



People displaced by the fighting between M23 rebels and gov soldiers leave their camp in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo



The leader of the far-right Freedom party (FPÖ) Herbert Kickl reacts upon arrival at the FPÖ headquarters in Vienna



Firefighters leave after extinguishing a fire in Cidade do Samba, a complex where major samba schools prepare for carnival, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



Anthony Mackie (L), and Harrison Ford arrive at the premiere of 'Captain America: Brave New World' at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles

Relatives of Israeli hostages terrified as Gaza ceasefire teeters

PTI, TEL AVIV: After 16 months of excruciating uncertainty, Idit Ohel finally received word this week that her 24-year-old son, a hostage in Gaza, is still alive.

She said she fainted upon hearing the brutal details of his captivity from freed hostages who had been held with him by Hamas since October 7, 2023. Bound by chains in an underground tunnel, Alon Ohel has subsisted on a piece of bread or less each day.

He hasn't seen sunlight in 493 days, she told reporters on Monday.

As the fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hamas seems increasingly at risk of falling apart Hamas says it will not free three hostages on Saturday as planned, and Israel says it's ready to



Palestinians walk amid the devastation in Beit Hanun in the northern Gaza Strip

resume the war if it doesn't families of the hostages are struggling to maintain hope.

They are pleading with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu not to give up on the ceasefire framework,

and to speed up the timeline of releases if possible.

Their worries about the ceasefire collapsing have been exacerbated by President Donald Trump's demand that all of the hostages be freed by Saturday and

his insistence that Gaza be emptied of all Palestinians and redeveloped as a tourist enclave controlled by the United States.

The emaciated state of three hostages released last Saturday has infuriated Israelis and terrified families of the remaining hostages, especially as more details come out about the conditions of their captivity.

The situation is especially difficult for relatives of hostages who are not on the list of 33 hostages expected to be released in the ceasefire's first, six-week phase, which began on January 19.

The agreement requires Israel to free 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees, whose families are also worried about how their enemy treats them.

Netanyahu warns of Gaza offensive if hostages not freed by Saturday

PTI, JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday threatened to withdraw from the ceasefire in Gaza and directed troops to prepare to resume fighting Hamas if the militant group does not release more hostages on Saturday.

Hamas said Monday and reiterated Tuesday that it planned to delay the release of three more hostages after accusing Israel of failing to meet the terms of the ceasefire, including by not allowing an agreed-upon number of tents and other aid into Gaza.

Amid the mounting tensions, US President Donald Trump emboldened Israel to call for the release of even more remaining hostages on Saturday.

Trump questions ceasefire's durability After meet-

ing with Jordan's King Abdullah II at the White House on Tuesday, Trump predicted Hamas would not release all the remaining hostages as he had demanded.

I don't think they're going to make the deadline, personally, the president said of Hamas. They want to play tough guy. We'll see how tough they are.

Since the ceasefire took effect, Hamas has released 21 hostages in a series of five exchanges for more than 730 Palestinian prisoners. A second phase calls for the return of all remaining hostages and an indefinite extension of the truce. However, Trump's statements about both the pending releases and plans for post-war Gaza have destabilised its fragile architecture.



Large figures are displayed during the Captain America: Brave New World World Premiere at TCL Chinese Theater in Hollywood, California

VIBRANT TRADITION



Dancers parade a dragon puppet during Cap Go Meh festival, an annual event held on the 15th day after the Chinese New Year to mark the end of its celebration period, in Bekasi, Indonesia

UK to refuse citizenship to undocumented migrants

AFP, LONDON: The British government on Wednesday said it was toughening immigration rules to make it almost impossible for undocumented migrants who arrive on small boats to later receive citizenship.

Under new guidance migrants arriving by sea, or hidden in the back of vehicles will normally be refused citizenship.

"This guidance further strengthens measures to make it clear that anyone who enters the UK illegally, including small boat arrivals, faces having a British citizenship application refused," a Home Office

spokesperson said.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Labour government is under pressure to reduce migration after Nigel Farage's anti-immigration Reform UK party won roughly four million votes during the last general election -- an unprecedented haul for a far-right party.

But the change to the rules has been criticised by some Labour MPs. "If we give someone refugee status, it can't be right to then refuse them a route to become a British citizen," wrote lawmaker Stella Creasy on X, adding that the policy would leave them "forever second class".

Free Movement, an immigration law blog, said the changes had the potential to "block a large number of refugees from naturalising as British citizens, effective immediately".

It called the updated guidance "incredibly spiteful and damaging to integration".

The announcement comes after MPs this week debated the government's new Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill, designed to give law enforcement officials "counter-terror style powers" to break up gangs bringing irregular migrants across the Channel.

Taiwan detects 62 Chinese aircraft as US ships transit waters

AFP, TAIPEI: Taiwan said Wednesday it detected 62 Chinese military aircraft near the self-ruled island

this week, as two US ships sailed through the sensitive Taiwan Strait.

The United States and its allies regularly transit the 180-kilometre Taiwan Strait to reinforce its status as an international waterway, angering Beijing.

Beijing has never ruled Taiwan, but it claims the democratic island as part of its territory and has threatened to bring it under its control by force.

Taipei said the US ships travelled from north to south "starting from February 10".

China's People's Liberation Army said Wednesday it had monitored the passage of the US destroyer and the ocean survey ship.

"This US action sent the wrong signal and increased security risks," Li Xi, a senior colonel and spokesman for China's Eastern Theatre Command, said in a statement.

Taiwan's defence ministry spokesman Sun Li-fang dismissed the criticism and said Taipei supported the freedom of navigation in the Taiwan Strait.

Road accident in Mexico claimed 38 lives: Officials

AFP, MEXICO CITY: Thirty-eight people died in a weekend road accident in Mexico as a truck collided head-on with a bus, authorities said Tuesday in the first official toll from the tragedy.

It happened Saturday in the southeastern state of Campeche and the fatalities were 36 people in the bus and two in the truck, said Jackson Villacis, a state prosecutor.

Villacis said relatives of victims claimed there were four additional fatalities but these bodies have not been found.

This is the first official toll from the accident in the Yucatan peninsula in which the truck swerved into the lane of the oncoming bus. Both vehicles caught fire and burned down to charred ruins.

Over the weekend reports said there were dozens of deaths but there was no official figure. Nine people survived the accident.

The bus had set out Saturday from Tabasco state and was headed for the Caribbean beach resort city of Cancun.

Ukraine detains top intel official allegedly aiding Russia

AFP, KYIV: Ukraine on Wednesday said that it had detained a high-ranking official within its own security services who was allegedly working for Russia.

Kyiv claims to have detained hundreds of people - including officials and security officers - for allegedly aiding or collaborating with Russia since it invaded in 2022.

The Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) said that agency head Vasyl Maliuk had personally carried out the arrest and that President Volodymyr Zelensky was informed of the operation, codenamed "rat".

"The chief-of-staff of the SBU Anti-Terrorist Centre was working for the enemy," the SBU said in a statement posted on social media.

The SBU said it had documented 14 cases of illegal activity by the suspect and opened a trial on high treason charges that carry a maximum sentence of life

imprisonment. The "extremely complex" and "multi-stage" operation revealed how the suspect collected and transmitted information to Russia, the SBU said.

It added that it had also used the suspect to feed "disinformation" to Russia. Maliuk said the man had been working in his current role with the Ukrainian intelligence service since 2016.

Russia at the time was backing separatists who controlled large parts of eastern Ukraine. "No matter how hard the enemy tries to infiltrate our ranks - they think they have all the possible forms and methods of secrecy - they will not succeed. Because we detect, document and detain them in a timely manner," Maliuk said.

The SBU also said the suspect was recruited by the Russian security services in Vienna in 2018 and that his parents were also being probed.

Amnesty warns children in Haiti falling prey to gang violence

WASHINGTON: Gangs in Haiti are recruiting children and targeting them with violence and sexual assault, Amnesty International said Wednesday in a report on the Caribbean nation ravaged by civil unrest. Amnesty estimates that more than a million children live in areas controlled by or under the influence of armed gangs in Haiti, and condemned offenses committed against young people as "human rights abuses." The report highlighted 14 Haitian children recruited by gangs to spy on rival groups and police, as well as to carry out work such as making deliveries or repairing vehicles. Girls were also victims of abductions, rape and other sexual assaults during gang attacks on neighborhoods, or after groups took control of areas, Amnesty said. It interviewed ten girls who had been victims of gang rape, several of whom became pregnant and resorted to unsafe methods to terminate their pregnancies, as abortion is illegal in Haiti.

Pope asks priest to read for him as bronchitis persists

VATICAN CITY: A breathless Pope Francis asked a priest Wednesday to read out his speech during the weekly audience, saying lingering bronchitis meant he was unable to do it himself. "Let me ask the priest to continue to read, because I cannot yet, with my bronchitis. I hope that next time I can," the 88-year-old said shortly after starting the speech. Francis had also asked aides to read on his behalf at a mass on Sunday and at last Wednesday's general audience. He held meetings at home on February 6 and 7 in an attempt to rest and recover, the Holy See said. The pope, who had part of one of his lungs removed as a young man, was admitted to hospital for three nights in 2023 with bronchitis, which was cured with antibiotics. The Argentine pontiff has been plagued in recent years by health issues, from knee and hip pain to an inflamed colon. He also underwent surgery on a hernia.

Two astronauts stranded on space station to touch down early

WASHINGTON: Two American astronauts who have been trapped on the International Space Station since June could return to Earth earlier in March than expected, NASA said Tuesday. Veteran astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams were due to spend eight days on the International Space Station (ISS), but have been there for more than eight months after their Boeing Starliner spacecraft suffered propulsion problems. The US space agency decided the Starliner would return home without its crew after carrying out weeks of intensive testing and announced in August that it was tasking Elon Musk's SpaceX with bringing the crew home. Musk, one of President Donald Trump's closest advisors, committed to bringing them back to Earth "as soon as possible" at the end of January, with Republicans blaming Trump's predecessor Joe Biden for the delay.

Over 250 people held at Myanmar scam centre released at Thai border

PHOP PHRA: More than 250 people rescued from online scam centres in Myanmar were handed over to Thailand on Wednesday, a senior Thai army official said, following a series of crackdowns on the illegal operations. Scam compounds have mushroomed in Myanmar's borderlands and are staffed by foreigners who are often trafficked and forced to work, swindling their compatriots in an industry analysts say is worth billions of dollars. The group released on Wednesday had been working at a scam centre in Kyauk Khet, a village in Kayin state along the Thai-Myanmar border, according to the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), a Myanmar insurgent group that controls the area.

Suspect confesses to killing 11-year old French School girl

ÉVRY: The prime suspect in the murder of an 11-year-old French schoolgirl, who was found in woods with multiple stab wounds after going missing, has confessed to the crime, prosecutors said on Wednesday. In a killing that shocked France, body of the girl, named as Louise, was found on Saturday close to her school. She had been missing since leaving school, in the suburban town of Epinay-sur-Orge about 20 kilometres (12 miles) south of Paris, on Friday afternoon. French police on Monday arrested a man aged 23 and his DNA was found on Louise's hands, according to prosecutors.

CLASSIFIED CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

SITUATIONS VACANT

Front desk (Fresher/ 1yr experience), Salary 16k. Guest Manager 15k. Steward min 1year exp. Salary 15k. Cook for cafe Salary 15k in Margao. (Night shift) Send CV 8862061078.

THANKSGIVING

POWERFUL PRAYER IN DESPERATE TIMES OF NEED Shoulder wound of Jesus... On loving Jesus, meek Lamb of God, I, a miserable sinner, salute and worship the most sacred wound of Thy shoulder, on which Thou did bear Thy heavy cross, which bore Thy flesh and lay Thy bones as to inflict an anguish greater than any other wound of Thy most blessed body.

I adore Thee, oh Jesus most sorrowful, I praise and glorify Thee, and give thanks fully to Thee for the most holy and sacred and painful wound. Respecting Thee by that exceeding pain, and by the crushing burden of Thy heavy cross to be merciful to me on towards heaven along the way of Thy cross. In Jesus' name (make request) Amen to all.

** This powerful prayer must be said for requests and most urgent help. After you have said it, ask for requests, then you must publish it right away for request to be granted. **

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