



Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese speaks during a visit to Morayfield Medicare Urgent Care Clinic near Brisbane



Indonesian Foreign Minister Sugiono (L) with Thailand's Foreign Minister Maris Sangiampongsa during their meeting in Bangkok, Thailand

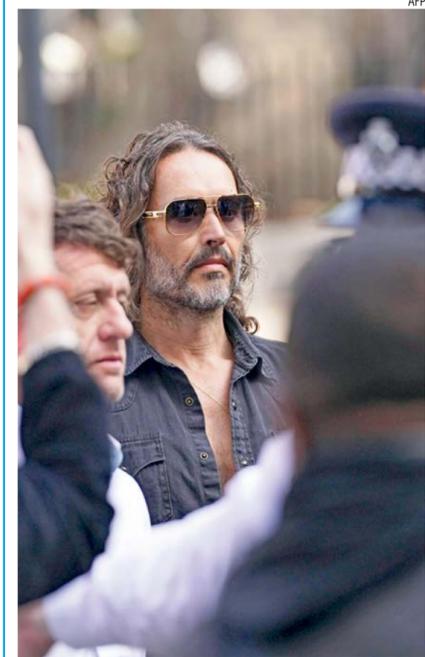


Vice President JD Vance speaks during a tour at Nucor Steel Berkeley in Huger, Unincorporated Community in South Carolina



French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot (R), welcomes his Japanese counterpart Takeshi Iwaya, Japan

allovertheworld



UK comedian Russell Brand arrives at Westminster Magistrates' court in London, where he faces, rape and sexual assault charges involving four women

Teen freed in Swedish triple murder probe, trio arrested

STOCKHOLM: A 16-year-old arrested in Sweden after a shooting that killed three youths is no longer a suspect and has been released and three men have been arrested, prosecutors said Friday. "Suspicion against the 16-year-old have weakened during his time in custody. He is no longer suspected of a crime," prosecutor Andreas Nyberg said in a statement. Two men around the ages of 25 and 35 were arrested Thursday suspected of "incitement to murder", while a third man in his 20s was arrested overnight Thursday to Friday suspected of murder, the statement said. Three youths aged 15 to 20 were killed in Tuesday's shooting in broad daylight at a hair salon in central Uppsala, about 70 kilometres (45 miles) north of Stockholm. The shooting shocked Sweden amid rising concern over gang violence, though police have not confirmed that the shooting was gang-related.

French prison attacks linked to drug traffickers, say prosecutors

PARIS: Prosecutors said Friday a series of coordinated attacks on French prisons were carried out by drug traffickers, with at least one suspect thought to have ties to a notorious cartel. Attackers in April struck at several jails and other facilities across France, torching cars, spraying the entrance of one prison with automatic gunfire and leaving mysterious inscriptions. A total of 30 people, including four minors, were arrested this week in police raids across France. Seven of them were released without charge. The assaults have embarrassed the right-leaning government whose tough-talking ministers of justice, Gerald Darmanin, and interior, Bruno Retailleau, have vowed to intensify the fight against narcotics and drug-related crime.

Over 200 killed in at least 243 Myanmar military attacks since quake: UN

GENEVA: The United Nations decried Friday continuing deadly attacks by Myanmar's military despite a ceasefire declared following a devastating earthquake that killed nearly 3,800 people. "The unremitting violence inflicted on civilians, despite a ceasefire nominally declared in the wake of the devastating earthquake on 28 March, underscores the need for the parties to commit to, and implement, a genuine and permanent nationwide halt to hostilities and return to civilian rule," UN rights chief Volker Turk said in a statement. A multi-sided conflict has engulfed Myanmar since 2021, when Min Aung Hlaing's military wrested power from the civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi. Following the 7.7 magnitude quake, the junta joined opponents in calling a temporary halt to hostilities on April 2 for relief to be delivered.

Thailand urges calm after first anthrax death in decades

BANGKOK: Thailand's health ministry urged calm on Friday after the kingdom reported its first anthrax death in more than three decades, with a second infection already confirmed. Anthrax - which spreads through bacteria in soil - commonly infects grazing livestock and wild animals but can kill humans with symptoms including skin lesions, blisters and swollen lymph nodes. Health officials warned Thais against eating raw meat, a staple in the country's northeast, following the death of a 53-year-old man who reportedly handled a dead cow in Mukdahan province near the border with Laos. A second 53-year-old man, also with a history of contact with cattle, has tested positive and been hospitalised in the same region. Meanwhile 638 people in "risk groups", including a butcher and those who consumed raw beef, are being monitored and given antibiotics.

Trans-women banned from English women's cricket

LONDON: Transgender women have been banned from playing in women's and girls' cricket in England and Wales after the governing body announced a change in policy on Friday. The move by the England and Wales Cricket Board follows last month's UK Supreme Court ruling regarding the Equality Act. The UK's highest court ruled the legal definition of a "woman" is based on a person's sex at birth and does not include transgender women who hold a gender recognition certificate. The decision by cricket chiefs comes after the English and Scottish football associations announced Thursday that transgender women would be barred from the women's game.

Vatican chimney installed ahead of papal conclave

AFP, VATICAN CITY: Firefighters installed the chimney atop the Sistine Chapel on Friday which will emit white smoke to signal the election of a new pope as preparations proceed just five days before cardinals gather for the conclave.



A view of the chimney (L) on the roof of the Sistine Chapel as it is being installed in The Vatican

Some 133 Catholic cardinals will gather below Michelangelo's famed frescoes in the 15th-century chapel, situated inside the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican, to elect a successor to Pope Francis.

Held behind locked doors, the conclave will signal to the world the outcome by burning ballots in a special stove, with the chimney emitting black smoke if no one has been elected, or white smoke if there is a new pope.

Cardinals from around the world have been called back to Rome following the

death on April 21 of Francis, an energetic reformer from Argentina who led the Catholic Church for 12 years.

All but four of the cardinal electors -- those aged under 80 -- who can vote in the conclave are already in Rome, Vatican spokesman Matteo Brunni said.

Ahead of the election, cardinals of all ages have been meeting daily at the Vatican to discuss the challenges facing the next head of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics.

Friday's meeting emphasised spreading the Catholic faith, the need for unity and the risk of "coun-

ter-witness" -- problems such as sexual abuse and financial scandals -- among other issues, Brunni told reporters.

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of the Philippines, Italy's Pietro Parolin -- who served as secretary of state under Francis -- and Ghana's Peter Turkson are among the favourites to be the next pope.

But there is an old Roman saying that he who enters the conclave a pope, leaves a cardinal -- a warning that the favourite rarely emerges as the winner.

"I think the Church is in prayer mode, but it must also put itself in surprise mode," Cardinal Gregorio Rosa Chavez, 82, told reporters as he headed into Friday morning's meeting.

"Remember what happened with Pope Francis -- what a surprise!"

UK court to rule on Prince Harry's security appeal

AFP, LONDON: Prince Harry will learn Friday whether his bid to restore his UK police protection has been upheld, in an appeals court verdict that could determine how often the estranged royal visits Britain.

King Charles III's youngest son has been embroiled in the years-long legal saga -- one of many -- since the UK government downgraded his security when he stepped down from royal life and left to live abroad with his wife, Meghan.

Since moving to California in 2020, Harry and Meghan have had a second child, Lilibet, a sister to Archie born in 2019, and rarely engage with the British royals.

But the prince says security concerns have hampered his ability to visit the UK and bring his family with him.

The government committee which handles pro-

tection for royals and public figures in 2020 decided he would not receive the "same degree" of publicly funded protection when in Britain.

After initially losing a case in the High Court challenging the decision last year, the Duke of Sussex, as he is formally known, was allowed to launch an appeal against the interior ministry.

His lawyers argue Harry was "singled out" for "unjustified and inferior treatment", and that the committee did not fully assess the security threats when downgrading his protection.

Harry, whose older brother is heir-to-the-throne Prince William, has long been haunted by the 1997 death of his mother Princess Diana in a high-speed car crash as she tried to escape paparazzi photographers.

Assessing US proposals for talks to reduce tariffs, says China

PTI, BEIJING: China on Friday said it is assessing whether to start trade talks with the US on tariff reductions following recent approaches by Washington, a move that would possibly ease the tit-for-tat tariff war between the world's two largest economies.

China is making assessments as the United States has recently reached out to convey messages to China through relevant parties many times, expressing hope to engage in talks with Beijing over tariff issues

- Chinese Commerce Ministry

"China is making assessments as the United States has recently reached out to convey messages to China through relevant parties many times, expressing hope to engage in talks with Beijing over tariff issues," the Chinese Commerce Ministry said in a statement here.

The tariff and trade wars were unilaterally initiated by the United States. If the US wants to negotiate, it must demonstrate sincerity, and make preparations and take concrete actions on issues such as correcting its erroneous practices and lifting the unilateral tariffs, the statement by its spokesperson said.

China has noticed the US side constantly talking about adjustments to its tariff measures, it said that "in any potential dialogue or talks, if the United States does not rectify its erroneous unilateral tariff measures, it would demonstrate a complete lack of sincerity and further undermine mutual trust." Saying one

thing while doing another, or even attempting to use talks as a cover for coercion and blackmail, will not work with China, it said.

China at present is the only country the US tariffs have come into effect while the American President by Donald Trump paused reciprocal levies against a host of other countries, including India and the EU, isolating Beijing, which for its part went ahead with tit for tat tariff war with Washington.

Trump slapped 145 per cent tariffs on Chinese exports. Later, the White House said tariffs on Chinese goods amounted to 245 per cent.

Beijing retaliated by imposing 125 per cent levies on US exports.

China has been denying any talks with the US on tariffs while Trump said talks were on and Chinese President Xi Jinping spoke to him.

Israeli airstrike near Syrian presidential palace amid sectarian clashes

PTI, DAMASCUS: Israel's air force struck near Syria's presidential palace early Friday after warning Syrian authorities not to march toward villages inhabited by members of a minority sect in southern Syria.

The strike came after days of clashes between pro-Syrian government gunmen and fighters who belong to the Druze minority sect near the capital, Damascus. The clashes left dozens of people dead or wounded.

Syria's presidency condemned the Israeli airstrike, calling it a dangerous escalation against state institutions and the sovereignty of the state. It called on the international community to stand by Syria, saying that such attacks target Syria national security and the unity of the Syrian people.

Friday's strike was Israel's second on Syria this week, and attacking an area close to the presidential palace appears to send a strong warning to Syria's new leadership that is mostly made up of Islamist groups led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham.

On Thursday, Syria's Druze spiritual leader Sheikh Hikmat Al-Hijri harshly criticised Syria's government for what he called an unjustified genocidal attack on the minority community.

Early Friday, the Druze religious leadership said that the community is part of Syria and refuses to break away from the country, adding that the role of the state should be activated in the southern province of Sweida and authorities should be in control of the Sweida-Damascus highway.

We confirm our commitment to a country that includes all Syrians, a nation that is free of strife, the statement said.

In the Damascus suburb of Jaramana, where fighting occurred earlier this week, security forces deployed inside the area along with local Druze gunmen, and at a later stage heavy weapons will be handed over to authorities. As part of the deal, forces from the defense ministry will deploy around Jaramana without going inside.

Israeli fighter jets strike near the palace The Israeli army said that fighter jets struck adjacent to the area of the Palace of President Ahmad al-Sharaa in Damascus. Its statement gave no further details.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz said that the strike was a clear message to Syrian leaders.

We will not allow the deployment of forces south of Damascus or any threat to the Druze community," the joint statement said.

LEBANON WARNS HAMAS NOT TO CARRY OUT ANY ATTACKS FROM ITS TERRITORIES

PTI, BEIRUT: Lebanese authorities warned the Hamas group Friday that it would face the harshest measures if it carried out any attacks from Lebanon. The warning by the Higher Defence Council, Lebanon's top military body, came weeks after several Lebanese and Palestinians were detained on suspicion of firing rockets from Lebanon into northern Israel. Hamas and other factions will not be allowed to endanger national stability, the council said. The safety of Lebanon's territories is above all. The harshest measures will be taken to put a complete end to any act that infringes on Lebanon's sovereignty, according to a statement that was read by Brig Gen Mohammed al-Mustafa.

DRONES STRIKE SHIP CARRYING AID TO GAZA, SAY ORGANISERS

PTI, TEL AVIV: Drones attacked a vessel carrying aid to Gaza while it was in international waters off Malta on Friday, the group organising the shipment said. A fire broke out but was brought under control, according to authorities.

A nearby tugboat responded to a distress call from the Conscience, which was carrying 12 crew members and four civilians, Malta's government said, adding that those aboard refused to leave their ship.

The group was safe and no injuries were reported, it said. The Freedom Flotilla Coalition accused Israel of attacking its ship. It did not provide evidence of that or that the fire was caused by drones, but in a video it shared an explosion can be heard. Another video showed a fire blazing.

Pro-government Syrian media outlets said that the strike hit close to the People's Palace on a hill overlooking the city.

Over the past two days, the Israeli military said that it had evacuated Syrian

Druze who were wounded in the fighting.

The Israeli army said in a statement Friday that a soldier was killed and three were slightly injured in an accident in the Golan Heights.

FROM PAGE 1

STUDENT SUICIDE: GRIEVING KIN SAY BITS WOKE UP LATE

They claimed that when Krishna's phone went unattended for hours, they called the BITS management, but were informed about his death only on Thursday evening.

The family members are learnt to have held a meeting with the institute's management on Friday, where they raised questions about the unavailability of CCTV cameras in the hostel corridor.

GOA'S FREE WATER SCHEME EVAPORATES

The policy reversal is seen as a stark departure from the Chief Minister's Independence Day 2021 pledge, when he promised round-the-clock potable water at zero cost for every Goan household.

SC PROTECTS FAMILY FACING DEPORTATION TO PAKISTAN

Advocate Nanda Kishore, appearing for the family, claimed they had valid passports and Aadhaar cards.

He said the family members in Srinagar were bundled into a jeep and ferried the Wagah border and now were at the "threshold of being thrown out of the country".

The bench while directing the authorities to verify all the documents said that a decision be taken at the earliest, though no time limit was fixed.

Justice Kant asked the petitioner's counsel, "How did the father come to India? You have said he was in Pakistan."

Kishore said he came to India in 1987 on a valid visa and surrendered the Pakistani passport at the border.

One of the sons, who was appearing virtually, claimed the father came to India from Muzaffarabad, from the other side of Kashmir.

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Cen-

tre, said it would be appropriate that the petitioners approach the authorities concerned first so that their claims were verified.

"Let them approach the authorities," Mehta said while assuring the bench that no coercive action would be taken against them till a decision was arrived at on the documents.

"It was a case, where these people have overstayed the visa," he submitted.

The bench, however, said the oral undertaking might pave way to uncertainties.

The top court was hearing a plea by Ahmed Tarek Butt and his five family members who claimed they were detained and taken to the Wagah border for deportation to Pakistan despite having valid Indian documents.

The bench noted that following the Pahalgam attack, the Centre in a notification dated April 25 has revoked the visa of Pakistani nationals except for those provided in the order itself and gave a specific timeline for their deportation.

KARACUS MARAKUS ISN'T REFUNDING TICKET COSTS FOR CANCELLED FESTIVAL

In both instances, police intervention halted the event citing continued breaches of noise regulations.

"Earlier, their New Year's party was stopped at 10 pm by police at Dream Beach, and we were promised refunds," said Anantha George, a disappointed attendee from Kerala. "Despite this, we booked again for the 10th edition, but after the venue kept shifting and the event was ultimately scrapped, no refunds have come through." George added that many attendees incurred additional losses on accommodation and transportation. "We at least expected the ticket money back."

In response, Pralayah Records issued a statement on social media offering affected ticket holders free entry to

the rescheduled festival set to take place in Thailand from January 29 to February 1, 2026. The post further stated that tickets would remain valid for future editions beyond 2026 if attendees are unable to travel.

However, this offer has done little to calm aggrieved festival-goers. "They're offering us access to a future event, but not addressing the issue of refunds, which should be a basic right in such cases," said a foreign ticket holder who requested anonymity.

Complaints have also surfaced about unresponsive communication channels. Many ticket buyers claim that queries sent to ticketing partner Madvibes, Pralayah Records, and festival CEO Karan Manvantra have gone unanswered.

Local residents had expressed anger over the organisers' attempt to hold events on Dream Beach during the Olive Ridley turtle nesting season. According to forest department records, 17 turtles nested at the site during the 2023-24 season, laying over 1,500 eggs. This year, 10 turtles had nested at Mahiri Beach (popularly known as Dream Beach) by March 12, with the first arriving on January 15.

The backlash was evident online, with one user commenting on Pralayah Records' page: "This is terrible. I hope this is not allowed to go ahead. Holding an event where baby turtles hatch goes against the very ethos of psychedelic culture."

Despite regulatory hurdles, Pralayah Records managed to host a scaled-down event under the banner The Source near a quarry in Mandrem earlier this year. A recent post on the organiser's social media account indicates plans to bring a follow-up event - The Source (Vol 2) - to Goa two weeks after the Thailand festival concludes, again offering free entry to all Karacus Marakus presale ticket holders.

The post encourages followers to stay updated via the hashtag #X, promising further details about the Goa 2026 season in the coming months.