



ORINDA, Calif. (AP) — Four people were killed and four were wounded at a Halloween night party shooting at a large rental home in a wealthy San Francisco Bay Area community, police said Friday. The shooting in Orinda, a city of about 20,000 near Oakland, happened at a party attended by 100 people, police chief David Cook told the East Bay Times. He said officers responded to a call around 10:45 p.m. Thursday and found four people dead at the scene. Michael Wang, who owns the home, said he rented it out to a woman through Airbnb for what the woman said would be a family reunion for a dozen people, according to The San Francisco Chronicle. Wang said his wife reached out to the woman after neighbors called complaining about excessive noise. The woman said there were only 12 people at the party, but Wang said he could see more people via video from his Ring doorbell camera.

BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) — In Argentina, thousands marched through the streets of Buenos Aires Thursday in the capital city's first major demonstration since incumbent President Mauricio Macri lost Sunday's election to center-left candidate Alberto Fernández. Protesters are demanding a reversal of cuts to pensions and public utility subsidies imposed after last year's \$57 billion bailout by the International Monetary Fund. They're also demanding the senate pass a bill expanding food assistance to combat rampant hunger. Esteban Marconi, who led a protest outside the IMF's offices, said "What we're going through is a catastrophe. The price increases on food makes the situation truly unsustainable. What we're debating every day is whether to eat or not."

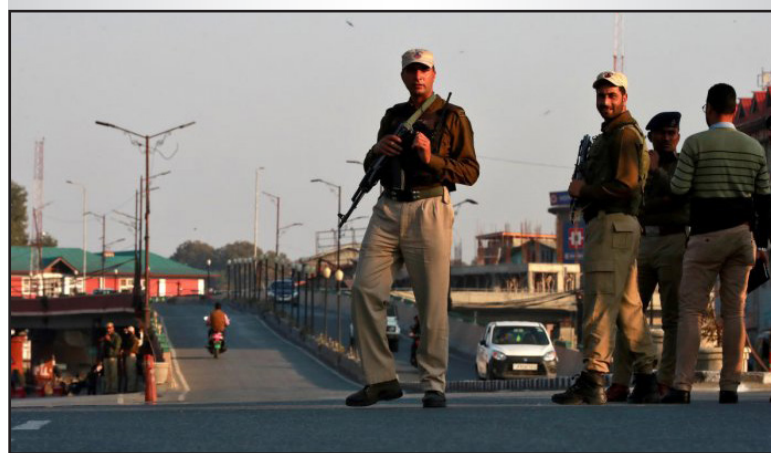
NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — More than 1 million people in East Africa are affected by flooding after higher than normal rainfall, an aid group said Friday. Parts of the region are bracing for a tropical storm, Kyarr, that could worsen an already dire humanitarian situation. The International Rescue Committee said many people had been reeling from an earlier period of severe drought. Now the rains in parts of Somalia, South Sudan and Kenya are expected for another four to six weeks. The flooding in Somalia, which has caused several deaths, has displaced more than 180,000 people and destroyed crops, the aid group Action Against Hunger said. It estimated that the tropical storm would bring another meter of water to parts of the region. In Kenya, government spokesman Cyrus Oguno said 38 people have died as a result of about a month of flooding. The torrential rain is uncommon for this time of year, he said. Experts have said the changing weather patterns have a huge impact because close to 100% of the country's agriculture is rain-fed. In South Sudan, President Salva Kiir this week declared a state of emergency in 27 counties because of the flooding. The United Nations has said entire communities in some areas have been submerged, disease is spreading and access to health services is limited.

BEIJING (Dispatches) — China warned on Friday that it would not tolerate any challenge to Hong Kong's governing system, as it laid out plans to boost patriotism in the city and change how its leader is chosen or removed after months of anti-government protests. The unrest in the semi-autonomous city was an important topic at a major, four-day meeting of the Communist Party chaired by President Xi Jinping this week in Beijing, said Shen Chunyao, director of the Hong Kong, Macau and Basic Law Commission. The central government in Beijing has so far voiced its confidence in Hong Kong chief executive Carrie Lam and the city police to put a lid on the increasingly violent protests.

MADRID (AFP) — Women's groups and legal experts demanded Friday that Spain's laws be changed after five men accused of gang-raping an unconscious 14-year-old girl were convicted on a lesser charge of sexual abuse. A Barcelona court on Thursday ruled out the more serious charge of sexual assault — the legal equivalent of rape in Spain — on the grounds that the victim was in an "unconscious state" from drugs and alcohol and the accused had not used "any type of violence or intimidation" in the attack. The five men were handed between 10 and 12 years in prison. A conviction for sexual assault would have carried jail sentences of between 15 and 20 years. Two other defendants were acquitted of involvement in the attack which took place in October 2016 at a party at an abandoned factory in the town of Manresa in the northeastern region of Catalonia.

NEW DELHI (Reuters) — Authorities in New Delhi declared a public health emergency on Friday and closed schools and all construction activity until next week as air pollution in the city hit its worst level this year. A thick haze has hung over the Indian capital this week caused by plumes of toxic smoke from farm fires raging in neighboring states. An index measuring the level of a deadly air pollutant hit 484 on a scale of 500 on Friday, the government's Central Pollution Control Board, the worst this year.

India Divides Kashmir as Part of Crackdown



Indian policemen stand guard on a road in Srinagar, Oct. 31, 2019.

SRINAGAR, India (AFP) — India's Muslim-majority region of Kashmir was formally divided on Thursday, almost three months after losing its autonomy in a move that triggered violence and stoked tensions with arch-rival Pakistan.

The move, announced in early August when India imposed a lockdown and sent in tens of thousands of extra troops, saw Jammu and Kashmir cease to be a state and split into two new administrative territories ruled directly from New Delhi.

Speaking next to a colossal statue of independence hero Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in his home state of Gujarat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday hailed a "bright future" for the blood-soaked Himalayan region.

Local authorities in Kashmir, meanwhile, deployed tens of thousands of government forces and issued a high alert for rebel attacks and anti-India protests. Police and paramilitary troops in bulletproof gear patrolled the streets in the densely populated old quarters of the main city of Srinagar and other towns across the volatile Kashmir Valley.

Kashmir was "the only place where terrorism killed around 40,000 people in the last three decades. So many mothers lost their sons... For how long could we just kept watching the innocents die?" Modi said.

"We are happy that Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are moving towards a new future from today onwards. Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir today are taking steps for their bright future," Modi said.

Kashmir has been split between India and Pakistan since 1947 and has sparked two wars and numerous flare-ups between the two nuclear-armed foes, most recently in February when they conducted tit-for-tat air strikes.

In early August, Modi's Hindu nationalist government stripped Indian-administered Kashmir of its special status in the constitution, detaining thousands of people — including almost all local political leaders — and cutting telecommunications.

It also announced that from October 31, the state would become two so-called union territories: Ladakh to the east bordering China — which also claims part of it — and Jammu and Kashmir in the west. New Delhi has a much bigger say in the overall administrative affairs of union territories, considered the lowest governance unit in India. There are now nine union territories and 28 states.

The move removes Kashmiris' exclusive land rights, allowing people from elsewhere to buy property. Locals suspect that this is part of Modi's aim to bring demographic change in the region.

U.S. Grounds Hundreds of Chinese Drones



The U.S. Interior Department says it will ground all drones in its fleet manufactured in China or contained Chinese-made parts.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) — The U.S. Department of the Interior has grounded its fleet of hundreds of Chinese-made drones over national security concerns, amid a growing technology tension between the two world powers.

The Interior Department announced that all drones in its fleet that were "manufactured in China or made from Chinese components," would be grounded as part of a review of the department's drone program.

The program, however, will not apply to drones "currently being utilized for emergency purposes, such as fighting wildfires, search and rescue, and dealing with natural disasters that may threaten life or property," the department said.

According to a report released last year, the department owned 531 drones as of last year.

Citing sources familiar with the program, the Associated Press said the department has a fleet of 810 drones. Only 24 of the unmanned aircraft are made in the U.S. and even those have Chinese electronic components.

The Interior Department uses drones to survey a variety of critical infrastructure, including mines and dams.

The decision to ground the Chinese drones is now expected to add to the growing tensions between Beijing and Washington.

China reacted to the move, saying Washington was abusing "the concept of national security to introduce anti-Chinese discriminatory

practices."

A spokesman for China's Foreign Ministry, Geng Shuang, described on Thursday the restriction on Chinese companies as coming from a "Cold War mentality."

He called on Washington to "provide a fair, equitable and nondiscriminatory environment for Chinese companies to conduct normal business activities in the United States."

The Chinese company DJI, which produces about 70 percent of the world's commercial drones, also denounced the move. "We're very disappointed," said a DJI spokesperson.

The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump has been using "security concerns" in an effort to push Chinese manufacturers out of American markets.

The most notable move was taken last year against Huawei Technologies — the world's biggest manufacturer of telecommunications equipment — over the accusation that the government in Beijing uses the company's 5G (fifth generation) networks to spy on other countries.

Back in August last year, President Trump signed a section into law that bans American government agencies from purchasing the Chinese company's equipment.

Washington has not provided any evidence to support the allegation, which Huawei described as "unconstitutional."

The Pentagon was already banned this year from purchasing Chinese-made drones.

At Least 74 Killed as Fire Sweeps Train in Pakistan



Firefighters and rescue workers gather near the place where a fire broke out in a passenger train and destroyed three carriages near the town of Rahim Yar Khan, Pakistan October 31, 2019.

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Distraught relatives gathered Friday for the funerals of some of the 74 people killed when fire ripped through a crowded train in Pakistan, with many of the victims residents of a single town.

Sobbing family members crowded a government building in Mirpurkhas overnight as the first bodies covered in white cloth began arriving by ambulance from the scene of the disaster.

After morning prayers, with women watching from nearby rooftops, more than a hundred men attended the first funeral — of a car mechanic named Mohammad Saleem, who was in his late 40s.

It was held at the Bismillah Mosque, from which at least 42 pilgrims had left to board the train one day earlier,

bound for a religious festival near Lahore.

According to officials, as some of the passengers cooked breakfast around dawn on Thursday two of their gas cylinders exploded, sending flames racing through three carriages as the train passed near Rahim Yar Khan, in Punjab province.

At least 74 people died, some after jumping through windows on the still-moving train to escape the blaze.

Rescue officials found bodies and some injured passengers along a two-kilometer stretch of track, Dawn newspaper reported.

The train was a daily express service that runs between the southern port city of Karachi and Rawalpindi, adjacent to Islamabad.

Trains on that route can reportedly

hit speeds of up to 110 kilometers (68 miles) per hour. Local media said that the speed may have helped fan the flames.

Journalists were allowed inside the interior of the carriages early Friday. The fire appeared to have burned them entirely, with virtually no space visible that was not blackened and charred.

One of them — Wagon No. 12 — was carrying mainly people from Mirpurkhas, the town's deputy commissioner, Attaullah Shah, told AFP.

"There was never such a tragic incident to happen to Mirpurkhas," he said.

Mirpurkhas commissioner Abdul Waheed Sheikh said ten of the bodies had been confirmed as being residents of the town so far. Twenty-four Mirpurkhas residents were among the injured.

But at least another 45 are still missing, he said.

Officials in Rahim Yar Khan have said many of the bodies are charred beyond recognition and will have to be identified through DNA testing — a process that could take up to one month.

Shah said the government was arranging to send families of the missing from Mirpurkhas to the hospital in Rahim Yar Khan where the bodies have been taken.

Mirpurkhas, a town of some half a million people surrounded by farms and mango orchards, was largely shut down Friday as businesses closed in mourning.

North Korea Tests 'Super-Large' Rocket Launcher



This Thursday, Oct. 31, 2019, photo provided by the North Korean government, shows what it says a test firing of a super-large rocket launcher by the Academy of Defense Science in North Korea.

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea confirmed Friday it conducted its third test-firing of a new "super-large" multiple rocket launcher that it says expands its ability to destroy enemy targets in surprise attacks.

The latest launches extended a monthslong streak of weapons displays by the North, which continues to use a standstill in nuclear negotiations to advance its military capabilities while pressuring Washington for concessions.

Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency described the tests a day after the South Korean and Japanese militaries said they detected two projectiles launched from an area near the North Korean capital traveling

more than 321 kilometers (200 miles) cross-country before landing in waters off the North's eastern coast.

Experts say the North could continue to ramp up weapons demonstrations ahead of an end-of-year deadline set by leader Kim Jong Un for the U.S. to offer mutually acceptable terms to salvage a fragile diplomacy strained by disagreements over exchanging sanctions relief and disarmament steps.

Thursday's launches followed statements of displeasure by top North Korean officials over the slow pace of nuclear negotiations with the United States and demands that the administration of President Donald Trump ease crippling sanctions and pressure

on their country.

KCNA said Kim expressed satisfaction over what North Korea described as a successful test of its new rocket artillery system, but it wasn't clear whether the leader observed the launches on site. The North previously tested the system in August and September. The latest test verified the "perfection" of the system's continuous firing ability that allows it to "totally destroy" enemy targets with "super power," the agency said.

Kim Eun-han, spokesman of Seoul's Unification Ministry, said South Korea has "strong concern" over the North's weapons activity, but avoided a straightforward answer when asked about the possible impact on inter-Korean dialogue.

Earlier this month, the North test-fired an underwater-launched ballistic missile for the first time in three years. The North has also tested new short-range ballistic missile and rocket artillery systems in recent months in what experts saw as an effort to advance its military capabilities and increase its bargaining power.

Negotiations have faltered after the collapse of a February summit between Kim Jong Un and Trump in Hanoi, Vietnam, where the U.S. rejected North Korean demands for broad sanctions relief in exchange for piecemeal progress toward partially surrendering its nuclear capabilities.

Johnson Defends Brexit Deal After Trump Criticism

LONDON (AFP) — British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's office has defended his Brexit deal with the EU, after U.S. President Donald Trump warned it would make it impossible for the two nations to strike a future trade agreement.

The president, whose impeachment in the U.S. has moved a stage closer following a key vote in Congress, waded into the British election campaign on Thursday to criticize Johnson's divorce terms with the European bloc.

"This deal... you can't do it, you can't trade. We can't make a trade deal with the UK," he said.

But a Downing Street spokesman later said the deal would allow the UK to strike "our own free trade deals around the world from which every part of the UK will benefit."

Trump's comments appear at odds with his previous pledge in September that he was working closely with Johnson to strike a "magnificent trade deal" once Britain left the EU.

The U.S. president also launched a stinging attack on the country's main opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn and urged Johnson to unite with eurosceptic hardliner Nigel Farage,

a key figure in the 2016 referendum on European Union membership.

"Corbyn would be so bad for your country," Trump told Farage during a phone interview broadcast on his talkshow on British radio station LBC.

"He'd take you in such a bad way. He'd take you into such bad places."

"I'd like to see you and Boris get together... I think it'd be a great thing," Trump added.

Farage, whose new Brexit Party is campaigning for Britain to leave the EU without any deal in place, has urged Johnson to form an electoral alliance but has so far been rebuffed.

He was due to launch his party's election campaign on Friday.

Within minutes of the interview airing, Corbyn shot back on Twitter that "Trump is trying to interfere in Britain's election to get his friend Boris Johnson elected."

Johnson agreed new divorce terms with the bloc's leaders earlier this month, ahead of the country's scheduled departure on Thursday.