



A young girl cries as she struggles to get food at a community kitchen in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. The food crisis in Gaza's south has been at a critical level, and thousands of new arrivals at the overly crowded tent camp for internally displaced people due to a new Israeli evacuation order is escalating the crisis.

India expects KSA to respect mutual ties

REUTERS, Mumbai

India yesterday said it hoped Saudi Arabia would keep in mind mutual interests and sensitivities between the two countries, two days after Riyadh signed a mutual defence pact with New Delhi's old foe Pakistan.

Saudi Arabia and nuclear-armed Pakistan signed the pact on Wednesday, and although few details have been made public, analysts said it could mean Riyadh will have a de facto nuclear shield under the agreement. The agreement, which came amid diplomatic upheaval in the Middle East and just months after a deadly India-Pakistan conflict, says any aggression against either country shall be considered an aggression against both.

"India and Saudi Arabia have a wide-ranging strategic partnership which has deepened considerably in the last few years," Indian foreign ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told reporters during a weekly news briefing.

"We expect that this strategic partnership will keep in mind mutual interests and sensitivities," he said.

Ex-Nepal PM Oli blames 'infiltrators'

Nepal interim PM Kakri vows to fix 'failure'

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's deposed prime minister KP Sharma Oli yesterday said his government did not order police to open fire on protesters and called for a probe into violence that killed at least 73 people.

In his first statement since stepping down last Tuesday, the 73-year-old said "infiltrators" were responsible for inciting bloodshed during youth-led protests that swept the Himalayan nation beginning September 8.

The demonstrations were sparked by a short-lived ban on social media, but fuelled by anger at corruption and long-standing economic woes.

At least 19 people were killed in a crackdown on the first day.

"Those who infiltrated (the protests) incited violence, resulting in the tragic loss of young lives," Oli said in a post in Nepali on Facebook.

"The government did not issue orders to target the protesters and fire shots," Oli said, as the country marked its constitution day yesterday.

Mobs ransacked government offices, set fire to a newly opened Hilton hotel and attacked other symbols of authority

-- including Oli's residence -- as fury swept across towns and cities.

Some protesters were seen brandishing automatic rifles on the second day of the unrest.

"There should be an investigation into incidents of use of automatic weapons which the police did not have," Oli said in his post.

"I will not say much about the conspiracy behind this today, time will tell itself," he added.

Oli has not been seen in public since his removal, with allies saying he was under military protection.

"He was under the protection of the army and returned yesterday," party colleague Agni Kharel from Oli's CPN-UML told AFP.

His successor, Prime Minister Sushila Karki, a 73-year-old former chief justice, has been tasked with restoring order and addressing demonstrators' demands for a corruption-free future ahead of elections in six months.

"The demonstrations and movement led by youth reflect both the aspirations of our young generation, growing public awareness and the dissatisfaction with prevailing corruption in the country," Karki said in a speech to mark the country's constitution day.



EU seeks to speed up Russian gas phase-out

AFP, Brussels

The European Union yesterday proposed to bring forward a ban on Russian gas imports as part of a new package of sanctions aimed at sapping Moscow's war chest -- and pleasing US President Donald Trump.

Under the measures presented for approval by the bloc's member states, the European Commission said it aims to phase out liquefied natural gas (LNG) purchases from Russia by January 2027 -- one year earlier than planned.

"Russia's war economy is sustained by revenues from fossil fuels. We want to cut these revenues. So we are banning imports of Russian LNG into European markets," commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said.

"It is time to turn off the tap".

The proposal comes as the United States pressures the EU to end fossil fuel imports from Russia. The US leader has so far held back from upping pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin but said last week he was ready to do so if allies stopped buying Russian oil and hit China with tariffs.

The 27-nation EU has already banned most Russian oil under previous rounds of sanctions -- slashing the share it imports from 29 percent in early 2021 to two percent by mid-2025.

UNSC to vote on snapback sanctions on Iran

AFP, United Nations

The United Nations Security Council was set to vote yesterday on reimposing deep economic sanctions on Iran over its resurgent nuclear programme.

Britain, France and Germany -- signatories to a 2015 deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) intended to stop Tehran obtaining nuclear weapons -- allege that Iran has broken its promises under the treaty.

Diplomatic sources said the resolution before the Security Council was unlikely to get the nine votes needed to uphold the status quo -- in which sanctions remain lifted -- meaning the punishment would be reimposed.



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Friday he had put forward a "fair and balanced" proposal to European powers to prevent the return of sanctions.

But French President Emmanuel Macron said he expected international sanctions to be reinstated by the end of the month, in an excerpt from an Israeli television interview broadcast.

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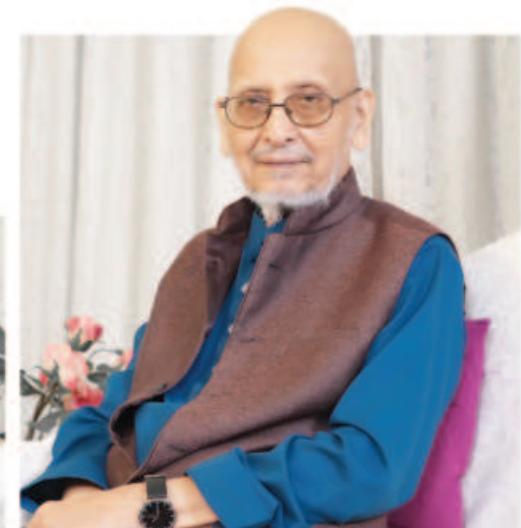
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