

KILLING OF 2 JOURNALISTS Indonesian palm oil executive held

AFP, Jakarta

An Indonesian palm oil executive has been arrested for allegedly ordering the killing two activist journalists who were mediating a land dispute between his company and local residents, police said Saturday. Maraden Sianipar's body was found last week in a ditch near a palm plantation in Labuhan Batu in North Sumatra province. Police found the remains of his colleague, Maratua Siregar, in the same area a day later. Both had been stabbed multiple times. On Saturday, North Sumatra authorities said they had arrested businessman Wibharry Padmoasmolo for allegedly masterminding the plot by paying nearing \$3,000 to four men to commit the killings. Padmoasmolo owns a firm that produces palm oil -- a widely used vegetable oil found in everything from soap to chocolate -- which was in a dispute with locals that the two victims were advocating for, police said. The killings were aimed at stopping the pair's involvement, according to authorities, who added that Padmoasmolo has denied owning the firm under questioning. In all, five people have been arrested in connection with the murder plot and police said they're still searching for several more suspects still at large. "We are looking for the three, while the five other suspects have been detained for further questioning," said North Sumatra police chief Agus Andrianto. Victims Sianipar and Maratua worked together for a local online news portal before going freelance in 2017. A friend of Siregar said they had recently become known for their activism in land disputes -- a common source of conflict across the resource-rich Southeast Asian archipelago. The friend said Siregar was active in an organisation that advocated for residents in the dispute. Many cases of violence against journalists in Indonesia go unsolved, according to the Independent Journalists Alliance, which has reported at least two dozen cases this year alone.

Passenger
FROM PAGE 16
his luggage after he disembarked from a Turkish Airlines flight around 5:30am, he said. Later, the arrestee was handed over to police, Sajjad added.

JU student
FROM PAGE 16
International Mother Language Institute in Dhaka. "How can we say that the VC has misappropriated money whereas not a single penny was released for the project?" Mohibul questioned. Responding to his remarks, Khandakar Hasan Mahmud, one of the protesting teachers, told The Daily Star, "It is not right that there is no scope of corruption if the money is not released." Meanwhile defying the ongoing ban, around hundred protesting students yesterday brought out a procession on the campus demanding removal of JU VC around 4:30pm. They also marched towards the university's main entrance and took position in front of the gate for some minutes.

FRESH PROTEST PROGRAMME DECLARED
Meanwhile, the protesters yesterday declared a fresh protest programme at a press conference held at the university's New Arts building. They halted the protest for the next two days considering the adverse weather conditions across the country. Fresh programmes will begin on November 12.

Snow crab sells
FROM PAGE 16
"I know it's extreme. But it's the custom," Hamashita told CNN. "But I am sure the taste of the crab matches the price." This year's snow crab hunting season began on Wednesday, November 6, with the first auction -- dubbed the "festive quotation market" -- taking place the following day.

While it's typical for prices to start high on opening day -- auction goers believe it's auspicious to buy the first and best catch of the season -- Hamashita said he expected the winning bid to be closer to 3 million yen. According to the organizers, auction attendees were surprised by the price as well, with many shouting "banzai" (an auspicious cheer meaning "long life") and applauding. Snow crab, a highly-sought-after delicacy in Japan, is found in the waters off Tottori prefecture, on Japan's main island of Honshu, between Osaka and Hiroshima. Called zuwaigani in Japanese, snow crabs are traditionally harvested during colder months. The "five shining star" nickname comes from the crab's shape, but also its high quality: long legs, fat and solid meat filling and rich creamy innards.



Riot police chase a demonstrator as clashes erupted following a protest against the government of Chilean President Sebastian Pinera in Santiago, on Friday.

PHOTO:
AFP

Ukraine foes start troop withdrawal

AFP, Bogdanivka

The Ukrainian army and Moscow-backed separatists yesterday launched the last phase of a troop pullback ahead of a high-stakes summit with Russia. The long-awaited withdrawal of troops in the conflict-riven Donetsk and Lugansk regions is a precondition for the first face-to-face talks between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky. The Paris summit, whose date has yet to be confirmed, will be mediated by the leaders of France and Germany. "The disengagement of troops and weaponry has begun" between the villages of Petrivske in the separatist-controlled zone and Bogdanivka in the Kiev-controlled territory in the Donetsk region, said a senior Ukrainian army representative, Bogdan Bondar. Donetsk separatists also said they started pulling out fighters. OSCE monitors confirmed the start of the withdrawal added that they "would continue to monitor and verify the disengagement process." The warring sides signalled their intention to withdraw by firing flares. An AFP correspondent saw three infantry fighting vehicles, two military trucks and two dozen Ukrainian soldiers leaving their positions. Bondar said the withdrawal would be completed in three days, followed by mine clearance and other activities which will last 25 days. The warring sides held a similar pullback in the Lugansk region in

October. Since coming to power in May, Ukraine's 41-year-old comedian-turned-president has sought to establish dialogue with Russian strongman Putin and revive a peace process to end a five-year-old separatist conflict that has claimed some 13,000 lives. "The Normandy format aims to renew dialogue, which can bring us closer to the complete end of the war," Zelensky said this week, referring to the four-way talks. But the summit has been repeatedly postponed for a number of reasons, including the failure of earlier attempts to disengage forces. The withdrawal of troops would be the "final precondition" for organising the four-way summit, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Vadym Prystaiko said this week. He has expressed hope that the meeting, the first at such a high level since 2016, could take place in Paris in November. But many political observers remain sceptical, saying that the Kremlin could come up with yet more conditions. "The chances of holding a summit have grown," Kiev-based analyst Volodymyr Fesenko told AFP. However he noted that Russia also wanted experts to agree in advance on the wording of a document that will be adopted as a result of the Normandy talks. "There are a number of disputed positions between Ukraine and Russia which will be hard to agree on," Fesenko said.

Trump calls upon pro-Democratic black vote to switch to his camp

AFP, Atlanta

President Donald Trump on Friday sought to crack Democrats' solid hold on black voters, telling a gathering of African-Americans in Atlanta that the left has taken them for granted. Trump hammered home his platform of fighting illegal immigration and using trade wars to rebuild the manufacturing base, saying that this especially benefits black communities. He touted rock bottom unemployment of 3.2 percent across the country -- even if it remains higher for blacks at 5.4 percent -- and appealed to the "vital role of African-American churches." "For decades, the Democrats have taken African-American voters totally for granted," he said in Georgia's historic state capital. "They're nice to you just before the election and then they forget about you," he said. "They get your vote and they say 'bye bye.'" The launch of a "Black Voices for Trump Coalition" aimed to build on the president's bid to reverse decades of hostility from African-Americans to his Republican party. The reality is that Trump is overwhelmingly opposed by black voters. While they comprise less than 14 percent of the overall population, their fierce loyalty to the Democratic party makes them a potent force in presidential elections. In his 2016 triumph, Trump won only eight percent of the black

vote, compared to 88 percent for his Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton. And deepening that traditional Democratic-Republican split is fallout from Trump's repeated controversies on racial issues. For years, he brazenly promoted the hoax conspiracy theory that then president Barack Obama, the first African-American to win the White House, was not born on US soil and therefore was illegitimate. Early in his presidency, he caused uproar when he appeared to fail to condemn a march by white supremacists in Charlottesville, Virginia, saying there were "fine people on both sides." More recently, he attacked a revered black congressman, the late Elijah Cummings, by describing his heavily African-American city of Baltimore as "rat and rodent infested." A Quinnipiac University poll in July found that 80 percent of African-Americans think Trump is racist. "Black Americans have never had a better champion than President Trump," said Katrina Pierson, a Trump 2020 reelection campaign advisor, predicting that the new "black voices" coalition would help him to a second term. As part of the charm offensive, Trump announced Friday on Twitter that he would be hosting the winners of a pro-Trump talent show dubbed #MAGACHALLENGE. Showcased in the tweet: a right-wing black rapper.

Thousands gather for 'martyrs' vigil

FROM PAGE 16

Police estimated 7,500 people attended yesterday's vigil. "Tonight we are not only here to mourn for him but to show the government, the Chinese Communist Party and the world that the things that have happened in the last six months have not been forgotten," said Tom, 26, a government worker who asked that only his first name be used. Chow Tsz-lok, 22, a student at Hong Kong's University of Science and Technology (UST), fell on Monday as protesters were being dispersed by police. Rallies have often erupted into clashes between police and protesters, creating the worst political crisis in the territory for decades, although yesterday's vigil that drew students, older people and a few children was

quiet in the early evening. Police said they had fired one round of live ammunition on Friday as a warning to what they described as "a large group of rioters armed with offensive weapons" who threw bricks at officers trying to clear street barricades in the Kowloon area. "The lives of the officers were under serious threat," police said in the statement, released yesterday. Students and young people have been at the forefront of the hundreds of thousands who have taken to the streets to seek greater democracy, among other demands, and rally against perceived Chinese meddling in the Asian financial hub. China denies interfering in Hong Kong and has blamed Western countries for stirring up trouble. Under China's "one country, two systems" formula, Hong Kong has

retained freedoms from the colonial era not enjoyed on the mainland, including an independent judiciary and the right to protest. Seven Hong Kong pro-democracy lawmakers had been detained or faced arrest as of Saturday and are due to appear in court on Monday on charges of obstructing a May meeting of the local assembly, according to police and several of the lawmakers. "We believe that the government together with the police, as well as the pro-establishment camp, they are trying to escalate the anger of Hong Kong people in order to cancel or even to postpone the upcoming district council election," Tanya Chan, a pro-democracy lawmaker, said at a press briefing, referring to upcoming elections on November 24. One of the arrested lawmakers, Gary Fan, said the detentions were the

result of "political prosecutions and judicial crackdowns" by Hong Kong chief executive Carrie Lam. Protesters have called for a general strike on Monday and for people to block public transport, although when such calls have been made in the past they have come to nothing. The death of the student is likely to fuel anger against the police, who protesters accuse of using excessive force. Since June, protesters have thrown petrol bombs and vandalised banks, stores and metro stations. Police have fired rubber bullets, tear gas, water cannon and, in some cases, live rounds. Last weekend, anti-government protesters crowded a shopping mall in running clashes with police that saw a man slash people with a knife and bite off part of the ear of a politician.

Australia bushfires leave three dead, at least 150 homes lost

AFP, Bobin

Catastrophic bushfires in eastern Australia have killed at least three people and forced thousands from their homes, with the death toll expected to rise as firefighters struggle towards hard-to-reach communities. In the normally picturesque coastal town of Forster -- one among dozens hit along the eastern seaboard -- vast plumes of smoke shot out from multiple blazes as water bombers swooped in overhead. And in Bobin, around 60 kilometres (35 miles) north of Forster, the whole town was scorched with some fires soaring 10 metres (30 feet) along the tree canopy. Some homes were completely burned to the ground in the small rural town, and in one just a fireplace could be seen among the smouldering rubble. Prime Minister Scott Morrison said that, if needed, the military could be called on to help some 1,300 firefighters who are tackling around 100 separate blazes. Several people are still unaccounted for and 30 more have been injured -- mostly firefighters working for hours on end in smoky, smouldering scrubland and blazing forests of towering eucalyptus. "My only thoughts today are with those who have lost their lives and their families," Morrison said, as hundreds of civilians also volunteered to help their hard-hit neighbours. A body was found in a burnt-out building near the east-coast town of Taree, police said, while another victim was found in a car and a woman died despite medics trying for several hours to save her. As hot and windy weather eased slightly on Saturday, the number of most serious fires fell to just a handful from an unprecedented 17 on Friday. But within an area spanning almost 1,000 kilometres (600 miles), schools were burned and at least 150 homes were destroyed, while authorities were forced to evacuate detention centres and old people's homes. It was a narrow escape for Don Russell, with the fire coming within meters of his home in Taree. "They've done a top job, them fellas," Russell told AFP after a crew of six firefighters brought the blaze under control. His next-door neighbours were not so lucky, however -- their home went up in flames Saturday afternoon. No one was home. "It used to be God's country, but it ain't any more," said another neighbour, 72-year-old Dave Scott. New South Wales's rural fire service said an emergency warning was in place for four fires among the dozens raging across the state. Bushfires are common in Australia and a vast corps of firefighters had already been tackling sporadic blazes for months in the lead-up to the southern hemisphere summer. But this was a dramatic start to what scientists predict will be a tough fire season -- with climate change and weather cycles contributing to the dangerous combination of strong winds, high temperatures and dry conditions. "We're experiencing tinderbox-like conditions across much of the state and all it takes is one spark to start a fire that may burn for days," said Queensland's acting fire commissioner Mike Wassing. Meanwhile, New South Wales premier Gladys Berejiklian warned that next week's weather forecast "could mean we're not through the worst of it". Morrison, whose government has played down the threat of climate change, sought to deflect questions about what impact it may have had. "Australia has been battling ferocious fires for as long as Australia has been a nation, and well before. And we will continue to do so," he said. Firefighters had described the conditions Friday as "difficult" and "dangerous". In some areas, residents were stuck and told to simply "seek shelter as it is too late to leave".

It's no way
FROM PAGE 16
have suffered enough over social divisions... We have far bigger challenges to face in the years ahead." He added that the current Indian government put politicians in jail despite knowing that they were elected by the people. The government had "violated the spirit of the Indian constitution". "This is not how Indian democracy is supposed to function," he added. Meanwhile, the ninth edition of Dhaka Lit Fest ended yesterday amid high hopes that literary minds would get a chance to uphold freedom of speech. At the closing ceremony, Poet Habibullah Siraji, director general of Bangla Academy, said, "It is important to have literary festivals. "We have Dhaka Lit Fest, we have Ekushey Boi Mela. The more we are intertwined with literature, the more we will be interconnected with positivity, love, and benevolence."