# Over 60 killed in fire at newly opened mall in Iraq Very close to a deal with India we're in negotiation, says Donald Trump opened mall in Iraq

As many as 61 people were killed in a massive fire at a newly opened mall in Al-Kut city in eastern Iraq, according to Iraq's Interior Ministry.

The ministry said that 14 charred bodies had been found in the mall fire in the Wasit governorate and that civil defense teams had rescued 45 people from inside the

"The death toll from the fire at a shopping mall in Kut has risen to 61. More than 45 people trapped in the burnedout building have been rescued," the ministry said in a statement, as quoted by the INA news



Iraqi officials said that most of the people died from suffocation in the blaze that broke out in

Three days of mourning has been declared by Provincial Governor Mo-

hammed al-Mayyahi. He said the cause of the fire is under investigation, but legal cases were filed against the building owner and mall

"We assure the families of the innocent victims that we will not be lenient with those who were directly or indirectly responsible for this incident," al-Mayyahi cident,'

US President Donald Trump today again reiterated that Washington is very close to a deal with India, adding that "maybe" as negotiations are underway.

The statement on trade

deal with India came up while Trump was speaking to reporters during a bilateral meeting with Bahrain's Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa at Oval office.

He emphasised that August 1 would be a significant day, when a lot of money will come into his

country.

"We've brought in over
USD 100 billion. The tariffs haven't kicked in significantly, except for automobiles and steel. August 1 is



when a very substantial money comes into our country. We've made deals with numerous places. We had one yesterday," Trump

said.
"We have another one, coming up, maybe with India, we are in negotiations. When I send out a letter,

that's a deal. The best deal we can make is to send out a letter, and the letter says that you'll pay 30 per cent, 35 per cent, 25 per cent, 20 per cent. We have some pretty good deals to an-

nounce. We're very close to

a deal with India where they open it up," Trump

Yesterday, Trump an-nounced a trade deal with Indonesia, under which Trump had cut down the 32 per cent tariff to just 19 per

President Trump called a "great deal for every-body," as US exports to Indonesia would face no tariffs, while Indonesian goods would be charged a tariff of 19 per cent in the United States.

comes as the Trump administration is trying to close trade deals with several countries, and threatening to impose doubledigit tariffs on the exports of two dozen nations as of August 1 if agreements are not clinched.

### **MUSTREAD**

#### 4 dead, 20 trapped in mining pit collapse in Ghana

Accra: Four people were killed, and 20 others are still trapped in a mining pit collapse Wednesday in the Eastern Region of Ghana, local media reported. Sources said four men have reportedly died under-ground when the mining pit collapsed at Akyem Wenchi, a community in the Denkyembour district, while 20 others who were said to be alive are trapped underground. The cause of the collapse remains unclear. Rescue efforts are underway with the assistance of local residents.

#### 3 dead, 7 injured as passenger bus targeted in Balochistan

Kalat: At least three people were killed and seven others injuries unidentified assáilants opened gunfire on a passenger coach travelling from Karachi to Quetta near a checkpost in Balochistan's Kalat, police said on Wednesday. This is the second such attack in less than a week in the restive province, which has witnessed a deadly year with scores of fatalities due to terrorist attacks, Geo news reported.

#### Afghan security forces capture ammo cache containing 13k assault rifle rounds

**Spin Boldak:** Afghan security forces have discovered 13,000 rounds of munition for assault rifles in the Spin Boldak border town of southern Kandahar province and arrested one person on charge of attempting to smuggle the munition, an army spokesman said today. Acting on a tip-off, security forces raided a market and discovered the ammunition from a parked car and took into custody a smuggler, spokesperson Ahmad Shukib said.

### Over 20k Afghan refugees return to

Afghanistan in one day Kabul: More than 20,000 Afghan refugees returned to their homeland from Iran and Pakistan in a single day, the state-run Radio and Television of Afghanistan said today. A total of 20,966 Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan yesterday, with majority of them hailing from Iran, with 20,042 being from Iran and 924 from Pakistan, the report said. All the returnees have received necessary assistance at crossing points.

#### UK to extend visas for Ukrainian refugees for

another 18 months: Starmer Moscow: Ukrainian refugees in the United Kingdom will be able to extend their work visas for another 18 months, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said. "We do need to provide certainty and security for Ukrainians in the United Kingdom, and we will provide an additional 18 months' permission to remain in the UK as well as continued rights to live, work and study here," Starmer said in the UK parliament yesterday. He recalled that more than 300,000 refugees arrived in the UK under a special visa regime for Ukrainians. The UK has eased the visa regime for Ukrainians amid Russia's special military operation in Ukraine.

### 180 delegates from China-ASEAN meet to explore AI potential to boost women empowerment

Over 180 delegates from across China and ASEAN countries convened in Nanning, the capital of south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region yesterday, to explore AI's transformative potential to boost women's development.

The programme titled 'Empowerment, Sharing, Innovation: Artificial Intelligence and Women's Development,' the 2025 Exchange and Cooperation Forum on Women's Development with ASEAN marked its 9th edition since its debut as the China-ASEAN Women's Forum in 2006.

"This convening reflects the growing urgency to place women at the centre of technological transformation within ASEAN, China, and the broader global community," said Sok Chan Chhorvy, Secretary of State, Ministry of Women's Affairs of Cambodia, during the event's opening

Wang Weiping, Guangxi's Deputy Party chief, highlighted at the forum the region's states. role as a gateway to Southeast Asia, leveraging cultural and geo-graphic ties to foster collabora-

Guangxi is building a cross-border AI ecosystem, integrating world-leading R&D from top-tier cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, with applications in the ASEAN region to create more opportunities for women in the digital era, said Wang.

The opening ceremony also featured the signing of key agreements aimed at strengthening women's empowerment.

The two-day forum features roundtable discussions that focus on AI's role in advancing women, alongside an exhibition showcasing women's AI-driven entrepreneurial achievements.

### Trump pulls federal funding for California's High-Speed Rail project

Washington (UNI)

U.S. President Donald Trump announced on Wednesday that the federal government would terminate funding for California's High-Speed Rail project.
"Not a SINGLE penny in Federal

Dollars will go towards this Newscum SCAM ever again," Trump wrote on his social media account. "The railroad we were promised still does not exist, and never will."

On the same day, U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy confirmed the termination of approxi-

mately 4 billion U.S. dollars in federal funding for the California High-Speed Rail project.

In a strongly worded post, Duffy criticized California Governor Gavin Newsom and the ongoing issues surrounding the high-speed rail initiative

"Governor Newsom and California's high speed rail boondoggle are the definition of government in-competence and possibly corrup-



tion," said Duffy in a post on social

Newsom responded on social media, saying, "Won't be taking advice from the guy who can't keep planes in the sky," an apparent reference to recent aviation safety concerns under Duffy's tenure as Transportation Secretary.

In June, Secretary Duffy's department released a report on the project, citing missed deadlines, budget overruns and management issues. The report criticized the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) for not meeting critical milestones in the construction of the rail line.

In response to the criticism CHSRA pushed back against the federal government's assessment, calling it inaccurate and defending the project's progress. The authority highlighted ongoing construction in the Central Valley- including major earthworks and bridge buildingand described the effort as the country's first genuine attempt at high-speed rail.

The California High-Speed Rai project, initially approved in 2008 has faced persistent delays, cost overruns and logistical hurdles.

However, state officials have re peatedly maintained that the pro ject is on track. The authority highlighted the completion of major in frastructure work, including 35 kilometers of earthworks and 11 bridge

Despite these claims, some Re publican lawmakers, particularly from the state's Central Valley re gion, have expressed frustration over the slow pace of progress.

#### Yemen's Houthis claim attack on Israel's Ben **Gurion Airport**

Sanaa: Yemen's Houthi armed group said on Wednesday night that they targeted Israel's Ben Gurion Airport with a ballistic missile and two drones in a new attack carried out earlier in the day.

Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Sarea said the attack forced the air traffic of the Israeli airport to halt temporarily and led thousands of Israelis to run to shelters. "The attack achieved its goal," Sarea said in a televised statement aired by Houthi-run al-Masirah satellite TV

He said that the group fired two other bomb-laden drones toward the Negev desert, targeting what he said an "Israeli military target." The Houthi group also hinted that it can target the Israeli nuclear installation located in the Negev desert, about eight miles southeast of the

### Trump says Coca-Cola agrees to switch back to real cane sugar in Coke

Atlanta-based soft drink giant The Coca-Cola Company will switch back to real cane sugar in its namesake soda, Coke, within the United States, U.S. President Donald Trump said Wednesday on social media.

"I have been speaking to Coca-Cola about using RE-AL Cane Sugar in Coke in the United States, and they have agreed to do so,

"We appreciate President Trump's enthusiasm for our iconic Coca-Cola brand.



More details on new innovaca-Cola product range will be shared soon," said a brief statement by Coca-Cola.

Coca-Cola adopted highfructose corn syrup in the 1980s in a cost-cutting effort. It was reported that the change in ingredients would reduce the shelf life of Coke and increase manufacturing The use of sweeteners

such as high-fructose corn syrup has been criticized by U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

fers a cane sugar version of its soda known as "Mexican Coke" in the United States.

### **Colombian President Gustavo** Pedro announces intent to distance Bogota from NATO

Bogota: Colombian President Gustavo Pedro has said that Bogota must distance itself from the Noth Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), citing the bloc's continued arms supplies to Ukraine as they have only prolonged its war with Russia, his interest in joining BRICS greater interest in making the country more self-reliant, as well as his condem nation of Israeli action in Palestine Though not a direct member, Colombia is one of NATO's biggest global partners having obtained the status in 2017, making it the first Latin American country to do so. The agreement on NATO's global partnership with Colombia was signed in Brussels in May 2018. However, amid ideological differences, Petro says that Colombia must distance itself from NA-TO, as well as from European countries that participate in military aggression.

### Bangladesh authorities halt demolition of century-old-building cited as Satyajit Ray's ancestral home amid public outcry

Bangladeshi authorities have halted the demolition of legendary Indian filmmaker Satyajit Ray's ancestral home in Mymensingh, after massive public uproar.

The century-old-property, which has long fallen into disrepair was scheduled for demolition, but was demolition, stopped by Deputy Com-missioner Mofidul Alam,

who strangely enough said that the property in question is not the ancestral home of Ray, reports Daily

The DC said, "We have taken opinions from senior residents, archaeologists and researchers in the city. Based on their input, we have come to this conclusion that the



house is not the ancestral home of

Satyajit Ray

He added that Rai Bahadur Ranada Prasad Shaha, the eminent philanthropist, occasionally resided in that house, and that Ray's ancestral home was a short distance away.

The house, located on Harik-

ishore Roy Road, was being demolished to make way for a new semi-concrete structure for the Shishu Academy.

The house in question was identified as the ancestral property of the Ray family, following an investigation by Sabina Yeasmin, field officer of the Department of Archae-(Dhaka and My-

mensingh divisions). In her letter to the District Children's Affairs Officer, Yeasmin urged for the building to not be demolished, writing "This is a historic house belonging to the Ray family. Though not listed as a protected site, it is over a hundred years old and linked to Satyajit Ray's ancestors. It should be considered for heritage protection.'

### Turkey urges end to Israel's 'aggressive actions' against Syria - Source

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan on Wednesday held a telephone conversation with Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud to discuss the Israeli attacks on Svria and called for an end to the "aggressive actions" immediately, a source in the Turkish Foreign Min-

istry told Sputnik. Earlier in the day, Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz warned that if the Syrian government did not cease its attacks on the Druze community in Suwayda, it would face "painful strikes." The Syria TV broadcaster reported that Israel had launched another airstrike on the building of the General Staff of the Syrian army and the Presidential Palace area in Damascus. The Syrian Health Ministry said one civilian was killed and 18

"Today [July 16], Foreign Minister

others injured as a result of Israeli

Hakan Fidan had a telephone conversation with Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud. During the conversation, the ministers discussed Israeli attacks aimed at destabilizing the region. It was emphasized that the strikes on Syria are undermining efforts to restore stability in that country, and such aggressive actions must be halted as soon as possible," the

Meanwhile, Fidan told reporters in Washington that Turkey remains in close contact with regional players, including Jordan and US Special Envoy for Syria Tom Barrack, and has relayed Ankara's concerns to Israel through its intelligence channels.

## Babies made using 3 people's DNA born free of hereditary disease

London (UNI)

By employing the pioneering technique, eight babies have been born in the UK using genetic material from three people to prevent devastating and often fatal conditions, doctors said today.

The method, pioneered by UK scientists, combines the egg and sperm from a mum and dad with a second egg from a donor

Although the technique has been legal here for a decade, it is only now that the first proof is leading to children born free of incurable mitochondrial dis-

ease, reports BBC. These conditions are



passed from cause severe disability and some babies die within days of being born. Couples know they are at risk if previous children, family members or the mother

has been affected. Children born through the three-person technique inherit most of their DNA, their genetic blue-print, from their parents, but also get a tiny amount, about 0.1 percent, from the

second woman. This is a change that is passed down the generations.

Mitochondria are tiny structures inside nearly every one of our cells. They are the reason we breathe as they use oxygen to convert food into the form of energy our bodies use as

About one in 5,000 babies are born with mitochondrial disease. As mitochondria are passed down only from mother to child, this pioneering fertility technique uses both parents and a woman who donates her healthy mitochondria.

Under this technique, the scientists have fertilised eggs from both the mother and the donor in the lab with the dad's sperm.

The embryos develop until the DNA from the sperm and egg form a pair of structures called the pro-nuclei, containing the blueprints for building the human body, such as hair colour and height.

Then, the pro-nuclei are removed from both embryos and the parents' DNA is inserted into the embryo packed with healthy mitochondria.

The resulting child is genetically and a second sec

netically related to their parents but should be free from mitochondrial dis-

### Hague group suspends defense trade with Israel

Bogota: The Hague Group, com prising of about 30 countries took "coordinated legal and diplomatic measures" against Israel, announcing a suspension of trade in weapons and military goods with the Jewish state, as

well as a ban on Israeli ships. "We hereby announce the following measures ... Prevent the provision or transfer of arms, munitions, military fuel, related military equipment, and dualuse items to Israel ... Prevent the transit, docking, and servicing of vessels at any port ... Prevent the carriage of arms, munitions, military fuel, related military equipment, and dual-use items to Israel on vessels bearing our flag," a joint statement read yes-