



DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — A court in Bangladesh on Monday sentenced 10 members of a banned militant group to death for a deadly bomb attack on a Communist Party rally in 2001. Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Court Judge Mohammed Rabiul Alam made the decision in a crowded courtroom while four of the defendants were in the dock. Six of the defendants are not in custody, while another two who are on the run were acquitted. All of those on trial belong to the banned group Harkat-ul Jihad al-Islami. The group considers the Communist Party an anti-Islamic force. On Jan. 20, 2001, bomb attacks on a party rally in Dhaka killed five people and wounded 50 others. The judge said investigators found Harkat-ul Jihad al-Islami's former leader was responsible for the attack but his name was dropped from the case because he was executed in 2017 over a separate attack.

LONDON (AFP) — The number of billionaires has doubled in the past decade and the world's 22 richest men now have more wealth than all the women in Africa, *Oxfam* said Monday in an appeal to the Davos elite to get serious about inequality. "Our broken economies are lining the pockets of billionaires and big business at the expense of ordinary men and women. No wonder people are starting to question whether billionaires should even exist," *Oxfam's* India head Amitabh Behar said. There will be at least 119 billionaires worth about \$500 billion attending Davos this year, *Bloomberg* reported, with the highest contingents coming from the United States, India and Russia. "The very top of the economic pyramid sees trillions of dollars of wealth in the hands of a very small group of people, predominantly men," the *Oxfam* report said. "Their wealth is already extreme, and our broken economy concentrates more and more wealth into these few hands," it said.

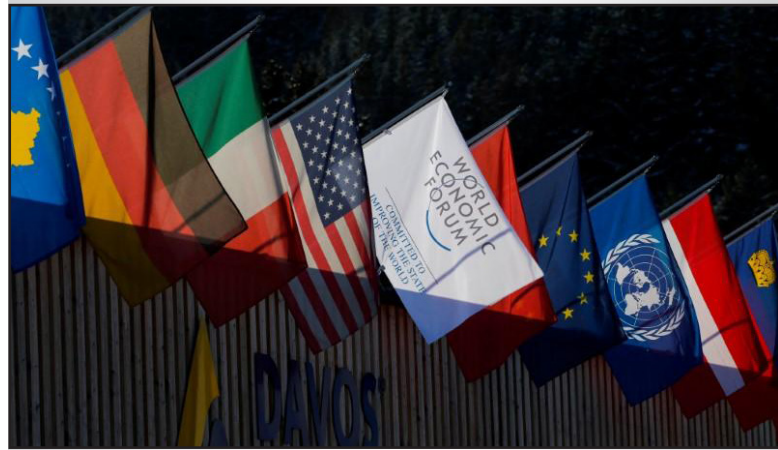
BERLIN (Reuters) — Libya will face a "catastrophic situation" unless foreign powers put pressure on eastern-based commander Khalifa Haftar to lift a blockade of oilfields that has cut output to almost zero, the country's internationally recognized premier said on Monday. Since Friday, Haftar's forces have closed Libya's major oil ports in a power play as European and Arab powers and the United States were meeting with his supporters in Berlin to push him to halt a campaign to capture the capital Tripoli. Tripoli-based Prime Minister Fayez al-Serraj told Reuters he rejects eastern demands to link a reopening of oil ports to a new distribution of oil revenues among Libyans, saying such income was in any case meant to benefit the entire country. "The situation will be catastrophic should it stay like this," Serraj said in an interview in Berlin.

MANILA (Reuters) — A restive volcano in the Philippines has a high risk of eruption as it is "recharging" with fresh magma and rising emissions of toxic gas, a top scientist said on Monday, while authorities ordered commercial establishments to stay shut. Earthquakes were still happening at the Taal volcano, which shot giant clouds of ash miles into the air on Jan. 12, and levels of the gas were rising, a sign of magma "recharging" and "resupplying" beneath it, a Philippine volcanologist said. "If it reaches the crater, it could cause a strong explosion," Renato Solidum, director of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs), told DZMM radio. Authorities have thrown a 14-km (9-mile) exclusion zone around the volcano, with experts saying an eruption could bring a devastating rain of rocks and magma and unleash a tsunami in the lake around it.

BOGOTA (Dispatches) — Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido arrived in Colombia on Sunday, defying a court-imposed travel ban, and was set to meet with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Monday. Guaido had not left Venezuela since February, when he also defied the ban to travel to Colombia. Pompeo told reporters earlier on Sunday that he hoped Guaido would make the trip and he looked forward to meeting him. According to the *Washington Post*, Guaido plans to travel from Colombia to the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where he will urge European officials to increase pressure on the government of President Nicolas Maduro. Senior figures in Venezuela's opposition hope that Guaido will also get to meet U.S. President Donald Trump at Davos, the newspaper said. On Sunday, Guaido met with Colombian President Ivan Duque at the presidential residence.

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Thunderstorms and giant hail battered parts of Australia's east coast on Monday after "apocalyptic" dust storms swept across drought-stricken areas, as extreme weather patterns collided in the bushfire-fatigued country. Australia has since October been overwhelmed by an unprecedented bushfire season made worse by climate change. Swaths of the country have burned, hundreds of millions of animals have died, more than 2,000 homes have been destroyed and at least 29 lives have been lost. Violent hail storms pelted the capital Canberra on Monday, with footage showing the storm ripping branches off trees. Emergency services were warning people there to "move cars under cover and away from trees and power lines". The bureau of meteorology told people in the southeast of New South Wales, including Sydney, to brace for the approaching storm.

Poll: Most People Believe Capitalism Doing Harm



The national flags of several countries and a flag with the logo of the World Economic Forum (WEF) fly on the roof of the congress center during preparations for the annual WEF meeting in the Swiss Alps resort of Davos, Switzerland January 19, 2020.

LONDON (Reuters) — A majority of people around the world believe capitalism in its current form is doing more harm than good, a survey found ahead of this week's Davos meeting of business and political leaders.

This year was the first time the "Edelman Trust Barometer", which for two decades has polled tens of thousands of people on their trust in core institutions, sought to understand how capitalism itself was viewed.

The study's authors said that earlier surveys showing a rising sense of inequality prompted them to ask whether citizens were now starting to have more fundamental doubts about the capitalist-based democracies of the West.

"The answer is yes," David Bersoff, lead researcher on the study produced by U.S. communications company Edelman.

"People are questioning at that level whether what we have today, and the world we live in today, is optimized for their having a good future."

The poll contacted over 34,000 people in 28 countries, from Western liberal democracies like the United States and France to those based on a different model such as China and Russia, with 56% agreeing that "capitalism as it exists today does more harm than good in

the world".

The survey was launched in 2000 to explore the theories of political scientist Francis Fukuyama, who after the collapse of communism declared that liberal capitalist democracy had seen off rival ideologies and so represented "the end of history".

That conclusion has since been challenged by critics who point to everything from the rising influence of China to the spread of autocratic leaders, trade protectionism and worsening inequality in the wake of the 2007/08 global financial crisis.

On a national level, lack of trust in capitalism was highest in Thailand and India on 75% and 74% respectively, with France close behind on 69%. Majorities prevailed in other Asian, European, Persian Gulf, African and Latin American states.

Only in Australia, Canada, the United States, South Korea, Hong Kong and Japan did majorities disagree with the assertion that capitalism currently did more harm than good.

The survey confirmed a by-now familiar set of concerns ranging from worries about the pace of technological progress and job insecurity, to distrust of the media and a sense that national governments were not up to the challenges of the day.

Myanmar: Government Panel Found No 'Genocide'



An aerial view shows burned down villages once inhabited by the Rohingya seen from the Myanmar military helicopters that carried the UN envoys to northern Rakhine state, Myanmar, May 1, 2018.

YANGON (Reuters) — A government-appointed panel established in Myanmar to probe allegations of abuses in Rakhine state in 2017 that drew global outrage said on Monday they had found no evidence of genocide against the Rohingya Muslim minority.

More than 730,000 Rohingya fled Rakhine state during weeks of brutal violence, during which the United Nations says gang rapes and mass killings were carried out with "genocidal intent". Hundreds of villages were burned to the ground and later razed and scrapped.

The commission of inquiry said there were "reasonable grounds" to conclude members of the security forces among "multiple actors" were responsible for possible war crimes and serious human rights violations during a military-led crackdown against the group in 2017.

These included the "killing of innocent villagers and destruction of their homes", it said.

But in its statement, issued to mark the finalization of a full report based on interviews with villagers and members of the security forces, the panel blamed Rohingya militants for attacking 30 police posts and "provoking" the crackdown and described the situation as an "internal armed conflict".

"The ICOE has not found any evidence suggesting that these killings or acts of

displacement were committed pursuant to an intent or plan to destroy the Muslim or any other community in northern Rakhine State," the panel's statement read.

"There is insufficient evidence to argue, much less conclude, that the crimes committed were undertaken with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, or with any other requisite mental state for the international crime of genocide."

The statement said the panel had submitted the report to the government but it did not say whether it would be made public.

In Bangladesh, where hundreds of thousands of Rohingya who fled Myanmar have taken refuge, a Rohingya leader, Dil Muhammad, described the report as a whitewash.

"We have been persecuted for decades. So many of our people were killed, our women were raped, our children were thrown into fire and our homes were torched. If it is not genocide, what is it?" he said.

The International Court of Justice, the highest UN court, will this week issue a decision on a request for emergency measures in a genocide case against the country.

Gambia filed the suit in November alleging Myanmar was committing "an ongoing genocide" against the Rohingya.

Pro-Trump Militia Groups Rally to Defend Guns



Police stand guard near an entrance to the Virginia State Capitol grounds before a rally by gun rights advocates and militia members in Richmond, Jan. 20, 2020.

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Gun-rights activists — some making deliberate displays of their military-style rifles — began to descend on Virginia's capital city Monday to protest plans by the state's Democratic leadership to pass gun-control legislation.

Several thousand activists — mostly white and male, many clothed in camouflage and waving flags with messages of support for President Donald Trump — appeared hours before the 11 a.m. rally was set to begin.

Gov. Ralph Northam declared a temporary state of emergency days ahead of the rally, banning all weapons, including guns, from the event on Capitol Square. The expected arrival of thou-

sands of gun-rights activists — along with members of militia groups and white supremacists — raised fears the state could again see the type of violence that exploded in Charlottesville in 2017.

Authorities said they would be looking to avoid a repeat of the violence that erupted in 2017 in Charlottesville during one of the largest gatherings of white supremacists and other far-right groups in a decade. Attendees brawled with counterprotesters, and an avowed white supremacist drove his car into a crowd, killing a woman and injuring dozens more. Law enforcement officials faced scathing criticism for what both the white supremacist groups and

anti-racism protesters said was a passive response.

Monday's rally was being organized by an influential grassroots gun-rights group, the Virginia Citizens Defense League. The group holds a yearly rally at the Capitol, typically a low-key event with a few hundred gun enthusiasts listening to speeches from a handful of ambitious Republican lawmakers. But this year, many more were expected to attend. Second Amendment groups have identified the state as a rallying point for the fight against what they see as a national erosion of gun rights.

Guns were a key topic of last year's state legislative elections — particularly after a mass shooting in Virginia Beach claimed a dozen lives — and gun-control groups heavily funded Democratic candidates. Northam and Democratic lawmakers have credited their focus on gun control for helping them win full control of the General Assembly for the first time in more than two decades.

Police in Kansas City, Missouri, said Monday at least two people were dead and 15 people reportedly injured in a shooting outside a bar.

The shooting took place shortly before midnight Sunday, Kansas City police said at the scene. Capt. David Jackson told news outlets at the scene that responding officers found "a chaotic scene" and had to call in help from around the city. A man and a woman were found dead.

Xi Urges Action to Combat Coronavirus Outbreak



Passengers wearing masks are seen at the waiting area for a train to Wuhan at the Beijing West Railway Station, ahead of the Chinese Lunar New Year, in Beijing, January 20, 2020.

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese President Xi Jinping said Monday that it's "extremely crucial" to take every possible measure to combat a new coronavirus that has infected 217 people in the country.

His remarks, cited by state broadcaster CCTV, came the same day that the country reported a sharp rise in the number of people infected by the novel form of viral pneumonia, including the first cases in the capital.

The outbreak comes as the country enters its busiest travel period, when millions board trains and planes for the Lunar New Year holidays.

"The recent outbreak of novel coronavirus pneumonia in Wuhan and other places must be taken seri-

ously," Xi said, according to CCTV. "Party committees, governments and relevant departments at all levels should put people's lives and health first."

They should "ensure that the masses have a quiet, peaceful and joyous Spring Festival," he added.

Health authorities in the central city of Wuhan, where the viral pneumonia appears to have originated, said an additional 136 cases have been confirmed in the city, which now has a total of 198 infected patients. As of the weekend, a third patient had died.

Five individuals in Beijing and 14 in southern China's Guangdong province have also been diagnosed with the new coronavirus, state broadcast-

er CCTV reported Monday evening. A total of seven suspected cases have been found in other parts of the country, including in Sichuan and Yunnan provinces in the southwest and in Shanghai.

China's National Health Commission said experts have judged the current outbreak to be "preventable and controllable."

"However, the source of the new type of coronavirus has not been found, we do not fully understand how the virus is transmitted, and changes in the virus still need to be closely monitored," the commission said in a statement Sunday.

Coronaviruses cause diseases ranging from the common cold to SARS, or severe acute respiratory syndrome. SARS first infected people in southern China in late 2002 and spread to more than two dozen countries, killing nearly 800. The Chinese government initially tried to conceal the severity of the SARS epidemic, but its cover-up was exposed by a high-ranking physician.

Xi instructed government departments Monday to promptly release information on the virus and deepen international cooperation.

China has notified and maintained close communication with the World Health Organization and other relevant countries and regions, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said at a regular news briefing.

Japan to Form Space Defense Unit to Repel Threats

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's prime minister said Monday that his country will form a space defense unit to protect itself from potential threats as rivals develop missiles and other technology and the new unit will work closely with its American counterpart recently launched by President Donald Trump.

The Space Domain Mission Unit will start in April as part of Japan's Air Self-Defense Force, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said in a policy speech marking the start of the year's parliamentary session.

He said Japan must also defend itself from threats in cyberspace and from electromagnetic interference against Japanese satellites.

"We will drastically bolster capability and system in order to secure superiority" in those areas, Abe said.

The space unit will be added to an existing air base at Fuchu in the western suburbs of Tokyo, where about 20 people will be staffed ahead of a full launch in 2022. The role of the space unit is to conduct satellite-based navigation and communications for other troops in the field, rather than being on the ground.

Abe's Cabinet in December approved 50.6 billion yen (\$460 million) budget in space-related projects, pending parliamentary approval.

The unit will cooperate with the U.S. Space Command that Trump established in August, as well as Japan's space exploration agency, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency.

Abe has pushed for Japan's Self-Defense Force to expand its international role and capability by bolstering cooperation and weapons compatibility with the U.S., as it increasingly works alongside American troops and as it grows concerned about the increasing capabilities of China and North Korea.

Abe, in marking Sunday's 60th anniversary of the signing of a Japan-U.S. security treaty, vowed to bolster Japan's capability and cooperation with the U.S., including in the areas of space and cyber security.

In a sign of a thaw in Japan's recently tense relations with South Korea, Abe said he planned to cooperate closely with the country and the U.S. in dealing with harsh security environment in northeast Asia.

He called South Korea his country's "most important neighbor," a standard phrase he used until their relations rapidly deteriorated in the past two years over wartime history and trade disputes.

Abe, however, repeated his demand Monday that South Korea resolve the issue of compensation for Korean laborers during Japan's 1910-1945 colonial rule.