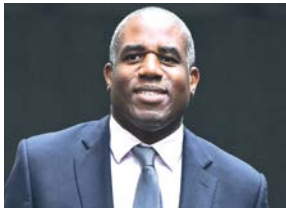




German Council of Economic Experts Monika Schnitzer attends a press conference in Berlin



Britain's Foreign Secretary David Lammy arrives at Downing Street in central London



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov attends a press conference in Yerevan



US Business executive Omeed Malik talks during a session in the Qatar Economic Forum in Doha

Israeli airstrikes kill 82 in Gaza

Humanitarian aid trickles into Gaza, left hurdles to reach final destination

AP, DEIR AL-BALAH : Israeli strikes continued to pound the Gaza Strip Wednesday, despite a surge in international anger at Israel's widening offensive, killing at least 82 people, including several women and a week-old infant, according to the Gaza Health Ministry and area hospitals.

Israel began allowing dozens of humanitarian trucks into Gaza on Tuesday, but the aid has not yet reached Palestinians in desperate need.

Jens Laerke, the spokesperson for the UN's humanitarian agency, said no trucks were picked up from the Gaza side of Kerem Shalom, the Israeli border crossing with southern Gaza.

UN spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric said Tuesday evening that although the aid had entered Gaza, aid workers were not able to bring it to distribution points, after the Israeli military forced them to reload the supplies onto separate trucks



Palestinians gather for a hot meal at a food distribution point in the Nuseirat camp for refugees in the central Gaza Strip. Gazans waited desperately for vital supplies on Wednesday

and workers ran out of time.

The Israeli defence body that oversees humanitarian aid to Gaza said trucks were entering Gaza on Wednesday morning, but it was unclear if that aid would be able to continue deeper into Gaza for distribution. The UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, said its staff had waited several hours to collect aid from the border crossing in order to begin distribution but were unable to do so on Tuesday.

A few dozen Israeli activists opposed to Israel's decision to allow aid into Gaza while Hamas still holds Israeli hostages attempted to block the trucks carrying the aid on Wednesday morning, but were kept back by Israeli police.

A group of diplomats came under fire while visiting Jenin, a city in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, according to the Palestinian Authority. The diplomats were on official mission to observe the humanitarian situation in Jenin when shots rang out.

The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the shooting.

An aid worker, who did not want to be named for fear of reprisal, said a delegation of about 20 diplomats was being briefed about the situation in Jenin by the Palestinian Authority. The group of regional,

LAST 2 FUNCTIONING HOSPITALS IN N GAZA ENCIRCLED BY ISRAELI FORCES
AP, DEIR AL-BALAH: Two of northern Gaza's last functioning hospitals have been encircled by Israeli troops, preventing anyone from leaving or entering the facilities, hospital staff and aid groups said this week, as Israel pursued its renewed offensive into the devastated Palestinian territory. The Indonesian hospital and al-Awda hospital are among the region's only surviving medical centers. Both have come under fire this week, including shelling at al-Awda that happened on Wednesday as The Associated Press spoke to its director on the phone. A third hospital, Kamal Adwan, is out of service, its director said, citing Israeli troops and drones in its vicinity. Israeli authorities issued evacuation orders Friday for large parts of northern Gaza ahead of attacks intended to pressure the Hamas militant group to release more hostages. New evacuation orders followed Tuesday.

European and Western diplomats were standing near the entrance of the Jenin refugee camp when they heard gunshots just before 2 pm, though it was unclear where the shots came from, she said. No one was injured, she added.

Footage shows a number of diplomats giving media interviews as rapid shots ring out close to the group, forcing them to run for cover.

Jenin has been the site of

Israel's widespread crackdown against West Bank militants since earlier this year.

On Jan 21 – just two days after its ceasefire deal with Hamas in Gaza – Israeli forces descended on Jenin as they have dozens of times since Hamas' Oct 7, 2023, attack on Israel. The fighting displaced tens of thousands of Palestinians, one of the largest West Bank displacements in years.

Pope Leo calls for aid to reach Gaza

AP, VATICAN CITY: Pope Leo XIV called Wednesday for humanitarian aid to reach the Gaza Strip and for an end to the "heart-breaking" toll on its people, as he presided over his first general audience in St Peter's Square.

The Vatican said that around 40,000 people were on hand for the audience, which came just days after an estimated 200,000 people attended the inaugural Mass on Sunday for history's first American pope.

Leo, the former Cardinal Robert Prevost of Chicago, began the audience with a tour through the piazza in the pope-mobile and stopped to bless several babies. In addressing specific greetings to different groups of pilgrims, Leo spoke in his native English, his fluent Spanish as well as the traditional Italian of the papacy.

"I renew my heartfelt appeal to allow the entrance of dignified humanitarian aid to Gaza and to put an end to the hostilities whose heartbreaking price is being paid by children, the elderly and sick people,"



he said. Leo didn't mention the plight of hostages taken by Hamas during the assault on southern Israel on Oct 7, 2023, as Pope Francis normally would.

The general audience on Wednesdays is a weekly appointment that popes have kept for decades to allow ordinary faithful to have a face-to-face encounter with the pontiff. It features the pope delivering a brief reflection on a theme or Scripture passage, with summaries provided by others in different languages and the pope directing specific messages to particular faith groups.

The encounter, which lasts more than an hour, usually ends with a brief topical appeal by the pope about a current issue or upcoming event. Leo began it with his now-frequent mantra "Peace be with you."

HIS MASTER'S GARDEN



Gardener Monty Don poses with his dog Ned, a Golden Retriever, in his dog-friendly garden, during the preview day at the RHS Chelsea Flower show, in London.

Iran vows to keep enriching uranium

Poses question mark over nuclear talks with United States

AP, TEHRAN: Iran's top diplomat insisted on Wednesday that Tehran will never stop enriching uranium, further underlining the Islamic Republic's red line in negotiations with the United States over its rapidly advancing nuclear programme.

The comments by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi come after multiple rounds of talks between the two nations, including at an expert level over the details of a possible deal. However, none has been reached yet and American officials including President Donald Trump, Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff and Secretary of State Marco Rubio maintain that Iran must give up enrichment – something it didn't do in its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.



"I have said it before, and I repeat it again: uranium enrichment in Iran will continue – with or without an agreement," Araghchi said, according to state television. Araghchi added that Iran is "currently reviewing whether to participate in the next round and when

to take part" in talks with the US. The US and Oman, which is mediating the negotiations, have yet to announce any fifth round of talks. Trump's trip to the Mideast last week delayed any new meeting. Negotiators previously met in Muscat, Oman, and Rome.

"We have never abandoned diplomacy. We will always be present at the

negotiating table, and the main reason for our presence is to defend the rights of the Iranian people," Araghchi said. "We stand against excessive demands and rhetoric at the table."

Araghchi's remarks came a day after Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said he didn't expect the negotiations to produce a deal.

"I don't think nuclear talks with the US will bring results. I don't know," Khamenei said. The talks seek to limit Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for the lifting of some of the crushing economic sanctions the US has imposed on the Islamic Republic, closing in on half a century of enmity.

FROM PAGE 1

SC GRANTS INTERIM BAIL TO ASHOKA UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR

"This is what we call it as dog whistling in law. He should have used more respectful and neutral language," the court said.

The bench told his lawyer, senior counsel Kapil Sibal, "At the time when so many things were happening in the country, where was the occasion for him to use these kinds of words which could be insulting, humiliating and putting others in discomfort? He is a learned man, he cannot be said to be short of words."

The bench went on to restrain the professor from posting on the recent India-Pakistan conflict any further and asked him to cooperate with the SIT investigation.

It also restrained him from posting on the Pahalgam terror attack.

"Everybody has a right to express himself. But is it the time to talk of it this much communal...? The country has faced a big challenge and is still facing it. Some monsters have come all the way from other jurisdictions and attacked innocent people. Entire country is staying united. But at this juncture... Why make such statements? Just to gain cheap popularity on this occasion?" Justice Kant said.

Sibal agreed that it was not the occasion for making such comments but said the remarks needed to be viewed in a way that there was no criminality involved in those remarks.

The bench referring to the reactions over Mahmudabad's arrest said, "Everybody is talking about fundamental right of speech and expression. This right is not absolute... As if the country for the last 75 years was distributing rights."

The judge said while some of it was not offensive to the nation, the moment Mahmudabad began opining, his words turned "communal" with a "double meaning". Sibal argued the professor's remarks had no "criminal intent" and highlighted the post ended with "Jai Hind" indicating its patriotic nature.

Seeking relief, Sibal said the professor was in judicial custody and had a nine-month pregnant wife.

The bench told Additional Solicitor General S V Raju, appearing for the Haryana, that the bonafide of the comments were the subject matter of investigation for it appeared he was anti-war as he had said families of the Army personnel and civilians in border areas were going to suffer.

"Some words appear to have double meanings," Justice Kant said.

Raju said that the post as it appeared was not as innocent as projected by Sibal.

The bench referred to some newspaper reports on university students and the faculty protesting and said, "If they dare to do anything, we will not accept this, if they try to join hands, etc., we know how to deal with these people, they are within our jurisdiction."

A Sonipat court on May 20 sent Mahmudabad to judicial custody till May 27 after the completion of his two-day police custody.

Haryana Police arrested Mahmudabad on May 18 after two FIRs were registered against him. His contentious social media posts on Operation Sindoor, it is alleged, endangered the sovereignty and integrity of the country.

The two FIRs – one based on a complaint by the chairperson of Haryana State Commission for Women, Renu Bhatia, and the other on a complaint by a village sarpanch – were lodged by Rai police in Sonipat district.

K'TAKA BJP MLA MUNIRATHNA BOOKED FOR GRAPRAPE

According to the FIR, the MLA allegedly threatened her that if she disclosed it to anyone, he will not spare her family and will destroy them.

In January this year, she was hospitalised and she was allegedly diagnosed with an incurable virus and she connected dots with the injection incident. On May 19, distressed at what has allegedly happened to her, she said to have consumed pills and fell unwell. Subsequently, she decided to report the matter to police.

The complainant also mentioned about a previous incident before this assault, where the BJP MLA had allegedly influenced others to file false cases against her at Peenya and RMC Yard police stations.

Later, when she was released from jail, the MLA's accomplices met her and assured her that Munirathna would help clear the charges against her and under that pretext, she was allegedly lured back to his office.

The FIR against the BJP MLA and others have been filed under sections 376 D (gangrape), 270 (Malignant act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 354 (Assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty), 504 (Intentional insult to provoke breach of the peace), 506 (criminal intimidation), 509 (word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman) and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code, according to the police.

There was no immediate reaction from the MLA.

Indian-origin ministers in Singapore's new cabinet

PTI, SINGAPORE: Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong on Wednesday named his new cabinet, with Indian-origin People's Action Party (PAP) stalwarts continuing to hold crucial ministries in critical positions.

Wong's PAP scored a landslide win in the May 3 general elections held in the global-tariff hit and tense trade environment.

The new cabinet marks a significant reshuffle, which includes three co-ordinating ministers and confirms Gan Kim Yong as the sole deputy prime minister.

It also features 15 full ministers and two acting ministers across the Prime Minister's Office and 16 ministries.

Wong has kept his Indian-origin ministers and PAP members, the ruling party's stalwarts, with decades of managing and running Singapore's crucial ministries, in critical positions. K Shanmugam will remain the home affairs minister and serve as the coordinating minister for national security, but relinquish the law portfolio.

Vivian Balakrishnan remains the foreign affairs minister, and Indraneel Rajah is the minister in the Prime Minister's Office.

Putin visits Russia's Kursk

His first time since Moscow said it drove out Ukrainian forces



Russian President Vladimir Putin visits the Kursk-II nuclear power plant under construction

AP, MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin visited Russia's Kursk region for the first time since Moscow claimed that it drove Ukrainian forces out of the area last month, the Kremlin said Wednesday. Putin visited the region bordering Ukraine the previous day, according to the Kremlin. Ukrainian forces made a surprise incursion into Kursk in August 2024 in one of their biggest battlefield successes in the more than three-year war. The incursion was the first time Russian territory was occupied by an invader since World War II and dealt a humiliating blow to the Kremlin.

Since the end of 2023, Russia has mostly had the

Ukrainian forces made a surprise incursion into Kursk in August 2024 in one of their biggest battlefield successes in the more than three-year war

advantage on the battlefield, with the exception of Kursk. Ukraine, the US and South Korea said that North Korea sent up to 12,000 troops to help the Russian army take back control of Kursk, and Russia said on April 26 that its forces had pushed out the Ukrainian army. Kyiv officials denied the claim.

Putin's unannounced visit appeared to be an effort to show Russia is in control of the conflict — even though its full-scale invasion of its neighbour has been slow and costly in terms of casualties and

equipment — amid recent US and European proposals for a ceasefire that Putin has effectively rejected.

Video broadcast by Russian state media showed that Putin visited Kursk Nuclear Power Plant-2, which is still under construction, and met with selected volunteers behind closed doors.

"What you are doing now during this difficult situation for this region, for this area, and for the country, will remain with you for the rest of your life as, perhaps, the most meaningful thing with which you were ever involved," Putin said.

