



Monique Nsanzabaganwa, Dy Chairperson for the African Union Commission, speaks at Africa Agenda 2063 during the 38th African Union Summit, in Addis Ababa



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with Brunei FM Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof during a meeting, in Muscat, Oman



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio (L) is welcomed by Israel's President Isaac Herzog in Jerusalem during his first Middle East tour



Lyudmila Navalnaya, mother of late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, pays tribute to her son at his grave, marking the first anniversary of his death, in Moscow

allovertheworld

Elon Musk-led DOGE cuts USD 21 million grant for 'voter turnout in India'

NEW YORK: The US Department of Government Efficiency led by billionaire Elon Musk has announced a series of expenditure cuts, including USD 21 million allocated for "voter turnout in India." US President Donald Trump chose Musk to head the new Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) last month. Tasked with improving governance and curbing wasteful expenditures, the DOGE in a post on X on Saturday announced cancelling many programmes costing hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars. The department said, "US taxpayer dollars were going to be spent on the following items, all (of) which have been cancelled..." The list included USD 486 million in grants to the "Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening" including USD 21 million for "voter turnout in India" and USD 22 million for "inclusive and participatory political process" in Moldova. No further details on the funding were given in the post.

US presented Ukraine with document to access its minerals but offered nothing in return

MUNICH (GERMANY): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says he directed his ministers not to sign off on a proposed agreement to give the United States access to Ukraine's rare earth minerals because the document was too focused on US interests. The proposal, which was a key part of Zelenskyy's talks with US Vice President JD Vance on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference on Friday, did not offer any specific security guarantees in return, according to one current and one former senior Ukrainian official familiar with the talks. Zelenskyy's decision not to sign a deal, at least for now, was described as "short-sighted" by a senior White House official. "I didn't let the ministers sign a relevant agreement because in my view it is not ready to protect us, our interest," Zelenskyy said on Saturday in Munich.

Suspect in fatal stabbing in Austria had 'Islamic terror motive', officials say

VIENNA: Austrian authorities said the stabbing of six passersby that left a 14-year-old boy dead was carried out by a man with possible connections to the Islamic State group who appeared to have acted alone. The suspect, a 23-year-old Syrian, was arrested after the attack in the southern city of Villach on Saturday. Five others were wounded, two of them seriously. "This is an Islamist attack with an IS connection by an attacker who radicalized himself within a very short time via the internet online," said Interior Minister Gerhard Karner told reporters in Villach Sunday. As the focus shifted to migration and asylum-seekers, Karner said that it will ultimately be necessary to "carry out a mass screening without cause because this assassin was not conspicuous." He did not elaborate, but Austria's far-right leader Herbert Kickl, whose party won a national election four months ago, called for "a rigorous crackdown on asylum" in the wake of the attack.

Jaishankar, Omani counterpart discuss cooperation in trade, energy security

PTI, MUSCAT: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday held wide-ranging discussions with his Omani counterpart Badr Albusaidi on bilateral co-

operation in trade, investment and energy security.

Jaishankar, who is in the Omani capital here to attend the 8th Indian Ocean Conference, also met foreign ministers of several other nations, including Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Brunei on the sidelines of the event and discussed issues related to bilateral ties and regional cooperation.

"Delighted to meet FM @badrbusaidi of Oman this morning. Appreciate his personal efforts in successfully hosting the 8th Indian Ocean Conference," Jaishankar posted on X.

"Held wide-ranging discussions on our cooperation in trade, investment and energy security," he said.

The two leaders jointly released the logo celebrating the 70th anniversary of the diplomatic relations.

They also jointly released a book titled 'Mandvi to Muscat: Indian Community and the Shared History of India and Oman'.

Later, Jaishankar also met his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi.

"Good to meet FM @araghchi of Iran this afternoon. Spoke about our bilateral ties and developments in the region," he said in a post on X.

Jaishankar also held "warm" talks with Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof, Foreign Minister of Brunei.

"A warm conversation with Brunei FM Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof this morning. Followed up on PM @narendramodi's September 2024 Brunei visit outcomes. Appreciate his insights on the region and support for India-ASEAN partnership," he said.

Rubio in Israel says Hamas must be eradicated

AP, JERUSALEM: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Sunday fully endorsed Israel's war aims in the Gaza Strip, saying Hamas "must be eradicated" and throwing the shaky ceasefire into further doubt.

Rubio met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the start of a regional tour, where he is likely to face pushback from Arab leaders over US President Donald Trump's proposal to transfer the Palestinian population out of Gaza and redevelop it under US ownership.

Netanyahu has welcomed the plan, and said that he and Trump have a "common strategy" for Gaza.

Echoing Trump, he said that "the gates of hell would be open" if Hamas doesn't release dozens of re-

As long as it stands as a force that can govern or as a force that can administer or as a force that can threaten by use of violence, peace becomes impossible. It must be eradicated

— Marco Rubio, US Secretary of State

maining hostages abducted in the militant group's attack on southern Israel on October 7, 2023, that triggered the 16-month war.

Their remarks came two weeks before the ceasefire's first phase is set to end. The second phase, in which Hamas would release dozens of remaining hostages in exchange for more Palestinian prisoners, a lasting truce and the withdrawal of Israeli forces, has yet to be negotiated.

Trump's special envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff, told Fox News that he had "very productive" calls Sunday with Netanyahu and of-

ficials from Egypt and Qatar, which are serving as mediators, about continuing talks this week. He also said that hostages to be released include 19 Israeli soldiers and "we believe all of them are alive."

Netanyahu's office confirmed the call and said that Israel's security Cabinet would meet Monday to discuss the second phase.

Rubio said that Hamas can't continue as a military or government force.

"As long as it stands as a force that can govern or as a force that can administer or as a force that

can threaten by use of violence, peace becomes impossible," he said. "It must be eradicated."

Such language could complicate talks with Hamas, which reasserted control over Gaza when the ceasefire took hold last month despite suffering heavy losses.

Rubio is also set to visit the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, which are political heavyweights in the region.

The Israeli military, meanwhile, said that it carried out an airstrike Sunday on people who approached its forces in southern Gaza. The Hamas-run Interior Ministry said the strike killed three of its police officers while they secured the entry of aid trucks near Rafah on the Egyptian border.

Pope is stable, Vatican says

AP, ROME: Pope Francis had breakfast, read the newspapers and followed Mass on television Sunday after a second night sleeping well at the hospital where the 88-year-old pontiff is being treated for a respiratory tract infection, the Vatican said.

Francis' condition was stable, as he continues his unspecified drug therapy, alternating in the afternoon between reading and resting, Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said. The Argentine pope, a known workaholic who keeps up a grueling pace despite his many ailments, was admitted to Rome's Gemelli hospital on Friday after a weeklong bout of bronchitis worsened. It was his fourth hospitalisation since his 2013 election and raised questions about his increasingly precarious health.

FROM PAGE 1

GREENS: SURVIVAL CHANCES OF TRANSLOCATED TREES BLEAK

Mody in his report has suggested several measures and to involve qualified professionals with experience in arboriculture and ecological restoration for future tree translocation.

The rainforest trees translocated so far in the low-lying field in Socorro are one Alstonias Scholaris, one Pinal tree and three banyan trees translocated so far.

All the 5 translocated trees are in a precarious State and the chances of survival are very low.

NO RESPECT FOR NATURE: MUSIC FEST DECLARES DREAM BEACH DATE FOR AFTER-PARTY

The Karacus Marakus Festival, which was moved to Mozogao in Mandrem on Saturday, as the organisers got no permission to host it at Echo in Ozrant and was not allowed to start by the Mandrem police, "in view of the Supreme Court ban of playing music after 10 pm."

An astonished Capt Fernandes asked: "How could they have thought of starting their party after 10 pm when the Supreme Court of India bans music in the open after 10 pm?"

As the organisers failed to get permission to play in Mandrem, they released the following message through their social media handle: "Big shout out to @semaluna decor for going above and beyond to set up that incredible stage three times! We truly appreciate all the hard work you put in every night, from the beach moving to different venues and working tirelessly for the all. Your dedication and passion shine through, despite the obstacles."

The festival, read their social media post, stands "postponed" with enthusiasts asked to be ready for the new date and venue.

"Their posts on social media are clear indications that they care a damn for turtles and us Goans. When their festival was cancelled at Dream Beach they said that there was no evidence of turtle nesting thereby indicating that what we saw and what the Forest Department recorded was wrong," fumed herpetologist Aaron Fernandes.

The organisers could not get permission to host the festival at Dream Beach because it is an Olive Ridley turtle nesting site with records of turtles walking ashore to nest with the Forest Department since the last many years.

Last year, 17 turtles walked ashore and laid 1,515 eggs, prompting the locals to write to the Forest Department on March 23, 2024 to declare the beach as a turtle nesting site.

"This is terrible; I hope this is not allowed to go ahead. Our destruction of the small blue ball continues and it won't end until we realise it's too late. Such a decision to hold an event where these baby turtles hatch is so against the vibe, atmosphere and message that psychedelic culture stands for," wrote timo\_ theus on social media.

"They first try to have the festival at a turtle nesting site and then try to move it to a place that has closure notice, which has been notified to the High Court of Bombay at Goa and then announce that they will have it in Mandrem after the time stipulated by the Supreme Court of India. It looks like these guys think they are above our judiciary," said a shocked Agnes D'Souza from Anjuna.

"Music can be played after 10 pm only in places that are soundproof and none of the places selected by the organisers of this festival were soundproof. So, expecting to play after 10 pm is out of the box," claimed crusader against noise pollution Dr Inacio Fernandes.

THOUSANDS THROUG DURGABHAT, BID TEARFUL FAREWELL TO LAVOO

MGP president Deepak Dhalvalikar said, "Never expected such a thing to happen. Lavoo was my childhood school friend. I am shocked by the incident. The government should conduct a thorough probe and punish the accused."

Ponda MLA and Agriculture Minister Ravi Naik said, "It is an unfortunate incident which should not have taken place. Lavoo used to visit Belagavi since his daughter was pursuing higher studies there. On petty issues he was assaulted and the government needs to conduct a thorough probe into his death. If Goans are treated in this manner in Belagavi, we will have to think twice before visiting the city. The Karnataka government must punish the accused autorickshaw driver. Lavoo was an active person, may God grant him eternal rest."

Art and Culture Minister Govind Gauda said, "We lost a Bahujan leader. Lavoo rose from a police official to an MLA due to his hard work. He was capable of handling any situation. He was never afraid of anyone and would fight for people's rights."

Condemning the attack on the former MLA, Leader of the Opposition Yuri Alemoa said, "We are anguished the way Lavoo was attacked, which is a serious offence and this should not repeat in future. A team from the Goa Po-

lice should visit Belagavi, investigate the incident and take strict action. Though the accused has been arrested, the case appears to be murder."

"We lost a great soul. Lavoo was connected to the masses, soft spoken and simple man and contested the last election on a Congress ticket. He was a duty-bound police officer and as a MLA, he worked for the development of his constituency," he added.

Congress State President Amit Patkar said, "The way the auto driver attacked Lavoo appears to have led to cardiac arrest. The police should probe thoroughly and give justice to Lavoo and his family. We have lost a very good legislator."

Quepem MLA Altono D'Costa said, "Lavoo was soft spoken and a good friend. The way the autorickshaw driver attacked the former MLA was shocking."

BJP president Damu Naik said, "This is a sudden attack on the Lavoo's family which should not have happened. From duty-bound police officer to a politician, he was well connected with the people."

Margao MLA Digambar Kamat said, "What happened to the former MLA is shocking and heartbreaking. I had good relations with Lavoo, which strengthened further when he became an MLA. I lost a good friend. May God give strength to Lavoo's family to bear the loss."

Goa Forward Party (GFP) president Vijai Sardesai said, "I am saddened by the incident which is uncalled for. This unexpected and unfortunate incident has shocked us. Lavoo was a loyal person and fought for justice for the people. The former MLA was very healthy and even performed yoga. I have no words as to how the unfortunate incident took place."

Former South Goa MP Adv Narendra Sawaikar said, "Lavoo was a straight forward person and stood for the right."

MGP's Ketan Bhatikar said, "The government needs to conduct a thorough investigation into Mamedar's death, as the former MLA was physically strong and would go on morning and evening walks."

Congress leader Girish Chodankar said, "The government needs to probe the case as a simple man lost his life. Such incidents are reportedly taking place in Goa where people are being attacked."

THIRD US PLANE WITH 112 DEPORTEES LANDS IN AMRITSAR

The deportees will be allowed to head home after the completion of all formalities, including immigration, verification and background checks.

Arrangements have been made for the transportation of the deportees to their respective destinations.

While those hailing from Punjab will be taken in vehicles arranged by the State government, the Haryana government has also sent two buses for transporting the deportees from the state to their native places.

On February 5, a US military aircraft carrying the first batch of 104 illegal Indian immigrants landed in Amritsar. Of the deportees in the first batch, 33 each were from Haryana and Gujarat, and 30 from Punjab.

On Saturday evening, a second aircraft brought 116 deportees from the United States, amid questions raised by several political leaders, including Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, over the BJP-led Centre's move to allow planes carrying immigrants to land in Amritsar.

Mann even accused the Centre of trying to "defame Punjab as part of a conspiracy".

DEPORTED FROM US, TWO GOANS REACH HOME

Sawaikar said, "As per our information two Goans who have been deported by the US government have arrived in the State. They reached their homes as well. They had gone to the US for jobs, but were arrested there. Now as per the policy of the US government, they have been deported. They were arrested while crossing the border. Normally, as per the protocol their names cannot be disclosed. That is why I cannot share their names," he said.

However, Sawaikar said, "I would like to request job seekers to verify details before going abroad. They should verify the agent and the process of going abroad. The NRI Commission also gets complaints that youth are taken for a certain job, but are asked to do something else. This puts them in trouble. So to prevent this from happening the job aspirants should vary the details of the agents and other details like documentation," he said.

One of the youth hailed from Sarzora, while the other is from Mankem-Shiroda.

It is learnt that the youth from Sarzora had paid money to an agent and had reached USA in January but he was arrested at the border.

Mediapersons attempted to the meet the deportee from

Sarzora, but the family members said that they were in a state of shock and refused to speak.

Meanwhile, Velim MLA Cruz Silva said, "One of the two Goans deported from the US hails from my Velim Assembly constituency. I also spoke to his father. The boy went in search of a job. Due to the lengthy process to get valid documents to migrate legally for work, youth attempt to go abroad illegally."

"The government must do something about this lengthy process to get documents. I will talk to Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on this issue," the MLA added.

TRAIN, PLATFORM CONFUSION SPARKED CHAOS: AUTHORITIES

Passengers of platform number 14, thinking that their train would come at 12, started moving towards the escalator and stairs which led to stampede, Kumar said. 18 passengers lost their lives, he said.

Northern Railway's Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Himanshu Upadhyay said that at the time of incident the Patna-bound Magadh Express was positioned at platform number 14 and the New Delhi-Jammu Uttar Sampark Kranti Express was stationed at platform number 15.

The Delhi Police put out a list of the 18 victims. The dead have been identified as Asha Devi (79), Pinky Devi (41), Sheela Devi (50), Vyom (25), Poonam Devi (40), Lalita Devi (35), Suruchi (11), Krishna Devi (40), Vijay Sah (15), Neeraj (12), Shanti Devi (40), Pooja Kumari (8), Sangeeta Malik (34), Poonam (34), Mamta Jha (40), Riya Singh (7), Baby Kumari (24) and Manoj (47).

Five of the 18 victims died due to traumatic asphyxia, the RML Hospital said.

"No injured were brought to RML Hospital. We received five dead bodies from LNJP for postmortem. Four of them were females and one a male," a senior doctor said.

The Delhi Police found in its initial probe that the stampede happened as passengers got confused between "Prayagraj Express" and "Prayagraj Special", and thought they might miss their train, police sources said.

A narrow stairway with 42 steps leading to a 25-foot-wide foot overbridge at the station turned into a scene of panic and chaos amid unprecedented rush.

Scattered slippers, torn bags, and abandoned belongings lay strewn across the staircase, the bridge, and platforms 14 and 15.

Porters recounted their harrowing experience of carrying bodies on handcarts.

"We carried dead bodies on handcarts, the same ones we use for luggage. In my 15 years as a porter, I have never seen such a massive crowd," said Balram, a porter.

"A massive crowd gathered on the (foot overbridge) bridge. People were so cramped for space that many suffocated. Around 10-15 people lost their lives right there," another porter Krishna Kumar Jogi said, adding that the crowd quickly swelled when a train bound for Prayagraj arrived.

Opal Singh, who lost his seven-year-old daughter in the stampede, said, "When she was born, I held her against my chest. Today, I carried her lifeless body away."

Singh and his family planned a tour of Maha Kumbh. But as they reached the station to take the train for Prayagraj, they saw a huge crowd.

Singh told PTI that as they made their way toward platform number 14, chaos suddenly erupted with a massive surge of people coming back up the staircase, triggering the stampede.

A compensation of Rs 10 lakh each has been announced by the Ministry of Railways for the next of kin of those killed in the stampede. Those seriously injured will get Rs 2.5 lakh and those with minor injuries 1 lakh, it said.

The distraught family members of those missing since the stampede frantically searched for their loved ones, running from one hospital to another, carrying their photos and not knowing what to do.

Many claimed that the hospitals did not allow them to search for their missing family members among the patients admitted there, turning their hopes into despair.

Anirudh, a daily wage labourer from Prayagraj presently living in Noida, also recalled the horror.

"No one was walking; people were just pushing each other to move ahead. I saw women falling to the ground and others trampling over them. People didn't even realise they were walking over human beings who were alive," Anirudh, who bought a general ticket to go to Prayagraj, said.

Every hour 1,500 general tickets were sold by the Railways due to which the station also got overcrowded and became uncontrollable. There was a stampede at Platform No. 14 and the escalator near platform no. 16, a senior police officer said.

The Railway Ministry said several measures have been enforced to avoid any such untoward incident in the future.

LNJP Hospital sources said that all bodies of victims were handed over to their family members by 9 am and the kin left for their respective places.

CLASSIFIED CONT FROM PAGE 8

SITUATIONS VACANT

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