



The leader and top candidate for Chancellor of Germany's CDU Friedrich Merz during a campaign event in Brilon, western Germany



Afghan Dy foreign minister for political affairs, Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanekzai (L), with Dy PM Abdul Ghani Baradar during a graduation event of madrassas



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz attends an event titled 'Day of Remembrance 80 Years Since the Liberation of Auschwitz - What Now?' in Frankfurt am Main



Syria's Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani (R) with his counterpart from Norway, Espen Barth Eide, before their meeting in Damascus

allovertheworld



Justin Cheung, Art and Objects specialist from Sotheby's New York, holds up a Joachim-Ma Stradivarius violin, an instrument of extraordinary historical significance, at Sotheby's Maison in Hong Kong on Sunday. The Joachim-Ma Stradivarius is expected to fetch 12 to 18 million USD at auction at Sotheby's New York this February

Will follow timeline set by govt for holding polls: Bangladesh EC

DHAKA: Bangladesh Election Commission said on Sunday that it will hold general elections on the timeline set by the interim government, asserting its commitment to free and fair polls. Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) AMM Nasir Uddin made the remarks during an event where the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) handed over technical equipment needed to update the voter lists, the Dhaka Tribune newspaper reported. The Election Commission received 175 laptops, 200 scanners and 4,300 bags for data collection from the UNDP. "We're focusing on the timeframe announced by the honourable chief advisor and working towards it," the CEC was quoted as saying by the bdnews24 news portal. Last month, Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus said the next general election in the country could take place by the end of 2025 or the first half of 2026. He had, however, said the timing of the election would largely depend upon the political consensus and the extent of the reforms that must be carried out before it. Nasir Uddin's comments came days after former prime minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) demanded that the general election be held by July or August of this year.

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SITUATIONS VACANT

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Biden says 'guns in Gaza have gone silent' under a deal he outlined

PTI, WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden on Sunday said that "the guns in Gaza have gone silent" under a ceasefire deal he outlined in May and hostages are being released as he underlined that now it falls to the next administration to help implement this agreement.

A ceasefire between Israel and Hamas began Sunday. Hours after the ceasefire began, Hamas freed three female hostages.

GAZA CEASEFIRE DEAL

"We got here without a wider war in the Middle East than many predicted. Now it falls to the next administration to help implement this deal," said Biden, who would hand over the presidency to Donald Trump on Monday.

"Success is going to require persistence and continuing support for our friends in the region and the belief in diplomacy backed by deterrence," Biden said in his remarks.

Trump, 78, will be sworn in as the 47th President of the United States Monday. He arrived here Saturday evening from Mar-a-Lago along with his family members. Af-

"We got here without a wider war in the Middle East than many predicted. Now it falls to the next administration to help implement this deal — Joe Biden, US President

ter attending fireworks at his Golf Resort in Sterling, Virginia, and attending receptions, Trump spent his night at Blair House, the official guest House of the US President. He moves into the White House on Monday afternoon.

In probably his last speech on the Gaza issue as the President, Biden said the ceasefire has gone into effect in Gaza. "And today we're seeing hostages being released."

"Four more women will be released in seven days. Three additional hostages every seven days thereafter, including at least two American citizens in this first phase. We pray for them and their families. They're going to have a long recovery ahead," he said.

"By the 16th day of the deal, talks will begin in the second phase. This phase includes the release of Israeli soldiers and a permanent end of the war without



US President Joe Biden speaks about the Israel-Hamas ceasefire and hostage deal in North Charleston, South Carolina, on Sunday

Hamas in power or able to threaten Israel. Hundreds of trucks are entering Gaza as I speak," he said, noting that the trucks are carrying assistance for civilians who suffered enormously from the war.

"After so much pain, destruction, and loss of life, today the guns in Gaza have gone silent," he said, adding that this was the deal that he had outlined for the world back on May 31.

Biden said this is the toughest negotiations that he has been part of. "But we have reached this point today because of the pressure Israel built on Hamas backed by the United States," he said.

"Some said my policy of affirmed support for Israel was relentlessly pursuing diplomacy, risked drawing America into a wider war in the region. I listened to those voices, many of whom I

respected a great deal, but I concluded abandoning the course I was on would not have led us to the ceasefire we're seeing today, but instead it would have risked a wider war in the region that so many feared. Now, the region has been fundamentally transformed," he added.

He said the longtime leader of Hamas is dead. Hamas sponsors in the Middle East have been badly weakened by Israel, backed by the United States. Hezbollah, one of Hamas' biggest backers, has been significantly weakened on the battlefield, and its leadership was destroyed, he added.

"Even as we worked for diplomatic solutions in Lebanon, we provided ongoing assistance and supported Israel's military campaign against Hezbollah, including its efforts to take out the terror infrastructure along the border between Israel and Lebanon," Biden said.

He said Israel's campaign was extremely successful, so much so that by the end of November, the United States had brokered a ceasefire in Lebanon. "Hezbollah did what it said it would never do. It cut its deal and abandoned Hamas," Biden added.

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3 HOSTAGES FREED FROM GAZA ARE WITH THE RED CROSS

Gonen was abducted from the Nova music festival, while the others were kidnapped from Kibbutz Kfar Aza. Damari is an Israeli-British dual citizen.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, said the families had approved the publication of the names.

In the interim between 8:30 a.m. and when the ceasefire took hold, Israeli fire killed at least 26 people, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. It did not say whether they were civilians or fighters. The military has warned people to stay away from Israeli forces as they retreat to a buffer zone inside Gaza.

Israel's hard-line national security minister, meanwhile, said his Jewish Power faction was quitting the government in protest over the ceasefire agreement. Itamar Ben-Gvir's departure weakens Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition but will not affect the truce.

In a separate development, Israel announced it had recovered the body of Oron Shaul, a soldier killed in the 2014 Israel-Hamas war, in a special operation in Gaza. The bodies of Shaul and another soldier, Hadar Goldin, remained there after the 2014 war and had not been returned.

think what to do because we do not want such incidents to happen. Paragliding starts from somewhere else, it only lands in Keri panchayat. So there is not much role of Keri Panchayat here."

Political analyst Trajano D'Mello said, "This term of Tourism Ministry is turning out to be the most horrible. We have never had such nightmarish experiences in the past. Be it touts beating and looting the tourists, roadside prostitution, violence at shacks leading to murder, boat mishaps, degradation of brand Goa, tragic and sudden fall in tourism, virtual wipe out of international tourists, sound pollution, taxi and airport cab operators' issue and the list goes on and on."

"Tourism policies and promotions are only meant for the gallery to appreciate. Just to recall we had Tourism ministers like Mickky Pacheco, Nilkanth Halarankar and Manohar Azgaonkar in the recent past, they had minimal interference with the stakeholders' businesses and in comparison they did fairly better than the present minister," D'Mello said.

TRANSLOCATED BANYAN TREE AT CAMPAL STILL ALIVE: BOTANIST

"It must be noted that it was doing extremely well, but the heavy downpour this year has affected the tree's growth," he said.

The 200-year-old tree, which was felled for the ongoing Smart City work at St Inez, was translocated at football ground at Campal, despite vehement protest held by Greens.

They claimed that the tree was not coming in the way of the Smart City work and it was part of the efforts made by the authorities to remove trees from the streets in the capital city.

TIKTOK SHUTS DOWN AS US BAN TAKES EFFECT

The warning stated: "We regret that a US law banning TikTok will take effect on January 19th, forcing us to temporarily suspend our services. We're working to restore our service in the US as soon as possible. Thank you for your support. Stay tuned."

By 10.30 pm ET, users were blocked from accessing both apps, with TikTok displaying a message that the app "isn't available right now," but expects resolution under President-elect Trump.

It comes after days of speculation and confusion over the platform's future.

The Supreme Court on Friday unanimously upheld the divest-or-ban law, which gave TikTok's China-based parent company ByteDance until Sunday to divest from the app.

The law directed Apple and Google to remove the service from app stores. It also required web-hosting firms, including TikTok's back-end cloud provider, Oracle, to stop supporting the app or face penalties that could reach into the billions of dollars, NPR reported.

Trump said Saturday that he would most likely give TikTok a 90-day extension.

"The 90-day extension is something that will be most likely done, because it's appropriate. You know, it's appropriate. We have to look at it carefully," Trump said in a call with "Meet the Press" moderator Kristen Welker. "It's a very big situation."

The law, which passed Congress with wide bipartisan majorities and was signed by President Biden in April, allows the president to provide a 90-day extension, as long as progress is being made toward a divestiture.

TRUMP SET TO REVEL IN HIS RETURN TO POWER

It is a remarkable turnaround after Trump left the nation's capital four years in disgrace and skipped the inauguration of his successor. Trump blasted his way through the 2024 GOP presidential primary and won November's election by an Electoral College margin unseen since Democrat Barack Obama was reelected in 2012.

Yet even with that comfortable victory and his party in full, albeit narrow, control of Congress, the incom-

ing president remains one of the most polarising figures in US history, with nearly as many fierce detractors as ardent supporters.

That means it could be difficult to fulfil postelection pledges about promoting bipartisanship while healing political differences. He told NBC News on Saturday that unity would be a theme of his inauguration speech Monday at the Capitol, along with strength and fairness.

"January 20th cannot come fast enough!" he posted on his social media site. "Everybody, even those that initially opposed a Victory by President Donald J Trump and the Trump Administration, just want it to happen."

Keeping to tradition, Trump spent Saturday night at Blair House, the president's official guest residence on Pennsylvania Avenue, across from the White House. He arrived there after a party at his golf club in Sterling, Virginia, about 30 miles west of the city, that illuminated the night sky.

He had arrived in Washington from his Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach, Florida, aboard a C-32, the military variant of the Boeing 757, painted in the iconic presidential powder blue and white colour scheme. The aircraft that would be known as Air Force One if the president were aboard carried the president-elect as Special Air Mission 47.

Sunday will be Trump's first full day back in the capital since the election. It gives him a chance to enjoy the moment and fire up his core supporters before Inauguration Day's heavy dose of official pomp, including the swearing-in at noon.

Trump planned to place a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery before addressing a rally downtown at Capital One Arena, home of Washington pro basketball and hockey teams.

With frigid temperatures expected Monday, Trump directed his oath of office — now set for the Capitol Rotunda — and most of Monday's outdoor events be moved indoors. The traditional parade will be held, in some form, at Capital One Arena.

Trump also was to attend a candlelight dinner Sunday where he was expected to speak.

Biden, in his final full day in office, scheduled a trip to South Carolina, a state that holds special meaning after his commanding win in the 2020 Democratic primary there set him up to achieve his life's goal of being elected president.

Biden, accompanied by his wife, first lady Jill Biden, was set to visit a church in North Charleston to worship and speak on the legacy of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr, the White House said. Monday is also the federal holiday honouring the slain civil rights leader.

The president used his farewell address earlier in the week to warn of a growing "oligarchy" of ultra-rich interests gaining power and threatening the nation's very democracy.

CLOTHES IN CLOSETS, FAVOURITE FOODS IN FRIDGE

"As soon as they leave, the executive residence staff swings into action," Matthew Costello, chief education officer of the White House Historical Association, said during a recent online programme about Inauguration Day history. "Essentially, staff is working nonstop to inventory, process and move all of the personal items of one first family out and a new first family in."

After the oath-taking, inaugural address, luncheon and traditional parade, the new president gets to go into the White House to find the family's clothes, furniture and other personal belongings in place and the kitchen stocked with favourite foods.

It's possible that Monday's timeline could be altered after Trump announced that he's moving the inaugural ceremony indoors to the Capitol Rotunda because of approaching bitter cold weather. He's also turning what's typically hours long parade down Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House into an indoor version at a pro sports arena.

As the ceremony gets underway, moving trucks for each family that have been on standby nearby will get the all-clear to be waved through tight security to the White House.