

MUSTREAD

Search continues for dozens feared trapped after landfill collapse

Manila: Search and rescue operations continued Friday for at least 38 missing people feared trapped after a landfill in the central Philippine city of Cebu collapsed on Thursday, killing one person and injuring several others, city officials have said. Cebu City Mayor Nestor Archival said in a social media post that more than 100 workers were at the landfill when the structure gave way on Thursday afternoon. As of early Friday, Archival said 12 people had been rescued, while one fatality had been confirmed. He identified the victim as a 22-year-old woman.

Israeli military says it is attacking Hezbollah targets in several areas

Lebanon: Israeli military said on Friday it is attacking Hezbollah targets in several areas in Lebanon. The Lebanese army said on Thursday it had taken operational control in the south of the country, but Israel said efforts to disarm Hezbollah fighters were insufficient.

Earthquake of magnitude 5.3 strikes Tajikistan

Dushanbe, Tajikistan: An earthquake of magnitude 5.3 struck Tajikistan on Friday, a statement by the National Center for Seismology (NCS) said. The earthquake occurred at a depth of 110 km. In a post on X, the NCS said, "EQ of M: 5.3, On: 09/01/2026 02:44:16 IST, Lat: 38.26 N, Long: 73.42 E, Depth: 110 Km, Location: Tajikistan."

Antonio Guterres expresses regret on US withdrawal from UN entities

Geneva, Switzerland: UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres expressed regret over the decision of the United States to pull out of multiple UN entities. In a statement delivered by Stephane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General, it was mentioned, "The Secretary-General regrets the announcement by the White House regarding the United States' decision to withdraw from a number of United Nations entities." "As we have consistently underscored, assessed contributions to the United Nations regular budget and peacekeeping budget, as approved by the General Assembly, are a legal obligation under the UN Charter for all Member States, including the United States," the statement added.

Singapore opens 10th 'light to night' art festival in historic civic district

Singapore: The 10th edition of Singapore's art festival "Light to Night" opened on Friday, inviting the public to engage with art installations, large-scale light projections and art programs across the city's historic Civic District and selected locations. Organised by the National Gallery Singapore and running until Jan. 31, this year's festival brings together artists from Singapore and the region, and marks the longest edition of Light to Night to date. Held under the theme "The Power in Us," the festival encourages audiences to reflect on history and local culture through site-specific works.

Swiss prosecutors summon owners of ski resort bar after deadly blaze

Sion, Switzerland: Swiss prosecutors summoned on Friday the owners of a ski resort bar where a fire on New Year's Day killed 40 people, amid growing criticism that the couple is still at large. The prosecutors are investigating the French owners on suspicion of crimes including homicide by negligence, while victims' families have filed legal complaints over the blaze at the "Le Constellation" bar in the town of Crans-Montana. The owners, Jacques and Jessica Moretti, did not answer reporters' questions as they entered the prosecutors' office in the nearby town of Sion on Friday, which Swiss authorities have designated a national day of mourning over the tragedy.

Iran cut off from world as Supreme Leader warns protesters

Agencies, Dubai

Iran was largely cut off from the outside world on Friday after authorities blacked out the internet to curb expanding protests, with phone calls not reaching the country, flights cancelled and online Iranian news sites only intermittently updating.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei accused protesters of acting on behalf of U.S. President Donald Trump, saying rioters were attacking public properties and warning that Tehran would not tolerate people acting as "mercenaries for foreigners".

The protests that began over soaring inflation in the Islamic Republic late last month have spiraled into the biggest for three years, with unrest reported in every province and rights groups documenting dozens of deaths.

Iran's fragmented external opposition factions called for more protests on Friday with Reza Pahlavi, exiled son of the late ruling shah, telling Iranians in a social media



post: "The eyes of the world are upon you. Take to the streets."

Trump, who bombed Iran last summer and who last week warned Tehran it could come to the protesters' aid, said on Friday he would not meet Pahlavi and was "not sure that it would be appropriate" to back him.

The images published by state

television overnight showed what it said were burning buses, cars and motorbikes as well as fires at metro stations and banks. It accused the People's Mujahedin Organisation, an opposition faction that splintered off after the 1979 Islamic Revolution and also known as the MKO, of being behind the unrest.

Trump warns Iran against killing protesters

Hails 'strength' and 'bravery' of demonstrators

Washington/Tehran: US President Donald Trump, once again backing the ongoing protests in Iran has warned the authorities in Tehran over their brutal crackdown on protesters, and hailed the Iranian people as "strong" and "brave." His comments came as millions took to the streets in various parts of the country, protesting against the theocratic regime and shouting for the ouster of the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei led regime, in favour of exiled Prince Reza Pahlavi.

In response, Iranian security personnel upped the ante of their crowd control measures with ruthless suppression, detaining thousands and killing several protesters amid the nationwide demonstrations on Thursday. Trump, talking to podcaster Hugh Hewitt, said that the Iranian leadership "have been told very strongly... that if they do that, they're going to have to pay hell." This is the third time since the start of protests on December 28 that Trump has warned Tehran against killing demonstrators, threatening possible US intervention.

Vice President JD Vance, backing Trump's statement, said that the administration stands by "anybody who is engaged in peaceful protests" and seeking to exercise "their rights of free association and to have their voices heard," including in Iran. "Obviously, the Iranian regime has a lot of problems, as the President of the United States has said, the smartest thing for them to have done, it was true two months ago, it's true today, is for them to actually have a real negotiation with the United States about what we need to see when it comes to their nuclear program," Vance said.

Moscow says US freed two Russian crew members

Moscow: The Russian Foreign Ministry said on Friday that the United States had released two Russian crew members from a Russian-flagged oil tanker seized on Wednesday in the Atlantic Ocean.

In a statement, Maria Zakharova, the ministry's spokesman said: "We welcome this decision and express our gratitude to the U.S. leadership.

"We are proceeding with the urgent practical work on all issues related to ensuring the speedy return of our compatriots to their homeland."

Russia's Transport Ministry said on Wednesday that it had lost contact with the vessel, the Marinera, after U.S. naval forces boarded it near Iceland as part of what Washington says are efforts to block oil exports from Venezuela.

EAM Jaishankar meets French President

Agencies, Paris

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday (local time) met French President Emmanuel Macron and conveyed Prime Minister Modi's warm wishes. Earlier in the day, Jaishankar also addressed the Ambassadors' Conference of France and underlined contemporary global shifts driven by factors like trade and energy.

Sharing the details in a series of posts on X, EAM appreciated the French President's perspectives on contemporary global developments and the positive sentiments for India-France Strategic Partnership.

"Delighted to call on President @EmmanuelMacron of France today and convey warm wishes of PM @narendramodi. Deeply appreciate his perspectives on contemporary global developments and positive sentiments for our Strategic Partner-



ship."

In another post on X, he shared the details from the Ambassador's Conference in France, where he highlighted the significance of India-France partnership in promoting multi-polarity and strategic autonomy.

"An honour to address the Ambassadors' Conference of France in Paris today. Underlined contemporary global shifts driven by trade, fi-

nance, technology, energy, resources and connectivity. Changes in mindset have been the crucial factor. As well as the significance of India-France partnership in promoting multi-polarity and strategic autonomy."

Earlier on Thursday, French President Emmanuel Macron said that he would pay a visit to India next month, as New Delhi is set to host the AI Impact Summit. He made the remarks while addressing the Diplomatic Corps, according to France 24.

On Wednesday, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met his French counterpart, Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot.

The two leaders discussed advancing bilateral cooperation and elevating India-EU engagement, while also sharing perspectives on contemporary global developments.

EAM had called France amongst

Chinese vice premier meets Disney CEO

Beijing: Chinese Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang met with Bob Iger, CEO of The Walt Disney Company, in Beijing on Friday.

Noting that China's economy is deeply integrated into the world economy, Ding, also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, said the better China develops, the more benefits all parties will gain.

Ding said that the fourth plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee has outlined the blueprint for China's development over the next five years.

"We will steadfastly promote high-quality development, expand high-standard opening up, and continuously optimize the business environment," said Ding.

Russia fires hypersonic missile near Ukraine's EU border

Agencies, Kyiv

Russia fired a powerful hypersonic missile at Ukraine near the EU border overnight, in what Kyiv called a new threat to European security that demanded a global response.

Moscow said it had fired the Oreshnik missile in response to what it has described as an attempted drone attack on one of President Vladimir Putin's residences last month, which Ukraine has denied and the United States has said did not happen.

It was only the second time Russia has fired the Oreshnik at Ukraine, and came amid a night of air attacks that Ukrainian authorities said also killed four people in Kyiv, knocked out power in the capital and damaged the Qatari embassy there.

The Oreshnik, designed to project power across Europe and which Moscow says is impossible to inter-



cept, is capable of carrying nuclear warheads although there was no suggestion it had done so.

"Such a strike close to EU and NATO border is a grave threat to the security on the European continent

and a test for the transatlantic community," Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiha said on X.

"It is absurd that Russia attempts to justify this strike with the fake 'Putin residence attack' that never happened," he added. "Putin uses an IRBM near EU and NATO border in response to his own hallucinations — this is truly a global threat. And it demands global responses."

Kyiv has called Russia's allegation it attacked Putin's residence in the Novgorod region of northern Russia on December 29 "an absurd lie" to sabotage peace talks. U.S. President Donald Trump has said he does not believe it happened, although something else happened in the area.

The Oreshnik hit the Lviv region in western Ukraine, around 60 kilometres (40 miles) from the border with Poland.



Spain arrests dozens of suspected 'Black Axe' crime ring members

Agencies, Madrid

Spanish police have arrested 34 people in a nationwide operation against an international crime ring known as "Black Axe" on accusations of fraud, money laundering and document forgery, Europol said on Friday.

Black Axe originated in Nigeria as a student fraternity in the late 1970s and has since evolved into a structured, violent criminal organisation dealing mainly in cyber-enabled financial crime.

The arrests were carried out across several Spanish provinces from Seville in the south to Barcelona in the northeast with support from Europol, the European

Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation.

Europol said the operation was coordinated with authorities in Germany as part of a wider investigation.

The organised crime network allegedly recruited money mules in impoverished areas of Spain with high unemployment rates.

"Most of these vulnerable individuals are Spanish nationals and are exploited to facilitate the network's criminal activities," Europol said in a statement.

Investigators estimate that the network had defrauded its victims of more than 5.9 million euros (\$6.87 million).

Colombian, Brazilian presidents discuss Venezuela situation

Brasilia: Colombian President Gustavo Petro and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva held a phone conversation on Thursday to discuss the situation in Venezuela, the Brazilian government said.

According to a statement from the Brazilian government, both leaders expressed deep concern over the use of force against the South American country, in violation of international law, the UN Charter and Venezuela's sovereignty.

"They stressed that such actions constitute an extremely dangerous precedent for regional peace and security, as well as for the international order," the statement said.

The two presidents agreed that the situation in Venezuela must be resolved exclusively through peaceful means, negotiation and respect for the will of the Venezuelan people.

Both leaders welcomed the announcement made earlier on Thursday by Venezuela's National Assembly President Jorge Rodriguez.

Yoon faces potential death sentence request in trial

Agencies, Seoul

South Korea's special prosecutor is expected to make a sentencing request for former president Yoon Suk Yeol on charges of insurrection over his brief imposition of martial law in 2024, as a lower court trial convened on Friday for its final session.

Yoon, who is accused of masterminding an insurrection, could face the death penalty or life in prison under South Korean law if found guilty. South Korea has followed an unofficial moratorium for nearly 30 years and has not executed a death-row inmate since 1997.

In hearings at the Seoul Central District Court, prosecutors have al-



take over legislative powers.

Prosecutors allege Yoon sought to brand political opponents — including then-opposition leader Lee Jae Myung — as "anti-state forces" and detain them.

The then president and Kim also tried to manufacture a pretext for martial law by escalating tensions with North Korea through a covert drone operation, prosecutors have said. While the botched bid to impose martial law lasted only about six hours, it sent shockwaves through Asia's fourth-largest economy, a key U.S. security ally and long considered one of Asia's most resilient democracies.

leged Yoon and then-defence minister, Kim Yong-hyun, began devising a scheme as far back as October 2023 to suspend parliament and

have the support within or the respect within the country".

Trump's comments come hours after he indicated in an interview on Fox News' "Hannity" program that Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado was coming to Washington next week, after previously dismissing the idea of working with her, saying that "she doesn't

have the support within or the respect within the country".

The Republican president, however, had told the New York Times on Wednesday that the U.S. was "getting along very well" with the Venezuelan government, led by acting interim president Delcy Rodriguez.

"The yays are 52. The nays are 47. The motion is agreed to."

3 killed in Ecuador armed attack

Quito: Three people were killed in an armed attack late Wednesday inside a private residential complex on Mocotí Island in Ecuador's coastal province of Guayas, Interior Minister John Reimberg said Thursday.

Local media reported that the gunmen violently entered the Mocotí Golf Club sports court after breaching several security filters. The attackers, who arrived in multiple vehicles, wore clothing resembling police or military uniforms and were armed with pistols and rifles.

Reimberg told Ecuavisa television that early investigations suggest the victims were guests to the complex. All three had criminal records for offenses including international drug trafficking, homicide and robbery.

One of the dead was identified as Stalin Rolando Olivero Vargas, known as "Marino," a leader of the criminal group Los Lagartos and considered a "high-value target" by the police.

Los Lagartos has been linked to drug trafficking, contract killings, extortion, robbery and kidnapping.



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Trump cancels second wave of attacks on Venezuela after cooperation

Agencies, Washington

U.S. President Donald Trump said he had canceled a second wave of attacks on Venezuela following cooperation from the South American nation.

The president said on Friday that Venezuela was releasing a large number of political prisoners as a sign of "seeking peace", following last week's dramatic U.S. military operation that resulted in the capture of President Nicolas Maduro.

"This is a very important and smart gesture. The U.S.A. and Venezuela are working well together, especially as it pertains to rebuilding, in a much bigger, better, and more modern form, their oil and gas infrastructure," Trump said on Truth Social.

"Because of this cooperation, I have canceled the previously expected second Wave of Attacks, which looks like it will not be needed, however, all ships will stay in place for

safety and security purpose," his post added.

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