

MUSTREAD

China's Shijian-32 satellite launch mission fails

Xichang: The launch of the Shijian-32 satellite in China's Xichang Satellite Launch Center using a Long March-3B carrier rocket failed on Saturday. The rocket blasted off at 12:55 a.m. (Beijing Time) at the launch center in southwestern Sichuan Province, but an anomaly occurred during its flight. The cause of the failure is under investigation.

China's military 'monitors' US vessels transiting the Taiwan Strait

Shanghai: China's military said it had followed and monitored the transit of guided-missile destroyer USS Finn and oceanographic survey ship USNS Mary Sears through the Taiwan Strait on January 16 and 17, it said on an official WeChat account Saturday. A spokesman for the Eastern Theatre Command of the People's Liberation Army said in the statement that it remains "on high alert at all times" to "resolutely defend national sovereignty and security". The Pentagon did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

White House names members of Gaza peace board chaired by Trump

Washington: The White House on Friday officially announced the names of the members of the Board of Peace for Gaza in a statement. U.S. President Donald Trump will serve as chairman. The board members include U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff, Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, and former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, said the statement. Trump said Thursday the Board of Peace for Gaza has been established, with the members of the board to be announced shortly.

Venezuela's acting president announces cabinet reshuffle

Caracas: Venezuela's Acting President Delcy Rodriguez on Friday announced three changes to her cabinet. Miguel Perez Pirela was appointed minister of communication and information, replacing Freddy Nanez, who will head the Ministry of Ecosocialism, Rodriguez said on Telegram. In his new role, Nanez will be responsible for "continuing to promote public policies for the protection of our Pachamama (Mother Earth) and all matters related to environmental protection," Rodriguez said.

U.S. reports over 18 mln flu cases for current season

Los Angeles: The United States has recorded at least 18 million influenza illnesses, 230,000 hospitalizations and 9,300 deaths so far during the current flu season, according to the latest estimates released Friday by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC said seasonal influenza activity remains elevated nationwide, though it has decreased or remained stable for two consecutive weeks. Influenza A(H3N2) viruses have been the most commonly reported strains circulating in the United States this season, the agency noted.

Malian authorities ban Jeune Afrique newspaper

Mali: Mali's Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization Abdoulaye Maiga has signed a decree banning the printing, distribution and sale of the Jeune Afrique newspaper in the country, Malian media reported. The ban was implemented due to the newspaper's alleged provision of false, destabilizing and biased information, particularly in terms of its coverage of the fuel supply crisis, Malian news website aBamako reported on Friday, citing Maiga's decree. The decree also stated that Jeune Afrique allegedly justified terrorist actions in Mali and contributed to the incitement of hatred in its publications. Mali has been facing a severe fuel crisis as militants in the country continue their attempts to establish a major fuel blockade.

US Senators call on Trump

To prioritize pulse crop market access in India trade talks

Agencies, Washington

Two Republican senators are urging President Donald Trump to ensure that American pulse crop producers receive better access to the Indian market as part of ongoing trade negotiations between the United States and India.

In a letter sent on January 16, Senators Kevin Cramer, Representative-North Dakota and Steve Daines, Representative-Montana urged President Trump to include "favourable pulse crop provisions" in any future bilateral trade agreement with India. Both senators represent states that are among the largest producers of pulses, such as peas, lentils, and dried beans, in the United States, while India is the world's biggest consumer of these crops.

The letter highlights longstanding concerns among American farmers about India's high agricultural tariffs, which raise the cost of US pulse exports and make them less competi-



tive compared with other suppliers. According to US trade officials, India's average applied tariff on agricultural goods is significantly higher than that of the US, creating barriers for American producers in one of the largest global markets.

According to US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor, the US and India are actively engaged in finalizing a

new trade deal. The Trump Administration launched negotiations for a bilateral trade agreement (BTA) with India last year on February 13, and in April, the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) finalized its Terms of Reference for a BTA, establishing the roadwork for mutually beneficial, multi-sector negotiations.

Major demonstration held in Baghdad in support of Iran

Baghdad: Hundreds of Iraqis have participated in a major demonstration in central Baghdad against US threats with respect to Tehran, a Sputnik correspondent reported.

Hundreds of ordinary citizens and supporters of Iraqi Shiite groups demonstrated on Friday in front of the Iranian embassy in Baghdad in support of the republic and the Iranian people in light of US threats to strike Iranian territory.

The demonstrators shouted anti-American and anti-Israeli slogans and attempted to burn American and Israeli flags, a Sputnik correspondent reported. On Wednesday, US President Donald Trump held a conversation with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The New York Times reported that Netanyahu asked the president to delay any planned US military attack on Iran.

Stefan Priesner begins role as United Nations Resident Coordinator in India

Agencies, New Delhi

The United Nations in India announced Saturday that Stefan Priesner has assumed office as the UN's Resident Coordinator in India, after presenting his credentials to the Government of India, an official statement said.

As Resident Coordinator, Priesner will lead the work of the UN Country Team (UNCT) in India, supporting national development priorities and guiding progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through a coherent and integrated UN response.

Priesner, who was appointed to the role by the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, presented his credentials to the Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs, Sibi



George, during a ceremony in Delhi on Friday, as per the statement.

Speaking afterwards, Priesner said, "I am honoured to take up this responsibility in India, a country whose diversity, dynamism and history make it such a key partner of the

Think tanks convene discussion in US ahead of February's AI Summit in India

Agencies, Washington

Observer Research Foundation with the Indian Embassy in the US, the Senate AI Caucus, and the Special Competitive Studies Project convened a panel discussion on India-US collaboration in the field of technology.

At the discussion held on Friday (local time), Deputy Chief of Mission Ambassador Namgya Khampa outlined India's priorities and vision ahead of the AI Impact Summit to be held in February.

In a post on X, the Indian Embassy in the US said, "Ahead of the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi (February 2026), the Embassy together with ORF America, the Senate AI Caucus, and the Special Competitive Studies Project convened a panel discussion at the US Congress. Deputy Chief of Mission Ambassador Namgya Khampa outlined India's priorities and vision for the Summit, underscoring India-USA collaboration in technology and innovation as a key pillar of the bilater-



al partnership."

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Wednesday participated in Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras Pongal celebrations, during which he announced that India will host the prestigious AI Impact Summit next month under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Addressing reporters, Dharmendra Pradhan said that countries worldwide are rapidly adopting AI in the education, healthcare, and manufacturing sectors.

Power line disconnected at Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant: IAEA

Austria: One power line was disconnected at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant (NPP) after an electrical substation was damaged due to military activity, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi said.

"At Ukraine's Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) site, one power line was disconnected in the past week after military activity damaged an electrical substation critical to its power supply, a development that once again underscores the importance of reliable electrical grid infrastructure for nuclear safety, IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi said today," the IAEA said in a Friday statement. The IAEA added that the disconnection was one of several incidents this week in which military activity affected nuclear safety at Ukraine's nuclear facilities.

West's policy of using Russia, China as threats in arctic unrealistic



Moscow (UNI/SPUTNIK)

The West's policy of using Russia and China's supposedly threatening presence in the Arctic as a pretext for intimidation has proven flawed, turning against its European supporters in the context of Greenland, Russian Ambassador to Norway Nikolai Korchnov told RIA Novosti.

"The policy pursued by Western countries of deliberately intimidating the whole world with mythical Russian and Chinese threats in the northern latitudes has proven to be completely inefficient, backfiring on its proponents in Europe in the context of Greenland," Korchnov said.

Some European countries outside the region are trying to "take advantage of the disagreements between the Arctic states" in order to "strengthen their role and position in the Arctic," Korchnov added.

"Countries that do not have significant natural resources are particularly eager to compensate for this by establishing a military presence in Greenland, including with a view to securing their economic interests," the ambassador also said.

Death toll in Iran protests over 3,000, rights group says

Agencies, Dubai

More than 3,000 people have died in Iran's nationwide protests, rights activists said on Saturday, while a "very slight rise" in internet activity was reported in the country after an eight-day blackout.

The U.S.-based HRANA group said it had verified 3,090 deaths, including 2,885 protesters, after residents said the crackdown appeared to have broadly quelled protests for now and state media reported more arrests.

The Iranian government has blamed much of the violence on people it says are armed rioters posing as protesters, labelling them "terrorists" and claiming that Israel and the U.S. were behind organising them and responsible for many of the deaths of demonstrators and security forces.

The capital Tehran has been com-



paratively quiet for four days, said several residents reached by Reuters. Drones were flying over the city, but there were no signs of major protests on Thursday or Friday, said the residents, who asked not to be identified for their safety.

The protests erupted on December 28 over economic hardship and

swelled into widespread demonstrations calling for the end of clerical rule in the Islamic Republic, culminating in mass violence late last week. According to opposition groups and an Iranian official, more than 2,000 people were killed in the worst domestic unrest since Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Ukraine's peace negotiators arrive in US for talks with Trump officials

Agencies, Kyiv

Ukraine's peace negotiators arrived in the United States on Saturday for talks on details of a proposed agreement to end the four-year war with Russia, the head of the Ukrainian president's office said.

Kyrylo Budanov said the delegation would meet with White House envoy Steve Witkoff, President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, and U.S. Army Secretary Daniel Driscoll.

"Ukraine needs a just peace. We are working to achieve results," Budanov, a former military intelligence chief, said on the Telegram app.

Trump has been pushing both Kyiv and Moscow for a deal to end



the war. But despite many rounds of talks, no tangible diplomatic breakthrough has been reached so far, and fighting continues to rage on a front line extending more than 1,200 km (750 miles).

Ukraine and the U.S. have drafted a 20-point peace proposal, but Russia has yet to comment on it.

The trickiest issues include territorial concessions, security guarantees and the fate of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, Europe's biggest, occupied by Russia.

Ukrainian officials said the agenda would include security guarantees and a post-war recovery package for Ukraine.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he hoped to sign documents outlining "a prosperity package" with the U.S. on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos next week, to unlock about \$800 billion in reconstruction investments.

Lebanese army needs more support to strengthen capacities: UN

United Nations: There continues to be a need for the Lebanese armed forces to get more resources and financial support to strengthen its capacities to secure the country's southern border, UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix said Friday.

While the Lebanese armed forces is increasing its numbers and presence, which "is an encouraging process," it is acknowledged by the Lebanese authorities and the Lebanese armed forces that there continues to be a need for more resources and financial support "in terms of capacities," Lacroix told reporters at the UN headquarters in New York via video link, in response to a question posed by Xinhua.

Judge urges US grant visa to college student deported due to 'mistake'

Agencies, Boston

A U.S. judge on Friday gave the Trump administration three weeks to "rectify the mistake" it made by deporting a college student to Honduras while she was traveling home to spend Thanksgiving with her family in Texas, and he recommended it issue her a student visa.

U.S. District Judge Richard Stearns in Boston imposed the deadline, opens new tab after a lawyer for the administration earlier this week apologized for having violated a court order that should have prevented 19-year-old Any Lucia Lopez Belloza from being sent to Honduras.

Lopez Belloza is a Honduran national who was brought to the United States by her mother when she was 8 while seeking asylum. She has said she was unaware she was subject to a removal order.



"There is happily no one-size-fits-all solution for seeing that justice be done in what all agree was an amalgam of errors that ended badly for Any," Stearns said.

He said the "simplest solution" would be for the U.S. Department of

Pakistan's power sector continues battling inefficient management

Islamabad (UNI)

Pakistan's power sector, already bereaved by financial woes continues to remain trapped in a cycle of inefficient management, and wastefulness, that continues to exacerbate the country's energy market, with electricity prices soaring for consumers despite ample generation capacity, according to a stark new assessment by the country's regulator NEPRA.

The State of the Industry Report 2025 released by National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) finds that weak distribution companies, transmission bottlenecks and rigid power contracts added hundreds of billions of PKR to circular debt during fiscal year 2024-25, while households and businesses

paid the price through inflated tariffs.

Electricity demand peaked at just over 33,000 megawatts during the year, far below the installed capacity of more than 41,000 megawatts.

Yet large power plants remained idle while still being paid under long-term contracts, a cost that flowed directly into consumer bills.

At the same time, congested transmission lines prevented cheaper electricity from efficient plants from reaching the grid, forcing reliance on more expensive sources.

NEPRA said combined transmission and distribution losses at public-sector utilities reached around 16.4%, well above the allowed limit of 11.77%.

He gave the administration 21 days to inform him of how it will proceed.

Todd Pomerleau, her lawyer, in an email welcomed the ruling, saying it will help him negotiate with the government "to come up with a solution to bring Any to the United States in the near future."

The Justice Department declined to comment.

Lopez Belloza, a freshman at Babson College in Massachusetts, was arrested on November 20 while at Boston's airport preparing to travel home to Texas to surprise her family for Thanksgiving.

Her lawyer the next day sued in Massachusetts to challenge her detention, and a judge issued an order on November 21 barring Lopez Belloza from being deported or transferred out of the state for 72 hours.

