

INDONESIA BLAST

One dead, 6 hurt outside police station

AFP, Medan

A suicide bomber blew himself up at a police station in Indonesia yesterday, killing himself and wounding six others including for officers, according to authorities who described the 24-year-old attacker as a “lone wolf”.

The motive for the attack was not immediately known, but police stations have been frequent targets for radicals in the world’s biggest Muslim majority nation.

The blast happened around 8:45 am local time at the police compound in Medan on Sumatra island.

The attacker -- whose identification listed him as a student -- wore an explosive device on his body.

The attack came a day after Indonesia launched a website that lets the public report “radical” content posted by government workers, including material that promotes hate or intolerance.



A protester releases a fire arrow with his bow to light a barricade at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), in Hong Kong early yesterday. *Inset*, A wounded anti-government protester is being detained during clashes with riot police at the Central District in Hong Kong.

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

Trump helping climate fight!

AFP, Hampton

Swedish teen activist Greta Thunberg said Tuesday that US President Donald Trump’s climate change denialism was “so extreme” that it had helped galvanize the movement to halt long term planetary warming.

She spoke in an interview with AFP on the eve of her departure from North America where she has spent almost three months.

“He’s so extreme and he says so extreme things, so I think people wake up by that in a way,” the 16-year-old said from on board a sailboat preparing to depart from the East Coast town of Hampton, Virginia for Europe early Wednesday.

“I thought when he got elected, now people will finally, now people must finally wake up,” she continued.

“Because it feels like if we just continue like now, nothing’s going to happen. So maybe he is helping.”

A young Australian couple have volunteered to aid her in her return journey.

Elayna Carausu, 26, and Riley Whitelum 35, live on their catamaran with their 11-month-old boy and document their adventures on social media, and responded to Greta’s appeal for help with an environmentally friendly return trip to Europe. They started the voyage yesterday.

They had originally planned to spend the winter in the United States but will now carry Greta and her father Svante Thunberg on their 14-meter (45 feet) catamaran, “La Vagabonde.”

Their destination is Portugal, some 5,500 kilometers (3,400 miles) away, in order to participate in the COP 25 UN climate summit in Madrid, Spain from December 2 to December 13.



Vandalism paralyses Hong Kong

Mainland China students flee as protest enters new violent phase

AFP, Hong Kong

Pro-democracy protesters yesterday stepped up a “blossom everywhere” campaign of road blocks and vandalism across Hong Kong that has crippled the international financial hub this week and ignited some of the worst violence in five months of unrest.

The new phase in the crisis, which has forced schools and shopping malls to close as well as the shutdown of large chunks of the vital train network, has prompted police to warn the city is on the verge of “total collapse” and a “breakdown”.

China, facing the biggest challenge to its rule of the territory since it was handed back by the British in 1997, has insisted it will not buckle to the pressure and warned of even tougher security measures.

As they have since the start of the week, protesters yesterday choked roads and blocked traffic with anything they could lay their hands on including bricks, bicycles, couches

and other materials. Key arterials routes were targeted in morning and after-work peak hours.

Various lines on the subway -- used daily by more than half of the city’s 7.5 million people -- were also suspended, forcing many workers to stay at home.

Masked protesters dressed in their signature black were also locked in a series of tense standoffs at university campuses, following intense clashes on Tuesday night that saw police fire tear gas and rubber bullets.

Highlighting the growing security fears, mainland Chinese students began fleeing Hong Kong on buses and boats back across the border, according to police and universities, although it was not immediately clear how many had left.

The chaos was part of the largely leaderless protest movement’s new strategy branded “blossom everywhere”, in which small groups target as many parts of the city as

possible to cause maximum disruption and stretch police resources.

Until this week protesters had largely confined their actions to evenings and the weekends. The new campaign began Monday has for the first time seen three straight days of chaos during the working week.

The poisonous atmosphere worsened on Monday morning when a police officer shot an unarmed 21-year-old protester, leaving him in a critical condition. The shooting, broadcast live on Facebook, exacerbated fury among protesters about what they say is excessive police violence.

However fears have also risen about increasingly violent tactics from the protesters.

The protest movement has been fuelled by anger that China is choking the liberties and freedoms that Hong Kong is meant to have under the terms of the handover deal with the British.

Protesters are demanding the right to freely elect their leaders.



A woman crosses the flooded St. Mark’s square after an exceptional overnight high tide, in Venice, yesterday. The exceptionally intense “acqua alta,” or high waters, peaked at 1.87 metres (six feet) as the flood alarm sounded across the Italian city of canals. Only once since records began in 1923 has the water crept even higher, reaching 1.94 metres in 1966.

PHOTO: AFP

China running more camps than known

Say Uighur activists; Beijing dismisses claim

AFP, Arlington

Uighur activists said Tuesday they have documented nearly 500 camps and prisons run by China to detain members of the ethnic group, alleging that Beijing could be holding far more than the commonly cited figure of one million people.

The East Turkistan National Awakening Movement, a Washington-based group that seeks independence for the mostly Muslim region known to China as Xinjiang, gave the geographic coordinates of 182 suspected “concentration camps” where Uighurs are allegedly pressured to renounce their culture.

Researching imagery from Google Earth, the group said it also spotted 209 suspected prisons and 74 suspected labour camps for which it would share details later.

“In large part these have not been previously identified, so we could be talking about far greater numbers” of people detained, said Kyle Olbert, the director of operations for the movement.

China’s foreign ministry said the allegations were “baseless.”

Anders Corr, an analyst who formerly worked in US intelligence and who advised the group, said that around 40 percent of the sites had not been previously reported.

Rights advocates have generally estimated that China is detaining more than one million Uighurs and members of other predominantly Muslim Turkic ethnicities.

But Randall Schriver, the top Pentagon official for Asia, said in May that the figure was “likely closer to three million citizens” -- an extraordinary number in a region of some 20 million people.

Indian Supreme Court opens chief justice’s office to RTI

THE HINDU ONLINE

The office of the Chief Justice of India (CJI) is a public authority under the Right to Information (RTI) Act and is liable to provide information sought in public interest, a five-judge Constitution Bench led by CJI Ranjan Gogoi declared yesterday.

“Transparency and accountability should go hand in hand,” the main judgment authored by Justice Sanjeev Khanna and supported by Chief Justice Gogoi and Justice Deepak Gupta said.

Justice Khanna wrote that transparency would only further strengthen judicial independence. The Bench upheld the Delhi High Court’s 2010 judgment, which concluded that the CJI is a public authority and does not hold information on the personal assets of fellow judges in a fiduciary capacity. Information held by a person in a fiduciary capacity is exempt from disclosure under the RTI.

Justice DY Chandrachud, in a separate opinion, said the CJI and the judges of the Supreme Court are constitutional offices and not a hierarchy. Hence, there

is no such fiduciary relationship among them.

On the aspect of disclosure of assets of the sitting Supreme Court judges, the Bench said private assets though may amount to “personal information” under Section 8(1) (j) of the RTI Act, the Public Information Officer should take a considered decision in favour of disclosure if larger public interest is at stake.

In his separate but concurring opinion of the Bench, Justice NV Ramana called for striking a balance between right to information and right to privacy of the judges. He said both rights were not in conflict with each other, but were two faces of the same coin.

Justice Ramana wrote that transparency cannot be allowed to run to its absolute. “Right to information should not be allowed to be used as a tool of surveillance,” he observed.

Justice Chandrachud wrote that judicial independence did not mean judges should be insulated from the rule of law. “Judges are not above the law,” he observed.

Trump impeachment probe goes public

REUTERS, Washington

The impeachment inquiry into US President Donald Trump was set to reach a critical juncture yesterday when lawmakers launch their first televised public hearings, marking a new, high-stakes phase of proceedings that could determine the fate of his tumultuous presidency.

Democrats leading the US House of Representatives probe have summoned three US diplomats -- all of whom have previously expressed alarm in closed-door testimony about Trump’s dealings with Ukraine - to detail their concerns this week under the glare of wall-to-wall news coverage.

Though no president has ever been removed from office by impeachment, that has not deterred Democrats, who are looking into whether Trump abused his power by withholding nearly \$400 million in security assistance to Ukraine to pressure the vulnerable US ally.

The focus is a July 25 phone call, in which Trump asked Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to open a corruption investigation into Biden and his son and into a discredited theory that Ukraine may have meddled in the 2016 US elections.

With a potential television audience of tens of millions, two witnesses -- William Taylor, top US diplomat in Ukraine, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State George Kent -- will be sworn in before the House Intelligence Committee.

Bushfire threat still high as Australia begins clean up

AFP, Glenreagh

Australians yesterday began sifting through the ashes of hundreds of bushfires that have ravaged the country, relieved that their worst fears were unrealised -- but wary of a long and brutal summer ahead.

Firefighters were still battling around 140 blazes across the country’s eastern seaboard, but a respite from “catastrophic” weather conditions meant the danger from many fires was downgraded.

The northern state of Queensland remained on high alert, with residents on the north shore of popular holiday town Noosa told to “leave immediately” to avoid an “unpredictable” fire burning nearby.

In the worst-hit areas of New South Wales, cooler southerly winds eased conditions -- a stark contrast with the gale-force gusts and high temperatures that

Kabul car bomb blast kills 7

At least seven people were killed and ten wounded, including four foreigners, when a suicide bomber in a minivan packed with explosives detonated during Kabul’s morning rush hour yesterday, an interior ministry spokesman said. The spokesman said the bomb -- targeting an SUV belonging to a private Canadian security company, GardaWorld -- had gone off in a neighbourhood which is near the interior ministry and north of Kabul airport. He did not confirm the nationalities of the foreigners injured. Interior Minister Massoud Andarabi said that one of those killed was a 13-year-old child heading to school. There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

72pc Indians happy with country’s progress: poll

At least 72 per cent urban Indians believe that India is headed in the right direction compared to 61 per cent global citizens who feel their country is on the wrong track, says a survey by market research firm Ipsos. While people in China (93 per cent), Saudi Arabia (82 per cent) and India (72 per cent) are the most optimistic about the future, those in South Africa (15 per cent), Italy (17 per cent) and Spain (21 per cent) are the most negative about the prospects of their country. Among the issues that bother Indians the most are unemployment, financial/political corruption and crime & violence, according to the Ipsos “What Worries the World” survey. These are also the top three issues that bother global citizens as well -- though not in the same order.

Senator declares herself Bolivia’s interim president



A senator proclaimed herself Bolivia’s interim president Tuesday in an effort to fill the power vacuum left by the abrupt resignation of Evo Morales, who immediately condemned the move as a “sneaky coup.” Lawmakers had been summoned to formalize the resignation and confirm deputy Senate speaker Jeanine Anez, 52, as interim president. Instead, Anez declared herself interim president when the session failed to reach a quorum of lawmakers, many staying away amid blockades and continuing protests by Morales supporters. The Constitutional Court later endorsed her appointment. Morales resigned after weeks of violent protests since the controversial October 20 election that saw him win an unconstitutional fourth term.

Sri Lanka steps up security for final vote rallies

Police stepped up security across Sri Lanka yesterday over fears of violence on the final day of campaigning for the fiercely contested presidential election, officials said. Elite police commandos reinforced police as the two front runners Sajith Premadasa and Gotabhaya Rajapakse held rival rallies at the end of a gruelling campaign. Campaigning should stop at midnight (1830 GMT) allowing a two-day colling period before Saturday ballot. Some 16 million people over the age of 18 years are eligible to choose a winner from among 35 candidates.

Man shot dead as Lebanese army disperse protesters



A man was shot dead south of Beirut after the army opened fire to disperse protesters blocking roads, Lebanese state media said yesterday. The victim “succumbed to his injuries” in hospital, the National News Agency said, the second death during the nationwide protests that have paralysed the country for nearly a month. On Tuesday night, street protests erupted after President Michel Aoun defended the role of his allies, whom protesters see as corrupt and inefficient.

SOURCE: AFP, ANN

