



China's National People's Congress Chairman Zhao Leji poses for photos with President of the French National Assembly Yael Braun-Pivet in Beijing



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer delivers a speech at The British Chambers of Commerce Global Annual Conference in London



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Laos Minister of Foreign Affairs Thongsavanh Phomvihane enter a hall during their meeting in Moscow



European Parliament President Roberta Metsola speaks during a press conference at the European Council in Brussels

Khamenei says Trump exaggerated impact of US strikes on nuclear sites

AFP, TEHRAN: Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei accused US President Donald Trump on Thursday of exaggerating the impact of US strikes on Iranian nuclear sites, in his first appearance since a ceasefire took hold.

In a televised speech, Khamenei hailed what he described as Iran's "victory" over Israel, vowed never to yield to US pressure and insisted Washington had been dealt a humiliating "slap".

"The American president exaggerated events in unusual ways, and it turned out that he needed this exaggeration," Khamenei said, rejecting US claims Iran's nuclear programme had been set back for decades.

The strikes, he insisted,



Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei addressing the nation

had done "nothing significant" to Iran's nuclear infrastructure.

Trump, however, maintained the US attacks were devastating.

The US president said key facilities, including the underground Fordo uranium enrichment site, had been "obliterated" by American B-2 bombers.

Posting on his Truth Social platform, Trump dismissed speculation Iran

might have removed enriched uranium prior to the raid, saying: "Nothing was taken out... too dangerous, and very heavy and hard to move!"

He added that satellite images showed trucks at the site only because Iranian crews were attempting to shield the facility with concrete.

Khamenei dismissed such claims, saying "the Islamic republic won, and in

The American president exaggerated events in unusual ways, and it turned out that he needed this exaggeration - Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader

retaliation dealt a severe slap to the face of America". His remarks followed the end of a 12-day war between Iran and Israel - the deadliest between the two countries to date.

Both sides have claimed victory: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called it a "historic win", while Khamenei said Iran's missile retaliation had brought Israel to the brink of collapse.

In Washington, the true impact of the strikes has

PENTAGON CHIEF BACKS TRUMP CLAIMS
AFP, WASHINGTON: US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth insisted Thursday that American strikes on Iranian nuclear sites were a success, backing President Donald Trump and berating the media for covering an intelligence report that questioned the results of the operation. American B-2 bombers hit two Iranian nuclear sites with massive GBU-57 bunker-buster bombs last weekend, while a guided missile submarine struck a third site with Tomahawk cruise missiles. "President Trump created the conditions to end the war, decimating - choose your word - obliterating, destroying Iran's nuclear capabilities," Hegseth told journalists at the Pentagon, referring to a 12-day conflict between Israel and Iran. Trump has called the strikes a "spectacular military success" and repeatedly said they "obliterated" the nuclear sites. On Thursday, he insisted that Iran did not manage to move nuclear materials - including enriched uranium - ahead of the US military action. "Nothing was taken out of facility."

sparked sharp political and intelligence debates.

A leaked classified assessment suggested the damage to Iran's nucle-

ar programme may be less severe than initially claimed - possibly delaying progress by only a few months.

Netanyahu asks court to postpone corruption trial summons: Lawyer

AFP, JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu asked a court on Thursday to postpone his testimony in his long-running corruption trial, after US President Donald Trump called for the case to be cancelled altogether.

In a filing to the tribunal, Netanyahu's lawyer Amit Hadad said the premier's testimony should be delayed in light of "regional and global developments".

"The court is respectfully requested to order the cancellation of the hearings in which the prime minister was scheduled to testify in the coming two weeks," the filing said.

It said Netanyahu was "compelled to devote all his time and energy to managing national, diplomatic and security issues of the utmost importance" following a brief conflict with Iran and during ongoing fighting in Gaza where

Israeli hostages are held. Trump on Wednesday described the case against Netanyahu as a "witch hunt".

In a message on his Truth Social platform, Trump said the Netanyahu trial "should be CANCELLED, IMMEDIATELY, or a Pardon given to a Great Hero", after the end of a 12-day war with Iran.

Netanyahu on Thursday thanked Trump for his "heartfelt support for me and your incredible support for Israel and the Jewish people".

"I look forward to continue working with you to defeat our common enemies, liberate our hostages and quickly expand the circle of peace," Netanyahu wrote on X, sharing a copy of Trump's Truth Social post.

Israel's opposition leader warned Trump against interfering in Israel's internal affairs.

BLASTING OFF BILLIONAIRES



Festival goers look at an artwork depicting (L to R) Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, US President Donald Trump Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg US billionaires Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk wearing space suits with the words 'send them to Mars'

China floods kills six

Over 80,000 people were evacuated from their homes

AFP, BEIJING: Six people have died from floods inundating China's Guizhou province, state media said Thursday, after more than 80,000 people were driven from their homes this week.

Deluges in Guizhou - classified as a southwestern province by the Chinese government - have prompted authorities to activate the highest-level emergency flood response, evacuating around 80,900 people by Tuesday.

On Thursday state broadcaster CCTV said "exceptionally large floods" had swept through Guizhou's Rongjiang county since Tuesday.

"As of 11 am on Thursday... six people have unfortunately lost their lives," the report said, citing the local flood control headquarters.

"Many low-lying areas in the county were flooded,



People walk with their belongings at a flood-affected area in Congjiang, in southwestern China

and the infrastructure of some towns was seriously damaged, resulting in traffic obstruction, communications blackouts, and some people being trapped," the broadcaster said.

"The water level in the county has now retreated below the warning level," it added, saying "post-disaster recovery and reconstruction and investigation of trapped people are underway".

Xinhua reported Wednesday that a football field in Rongjiang was

"submerged under three meter of water", and a resident told the news agency they were rescued from the third floor of their home.

Guangxi, a region that borders Guizhou, has also been hit by torrential rains, with Xinhua publishing photographs of mud flowing onto residential streets in Meilin Township.

Flood alarms have been triggered along 20 rivers running through Guangxi in recent days, Xinhua reported.

Driver hits children with car near elementary school in Beijing

AP, BEIJING: A driver hit an unknown number of children with their car near an elementary school in an outlying district of Beijing, police and media reports said Thursday.

It wasn't immediately clear if it was another case of a driver intentionally running into people in China.

A short statement from police in Beijing's Miyun district described the cause only as "improper operation" of the vehicle.

Nearby shop owners told news outlet Caixin that several children had been injured, and a hospital told the outlet that it and one other hospital was treating some of the children. It wasn't clear if any had died.

Storms in France kill 2, injures 17

AP, PARIS: Two people were killed and 17 injured during torrential storms in France that toppled trees, flooded Paris streets and caused parliament's roof to spring a leak as the prime minister was speaking.

"Have you noticed that it was raining?" Prime Minister François Bayrou pointed out, looking up at the National Assembly's leaking domed ceiling after delivering a speech on the Middle East as a deluge fell outside, quickly inundating Paris boulevards on Wednesday evening.

The assembly vice president, Roland Lescure, suspended the debate so fire officers could check out the problem. When he restarted the session about 15 minutes later, Lescure told lawmakers that absorbent mats were used to patch up the leak.

The French civil defence agency said one person was critically injured in the storm, which broadly swept France after a heat wave. The agency said power was also cut to 110,000 homes.

A falling tree killed a 12-year-old child in southwest France and a man died when his quad-bike hit a toppled tree in the northwest, French media reported.

Zelensky approves plans to set up special tribunal to prosecute Russian leaders

AP, The Hague: Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky formally approved plans Wednesday to set up a new international court to prosecute senior Russian officials for the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The special tribunal will be created through an agreement between Ukraine and the Council of Europe, the continent's top human rights body. Zelensky visited the Strasbourg-based organisation for the first time as part of the announcement.

The special tribunal aims to target senior Russian leaders for the "crime of aggression," which underpins the countless war crimes Ukraine accuses Russian forces of committing since the start of the war on Feb 24, 2022. Existing international courts,

UKRAINE, RUSSIA EXCHANGE ANOTHER GROUP OF POWS

AFP, KYIV: Ukraine and Russia exchanged a new group of captured soldiers on Thursday, the latest in a series of prisoner swaps agreed at peace talks in Istanbul earlier this month. Neither side said how many prisoners were released in the latest exchange. The two countries pledged to swap at least 1,000 soldiers each during their direct meeting in Istanbul on June 2, but no follow-up talks have been scheduled. The return of prisoners of war and the repatriation of war dead have been among the few areas of cooperation between the warring sides since Moscow invaded Ukraine in 2022. "Today, warriors of the Armed Forces, the National Guard, and the State Border Guard Service are returning home," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on social media. He shared images of Ukrainian soldiers draped in blue-and-yellow national flags, smiling and tearfully embracing,

including the International Criminal Court in The Hague lack jurisdiction to prosecute Russian nationals for that specific offense. Since early in the conflict, Kyiv has been pushing

for the creation of a special tribunal that goes beyond prosecuting war crimes that Ukraine alleged Russian forces committed - including bombing civilian infrastructure, killing civil-

ians, rape, taking hostages and torture. Russia denies those accusations.

There are logistical details still to be resolved, including where the court will be based. The Hague has been suggested because of its existing legal infrastructure, but no final decision has been made.

Russia doesn't extradite its own citizens, and whether or not Russian President Vladimir Putin will ever end up in the dock remains to be seen.

Under international law, sitting heads of state and certain other top officials - often referred to as the "troika," including a country's head of state, head of government and foreign minister - enjoy immunity from prosecution. That means any potential indictment of Putin could only move forward if he leaves office.

North Korea sending more troops to Russia for Ukraine war: Seoul

AFP, SEOUL: North Korea will send more troops to Russia to assist in its war against Ukraine, possibly as early as July, a South Korean lawmaker said Thursday, citing information from Seoul's spy agency.

The confirmation comes just a week after Sergei Shoigu, head of Russia's Security Council, said North Korea would send military builders and sappers to help restore Russia's Kursk region during his visit to Pyongyang.

"North Korea is continuing to send troops and supply weapons to Russia, and we see its support has played a significant role in Moscow's efforts to retake Kursk," lawmaker Lee Seong-kweon told reporters after a briefing from the

spy agency. "After dispatching 11,000 personnel in October last year, Russia has already announced a second deployment of 4,000 troops, and a further 6,000 construction troops to assist in rebuilding Kursk," said Lee.

According to the National Intelligence Service's assessments, the additional deployment "could take place as early as July or August".

Evidence for this is that, during previous deployments, Shoigu visited Pyongyang roughly a month in advance, said Lee, along with "recent reports that North Korea has begun selecting personnel for dispatch, as indicators that preparations are already underway."

CLASSIFIED CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

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Child vaccine coverage faltering, threatening millions: study

AFP, PARIS: Efforts to vaccinate children against deadly diseases are faltering across the world due to economic inequality, Covid-era disruptions and misinformation, putting millions of lives at risk, research warned Wednesday.

These trends all increase the threat of future outbreaks of preventable diseases, the researchers said, while sweeping foreign aid cuts threaten previous progress in vaccinating the

world's children. A new study published in The Lancet journal looked at childhood vaccination rates across 204 countries and territories.

It was not all bad news. An immunisation programme by the World Health Organization was estimated to have saved an estimated 154 million lives over the last 50 years.

And vaccination coverage against diseases such as diphtheria, tetanus,

whooping cough, measles, polio and tuberculosis doubled between 1980 and 2023, the international team of researchers found.

However the gains slowed in the 2010s, when measles vaccinations decreased in around half of the countries, with the largest drop in Latin America.

Meanwhile in more than half of all high-income countries there were declines in coverage for at

least one vaccine dose. Then the Covid-19 pandemic struck.

Routine vaccination services were hugely disrupted during lockdowns and other measures, resulting in nearly 13 million extra children who never received any vaccine dose between 2020 to 2023, the study said.

This disparity endured, particularly in poorer countries. In 2023, more than half of the world's

15.7 million completely unvaccinated children lived in just eight countries, the majority in sub-Saharan Africa, according to the study.

In the European Union, 10 times more measles cases were recorded last year compared to 2023. In the United States, a measles outbreak surged past 1,000 cases across 30 states last month, which is already more than were recorded in all of 2024.

Cases of polio, long

eradicated in many areas thanks to vaccination, have been rising in Pakistan and Afghanistan, while Papua New Guinea is currently enduring a polio outbreak.

"Routine childhood vaccinations are among the most powerful and cost-effective public health interventions available," said senior study author Jonathan Mosser of the US-based Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME).