

Dozen died in Bangladesh detention after revolution: rights group

Dhaka(News Desk) At least a dozen people died in detention in Bangladesh since last year's revolution, including by torture and gunshot wounds, a rights group said Wednesday.

Odhikar, one of the South Asian nation's largest human rights organisations, demanded justice from the interim government that took over after the student-led revolution that toppled former prime minister Sheikh Hasina. "The interim government should not let these crimes go unpunished," Odhikar director ASM Nasiruddin Elan told AFP. "Those involved in extrajudicial killings must be brought to justice." Odhikar detailed in a report how security forces during Hasina's 15-year-long autocratic rule engaged in widespread killings to bolster her power — and accused the same agencies of continuing to commit human rights violations since she fled. Hasina escaped into exile to neighbouring India on August 5, capping an uprising in which the United Nations says more than 1,400 people could have been killed, and has since defied an arrest warrant to face trial for crimes against humanity.

Israel threatens to resume 'intense fighting' in Gaza if no prisoners released

JERUSALEM: (News Desk) Israel threatened on Tuesday to resume "intense fighting" in Gaza if no prisoners were released this weekend, echoing a warning from US President Donald Trump that has strained the fragile truce deal.

Trump, who has taken credit for securing the agreement that went into effect last month, said that "hell" would break out if Hamas failed to release "all" Israeli prisoners by Saturday.

As he was hosting Jordan's King Abdullah II at the White House on Tuesday, Trump was asked whether his deadline still held, and said "Yes". Under the terms of the ceasefire, which has largely halted more than 15 months of fighting in Gaza, prisoners were to be released in batches in exchange for Palestinians in Israeli custody.

So far, Israel and Hamas have completed five prisoner swaps. But the agreement has come under increasing strain in recent days, prompting diplomatic efforts to salvage it.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that "if Hamas does not return our hostages by Saturday noon, the ceasefire will end, and the IDF (Israeli military) will resume intense fighting until Hamas is decisively defeated".

Tensions, which initially spiked after Trump proposed last month taking over Gaza and removing its more than two million inhabitants, have grown following his latest comments. "As far as I'm concerned, if all of the hostages aren't returned by Saturday 12 o'clock... I would say cancel it and all bets are off and let hell break out," Trump said on Monday.

UK, US refuse to sign AI declaration

PARIS:(News Desk) The UK and US have not signed an international agreement on artificial intelligence (AI) at a global summit in Paris, the BBC reported on Tuesday.

The summit on the future of artificial intelligence urged that the fast-moving new technology must be "open", "ethical" and flanked by international governance, but the statement was not signed by Britain or the United States or key industry players.

The 61 signatories, including China, France, Germany and India, agreed it is a priority to ensure "AI is open, inclusive, transparent, ethical, safe, secure and trustworthy, taking into account international frameworks for all," said the closing statement.

Downing Street said the UK "hadn't been able to agree all parts of the leaders' declaration" and would "only ever sign up to initiatives that are in UK national interests" — but has not spelt out which parts of the communiqué the UK objected to, as per the report from the BBC.

"You'd only ever expect us to sign up to initiatives that we judge to be in our national interest," Prime Minister Keir Starmer's spokesman told reporters.

Earlier, US Vice President JD Vance warned against "excessive regulation" of artificial intelligence at a Paris summit on the technology, warning both European allies and rivals like China against tightening governments' grip. "Excessive regulation of the AI sector could kill a transformative sector just as it's taking off," Vance told global leaders and tech industry chiefs in the opulent surroundings of the French capital's Grand Palais.

He singled out the European Union's Digital Services Act by name for criticism over "massive regulations it created about taking down content and policing so-called misinformation" that he said placed an unfair burden on American tech giants. Vance also jabbed at China as one of several "authoritarian regimes" he said were looking to use AI for increased control of citizens at home and other countries abroad. "Partnering with them means chaining your nation to an authoritarian master that seeks to infiltrate, dig in and seize your information infrastructure," Vance said. Vance told world leaders that AI was "an opportunity that the Trump administration will not squander" and said "pro-growth AI policies" should be prioritised over safety.



An Elon Musk aide was mistakenly given clearance to make changes to the US Treasury Department's highly sensitive payments system containing millions of Americans' personal information, a department official said on Tuesday.

Trump fires USAID inspector general: reports

Washington(News Desk) US President Donald Trump has fired the independent inspector general for the US Agency for International Development (USAID), US media outlets reported on Wednesday.

Paul Martin's dismissal came a day after his office issued a report critical of the Trump administration's efforts to dismantle the agency, the Washington Post, CNN and others reported.

They cited a two-sentence email from the White House sent on Tuesday to Martin telling him his position was "terminated, effective immediately", but with no explanation of the reasons for the decision.

His office's report had warned that more than \$489 million in food assistance was at risk of spoilage or potential diversion after the Trump administration implemented an aid freeze and stop-work order.

The report said it had long "identified significant challenges and offered recommendations to improve Agency programming to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse." "However, recent widespread staffing reductions across the Agency... coupled with uncertainty about the scope of foreign assistance waivers and permissible communications with implementers, has degraded USAID's ability to distribute and safeguard taxpayer-funded

humanitarian assistance." Trump had already fired 18 inspectors general, who are independent watchdogs of the federal government, but Martin — appointed by Trump's predecessor Joe Biden — had remained in place. Trump, who began his second term last month, has launched a crusade led by his top donor Elon Musk, the world's richest man, to downsize or dismantle swaths of the US government.

Musk aide given payment system access by mistake: US official

Washington(News Desk) An Elon Musk aide was mistakenly given clearance to make changes to the US Treasury Department's highly sensitive payments system containing millions of Americans' personal information, a department official said on Tuesday.

The admission came in a sworn statement to a federal judge amid heated criticism that the 25-year-old employee of billionaire Musk had ed-

ited rights to a system that handles trillions of dollars in government payments. The employee, Marko Elez — who had no federal government status — resigned Friday after being linked to a racist social media account, only for Musk to announce that he was being reinstated. President Donald Trump has tasked Musk with taking an axe to government spending as the leader of a new agency

called the Department of Government Efficiency, or Doge. The sworn statement, seen by AFP, says that Elez was supposed to gain read-only access to the system, under the supervision of the Bureau of the Fiscal Service, the Treasury Department section that manages payments and collections. "On the morning of February 6, it was discovered that Mr Elez's database access to SPS on February 5

had mistakenly been configured with read/write permissions instead read-only," said the statement from Joseph Gioeli, an official from the payments section. SPS stands for Secure Payment System. An initial investigation showed all of Elez's interactions with the SPS system occurred within a supervised session and that "no unauthorised actions had taken place", the official added.



(LEFT to right) France's Minister for Foreign Affairs Jean-Noel Barrot, Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Digital Technology Minister Clara Chappaz pose after arriving for a plenary session of the Artificial Intelligence summit

BYD to integrate DeepSeek software into its cars

BEIJING: (News Desk) Shares in Chinese automaker BYD jumped on Tuesday after it unveiled plans to unroll advanced self-driving technology on nearly all its cars, including budget models priced below \$10,000.

The company also said it would integrate AI start-up Deepseek's software into its cars, following

domestic peers such as Geely, Great Wall Motors, and Leapmotor. BYD is Tesla's biggest rival in China and increasingly abroad, and Monday evening's announcement led analysts to suggest a new price war might be on the horizon.

BYD will install its autonomous driving sys-

tem in at least 21 models, including the Seagull budget hatchback priced from 69,800 yuan (\$9,550) and increasingly abroad, and Monday evening's announcement led analysts to suggest a new price war might be on the horizon. The system includes features such as remote parking and autonomous highway

navigation previously found on more expensive vehicles. Tesla has similar features available in its EVs priced from \$32,000.

"Autonomous driving is no longer a remote rarity, it's a... necessary tool," BYD founder Wang Chuanfu said at a livestreamed event on Monday.

Google changes name of Gulf of Mexico to 'Gulf of America'

SAN FRANCISCO: (News Desk) Google on Monday changed the name of the Gulf of Mexico to "Gulf of America" for those using its Maps platform inside the United States, complying with an executive order by President Donald Trump.

The tech giant wrote in a blog post that users outside the United States will continue to see both the original and new name for the Gulf of Mexico, as is the case for other disputed locations. "People using Maps in the US will see 'Gulf of America,' and people in Mexico will see 'Gulf of Mexico.' Everyone else will see both names," Google wrote.

Google said the change aligns with its policy of following official US government geographic designations through the Geographic Names Information System. Upon taking office, Trump signed executive orders not only changing the name of the Gulf of Mexico but also reverting the name of Denali, America's highest peak, to its former moniker Mt. McKinley. In 2015, then-president Barack Obama officially recognised the Alaska mountain as Denali, the name used by Alaska Natives for centuries.

Jordan opposes Trump plan to take over Gaza

WASHINGTON: (News Desk) Jordan's King Abdullah II told Donald Trump on Tuesday that his country would take in some 2,000 sick children from Gaza, but pushed back against the US president's plan to take over the Palestinian territory and send its population into exile.

"I reiterated Jordan's steadfast position against the displacement of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. This is the unified Arab position.

"Rebuilding Gaza without displacing the Palestinians and addressing the dire humanitarian situation should be the priority for all," Abdullah said on social media after the talks.

However, he told Trump that Egypt was working on a plan for how countries in the region could "work" with Trump on the proposal.

The Jordanian monarch also appeared to offer a sweetener to Trump, who had just the day before the visit floated the possibility of halting US aid to Jordan if it did not take refugees.

"One of the things that we can do right away is take 2,000 children, cancer children who are in a very ill state. That is possible," King Abdullah said as Trump welcomed him and Crown Prince Hussein in the Oval Office. Trump replied that it was "really a beautiful gesture" and said he didn't know about it before the Jordanian monarch's arrival at the White House.

South Africa win toss, bat against Pakistan in tri-series

Lahore(News Desk) South Africa won the toss and chose to bat against Pakistan in the third match of the three-nation tournament in Karachi on Wednesday.

South Africa, who lost to New Zealand in their first game, made four changes, with star batter Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, Corbin Bosch and Tony de Zorzi coming into the side.

Pakistan made two changes from their defeat against New Zealand in the first match in Lahore, bringing in Saud Shakeel and Mohammad Hasnain in place of injured Haris Rauf and Kamran Ghulam.

The winner will face New Zealand in the final scheduled for Friday, also in Karachi. Teams: Pakistan: Mohammad Rizwan (captain), Fakhar Zaman, Babar Azam, Saud Shakeel, Tayyab Tahir, Salman Agha, Khushdil Shah, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah, Mohammad Hasnain, Abrar Ahmed. South Africa: Temba Bavuma (captain), Tony de Zorzi, Matthew Breetzke, Kyle Verreynne, Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, Senuran Muthusamy, Wiaan Mulder, Tbraiz Shamsi, Corbin Bosch, Lungi Ngidi. Umpires: Asif Yaqoob (PAK) and Michael Gough (ENG). TV Umpire: Richard Illingworth (ENG)

Pakistan, South Africa clash for spot in tri-series final

KARACHI: (News Desk) The last time Pakistan played a One-day International against South Africa, they completed a whitewash over the side, that too away from home.

When the two teams clash on Wednesday, they will be on Pakistan's home turf here at the recently-renovated National Bank Stadium.

And the tri-nation series contest is set to be a virtual semi-final, with New Zealand having sealed their place in Friday's finale with clinical wins against both Pakistan and South Africa in Lahore.

South Africa will go into the match with a number of their first-choice players rested and less experienced players given the opportunity to vie for a regular place in the side.

While that would relieve the visitors from some pressure, it will be the other way around for Pakistan, who are full-strength, at home, and one defeat away from being deprived of playing the final in front of home fans.

Mohammad Rizwan and co have worries to deal with. Their batters, barring Fakhar Zaman, looked toothless against New Zealand. Their spinners didn't pose real threats and their pacers were taken to the cleaners.

The belief in the side's dressing room seems to be quite a straightforward one; it was a bad day at office. "Cricket depends on performances on the given day," Pakistan batter Tayyab Tahir said in the pre-match press conference here on Tuesday. "Sometimes things don't go your way, and people start analysing weaknesses based on one match. At the end of the day, one team has to win, and the other has to lose. The team that plays better on the day comes out victorious."

Tayyab was Pakistan's third-highest run-maker in the New Zealand fixture with 30, before the right-hander fell prey to a brilliant catch by Glenn Phillips.

He played at number six to make that contribution, despite being a regular higher up the order in domestic cricket. Meanwhile, former skipper Babar Azam has been promoted to the opening position as Pakistan experiment days ahead of the ICC Champions Trophy, which starts next week.

US sanctions strand Iran, Russia oil on tankers, driving up crude costs

Washington(News Desk) The amount of Russian and Iranian oil held on ships has hit multi-month highs as harsher US sanctions reduced the number of buyers, leaving fewer tankers available to deliver cargoes and driving up crude costs, trade sources and analysts said.

Washington has imposed multiple rounds of sanctions on ships and entities dealing with oil from Iran and Russia since October, disrupting trade with major importers China and India. US President Donald

Trump last week restored his "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran that includes efforts to drive its oil exports down to zero in order to stop Tehran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

The OPEC producer has struggled to attract new vessels to fill the shipping capacity gap since the sanctions were imposed in the fourth quarter, said Xu Muyu, a senior analyst at data analytics firm Kpler.

A ban last month by China's Shandong Port Group on sanctioned

tankers from calling at its ports in the eastern province, home to most of the independent refiners that are the main buyers of Russian and Iranian oil, has also made it difficult for such cargoes to discharge.

Shipbroker Braemar ACM said 57 per cent of the 126 Very Large Crude Carriers (VLCCs) currently involved in Iran's crude trade to China are already subject to US sanctions.

As exports have risen and deliveries to China have dropped, the amount of Iranian oil in

floating storage has expanded by between 10 million and 20 million barrels so far this year, according to three analysts' estimates.

However, calculations of the total volume of Iranian oil in floating storage vary widely as the analysts use different methodologies to track the so-called shadow fleet.

Data from Kpler showed Iranian oil floating storage at more than 25 million barrels, the highest in more than a year, with about 80pc of the cargoes floating off the waters of Singapore and Malay-

sia. In contrast, Emma Li, a senior analyst at tanker tracker Vortexa Analytics, estimates the volume of Iranian crude and condensate in floating storage stood at 73.1 million barrels at the end of January. Iran's exports rose for a second month to 1.78 million barrels in January after hitting a two-year low of 1.45 million in November, she said.

"Smuggling techniques such as deactivating and spoofing AIS transponders and undertaking ship-to-ship transfers means there may be

even more Iranian oil starting to float," said Richard Bronze, head of geopolitics at consultancy Energy Aspects. With fewer non-sanctioned ships to deliver oil to China, crude prices have climbed. Discounts for flagship Iranian Light crude have narrowed to 50 cents per barrel against ICE Brent, a multi-year peak, versus discounts of \$2.50 per barrel about two months ago, on a delivered ex-ship (DES) basis to Shandong province for a cargo arriving in March, traders said.