



Elon Musk speaks during a Cabinet meeting with President Donald Trump at the White House in Washington



Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs & Trade Peter Szijarto, right, receives Foreign Minister of Guinea-Bissau Carlos Pinto Pereira, in Budapest, Hungary



Believers gather around a ritual bonfire during the Dugzhuuba, a Buddhist pre-New Year ritual of purification, near St Petersburg, Russia



Indonesian Muslim women buy vegetables to prepare for the holy month of Ramadan at a market in Jakarta, Indonesia

allovertheworld



Shiite Muslim pilgrims visit the holy shrine of Imam Abbas in Karbala, Iraq

Thai cops arrest Singaporean suspected of global cyber attacks

BANGKOK: Thai police have arrested a Singaporean man suspected of cyber attacks on more than 70 organisations in a dozen countries around the world. The 39-year-old was detained in Bangkok on Wednesday following a joint operation with Singaporean authorities. Thai police said on Thursday. The suspect, identified by police as Chia, is accused of hacking into dozens of companies, stealing sensitive data and selling it on the dark web, officials said. His arrest followed an extortion complaint from a Thai company which reported receiving threats via the X account '@0mid16b', demanding payment in exchange for withholding stolen customer data. Atip Pongsivapai, commander of Thailand's Technology Crime Suppression Division, said they began tracking the hacker's activities after receiving the complaint.

TikTok to invest \$8.8 b in Thailand over five years

BANGKOK: TikTok plans to invest \$8.8 billion in Thailand over the next five years, focusing on digital infrastructure, workforce development and online safety initiatives, a senior executive said Friday after talks with the government. The social media platform owned by China's ByteDance is the latest in a string of big tech names to announce major spending projects in the kingdom, after Amazon, Google and Microsoft. Helena Lersch, TikTok's vice president of public policy, met Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra in Bangkok on Friday to discuss the expansion. The investment includes training programmes for businesses and creators, anti-fraud campaigns, and a new data hosting service to enhance local cloud capabilities.

Cyclone winds tear off roofs on battered French island

SAINT-DENIS DE LA REUNION: Authorities ordered all people on La Reunion island to stay indoors for several hours Friday as Cyclone Garance's fierce winds caused destruction across the French Indian Ocean territory. Winds of up to 230 kilometres (143 miles) per hour battered the territory of 900,000 people and the storm earlier forced the closure of the main airport on nearby Mauritius. Residents posted pictures online of uprooted trees, torn-off roofs and flooded homes on La Reunion. Power outages affected around 145,000 people across the island, while 82,000 had no drinking water and 39,000 were without internet access, authorities said. Authorities imposed a maximum "purple alert" for several hours early Friday, confining the entire population - including law enforcement and emergency services - to homes and offices.

Hong Kong to probe close call involving cargo planes

HONG KONG: A mid-air close call between two cargo planes taking off from Hong Kong's airport on Thursday has triggered an investigation, authorities said Friday, removing air traffic control personnel from frontline duty. The incident occurred on Thursday around 7 am (Wednesday 2300 GMT) when two aircraft - MNB380 bound for Turkmenistan and AZG625 for Baku - took off from adjacent runways at the Hong Kong International Airport, according to the city's Civil Aviation Department. They were told by air traffic control to maintain vertical separation but were unable to because their climbing rates varied from expectations, the department said. The Boeing 777 freighter bound for Baku -- operated by Silk Way West Airlines -- issued a collision-related alert to its crew when it reached a spot around seven nautical miles northeast of the airport, then descended to 2,500 feet (762 metres).

Violence mars huge Greece train crash demonstration

ATHENS: Violence on Friday marred a huge demonstration in Athens to mark the second anniversary of the country's worst rail tragedy, as youths threw firebombs and clashed with riot police outside parliament. Nearly 200,000 people had turned out in peaceful protest to demand justice for the 57 victims of the crash between a freight train and a passenger train near the central city of Larissa on February 28, 2023. But the crowd, including children and the elderly, were forced to disperse when several hooded attackers threw firebombs and rockets at police, prompting them to respond with teargas and stun grenades. The ambulance service said five people were taken to hospital, including a photographer hit in the head by one of the grenades. "The crowd was extremely packed and many panicked," protester Sofia Yianniri told AFP. "We tried to get people with children out." Police earlier said some 325,000 people had turned out nationwide in demonstrations described by commentators as unprecedented in size and "historic".

Zelenskyy meets Trump at WH

Seeks security assurances against future Russian aggression

AP, WASHINGTON: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met Friday with President Donald Trump at a pivotal moment for his country, as he tries to persuade the White House to provide some form of US backing for Ukraine's security against any future Russian aggression.

Zelenskyy flashed a thumb's up but didn't speak to reporters as he arrived at the White House. He wore a more formal black top rather than his usual military green T-shirt, prompting Trump to quip, "He's all dressed up."

Zelenskyy's delegation is expected to sign a landmark economic agreement with the US aimed at financing the reconstruction of war-damaged Ukraine, a deal that would closely tie the two countries together for years to come.



US President Donald Trump greets Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the Oval Office at the White House, in Washington, DC

The deal, which is seen as a step toward ending the three-year war, references the importance of Ukraine's security. But it leaves that to a separate agreement still being hammered out by the two leaders. Meeting together in the

Oval Office, Trump said the agreement would be signed soon in the East Room of the White House.

"We have something that is a very fair deal," Trump said, adding, "It is a big commitment from the United States."

He said the US wants to see the killing in the war stopped, adding that US money for Ukraine should be "put to different kinds of use like rebuilding."

Zelenskyy called Russian President Vladimir Putin a terrorist and told Trump that Ukraine and the world need "no compromises with a killer."

"Even during the war there are rules," he said.

As Ukrainian forces hold out against slow but steady advances by Russia's larger and better-equipped army, leaders in Kyiv have pushed to ensure a potential US-brokered peace plan would include guarantees for the country's future security.

Many Ukrainians fear that a hastily negotiated peace - especially one that makes too many concessions to Russian demands - would allow Moscow to rearm and

ENDING RUSSIA'S WAR IN UKRAINE CAN'T BE PEACE THAT REWARDS AGGRESSOR

AP, WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump said Thursday that talks to end Russia's invasion of Ukraine are "very well advanced" but cautioned that there is only a narrow window to get a deal done to end the grinding war. Trump made the comments as he hosted Prime Minister Keir Starmer at the White House for talks in which the British premier made his case that American leadership would be critical to maintaining the peace in Ukraine should the three-year war end. Trump also expressed confidence that Russian President Vladimir Putin won't press to restart the war if a truce can be reached. "I think he'll keep his word," Trump said of Putin. "I've spoken to him, I've known him for a long time now, we had to go through the Russian hoax together." The mention of "Russia hoax" is a reference to the FBI and Justice Department special counsel investigation that examined whether Trump's 2016 presidential campaign illegally coordinated with Russia to sway the outcome of the U.S. election.

consolidate its forces for a future invasion after current hostilities cease.

Asked about long-term security guarantee to guard

against future Russian aggression, Trump says once the agreement is signed that a return to fighting was unlikely.

Top cleric, 4 worshippers killed in suicide bomb attack in Pak

PTI, PESHAWAR: A top cleric and four worshippers were killed and 20 others injured in a blast triggered by a suicide bomber during Friday prayers at a seminary in northwest Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province ahead of the fasting month of Ramadan, police said.

The blast claimed the life of Hamidul Haq Haqqani, chief of his own faction of the Jamiat Ulema Islam (JUI) and caretaker of the Madrasa-e-Haqqania, located in Akora Khattak town of Nowshera district, Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah confirmed.

Born in 1968, Hamidul Haq became chief of his JUI (Sami Group) after the death of his father Maulana Sami ul Haq.

IGP, Khyber Pakhtunkh-



Security officials examine a damaged security forces' vehicle at the site of a bomb blast in Quetta, Pakistan

wa, Zulfiqar Hameed said it is suspected to be a suicide bombing and Hamidul Haq appeared to be the target. We had provided six security guards to Hamidul Haq, he said.

The attack in Nowshera was part of a wave of violence in Pakistan on the same day. In two separate

incidents, a total of 15 people were injured. An IED blast in Balochistan province wounded 10 people including a security official, while in North Waziristan district, a mortar shell struck a house, injuring five members of a family, including four children.

Students who toppled Hasina regime form political party

Says no room for pro-India, pro-Pak politics

PTI, DHAKA: The students' group that led the protests against Bangladesh prime minister Sheikh Hasina launched itself as a political party on Friday, declaring there will be no room now for pro-India and pro-Pakistan politics in the country.

The Anti-Discrimination Student Movement or Students against Discrimination (SAD) turned into 'Jatiya Nagorik Party' or National Citizen Party (NCP) at a rally at Manik Mia Avenue in central Dhaka near Parliament with one of the key leaders of the July-August 2024 protests, Nahid Islam, 26, as its convener.

The student leaders also issued a declaration that outlined "a transformative political and economic roadmap



Nahid Islam, convener of the newly formed Jatiya Nagarik Party, or National Citizen's Party, speaks as students shout slogans during the launch of the new political party, in Dhaka

for Bangladesh" and also unveiled a manifesto laying the foundation for what it calls a "second republic".

The inaugural event, which was attended by representatives of some polit-

ical parties and envoys of the Vatican and Pakistan.

The student movement led a mass protest leading to the ouster of Hasina's over 15 years of rule on August 5 last year.

FESTIVE ROYALTY



King Momo Kaio Mackenzie (R) and Queen of the Carnival Thuane Werneck (L) receive the key of the city during the official Carnival opening ceremony in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Vatican makes Ash Wednesday plans as Pope's health improves

AP, ROME: Pope Francis reached the two-week mark in his recovery from pneumonia Friday as doctors suggested he had overcome the most critical phase of the infection but held out on declaring him out of danger entirely.

The Vatican, though, made alternative plans for Ash Wednesday next week, making clear Francis still had a long road ahead. Cardinal Angelo De Donatis, a Vatican official and former

vicar of Rome, will preside over the March 5 ceremony and procession that inaugurates the church's solemn Lenten season leading up to Easter in April.

The Vatican's early Friday update suggested a level of normalcy and routine as the 88-year-old pope continues recovering at Rome's Gemelli Hospital. "As in past days, the night was tranquil and the pope now is resting," it said.

Francis had breakfast,



Catholic faithful hold candles during a mass for the health of Pope Francis at the complex of the statue of Christ the Protector in Encantado, state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

read the day's newspapers and was receiving respira-

tory physiotherapy, the Vatican said.

In their Thursday evening bulletin, doctors said Francis' clinical condition had confirmed that he was improving. He was alternating the high-flow supplemental oxygen he had been receiving by a nasal tube with a mask in a sign of improved respiratory function.

Additionally, he left his hospital room to go to his nearby private chapel to pray, while continuing

with respiratory physiotherapy and work, the Vatican said.

For the second day in a row, doctors avoided saying Francis was in critical condition, suggesting he had overcome the most acute phase of the infection. But given the complexity of his lung infection, they said "further days of clinical stability are needed" before they revise their prognosis officially and say he is out of danger.