

NEWS IN brief

India to get S-400 missiles as planned

REUTERS, Brasilia

Russia plans to deliver S-400 surface-to-air missile systems to India on schedule, President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday. India agreed to buy the S-400 system from Russia last year despite US warnings the purchase could trigger sanctions against it. India said it needed the weapons to bolster its defences against China. "As far as the S-400 deliveries are concerned, everything is going according to plan," Putin told reporters at a summit of BRICS countries in Brazil.

State of emergency in flood-hit Venice

AFP, Venice

Another exceptional high tide swamped flood-hit Venice on Friday, prompting the mayor to order St Mark's square closed after Italy declared a state of emergency for the UNESCO city. Luigi Brugnaro ordered the iconic square closed as the latest sea surge of around 1.6 metres (over five feet) struck and strong storms and winds battered the region -- lower than Tuesday's peak but still dangerous.

Trump to attend Nato summit in London

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump will visit Britain for Nato's 70th anniversary summit next month, the White House said yesterday, in a trip that falls days before the country votes in the December 12 election. The White House said in a statement that Trump and First Lady Melania would visit Britain from December 2 to 4, attending both the Nato gathering and a reception hosted by Queen Elizabeth II. Trump backs a "no deal" Brexit, and he has already roiled the election campaign by suggesting last month that the terms of Johnson's current EU divorce deal mean that London could struggle to continue trade with the US.



Rick Wright inspects the damage next to his house at Nabiac, some 350kms north of Sydney, Australia yesterday braced for strong winds that began to whip up bushfires in two states, potentially adding to a toll of more than 270 homes destroyed and 2.5 million acres of land ravaged during the past week. At least four people died.

PHOTO: AFP

Israel-Gaza violence tests fragile ceasefire

AFP, Gaza City

Gaza and Israel, was agreed as the flare-up raised fears of a new all-out conflict.

To keep a lid on tensions, Palestinians cancelled weekly protests along the Gaza-Israeli border that have often led to violence since March 2018. At least 311 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire in Gaza or the border area since then, most of them during demonstrations and associated clashes.

ISRAEL TO PROBE CIVILIAN ATTACKS

Meanwhile, Israel's military yesterday said it would investigate unanticipated civilian casualties in a strike the previous day on an Islamic Jihad target in the Gaza Strip. It said, according to information, no civilian was expected to be harmed at the time of the attack.

Israel hit the home of Rasmi Abu Malhous, who it described as an Islamic Jihad commander, early on Thursday before a truce between the sides went into force. The strike killed him, five children and two women, according to the Palestinian health ministry in the strip, where the Islamist Hamas movement rules.

Islamic Jihad is the second most powerful Palestinian militant group in Gaza after Hamas. The ceasefire brokered by Egyptian and UN officials, the usual mediators between

Israel and Israel, was agreed as the flare-up raised fears of a new all-out conflict.

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Lanka votes for new leader

Former defense secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa, minister Sajith Premadasa vie for presidential post in today's election

CNN ONLINE

by the President from members of Parliament, who nominate the most suitable.

Amid the dozens of potential candidates, two men are seen as the likeliest to replace Sirisena: former Defense Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Minister of Housing Sajith Premadasa.



Gotabaya

Sajith

2005 to 2015.

Few doubt that were Gotabaya Rajapaksa to win -- under the maroon banner of the Sri Lanka People's Front -- his brother would wield massive influence over his administration and could be considered President again in all but name. The elder Rajapaksa currently leads the opposition in Parliament and is widely expected to vie for the post of Prime Minister when parliamentary elections are held in 2020 -- bringing the country back in control of the two brothers.

Premadasa is deputy leader of the ruling United National Party (UNP), but is contesting the election as a representative of the New Democratic Front, a coalition of right-wing parties.

Premadasa is the son of sometime President Ranasinghe Premadasa, who was assassinated by Tamil Tiger rebels at a May Day rally in Colombo in 1993. The winner is expected to be announced by Monday midday, but officials have warned of potential delays should the result be contested or candidates demand a recount.



Students and parents embrace after a shooting at Saugus High School in Santa Clarita, California, Thursday. A teenage boy gunned down fellow students at a California high school on his 16th birthday Thursday, killing two and wounding another three before turning the pistol on himself. The gunman was taken into custody in "grave" condition, police said. This incident is the latest in a relentless cycle of classroom shootings in the United States that have left around 300 youngsters dead over two decades.

PHOTO: AFP

Ayodhya: Muslim group rejects land for mosque

Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind (JuH), a key Muslim litigant in the Ayodhya title suit, has decided not to accept the 5-acre alternative land for building a mosque as mandated by the Indian Supreme Court. After its working committee meeting in Delhi on Thursday, the Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind said that nothing would be acceptable as an "alternative" to a mosque, be it money or land. In another big decision, JuH did not rule out the possibility of going for a review of the Supreme Court verdict. A five-member fact-finding committee to be headed by its president, Arshad Madani, would seek legal opinion on the issue.

Chile to change its charter to restore peace

Chile's Congress has reached an agreement to reform the country's constitution in an effort to restore peace after weeks of violent protests that have led to the deaths of at least 20 people. Chilean Senate President Jaime Quintana said the new code would "build a true social contract" and be "100% democratic" compared to the current constitution, which was approved in 1980 during the rule of military dictator Augusto Pinochet. The protests initially began over a now-suspended price hike for subway tickets in Santiago but have since expanded, revealing anger among ordinary Chileans who feel they have been excluded from the nation's economic rise. Chilean President Sebastian Pinera had already promised social and economic reforms to tackle issues at the heart of the recent unrest, including pension raises, affordable medical insurance, lowering the price of medicine and stabilizing electricity prices.

Bolivia interim president rules out Morales polls bid



Bolivia's interim president Jeanine Añez on Thursday ruled out exiled leader Evo Morales from standing in new elections as thousands of demonstrators marched through La Paz in support of the socialist icon and against the new, acting leader. Pledging early elections, Añez -- until now a little-known lawmaker -- proclaimed herself acting president on Tuesday after Morales fled the country for Mexico, claiming to fear for his safety amid deadly protests. Her move was validated by the country's top court. Unrest erupted when Morales -- Bolivia's first indigenous president -- was accused of rigging the results of October 20 polls to gain re-election for a fourth term.

SOURCE: AFP

Free broadband for all

Promises UK Labour; Johnson extends lead ahead of polls

AFP, London

Britain's main opposition Labour party yesterday promised free, fast broadband internet for everyone, in the most eye-catching of a series of big spending pledges ahead of next month's election.

The pledge comes as Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative Party extended its lead over the Labour Party to 13 points this week, according to a Panelbase poll.

The poll, conducted after the Brexit Party said it would not stand in Conservative-held seats at the December 12 election, put the Conservatives on 43%, up 3 points from a poll last week, ahead of Labour who were unchanged at 30%.

Labour said it would bring the parts of telecoms giant BT that deal with broadband into public ownership, as part of a sweeping programme of nationalisations.

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opportunities for work, creativity, entertainment and friendship," said Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.

"What was once a luxury is now an essential utility."

"That's why full-fibre broadband must be a public service, bringing communities together, with equal

access, in an inclusive and connected society."

Johnson has previously promised to deliver high-speed broadband to all households by 2025 via the private sector. He condemned Labour's plan as "slightly fantastical" saying it would cost "many tens of billions" of taxpayers' money.

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