



EU Prez Ursula von der Leyen arrives for the weekly College of Commissioners meeting at EU headquarters in Brussels



French President Emmanuel Macron (L), welcomes Jordan's King Abdullah II, before a meeting at the Elysee Palace in Paris



Flemish Minister for Education and Work Zuhal Demir speaks during a plenary session of the Flemish Parliament in Brussels



People wait to light a candle at a makeshift memorial for the 59 people killed in a horrific nightclub blaze last weekend, in Kocani

allovertheworld



Members of the United Nations peacekeeping force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) take part in a ceremony marking the force's 47th anniversary, at its base in the country's southernmost town of Naqura by the border with Israel

Nigeria probes NGOs after US Republican's terror financing claim

LAGOS: Nigeria's House of Representatives is probing the finances of several NGOs after an American congressman made widely panned claims that the main US development agency financed terrorism in the West African nation. In a letter dated March 10 sent to NGOs and seen by AFP, the lower chamber of the Nigerian parliament said it had set up a committee to "investigate the allegations against United States Agency for International Development (USAID)". Congressman Scott Perry claimed in February that USAID channelled funds to terror groups in several countries, including Boko Haram in Nigeria. The claims were widely considered baseless by experts and come amid a conservative-led push against international aid on political grounds that has seen USAID largely dismantled.

Thousands march in support of Colombia's president, reforms

BOGOTÁ: Colombia's leftist president called thousands of supporters to the streets Tuesday, a political show of strength in an effort to press lawmakers into passing stalled health and labor reforms. In major cities from Bogota to Medellin, thousands of Gustavo Petro's supporters blocked streets, waved flags and chanted slogans of support. Petro, 64, is the first leftist president in Colombia's history, but has failed to pass the bulk of his reformist agenda through Congress. With little more than a year left in his four-year term, Petro is now in a race to fulfill key pledges and cement his political legacy.

Thousands join anti-government rally in Jerusalem

JERUSALEM: Thousands of protesters massed in Jerusalem on Wednesday, chanting slogans against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who they accuse of undermining democracy and resuming Gaza strikes without regard for hostages. Protesters shouted "You are the head, and you're to blame" as well as "The blood is on your hands" at the demonstration near parliament, the largest to take place in Jerusalem for months. The demonstration was organised by anti-Netanyahu opposition groups protesting the premier's move to sack Ronen Bar, head of the Shin Bet internal security agency. Following Netanyahu's announcement to dismiss Bar, which threatened to trigger political crisis, Israel launched a wave of overnight strikes on Gaza, by far the deadliest since the start of a fragile ceasefire in January.

Bosnia issues arrest warrant for ethnic Serb leader

SARAJEVO: Bosnian authorities have issued an arrest warrant for ethnic Serb leader Milorad Dodik, a senior police officer said Wednesday, as part of an investigation into his alleged flouting of the country's constitution. The announcement comes a week after police said they were seeking to question Dodik, who remained defiant and called on federal police to ignore the order. But according to the head of police in Bosnia's Muslim-Croat statelet, an arrest warrant has now been issued by authorities. It also includes orders to detain Republika Srpska Prime Minister Radovan Viskovic and Parliamentary Speaker Nenad Stevandić. "We received an arrest warrant for these three individuals," said Vahidin Munjic during an interview with local media.

Four convicted for Amsterdam violence against Israelis

AMSTERDAM: A Dutch court on Wednesday convicted four men for their part in November's violence against Israeli football fans that sparked accusations of anti-Semitism. The latest convictions by the Amsterdam District Court followed five others handed down in December for the "hit-and-run" style attacks on Maccabi Tel Aviv fans in the early hours of November 8. Images of the violence, which left five fans briefly hospitalised, went around the world and sparked a furious reaction in Israel including accusations of a "pogrom". Aged between 22 and 32 years, Tuesday's suspects were found guilty of a range of offences including helping to foment the violence and insulting Jews. He was also sentenced for insulting Jews including making disparaging comments about the Holocaust and posting slogans such "Dead Jew better than living Jew", the court's judges said.

Zelensky: Putin's no-attack pledge on energy infrastructure untrustworthy

PTI, KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Wednesday that a vow by Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin not to attack energy infrastructure was very much at odds with reality following an overnight barrage of drone strikes across the country. Zelensky said that he would speak with US President Donald Trump later in the day and expected to hear more about the American leader's phone call with Putin about a ceasefire and to discuss the next steps to be taken.

"Even last night, after Putin's conversation with Trump, when Putin said that he was allegedly giving orders to stop strikes on Ukrainian energy, there were 150 drones launched overnight, including on



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky (L) and Finland's President Alexander Stubb hug each other after the Europe in support of Ukraine discussion at the University of Helsinki, Finland

energy facilities, Zelensky said at a news conference in Helsinki with Finnish President Alexander Stubb.

Russia said it had halted its targeting of Ukraine's energy facilities and accused Kyiv of attacking

equipment near one of its pipelines.

"Unfortunately, we see that for now there is no reciprocity on the part of the Kyiv regime," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Italy says six dead, 40 missing after migrant shipwreck

AFP, ROME: Six people died and 40 are missing after a migrant shipwreck in the Mediterranean, the United Nations said Wednesday, as Italian authorities searched for survivors off the island of Lampedusa.

"Still too many dead in a new shipwreck in the Mediterranean," Chiara Cardoletti, the Italy representative of the UN refugee agency UNHCR, said on X.

An inflatable dinghy carrying 56 people left the Tunisian port of Sfax on Monday before getting into trouble, she said. "After a few hours of sailing, the dinghy began to deflate and take on water. Six bodies recovered. 40 missing," she wrote.

Italy's coastguard said it pulled 10 people to safety and was scouring the area

for survivors. "Due to the particularly adverse weather and sea conditions, the search operations are being carried out with the support of various aircraft... which will take turns in overflying the area," the coastguard said in a statement.

Those included aircraft belonging to Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, it said. The dinghy was reportedly found partially deflated off the tiny rocky outcrop of Lampione, to the west of Lampedusa, which lies closer to North Africa than Europe.

The search and rescue centres in Malta and Tunisia have both been alerted as part of efforts to recover the missing, the coastguard said.

Researcher sentenced to death in China for espionage

PTI, BEIJING: A Chinese engineer from a research institute has been sentenced to death for selling classified material to foreign spy agencies, China's Ministry of State Security said on Wednesday.

The engineer, identified as Liu, from the research institute was working with a carefully designed plan to sell intelligence to foreign agencies, the official media here reported, citing the ministry's article.

China's national security officials have uncovered the espionage case in which Liu illegally copied and sold state secrets to foreign spy agencies.

Liu was convicted of espionage and illegally providing state secrets.

BOXING SEASON



European Hares, also known as Brown Hares engage in "boxing", which happens during the month of March during their breeding season, in a field on the South Downs, near Arundel, southern England

Honduras plane crash kills 12, including musician Aurelio Martínez Suazo

PTI, TEGUCIGALPA: A small commercial plane crash off the coast of Honduras left 12 people dead, including a well-known Garifuna musician, authorities said.

The Lanhsa Airlines flight crashed into the sea shortly after takeoff Monday night from the island of Roatan en route to the mainland city of La Ceiba.

It carried 17 passengers and crew, five of whom were rescued and hospitalized.

Police reported that the plane failed to reach full altitude and sank quickly after impact. Local fishermen rescued the survivors.

The Honduran Civil Aeronautics Agency said the crash is under investigation.

Among the victims was Aurelio Martínez Suazo, a former member of Con-

gress and member of the Garifuna ethnic group, which is of mixed African and Indigenous heritage. Martínez Suazo also held U.S. citizenship. His representative, Helene Odile Guivarch, a French citizen, was among the survivors.

Martnez Suazo was originally from Honduras' Gracias a Dios region along the country's Caribbean coast.

We're devastated, his nephew ngel Aparicio Fernandez Martínez, also a musician who played with his uncle, said Tuesday. He was the family's pillar.

Martnez Suazo was a member of Los Gatos Bravos before forming his own group Lita Ariran. His first album Garifuna Soul took him to Europe, the United States and other parts of the world.

He was the greatest model from Honduras of Garifuna music on a worldwide stage, his nephew said.

Humberto Castillo, president of the Association of Afro-descendants of the Sula Valley, called Martínez Suazo the ambassador of Garifuna culture, noting that he spoke Garifuna and Miskito and composed music in both languages.

The victims bodies were taken from Roatan to the morgue in San Pedro Sula.

Pak-Afghan Torkham border crossing reopens after 27 days: Report

PTI, ISLAMABAD: The Torkham border crossing between Pakistan and Afghanistan reopened on Wednesday after 27 days of closure following talks between jirga members from both sides, according to a media report.

The cross-border movement was suspended on February 21 after Islamabad shut it down over a dispute concerning the construction of a border post by the Afghan government.

Head of the Pakistani jirga (tribal council) Syed Jawad Hussain Kazmi told the Dawn newspaper that the border has opened for cargo vehicles.

He added that it will reopen for pedestrians and patients on Friday after repairs to the Pakistani customs infrastructure, which was damaged by firing from the Afghan side.

The decision to reopen the border was taken at a meeting at Torkham on the Afghan side on Wednesday, the newspaper quoted him as saying.

Since February 21, officials and tribal elders on both sides have been holding talks about reopening the border. On Monday, the Pakistan-Afghanistan Jirga agreed on a ceasefire and the border's reopening.

Sri Lanka's police chief surrenders

PTI, COLOMBO: Deshabandu Tennakoon, the suspended inspector general of police, surrendered to the court on Wednesday after evading arrest for over two weeks in a case related to a shooting incident in 2023.

Tennakoon, who had been on a run since February 28, turned himself in at the magistrate's court at the southern town of Matara. The court sent him to remand prison for a day.

The police chief had two days ago lost his appeal at the Court of Appeal to prevent his arrest. The Appeal Court refused his plea without a hearing.

Tennakoon, under suspension since July 2024, remained a fugitive and was hiding since the Magistrate's court in Matara on February 28 ordered his arrest over the December 2023 incident in the southern resort of Weligama.

Lanka court rejects Rajapaksa's plea for personal protection

PTI, COLOMBO: The Supreme Court on Wednesday dismissed without a hearing the former president Mahinda Rajapaksa's plea for restoring his security contingent.

Rajapaksa, in January, had filed the fundamental rights petition seeking court intervention after the government slashed his security from over 350 personnel to just 60 in December last year.

In his petition, Rajapaksa claimed his life was under threat as a result of his action to end the three-decade-long armed campaign by the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) for a separate Tamil homeland.

He had cited Prime Minister Harini Amarasinghe, the Cabinet and the defence establishment as respondents.

The legal step by the 80-year-old came in the

midst of action by the government to remove him from his official residence.

Rajapaksa served as the President of Sri Lanka from 2005 to 2015. The LTTE, which led a separatist war for a separate Tamil homeland, was crushed by the Lankan military in 2009 with the death of its supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran.

The government has also initiated steps to evict Rajapaksa from his official residence he has not vacated his official residence yet despite pressure from the government - citing its policy of reducing public expenditure and curbing the privileges of former presidents.

While the govt insists the measures are part of broader cost-cutting efforts, the opposition has criticised the actions as politically motivated, arguing that former presidents are legally entitled to certain privileges.

Federal judge blocks Trump admin from banning transgender people from military service

PTI, WASHINGTON: A federal judge blocked President Donald Trump's executive order banning transgender people from military service on Tuesday. US District Judge Ana Reyes in Washington, D.C., ruled that Trump's order to exclude transgender troops from military service likely violates their constitutional rights.

She delayed her order by three days to give the administration time to appeal. The judge issued a pre-

liminary injunction requested by attorneys for six transgender people who are active-duty service members and two others seeking to join the military.

On January 27, Trump signed an executive order that claims the sexual identity of transgender service members "conflicts with a soldier's commitment to an honorable, truthful, and disciplined lifestyle, even in one's personal life and is harmful to military readiness."

In response to the order, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth issued a policy that presumptively disqualifies people with gender dysphoria from military service. Gender dysphoria is the distress that a person feels because their assigned gender and gender identity don't match. The medical condition has been linked to depression and suicidal thoughts.

Plaintiffs' attorneys contend Trump's order violates

transgender people's rights to equal protection under the Fifth Amendment.

Government lawyers argue that military officials have broad discretion to decide how to assign and deploy servicemembers without judicial interference.

Thousands of transgender people serve in the military, but they represent less than 1% of the total number of active-duty service members.