



Demonstrators rally in support to Palestinians and against their displacement in Tripoli, Libya



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen rings a bell to signify the beginning of the weekly college of commissioners meeting at EU HQ in Brussels



Queen Rania of Jordan, right, meets with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni at villa Doria Pamphili in Rome



Lava shooting up high during an ongoing eruption of Kilauea volcano inside Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, US

allovertheworld



Gold bracelets are seen on display at Hua Seng Heng gold traders in Chinatown in Bangkok

Peruvian schoolkids living in fear of extortion gangs

LIMA: First they came for shop owners and bus drivers, ordering them to pay protection money on pain of death. Now the extortion gangs terrorising Peru have set their sights on fee-paying schools, threatening to kill staff or parents "inside or outside" the classroom unless they fork out tens of thousands of dollars. Fearing for pupils' safety, hundreds of private schools have shut their doors and moved classes online in recent months, highlighting the worsening security crisis in the gang-plagued South American country. The southern hemisphere's new school year began in March but for pupils of San Vicente primary and secondary school in northern Lima it only really started last week. Classes had barely begun last month when a gang attacked the school with explosives for refusing to pay \$27,000 in protection money.

German parties hope to unveil deal for new government

BERLIN: Germany's two main centrist parties were expected to announce a deal Wednesday to form a new government by early May, which would end a long period of political limbo that has left Berlin hamstrung amid global and domestic crises. After six weeks of negotiations, the conservative CDU/CSU alliance of chancellor-in-waiting Friedrich Merz and the centre-left SPD were hoping to present a formal coalition agreement, a source close to the talks told AFP. As senior party figures gathered on Wednesday morning, CDU parliamentary leader Thorsten Frei said he was "certain" an agreement would soon be reached.

Sweden accuses man of spying on exiled Uyghurs for China

STOCKHOLM: A Swedish prosecutor on Wednesday accused a man detained this weekend of spying on exiled members of China's minority Uyghur community for Beijing. At a court hearing in Solna, north of Stockholm, later Wednesday, he will ask for the suspect to be taken into custody for aggravated spying. "The man is suspected of having illegally gathered information and intelligence on people from the Uyghur community for the Chinese intelligence services," said prosecutor Mats Ljungqvist. "The case is very sensitive and is at a preliminary stage of investigation. For this reason, I cannot provide further information at this point," he added in a statement. The suspect was detained on Sunday according to court documents obtained by AFP, which gave his date of birth as April 8, 1967 and said that he had needed a Mandarin interpreter.

Algeria criticises US stance on disputed Western Sahara

ALGIERS: Algeria criticised the US on Wednesday after Washington reaffirmed its support for Morocco's stance on the disputed Western Sahara, a territory largely controlled by Rabat but claimed for decades by the Algiers-backed Polisario Front. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, meeting his Moroccan counterpart Nasser Bourita Tuesday, "reiterated that the United States recognizes Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara and supports Morocco's serious, credible and realistic autonomy proposal as the only basis for a just and lasting solution to the dispute," the State Department spokeswoman said. An Algerian foreign ministry statement expressed disappointment with Washington's "confirmation of this position by a permanent member of the Security Council from whom it is normally expected to demonstrate respect for international legality in general, and for (UN) Security Council resolutions in particular".

UK and India meet to accelerate trade deal talks

LONDON: Britain and India meet on Wednesday to help secure a post-Brexit free trade deal, as UK finance minister Rachel Reeves urged an acceleration of trade agreements worldwide amid US tariffs. The UK has sought to bolster trade ties across the world since it left the European Union, and that need has only strengthened since US President's Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs have increased economic uncertainty. The UK and India are the sixth and fifth largest global economies respectively, with a trade relationship worth £41 billion (\$53 billion) and investment supporting more than 600,000 jobs across both countries.

Israeli airstrike on Gaza apartment building kills 23

AP, DEIR AL-BALAH (GAZA STRIP): Israeli aircraft struck a residential block in war-ravaged northern Gaza on Wednesday, killing at least 23 people, health officials said, as the renewed fighting in the devastated Palestinian enclave showed no signs of letting up. The Al-Ahly hospital said at least 23 people were killed in the strike, including eight women and eight children, figures confirmed by the territory's Health Ministry.



Smoke billows at the site of an Israeli strike on a residential area in Gaza City's Shujaiyya neighbourhood

The strike hit a four-story building in the Shijaiyya neighborhood of Gaza City and rescue teams were searching for victims under the rubble, according to the Health Ministry's emergency service. The civil defense, a rescue group which operates under the Hamas-run government, said other neighbouring buildings were damaged in the strike. The Israeli military said it struck a senior Hamas militant who it said was behind attacks emanating from Shijaiyya. It did not name him or provide further details. Israel blames the deaths of civilians on

the militant group, because it embeds itself in dense urban areas.

As it ratchets up pressure on Hamas to agree to free hostages, Israel has issued sweeping evacuation orders in parts of Gaza, including for Shijaiyya. It has imposed a blockade on food, fuel and humanitarian aid that has left civilians facing acute shortages as supplies dwindle. It has pledged to seize large parts of the Palestinian territory and establish a new security corridor through it. Earlier this week, Hamas

fired its strongest volley of rockets since the ceasefire collapsed, lobbing 10 projectiles toward southern Israel.

Israel resumed its war against Hamas in Gaza last month after an eight-week ceasefire collapsed. The ceasefire brought a much-needed reprieve from the fighting to war-weary Palestinians in Gaza and sent an infusion of humanitarian aid to the territory. It also led to the release of 25 living Israeli hostages held in Gaza and the return of the remains of eight others,

in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners.

Mediators have since attempted to bring the sides to a bridging agreement that would again pause the war, free hostages and open the door for talks on the war's end, something Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says he won't agree to until Hamas is defeated. Hamas wants the war to end before it frees the remaining 59 hostages it holds, 24 of whom are believed to be alive.

The war, which was sparked by Hamas on October 7, 2023, attacks on southern Israel, has seen the deadliest fighting between Israelis and Palestinians in their history.

It has ignited a humanitarian crisis in already impoverished Gaza, and has sent shockwaves across the region and beyond.

Netanyahu travelled to Washington this week to meet with President Donald Trump and in their public statements offered sympathy for the plight of the hostages but shed little light on any emerging deal to suspend the fighting.

US imposes new sanctions on Iran ahead of nuclear talks

AFP, WASHINGTON: The United States on Wednesday announced new sanctions targeting Iran's nuclear programme ahead of closely watched talks on the row between the long-time adversaries.

The Treasury Department said it was imposing sanctions under additional authorities on five entities including the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran and one individual over the contested nuclear program. In practical terms, the move is symbolic as the United States already enforces sweeping sanctions on Iran and particularly its nuclear program, whose scientists have also been the target of an assassination campaign attributed to Israel.

But the sanctions are the latest show of pressure by the United States ahead of the talks, which are set to take place Saturday in Oman.

"The Iranian regime's reckless pursuit of nuclear weapons remains a grave threat to the United States and a menace to regional stability and global security," Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a statement, vowing to "disrupt any attempt by Iran to advance its nuclear program."

Iran denies seeking nuclear weapons and US intelligence has not concluded that Iran is pursuing a nuclear weapon, saying only that the clerical state could quickly make a bomb if it chooses to do so.

Nursing home fire in China

PTI, BEIJING: Twenty elderly people were killed in a fire at a nursing home in north China's Hebei province, local officials said on Wednesday. A total of 39 elderly residents were residing in the building when the blaze broke out around 9 pm on Tuesday (local

time) in Longhua County, Chengde City, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The fire was extinguished by around 11 pm.

A total of 20 people have been confirmed dead so far while 19 were sent to a hospital for examination.

FROM PAGE 1

THANKS TO DELAY, YOUR 'SMART CITY' IS BRACING FOR A BLEAK MONSOON

Reports suggest drain-cleaning has been undertaken in 14 of the 30 wards in the city, leaving 16 wards out as Smart City work inches towards the finishing line at a snail's pace.

Speaking to O Herlado, a senior CCP official said, "IP-SCDL (Imagine Panaji Smart City Development Limited) has not finished their work on some of the main roads of the city and are concentrating on the peripheral roads. Roads like Dr Pissurlekar Road, 18th June Road and Rua de Ourem are still left."

"Scope of smart city work keeps on changing. They do not share details or updates. Last time we heard that work on the 18th June Road will start soon but recently we got to know that it is not being done," the officer said.

He added that the desilting of the drains started in January and so far, one round has been completed with the second round set to begin soon.

Another official said, "IPSCDL is working on various roads, but we will have to check the quality of the work. We do not know if any inspection is being carried out to check the works being done by the Smart City team. They do not report to us. The work should last at least five years. Once the monsoon starts then it is the CCP that will be criticised."

Meanwhile, Babush Monserrate said, "I have already said that I am not happy with the work. I have been saying that the work is substandard since Day One. Can't you make out whether the work is substandard or not? If they are saying that 90% work is complete, then let the completed work be handed over to the CCP. Let it be maintained. Once the completed projects are handed over, CCP will check what has been done as per the tender documents," he added.

When asked if Panjim was looking 'smart', the minister replied, "I also have eyes, you also have eyes. You should decide."

PETITIONER GOES TO HC OVER UNFINISHED SMART CITY WORK

The petitioner attached multiple photographs of the ongoing roadworks at various locations in Panjim, including St Inez Creek to Caculo Mall Road, St Inez, Mala area, behind Hindu Pharmacy, M G Road near Govinda building, Geeta Bakery near Navtara Restaurant, and near the Walk-over showroom and Panjim market. These images, taken on April 8, show clear evidence that the roadworks were still incomplete.

Lopes further stated that local media platforms, including O Herald, had reported on the unfinished works, providing additional evidence of the delay. The petitioner also noted that the Mayor of the Corporation of the City of Panaji (CCP) had publicly questioned the quality of the ongoing works carried out by IPSCDL, further raising concerns about the project's progress.

TIT-FOR-TAT: CHINA SLAPS 84% LEVY, TRUMP HITS BACK WITH 125% TARIFF

The US tariffs, which cover an estimated USD 575 billion in bilateral trade, have put considerable pressure on China's already slowing economy. Some analysts have warned that these measures could cut China's GDP by up to 2.5%. Despite these challenges, China remains confident in its ability to weather the storm, with Premier Li Qiang stating that China has the policy tools to mitigate the negative impact and is shifting towards a more domestic consumption-driven economy.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump announced a dramatic new move on April 9. In a post on Truth Social, Trump revealed that he had authorised a 90-day pause in the tariff escalation, with a lowered reciprocal tariff of 10% for the three-month truce. However, he simultaneously raised tariffs on China to an unprecedented 125%, marking a significant increase in the ongoing trade dispute. This new move comes in the wake of global market volatility caused by the trade tensions.

Trump's announcement of a 125% tariff on China was framed as a response to what he described as China's lack of respect for the world's markets. He indicated that Chi-

na's continued economic practices had led to these drastic measures, with hopes that China would eventually reconsider its position. Despite this aggressive stance, Trump also mentioned that more than 75 countries had reached out to the US, and as a result, he had authorised the temporary 10% tariff on countries other than China during the truce period. The precise details on how these tariffs will be applied and how the US plans to ease tensions with non-China trade partners remain unclear, adding uncertainty to the global market.

This latest development from Trump came as a surprise to many, with global markets responding positively to the 90-day pause. However, the continuing uncertainty regarding tariff increases, trade negotiations, and retaliatory actions suggests that the trade war is far from over. Both China and the US are locked in a cycle of escalatory measures, with no clear end in sight. As the trade war rages on, its impact on the global economy, market stability, and the future of international trade remains a pressing concern.

TAHAWWUR RANA BEING BROUGHT TO INDIA IN SPECIAL FLIGHT: SOURCES

"You are all aware that the US Supreme Court has rejected his plea. As far as extradition of Rana is concerned, at this point, I do not have an update," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

"We will provide you an update at an appropriate time," he said while replying to a question during his weekly media briefing. Rana is known to be associated with Pakistani-American terrorist David Coleman Headley, one of the main conspirators of the 26/11 attacks.

On November 26, 2008, a group of 10 Pakistani terrorists went into a rampage, carrying out a coordinated attack on a railway station, two luxury hotels and a Jewish centre, after they sneaked into India's financial capital using the sea route in the Arabian Sea.

As many as 166 people were killed in the nearly 60-hour assault that sent shockwaves across the country and even brought India and Pakistan to the brink of war.

In November 2012, Ajmal Amir Kasab, the lone surviving gunman among the Pakistani group, was hanged to death in Yerawada Jail in Pune.

A joint press conference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the White House in February, President Donald Trump announced that his administration has approved the extradition of a "very evil" man "to face justice" in India.

In his emergency application, Rana had sought a "stay of his extradition and surrender to India pending litigation (including exhaustion of all appeals) on the merits of his February 13 petition."

In that petition, Rana argued that his extradition to India violates United States law and the United Nations Convention Against Torture "because there are substantial grounds for believing that, if extradited to India, the petitioner will be in danger of being subjected to torture."

PROPOSED US BILL THREATENS TO SCRAP POST-STUDY WORK PERMIT

According to a report, there were over 3,31,000 Indian students in the US during the 2023-2024 academic year, with nearly 97,556 participating in OPT—a 41% increase from the previous year.

However, data shows that number of Indian students in the US dipped by nearly 28% year-on-year in March 2025. Active Indian students count took a sharp dive from 3,48,446 in July 2024 to 2,55,447 in August 2024 - a month that typically coincides with the admission cycle in the US. This decline was a reversal of the previously consistent upward trend in Indian enrollment.

Representative Paul Gosar from Arizona had on March 25, introduced the "Fairness for High-Skilled Americans Act", which looks to eliminate the Optional Practical Training programme, which currently allows international students, particularly those in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, to work in the United States for up to three years after graduation.

The bill reflects the 'Buy American, Hire American' agenda championed by US President Trump during his first term.

As per the bill tabled, a non-US national would be al-

lowed to participate in the programme for four months with no extensions available. It also bars certain individuals from participating in the programme, specifically an individual - with a degree or working in a sensitive field, or who is employed by or otherwise affiliated with an entity owned or controlled by the Communist Party of China.

Experts say if the bill passes, Indian students may be forced to leave the US abruptly without transitioning to another work visa, impacting their ability to repay student loans.

There's also a concern that it will lead to a scramble for H-1B-eligible jobs, though success is far from guaranteed. As experts noted "the development has panicked existing F-1 and M-1 student visa holders who are frantically applying for jobs that can transition them to an H-1B work visa, primarily sponsored by large US and Indian technology companies."

The introduction of the bill seeking to cancel OPT comes against a backdrop of intensifying anti-immigrant measures, including mass deportations and tightened visa scrutiny.

Indian students are already under severe scrutiny with minor offences also leading to their deportation. A report in the Times of India said that dozens of Indian students in the US received emails from their designated school officials (DSOs) in the past few days, informing them that their F-1 student visas were no longer valid and that they had to leave the country immediately.

GOA POLICE BUST ILLEGAL IPL BETTING RACKETS, ARREST 34

These transactions took place in closed premises, where the accused impersonated the legitimate account holders.

In the first raid, authorities seized 18 mobile phones, 5 laptops, 3 Indian passports, 11 bank passbooks, 54 SIM cards, 8 cheque books, and 363 ATM cards from various banks. In the second raid, the police seized 84 passbooks, 27 cheque books, 83 mobile phones, 6 laptops, 12 desktops, 6 CPUs, 3 routers, and 109 ATM cards from different banks.

So far this season, Goa Police have registered six IPL betting-related cases—two by North Goa Police and four by the Crime Branch—resulting in 44 arrests and the seizure of approximately Rs 45 lakh worth of materials.

An offence has been registered under Sections 318(2), 319(2), 112, 61(2) of BNS 2023, Sections 3 and 4 of the GDD PG Act, and Section 66D of the IT Act, police said.

TWO AP NATIVES HELD IN SEPERATE IPL SCAM AT SINGUERIM

Following a tip-off that some persons staying in an apartment hotel in Singuerim, were accepting bets on matches during the ongoing tournament, Calangute Police said they conducted a raid between 11.20pm on Tuesday and 1.50am Wednesday in room no 101, D Block in the apartment complex, during which the two accused were caught red-handed while accepting illegal bets on mobile/online.

Datla Varma, 37, and Vejandla Sambasivarao, 36 have been arrested.

Calangute Police also seized 10 mobile phones, a HP Laptop and other accessories, all worth Rs 95,000 approximately. Further investigations are on.

SANGUEM TOWN HALL DEBRIS DUMPED IN FIELD FOR 'ILLEGAL ROAD'?

He also criticised the practice of contractors filling agricultural lands without proper authorisation.

Naik also noted that small trees in the surrounding wetlands had been "butchered mercilessly" during the process. "I asked the Talati about this, and he replied that reports had been sent to higher authorities. But the big question is whether the soil will remain in the field or be removed," he said.

The residents are now demanding that strict action be taken against those responsible for the illegal land-filling, particularly the contractor involved in the work. Many have pointed out that action should have been taken at the onset of the project, questioning why the local Panchayat failed to intervene earlier. "Where was the Panchayat body when the illegal work began? Why wasn't timely action taken to prevent this unauthorised activity?" asked Naik.