

Trump hits out at AP as 'radical left' media

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump on Thursday called the Associated Press (AP) a "radical left organization", his latest salvo against the US media mainstay over its use of the Gulf of Mexico for the renamed body of water.

Trump dubbed the area the "Gulf of America" in his first month in office and has restricted Associated Press (AP) journalists' access to the White House until the news agency obeys his order.

The White House has blocked AP journalists from Air Force One and the Oval Office, arguing that the agency was ignoring a lawful name change.

"We have a fight with one news organization, AP, a radical left organization -- treats us all very badly -- and they refuse to acknowledge that the Gulf formerly of Mexico is now called the Gulf of America," Trump said in a speech Thursday to the Republican Governor's Association in the capital Washington.

"We're holding them out of any news conferences now. I'm sure they'll get sued, and maybe they'll win. Doesn't matter. It's just something



that we feel strongly about," he added, without clarifying what he meant about the possible legal action.

The 180-year-old media organisation has long been a pillar of US journalism and provides news to print, TV and radio outlets.

In a style note last month, AP noted that "the Gulf of Mexico has carried that name for more than 400 years" and said Trump's executive order "only carries authority within the United States."

Tech billionaire Elon Musk, who leads a campaign to reduce federal spending, meanwhile posted on X: "AP stands for Associated Propaganda."

Meanwhile, Fox News and Newsmax are among the outlets who are urging the Trump administration to lift a ban on the AP from accessing certain White House events. A number of news outlets signed on to a letter sent by the White House Correspondents' Association.



Migrants deported from the United States enter the Catem shelter in Corredores, Puntarenas province, Costa Rica, yesterday. The United States deported 135 migrants of various nationalities, including 65 minors, to Costa Rica, according to the Costa Rican government.

PHOTO: AFP

US-RUSSIA PEACE NEGOTIATION

Ukrainian refugees watch talks with concern

Say Russia-occupied areas should return to Ukraine

REUTERS, Sopot

Three years since the arrival of Russian forces drove her from her home in eastern Ukraine to Poland, Oksana Sapronova and other refugees fear their homeland's battlefield losses could now end up being in vain.

"I simply don't want to think that our boys were killed in this war for nothing," the 41-year-old said as she sat with other Ukrainians in a beachside cafe in the Baltic town of Sopot in northern Poland.

Her brother has been fighting on the front line since Moscow sent troops and tanks into Ukraine in February 2022 for what it called a "special military operation".

Sapronova, like many Ukrainians, is worried that talks this week between US and Russian officials - with no seat for Ukraine at the table - could force Ukraine to make painful territorial concessions and leave

it vulnerable to further Russian advances.

US President Donald Trump has dramatically changed Washington's approach towards the conflict, engaging directly with Russian President Vladimir Putin, pushing for a quick



deal to end the war and calling Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy a "dictator".

"We should believe Russia and the United States again that we will be safe? They cheated us once before," said Olha Shkapa, 45, from Kyiv, referring to the aftermath of the Soviet Union's

collapse in 1991.

Kyiv gave up nuclear weapons it inherited from the Soviet Union under a 1994 agreement, the Budapest Memorandum, in return for security assurances from Russia, the US and Britain.

The fate of Russian-occupied regions in the eastern part of the country could be a crucial part of any future peace deal.

Shkapa said losing the eastern regions would mean "there was no point in the deaths of so many civilians and soldiers".

Sapronova said she hoped the occupied areas will return to Ukraine, but she has no plans to return to her hometown of Zaporizhzhia from Poland where she feels settled and has restarted her sewing business.

"The country is ruined ... there is simply nothing to come back to for me," Sapronova said, adding that she hopes for a better future for her daughter.

KASHMIR AREA

India, Pak army hold talks to ease LoC tension

DECCAN HERALD ONLINE

India and Pakistan yesterday held a flag meeting along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district in an effort to ease tension after recent incidents of cross-border firing and an IED attack, official sources said.

The sources said the brigade-commander level flag meeting took place in the Chakkan-Da-Bagh crossing point area with both sides highlighting the need to maintain peace along the borders.

The meeting took place in a congenial atmosphere and both sides agreed to honour the ceasefire agreement in the larger interest of peace on the borders, the sources said.

Penniless, scarred

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small boat. After navigating for 15 minutes, the man in uniform handed one of them a map and jumped into the sea.

After two days of being lost at sea, they were intercepted by what he believed was a boat of Libyan armed forces.

Their passports, money, and belongings were confiscated.

"We were promptly sent back to Benghazi and held in another camp with 100 others. That's when the nightmare began. Beatings with sticks were routine. Meals, when provided, consisted of little rice, a few onions, and green chillies."

After a week, the guards stripped Mustakim and 19 others and locked them in a toilet.

"They demanded Tk 6 lakh from me. My family, already burdened with debts, took two days to arrange the money. As a punishment, they pulled out a toenail from my left foot."

Once the ransom was paid, the traffickers left. "I ran through the desert at night until some army personnel caught me. They beat me up first and then sent me to Algeria where I was imprisoned for three months."

Mustakim pleaded with the Algerian authorities to contact his family.

His wife, Sharmin Akhter, reached out to BRAC, whose intervention finally paved the way for their return home.

"I thought I was securing a future for my family. Instead, I brought back scars and debts," he told this correspondent.

BRAC took assistance from the foreign ministry, Wage Earners' Welfare Board, and the Trafficking-in-Persons Hero Network to repatriate Mustakim and the four others, said Shariful Hasan, associate director of the BRAC Migration Programme.

"Those taken to Libya with promises of jobs in Europe get cheated. Most of them are detained in camps in Libya, where they are subjected to torture. They are then held hostage by gangs seeking ransom. Despite all this, there is a trend of people going to Libya, hoping to travel across the Mediterranean to Europe," he said.

Public awareness campaigns can end the crisis, he said.

"Local brokers and human trafficking networks must be identified. Operations should be carried out by law enforcement agencies. In particular, financial transactions must be traced," he said, adding, "Without a collective effort, this crisis cannot be resolved."

Case filed

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reads the statement.

Around 1:45am, near the Sohagpara pedestrian bridge on the Dhaka-Tangail highway in Mirzapur, six to seven robbers took cash, phones, and gold jewelry from passengers and molested two to three women.

The bus then took a U-turn at Natiyapara in Delduar, Tangail.

For two to two and a half hours, the robbers drove through Kaliakair and Konabari.

Around 4:00am, near Nandan Park in Ashulia, they stopped the bus and turned it towards Tangail again. The robber then asked the original driver to take the wheel and keep going for 10 kilometres.

They then quickly got off and fled, the complaint said.

Omar told this correspondent that, "I have mentioned everything that happened that day in the

case statement. Two or three robbers molested the female passengers. I mentioned those things in the case," he said.

He said police told him that they would take action against the bus staffer, if evidence of their involvement is found.

He said the robbers took away Tk 1.20 lakh from him.

"I sell betel nuts in the Beribadha area in Dhaka. I was returning home with a few days' sales money. The robbers snatched it away," Omar added.

A group of citizens yesterday formed a human chain in front of the national museum in the capital, protesting the incident.

The role of Natore district police is highly questionable, they said, demanding justice for the victims.

Yesterday afternoon, Officer-in-Charge of Baraigram Police Station in Natore, Sirajul Islam, was withdrawn, Prothom Alo reports.

Hundreds of women march in Barishal

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streets of the city after the news of killings of protesters in Dhaka reached Barishal, according to the book *Bhasha Andolan: Teknaf Theke Tetulia* by Ahmed Rafiq.

The women leading a protest procession included Hosne Ara Niru, Manjushree, Mahe Noor Begum and Rani Bhattacharya. They were followed by members of the Rashtrobhasha Sangram Parishad. The participants included former minister Khan Bahadur Hashem Ali Khan and lawyer Shamsur Ali.

The procession, brought out from the Ashwinikumar Town Hall, ended at the Circuit House ground. Around 500 pupils of AK Institute, led by student leader AKM Azhar Uddin, took out another procession. Joined by people, they held an absentee funeral and a commemorative meeting for the martyrs.

Another absentee funeral was held at the AK Khan School ground on February 23. The protesters built a Shaheed Minar in front of the Town Hall on February 24. A black flag of mourning and a red one symbolising revolution were hoisted there.

Earlier, during the first wave of the movement, then Additional District Magistrate Golam Kabir organised a discussion on Pakistan's state language towards the end of 1947. Advocate Aboni Ghosh and Professor DN Chatterjee were among those who spoke in favour of Bangla as a state language.

The surge of the movement's first phase reached Barishal and other parts of the country when the proposal to recognise Bangla as a state language was opposed in the Pakistan Constituent Assembly in 1948.

According to the book *Bhasha Andolaner Ancholik Itihas* by Abu Mohammad Delwar Hossain, a protest rally was held for Bangla as a state language at the Muslim Institute on February 27 that year.

Brajamohan College students joined the rally in procession.

Ahead of a demonstration announced centrally from Dhaka for March 11, Barishal Sangram Parishad was formed with Shamsul Haque Chowdhury as the convener. Students from different institutions conducted a publicity campaign for the protests.

Ahmed Rafiq wrote in his book *Bhasha Andolan: Teknaf Theke Tetulia* that an all-out general strike was observed in Barishal on March 11. The student protesters marched across the city before joining a rally next to Fakirbari road. Student leader Kazi Bahauddin Ahmed presided over the rally.

Bahauddin was among several leaders who were arrested by police later in the evening, but the protests could not be suppressed. General strikes were observed in the educational institutions of Barishal, Pirojpur, Bhola and Patuakhali on March 12 and 13.

In 1952, the students and people of Barishal erupted in protests when the government on January 27 announced that Urdu, not Bangla, would be the state language.

The book *Bhasha Andolaner Ancholik Itihas* says that a 25-member Rashtrobhasha Sangram Parishad was formed in Barishal to press for the demand for Bangla as a state language. Another Sangram Parishad was formed with Brajamohan College Students' Union Vice-President Syed Golam Kibria as the convener.

They launched a huge publicity campaign ahead of February 21, the main protest day. Besides pasting posters, they distributed leaflets across the city.

On February 21, Barishal turned into a city of processions, with all shops, educational institutions and businesses shut amid a general strike. The protesters chanted the indomitable slogan, "Rashtrabhanga Bangla Chai", as they marched across the city.

ADB, WB to give single set of rules for joint projects

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The framework came in response to international calls, including from the G20, for MDBs to work more collaboratively to maximise impact and address global development challenges more effectively.

"The Full Mutual Reliance Framework is a significant step in our collaboration with the World Bank and will deliver lasting benefits to communities and economies across Asia and the Pacific," said ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa.

"By leveraging our respective strengths, we can enhance efficiency, scale impact, and provide a strong platform for sustainable and inclusive growth."

World Bank Group President Ajay Banga highlighted the shift towards greater cooperation in development financing.

The framework will initially be implemented in selected public sector projects over a four-year pilot phase, beginning in 2025, allowing for refinement of operational approaches and evaluation of outcomes. Building on earlier co-financing efforts, such as the Procurement Framework Agreement of 2018, the FMRF incorporates lessons from engagements with civil society organisations, borrower countries, and other stakeholders.

Under the framework, one institution will serve as the "Lead Lender," overseeing project design, preparation, appraisal, supervision, and evaluation, while the other, termed the "Trail Lender," will participate in knowledge sharing and provide limited support without decision-making or fiduciary responsibilities.

This initiative is expected to serve as a model for deeper collaboration among MDBs, addressing urgent development needs while fostering knowledge sharing and innovation.

Urs halted in Manikganj

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former Awami League MP and singer Momtaz Begum.

OC Jahangir said the Urs Mubarak organising committee did not take permission from the administration for the event.

"When a group of 'Towhidi Janata' went to stop the Urs Mubarak, the organising committee attacked them with sticks," he said. The group of locals then launched a counter-attack, he added.

In Noakhali, another group of locals under the banner of "Towhidi Janata" entirely destroyed the shrine of Shah Sufi Ayub Ali Darbesh in Kaladarap Union of Sadar upazila in an arson attack on Thursday.

They stormed the shrine, including structures set up for an annual religious festival, and set fire to a tin-roofed room around 3:30pm.

According to devotees, at least 10 people, including women, were injured in the attack. The injured received first-aid, the devotees said.

Upon receiving reports, army and police personnel, and officials of the local administration rushed to the area and brought the situation under control, said Kamrul Islam, officer-in-charge of Sudharam Model Police Station.

According to police and witnesses, preparations were underway at the shrine for the 57th annual three-day Urs festival, which was set to begin on Thursday.

Tension escalated in the morning as the "Towhidi Janata" group announced another religious gathering, a Waz Mahfil, at Soleman Market near the shrine at the same time.

Given the tensions surrounding the Urs, a police patrol was stationed in the area since the morning, said OC Kamrul.

"When the shrine organisers ignored warnings and proceeded with the event, a crowd of over 1,000 people carrying sticks, launched the attack on the shrine in the afternoon.

"Despite the presence of police and army personnel, it was difficult to control a crowd of over a thousand people," OC Kamrul said.

"Legal action will be taken accordingly if a written complaint is filed in this regard," he added.

Shah Nawaz Tanvir, AC (Land) of Sadar upazila, said that the attack had already taken place before law enforcement arrived. "Authorities are working to maintain peace and order in consultation with local religious leaders."

Shahadat Ullah Seli, chairman of Kaladarap Union Parishad, said, "Local residents and mosque authorities had repeatedly requested that the Urs be cancelled this year. Despite my request, the shrine organisers proceeded with the event. When they started the festival in the afternoon, a large crowd stormed the shrine and carried out the attack."

Trump's 'kickback scheme' remark fuels BJP-Congress face-off in India

TNN, New Delhi

A fresh war of words has erupted between India's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Congress over US President Donald Trump's claim that USAID provided "\$21 million for voter turnout in India."

The fresh row started over USAID funds to India after Trump once again yesterday questioned the funding, terming it a "kickback scheme" and said, "Why are we caring about India turnout? We got enough problems."

Linking Trump's comments to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's 2023 remarks in London about global concerns over Indian democracy, the BJP alleged that NGOs connected to Congress were using foreign funds to influence the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Rickelton century sets up 107-run win for Proteas

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work out how to adapt to score your runs.

"We could have pushed harder at certain stages of our innings, but everyone chipped in to make sure we had competitive total."

South Africa's innings was anchored by the left-hander, whose 103 came from 106 deliveries, but there were valuable contributions all the way through.

Captain Temba Bavuma scored 58 as he put on 129 with Rickelton for the second wicket before Rassie van der Dussen pitched in with a useful 52 and Aiden Markram was unbeaten on 52 from 36 deliveries to give the innings a boost at the end.

In contrast to South Africa, Afghanistan battled to find a way to stem the flow of runs, with 40-year-old off-spinner Mohammad Nabi the pick of their bowlers with 2-51 from 10 overs.

Afghanistan's lone resistance came from middle-order batter Shah, who took the attack to the bowlers but ran out of partners as nobody around him could build an innings.

Kagiso Rabada finished with 3-36 in 8.3 overs and was well supported by Wiaan Mulder, who took 2-36 in his nine overs.

"The batting was not good enough today," Afghanistan captain Hashmatullah Shahidi said. "The pitch was helping them in the second innings."

"We did well in the bowling but not so good in the first 20 overs (of Afghanistan's batting innings). The toss was important, it was not a typical Karachi pitch."

South Africa will next play Australia in Rawalpindi on Tuesday, while Afghanistan meet England in Lahore the following day in what is already a must-win game for them with the top two in the four-team group advancing to the semi-finals.