

Five killed in Melbourne plane crash



Smoke and flames after a plane crashed into a shopping centre in Melbourne

Melbourne

A light aircraft smashed into shops and exploded into a "massive fireball" killing all five on board, including four American passengers reportedly golfers on the trip of a lifetime, officials in Australia said yesterday.

The twin-engined Beechcraft plane veered just after take-off into a shopping centre, that was still closed, next to Essendon Fields airport near Melbourne.

"Five on the aircraft and looks like no one has survived the crash," said Victoria Police Assistant Commissioner Stephen Leane.

Premier Daniel Andrews described it as "the worst civil aviation accident in last 30 years".

The private charter

from Essendon, north of Melbourne, to King Island, 55 minutes to the south, came down just short of a major motorway packed with the heavy traffic of early morning commuters.

A column of thick black smoke rose into the air as witnesses spoke of an explosion.

"The pilot unfortunately attempted to return to Essendon but has crashed into the DFO (Direct Factory Outlet) at Essendon Fields," Leane told reporters.

The centre was not due to open for another hour and the authorities confirmed no one inside was hurt.

A taxi driver called ABC radio and told of the "massive fireball" and a landing wheel bouncing onto the motorway.

"I saw this plane when it hit the building there was a massive fireball," said the man called Jason.

Victoria Police Superintendent Mick Frewen said investigations centred on a "catastrophic engine failure".

The highly experienced 60-year-old Australian pilot made a May-Day call before crashing.

A shopworker called Ash told Sky News he saw "the fireball go up into the air".

"The fire was just so hot we could not get anywhere near it," he said. "We could see the wreckage, or what was left of it."

The US embassy in Canberra said the four passengers were American citizens. - (AFP)

#PollToday



Have you ever subjected to online blackmailing?

Yes No Can't Say



I call on the United Kingdom to accept its responsibility for adolescent migrants in France at the moment who have family on the other side of the Channel

Francois Hollande
French President

Rest in sight

Italy taxis drivers strike over 'Uber' benefits



Hundreds of taxi drivers protested in Rome yesterday as a strike over delays to Italian legislation regulating Uber entered its sixth day.

Nepal to hold first local elections in 20 years

Nepal will hold its first local elections in two decades in May, the government has announced, a key moment in the country's fraught transition to democracy.

1.4 million children face famine in four countries

Almost 1.4 million children suffering from severe malnutrition could die this year from famine in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen, the UN children's agency said yesterday.

France arrests 3 suspected of planning terror attack

French police yesterday arrested three men suspected of planning a terror attack in raids in the Paris area, Marseille and the central city of Clermont-Ferrand.

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India arrests heads of adoption centre

Kolkata

Indian police said yesterday they have arrested the heads of an adoption centre suspected of selling at least 17 children to foreign couples.

Investigators said children aged between six months and 14 years were sold to couples from Europe, America and Asia for between \$12,000 and \$23,000 and taken out of the country.

Police in the eastern state of West Bengal arrested Chandana Chakraborty, head of the Bimala Sishu Griha centre, and her deputy Sonali Mondal at the weekend after a tip-off from the federal adoption agency.

"In the last two to three years, they have sold at least 17 children," a police officer told AFP on condition of anonymity.



Indian police officials escort Chandana Chakraborty (C)

"We will try to contact the couples and are expecting more arrests in coming days."

One French couple paid 1.5 million rupees (\$23,000) for a child in 2015, he said.

The women were also involved in running two other homes in the area.

Investigators said they had been monitoring the charity since June when child welfare authorities found discrepancies in their records.

Japan zoo culls monkeys carrying 'invasive' genes

Tokyo

A Japanese zoo has culled 57 native snow monkeys by lethal injection after finding that they carried genes of an "invasive alien species", officials said yesterday.

The Takagoyama Nature Zoo in the city of Futtsu in Chiba prefecture east of Tokyo, housed 164 simians which it believed were all pure Japanese macaques.

But the operator and local officials discovered about one-third were crossbred with the rhesus macaque, which in Japan is designated an "invasive alien species".

Japanese law bans the possession and transport of invasive species, including the crossbreeds, and that culling of them is allowed under the law.

He said the monkeys were put to death by lethal injection over about one month ending early February.

Snow monkey-rhesus macaque crossbreeds were designated for culling when Japan's environment law was revised in 2013.

"They have to be killed to protect the indigenous environment," an official with the Chiba prefectural government said.

Long-lost lions from French King tomb to be auctioned

London

A sculpture of two lions carved for the tomb of French king Charles V that was thought lost in the French Revolution will soon go under the hammer in London, auction house Christie's said yesterday.

The 14th-century marble work by French artist Andre Beauneveu, which had been held in a private British collection for more than two centuries, will be sold on July 6.

The lions were carved as near mirror images of each another, with strikingly detailed manes and one baring its teeth.

Beauneveu was commissioned by the king shortly after he came to the throne, and was tasked with constructing four family tombs.

The lions were sculpted over two years from 1364 to 1366,



An employee with re-discovered sculpture of two carved lions

according to Christie's, and placed at the foot of Charles's tomb.

But the family tombs were dismantled in 1793 by France's revolutionary government, and the lions were purchased in 1802 by Thomas Neave.

The emergence of the sculpture represents a "remarkable rediscovery", Christie's said. (AFP)

Bodies of migrants wash up on Libya beach



Tripoli

The bodies of 74 migrants who drowned in the Mediterranean trying to reach Europe have washed up on a beach west of the Libyan capital.

Residents of the village of Harcha, outside Zawiya, 45 kilometres from Tripoli, alerted the emergency services after finding a

wrecked boat on the beach with bodies inside.

More were discovered elsewhere on the beach and still more were feared to be in the sea.

An International Organization for Migration said the boat was reported to have foundered on Sunday, leaving as many as 100 people dead.