

Over 200 Killed, Hundreds Injured in Series of Blasts at Sri Lankan Hotels & Churches

NEGOMBO - A series of eight explosions rocked Catholic churches and luxury hotels in Sri Lanka as Christians began Easter Sunday celebrations, with over 200 killed and hundreds injured, media reported, citing police.

The blasts started at around 8:45am local time at St. Anthony's Church in Colombo and St. Sebastian's Church in Negombo, a Catholic-majority town outside of the capital. The Zion Church in Batticaloa on the eastern coast was also targeted. At around the same time, the Shangri-La, Cinnamon Grand and Kingsbury five-star hotels were also hit, police confirmed.

Two more explosions happened later in the day, targeting two more locations in



Colombo. All attacks appear to have been coordinated.

At least 207 people were killed, Reuters re-

ported, citing police. More than 450 were injured in the attacks. Alleged footage of the aftermath, shared on social media, showed

chaos and large-scale destruction inside at least one of the churches. (RT)

UN Peacekeeper Killed in Mali Mine Explosion

BAMAKO - A UN peacekeeper was killed and four others wounded on Saturday when a mine exploded as their convoy passed through central Mali, the UN mission in the country said.

The blast hit part of the Egyptian contingent of the UN force close to the Burkina Faso border, the UN stabilisation mission in Mali (MINUSMA) said. The peacekeeper killed was Egyptian. One attacker was killed, according to a security source.

MINUSMA chief Mahamat Saleh Annadif called

it a "cowardly attack." UN chief Antonio Guterres's office issued a statement saying the UN peacekeepers "responded, killing an assailant and apprehending eight others."

He urged Malian authorities "to take swift action to identify the perpetrators of this attack and bring them to justice."

The UN mission was established in Mali after radical Islamist militias seized the north of the country in 2012. They were pushed back by French troops in 2013. ...*(More on P4)...(18)*

Indian, Australian Warships Arrive in China for Naval Parade

QINGDAO, China - Warships from India, Australia and several other nations arrived in the eastern Chinese port city of Qingdao on Sunday to attend a naval parade, part of a goodwill visit as China extends the hand of friendship despite regional tensions and suspicions.

China on Tuesday will mark 70 years since the founding of the People's Liberation Army Navy, where it will show off new warships including nuclear submarines and destroyers at a major

review in the waters off Qingdao.

China says warships from about a dozen nations are also taking part - one diplomatic source with direct knowledge said it was 13 countries in total - and the PLA is putting its best foot forward to welcome them.

India, which has been at odds with China over their disputed land border and Beijing's support for India's regional rival Pakistan, has sent stealth guided-missile destroyer the "INS Kolkata" to take part, along with a supply



ship. "We bring to you one of the best ships that we have made. It is the pride of the nation and the navy, and we are very

happy to be here," Captain Aditya Hara told reporters on the dockside after disembarking from the ship in Qingdao. ...*(More on P4)...(15)*

US Ambassador's Passover Wishes Spark Wave of Angry Comments from Poles



WARSAW - The U.S. ambassador to Poland sparked a wave of angry comments on Twitter after she wished Jews a happy Passover in Pol-

ish on Friday. Ambassador Georgette Mosbacher, who also wished Poles a happy Easter on Sunday, was accused of offending the

mostly Roman Catholic country with the tweet, with some calling it a "provocation."

Her tweet said: "On the occasion of the Feast of Pesach, commemorating the departure of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage tonight, I wish peace and joyful holidays! Chag Pesach Sameach, Happy Passover!"

It triggered many anti-Semitic comments including one claiming that "only Catholics live in Poland." Another said in part: "it

is a great snub for the Polish nation that just Jewish individuals still on this earth."

Robert Bakiewicz, a far-right activist who organizes a yearly Independence Day march said: "Christ died and was resurrected also for you, pagans and traitorous Jews."

Some came to Moschaber's defense, recalling that Poland also has a small Jewish population.

This weekend - during the 76th anniversary of the ...*(More on P4)...(16)*

Japan PM Abe Sends Offering to Yasukuni War Shrine

TOKYO - Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Sunday sent a ritual offering to the controversial Yasukuni war shrine, seen by Asian neighbours as a symbol of Japan's militarist past. The Tokyo shrine honours 2.5 million war dead but also top World War II criminals and has frequently been a source of sour relations with countries that suffered from Japan's military atrocities.

The conservative premier sent a sacred "masakaki" tree at the start of an annual spring festival.

"The prime minister, the speakers of the upper and lower houses, and the welfare minister" made offerings, said a shrine spokeswoman. Abe last visited the shrine in December 2013 to mark his first year in power, sparking fury in Beijing and Seoul and earning a diplomatic rebuke from close ally the United States.

He has since stayed away however as the leaders of both China and Japan attempt to maintain their improving but delicate relations. ...*(More on P4)...(19)*

Macron Popularity Still Weak after Notre-Dame Fire: Poll

PARIS - The popularity of French President Emmanuel Macron remains stuck at under 30 percent as he battles a series of political troubles, with no major change reported after the Notre-Dame fire, a poll said Sunday.

According to the Ifop poll for the Journal du Dimanche just 29 percent of people polled said they are satisfied with the job Macron is doing, with 69 percent dissatisfied.

This April reading was unchanged from the last poll in March, the newspaper said.

The poll, carried out up until April 20, was published at the end of a dramatic week for Macron which saw him address the nation over the damage to the Notre-Dame cathedral. ...*(More on P4)...(20)*

'Assaults on All Humanity': Turkey's Erdogan Condemns Sri Lankan Bombings

NEGOMBO - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has condemned the bombing attacks on Christian churches and hotels in Sri Lanka, which happened during the celebration of Easter.

Erdogan offered Turkey's condolences to the families of victims and a speedy recovery to the hundreds of people who were injured by Sunday's bombings.

Meanwhile, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu compared the attacks to the recent shooting in New Zealand, in which a white nationalist gunned down 50 people at two mosques in the city of Christchurch. ...*(More on P4)...(21)*

Experts Call for More China-U.S. Technology Cooperation

PHILADELPHIA, the United States - A panel of experts said that China and the United States should utilize their respective advantages and enhance cooperation in technology, such as artificial intelligence (AI). In a discussion at the 2019 Penn Wharton China Summit, Bill Huang, founder and CEO of CloudMinds, an operator of cloud-based systems for intelligent robots, said Saturday he thinks the United States is leading the world in software innovation, while China, with its industrial chain, has an



edge in hardware innovation.

In terms of AI, Huang said companies could focus their algorithm development in the United States, and implement their business plans in the Chinese market.

"I think China cannot do without America, and America cannot do without China," Huang said. Echoing Huang's remarks, Zhou Wei, founding managing ...*(More on P4)...(17)*

UK PM May to be Told to Quit by Top Conservative: Sunday Times

LONDON - A top member of Prime Minister Theresa May's Conservative Party will tell her in the coming week that she must step down by the end of June or her lawmakers will try again to depose her, the Sunday Times reported, without citing sources.

May survived a vote of no confidence in December and although party rules mean lawmakers cannot challenge her again until a year has passed, lawmaker Graham Brady will tell her the rules will be changed unless she quits, the newspaper said.

Brady, who chairs the Conservative Party's influential 1922 Committee of backbench lawmakers, will tell her that 70 percent of her members of parliament want her to resign over her handling of Brexit, the Sunday Times said.

Britain was originally due to leave the European Union on March 29, but that deadline was pushed back to April 12 and then again to Oct. 31 as May failed to break an impasse in parliament on the terms of Brexit. (Reuters)

New Mayor Calls Istanbul Rally for 'New Beginning'

ISTANBUL - Istanbul's new mayor on Sunday called for a rally to celebrate a "new beginning" urging people to unite after he won a highly contested race against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ruling party.

Ekrem Imamoglu, 49, of the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), narrowly edged out his rival to capture Istanbul mayor's office in a stingy setback to Erdogan's ruling AKP after a decade and a half in power.

The Justice and Development Party (AKP) is still seeking a rerun of the March 31 Istanbul ballot, but electoral authorities on Wednesday handed Imamoglu his mandate after he won a slim 13,000-vote lead over AKP's Binali Yildirim.

Imamoglu supporters were expected to pack the vast Maltepe shoreline area on the Asian side of Istanbul for the rally.

Imamoglu, a soft-spoken former district mayor who struck a conciliatory tone throughout the heated race, has vowed to serve all citizens of the 16-million strong city, regardless of their political inclinations.

"We are united now. The whole of Istanbul is meeting in Maltepe for a 'new beginning,'" the new mayor announced on his official Twitter account on Saturday.

Imamoglu, who will govern the city for the next five years, said the Maltepe rally was not a political gathering, but a way to introduce the city's new administration to the people of Istanbul. ...*(More on P4)...(22)*

Neighbor News

Iran Develops Drill to Clean Up Mud after Recent Floods

TEHRAN - A group of Iranian researchers managed to develop a horizontal drill used to suck up mud, after they realized flood-hit provinces need the drill but the country cannot import it due to the US sanctions.

The apparatus designed by researchers at Islamic Azad University, Qazvin Branch, was developed after an order was issued to produce a device that could clean up mud in flood-stricken areas.

Afterwards, a 12-strong team went into action

and developed the apparatus in a matter of just three days by utilizing whatever resources available to them.

The device was used to suck up mud in flood-hit areas after heavy downpours affected much of the country. The apparatus proved specifically useful because it was impossible to get to some areas with mechanical diggers and heavy vehicles. Officials say the apparatus could go into mass-production if needed. (IFP)

Iran, Iraq Discuss Reinforcing Parliamentary Ties

BAGHDAD - Iranian lawmaker Alaeddin Boroujerdi and the Speaker of the Council of Representatives of Iraq Mohamed al-Halbousi reviewed ways of developing parliamentary relations.

Al-Halbousi appreciated Iran's participation in inter-parliamentary meeting.

He once again sympathized with victims of the recent deadly floods in Iran. Meanwhile, Boroujerdi stressed Iran's all-out support for Iraq. He described holding

the inter-parliamentary meeting as a big success for Iraq.

Boroujerdi earlier held talks with Head of Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq Sheikh Humam Hamoudi, Head of the Badr Organization Hadi Al-Amiri and Head of the National Wisdom Movement of Iraq Seyyed Ammar Hakim.

The Iraqi Inter-parliamentary meeting was held with the attendance of Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Turkey and Jordan. (Agencies)

Pakistani PM Lands in Mashhad as First Step of Iran State Visit

TEHRAN - The plane carrying Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan and his accompanying delegation landed at Shahid Hashemi Nejad Airport in the northeastern city of Mashhad to start their official visit to Iran.

Accompanied by several ministers, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan arrived in the northeastern Iranian holy city of Mashhad.

Upon his arrival at Shahid Hashemi Nejad Airport in Mashhad,

the Pakistani premier and his accompanying high-ranking delegation were welcomed by Khorasan Razavi provincial governor and some other officials in the province.

Imran Khan is scheduled to visit the holy shrine of the 8th Imam of Shia in Mashhad and then hold a meeting with the custodian of the shrine.

During the important trip, the Pakistani prime minister is accompanied by several ministers. (MNA)

Economic Corridor to Further Boost Pakistan's Development

ISLAMABAD - The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), from China's Kashgar to Pakistan's Gwadar, has managed to promote connectivity across Pakistan by a network of highways, railways, pipelines, and optical cables and is expected to further boost the economic growth of Pakistan.

Expected to link the Silk Road Economic Belt in the north with the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road in the south, CPEC provides an opportunity for Pakistan to be a transport hub for South Asia, Central and Western Asia, Middle East and Western China

by energy, infrastructure, industrial cooperation, and Gwadar port construction, according to a report carried by China Global Television Network (CGTN) here on Sunday.

Half of 22 projects under CPEC belong to energy construction. The Port Qasim coal-fired power plant, jointly financed and constructed by Qatar's Al-Mirqab Capital and Power Construction Corporation of China (PowerChina) is the first one to implement, capable to generate nine billion units of

electricity to about four million households in the country.

The upgradation plan of Karakorum Highway (KKH), part of an arterial road from Pakistan's north to south and the only land route connecting China and Pakistan, and Peshawar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to Karachi Railways, or the ML-1, will promote connectivity, facilitate local economy and people's lives along the route.

Launched on March 29, New Gwadar International Airport is a 230-million-US-dollar project funded by the Chinese government, which would link Pakistan's southwest Gwadar port city, 600km east of the world's biggest energy choke point, the Strait of Hormuz, with the rest of the world.

After the gradual improvement of energy, power and transportation, Pakistan aims to take steps on construction of special economic zones (SEZs) under CPEC with the Finance Ministry already requiring the board of investment to approve application of companies interested in investing in the SEZs in 45 days from previous 90 days this year. (Agencies)