



France's Prez Emmanuel Macron (R), and UAE Prez Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan attend an agreement signing ceremony, at the Elysee Palace, in Paris



Volunteers from Samaritan's Purse help search a home for items that survived the Eaton Fire, in Altadena, California



Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei listens to the national anthem as air force officers salute during their meeting in Tehran, Iran



Military officials say this photo taken from a nearby vessel shows smoke rising from a fire aboard the Russian spy ship Kildin off the coast of Syria

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The stone carver Mathilde Bretz, 30 years, works on a stone to rebuild the second tower of the Saint-Denis Cathedral during reconstruction work on the spire in Saint-Denis, subAurbs of Paris. The municipality of Saint-Denis, after twelve years of feasibility studies and budget commissions, will begin restoration work on the spire on 14 March 2025. To create public interest, a temporary museum will be opened in September 2025 in the Basilica's garden to allow visitors to follow the work, which will last five or six years

Canada willing to join US 'Iron Dome' missile shield: Minister

OTTAWA: Canada is prepared to join US President Donald Trump's proposed development of an "Iron Dome" missile defense shield, Defense Minister Bill Blair said Thursday. Blair, in a call with reporters at the end of a trip to Washington, said Canada was already an "essential partner" in the joint protection of North America, through NATO and the NORAD joint air defense program. "Frankly, an integrated missile defense system for all of North America is the thing that makes sense to everybody," he said, rather than having it stop at the US-Canada border. "And we've been able to demonstrate that we are a ready and willing partner, and that we have a great deal to contribute to the alliance." Trump last week signed an executive order to start planning for an "Iron Dome" air defense system for the United States, like the one that Israel has used to intercept thousands of rockets.

Taiwan says detects six Chinese balloons near island

TAIPEI: Taiwan detected six Chinese balloons off the island, the defence ministry said Friday, as Beijing maintains military pressure on Taipei to accept its claim of sovereignty. The six balloons were spotted in the 24 hours to 6:00 am on Friday (2200 GMT Thursday), the ministry said, in its daily tally of Chinese military activity around the island. Along with the balloons, nine Chinese military aircraft, six warships and two official ships were detected over the same period near Taiwan. While Taiwan calls itself a sovereign nation, China claims the island as part of its territory and has threatened to use force to bring it under its control.

Thai police ask to summon lawmaker over rape allegation

BANGKOK: Thai police have requested parliament's permission to summon a lawmaker for questioning after allegations he raped a tourist, officers told AFP on Friday. Police in the northern city of Chiang Mai submitted the formal request as part of an investigation into Bangkok MP Chaiyamparwaan Manpanjitt, 35. A Taiwanese tourist told the police last month that Chaiyamparwaan raped her at a Chiang Mai hotel during the early hours of January 9, according to a police statement obtained by Thai broadcaster Bright TV. "We have followed the procedures (to summon him)," Chiang Mai police chief Yuthana Kanchana told AFP. Because Chaiyamparwaan is a serving lawmaker, police must ask parliament's permission to summon him for questioning.

Sexual violence against children soars in Haiti: UN

GENEVA: Sexual violence against children in violence-ravaged Haiti soared tenfold last year, the UN children's agency said Friday, as gangs who control most of the capital upped their recruitment of children. Haiti has been mired for decades by political instability, made worse in recent years by criminal gangs that have grown more powerful. Gangs now control 85 percent of the capital Port-au-Prince and children - some as young as eight years old - now make up to half of all armed groups, UNICEF spokesman James Elder told reporters in Geneva. "A staggering 1,000-percent increase in sexual violence against children in Haiti has turned their bodies into battlegrounds," Elder said. "The tenfold rise, recorded from 2023 to last year, comes as armed groups inflict unimaginable horrors on children."

DR Congo conflict advances as UN warns of regional escalation

BUKAVU: The Rwanda-backed M23 armed group was threatening another key town in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo on Friday as the United Nations warned that the risk of violence spreading regionally had "never been higher". M23 and Rwandan troops seized the city of Goma last week and are now pushing into the neighbouring South Kivu province. Thousands have died and huge numbers displaced as they have overtaken swathes of the mineral-rich region, routing DRC troops and their allies in the latest episode of decades-long turmoil in eastern DRC.

Trump imposes sanctions on ICC over Israel investigations

AP, WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump on Thursday signed an executive order imposing sanctions on the International Criminal Court over investigations of Israel, a close US ally.

Neither the U.S. nor Israel is a member of or recognizes the court, which has issued an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for alleged war crimes over his military response in Gaza after the Hamas attack against Israel in October 2023. Tens of thousands of Palestinians, including children, have been killed during the Israeli military's response.

The order Trump signed accuses the ICC of engaging in "illegitimate and baseless actions targeting America and our close ally Israel" and of abusing its power by issuing "baseless arrest warrants" against Netanyahu and his former defense minister, Yoav Gallant.

"The ICC has no jurisdiction over the United States or Israel," the order states, adding that the court had set a "dangerous precedent" with its actions against both countries.

Trump's action came as Netanyahu was visiting Washington. He and Trump held talks Tuesday at the White House, and Netanyahu spent some of Thursday



US President Donald Trump signs an executive order in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC

ICC CONDEMNS SANCTIONS BY TRUMP ADMIN, PLEDGES TO CONTINUE ITS WORK

AP, THE HAGUE: The International Criminal Court on Friday called on its member states to stand up against sanctions imposed by US President Donald Trump, saying that the move was an attempt to "harm its independent and impartial judicial work". And the embattled court got plenty of support from traditional US allies in Europe who stood up against the Trump measure. "Sanctioning the ICC threatens the court's independence and undermines the international criminal justice system as a whole," said European Council President António Costa, who heads the summits of the European Union's 27 leaders. It was the toughest direct criticism to a decision by Trump by a top EU official since he took office again last month.

meeting with lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

The order says the U.S. will impose "tangible and significant consequences" on those responsible for the ICC's "transgressions."

Actions may include blocking property and assets and not allowing ICC officials, employees and relatives to enter the United States.

Human rights activists said sanctioning court offi-

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OPPN RED-FLAGS GREEN CESS 'SCAM'

Of the total amount collected, petroleum companies contributed Rs 190 crore, while the coke and coal industries only paid Rs 47 crore, he said, further pointing out that Rs 114.49 crore in green cess remained uncollected, he said

"Over the last decade, 102.46 metric tonnes of coal and coke have been imported into Goa, yet the government has been slow in collecting taxes from these companies," Alemao said, questioning the government's approach.

Apart from asserting that over 50% green cess had been collected, the CM's response noted that the matter was still pending before the Apex Court. Sawant clarified that the assessment and collection of green cess were being carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Goa Cess on Products and Substances Causing Pollution (Green Cess) Act, 2013, and other relevant legislation, including the Goa Value Added Tax Act, 2005. He assured the House that the government was committed to recovering the pending cess.

US READIES ANOTHER 487 INDIANS FOR DEPORTATION

He referred to the statement by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in Parliament on Thursday.

"The description by the EAM of the standard operating procedure relating to the use of restraints which has been communicated to us by US authorities including the immigration and customs enforcement," Misri said.

He said the minister attracted attention to the fact that these have been in practice for a long period of time since 2012.

The foreign secretary said India continued to emphasise to US authorities that there should be no mistreatment of deportees.

"We will continue to take up any instances of mistreatment that come to our attention," he said.

He also stressed on the need to take action against the "real cancer" that is the ecosystem of illegal immigration.

VANDALISM, ARSON ENGULF BANGLADESH

This was stated by the United News of Bangladesh (UNB) which quoted a Fire Service control room duty officer.

A day after the Dhanmondi-32 residence of Sheikh Mujib was torched and torn down, protesters ransacked and set the house of Obaidul Quader, general secretary of Awami League (AL), in Noakhali's Companiganj on fire, the Daily Star newspaper reported on Friday.

During the attack on the house in the Bora Rajapur Mohalla area around 1:00 pm, the two-storey building and tin-roofed rooms of Quader's younger brother Abdul Quader Mirza, president of Companiganj AL, and Shahadat Mirza, former mayor of Basurhat municipality, were also ransacked.

A car parked in front of the house was also torched. No one was home then.

In Rajshahi, a group of protesters set the three-storey house of Shahriar Alam, former state minister for foreign affairs, in Chakisinga Mohalla on fire, UNB reported. Witnesses said over 100 people from Bagha and Charghat upazilas went there on motorbikes and set the house on fire around noon.

Protesters also attacked and torched the house of AL leader Abu Sayeed in the Shalgaria village of Pabna yesterday. They broke the gate, ransacked the house, and then set it on fire on Thursday evening, said witnesses.

Abu Sayeed, vice-president of Pabna Sadar upazila AL and also the former chairman of Varara Union Parishad, is accused in a case filed over an attack on demonstrators that left two students dead during the July uprising. He has been in hiding since.

On Thursday, in Cumilla, protesters demolished two murals of Sheikh Mujib in the city. They took a bulldozer to the Cumilla Judge Court premises around 4:00 pm and

demolished a mural in front of a court building.

Addressing the people present at the scene, Rashedul Haque, secretary of the Cumilla City unit of Students Against Discrimination, said, "We will demolish all signs of fascism." Later, another mural of Sheikh Mujib was bulldozed at Cumilla City Park.

In Narayanganj, pro-BNP lawyers demolished murals and a bust of Sheikh Mujib at the Narayanganj Judge Court premises and the offices of deputy commissioner, and superintendent of police in the city. Construction workers were called in and instructed to demolish them with hammers and crowbars, said witnesses.

In Narsingdi, demonstrators defaced a mural of Sheikh Mujib on the District and Sessions Judge Court premises around noon. Some 10 pro-AL Bangladesh Chhatra League activists, who were then being taken to court by police, were also attacked.

Witnesses said several hundred people went to the AL office in the Main Road area around 4:00 pm and demolished it with an excavator.

In Bagerhat, six murals of Sheikh Mujib were defaced in the Muktioddha Complex, Municipality Park, Shaheed Minar areas in the town, and in Mongla Upazila Parishad Complex, Mongla Children Park, and Muktioddha Bhaban on Thursday.

Protesters also demolished a mural of Sheikh Mujib at the Barishal Press Club.

Demonstrators also torched several properties, including the Feni district AL office and the houses of ex-MPs Lt Gen (retd) Masud Uddin Chowdhury, and Alauddin Ahmed Chowdhury Nasim. In Thakurgaon, protesters defaced five murals of Sheikh Mujib, Sheikh Russel, and Sheikh Moni in the town.

The student movement earlier promised to scrap Bangladesh's 1972 Constitution as they promised to bury the "Mujibist constitution" while some far-right groups also suggested a change of the national anthem adopted by Mujib-led post-independence government.

Hasina, 77, has been living in India since August 5 last year when she fled Bangladesh following a massive student-led protest that toppled her Awami League's 16-year regime.

Hasina's father is widely viewed as an independence hero, but anger at his daughter has tarnished his legacy.

In a Facebook livestream, Hasina condemned the attack and demanded "justice".

"They can demolish a building, but they can't erase history," she said.

Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) has issued arrest warrants for Hasina and several former Cabinet ministers, advisers, and military and civil officials for "crimes against humanity and genocide".

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party headed by former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, Hasina's main political rival, has expressed concern over the country's current situation, saying that stability could be at risk if the government fails to demonstrate its ability to control the emerging challenges.

"If the government cannot effectively manage the ongoing situation, the stability of both the state and the government will face serious threats," the party said in a press release last night.

B'DESH GOVT APPEALS FOR PEACE

The interim government on Thursday blamed Hasina's 'provocative' speech for sparking 'unintended and unexpected' violence.

A press statement issued by Yunus' office said that the Chief Adviser "calls on all citizens to immediately restore complete law and order and to ensure there will be no further attacks on properties associated with the family of Sheikh Hasina and politicians of the fascist Awami League party or against any citizen on any pretext".

The statement said despite its understanding of the activists' anger against the ousted premier, the "govern-

Trump admin to drastically cut USAID jobs, officials report

AP, WASHINGTON: The Trump administration presented a plan Thursday to dramatically cut staffing worldwide for US aid projects as part of its dismantling of the US Agency for International Development, leaving fewer than 300 workers out of thousands.

Late Thursday, federal workers associations filed suit asking a federal court to stop the shutdown, arguing that President Donald Trump lacks the authority to shut down an agency enshrined in congressional legislation.

Two current USAID employees and one former senior USAID official told The Associated Press of the administration's plan, presented to remaining senior officials of the agency Thursday. They spoke on condition of anonymity due to a Trump administration order barring USAID staffers from talking to anyone outside their agency.

The plan would leave fewer than 300 staffers on the job out of what are currently 8,000 direct hires and contractors. They, along with an unknown number of 5,000 locally hired international staffers abroad, would run the few life-saving programs that the administration says it intends to keep going for the time being.

It was not immediately clear whether the reduction to 300 would be permanent or temporary, potentially allowing more workers to return after what the Trump administration says is a review of which aid and development programs it wants to resume.

The administration earlier this week gave almost all USAID staffers posted overseas 30 days, starting Friday, to return to the US, with the government paying for their travel and moving costs. Workers who choose to stay longer, unless they received a specific hardship waiver, might have to cover their own expenses, a notice on the USAID website said late Thursday.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said during a trip to the Dominican Republic on Thursday that the US government will continue providing foreign aid.

"But it is going to be foreign aid that makes sense and is aligned with our national interest," he told reporters.

The Trump administration and billionaire ally Elon Musk, who is running a budget-cutting Department of Government Efficiency, have targeted USAID hardest so far in an unprecedented challenge of the federal government and many of its programs.

ment appeals to the citizens to abide by the law to show the world we are a nation that respects of the rule of law".

"The anger of the activists who have attacked properties is understandable because they and their relatives and friends lived through years of tyranny under Hasina... The government also understand the activists' sense of outrage that even from her refuge in New Delhi, Hasina continues to try to mobilise her militants to hamper Bangladesh's recovery from her years of abuse," the statement said.

However, respecting the rule of law is what "differentiates the new Bangladesh we are working together to build from the old Bangladesh under the fascist regime", it said.

"Let us not undermine Bangladeshis' sense of security and stability; any disregard for the law endangers the lives and property of citizens," it said.

Yunus in the statement said the interim government is working with the security forces to preserve law and order and to protect the lives and property of all Bangladeshis.

"If any attempt is made to destabilise the country through any kind of provocative activities, law enforcement agencies will immediately take strict action against anyone acting to create chaos and anarchy, which emphatically includes the destruction of property," he said.

VIRAL VIDEO HELPS NAB TOURISTS FOR ATTACKING LOCAL AT SANGOLDA

The assailants, Faiz Shaikh and Arkan Shaikh, who were riding rented scooters accompanied by women and toddlers, blocked Salgaonkar's path before launching a ruthless attack. Helmets were used as weapons and they mercilessly rained blows on Salgaonkar. The duo then vandalised Salgaonkar's car before fleeing on their scooters.

Even more disturbing was the indifference displayed by onlookers, who merely watched as a fellow Goan was being assaulted. What should have been a simple exchange turned into a horrifying spectacle.

It was only after a motorist captured the assault on video and shared it online that outrage spread like wildfire. The footage went viral, exposing the brutality of the incident and the shocking reality that such lawlessness is unfolding on the streets of peace-loving Goa. The video prompted a swift response from the Salgaon Police, who arrested the duo and registered an FIR against them.

The incident has raised serious concerns about the safety of Goans amid increasing tensions between tourists and locals. It highlights the urgent need for greater accountability and respect in the State. Tourism Minister Rohan Khaunte condemned the violent attack, emphasising that such behavior will not be tolerated in Goa.

TOURISM DEPT HAS NO SAFETY CHECKS FOR ADVENTURE SPORTS YET

"We are working on new guidelines, and they should be ready soon.

The suspension was not meant to end the sport but to ensure it operates on a safer path for both enthusiasts and operators," explained Kedar Naik, the newly appointed Director of Tourism.

In the wake of the casualty, Shekhar Raizada, the owner of the paragliding company Hike & Fly, was arrested the following day. Raizada, however, contends that he was unfairly blamed for the tragedy, though it is true his registration had lapsed last November. "My registration expired on November 2, 2024. I went to renew it a few days before the expiration, but was told I could only do so on the exact date it expired. It's unfortunate that after the tragedy, the department claimed I wasn't registered," he lamented.

Kedar Naik, the newly appointed Director of Tourism, responded, "I was not aware of the details regarding his registration, but I will investigate the matter. There are some operators working without registration, but we will ensure that this practice stops."

