

Myanmar man pleads guilty in plot to attack UN envoy

AFP, New York
A citizen of Myanmar on Friday pleaded guilty in a plot to attack or kill the country's pro-democracy UN ambassador, who has refused junta orders to quit, US officials said.
In August, Ye Hein Zaw, a resident of New York in his early twenties, conspired with two others to force Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun to resign or, if he refused, to kill him, according to prosecutors.
Zaw agreed to pay \$5,000 for the attack, which was foiled by US investigators.
Zaw admitted in court that he "participated in a plot to injure or kill Myanmar's ambassador to the United Nations in a planned attack that was to take place on American soil," US Attorney Damian Williams said in a statement. Zaw is due to be sentenced in May. He faces up to five years in prison.
It remained unclear what, if any, connection the suspect had with the military junta, which on February 1 overthrew the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.



Indian farmers cheer as they leave the protest site at the Delhi-Haryana state border in Singhu yesterday, as farmers headed home from the Delhi outskirts following a year-long protest against the government's agriculture policies. PHOTO: AFP

MORE NEWS

Trump 'attacked' Netanyahu for congratulating Biden

Former US president Donald Trump spat an expletive about his old ally, Israel's ex-prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for congratulating Joe Biden on his victory in last year's election, according to a new book. Trump lashed out in an interview for a book on US-Israel relations during his presidency, author Barak Ravid wrote on the Axios website on Friday. "I haven't spoken to him since," Trump told Ravid in an interview. "Fuck him." Ravid said that he interviewed Trump twice for his forthcoming book, "Trump's Peace: The Abraham Accords and the Reshaping of the Middle East." He said Trump, who appeared close to Netanyahu while president from 2017 to 2021, was repeatedly critical of him in the interviews.

Palestinians in West Bank villages hold municipal polls

Palestinians in villages of the Israeli-occupied West Bank voted in municipal polls yesterday, amid a boycott by the main opposition Hamas, the Islamist rulers of Gaza, in protest at the indefinite postponement of a general election. No legislative or presidential election has been held in the Palestinian territories for 15 years, while the last municipal vote -- also boycotted by Hamas -- took place in 2017. Of the 367 villages in the West Bank, 60 had no candidates standing and another 162 had a single list, leaving only 154 villages actually voting yesterday. Polling stations are open until 7:00 pm, with some 405,000 people eligible to vote, according to the elections committee. The municipal vote -- the first of two stages, with cities and towns due to vote in March 2022 -- is widely considered as inconsequential, with most candidates running as independents and Hamas not taking part.

NUCLEAR NEGOTIATIONS WITH WESTERN POWERS

Iran stays firm amid pressure

REUTERS
World powers and Iran have been locked in talks on reviving their nuclear deal, with a European source saying they were working from texts discussed five months ago and Iranian officials saying they were sticking to a tough stance from last week.
The talks resumed on Thursday with the United States and Israel - which is not a party to the 2015 deal - piling rhetorical pressure on Tehran about the possible economic or military consequences if diplomacy fails.
Iran's top negotiator, Ali Bagheri Kani, on Friday said Tehran was standing firm on the position it laid out last week, when the talks broke off with European and US officials accusing Iran of making new demands and of renegeing on compromises worked out earlier this year.
Asked whether new draft proposals that Iran had put forward last week were being discussed, Bagheri Kani told Reuters: "Yes, the drafts we



denied it.
Under the original deal that then-President Donald Trump abandoned in 2018, Iran limited its nuclear programme in return for relief from US, European Union and UN sanctions. The West fears the programme would be used to develop weapons, something Tehran denies.
The indirect US-Iranian talks, in which diplomats from France, Britain, Germany, Russia and China shuttle between them because Tehran refuses direct contact with Washington, aim to get both sides to resume full compliance with the accord.
A year after Trump's reimposition of sanctions on Iran, Tehran began to gradually violate nuclear limits of the agreement. Iran wants all sanctions to be lifted.
A senior EU official said on Friday the talks are moving forward and that various big matters were still open for a deal on a final text.
The talks resumed last week after a five-month hiatus.

Donors approve release of \$280m for Afghanistan

AFP, Washington
International donors agreed to release \$280 million in aid to Afghanistan, the World Bank said Friday, after repeated warnings that more than half the population face "acute" food shortages this winter.
The fund from the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) will go "to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan at this critical time," the World Bank said in a statement.
The funds will go to UNICEF and the World Food Programme, who "have presence and logistics capacity on the ground in Afghanistan and will use these funds to cover financing gaps in their existing programs to deliver health and nutrition services directly to the Afghan people."
The bank's management earlier this month offered the proposal to re-direct the funds intended for rebuilding efforts.
The United Nations has repeatedly warned that Afghanistan is on the brink of the world's worst humanitarian crisis.
Around 22 million Afghans, or more than half the country, will face an "acute" food shortage in the winter months, forcing millions to choose between migration and starvation.
That is due to the combined effects of drought caused by global warming, and an economic crisis aggravated by the international community's decision to freeze funding to the aid-dependent nation after the Taliban takeover in August -- a decision the UN described in a recent report as an "unprecedented fiscal shock".
Washington froze about \$10 billion of the country's reserves and the World Bank and International Monetary Fund halted Afghanistan's access to funding.



Biden staffer appointed as director of Unicef

Catherine Russell, a senior official of US President Joe Biden's administration, has been named head of the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), a UN spokesperson announced Friday. Russell, 60, is currently the director of the White House Office of Presidential Personnel and assistant to the president. Appointed by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Russell will replace fellow American Henrietta Fore, who resigned in July to care for her ailing husband. Unicef is a UN agency headed by a board of directors made up of 36 members who represent the five regional groups of United Nations member states: Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe, and Europe. It advocates for children in 190 countries and territories with an overall estimated budget of \$2.8 billion for 2018-2021.



A pro-democracy activist holds an image of Myanmar's ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi as they take part in the "Show Respect for Human Rights in Asia Peace March" in Tokyo, Japan, yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Pak Taliban kill cop after calling off truce

AFP, Peshawar
A Pakistani policeman was shot dead and another officer was hurt while guarding a polio vaccination team yesterday, police said, in an attack claimed by the local Taliban a day after they called off a ceasefire with the government.
Two men riding a motorcycle opened fire on police officers guarding a two-woman polio inoculation team who were administering vaccines to children in Tank district in the northwestern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
Police guards protecting vaccination teams in have come under attack before, mostly from militants.

Return to democracy Western nations, European Union urge Tunisia

AFP, Tunis
The envoys of seven Western states plus the European Union urged Tunisia on Friday to respect "fundamental freedoms" and set a timeline for a return to democratic institutions.
Tunisia's President Kais Saied on July 25 sacked the government, suspended parliament and seized wide-ranging powers, following months of economic and political turmoil worsened by the coronavirus pandemic.
Four and a half months later, he has yet to declare a clear timeline for his next steps, deepening the uncertainty hanging over the country's battered economy and sparking fears for political freedoms in the birthplace of the 2011 Arab uprisings.
In a joint statement on Friday, diplomatic mission heads of the G7 nations plus the EU said they "strongly support the people of Tunisia in their pursuit of effective, democratic, and transparent governance."
"We restate the importance of respect for all Tunisians' fundamental freedoms, and inclusive and transparent engagement with all stakeholders, including diverse political and civil society voices," they said.
They called for "a clear timeline allowing for a swift return to functioning democratic institutions, with an elected parliament playing a significant role."
Saied's July 25 power grab won support from many Tunisians tired of political parties seen as deeply corrupt and incapable of solving the country's deep social and economic woes.
But he has since faced mass demonstrations and growing accusations that he is becoming a new autocrat.
Human rights groups have repeatedly warned against the trial of civilians in military courts.
Meanwhile, talks with international lenders over a fourth bailout package in a decade have stalled and worries are growing that the country could default on its sovereign debt.

Indian cops recover Maradona's stolen watch

AFP, Guwahati
Indian police have recovered a stolen watch customised for star footballer Diego Maradona and arrested a suspect behind the alleged theft in Dubai, officials claimed Saturday.
Police said they detained Wazid Hussain in the northeastern state of Assam and recovered a Swiss-made Hublot watch after he fled to India following an alleged theft in Dubai.
The 37-year-old had been working as a security guard since 2016 at a Dubai-based firm where memorabilia relating to the Argentinian footballer were stored, police said.
They said the single edition watch, worth about \$26,500, has a photo of the star engraved on its back and carries his signature with his jersey number 10.
"Though there are many limited edition watches available this watch was customised for Maradona," Sivasagar superintendent of police Rakesh Roushan told AFP, quoting information received from Dubai authorities.
Maradona, regarded as one of the greatest players of the game, died last November at the age of 60.
Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the local police held the accused after receiving a tip-off from their counterparts in Dubai.
Police said the detained man denied the allegations, adding he had returned to his native in Assam in August on the pretext of tending to his ailing father.

Official notice from Bangladesh government regarding procurement of a watch. The notice is in Bengali and includes details about the procurement process, the item being a watch, and the deadline for submission of bids. It also includes contact information for the procurement officer.