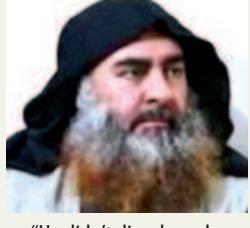


BAGHDADI'S DEATH

WORLD REACTION



"He didn't die a hero, he died a coward, crying, whimpering and screaming and bringing three kids with him to die."

President Donald Trump

"The death of Baghdadi is an important moment in our fight against terror but the battle against the evil of Daesh (Islamic State) is not yet over."

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson

"Not a big deal, You just killed your creature" (accusing the United States, its longtime foe, of creating Islamic State)

Iranian Minister Javad Azari-Jahromi

"The Russian Ministry of Defence does not have reliable information on the operation by US servicemen... on yet another 'elimination' of former IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi."

Russian Major-General Igor Konashenkov

"Baghdadi's early retirement for a terrorist, but not for his organisation. I congratulate our American allies with this operation."

French Defence Minister Florence Parly

"Turkey was proud to help the United States, our NATO ally, bring a notorious terrorist to justice... We remember today Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's civilian victims and our military heroes, who lost their lives to protect the world from Daesh (Islamic State) terrorists."

Senior aide to Turkey President, Fahrettin Altun

"I would like to congratulate President Trump on the impressive achievement that led to the assassination of the head of (Islamic State) al-Baghdadi. ... This achievement is an important milestone, but the campaign is still ahead of us."

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

SOURCE: REUTERS



LEBANON UNITES HANDS FOR CHANGE

Demonstrators form a human chain during ongoing anti-government protests in Beirut, Lebanon, yesterday. Tens of thousands of Lebanese protesters successfully formed a human chain running north-south across the entire country yesterday to symbolise newfound national unity. They joined hands from Tripoli to Tyre, a 170-kilometre chain running through the main protest hub in Beirut, as part of an unprecedented cross-sectarian mobilisation for a complete overhaul of the political system. PHOTO: AFP

Death toll mounts to 63 Students join protests as pressure on government swells

AFP, Baghdad

Iraqi students joined anti-government protests in Baghdad yesterday, ramping up the street pressure on Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi who also faced a surprise sit-in from parliament's largest bloc.

The capital and country's south have been rocked by a second wave of demonstrations since Thursday, with protesters digging in despite tear gas, curfews and violence that has left over 60 dead.

Yesterday morning, students could be seen joining demonstrations in the capital, with activists saying about a dozen schools and universities had decided to shut their doors and take part in protests en masse.

In the emblematic Tahrir Square, young girls in school uniforms with rucksacks were seen trekking through streets littered with tear gas canisters.

Hundreds of protesters had hunkered down in the square, defying heavy tear gas use overnight and pledging to "weed out" the political class.

"We're here to bring down the whole government -- to weed them all out!" one protester said, the Iraqi tricolour

wrapped around his head.

The protests are unprecedented in recent Iraqi history for their ire at the entire political class, including Abdel Mahdi, parliament speaker Mohammed Al-Halbussi and even traditionally revered religious leaders.

They have also been exceptionally violent, with 157 dead in the first set of rallies and 63 dead in the latest round.

"We don't want a single one of them. Not Halbussi, not Abdel Mahdi. We want to bring down the regime," the protester said.

Women were also seen in larger numbers, including a young nurse who said she was protesting "for the generation that's coming".

"Our generation is psychologically tired, but it's alright as long as this is for the next one," she said.

This week's protests are the sequel to six days of anti-government rallies that erupted on October 1 in outrage at corruption, unemployment and poor services.

Oil-rich Iraq is the OPEC oil cartel's second biggest producer, but one in five people live in poverty and youth unemployment stands at 25 percent, according to the World Bank.

PROTESTS IN IRAQ OVER JOBS, CORRUPTION



INSURGENCY IN RAKHINE

Hostages 'killed' in botched operation

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's army sunk several boats carrying dozens of soldiers and police officers taken hostage by rebels in the restive western Rakhine state, the Arakan Army said yesterday, adding that many had died.

The ethnic armed group abducted more than 50 people, most of them members of the security forces, a day earlier in the latest escalation of violence in the region where it has been fighting government troops for months.

The AA, which is demanding greater autonomy for Rakhine state, said troops opened fire on three vessels in the latest escalation of violence in the region where it has been fighting government troops for months.

"Many were killed as there was no cover from incoming fire," it said in a statement.

However the army refuted the allegation saying the AA "killed them before the fighting took place" with security forces.

Tens of thousands of people have been displaced across Rakhine state since clashes began in December, plunging the region, where more than 730,000 Rohingya Muslims fled a military crackdown in 2017, into fresh chaos.

The abduction on Saturday was the second carried out in recent weeks by the AA, which recruits from the mostly Buddhist local majority. Earlier this month, suspected rebels disguised as sports players boarded a bus in the state and took dozens of firefighters and civilians hostage.

The incident is likely to intensify army operations in a state scarred by ethnic and religious violence.

Rights groups have accused soldiers of committing war crimes including extrajudicial killings in their fresh campaign against the Arakan Army.

Stop plundering the Earth for financial gains: Pope

AFP, Vatican City

Pope Francis yesterday said it was time for "predators" to stop plundering the Earth for financial gain, holding up the "scarred face of the Amazon" as a warning.

The poor are "threatened by predatory models of development", the pope said at a Mass at the end of a three-week Vatican assembly, or "synod", on the Pan-Amazonian region.

"The mistakes of the past were not enough to stop the plundering of other persons and the inflicting of wounds on our brothers and sisters and on our sister earth: we have seen it in the scarred face of the Amazon region," he said.

Some 184 Catholic bishops had gathered at the Vatican with representatives of indigenous peoples, experts and nuns, to discuss a multitude of regional concerns, from the destruction of the rainforest and the global climate emergency, to land-grabbing and the exploitation of indigenous peoples.



Francis slammed those with power who look down on others: "considering them backward and of little worth, they despise their traditions, erase their history, occupy their lands, and usurp their goods".

And he admitted that, "even in the Church", there were those who scoff at the poor or silence them as inconvenient.

The pope warned that those who prey on or discard the vulnerable and weak will pay a price eventually, saying that the poor are "the gatekeepers of heaven".

"They are the ones who will open wide or not the gates of eternal life," he said.

The bishops issued a list of recommendations Saturday on the last day of the assembly, including an appeal for Francis to make damaging the environment a sin.

They also suggested married "men of proven virtue" could be allowed to join the priesthood in remote corners of the Amazon, where communities seldom have Mass due to a lack of priests.

They were bored and broke

Vietnam migrants risk lives for riches in Europe; 20 migrants, including women and children, found safe in two trucks in Belgium

AFP, Hanoi

Young, aspirational and poor Vietnamese are risking their lives to travel to Europe, taking on large debts to join well-worn trafficking routes in the hope of a better future thousands of miles from their rural homes.

The dangers of illegal crossings into Europe were laid bare this week when 31 men and eight women were found dead in a refrigerated truck in Britain.

British police initially said the victims were Chinese, but it is now feared most were from Vietnam. Three suspects arrested in Britain over the deaths of 39 people have been released on bail, police said yesterday.

Many Vietnamese migrants come from just a handful of central provinces, where smugglers prey on disaffected youth lured by the prospect of overseas work.

Bored by village life and fed up with a lack of opportunity, the allure of overseas riches is enough to tempt

many to embark on the risky trips. Many belong to Vietnam's booming social-media obsessed population of under 30s, often following relatives or friends to the UK, France and Germany -- Facebook posts from abroad and money sent home are often proof enough that the journey is worth it.

Greased by smuggling networks with

links in remote Vietnamese towns and throughout eastern Europe, migrants can pay up to \$40,000 for a ticket out of poverty, borrowing from relatives or taking huge loans.

"Smugglers are really saying that the UK is the 'El Dorado,'" Paris-based migration expert Nadia Sebttaoui told AFP.

They are often promised princely

salaries of up to £3,000 pounds (\$3,800) a month, around three times the annual income in Vietnam's poorest provinces.

But the reality is often far different.

Some end up owing thousands of dollars to smugglers and money lenders who front cash for the treacherous journeys. Saddled by huge debts, many face the risk of exploitation along the way. The migrants on the ill-fated truck found this week might have paid thousands of dollars for a spot in the refrigerated trailer.

MIGRANTS FOUND SAFE

Twenty migrants were found in good health in two separate trucks in Belgium on Saturday, according to local prosecutors.

Eleven African men, women and children -- mainly from Eritrea -- were found in a truck in the city of Saint-Trond. Meanwhile, police also found nine men hidden in a truck in Bruges in northeastern Belgium, en route to the port of Zeebrugge.



district where the unsanctioned rally was due to take place.

Officers stopped and searched numerous people, sparking confrontations as the crowds got bigger, many of them shouting "black cops" and "triads" at the police.

Tear gas, pepper spray and some rubber bullets were fired in at least three different locations as clashes broke out and crowds scattered.

Police said some of their officers were attacked with "hard objects and umbrellas".

Later in the evening police fired water cannon at protesters in Tsim Sha Tsui as they faced crowds yelling insults at them.

Hong Kong has been battered by nearly five months of huge and frequently violent pro-democracy protests which Beijing and its local leaders have taken a hard line against.

HONG KONG PRO-DEMOCRACY PROTESTS

Cops fire teargas, rubber bullets

AFP, Hong Kong

Police fired tear gas and rubber bullets yesterday at pro-democracy protesters who defied authorities to hold a rally on Hong Kong's scenic harbourfront, the latest flashpoint in months of political unrest gripping the city.

Clouds of acrid smoke wafted across streets usually packed with tourists, including outside the landmark colonial-era Peninsula Hotel, as protesters and police clashed in what has become a weekly ritual.

Many of the protesters wore masks, defying a recent emergency law banning face coverings.

But few of those involved in the early clashes had protective helmets and respirators used by more hardcore frontliners.

Tensions built in the afternoon as riot police flooded the harbourside park in Tsim Sha Tsui

Pakistan denies use of airspace to Modi

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan has again denied India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi permission to fly through its airspace due to "ongoing grave human rights violations" in Indian-administered Kashmir.

The decision came with tensions simmering between the two nuclear-armed arch rivals over the disputed Himalayan region.

It is the third time in recent weeks that Islamabad has refused to allow Indian leaders to use its airspace.

Requests by Indian President Ram Nath Kovind and Modi were turned down last month.

"Indian Prime Minister wanted to use our airspace but we denied permission in the perspective of black day being observed by Kashmiris today to condemn Indian occupation and ongoing grave human rights violations in Indian-occupied Kashmir," foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said in a statement on Saturday.

He said the Indian high commissioner (ambassador) was being informed about the decision.

Qureshi did not disclose Modi's destination but a senior Pakistani official told AFP the Indian prime minister had sought permission to use Pakistan's airspace to travel to Saudi Arabia, where he is due to attend an investment summit.

NEWS IN brief

Afghan polls results delayed again

AFP, Kabul

Preliminary results from Afghanistan's presidential elections have been delayed for nearly a month, officials announced yesterday, a lengthy postponement likely to stoke political uncertainty and allegations of fraud. Afghans went to the polls for a first-round vote on September 28, and initial results were supposed to have been released October 19. Now the results would not be released until November 14, officials said.

First woman named as Belgian PM

AFP, Brussels

Belgian Budget Minister Sophie Wilmes, 44, has been chosen as the country's new caretaker prime minister -- a first for a woman, the current premier Charles Michel said yesterday. Belgium has not had a fully functioning federal government since a coalition headed up by Michel collapsed in December 2018. He has stayed on as caretaker premier ever since.

UK's Telegraph put up for sale

AFP, London

The owners of Britain's Daily Telegraph and Sunday Telegraph have put them up for sale, a rival newspaper reported yesterday. According to The Times, the Barclay family is reviewing the ownership of all its holdings, including The Ritz hotel. Operating profits fell from £16.3 million in 2017 to £3.1 million last year, while revenues dropped from £278 million in 2017 to £271 million in 2018, according to The Times. The newspapers did not respond to requests for comment.