

'No one is safe'

India's SC expresses concern over alarming pollution levels in Delhi as the city restricts car use

AGENCIES

People are losing precious years of their lives due to pollution, India's Supreme Court said yesterday and slammed authorities for their failure to curb pollution in Delhi-NCR.

A bench of justices Arun Mishra and Deepak Gupta asked the Centre to call environmental experts, including from IIT, to the court within 30 minutes.

"Can we survive in this atmosphere? This is not the way we can survive," the bench said adding that the authorities have left the people to die.

The court said it will not tolerate this and will fix liability on the state governments.

"Delhi is choking every year and we are not able to do anything. Question is that every year this is happening," the bench said, adding, "It cannot be done in a civilised country".

It also took serious note of crop burning in Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh and said it cannot go unabated every year, reported PTI.

The top court called the pollution in Delhi-NCR as atrocious and said no one is safe even inside homes. "It is too much. No one is safe even inside their house. It is atrocious," the bench said.

New Delhi banned half the Indian capital's private cars from its roads yesterday, reported AFP.

As smog levels exceeded those of Beijing by more than three times, authorities also parked a van with an air purifier near the Taj Mahal -- the iconic 17th-century marble mausoleum 250 kilometres (150 miles) south of Delhi -- in a bid to clean the air in its surrounds.



Iranian protesters hold anti-US placards during a rally outside the former US embassy in the Iranian capital Tehran yesterday, to mark the 40th anniversary of the Iran hostage crisis. On November 4, 1979, less than nine months after the toppling of Iran's American-backed Shah, students overran the embassy complex to demand the US hand over the ousted ruler after he was admitted to a US hospital. PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN brief

Indian worker dies in Myanmar rebel ops

AFP, Yangon

An Indian construction worker died while being taken hostage with several compatriots by insurgents in Myanmar's conflict-scarred Rakhine state, rebels and the government said yesterday. The Arakan Army (AA) have changed tactics in recent weeks in their increasingly vicious battle with Myanmar troops -- taking mass hostages along rivers and roads in the large western state. But it is the first time they have captured foreign workers in the resource-rich area.

Mortar fire kills foreign medic in Syria: NGO

AFP, Qamishli

Mortar fire by pro-Ankara forces Sunday killed a Myanmar national working as a cameraman and medic for a non-governmental group in northeast Syria, the group said. Turkish troops and their Syrian proxies last month launched a cross-border attack against Kurdish fighters in northeastern Syria that has killed hundreds and caused tens of thousands to flee their homes. A ceasefire signed by Moscow and Ankara on October 22 has mostly stemmed the fighting, but sporadic clashes persist.

17 dead in Nepal bus accident

AFP, Kathmandu

At least 17 people, including seven children, died when a crowded bus swerved off the road and plunged into a river in central Nepal on Sunday, officials said. The bus skidded off the road in Sindhupalchowk district, northwest of the capital Kathmandu, and plunged 50 metres down into the Sunkosi River. Local rafters assisted the police and the army to scour the river and rescue any survivors, but some passengers are still feared missing.

World in 'colossal danger' from nuclear weapons

Warns former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev

AFP, London

Former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev says the world is in "colossal" danger from nuclear weapons held by global powers amid continued tensions since the end of the Cold War.

The last head of the Soviet Union won the 1990 Nobel Peace Prize for negotiating a historic nuclear arms reduction treaty with Ronald Reagan that US President Donald Trump pulled out of this year.

Gorbachev's decision not to send the Soviet army into East Germany when the Berlin Wall fell 30 years ago was seen as crucial to preserving peace during the Cold War.

But he remains a hate figure for many Russians for allowing the Soviet empire to collapse.

The 88-year-old told the BBC in Moscow that the world was not safe despite past

arms limitation efforts.

"While there are weapons of mass destruction, and especially nuclear ones, it is (in) colossal danger," he said in an interview aired yesterday.

"All people have to clearly state -- all people -- that nuclear weapons must be destroyed. This way, we will be saving ourselves and the planet."

He said the 20th-century rivalry between Moscow and Washington has been replaced by new challenges that put the world in a state of permanent war.

"It's a cooled-down one, but it's a war," he said with a laugh. "The atmosphere is all wrong."

Gorbachev has turned into a critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin and his strong-arm approach to domestic politics and international affairs.

Putin has massively boosted military spending and is focused on developing new nuclear arms.



Trump wades into UK politics

Tells Johnson, Farage to unite for snap polls to safeguard prospects for US-UK trade; British MPs vote on new speaker

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump on Sunday urged British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage to come together to safeguard prospects for expanded US-UK trade after Britain leaves the European Union.

Trump told reporters at the White House that both men were friends of his, but Johnson was "the right man for the time."

Farage on Sunday said he would not run for a seat in parliament in Britain's snap December 12 election, focusing instead on campaigning against Johnson's EU divorce deal. The election was called because of an impasse in parliament over Brexit, more than three years after voters decided to leave the bloc.

Asked which UK leader he supported, Trump said, "I like them both. I think Boris will get it right. They're both friends of mine. What I'd like to see is for Nigel and Boris to come together. I think that's a possibility."

Trump said Britain's exit from the EU must be structured

to facilitate continued trade between Britain and the United States.

"We're far and away the No.1 economy in the world, and if you do it a certain way we're prohibited from trading with the UK," he said. "That would be very bad for the UK, because we can do much more business (than the) European Union."

Trump first waded into Britain's election campaign last week, telling Farage in a radio interview that the leader of the left-wing opposition Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, would be "so bad" for Britain if he wins.

Meanwhile, British lawmakers were set to elect a new Speaker yesterday to take on the role of refereeing the next parliamentary instalment of the country's protracted struggle over Brexit.

The Speaker is the arbiter of procedural disputes in the House of Commons, parliament's lower chamber, and has the power to decide which challenges to the government's plans are allowed to proceed.



Police find 41 migrants alive in truck in Greece

Greek police found 41 migrants hiding in a refrigerated truck at a motorway in northern Greece yesterday, police officials said. The migrants, most of them Afghans, were not injured, one of the officials said, adding that the refrigeration system had not been turned on. Police stopped the truck on a highway near the northern Greek city of Xanthi for a regular check. They arrested the driver and took him and the migrants to a nearby police station for identification. Meanwhile, Vietnam has arrested eight more suspects in connection with the deaths of 39 people found in a truck in Britain who are believed to be Vietnamese.

Ethiopian PM Abiy defends response to ethnic clashes



Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on Sunday pushed back against portrayals of his government as weak and timid in the face of recent unrest that left more than 80 people dead. Protests against Abiy, this year's Nobel Peace Prize laureate, erupted in Addis Ababa and in Ethiopia's Oromia region on October 23 after a high-profile activist accused security forces of trying to orchestrate an attack against him -- a claim police denied. The instability quickly devolved into ethnic and religious clashes in multiple locations in Oromia. Abiy waited several days to issue a written statement about the violence, and he has been criticised for his slow public response.

US white supremacist arrested in Norway

Norwegian authorities have arrested a high-profile American white supremacist, hours before he was due to give a speech at a far-right conference in Oslo on Saturday. The detained American, Greg Johnson, is editor-in-chief of the white nationalist Counter-Currents Publishing group. He had been scheduled to speak at the Scandza Forum, a network known for its anti-Semitic and racist views. Norway's intelligence service considered Johnson "to be a threat, not because of what he could do but because of his hate speech and his previously expressed support for Anders Breivik," spokesman Martin Bernsen told CNN.

SOURCE: CNN, AFP



Journalists wearing protective press helmets with Chinese characters that collectively read "Investigate Police Brutality Stop Police Lies" appear in a press conference room at the police headquarters in Hong Kong yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Iraq forces fire on protesters after 4 killed in Karbala

AFP, Baghdad

Iraqi security forces yesterday fired live rounds at anti-government protesters in Baghdad, hours after four demonstrators were shot dead outside the Iranian consulate in the holy city of Karbala.

It was the latest bloodshed in a wave of ongoing protests, road blocks and a campaign of civil disobedience waged by protesters accusing the Iraqi government of rampant corruption and clientelism.

About 12 people were wounded in Baghdad, medical and security sources said, when security forces opened fire on protesters massing near the state television headquarters, according to witnesses.

It was the first time live ammunition was fired at demonstrators in Baghdad since protests resumed on October 24, following a period in which riot police had switched to use tear gas amid accusations of "excessive force".

Some 270 people have lost their lives since the anti-government rallies broke out on October 1, according to an AFP count,

but officials have stopped providing precise casualty numbers.

Overnight, a crowd of protesters had gathered in Karbala around the consulate of neighbouring Iran, which they accuse of propping up the government they are trying to overthrow.

They scaled the blast walls and aimed fireworks at the building and, as the crowd grew, heavy gunfire and volleys of tear gas rang out.

"They're not firing up in the air. They intend to kill, not disperse," said one young protester wearing a medical mask about Iraqi forces guarding the mission.

The forensic medicine department later confirmed four protesters died after being shot.

"My son went out to protest with the rest of the young Iraqi men and got shot once in the shoulder and a second time in the head. He was 20," said Wissam Shaker.

Another relative of a casualty, who declined to give his name, said the protesters had been unarmed.

Leaders snub US meeting after Trump skips Asean

AFP, Bangkok

Several Southeast Asian leaders snubbed a meeting with US officials yesterday after President Donald Trump decided not to attend a regional summit in Bangkok.

Just three leaders from the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) showed up to the session, along with a host of foreign ministers.

Trump has been accused of turning his back on Asian allies for pulling out of a major trade pact, as fellow superpower China pursues its own deals and investment projects in the region.

Washington did not send top officials to the weekend Asean summit, instead dispatching commerce secretary Wilbur Ross and national security advisor Robert O'Brien.

Yesterday's address from O'Brien stood in contrast to earlier Asean meetings, which had all been attended by most heads of state.

"It's not appropriate for Asean to send leaders when the US representation is not on parity," one diplomat in Bangkok told AFP.

Another diplomat said: "It's not a

boycott, it's just that other leaders have other meetings to attend to."

In lieu of Trump's physical presence, O'Brien read a letter from the president inviting "the leaders of Asean to join me in the United States for a special summit" in the first three months of next year.

In attendance was the prime minister of Thailand, which is hosting the summit, along with the leaders of Laos and Vietnam, next year's Asean chair.

The summit, which closed yesterday, has been peppered with statements from leaders rallying against protectionism amid fears of dragging global growth made worse by the US-China trade war.

Trump, who attended the 2017 Asean meeting in Singapore -- Vice President Mike Pence went to the one in Manila last year -- could not come this year because he was busy with campaign events back home, a senior White House official said.

China's premier and the leaders of India, South Korea and Japan all made an appearance at meetings yesterday, although none of them was expected at the US-Asean summit.

One killed, 17 injured

Half of mobile phones still remain cut off in the restive region

AFP, Srinagar

At least one person was killed and 17 wounded yesterday in a grenade blast at a crowded market in Indian-administered Kashmir's main city Srinagar, police and doctors said.

Kashmir has been on a knife-edge since August 5 when the Indian government moved to strip the region of its autonomy, imposed a lockdown, cut telecommunications and detained thousands.

No one claimed yesterday's blast but authorities have in the past accused militants backed by Pakistan of intimidating people into resisting Indian attempts to return life to normal.

Doctors at the main hospital told AFP that the deceased was a resident of northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh.

"Two people are critical," a doctor said on condition of anonymity. Srinagar police chief Haseeb Mughal told AFP

that 18 people were injured out of whom one died at the hospital.

Kashmir is divided between India and its arch-foe Pakistan, and both claim it in full.

Militants seeking independence or a merger with Pakistan have waged an armed rebellion against New Delhi since 1989.

Around half of mobile phones remain cut off, as does the internet, while hundreds of local political leaders are still in detention, mostly without charge.

Markets, schools and public areas remain closed with government forces still patrolling the streets, with periodic security lockdowns imposed on many parts of the region.

The UN High Commission for Human Rights in Geneva said last Tuesday that it was "extremely concerned" at the situation.

"We urge the Indian authorities to unlock the situation and fully restore the rights that are currently being denied," it said.

GRENAD BLAST IN J&K

