



King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands delivers his statement during a press conference at the Prague Castle in Prague, Czech Republic



France's Delegate Minister for Relations with Parliament Patrick Mignola leaves after the weekly cabinet meeting at the Presidential Palace in Paris



NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte delivers remarks during the pre-ministerial press conference at the Nato headquarters, in Brussels



US Vice President JD Vance speaks during the American Compass Fifth Anniversary Gala at the National Building Museum in Washington

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Canadian actor Keanu Reeves attends the Los Angeles special screening of 'Ballerina' at the TCL Chinese theatre in Hollywood, California

Turkey arrests five mayors from CHP opposition party

ISTANBUL, TURKEY: Turkish police arrested five opposition mayors early Wednesday alongside 17 others as part of a probe into corruption allegations at CHP-held municipalities, a party spokesman told AFP. The latest arrests targeted a former lawmaker and three CHP mayors in Istanbul, and two more in the southern province of Adana, the spokesman said. The latest round of arrests brings to nine the total number of CHP mayors in Istanbul province that have been jailed, he said, which includes the city's mayor Ekrem Imamoglu – the main political rival to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. With the two arrests in Adana, that raises the total to 11 CHP mayors.

Chinese researchers charged with smuggling fungus into US

WASHINGTON, UNITED STATES: Two Chinese scientists have been charged with allegedly smuggling a toxic fungus into the United States that they planned to research at an American university, the Justice Department said Tuesday. Yunqing Jian, 33, and Zunyong Liu, 34, are charged with conspiracy, smuggling, false statements, and visa fraud, the US Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan said in a statement. Jian is in US custody while Liu's whereabouts are unknown. The Justice Department said the pair conspired to smuggle a fungus called Fusarium graminearum into the United States that causes "head blight," a disease of wheat, barley, maize, and rice.

Thailand chooses Swedish Gripen jets over F-16s for its air force

BANGKOK, THAILAND: Thailand on Wednesday announced plans to buy four Gripen fighter jets in a \$500 million deal, choosing the Swedish-made planes over American F-16s as it renews its air combat fleet. The Gripen E/F models, made by Nordic industrial giant Saab, will replace the Royal Thai Air Force's older F-16 A/B jets bought in the 1980s. The announcement is the first phase of a 10-year plan to buy 12 fighter aircraft as Thailand updates its air power. "This is an important project to strengthen our force to protect our sovereignty," Air Force Chief Pulpakdee Pattanakul told reporters.

Brazil confirms bird flu case at zoo

BRAZIL: The Brazilian government confirmed a case of bird flu at a zoo in its capital after two birds were found dead there last week. Brazil, the world's top exporter of chicken meat, has suspended its shipments to more than 20 countries due to an avian flu outbreak that began in mid-May. Brasilia's zoo closed on May 28 after finding a dead pigeon and dead duck that it suspected were cases of the disease. Samples from the birds revealed "the detection of a case of highly pathogenic avian influenza," the Federal District's Agriculture Secretariat said on social media Tuesday. "With the confirmation of the outbreak... the closure of the zoo will remain in effect until June 12, if no new cases are detected on-site."

Vietnam police arrest admin of popular YouTube channel

HANOI, VIETNAM: Vietnamese police said Wednesday they had arrested administrators of a YouTube channel with two million subscribers for allegedly spreading false information about state officials. Rights campaigners say the government in one-party Vietnam has in recent years stepped up a crackdown on civil society and weaponised the law to silence critics, especially people posting on social media. Human Rights Watch said in April that members of the public were being targeted through an expansion of the scope of article 331 of the penal code, which centres on the "infringement of state interests".

Couple publicly flogged in Indonesia for sex outside marriage

INDONESIA: A man and woman were publicly flogged 100 times each in Indonesia's conservative Aceh province on Wednesday after they were found guilty of sex outside marriage by a court operating under strict Islamic law. Sexual relations between an unmarried couple is outlawed in Aceh, which imposes a version of sharia, the Islamic legal code. Indonesia banned sex outside of marriage in its latest criminal code in 2022 but that law will not come into force until next year. The two were lashed in sets of 10 with a rattan stick as a small crowd watched on at a park in provincial capital Banda Aceh, and the female suspect was lashed by a woman, according to an AFP reporter at the scene.

Khamenei criticises US nuke deal but leaves door open for talks

AP, DUBAI: Iran's supreme leader on Wednesday criticised an initial proposal from the United States in negotiations over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear programme, though he stopped short of entirely rejecting the idea of agreement with Washington.

The remarks by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei coloured in the red line expressed over recent days – one that says Tehran refuses to give up enriching uranium in any possible deal with the US.

That demand has been repeatedly made by American officials, including President Donald Trump, though it remains unclear just how much US Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff brought it up in his initial proposal to Iran.

But what Khamenei did not say in his speech matters as well. He didn't reject the talks, which Iran views



Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei waving during a ceremony in Tehran

as crucial for its economy to lift some of the crushing economic sanctions it faces.

Khamenei also did not insist on any specific level of nuclear enrichment. Iran now enriches uranium up to 60 per cent – a short, technical step from weapons-grade levels.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, who has led the talks with Witkoff, said Tehran soon will offer its response to the US Khamenei's speech Wednesday at the mausoleum of Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini may serve as a preview.

The 86-year-old Khamenei, who has final say on all matters of state in Iran, often balances his remarks over the demands of reformists within the country who want the talks against hard-line elements within Iran's theocracy, including the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard.

Late in August, Khamenei in a speech opened the door to possible talks with the US, saying there is "no harm" in engaging with the "enemy."

The supreme leader later tempered that, saying that negotiations with America "are not intelligent, wise or honourable," after Trump floated nuclear talks with Tehran.

Khamenei's speech on Wednesday, marking the anniversary of Khomeini's death, offered an opportunity to discuss Witkoff's proposal.

Khamenei touched on previous remarks

Musk blasts Trump megabill

AFP, WASHINGTON: Tensions between Elon Musk and Donald Trump erupted Tuesday as the world's richest man derided the president's key piece of economic legislation in a startling rupture just days after exiting a controversial job in the White House.

Musk was lauded by the Republican leader as he left his advisory role atop Trump's "Department of Government Efficiency" last week, despite criticism over his failure to deliver on promises of radical spending cuts.

"This massive, outrageous, pork-filled Congressional spending bill is a disgusting abomination," Musk posted on X as he followed its progress from the sidelines, in by far his most caustic remarks on Trump's agenda.

"Shame on those who voted for it: you know you did wrong."

It was not Musk's first comments on Trump's so-called "big, beautiful bill" which is set to add \$3 trillion to US deficits over a 10-year horizon, despite deep



US President Donald Trump speaks with Elon Musk before departed the White House on his way to his South Florida home

cuts to health and food aid programs.

But Musk's previous criticism was more restrained, with the Tesla and SpaceX magnate offering only that it undermined his cost-cutting efforts.

On Tuesday he said the bill – being considered by Congress – would burden "citizens with crushingly unsustainable debt."

His post laid bare an increasingly tense relationship between the White House and Musk, who donated almost \$300 million to Trump's 2024 election campaign.

Musk has become disillusioned, US media reported, as his goals for White

House action that would benefit him personally have gone unrealized.

The bill he was criticizing cuts the electric vehicle tax credit – bad news for Tesla – while Axios reported that Musk was rebuffed in his efforts to extend his role beyond the statutory 130-day limit.

He also failed to have his Starlink satellite system used for air traffic control, according to Axios, and was angered by Trump withdrawing the nomination of Musk ally Jared Isaacman to be NASA chief.

The normally pugilistic Trump has pulled his punches, aware of his biggest backer's enormous

influence over young, tech-savvy and historically apathetic voters – a key Trump constituency in 2024.

"The president already knows where Elon Musk stood on this bill, it doesn't change his opinion," White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters in a rapid response to Musk's tweet.

The spat came with House Republicans set to pass legislation sent from the White House to enshrine into law \$9.4 billion of DOGE's cuts, mostly money destined for public broadcasting and foreign aid.

House Speaker Mike Johnson called Musk's comments "disappointing," adding that he had walked the entrepreneur through the bill on Monday, and that he "seemed to understand."

As the world's richest person bowed out of his role as Trump's cost-cutter-in-chief, their relationship appeared on an even keel as the Republican hailed his fellow billionaire's "incredible service."

Bangladesh drops 'Father of the Nation' title for Mujibur Rahman

PTI, DHAKA: Bangladesh's interim government has dropped the "Father of the Nation" title for Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as it amended a legislation, revising the definition of freedom fighter, according to media reports on Wednesday.

The move on Tuesday comes a few days after the Muhammad Yunus-led government dropped the portrait of the country's founding father and deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's father Mujibur Rahman from new currency notes.

The interim government has amended the National Freedom Fighters Council Act, "altering" the definition of freedom fighter, The Dhaka Tribune newspaper reported.

The Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs issued the related ordinance on Tuesday night, it said.

The amendment to the law also "modifies the term 'Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh



Mujibur Rahman", the report said.

According to bdnews24.com portal, "The words 'Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman' and portions of the law that mentioned the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman have been deleted."

The Daily Star newspaper reported that the ordinance also makes slight changes to the definition of the Liberation War.

"The new definition of Liberation War drops the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The previous one mentioned that the war was waged responding to Bangabandhu's call for independence," it said.

Putin says Ukraine wants ceasefire to rearm and mobilise

AFP, MOSCOW, RUSSIA: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday appeared to rule out a full ceasefire in Ukraine, saying that Kyiv would use any pause in the fighting to rearm.

Ukraine has been pushing for an unconditional and immediate 30-day truce, issuing its latest proposal to Moscow at peace talks in Istanbul on Monday.

"Why reward them by giving them a break from the combat, which will be used to pump the regime with Western arms, to continue their forced mobilisation and to prepare different terrorist acts," Putin said in a televised government meeting.

At talks on Monday, Russia outlined maximalist

demands for such a ceasefire, including that Ukraine fully withdraws from four regions across its east and south that Moscow claims to have annexed.

Putin also accused Ukraine of being behind "terrorist" attacks on bridges in its border regions over the weekend, including one that caused a train to derail, killing seven people.

That attack – which Ukraine has not claimed responsibility for – was "directed at thwarting the negotiation process", Putin said.

Russia instead proposed on Monday a short three-day ceasefire intended to let both armies collect the bodies of dead soldiers from the battlefield.

Pak foreign minister says chances of revival of conflict with India 'remote'

PTI, ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Wednesday said that the chance of revival of an armed conflict between Pakistan and India is remote but warned of a befitting response in case of any such development.

Dar's comment came while responding to a question during his press conference giving details of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent visit to Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan and to thank the respective leadership for support during the last month's conflict with India following the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people.

When asked about a possible new round of fighting, Dar said that he could not predict the future but the chances of any such possibility are slim.

PAK SECURITY FORCES KILL 14 TERRORISTS IN TRIBAL DISTRICT NEAR AFGHAN BORDER

PTI, PESHAWAR: Security forces mowed down 14 terrorists in an intelligence-based operation at a tribal district bordering Afghanistan in northwest Pakistan, military media wing said on Wednesday. According to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations, "On June 2-3, 2025, an intelligence-based operation was conducted by the security forces in general area of Datta Khel, North Waziristan district, on a reported presence of terrorists." The troops raided a terrorist hideout in the area. "After an intense exchange of fire, 14 khwarij were sent to hell," the statement said. "Sanitisation operations are being conducted to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area. The security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of sponsored terrorism from the country," it added.

"The ceasefire is holding and all steps regarding withdrawal of troops have been implemented by the two sides in letter and spirit. So there is no chance in my opinion," he said. "However, we will give a befitting

reply if India resorts to armed conflict."

He said Pakistan was ready for dialogue with India, but not desperate for it, adding that Pakistan seeks a composite dialogue that includes terrorism as well

as other issues, including Indus Waters Treaty (IWT).

He also claimed the IWT cannot be suspended.

Soon after the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, India announced abeyance of the IWT among other punitive measures.

The IWT was signed in 1960 by the two countries to address the water dispute between them and to share the waters of the six main rivers of the Indus basin.

The minister reiterated the offer for a neutral probe into the Pahalgam incident, which led to the recent escalation between Pakistan and India.

Dar, who is also the Deputy Prime Minister, claimed while Pakistan's kinetic action has been appreciated, its diplomatic efforts have also earned international recognition.

Cologne starts its biggest evacuation since 1945 to defuse WWII bombs

AP, COLOGNE: More than 20,000 residents were being evacuated from part of Cologne's city centre on Wednesday as specialists prepared to defuse three unexploded US bombs from World War II that were unearthed earlier this week.

Even 80 years after the end of the war, unexploded bombs dropped during wartime air raids are frequently found in Germany.

Disposing of them sometimes entails large-scale precautionary evacuations such as the one on Wednesday.

day, though the location this time was unusually prominent and this is Cologne's biggest evacuation since 1945. There have been bigger evacuations in other cities.

Authorities on Wednesday morning started evac-

uating about 20,500 residents from an area within a 1,000-meter (3,280-foot) radius of the bombs, which were discovered on Monday during preparatory work for road construction. They were found in the Deutz dis-

trict, just across the Rhine River from Cologne's historic centre.

As well as homes, the area includes 58 hotels, nine schools, several museums and office buildings and the Messe/Deutz train station. It also includes

three bridges across the Rhine – among them the heavily used Hohenzollern railway bridge, which leads into Cologne's central station and is being shut during the defusal work itself. Shipping on the Rhine will also be suspended.