

'Shoot me' if I become a dictator: Duterte

Manila
Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte yesterday instructed the army and police to shoot him if he became a dictator and stayed on beyond his term, a scenario his foes are warning against, amid moves by his loyalists to change the constitution.

The firebrand leader sought to dispel speculation he had ordered loyalists in Congress to introduce a federal system that would let him stay in power beyond 2022, when his single term ends.

"If I overstay and wanted to become a dictator, shoot me, I am not joking," Duterte told soldiers during an army base visit, adding that security forces should not allow anybody to mess with the constitution.

"It is your job to protect the constitution and to protect the people. Remember, it is your solemn duty."



Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte

Duterte has advocated federalism to tackle inequality, empower provinces and recognise the country's diverse makeup.

Last week, his lower house allies voted to convene a constituent assembly to revise the charter by May this year, scrapping mid-term elections next year and extending the terms of all elected officials.

Constitutional reform has been a divisive issue, with critics accusing lawmakers of trying to prolong their stay in office, or of seeking a way for

the hugely popular Duterte to cling to power beyond the end of his term.

Opponents warn it could lead to a repeat of the oppressive rule of late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, saying they are troubled by Duterte's admiration for Marcos and his similar authoritarian traits.

Duterte's spokesman, Harry Roque, has repeatedly said the president has no desire to stay longer than his term and, if anything, would prefer to retire earlier. (Reuters)

Dead Sea Scroll deciphered

Jerusalem
Israeli scholars have pieced together and deciphered one of two previously unread manuscripts of the Dead Sea Scrolls more than half a century since their discovery, an Israeli university has said.

The more than 60 tiny fragments of parchment bearing encrypted Hebrew writing had previously been thought to come from a variety of different scrolls, a Haifa University spokesman told AFP yesterday.

But Eshbal Ratson and Jonathan Ben-Dov of the university's Bible studies department found the pieces all fit together after they started

examining them just under a year ago, Ilan Yavelberg said.

"They put it all together and said it was actually one scroll," he said.

A Haifa University statement said that Ratson and Ben-Dov were now working on deciphering the last remaining scroll. (AFP)



A conservator at the Dead Sea Scrolls laboratory works on fragments of a Dead Sea Scroll

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US Vice President Mike Pence says the Embassy in Jerusalem will open by the end of 2019. Do you think this will be possible?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Cant Say



"We consider that the sanctions (by US) are imposed absolutely without any grounds as for the reasons behind them... Russia's honest, open and constructive policy cannot be changed by them,"

Sergei Lavrov
Russian Foreign Minister

Rest in sight

Nationwide jail strike hits France



A series of attacks on prison guards by inmates at jails across the country has led to a nationwide strike.

16 injured in Sydney train accident

At least 16 people were injured when a passenger train hit a rail buffer at a railway station in Sydney.

3 killed in Thai market bombing

At least three people were killed and another 18 wounded in a bomb explosion at a market in Thailand.

Thirteen dead in Colombia landslide

Thirteen persons, including two minors and two women, have died in a landslide in Colombia that dragged down a small bus near the Ecuadorian border.

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Indian states seek last-ditch film ban amid protests



The charred remains of a bus torched by protesters

Mumbai

Indian state governments made a last-ditch attempt yesterday to ban a Bollywood film about a mythical Hindu queen which has sparked violent protests by radical groups.

The Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh governments asked India's top court to retract

a ruling ordering states to show the film "Padmaavat", which is due to hit screens on Thursday.

The urgent petitions, which the Supreme Court will hear on Tuesday, were lodged a day after Hindu extremists set fire to buses and blocked roads in Gujarat state. (AFP)

Ecuador president calls Julian Assange a 'problem'

Quito

The president of Ecuador Lenin Moreno on Sunday described WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange as an "inherited problem" that has created "more than a nuisance" for his government.

"We hope to have a positive result" on the issue, he said in an interview with television networks.

Earlier this month, Ecuador announced it had granted citizenship to Assange, in an unsuccessful

attempt to provide him with diplomatic immunity and usher him out of its London embassy without the threat of arrest by Britain.

Moreno said his country was continuing to seek mediation involving "important people," without specifying whom he meant.

Assange fled to the embassy in 2012 to avoid being extradited to Sweden for alleged sex crimes, which he denies, and has remained in the building ever since. (AFP)

Mexico sees deadliest year on record

There were more than 25,000 murders across drug-ravaged Mexico in 2017, the highest annual tally since modern records began. The number is higher than the peak year of Mexico's drug war in 2011

