



Rep Nancy Pelosi, D-California speaks during a protest in support of birthright citizenship, outside of the SC in Washington



Jorge Tuto Quiroga speaks at a ceremony announcing his presidential candidacy for the opposition Alianza Libre (Free Alliance) party, in La Paz, Bolivia



Albania's PM Edi Rama, (L), welcomes Prez of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the 6th European Political Community (EPC) Summit in Tirana, Albania



Tom Cruise & Michael B Jordan pose for photographers upon arrival at the premiere of the film Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning on in London

allovertheworld



Britain's King Charles III, Sovereign Head of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, attends the Service for the Oath and Installation of the Great Master and the Knights Grand Cross at Westminster Abbey in London, in the Order's 300th anniversary year. The Service for the Order of the Bath takes place every four years. The Order is a revival of an older custom dating back to medieval times when part of the ceremony of knighthood included a ritual bath symbolic of spiritual purification and a vigil the night before receiving the honour

US singer Brown remanded in custody until June in UK assault case

MANCHESTER: American R&B singer Chris Brown, former boyfriend of superstar Rihanna, was Friday remanded in custody until June 13 by a UK court, charged with assault over a 2023 incident. The judge's decision to reject his bail request throws into doubt the start of Brown's next tour, with shows already sold-out in the Netherlands on June 8 and Germany on June 11. Brown, 36, was arrested in the early hours of Thursday at a Manchester hotel and then charged over the alleged assault at a London nightclub in 2023, police said. He appeared at Manchester Magistrates' Court on Friday, where District Judge Joanne Hirst remanded him in custody until a plea and trial preparation hearing at London's Southwark Crown Court on June 13. Brown is due to play in Germany that day, and has a series of shows planned in the UK and Europe during June and July, before heading to the United States.

Eurovision door still open for Celine Dion comeback

BASEL, (SWITZERLAND): As excitement builds for Saturday's Eurovision final, one question looms large: could superstar Celine Dion, now in fragile health, make a show-stopping appearance, 37 years after winning the competition? Dion became a global music icon, selling albums by the millions and staging groundbreaking sell-out concerts around the world. But she has never forgotten the role the song contest played in launching her on the international stage. Dion was 20 and little-known outside her native French-speaking Quebec province in Canada when she won Eurovision in 1988, guesting for Switzerland, with the song "Ne Partez Pas Sans Moi". That gave Switzerland the right to host Eurovision 1989 in Lausanne, where Dion opened the TV extravaganza with her winning French-language song.

Jihadists kill five troops in Nigeria base raid: sources

KANO: A jihadist raid on a military base in northeast Nigeria near the border with Cameroon killed five troops from a multinational coalition Friday, two military sources told AFP. Fighters from the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) stormed the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) base housing Nigerian and Cameroonian troops in the town of Wulgo in a pre-dawn attack, engaging troops in a gunfight, the two sources said. "Four Nigerian soldiers and a Cameroonian soldier were killed in the fighting," a Nigerian military source said. "Nine of the terrorists were also killed," the officer said. The militants forced the troops to abandon the base after overwhelming them, said a second officer, who gave the same toll. The attack came two months after a similar raid on the same base killed 25 Cameroonian soldiers.

Petition urging EU ban on anti-LGBTQ 'conversion' gains steam

BRUSSELS: A petition calling on the EU to ban "conversion" practices targeting LGBTQ people was close to reaching its minimum threshold of one million signatures on Friday. As of 2:00 pm Friday, more than 950,000 people from across the 27-nation bloc had backed the initiative, including singer Pierre de Maere and former French prime minister Gabriel Attal. "Conversion therapy must be banned throughout Europe," said Belgian singer Angele, another famous supporter. So-called conversion practices imply methods aimed at changing the sexual orientation or gender identity or expression of gay, lesbians, queer and trans people. The United Nations has called for a global ban, describing such practices - based on the erroneous belief that homosexuality is a disorder - as discriminatory, humiliating and a violation of bodily integrity.

Cyberattack hits Polish ruling party before election

WARSAW: A cyberattack knocked the Polish governing party's website offline Friday, just ahead of a presidential election this weekend, the prime minister's office said. The party's candidate, Warsaw mayor Rafal Trzaskowski, is polling first in opinion surveys before round one of the ballot on Sunday. "Since 9 am (0700 GMT) there has been an ongoing DDoS (distributed denial of service) attack against the Civic Platform (PO) site," said Jan Grabiec, the prime minister's chief of staff. "PO's main page and an additional one devoted to campaign donations have been temporarily disabled," he added on X, without identifying the source of the cyberattack.

Russia-Ukraine direct peace talks conclude swiftly with limited progress

AP, ISTANBUL: The first direct peace talks between Russia and Ukraine since the early weeks of Moscow's 2022 invasion ended Friday after less than two hours, according to the Turkish Foreign Ministry and a senior Ukrainian official.

Kyiv accused the Kremlin of introducing new "unacceptable demands" to withdraw Ukrainian forces from huge swaths of territory, according to the official, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to make official statements.

The demands had not been previously discussed, the official said.

He said the Ukrainian side reiterated it remained focused on achieving real progress - an immediate ceasefire and a pathway to substantive diplomacy, "just like the US, European partners, and other countries proposed," the official added.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry also said in a statement that the session ended.

The two sides sat at a



Russian and Ukrainian delegations meet at the Dolmabache palace, in Istanbul, Turkey

U-shaped table but remained far apart in their conditions for ending the war. US President Donald Trump, who has pressed both Moscow and Kyiv for an end to the conflict, saying a meeting between himself and Russian President Vladimir Putin would happen "as soon as we can set it up."

"I think it's time for us to just do it," Trump told reporters in Abu Dhabi as he wrapped up a trip to the Middle East.

In Istanbul, a Ukrainian delegation led by Defence Minister Rustem Umerov sat opposite a low-level

Russian team headed by presidential aide Vladimir Medinsky, according to Ukraine's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Heorhii Tykhyi, who published a photo of the meeting.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan had opened the session by urging the parties "to take advantage of this opportunity," adding that it was "critically important that the ceasefire happens as soon as possible."

Both countries engaged in diplomatic manoeuvring this week as they tried to show Trump that they

are eager to negotiate, although he has expressed frustration over the slow progress and threatened to punish foot-dragging.

On Thursday, Putin spurned an offer by Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy to meet face-to-face in Turkiye. Zelenskyy accused Moscow of not making a serious effort to end the war by sending a low-level delegation.

Ukraine has accepted a US and European proposal for a full, 30-day ceasefire, but Putin has effectively rejected it by imposing far-reaching conditions.

Deadly clashes in Papua: 18 rebels, 2 police officers killed

AP, JAYAPURA: Indonesia's security forces have clashed with separatist rebels in the restive Papua region, leaving at least 18 insurgents and two police officers dead, officials and the rebels said Friday.

The battle erupted Wednesday when dozens of rebels armed with military-grade weapons and arrows attacked troops preparing to offer health and education services to villages in Intan Jaya, a hotbed of the insurgency, said Lt. Col. Iwan Dwi Prihartono, a military spokesperson.

"The situation changed when an armed group ambushed dozens of government soldiers," Prihartono said in a video statement.

"So at that moment we carried out a measured and professional action operation."

Security forces seized one assault rifle, a home-made rifle, several arrows, rounds of ammunition and a "morning star" flag - a separatist symbol - after the clash, Prihartono said, adding there were no casualties on the government side.

Rebels in Papua have been fighting a low-level insurgency since the early 1960s, when Indonesia annexed the region, a former Dutch colony. Papua was incorporated into Indonesia in 1969, after a U.N.-sponsored ballot that was widely seen as a sham.

CARRYING ON A TRADITION



Cambodian royal officials carrying Phat Sophany (C), wife of Kampong Chhnang Provincial Governor Sun Sovannarith, during the annual royal plowing ceremony in Kampong Chhnang province, in Cambodia

Israel intensifies attacks in Gaza, strikes ports in Yemen as Trump wraps up trip to region

AP, DEIR AL-BALAH: Israel launched dozens of airstrikes across northern and southern Gaza on Friday, killing more than 93 people and wounding hundreds -- attacks that Israeli officials described as a prelude to a larger military campaign in the territory aimed at pressuring Hamas to release hostages.

Also on Friday, Israel struck two ports in Yemen that it said were used by the Houthi militant group to transfer weapons.

The strikes in Gaza followed days of similar attacks that killed more than 130 people, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, and came as US President Donald Trump wrapped up a visit to Gulf states.



Palestinians carry their belongings as they flee Gaza City

There had been widespread hopes that his trip to the region could increase the chances of a ceasefire deal, or the resumption of humanitarian aid to Gaza, which Israel has prevented

for more than two months.

Speaking to reporters in Abu Dhabi on the final day of his trip, Trump said he was looking to resolve a range of global crises, including Gaza. "We're looking

at Gaza," he said. "And we've got to get that taken care of. A lot of people are starving. A lot of people are - there's a lot of bad things going on."

In southern Gaza, Israel struck the outskirts of Deir al-Balah and the city of Khan Younis. It said it hit anti-tank missile posts and military structures.

In northern Gaza, the attacks sent people fleeing from the Jabaliya refugee camp and the town of Beit Lahiya. Israel said it eliminated several militants who were operating in an observation compound.

Dark smoke was seen rising over Jabaliya as people grabbed what they could of their belongings and fled on donkey carts, by car and foot.

UN rights chief warns of ethnic cleansing in Gaza

AFP, GENEVA: The UN's rights chief on Friday denounced Israel's sharp escalation of attacks in Gaza - and an apparent push to permanently displace the population - as amounting to "ethnic cleansing".

"This latest barrage of bombs... and the denial of humanitarian assistance underline that there appears to be a push for a permanent demographic shift in Gaza that is in defiance of international law and is tantamount to ethnic cleansing," Volker Turk said in a statement.

A two-month ceasefire between Israel and Hamas collapsed in March, shortly after Israel reimposed a total blockade on Gaza that aid agencies

say has sparked critical food shortages, with famine looming. Israeli media reported Friday that the military had stepped up its offensive in Gaza following government approval of a plan to retake the territory earlier this month, though the army has yet to formally announce its threatened expansion of the campaign.

Turk, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, warned that a clear intensification in attacks this week raised fears the wider Israeli offensive had begun. "We must stop the clock on this madness," he said, urging all parties, including third states with direct influence, to stop the assault.

UN peacekeeping force confronted in Lebanon

AP, BEIRUT: The force, known as UNIFIL, said one of its patrols was confronted between the villages of Jmayme and Khirbet Selm Friday by a large group of people in civilian clothing who "attempted to stop the patrol using aggressive means, wielding metal sticks and axes, resulting in damage to the vehicles."

The peacekeepers used "non-lethal force" in response, and there were no injuries, it said in a statement. Hezbollah supporters in

Lebanon frequently accuse the UN mission - which was created to oversee the withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon after Israel's 1978 invasion - of collusion with Israel.

Israel has accused the peacekeepers of turning a blind eye to Hezbollah's military activities in southern Lebanon.

UNIFIL issued a statement that complained of "aggressive behaviour" by Israeli forces towards its peacekeepers.

Florida becomes second US state to ban fluoride in drinking water

AFP, MIAMI: The US state of Florida became the second to ban fluoride in public water supplies, joining Utah in skipping the widespread dental hygiene practice.

On Thursday, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed the Florida Farm Bill, which precludes adding anything to the water supply that is not for the purpose of sanitising drinking water.

"Yes, use fluoride for your

teeth, that's fine. But forcing it into the water supply is basically forced medication on people," DeSantis said.

Fluoride was first introduced to US water systems in 1945, dramatically reducing childhood cavities and adult tooth loss. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hails it as one of the top public health achievements of the 20th century.

Ending fluoridation is generally opposed by the dental and public health communities, but controversy has grown around its potential neurotoxic effects.

Last year, the Department of Health and Human Services under former president Joe Biden concluded with "moderate confidence" that higher levels of fluoride are linked to lower IQ scores.

US Health Secretary Rob-

ert F Kennedy Jr and Florida State Surgeon General Joseph Ladapo both oppose the practice, arguing it could affect children's cognitive abilities.

The World Health Organization has called for public health authorities to ensure sufficient fluoridation, noting both its benefits in reducing tooth decay and the risks of overexposure at prolonged, high concentrations.