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## Assange back home as a free man

REUTERS, Canberra

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange landed to an ecstatic welcome in Australia yesterday after pleading guilty to violating US espionage law in a deal that sets him free from a 14-year legal battle.

Assange disembarked from a private jet at Canberra airport just after 7:30 pm (0930 GMT), waving to waiting media and cheering supporters before passionately kissing his wife, Stella, and lifting her off the ground.

He embraced his father before entering the terminal building with his legal team.

Assange has not spoken publicly since being released and did not appear at a WikiLeaks press conference at a hotel in Canberra, where Stella Assange said it was too soon to say what her husband would do next.

"Julian needs time to recover, to get used to freedom," she said. "I want Julian to have that space to rediscover that freedom."

She added she believed her

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Argentina striker Lautaro Martinez celebrates with Lisandro Martinez and Marcos Acuna following his last-gasp winner against Chile in Copa Group A match at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey yesterday. The Inter Milan striker came off the bench to score the decisive goal as the defending champions cruised into the quarterfinals of the 16-team competition. PHOTO: AFP

## New finalists on the cards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ongoing T20 World Cup of many firsts will get to see another unprecedented case as a new finalist will feature in the grand finale of the showpiece event as South Africa and Afghanistan will face off in the first semifinal in Trinidad and Tobago today.

In the second semifinal later tonight, 2007 champions India will take on two-time winners England in Guyana for a spot in the final.

South Africa, who are often considered favourites going into ICC events, are not strangers to heartbreaks as they don't farewell in such phases of a major tournament, losing in seven consecutive World Cup (T20I/ODI) semis, but will look to finally break their semifinal curse and progress to their first-ever final in a World Cup.

The Proteas, like they most often do prior to the knockout phases, have won all of their matches in the lead-up to the semis and set a record for most consecutive wins (seven) in a T20 World Cup. But teams like Nepal and Bangladesh have pushed the Proteas to the limit and despite the results going their way, Aiden Markram and Co will be wary of not letting the Afghans have a sniff in the game.

Meanwhile, Rashid Khan's Afghanistan are making a habit of creating history in this tournament and wouldn't be much daunted by the task as they have had a direct hand in eliminating Australia and New Zealand -- with



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## 2 more suspects held in the hills

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A team of detectives from Dhaka yesterday arrested two men suspected of being involved in the murder of Jhenaidah-4 lawmaker Anwarul Azim Anar.

Faisal and Mustafiz were arrested in Khagrachhari where they had been masquerading as devotees at a remote Kali Temple for 23 days, said Harun Or Rashid, additional commissioner (Detective Branch) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

They introduced themselves in Khagrachhari as Palash Roy and Shimul Roy, he added.

They were among the seven people present in the Kolkata flat where Azim was killed in May, he said.

Officers learned their whereabouts on Tuesday, and then caught them in a special drive yesterday.

Harun later flew back to the capital with the suspects in a helicopter and landed in Purbachal.

Officers have information that Faisal used chloroform to make Azim's lose consciousness and Mustafiz later stripped him and tied him to a chair, he told reporters.

On May 19, they came back to Bangladesh from Kolkata after the murder and contacted Aktaruzzaman who planned the murder.

"Aktaruzzaman then gave them Tk 30,000. With the money, they went to the remote hilly area," he said.

A total of nine people have been arrested in Bangladesh, India and Nepal in connection with the killings, he said.

Aktaruzzaman is currently in the US, and the authorities are trying to get him extradited.

Harun reiterated that there was "no pressure" on officers regarding the investigation.

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## Probe on to unearth wealth of cops: IGP

UNB, Khulna

Probe into the wealth of police officials is underway, with authentic information expected to emerge, said Inspector General of Police (IGP) Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun.

He made the statement while addressing reporters at the Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) Lines yesterday afternoon.

The IGP mentioned that a meeting was held between the Police Services Association and journalists to discuss recent media reports on the wealth of police officials and the police headquarters' response.

"The issue will be resolved through discussion," he assured.

Regarding actress Pori Moni issue, IGP Mamun said that Golam Saklain, former Additional Deputy Commissioner of the Detective Branch (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), was sent on compulsory retirement after allegations against him were confirmed.

Bangladesh Police adheres to a zero-tolerance policy towards any immoral activity, he said.

## 60 Palestinians killed as Israeli forces pound Gaza

AGENCIES

Israeli forces pounded several areas in north and south Gaza yesterday, and residents reported fierce fighting between Israeli troops and Hamas fighters in Rafah in the south of the Palestinian enclave.

Residents said fighting intensified in the Tel Al Sultan neighbourhood in western Rafah, where tanks were also trying to force their way north amid heavy clashes. The armed wings of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad said fighters attacked Israeli forces with anti-tank rockets and mortar bombs.

Since early May, ground fighting has focused on Rafah, abutting Egypt on Gaza's southern edge, where around half of the enclave's 2.3 million people had been sheltering after fleeing other areas. Most have since had to flee again.

Medics said two Palestinians were killed in one Israeli missile strike in Rafah earlier yesterday.

The Israeli military said in a statement its forces killed a Hamas member who had been involved in the smuggling of weapons through the border between Rafah and Egypt. It said jets struck dozens of Hamas targets in Rafah overnight, including fighters, military structures and tunnel shafts, reports Reuters.

In the northern Gaza town of

Beit Lahiya, an Israeli air strike destroyed a house, killing four Palestinians and wounding several others, medics said.

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said yesterday that at least 37,718 people have been killed during more than eight months of offensive. The toll includes at least 60 deaths over the past 24 hours, a ministry statement said.

More than eight months into the

thousands of children were suffering from malnutrition that has already killed at least 30 since October 7.

"There is only flour and canned food, there is nothing else to eat, no vegetables, no meat, and no milk. I have lost over 25 kilos of my weight," said Abu Mustafa, who lives in Gaza City, with his family.

Meanwhile, President Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday that



- » Severe food shortage in Gaza
- » Turkey stands with Lebanon as tensions rises
- » Gaza death toll rises to 37,718

offensive, international mediation backed by the US has failed to yield a ceasefire agreement. Hamas says any deal must bring an end to the offensive and full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, while Israel says it will accept only temporary pauses in fighting until Hamas is eradicated.

In the northern Gaza Strip, Palestinians complained of a severe lack of food and soaring prices, and health officials said

Turkey stood in solidarity with Lebanon in light of growing tensions with Israel and called on regional countries to also support Beirut.

Speaking in parliament, Erdogan said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu planned to spread the Gaza offensive to the region and that this would lead to a "catastrophe", adding the Western support for Israel was "pitiful".

## BSF shoots Bangladeshi dead near border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A Bangladeshi man was shot dead by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) near the Lohakuchi border in Kaliganj upazila of Lalmonirhat early yesterday.

According to BGB and locals, the incident occurred early yesterday when a group of eight or nine locals, including the deceased Nurul Islam, 63, tried to enter Indian territory to fetch cattle.

At that time, the BSF, patrolling the West Chamta camp on the Indian side, opened fire on the group injuring Nurul Islam.

Nurul was brought back to Bangladesh by his associates. He later succumbed to his injuries, reports our local correspondent quoting Intiaz Kabir, officer-in-charge of Kaliganj Police Station.

Police has taken Nurul's body to the police station, said Intiaz Kabir.

A protest letter has been sent to BSF, said Subedar Manjurul Islam, commander of the Lohakuchi camp of Bangladesh Border Guard (BGB) Lalmonirhat-15 Battalion.

## Delhi for early democratic transition in Myanmar Says Jaishankar

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's foreign minister said he voiced concern about the impact of continuing violence in Myanmar in a meeting with his counterpart from the Southeast Asian nation yesterday.

Myanmar plunged into turmoil after a 2021 military coup seized power from an elected government, sparking a protest movement that has evolved into a full-blown civil war, in which the military has lost control of large swathes of territory.

India has maintained its relationship with the ruling junta, even as armed resistance to the military has expanded, and it has an infrastructure project in Myanmar's western Rakhine state where heavy fighting has raged in recent months.

Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said he sought a commitment to protecting India's ongoing projects in Myanmar in the meeting with counterpart Than Swe.

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Women walking across Begum Rokeya Sarani after an hour of downpour flooded parts of the street yesterday morning. Many other areas in the capital often remain waterlogged in monsoon due to poor drainage. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Rahul Gandhi vows MPs won't be silenced

Modi, Rahul shake hands, escort Om Birla to Speaker's chair

AGENCIES

India's new leader of the opposition Rahul Gandhi said yesterday that his lawmakers would not be silenced, in his first speech since formally taking up a post vacant for a decade.

Rahul, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's chief rival, was appointed by fellow opposition lawmakers to the post in a signal of a reinvigorated challenge to the government.

"The government has political power, but the opposition also represents the voice of India's people," Rahul said in a speech in the lower house of parliament, accompanied by supportive thumps by his party's lawmakers on their desks.

"This time, the opposition represents significantly more voice of the Indian people."

In the past two parliaments, Rahul's once-mighty Congress party did not have enough seats in the legislature to qualify him for the post, reports AFP.

Modi's first two terms in office followed landslide wins



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