

VENEZUELA OIL DELIVERY US sanctions 5 Iranian ship captains

AFP, Washington

The United States imposed sanctions Wednesday on five Iranian ship captains who delivered oil to Venezuela, as Washington ratcheted up pressure on President Nicolas Maduro, whose government it considers illegitimate.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the Iranian-flagged oil tankers, which delivered some 1.5 million barrels of gasoline and oil to Venezuela in recent weeks, had been placed on the US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) blacklist.

"Mariners who do business with Iran and Venezuela will face consequences from the United States of America," Pompeo said.

Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza responded on Twitter, calling the move "more proof of the hatred by (US President Donald) Trump's hawks against Venezuela".

"As a result of today's sanctions, these captains' assets will be blocked. Their careers and prospects will suffer from this designation," Pompeo said.

"The rogue regimes in Caracas and Tehran are unified by their penchant for repressing their people, corruption, self-enrichment, and gross mismanagement of their people's wealth," Pompeo added.

Iran said the latest sanctions showed the US campaign against it was failing.

"US desperate moves against Iranian individuals... just signal the miserable failure of the so-called 'max pressure'," foreign ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi tweeted.

"Despite US pressure, #Iran & #Venezuela remain steadfast in countering unlawful American sanctions," he added.

The move came as Venezuela accused the United States Wednesday of "an act of provocation" after a US warship steamed close to the South American country's territorial waters the previous day.

The vessel sailed in an area that "the illegitimate Maduro regime falsely claims to have control over," the US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) said in a statement.

MP Shahid

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Investigation Department of Kuwait "detained" Shahid, lawmaker from Laxmipur-2 and also the managing director and CEO of the company in Kuwait.

The MP, also known as Kazi Papul, and a Kuwaiti citizen co-own the large recruitment company Marafie Kuwaitia.

He was accused of charging each foreign worker, mostly from Bangladesh, up to 3,000 dinars in exchange for going to the Gulf country.

The workers also paid huge sums to the company for renewing their residency every year.

In response to a complaint filed on February 16, Bangladesh's Anti-Corruption Commission opened an enquiry into the allegation that Shahid amassed Tk 1,400 crore by trafficking people to Kuwait and laundered the money to different countries.

Also in February, Kuwaiti media reported that three Bangladeshis were operating a human trafficking racket in the Middle Eastern country.

On February 12, a report of the Arab Times said one of the three was a "member of parliament in Bangladesh".

According to the report, the trio "occupied sensitive positions" in three major companies that sent over 20,000 Bangladeshi workers to Kuwait in exchange for an amount believed to be more than Tk 1,391.6 crore.

3 robbers

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road at Bekerbazar in the wee hours yesterday.

Soon after they reached, they broke down the shop's lock and started to loot it and load on a truck, they said.

When the night guard screamed seeing the burglary, they strangled him with a 'gamchha'.

Hearing his screams, locals gathered and tried to confine the burglars.

In the meantime, law enforcers also reached the spot and chased the criminals.

The criminals opened fire on the law enforcers, forcing them to fire back and triggering a "gunfight".

During the "gunfight", one of the robbers died on the spot while three others received bullet wounds, police said.

Among the three, one died on the way to Daganbhuiyan Upazila Health Complex while another died on way to Feni 250-bed General Hospital.

Daganbhuiyan Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Aslam Sikder confirmed the incident and said a case is being filed in this regard.

The bodies were sent to Feni General Hospital morgue for autopsies, he added.



Children play under water jets as they cool off in fountains during a heatwave in the French riviera city of Nice, On Wednesday. Experts warn that an early summer heatwave across Europe could lead to a surge in infections as people hit beaches and parks while ignoring social distancing measures.

PHOTO: AFP

WHO warns of global shortage of oxygen

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"I'm tearing up, but they're tears of joy. I'm going to climb, but slowly," said Therese, 60, from the southwestern city of Perpignan. "And if I don't make it, it's no big deal!"

The global airline industry suffered more bad news. Australia's Qantas announced it was cutting 6,000 staff -- one fifth of its workforce -- in a \$10 billion cost-cutting blitz.

European airlines are faring little better -- the European Union gave its backing to a \$10 billion state rescue of German airline Lufthansa, although the deal still faces a possible shareholder backlash as well as litigation from competitors including RyanAir.

In Britain, the Royal Mail postal service said it would axe 2,000 management jobs even though the Covid-19 had sparked as jump in

demand for parcel delivery.

'COMPLETELY OUT OF CONTROL' The Americas is bearing the brunt of the human toll of the virus at the moment, with new cases in the south and west of the United States on an upward trend.

White House adviser Anthony Fauci warned the next two weeks would be "critical" to assess the country's ability to cope with surges in Florida, Texas and other states.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott said the state, which was one of the most aggressive about reopening, could see new restrictions.

"If it's not contained in the next couple of weeks, it will be completely out of control, and Texas will have to ratchet back," said Abbott, an ally of President Donald Trump.

The total number of deaths in Latin America and the Caribbean surpassed

100,000 on Wednesday, with Brazil the hardest-hit country, reports AFP.

'BEIJING UNDER CONTROL' While the situation in Europe and the Americas continued to cause global concern, other more localised outbreaks in Asia and the Middle East also raised alarm bells.

Iran confirmed its death toll had surpassed 10,000 yesterday, with health officials recording more than 100 daily deaths for the seventh consecutive day in the region's worst-hit nation.

China, where the disease was first detected late last year, declared that it had controlled an outbreak in Beijing that had briefly raised fears of a second wave and prompted restrictions and several million tests.

China's giant neighbour Russia, however, was making intense efforts to get back to normal life.

A postponed referendum on constitutional changes that could see President Vladimir Putin stay in power until 2036 kicked off across 10 times zones yesterday, with masks and disinfectant gels on offer in polling stations.

Authorities in New Delhi worked to convert a spiritual centre into a huge quarantine facility yesterday as cases in the Indian capital overtook the financial hub Mumbai for the first time, reports Reuters.

Delhi now has 70,390 coronavirus cases, with more than 40,000 detected in the last two weeks.

"Most of the cases detected now are directly a function of increased testing. Going forward, this should help in the early isolation of those who are infected," said Giridhara R Babu, an epidemiologist at the Public Health Foundation of India.

Govt allocates Tk 46.63cr for teachers, staff

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sent a proposal to the Prime Minister's Office last month seeking a one-time allocation for the non-MPO teachers and staffers within June. The PMO then forwarded the proposal to the finance ministry.

Teachers and staff of MPO-listed institutions get 100 percent of their basic salary from the national exchequer.

Binooy Bhushan Roy, general secretary of the Non-MPO Educational

Institutions' Teachers and Employees Federation, and Nazrul Islam Rony, spokesperson of MPO Bhukto Shiksha Protisthan Jatiyakoron Liaison Forum, last week told this newspaper that non-MPO teachers have had their backs pushed against the wall due to the coronavirus situation.

They said non-MPO teachers were usually ill-paid -- which can be as low as Tk 4,000 every month -- and they used to make up the shortfall by private tutoring.

But they lost both the means of earning during the time of coronavirus. Although the pandemic-induced nationwide closure ended on May 31, all educational institutions will remain closed until August 6.

However, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on April 27 said all educational institutions might stay closed until September if the coronavirus situation did not improve.

Authorities of non-government educational institutions argue that

they could not pay the salaries of their employees as the tuition fees of students, the only source of income for a lot of institutions, could not be collected.

Only a few renowned schools in the capital could pay the salaries of their employees from school savings.

The prime minister has so far announced 18 stimulus packages for different sectors worth around Tk 1,01,117 crore to offset the shock of the pandemic.

Democrats accuse Barr of political meddling in US justice system

REUTERS, Washington

US House Democrats blasted Attorney General William Barr at a hearing on Wednesday over accusations he had improperly meddled in criminal cases and antitrust probes for political gain, but they stopped short of pledging to take any steps to try and oust the nation's top law enforcement official.

"Mr. Barr's work at the Department of Justice has nothing to do with correcting injustice. He is the president's fixer," said Jerrold Nadler, the Chairman of the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee. "He has shown us that there is one set of rules for the president's friends, and another set of rules for the rest of us."

Nadler had mulled subpoenaing Barr to appear before the panel for a future hearing, but a Justice Department spokeswoman on Wednesday tweeted that Barr would voluntarily appear to testify on July

28.

Wednesday's contentious hearing featured testimony from two current Justice Department employees who took the unusual step of publicly blowing the whistle against their own employer.

The hearing came at a time when Barr has come under growing scrutiny after he intervened in two prosecutions involving Trump allies, fired a federal prosecutor whose office is investigating Trump's personal attorney, and oversaw the use of force by federal law enforcement officers against peaceful protesters in historic Lafayette Square.

Federal prosecutor Aaron Zelinsky testified on Wednesday that the U.S. Attorney's office in Washington was pressured from the "highest levels" of the Justice Department to scale back its sentencing recommendation for Trump's longtime friend, Roger Stone. "Roger Stone was being treated differently from every other defendant.

He received breaks that are, in my experience, unheard of," said Zelinsky, who withdrew from the case after senior department officials filed a new sentencing memo that backed away from the original recommendation of seven to nine years in prison.

Stone, 67, who was convicted of obstruction, witness tampering and lying to Congress during its investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election.

Republicans on the panel criticized Zelinsky, who admitted he had not directly spoken with Barr or the then-Acting U.S. Attorney Tim Shea about their reasons for scaling back the sentencing recommendation.

Zelinsky told lawmakers that Shea's office declined his request for a meeting, and that J.P. Cooney, who supervises public corruption cases in the U.S. Attorney's office in Washington, had told him that political motivations were behind the abrupt shift.

The second employee to testify on Wednesday was antitrust attorney John Elias, who spoke about the abuse of the politicization of antitrust probes into marijuana companies and the auto sector.

With less than five months before U.S. elections, the partisanship displayed during the House Judiciary hearing was on display throughout the Congress. During the hearing, legislation to stop excessive force by police departments fell victim to partisan infighting in the Senate.

Donald Ayer, the former Deputy Attorney General under George H.W. Bush who also testified before the committee Wednesday, said he feared Barr's misbehavior was only accelerating as the election draws closer.

"The drum beat of his misbehavior is accelerating," he said. "I don't know what's next, but I'm scared to think about what it might be," he said.

US SC bolsters Trump's power over rapid deportation

REUTERS, Washington

The US Supreme Court yesterday enhanced the ability of President Donald Trump's administration to quickly deport illegal immigrants including asylum seekers with limited judicial review, handing him a victory in a case involving one of his signature issues in an election year.

The justices ruled in favor of the administration in its appeal of a lower court ruling that a Sri Lankan farmer named Vijayakumar Thuraissigiam had a right to have a judge review the government's handling of his asylum bid.

The ruling, written by conservative Justice Samuel Alito, found that limiting judicial scrutiny in this rapid deportation case, known as expedited removal, did not violate key safeguards of individual liberty in the U.S. Constitution.

The vote was 7-2. Although two of the four liberal justices, Stephen Breyer and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, agreed that Thuraissigiam's legal claim failed, they did not embrace Alito's broad reasoning. Liberal justices Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan dissented.

It has long been recognized that people who have yet to be granted legal entry to the United States do not have the full range of constitutional rights and that Congress has some authority to determine what rights they do possess, Alito wrote.

"While aliens who have established connections in this country have due process rights in deportation proceedings, the court long ago held that Congress is entitled to set the conditions for an alien's lawful entry into this country," Alito added.

The ruling will have wide implications for immigrants facing removal, Sotomayor wrote, giving the

administration "unchecked" power and increasing the risk of arbitrary and illegal decisions by immigration officials in deportation proceedings.

The United States "has time and again reaffirmed its commitment to providing sanctuary to those escaping oppression and persecution," Sotomayor added.

The San Francisco-based 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in 2019 ruled that under the Constitution's suspension clause - relating to a person's ability to challenge confinement by the government - courts should be able to review Thuraissigiam's claims.

The administration contended the 9th Circuit ruling would defeat the purpose of quick deportation and "impose a severe burden on the immigration system." Trump's headline policies on immigration and deportation have been a centerpiece of his presidency and bid

for re-election on Nov. 3.

"This ruling fails to live up to the Constitution's bedrock principle that individuals deprived of their liberty have their day in court, and this includes asylum seekers," said American Civil Liberties Union lawyer Lee Gelernt, who represents Thuraissigiam.

Thuraissigiam sought U.S. asylum, claiming that as a member of Sri Lanka's Tamil minority he was tortured over his political ties and subjected to beatings and simulated drowning. He fled Sri Lanka in 2016 and was arrested in California in 2017.

Turkey hits back at EU, Greek criticism over migrants

AFP, Ankara

Turkey yesterday accused Greece of human rights violations as it hit back at criticism by Athens and the European Union over its policies on migrants.

The EU's chief diplomat Josep Borrell on Wednesday said Brussels was determined to protect its frontiers as he visited the Evros border area, the scene of clashes in March after Turkey said it would no longer prevent migrants from going to Europe.

After accompanying Borrell to the border, Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias accused Turkey of encouraging a fresh surge of migrants into Europe.

Turkey has "once again declared that its land borders to Europe are open," following a brief respite during the pandemic, he said.

"At the same time, its coastguard escorts boats laden with migrants to the Greek islands."

The remarks are an example of Greece's attempt "to cover up human rights violations and crimes against refugees," Turkish foreign ministry spokesman Hami Aksoy said.

"The fact that the EU Commission is complicit is unfortunate," he added.

"We invite the EU and Greece to fulfil their responsibilities instead of blaming our country, and to show respect for refugees' rights," Aksoy said in a statement.

Already tense relations between Ankara and Athens deteriorated further when thousands of migrants and refugees flocked to Turkey's land border with Greece after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in late February their attempts to leave would not be stopped.

Nasa prepares

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unlike anything ever attempted," said MiMi Aung, project manager of the Mars Helicopter at Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

"And then we had to figure out how to hitch a ride a safely get deployed from the Mars 2020 Perseverance rover."

The team at Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory plans to locate a suitable airfield after the rover lands, which could take up to two months.

It will need to be a 10-by-10 metre patch of Martian surface that is relatively flat, obstruction-free, and viewable by Perseverance from around 100 metres away.

If the experimental flight test proves successful, Nasa hopes to deploy second-generation helicopters on future Mars missions to add an aerial dimension to their explorations.

Potential uses could include scouting for human crews, investigating caves and craters, and carrying small payloads from one part of the planet to another.

Gravity on Mars is around 38 percent of Earth's due to the planet's smaller mass, however the thin atmosphere makes it extremely difficult to fly.

The helicopter is therefore very light - less than two kilograms - and uses a dual system of counter-rotating blades that will attempt to generate lift in an atmosphere that is just 1 percent as dense as Earth's.

Nasa administrator Jim Bridenstine said at a news conference that the mission, which launches on 20 July, is the thing he is most looking forward to.

He said: "I'll tell you, the thing that has me the most excited as a Nasa administrator is getting ready to watch a helicopter fly on another world."

3 more die

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Officer Mizanur Rahman. Another 45-year-old man, a resident of Rayermahal area, died around 4:00am. He was admitted to the hospital on Tuesday.

His symptoms gradually worsened and he was referred to ICU, the doctor said.

The third victim was a 55-year-old man from Bagmara. He died around 1:20am, soon after he was admitted to the hospital.

He had breathing difficulties, fever and other problems.

The deceased are being tested for coronavirus, the official said.

As of yesterday, 1,322 people tested positive for coronavirus in Khulna.

UGC again urges

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gave several reasons for not to introduce online education including a lack of facilities at the institutions and uneven internet access to students.

"After the initial calls, [UGC] did not have expected response. But this time we are expecting a better response, as they have promised to introduce online classes," Shahidullah said.

UGC acting secretary Ferdous Zaman, after the meeting, told The Daily Star that they had asked the universities to place the details of their needs by next two weeks.

"We will seek special allocation from the government so that public universities can introduce and conduct online classes," he said.