



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov speaks during a joint press conference with his Kyrgyz counterpart following their talks in Cholpon-Ata



Democratic Republic of the Congo Foreign Minister Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner during a meeting with US Prez Trump in Washington, DC



Russian Culture Minister Olga Lyubimova after her arrival with her delegation at the Pyongyang International Airport in Pyongyang



President of France's National Assembly Yael Braun-Pivet speaks to the media during a press conference in Shanghai, China

Trump upbeat as 'Big Beautiful Bill' clears senate hurdle

AP, WASHINGTON: Hours before a tumultuous near-midnight vote on President Donald Trump's package of tax breaks, spending cuts and increased deportation money, a Republican senator stood on the chamber floor and implored the plan's critics, "Read the bill."



US President Donald Trump clears key US Senate vote ahead of July 4 deadline

After the dramatic 51-49 roll call late Saturday, Senate Democrats did exactly that. Unable to stop the march toward passage of the 940-page bill by Trump's Fourth of July deadline, the minority party in Congress is using the tools at its disposal to delay and drag out the process.

By midday Sunday the Senate had rounded its 12th hour, more than half-way through the clerk's reading of the foot-high bill. There were hours still to go.

"Senate Republicans are scrambling to pass a radical bill, released to the public in the dead of night, praying

the American people don't realize what's in it," Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York said after vote. "If Senate Republicans won't tell the American people what's in this bill, then Democrats are going to force this chamber to read it from start to finish."

The slow-walking points to a difficult days ahead.

Republicans, who have control of the House and

Senate, are closer to passing Trump's signature domestic policy package, yet there is a long and politically uncertain path ahead to get the bill to Trump by the Friday holiday.

Republicans remain reluctant to give their votes, and their leaders have almost no room to spare, given their narrow majorities. Essentially, they can afford three dissenters in

ELON MUSK RENEWS CRITICISM

AP, WASHINGTON: Elon Musk on Saturday doubled down on his distaste for US President Donald Trump's sprawling tax and spending cuts bill, arguing the legislation that Republican senators are scrambling to pass would kill jobs and bog down burgeoning industries. "The latest Senate draft bill will destroy millions of jobs in America and cause immense strategic harm to our country," Musk wrote on X on Saturday as the Senate was scheduled to call a vote to open debate on the nearly 1,000-page bill. "It gives handouts to industries of the past while severely damaging industries of the future." The Tesla and SpaceX CEO, whose birthday is also Saturday, later posted that the bill would be "political suicide for the Republican Party". The criticisms reopen a recent fiery conflict between the former head of the Department of Government Efficiency and the administration he recently left.

the Senate, with its 53-47 GOP edge, and about as many in the House, if all members are present and

voting. House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La. had sent his colleagues home for the weekend.

Israeli strikes kill 37 including 9 children, in Gaza

AFP, GAZA CITY: Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli forces killed 37 people in the devastated territory on Saturday, including at least nine children who died in strikes.

Civil defence spokesman Mahmud Bassal told AFP 35 people were killed in seven Israeli drone and air strikes in various locations, and two others by Israeli fire while waiting for food aid in the Netzarim zone in central Gaza.

He said the dead included three children who were killed in an air strike on a home in Jabalia, in northern Gaza.

Bassal said at least six more children died in a neighbourhood in the north-east of Gaza City, including some in an air strike near a school where displaced people were sheltering.

The Israeli military did not respond to a request for comment by Saturday evening.

As international criticism mounted over civil-



Smoke billows after an Israeli strike on Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip

ian deaths in Gaza, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said Saturday that his country "stands ready, Europe as well, to contribute to the safety of food distribution" in Gaza.

Such an initiative, he added, would also deal with Israeli concerns that armed groups such as Hamas were intercepting the aid.

Barrot did not provide any details on how France could help secure aid distribution to Gaza's civilians.

Restrictions on media in Gaza and difficulties in accessing many are-

as mean AFP is unable to independently verify the tolls and details provided by rescuers.

AFP images showed mourners weeping over the bodies of seven people, including at least two children, wrapped in white shrouds and blankets at Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City.

Video footage filmed from southern Israel showed smoke rising over northern Gaza after blasts.

Other AFP footage filmed in Gaza City showed a cloud of smoke rising from buildings after a strike.

Ukraine F-16 shot down as Russia launches largest airstrike since invasion

AP, KYIV: Russia launched its biggest aerial attack against Ukraine overnight, a Ukrainian official said Sunday, part of an escalating bombing campaign that has further dashed hopes for a breakthrough in efforts to end the 3-year-old war.



A fire in a multi-storey residential building following a Russian drone attack in Odesa

Russia fired a total of 537 aerial weapons at Ukraine, including 477 drones and decoys and 60 missiles, Ukraine's air force said. Of these, 249 were shot down and 226 were lost, likely having been electronically jammed.

The onslaught was "the most massive airstrike" on the country since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, taking into account both drones and various types of missiles, Yuriy Ilnat, head of communica-

tions for Ukraine's air force, told The Associated Press. The attack targeted several regions, including western Ukraine, far from the front line.

Poland and allied countries scrambled aircraft to ensure the safety of Polish airspace, the country's air force said.

One person died in a drone strike in the Kherson region, Gov. Oleksandr

Prokudin said, while another was killed when a drone hit a car in the Kharkiv region, according to its Gov. Oleh Syniehubov. Six people were wounded in Cherkasy, including a child, according to regional Gov. Ihor Taburets.

In the far-western Lviv region, a large fire broke out at an industrial facility in the city of Drohobych following a drone attack that

also cut electricity to parts of the city.

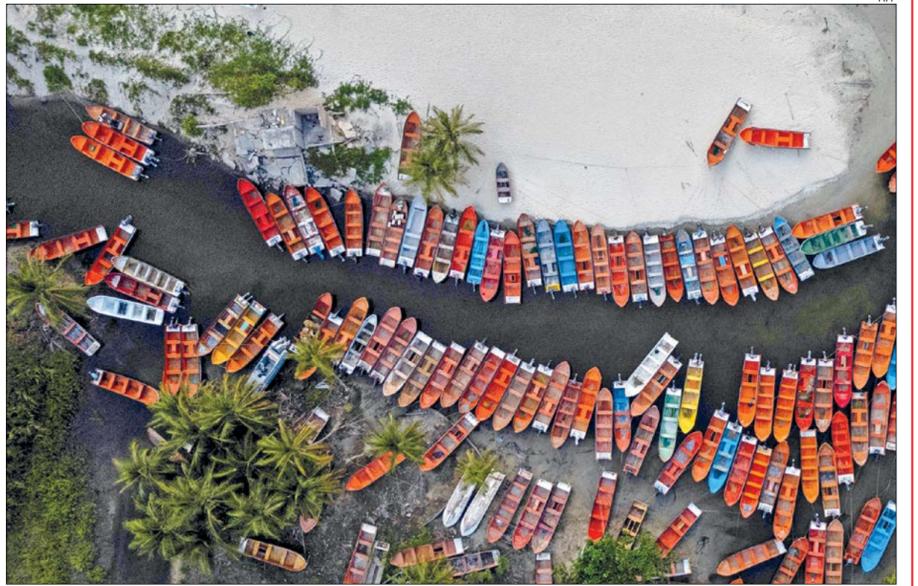
Ukraine's air force said one of its F-16 warplanes supplied by its Western partners crashed after sustaining damage while shooting down air targets. The pilot died.

Attacks continued during the day. Dnipropetrovsk Gov. Serhii Lysak said a 72-year-old man was killed when a drone hit his car.

Russia's Defence Ministry said it had shot down three Ukrainian drones overnight.

Two people were wounded in another Ukrainian drone attack on the city of Bryansk in western Russia, regional Gov. Alexander Bogomaz said Sunday morning, adding that seven more Ukrainian drones had been shot down over the region.

A SIGHT TO BEHOLD



An aerial view captures a fleet of vibrant wooden fishing boats moored at Chuao Beach, in the state of Aragua, Venezuela, framed with the sparkling turquoise waters of the Caribbean Sea

UK govt condemns 'death to the IDF' chants at Glastonbury

AFP, GLASTONBURY: A British punk-rap group faced growing criticism on Sunday for making anti-Israel remarks at Glastonbury festival that have sparked a police probe.

Bob Vylan led crowds in chants of "Death, death to the IDF", a reference to the acronym for the Israeli military, during their set on Saturday.

British police officers are also examining comments by Irish rap trio Kneecap, who have likewise been highly critical of Israel and its ongoing military campaign against the Palestinian militant group Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

One of Kneecap's members wore a T-shirt dedicated to Palestine Action Group, which is about to

be banned under UK terror laws.

The UK government has "strongly condemned" Bob Vylan's chants, which festival organisers said had "very much crossed a line".

"We are urgently reminding everyone involved in the production of the festival that there is no place at Glastonbury for antisemitism, hate speech or incitement to violence," the festival said in a statement.

Avon and Somerset police said Saturday that video evidence would be assessed by officers "to determine whether any offences may have been committed that would require a criminal investigation".

Next polls to be most credible in Bangladesh's history: Yunus' aide

PTI, DHAKA: The next general elections will be the "most credible and peaceful" in Bangladesh's history, Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus' aide has said, asserting that the interim government has taken all necessary measures to ensure free and fair polls.

Yunus' Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam made the remarks on Saturday during an interaction with journalists in Khulna city, the state-run Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) news agency reported.

General elections in Bangladesh are scheduled for the first half of April next year, the chief adviser announced last month.

Asserting that the polls will take place in a festive and peaceful environment, Alam said, "The upcoming

KHALEDA ZIA'S BNP SLAMS DEMANDS OF LOCAL POLLS BEFORE NATIONAL ELECTIONS

PTI, DHAKA: Former prime minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) on Saturday firmly opposed the demands by major Islamist parties and newly-emerged NCP to introduce proportional representation in the electoral system and hold local government polls ahead of national elections. "Those who are talking about a proportional election system have a motive. Those who want local government elections before the national election also have a motive," BNP spokesman Salahuddin Ahmed said. He blasted the proponents of the two ideas, saying "either they want the election to be delayed, or they want no election at all in Bangladesh", adding that the proportional representation (PR) system is unsuitable for Bangladesh's political culture.

national election will be the most credible and peaceful one in the country's history."

He said that the primary goal of the mass uprising in July 2024, which ousted the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League regime, was to re-

store democracy in Bangladesh and added that the interim government has taken all necessary measures to ensure free and fair elections.

Deposed prime minister Hasina fled to India when

her regime was toppled on August 5 last year in a massive student-led protest.

Last week, the interim government formed a committee to investigate allegations of irregularities, corruption and administrative involvement in the 2014, 2018, and 2024 general elections.

The five-member panel led by former high court justice Shamim Hasnain will submit a report by September 30 on allegations that the three elections were manipulated to secure victories for the then-ruling Awami League party by systematically depriving citizens of their voting rights, said an official notification.

The committee will also make recommendations on ensuring fair elections in the future.

Iran could again enrich uranium 'in matter of months': IAEA chief

AFP, WASHINGTON: UN nuclear watchdog chief Rafael Grossi says Iran likely will be able to begin to produce enriched uranium "in a matter of months," despite damage to several nuclear facilities from US and Israeli attacks, CBS News said Saturday.

Israel launched a bombing campaign on Iranian nuclear and military sites on June 13, saying it was aimed at keeping Iran from developing a nuclear weapon - an ambition the Islamic republic has consistently denied.

The United States subsequently bombed three key facilities used for Tehran's atomic program.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi says the extent of the damage to the nuclear sites is "serious," but the details are unknown. US President Donald Trump insisted Iran's nuclear program had been set back "decades."

But Grossi, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said "some is still standing." "They can have, you know, in a matter of months, I would say, a few cascades of centrifuges spinning and producing enriched ura-

nium, or less than that," Grossi said Friday, according to a transcript of the interview released Saturday.

Another key question is whether Iran was able to relocate some or all of its estimated 408.6-kilo (900-pound) stockpile of highly enriched uranium before the attacks.

The uranium in question is enriched to 60 percent -- above levels for civilian usage but still below weapons grade. That material, if further refined, would theoretically be sufficient to produce more than nine nuclear bombs.

Grossi admitted to CBS: "We don't know where this material could be."

"So some could have been destroyed as part of the attack, but some could have been moved. So there has to be at some point a clarification," he said in the interview.

'Eat the rich': Venice protests shadow Bezos's wedding

AFP, VENICE: At least 500 protesters marched through Venice on Saturday, condemning Amazon founder Jeff Bezos's wedding to journalist Lauren Sanchez, a lavish affair that has drawn backlash in the historic Italian city.

"Bezos, out of the lagoon", the demonstrators chanted as they wound through the city centre, some brandishing signs that read: "Eat the rich", "Rejected", and accusations that Venice's mayor

is "corrupt". The peaceful protest, held in sweltering heat, was led by the "No place for Bezos" group, which has campaigned for days against what it calls the couple's harmful economic and environmental footprint on the city.

"We are here against what Bezos represents, his model, the Amazon model, based on exploiting people and land," said Alice Bazzoli, 24, an activist with "No Space for Bezos" who



Lauren Sanchez Bezos and Jeff Bezos depart from the Aman hotel during wedding celebrations in Venice, Italy

has lived in Venice for five years, speaking to AFP TV.

Protesters later unfurled a large "No place for Bezos"

banner and lit flares above the famous Rialto Bridge spanning the Grand Canal.

Matteo Battistuta, a 20-year-old student, said he wanted to send the message that "Venice is fighting back, it's not a dead city, it acts in its own interest before tourism's". "We believe Venice can still be a place worth living in," he added.

Bezos, 61, and Sanchez, 55, exchanged vows during a ceremony Friday evening on the island of San Gior-

gio Maggiore, opposite St Mark's Square.

The ceremony capped off a week of yacht parties and VIP events, due to end with a lavish ball Saturday night - as Venetians remain divided over the impact on the city's image.

Guests included Ivanka Trump, Leonardo DiCaprio, Kim Kardashian, Kendall and Kylie Jenner, American football star Tom Brady, TV host Oprah Winfrey and Bill Gates.

