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A man watches with astronomy telescope a partial solar eclipse, from the hill of Burgos' castle, in Burgos, north of Spain. Skygazers across a broad swathe of the Northern Hemisphere have a chance to see the Moon take a bite out of the Sun when a partial solar eclipse sweeps from eastern Canada to Siberia

Haiti crisis worsening as gangs gain ground: UN

GENEVA: The UN rights chief on Friday said that the situation in Haiti was worsening as armed gangs seize territory, team up and increasingly turn their violence on the population. "The human rights situation in Haiti has reached yet another crisis point," Volker Turk said, adding that the violence and insecurity had now "dramatically worsened". Presenting his annual report on the situation in Haiti, Turk told the UN Human Rights Council that gangs were gaining ground in the capital Port-au-Prince and its outskirts, capturing key territory and infrastructure. He said they had united to launch attacks, often outnumbering and overpowering national security forces. "Gangs are killing ordinary people, brutally punishing those who defy their rules, or are suspected of collaborating with the police or self-defence groups," he said.

Ten dead after armed men attack Nigerian village

NIGERIA: Armed men killed 10 people in a village in central-northern Nigeria - a region regularly rocked by inter-communal violence - several local sources said on Friday. Ruwi village, where the attack happened, is in Plateau State, which lies on the internal border between the mostly-Muslim northern half of the country and the largely Christian south. It is a state that sees regular flare-ups of violence between nomadic herders and pastoral farmers. On Thursday night, unidentified men "came into the community shooting sporadically, and killed 10 people", Moses John, a village leader, told AFP. "Three other people are injured and have been taken to the hospital. I can't tell you exactly why we are attacked," added Joshua Maren, a villager who called on authorities to send "security personnel to come to our rescue".

Far-right Reform UK party proposes British DOGE

BIRMINGHAM: Leader of anti-immigration party Reform UK Nigel Farage on Friday proposed a possible UK version of the United States' so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) if the party was elected. Farage was speaking at a rally to launch his party's campaign ahead of local elections in parts of the UK and the first major by-election test for Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer since he was elected. "We need a British form of DOGE, as Elon Musk has got in America," he told the rally in Britain's second city of Birmingham, referring to the unselected tech billionaire's new department which is part of Trump's cost-cutting drive. Public sector spending had "grown out of all proportion" and must be cut, he said.

Taiwan defence official in US for fighter jet unveiling

TAIPEI: Taiwan's deputy defence minister attended a ceremony in the United States unveiling the first F-16V fighter jet built for the island, Taipei said Saturday. Po Horng-huei's visit comes nearly six years after Washington approved a \$8 billion deal for 66 warplanes during US President Donald Trump's first term. Lockheed Martin, the US defence contractor building the jets, held the rollout ceremony at its production line South Carolina on Friday. Alexander Yui, Taiwan's de facto ambassador to Washington, also attended the event. Taipei's defence ministry said. Taiwan acquired the new fighters to "strengthen the air force's combat capability and improve joint combat effectiveness," it said in a statement.

Afghan Taliban release nearly 2,500 prisoners ahead of Eid

KABUL: Afghanistan's Taliban government released nearly 2,500 prisoners ahead of celebrations marking the end of Ramadan, the supreme court said on Saturday, in a country where the UN has warned of a growing prison population. The exact number of prisoners held by various security bodies in Afghanistan is unclear, but a spokesman for the Office of Prison Administration (OPA) told AFP on Saturday between 11,000 and 12,000 convicted prisoners were in the authority's custody.

S Korea firefighters deploy helicopters as wildfires reignite

SEOUL: South Korean firefighters deployed helicopters Saturday as the country's biggest wildfires on record that ravaged wide areas of its southeast reignited in one of the region's cities, an official said. More than a dozen fires have been fanned by high winds and dry conditions, killing 30 people and injuring dozens more in southeastern regions, an interior ministry official said Saturday. Fires were whipped up again early Saturday in Andong, a city in the worst-hit North Gyeongsang province, forcing authorities to deploy eight helicopters to the area, an official from the Korea Forest Service told AFP.

Pak govt finalises arrangements to detain, deport Afghans as deadline nears

PTI, ISLAMABAD: Officials in Pakistan said they have completed arrangements to detain and expel a certain category of Afghan citizens after the March 31 deadline for their voluntary return to Afghanistan.

A high-level meeting on Friday reviewed the arrangements to repatriate the Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders after the March 31 deadline.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi chaired the meeting.

The Pakistan government in January asked the ACC holders to leave Pakistan by the end of March or face deportation.

Pakistani authorities refused to reset the deadline for their return despite requests by the Afghan government and rights bodies.

In Friday's meeting, officials informed that all arrangements have been completed to send ACC holders

PAKISTANI FORCES CARRY OUT DRONE STRIKES ON MILITANT HIDEOUT, CIVILIAN CASUALTIES REPORTED

PTI, PESHAWAR: Pakistani security forces on Saturday targeted a militant hideout with drones in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, killing an unspecified number of "high-value" terrorists, and civilians, sources said. A press note issued by the provincial government confirmed the civilian casualties and suggested that women and children might be among the victims. The "counter-terrorism operation" targeted hideouts of the terrorists in the remote hilltop area of Katlang, in the Mardan district, it said. The press note said it was based on "credible intelligence" about the presence of armed militants using the location as a hideout and transit point. It said "several high-value targets linked to ongoing militant activities in the region" were killed in the operation.

back to Afghanistan.

The officials said that holding centres have been set up to detain Afghan citizens before their deporta-

tion, with food and health-care facilities arranged at the facilities, the Dawn newspaper reported.

Naqvi said the federal

government was coordinating with the provinces regarding the repatriation process. He said Islamabad would provide full support

to the provinces for the repatriation.

The meeting decided that Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry would visit the provinces to resolve any issues during the repatriation process.

Naqvi also directed the authorities to treat foreign nationals respectfully during the repatriation process.

A door-to-door awareness campaign about the repatriation was underway and the mapping of ACC holders had also been completed, the meeting was told. According to the UN's International Organisation for Migration, ACC gives temporary legal status to Afghans during their stay in Pakistan.

However, the federal government makes the decision on the duration for which the ACC would remain valid.

A government official told the Dawn newspaper

that crackdowns would be launched after the deadline against ACC holders across the country.

He said citizens renting their properties to illegal Afghan nationals will also face consequences.

Search operations would be conducted to track illegal Afghans and their biometric records would be maintained in official records to bar their entry into the country in future.

The identity and travel documents fraudulently obtained by Afghan nationals will be cancelled. They will also face imprisonment and fines, along with their abettors, added the official, who wished not to be named.

The meeting also decided to form a committee to consider the recommendation of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur for talks with the Afghan Taliban on terrorism.

France slams US interference in firms diversity programmes

AFP, PARIS: France's trade ministry condemned "unacceptable" US interference Saturday after the American embassy in Paris sent several French firms letters warning against using the diversity programmes known as "DEI", a frequent Donald Trump target.

The letters, sent to French companies currently doing or looking to do business with the United States, included an attached questionnaire asking firms to certify that they "do not practice programmes to promote diversity, equity and inclusion", or DEI.

The questionnaire, which was shared with AFP, added that such programmes "infringe on applicable federal anti-discrimination laws"

in the United States, where Trump signed an order banning federal DEI programmes the day he returned to office for his second term.

In France, already bristling at Trump's moves to slap hefty tariffs on imports, the foreign trade ministry hit back.

"US interference in French companies' inclusion policies is unacceptable, just like its unjustified tariff threats," the ministry said. "France and Europe will defend their companies, their consumers, but also their values."

Designed to provide opportunities for Blacks, women and other historically excluded groups, DEI programmes have drawn the wrath of Trump and his followers, who see them as unfair.

Hundreds of thousands rally in Istanbul in support of imprisoned mayor

AP, ISTANBUL: Hundreds of thousands of protesters again congregated in Istanbul Saturday to show their support for the city's imprisoned mayor and demand his release. Turkey's main opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP) organised the demonstration, the latest in a series of protests that resulted in hundreds of detentions and have turned up the pressure on the country's long-time leader, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, a key rival to Erdogan, was detained on March 19th on corruption and terrorism charges that many saw as politically motivated. The government insists the judiciary is independent and free of political interference.



Protestors wave Turkish flags during a rally called by the Republican People's Party (CHP) in support of Istanbul's arrested mayor Ekrem Imamoglu in Maltepe, on the outskirts of Istanbul

His detention, and later formal arrest over the corruption charges on March 23, sparked nationwide protests despite assembly bans, police crackdowns,

and legal prosecution by authorities.

"They've detained hundreds of our children, thousands of our youths... arrested hundreds of them," CHP

leader Ozgur Ozel told protesters. "They only had one goal in mind: to intimidate them, terrify them, make sure they never go out again."

Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said Thursday that nearly 1,900 people had been detained since March 19, and pro-government media reported Friday that public prosecutors had requested up to three years imprisonment for 74 of the detainees.

Police kept their distance at Saturday's rally with no new arrests reported. Ozel called for the immediate release of Imamoglu, as well as for other political prisoners including Selahattin Demirtas, a former presidential candidate and founder of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party, or DEM.

Judge blocks Trump administration from firing staff of Voice of America

PTI, NEW YORK: Voice of America can't be silenced just yet.

A federal judge on Friday halted the Trump administration's efforts to dismantle the eight-decade-old US government-funded international news service, calling the move a classic case of arbitrary and capricious decision making.

Judge James Paul Oetken blocked the US Agency for Global Media, which runs Voice of America, from firing more than 1,200 journalists, engineers and other staff that it sidelined two weeks ago in the wake of President Donald Trump

ordered its funding slashed.

Oetken issued a temporary restraining order barring the agency from any further attempt to terminate, reduce-in-force, place on leave, or furlough employees or contractors, and from closing any offices or requiring overseas employees to return to the US.

The order also bars the Agency for Global Media from terminating grant funding for its other broadcast outlets, including Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia and Radio Free Afghanistan. The agency said Thursday it was restoring Radio Free Europe's funding

after a judge in Washington, D.C. ordered it to do so.

At a hearing Friday in Manhattan, Oetken faulted the Trump administration for taking a sledgehammer to an agency that has been statutorily authorized and funded by Congress.

The judge criticized the agency's leadership, including special adviser Kari Lake, for pulling the plug seemingly overnight on the US government's global, soft-power megaphone with no consideration of the effects.

Oetken ruled after a coalition of Voice of America journalists, labor unions and the non-profit jour-

nalism advocacy group Reporters Without Borders sued the Trump administration last week to block the cuts. Ultimately, they seek to have Voice of America return to the air.

The plaintiffs argued the shutdown violated a court's finding during Trump's first term that Voice of America journalists have a free-speech firewall protecting them from White House interference. Their absence from the airwaves has left a vacuum that's being filled by propagandists whose messages will monopolize global airwaves, the plaintiffs said.

Cricket betting racket busted in Hingoli, five held

PTI, JALNA: Police on Saturday busted a cricket betting racket in Maharashtra's Hingoli district and arrested five persons, including four bookies, an official said.

Cash and valuables worth Rs 8.53 lakh were also recovered during the action by the Jalna police, he said.

Additional Superintendent of Police Ayush Nopany said police on Friday caught one Shaikh Mustaqeem for placing bets through his mobile phone.

Mustaqeem told the police that an organised betting network was being operated. The input helped police expose the illegal activity and arrest the bookies, the official said, adding that they would seek court's permission to freeze the bank accounts of the accused persons.

Two days ago, police had arrested four bookies in the district. They have also taken preventive action against 16 bookies.

Curfew lifted in east Katmandu, over 100 demonstrators arrested for vandalising property

PTI, KATHMANDU: Authorities in Nepal on Saturday lifted a curfew imposed in the eastern part of Kathmandu following violent clashes between the security personnel and the pro-monarchy protesters, as tensions eased in the area.

Parts of Kathmandu on Friday witnessed a tense situation after pro-monarchy protesters pelted stones, attacked the office of a political party, set fire to vehicles and looted shops in the Tinkune area of the capital.

Two persons, including a TV cameraman, were killed and 110 others injured in the clashes between the security personnel and the pro-monarchy protesters. The Army was later called out to control the situation.

Police have arrested 105 agitators who were involved in burning houses



Nepal police fire tear gas to disperse pro-monarchy demonstrators demanding a Hindu state, in Kathmandu

and vandalising vehicles during Friday's violent demonstration.

The curfew imposed since 4.25 pm on Friday has been lifted from 7 am on Saturday, according to a notice issued by Kathmandu District Administration Office.

Those arrested included the general secretary of the

Rastriya Prajatantra Party Dhawal Shumsher Rana and a central member of the party, Rabindra Mishra, among others.

Durga Prasai, the key person behind Friday's violent demonstration, is at large, Superintendent of Police of Kathmandu District Police Range Apil Bohara said.

Two killed, four injured in shooting at Washington party

AP, SEATTLE: Two people were killed and four others injured during an early morning shooting at a house party in Tacoma, Washington, authorities said Saturday.

The Pierce County Sheriff's Department, in a statement on social media, said one male juvenile was in custody. They did not provide his age.

Shortly before 12.30 am, deputies were notified of 30 to 40 young people running and screaming from a house party, with several

callers reporting a fight had broken out in the street.

Before deputies arrived, shots were fired, and people and vehicles fled. "Vehicles were getting stuck in the neighbourhood while chaos embodied the entire street," the statement says.

Deputies attempted life-saving measures on one male at the site, but he died, the statement said. Five others went to local hospitals on their own. The department said it later learned another male had died of injuries at a hospital.

FROM PAGE 1

CLASS IX STUDENTS WILL GET 2 YRS TO CLEAR EXAMS IF THEY FAIL

A one-month summer vacation will begin for these students from May 1 to June 4.

Shetgaonkar further clarified that the circular issued on January 30, 2025, regarding the start of the new academic year, was part of the process to assess preparedness and ensure the availability of free textbooks for students in Classes VI to VIII. Zingde also highlighted that consultations with school management, teachers, and parents had been ongoing since July 2024 to discuss the proposed changes.

Apart from Shetye and Zingde, the press conference was also attended by SCERT Director Meghana Shetgaonkar.

CABINET REJIG AFTER DISCUSSING WITH HIGH COMMAND: CM

A fortnight ago, Town and Country Planning (TCP) Minister Vishwajit Rane had stated that the new Regional Plan will not be formulated in the State, and instead zoning plans will be prepared.

179 KG BEEF TRANSPORTED FROM DELHI SEIZED AT VASCO

The authorities are currently conducting a thorough investigation into the illegal shipment which is suspected to be linked to preparations ahead of festival celebrations.

This seizure highlights the ongoing efforts by law enforcement agencies to crack down on illegal transportation activities and maintain law and order. Investigations are underway to uncover further details regarding the origin and intended destination of the shipment.

The authorities refused to divulge further details, but assured strict action against those involved in illegal cattle meat transportation to uphold the law.