



A Druze militiaman holds a small rocket launcher during a shooting practice in the southern province of Sweida, Syria



Crews remove light fixtures as they begin work removing the 'Black Lives Matter' street mural and plaza in Washington, DC



Demonstrators gather with dinosaur mascot Chuck the Rex during a protest before the start of the annual Commonwealth Day Service at Westminster Abbey in London



Mark Carney, Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, embraces PM Justin Trudeau after being announced the winner at the Liberal leadership Event in Ottawa, Ontario

allovertheworld



Fuego volcano erupts as seen from Alotenango, Sacatepequez department, some 65 kilometres southwest of Guatemala City. Nearly a thousand people were evacuated early Monday morning following a new eruption of the Fuego volcano in Guatemala, near the capital and considered the most active in Central America

Hundreds of thousands return home in war-torn Sudan: IOM

**PORT SUDAN:** Nearly 400,000 Sudanese have returned to their homes over the past two and a half months after being displaced by the ongoing conflict, the United Nations migration agency said on Monday. Between December and March, "approximately 396,738 individuals" returned to areas retaken from paramilitary forces by the army, which has advanced through central Sudan in recent months, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Since April 2023, Sudan has been locked in a brutal conflict between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who leads the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

Colombian guerrillas warn of 'total war' as peace plan falters

**THE CATATUMBO MOUNTAINS:** Commanders from Colombia's National Liberation Army guerrilla group have vowed to repel a government counteroffensive in the country's northeast, warning that years of "total peace" risk turning into "total war." In a rare interview, carried out at a secret mountain location near the Venezuelan border, two senior guerrilla commanders told AFP that they would not hesitate to fight 10,000 government troops amassed nearby. The thousands-strong guerrilla group, better known by its Spanish initials ELN, has waged a 60-year leftwing insurgency against the Colombian state, seizing swathes of territory and becoming a major player in the global cocaine trade.

Eight people on trial over deadly Hanoi apartment block fire

**HANOI:** Eight people went on trial on Monday over a fire that tore through a Hanoi apartment block in 2023, killing 56 people in Vietnam's deadliest blaze in two decades. The owner of the nine-storey block, down a narrow alley in a densely populated area of the capital, is accused of violating fire prevention regulations after he illegally changed the building's design to cram in more rooms, state media said. Seven local officials are also on trial at the Hanoi court, accused of "lack of responsibility causing serious consequences" after failing to properly report the owner's wrongdoing.

Indonesia court jails transgender woman for Jesus remark

**MEDAN:** An Indonesian court sentenced a transgender woman to more than two years in prison Monday for a remark online about Jesus' hair, a local official said, in a case condemned by rights groups as excessive. Ratu Thalisa was found guilty by a court in Medan city on the western island of Sumatra of spreading hatred under a widely-criticised online hate-speech law in a TikTok livestream, Dapot Dariarma of the local prosecutor's office told AFP. The judge handed the woman - a Muslim according to court documents - a sentence of two years and 10 months, he said.

Myanmar Catholics pray for ailing Pope Francis

**YANGON:** In a cathedral's hush in Myanmar's biggest metropolis, Catholics bow their heads in prayer for Pope Francis - returning the good wishes the ailing faith leader often sends the war-riven nation. "He takes care of those despondent and weak. So he always remembers and prays for Myanmar," said Francis Than Htun, the rector of St. Mary's Cathedral and auxiliary bishop of Yangon archdiocese. "I feel saddened like he is my own father since he has been sick," he told AFP ahead of a Rosary prayer for the Pope attended by dozens on Sunday evening.

Major fuel shortage hits black gold producer Niger

**NIAMEY:** Petrol station attendant Amadou Sani gesticulated to approaching motorists in Niamey to keep going because the garage had no more fuel. Niger has been grappling since the start of the month with an unprecedented shortage of the most widely used petrol in the west African country.

# Massive rally in Mexico as Prez celebrates US tariff delay

**PTI, MEXICO CITY:** Tens of thousands of people packed into Mexico's City main plaza on Sunday to celebrate with President Claudia Sheinbaum a decision by the U.S. to postpone tariffs on many of the country's goods.

The crowd clutched large Mexican flags and yelled, Mexico is to be respected! as they cheered on Sheinbaum.

Fortunately, dialogue and respect have prevailed, she told the crowd.

The celebration comes just days after U.S. President Donald Trump postponed 25% tariffs on many imports from Mexico for a month, saying Sheinbaum had made progress on drug smuggling and illegal immigration.

Sheinbaum had planned to announce any retaliatory measures on Sunday, but instead held a mass cele-



Supporters of Mexico's President Claudia Sheinbaum attend a rally at the Zocalo square in Mexico City

bration.

While threats persist, the president said she was optimistic tariffs would not be applied to Mexico and that she would continue to act with a cool head in the face of Trump.

Among Sheinbaum's supporters was Roberto Gonzalez, a 68-year-old com-

puter scientist who raised a sign that read we are united Mexicans." The unity of the country is very important, said Gonzalez, adding that is the only way Mexico would be able to face one of the largest powers in the world." Also cheering on the president was Mariana Rivera, a 40-year-old social

activist who held up a massive Mexican flag as high as her arms allowed.

Despite the dark clouds hanging over the country, the activist said she was convinced that the president will overcome everything.

Analysts say they don't expect the jubilant ceremony to alleviate the climate of uncertainty that threatens new investments and the Mexican economy, but that it would help Sheinbaum consolidate internal support against Trump, who is setting the pace of bilateral relations with his powerful rhetoric.

This is an event designed more for internal politics, said political scientist and academic Javier Rosiles Salas, stating that Sheinbaum will seek to strengthen her image and leadership with Sunday's event.

SKY SPLASH



A participant pilots a water jet pack on the Yarra River during the annual Moomba Festival in Melbourne, Australia

## Russia expels 2 British diplomats from embassy in Moscow over espionage claims

**PTI, MOSCOW:** Russia said on Monday it was expelling two British diplomats based at the embassy in Moscow over spying allegations.

Russia's Federal Security Service, or FSB, said in a statement quoted by the state news agency RIA Novosti that the two diplomats had provided false personal data while seeking permission to enter the country and had engaged in alleged intelligence and subversive activities that threatened Russia's security. It didn't offer any evidence.

According to the RIA Novosti report, a decision has been made to revoke the diplomats' accreditations and they have been ordered to leave Russia within two weeks. The Russian Foreign Ministry said in a separate statement that it summoned a British embassy official. "Moscow will not tolerate

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the activities of undeclared British intelligence officers on Russian territory," it said. There was no immediate response from the UK authorities.

The FSB last year accused seven British diplomats of spying. Six expulsions were announced in September, and one more in November. The UK called the moves at the time baseless.

The expulsions came amid soaring tensions over the war in Ukraine and after London decided to revoke the credentials of an attache at the Russian Embassy and limit Moscow's diplomatic activities in Britain.

Last month, London expelled a Russian diplomat in response to the November expulsion.

In May 2024, the UK expelled Russia's defence attache in London, alleging he was an undeclared intelligence officer, and it closed several Russian diplomatic properties in Britain that it said were being used for spying. Days later Russia reciprocated and expelled Britain's defense attache.

Expulsions of diplomats both Western envoys working in Russia and Russians in the West have become increasingly common since Moscow launched its invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

## N Korea fires ballistic missiles after US-S Korea military drills begin

**PTI, SEOUL:** North Korea fired several ballistic missiles into the sea on Monday, South Korea's military said, hours after South Korean and US troops kicked off their large annual combined drills, which the North views as an invasion rehearsal.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the missile firings, North Korea's fifth missile launch event this year, were detected from the North's Hwanghae province but gave no further details such as how far they flew.

Earlier Monday, the South Korean and US militaries began their annual joint military exercises, which are scheduled to last 11 days.

The Freedom Shield command post exercise began after the South Korean and US militaries paused live-fire training while Seoul investigates how two of its fighter jets mistakenly bombed a civilian area during a warm-up drill last week.

The drills' start drew the condemnation of nuclear-armed North Korea, which issued a government statement calling the exercises a dangerous provocative act that increases the risks of military conflict.

About 30 people were injured, two of them seriously, when two South Korean KF-16 fighter jets mistakenly fired eight MK-82 bombs on a civilian area in Pocheon, a town near the North Korean border, on Thursday.

The bombing occurred while South Korean and US forces were engaging in a live-fire drill ahead of the larger Freedom Shield exercise.

In a background briefing to domestic reporters on Monday, the South Korean air force repeated its initial assessment last week that one of the KF-16 pilots had



People watch a television screen showing a news broadcast with file footage of a North Korean missile test, at a train station in Seoul



South Korean protesters hold banners that collectively read 'Stop the military exercise between the US and South Korea' during a rally to oppose the joint US-South Korea 'Freedom Shield 2025' exercise in front of the Defence Ministry in Seoul

entered the wrong coordinates for a bombing site.

The unidentified pilot didn't recognize the error during a pre-takeoff check and, rushing to meet scheduled timing, failed to visually verify the target before proceeding with the bombing.

The second pilot had the correct coordinates but focused only on maintaining formation with the other aircraft and dropped the bombs following the first pilot's instructions, failing to recognize they deviated from the right target, according to the content of the briefing provided to

The Associated Press.

Gen. Lee Youngsu, chief of staff of the South Korean air force, bowed and apologized Monday over the injuries and property damage caused by the incident, which he said should have never happened and must never happen again.

Both the S Korean and US militaries have halted all live-fire exercises in South Korea following the mishap. South Korean military officials say live-fire training will resume after they complete the ongoing investigation on the bombing and formulate preventative steps.

## NZ glaciers shrink by a third, transforming landscapes and Lives

**PTI, WELLINGTON:** New Zealand ranks third globally in the proportion of ice lost from glaciers.

Almost 30 per cent of ice volume has melted during the past 24 years and what remains is disappearing at an accelerating pace, according to a recent global assessment.

Almost 300 glaciers have now vanished completely from New Zealand's mountains.

As warming temperatures melt glaciers, the ice loss has repercussions for climate and water cycles. This in turn has significant impacts on landscapes, rivers, ecosystems and, ultimately, people

and economies.

New Zealand is tracking glacial ice loss closely, thanks to a long-running monitoring programme going back to 1977.

Each year, a team of scientists carries out aerial surveys of the end-of-summer snowline to determine how much of the previous winter snowpack has survived the summer melt season.

Winter snow supplies new mass to glaciers and must balance summer melt if glaciers are to maintain their size. Recent surveys have shown that summer melt far exceeds winter inputs.

During extremely warm

years, the winter snow pack is almost entirely removed from some glaciers and the underlying ice has thinned by several metres.

Like a bank account where expenses continually exceed income, the glaciers are out of balance. If left unchecked, eventually the bank account runs dry.

What we lose when glaciers melt New Zealand is home to just under 3,000 glaciers, covering about 794 square kilometres equivalent to about 75 per cent of Auckland's urban area.

Many of these ice bodies are small. Most of the ice is contained in just a few larger glaciers situated close to

Aoraki Mt Cook.

We don't have accurate measurements of glacier thickness but estimate they hold as much water as Lake Taupo. If all of the ice in New Zealand melted a possibility under some climate scenarios for the coming centuries the impact on global sea levels would be barely perceptible, but we would be affected in many other ways.

Physically, snow and ice have a cooling effect on their surrounding environment. The highly reflective surface of snow and ice means a high proportion of solar radiation (up to 90 per cent on fresh snow) is reflected back to space.

