

World News Roundup

Shooting

Good cop: mayor

New Jersey shooting kills 6, including police officer

JERSEY CITY, NJ, Dec 11, (AP): Six people, including a police officer and three bystanders, were killed in a furious gun battle Tuesday that filled the streets of Jersey City with the sound of heavy fire for hours, authorities said.

The dead included the two gunmen, Jersey City Police Chief Michael Kelly said.

The slain officer, Detective Joseph Seals, 40, was credited by his superiors with having led the department in the number of illegal guns removed from the streets in recent years, and might have been trying to stop an incident involving such weapons when he was cut down by gunfire that erupted near a cemetery, authorities said.

The shooting then continued at a kosher supermarket about a mile away, where five more bodies were found, Kelly said.

Authorities believe the Jewish market was targeted by the gunmen, Jersey City Mayor Steven Fulop tweeted Tuesday night. Fulop, whose public safety director said earlier in the day that terrorism wasn't suspected, did not elaborate on why authorities now believe the market was targeted.

Messages were left Tuesday night seeking comment on Fulop's tweet.

"It's a really tough day for the city of Jersey City," Fulop said. Seals "was one of the best officers for getting the most guns off the streets. He was a good cop."

Two other officers were wounded but were later released from the hospital, authorities said.

The bullets started flying early in the afternoon in the city of about 270,000 people, situated across the Hudson River from New York City. Seals, who worked for a unit called Cease Fire, was shot around 12:30 pm. The gunmen then drove a stolen rental van to another part of the city and engaged police in a lengthy shootout.

Kelly said when police responded to the area of the kosher store, officers "were immediately engaged by high-power rifle fire."

A video shot by a witness shows a police officer on the ground by a car, apparently wounded. Another officer goes to him, helps him up and the two run around a corner as gunshots ring out. Seconds later, as a police cruiser pulls up in front of the store, about a dozen shots are heard in rapid succession.

"Our officers were under fire for hours," the chief said.

Inside the grocery store, police found the bodies of who they believed were the two gunmen and three other people who apparently happened to be there when the assailants rushed in, authorities said. Police said they were confident the bystanders were shot by the gunmen and not by police.



Fulop



An Indian protester shouts slogans near fire set on a road during a protest against the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) in Guwahati, India on Dec 11. (AP)

India parliament set to vote on citizenship bill

India's ruling Hindu nationalists pushed for final parliamentary approval on Wednesday for a law that critics say undermines the country's secular constitution by granting citizenship to non-Muslim minorities from three neighbouring countries.

Having obtained assent from the lower house of parliament a day earlier, Home Minister Amit Shah tabled the Citizenship Amendment Bill in the

upper house and a vote is expected late on Wednesday.

Opposition parties, minority groups, academics and a US federal panel have contested the proposed law, which would for the first time provide a legal route to Indian citizenship based on religion, calling it discriminatory against Muslims.

The bill seeks to give citizenship to Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains,

Parsis and Sikhs, who fled Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan before 2015.

Protests against the bill turned violent on Wednesday in India's ethnically diverse northeastern region, with the army deploying troops in Tripura state and putting reinforcements on standby in neighbouring Assam, where police battled thousands of protesters. (RTRS)

Asia

Suu Kyi rejects genocide charge:

Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi on Wednesday rejected accusations of genocide committed against her country's Muslim Rohingya minority as "incomplete and misleading", and said the case should not be heard by the UN's highest court.

The Nobel Peace laureate, speaking during three days of hearings at the International Court of Justice, challenged allegations in a lawsuit brought by Gambia last month accusing Myanmar of violating the 1948 Genocide Convention.

Suu Kyi, once feted in the West as a heroine of democracy, spoke for about 30 minutes at the courtroom in The Hague in defence of the actions of the Myanmar military that for years had kept her under

house arrest.

She said a military-led "clearance operation" in western Rakhine State in August 2017 was a counterterrorism response to coordinated Rohingya militant attacks against dozens of police stations. (RTRS)

Experts quit police probe: Foreign



Suu Kyi



Lam

experts recruited to add legitimacy to Hong Kong's police watchdog quit Wednesday, saying the agency lacks teeth.

The expert panel's decision to stand aside is likely to increase pressure on the territory's government for an independent probe of police behavior during six months of pro-democracy protests.

Critics of the police watchdog had previously argued that the agency lacks independence and powers to credibly investigate policing of the protests.

The panel of international experts that the agency turned to in September for experience and advice ended up drawing a similar conclusion.

An independent investigation of police conduct is among the movement's key demands, resisted by Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam. Lam travels to Beijing this weekend for regularly scheduled meetings with Communist Party leaders. (AP)

Europe

French PM defies unions:

Prime Minister Edouard Philippe on Wednesday defied striking workers on Wednesday with plans for a long-anticipated overhaul of France's byzantine pension system that he said would be fairer and encourage people to work longer.

France would replace a convoluted system of more than 42 separate state-funded plans with a universal, points-based system that will apply to those entering the job market for the first time in 2022, Philippe said in a speech that followed days of protests and strikes.

He did though show some flexibility to unions over the timing of the implementation of the plan, saying anyone within 17 years of retirement would be exempt.

"The time has come to build a universal pension system," Philippe said in a much-anticipated speech. "There is no hidden agenda. We want to protect the purchasing power of the workers and pensioners of today and tomorrow."

The legal retirement age would remain at 62, the prime minister said, but workers would be incentivised to work longer. He said he expected that within five years the average worker would retire at 64.

There would be a minimum pension of 1,000 euros (\$1,102.20) per month for those who worked a full career.

Reform of France's pension system, which offers some of the most generous benefits in the industrialised world, has proven a treacherous task for past and present governments. (RTRS)

Protest against Babis:

Tens of thousands of Czechs returned to the streets of Prague on Tuesday to urge Prime Minister Andrej Babis to resign.

The protest at the central Wenceslas Square and a march followed two huge rallies earlier this year when a quarter of a million people demanded that Babis step down in the biggest such demonstrations since the 1989 anti-Communist Velvet Revolution.

The latest protest was fueled by the move of the country's chief prosecutor who overturned last week a previous decision to drop charges Babis was facing over alleged fraud involving European Union subsidies.

In a separate case, a leaked EU report in recent days concluded that Babis might have had a conflict of interest over EU subsidies involving his former business empire. The European Commission has not published the result of its audit because the procedure hasn't been completed.

"Resign, resign," the crowd chanted.

Babis, a populist billionaire, has denied wrongdoing and repeatedly said he wasn't planning to leave office. (AP)



Philippe

Lulu strengthens presence in Kuwait . . Opens 10th Hypermarket



In a bid to further strengthen its presence in the State of Kuwait, retail major Lulu Group has opened yet another hypermarket in the country. The latest hypermarket which is also 10th in Kuwait was inaugurated by H.E. Abdul Kareem Taqi Abdul Kareem, General Manager of public Authority for Industries, Kuwait in the presence of the ambassadors of the United Arab Emirates, India, Nepal, Malaysia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, the Philippines and South Africa and a large number of diplomats in addition to many prominent Kuwaiti figures at Al Hashan Commercial Complex in Fahaheel.

The new hypermarket, which is one of the largest hypermarkets in the country is also 184th of the group globally. The 150,000 square feet three level hypermarket was designed according to the best design concepts serving a large number of residents in Fahaheel and its surrounding areas. The focus has been on providing shoppers with a convenient and

comfortable shopping experience. The interiors, well-planned retail floor layout, ample aisle space, extensively laid out counters and liberal parking space contribute to a relaxed world class shopping experience.

Commenting on the opening of the new hypermarket, Yusuff Ali MA, Chairman of Lulu Group said, "it has been our policy to bring unique shopping experience closer to the residents rather than making them drive long distance. With the opening of this new market, the citizens and residents staying here will have huge options of quality products at attractive and competitive prices". We also believe that this new shopping center will further strengthen our presence and help us to give more value to our shoppers in Kuwait, added Yusuffali.

Yusuff Ali further said that Lulu has always been committed to support and promote Kuwait agricultural sector. As part of this initiative, dedicated sections

for locally grown vegetables and fruits especially organic have been arranged. Due to our efforts, we are seeing good growth and popularity of locally grown agricultural produce among the largest sections of the population".

Lulu has been on an aggressive expansion drive with more than 20 new hypermarkets and malls slated to open within the next two years in different GCC countries, Egypt and Far East.

The new branch offers a wide range of departments that meet the needs of all shoppers including fresh foods, fruits, vegetables, groceries, and hygiene products as well as electronics, fashion, appliances, home appliances, and mobile phones.

Also present were Saifee Rupwala, CEO, Ashraf Ali MA, Executive Director, Mohamed Haris, Lulu Kuwait Director and other senior officials. A large number of people from different walks of life were also present on the occasion.

