

Trump says expecting ‘arrest’

Calls for protests to ‘get our nation back’

AFP, New York

Former US President Donald Trump said he expects to be “arrested” on Tuesday over hush money allegedly paid to a porn star before the 2016 election, calling on his supporters to protest.

Citing a “leak” from the Manhattan district attorney’s office, Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform this morning: “Leading Republican candidate & former President of the United States of America will be arrested on Tuesday of next week. Protest, take our nation back!”

The investigation centres on USD 130,000 paid weeks before the 2016 polls to stop Stormy Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford, from going public about an affair she says she had with Trump years earlier.

Prosecutors are weighing whether to charge Trump in the case, and speculation is rife that an indictment is likely.

If the Manhattan district attorney were to indict Trump, the 76-year-old would become the first former president to be charged with a crime. That would also upend his bid to win the Republican

nomination for the 2024 presidential election.

Trump’s lawyer told CNBC on Friday evening that his client would surrender to face criminal charges if he was indicted by a Manhattan grand jury.

Trump has denied having an affair with Daniels and has dismissed the investigation as politically motivated.

In his post, written in capital letters, Trump referred to “illegal leaks from a corrupt & highly political Manhattan district attorneys office” and said the investigation was “based on an old & fully debunked (by numerous other prosecutors!) fairytale.”

Daniels met with prosecutors on Wednesday and “agreed to make herself available as a witness, or for further inquiry if needed,” according to her lawyer Charles Brewster.

Earlier this month, Trump was given the opportunity to testify by District Attorney Alvin Bragg’s team but declined to avoid potentially incriminating himself. Experts say the invitation is a sign that he will almost certainly be charged.



Protesters march holding a placard which reads “you did not want me, well, you will thing of the king again, leaving broken at 64-year-old”, during a demonstration in Nantes, western France, yesterday, two days after the French government pushed a pensions reform through parliament without a vote, using the article 49.3 of the constitution.

PHOTO: AFP

Biden: Putin committed war crimes Calls ICC charges against him justified

REUTERS, Washington

US President Joe Biden said on Friday that Russian President Vladimir Putin has clearly committed war crimes and the International Criminal Court’s (ICC) decision to issue an arrest warrant for him was justified.

The ICC earlier on Friday called for Putin’s arrest on suspicion of unlawful deportation of children and unlawful transfer of people from Ukraine to Russia since Moscow’s invasion began of its neighbor last year. The United States is not a member of the ICC.

“He’s clearly committed war crimes,” Biden told reporters, referring to Putin.

“Well, I think it’s justified,” Biden added, referring to the warrant. “But the question is - it’s not recognized internationally by us either. But I think it makes a very strong point.”

The United States separately has concluded that Russian forces have committed war crimes in Ukraine and supports accountability for perpetrators of war crimes, a State Department spokesperson said in an emailed statement.

CHINA BROKERED IRAN-SAUDI DEAL

US leadership role in ME facing deep challenges

AFP, Washington

China’s shock success at bringing Saudi Arabia and Iran together has challenged the United States’ longstanding role as the key outside power broker in the Middle East.

Beijing’s persuading archrivals Riyadh and Tehran to reestablish diplomatic relations upstaged the United States just as Washington appears powerless to intervene in the political tensions in Israel over the Netanyahu government’s sharp-right turn, which has inflamed Palestinians.

“Anything that can help reduce tensions, avoid conflict and deter in any way dangerous and destabilizing actions by Iran is a good thing,” US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Wednesday on the Saudi-Iran deal announced on March 10.

US officials have tried to minimize Beijing’s role in the region, saying it is far from supplanting the United States: much of the Middle East still sits under the Pentagon’s security umbrella.

But China’s breakthrough is a real challenge, as Washington remains deeply preoccupied with the Ukraine war and, over the long term, with blunting Beijing’s diplomatic and military advance in the Indo-Pacific region.

James Ryan, Director of the Middle East program at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, said Washington is happy if anyone can contribute to Middle East

regional stability, even rival China.

“The Biden administration has very clearly said that when it comes to the Middle East they’re going to favour security, they’re going to favor stability,” he told AFP. “American involvement just overall is going to be more on the sidelines than it has been in the past,” a message the Saudis “very clearly” understand, Ryan said.



China stepped in in a period when the US views Iran as a major threat to the region and yet its own relations with longtime ally Saudi Arabia have frayed.

Despite scoring a huge \$37 billion contract to sell more Boeing jets to the Saudis this week, Washington’s ties with Riyadh have been tense since President Joe Biden ordered a review of the ties in October.

Biden has spoken of “consequences” after the Saudis snubbed US requests to increase oil output to force down prices

that soared after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Instead, Riyadh cut production, sending prices even higher with global impacts.

A Saudi-Iran rapprochement also threatens the ultimate goal of the US-crafted Abraham Accords: Arab powerhouse Saudi Arabia’s recognition of Israel after decades of refusal. Riyadh has resisted pressure to do so as well.

The Wall Street Journal and the New York Times reported that the Saudis want security guarantees from Washington and assistance on their civilian nuclear program in exchange for recognizing the Jewish state.

Meanwhile, Biden’s hopes to break some ice with Iran by restoring the 2015 deal that limited its nuclear program have gone nowhere.

Instead, Tehran has moved further away, supporting Russia in its war on Ukraine.

The turmoil in Israel is another headache. Despite repeated calls from US officials for de-escalation, the violence between Israelis and Palestinians has worsened.

But pressure is mounting on the Biden administration.

Around one hundred Democratic lawmakers recently wrote Biden expressing concerns about the direction of Netanyahu’s government and urged the US leader to use all diplomatic tools possible to prevent it from “further damaging the nation’s democratic institutions.”

Mountain forests disappearing at alarming rate: study

AFP, Washington



Logging, wildfires and farming are causing mountain forests, habitat to 85 percent of the world’s birds, mammals and amphibians, to vanish at an alarming rate, according to a study published on Friday.

Mountain forests covered 1.1 billion hectares of the planet in 2000, the authors of the study published in the Cell Press journal One Earth said.

But at least 78.1 million hectares – an area larger than the US state of Texas – have been lost between 2000 and 2018, with recent losses 2.7-fold greater than at the beginning of the century.

Key drivers of the loss are commercial logging, wildfires, “slash-and-burn” cultivation and commodity agriculture, said the authors from China’s Southern University of Science and Technology and the University of Leeds.

Of particular concern, they said, is that heavy forest losses have occurred in mountain areas that are “tropical biodiversity hotspots” – refuges for rare and endangered species. High elevations and steep slopes have restricted human exploitation of mountain forests, the authors said. But they have increasingly been targeted for timber and used for agriculture since the turn of the century.

Commercial forestry was responsible for 42 percent of mountain forest loss, followed by wildfires (29 percent), shifting cultivation (15 percent), and permanent or semi-permanent commodity agriculture (10 percent), the study said.

North Korea says 800,000 people enlist to fight ‘US imperialists’

AFP, Seoul

More than 800,000 young North Koreans have volunteered to join the army to fight “US imperialists”, state media said Saturday, days after Pyongyang test-fired its most powerful intercontinental ballistic missile.

After a record-breaking year of weapons tests and growing nuclear threats from Pyongyang, Seoul and Washington have ramped up security cooperation, and this week kicked off their largest joint military drills in five years.

North Korea views all such exercises as rehearsals for invasion and has repeatedly warned it would take “overwhelming” action in response.

The official Korean Central News Agency described the ongoing drills as an American attempt “to provoke a nuclear war” and said that in response, hundreds of thousands of people had enlisted.

College student

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chairman Khalilur Bashir Manik, Dr Md Rafiqul Alam and anaesthetist Fauzia Zafrin Tikli – who are on the run, said police.

OC Mohammad Emranul Islam said, “We arrested hospital manager Nazmul Hossain, and staffers Arif and Joy.”

Meanwhile, after the news of Iqram’s death spread, his classmates ransacked the hospital. Later, police brought the situation under control.

Afterwards, locals formed a human chain in front of Brahmanbaria Press Club in protest.

According to the complaint, Iqram was admitted to the ear, nose and throat department of the hospital on Friday for the purpose of nasal polypus surgery.

Following the surgery, he did not regain consciousness and was sent to the hospital bed in critical condition.

Then he was taken back to the OT after objection from the patient’s relatives. But the patient did not regain consciousness and later, without informing his relatives, he was transferred to Brahmanbaria ICU Specialized Hospital.

At that time, the authorities of Al-

Khalil hospital fled, the complaint said.

The specialised hospital authorities informed the family that Iqram had died during a 15-hour unconsciousness state from Friday afternoon to yesterday morning.

Iqram’s classmates and locals alleged that he was admitted to Al-Khalil hospital to get the surgery done by a doctor who used to go there from Dhaka once a week.

However, another doctor conducted the surgery, they said, adding that Iqram died due to a lack of proper treatment.

Since the hospital was locked after the incident, it was not possible to contact the doctor or any of the authorities, it stated.

The hospital ward master Emdad Hossain told The Daily Star, “I have heard about the incident. But since last February 27, I have been on sick leave. So, I cannot say anything about it. The arrestees – who were staying at the hospital after the incident – can tell the details.”

Khalilur Bashir Manik, founder chairman of the hospital, couldn’t be contacted as his phone was found switched off.



PHOTO: STAR

Participants of The Daily Star Newspaper Olympiad Season-3 Chattogram selection round yesterday. The event was held at Chattogram Cantonment Public College. Around 120 students from different educational institutions participated at the selection round. Of them, top 30 participants were selected for the next round in Dhaka.

Bangabandhu

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of Bangabandhu’s values among the children.”

Bangladesh High Commission in Brunei Darussalam organised a programme that included presenting books on Bangabandhu to the principal of Seri Mulla Sarjana International School and a speech by High Commissioner Nahida Rahman Shumona.

Bangladesh missions in New York, New Delhi, Amman, Canberra, Rome, Colombo and other countries also celebrated Bangabandhu’s birth anniversary.

AFP, London

Former UK prime minister Tony Blair is by turns pensive and defiant as he reflects on the upcoming anniversaries of two events that arguably defined the best and worst of his decade in power.

Monday marks 20 years since Blair joined US president George W. Bush in launching an invasion of Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, without a UN mandate and in defiance of some of the biggest demonstrations ever seen in Britain.

For its many critics, the war was exposed as a reckless misadventure when no weapons of mass destruction were found, and hampered the West’s ability to stand up to the rise of autocrats in Russia and China.

But Blair rejects the notion that Russian President Vladimir Putin profited by defying a weakened West with his own aggression against Ukraine, starting in 2014 and extending to last year’s full invasion.

“If he didn’t use that excuse (Iraq), he’d use another excuse,” Britain’s

most successful Labour leader, who is now 69, said in an interview with AFP and fellow European news agencies ANSA, DPA and EFE.

Saddam, Blair noted, had initiated two regional wars, defied multiple UN resolutions and launched a chemical attack on his own people.

Ukraine in contrast has a democratic government and posed no threat to its neighbours when Putin invaded.

“At least you could say we were removing a despot and trying to introduce democracy,” Blair said,

speaking at the offices of his Tony Blair Institute for Global Change in central London.

“Now you can argue about all the consequences and so on.

“His (Putin’s) intervention in the Middle East (in Syria) was to prop up a despot and refuse a democracy. So we should treat all that propaganda with the lack of respect it deserves.”

- Northern Ireland -

Fallout from the Iraq war arguably hampered Blair’s own efforts as an international envoy to negotiate peace

between Israel and the Palestinians, after he left office in 2007.

Through his institute, Blair maintains offices in the region and says he is “still very passionate” about promoting peace in the Middle East, even if it appears “pretty distant right now”.

But while there can be no settlement in Ukraine until Russia recognises that “aggression is wrong”, he says the Palestinians could draw lessons from the undisputed high point of his tenure: peace in Northern Ireland.