ireland and EU member Ireland after Brexit.
Irish broadcaster RTE reported late Monday that Britain has proposed erecting "customs clearance sites" along both sides of the border but located five to ten miles away to keep the actual frontier open.
Citing a "non-paper" provisional plan put forward by London, it said goods moving from one site to another would be monitored in real time on mobile phones or tracking devices placed on trucks.
But Ireland says there cannot be a return to the border infrastructure of the past, warning it could upset the peace process in Northern Ireland.

HEAVIEST MONSOON SEASON FOR 25 YEARS

More than 1,600 die in India

REUTERS, New Delhi/Lucknow
The heaviest monsoon rains to lash India in 25 years have killed more than 1,600 people since June, government data showed yesterday, as authorities battled floods in two northern states and muddy waters swirled inside a major city.
The monsoon, which typically lasts between June and September, has already delivered 10% more rain than a 50-year average, and is expected to withdraw only after early October, more than a month later than usual.
The extended rains have wreaked havoc, with northern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar states the worst hit in the latest spell of intense downpours, killing 144 people since last Friday, two officials said.
In Patna, Bihar's riverside capital city that is home to around two million people, residents said they were wading through waist-deep water to buy essential items like food and milk.
Ranjeev Kumar, 65, a resident of Patna's Ashiyana neighbourhood, told Reuters by telephone that the entire area was stranded by the water.
"The government is not doing any rescue and the situation is very serious here," he said.
On Monday, relief workers rescued Bihar's Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Modi from his home in Patna.



Video footage showed him dressed in shorts and a t-shirt as he was brought out on a raft along with his family members.
Saket Kumar Singh, who lives in the city's Boring Road area, said he was stranded for four days, with about two feet of water inside his house.
"There was no electricity, and despite having money I was helpless," Singh, 45, said.

Data released by the federal home ministry shows that 1,673 people have died because of floods and heavy rains this year, as of Sept. 29.
Officials said that many of these fatalities were caused due to wall and building collapses, including in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, the western state that has seen 371 flood-related deaths in 2019, the highest in the country.

India FM defends right to buy Russian arms on US trip

AFP, Washington
India's foreign minister on Monday defended his country's right to buy a missile defense system from Russia despite the threat of sanctions from the United States.
On a visit to Washington, Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar said India was discussing the US concerns but declined to forecast the ultimate decision on the fate of the S-400 purchase from Russia.
"We have always maintained that what we buy -- the sourcing of military equipment -- is very much a sovereign right," he told reporters ahead of a meeting with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.
"We would not like any state to tell us what to buy or not to buy from Russia any more than we would like any state to tell us to buy or not to buy from America," he said.
"That freedom of choice is ours and we think it's in everybody's interest to recognize that," he said.
India, a Cold War ally of the Soviet Union, last year agreed to buy five S-400 systems for \$5.2

billion, and Russia has said that delivery is on track.
Under a 2017 law, the United States imposes sanctions against countries over "major" arms purchases from Russia due to Moscow's military involvement in Ukraine and Syria and alleged meddling in US elections.
Jaishankar hailed warm relations overall with the United States but underlined India's differences with Trump's hawkish stance on Iran.
US has threatened sanctions to force all countries to stop buying oil from Iran as it seeks to curb the clerical regime's influence in the Middle East.
In May, the Trump administration ended waivers for countries including India, formerly a leading customer for Iranian oil.
"We view Iran from the east, and from the east Iran has been a very stable, status quo power," Jaishankar said.
For India, "we've been repeatedly assured that the affordable and predictable access to energy will not change," he said, declining to comment further on discussions on Iran.



Hold the vodka
Russians cut drinking 40 percent under Putin

AFP, Moscow
Russians might have a reputation as a nation of hard drinkers, but a report by the World Health Organization published yesterday showed their alcohol consumption has dropped by more than 40 percent from its peak in the early 2000s.
The WHO put the decrease down to a raft of measures brought in since sport-loving President Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000, including restrictions on alcohol sales and the promotion of healthy lifestyles.
"The Russian Federation has long been considered one of the heaviest-drinking countries in the world," the report said, adding that alcohol was a major contributor to a spike in deaths in the 1990s.
"However, in recent years these trends have been reversed."
The study showed a 43 percent drop in alcohol consumption per capita from 2003 to 2016, driven by a steep decline in the consumption of bootleg booze.
The authors said this trend was a factor in increased life expectancies, which reached a historic peak in 2018, at 78 years for women and 68 years for men. In the turbulent early 1990s, male life expectancy was just 57.
Under Putin, Russia has introduced measures including a ban on shops selling any alcohol after 11:00 pm, increases in the minimum retail price of spirits and an advertising blackout.

Nepal's parliament speaker steps down after rape claim

The speaker of Nepal's parliament stepped down yesterday after a female employee of the parliament secretariat accused him of rape. Krishna Bahadur Mahara, a senior member of the ruling Nepal Communist Party said he was stepping down to allow an "impartial and independent investigation into the allegations." A former rebel leader during Nepal's decade-long Maoist insurgency, Mahara has previously served as deputy prime minister and has held several ministerial positions. The woman said that an intoxicated Mahara arrived at her rented home on Sunday night and persuaded her to drink alcohol before assaulting her. The woman also showed apparent bruises on her arms, hands and feet.

N Korea to hold nuke talks with US on Saturday

North Korea and the United States will hold working-level nuclear talks on Saturday, Pyongyang said, signalling the resumption of a dialogue process that has been effectively stalled since the collapse of a summit in February. The two sides agreed to have "preliminary contact" on October 4 and hold working-level negotiations the following day, the North's vice foreign minister Choe Son Hui said in a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency. North Korean officials were "ready" to enter the discussions, she said. There was no immediate confirmation from the American side.

Sarkozy to stand trial for illegal campaign financing

Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy lost a final court appeal yesterday against an order that he stand trial on charges of illegal financing for his 2012 election campaign. Sarkozy, who already faces a separate trial for corruption involving a judge, is accused of spending nearly double the legal limit of 22.5 million euros on his failed re-election bid. Prosecutors claim the 64-year-old Sarkozy spent nearly 43 million euros on his quest for a second term. Investigators claim that Sarkozy's campaign used fake invoices to get around the campaign spending limits. Sarkozy has rejected the charges, saying he was unaware of the fraud by executives at the public relations firm Bygmalion. He faces a year in prison and a fine of 3,750 euros if convicted.
SOURCE: AFP

