



We warn about the tricks and betrayals of the Zionist regime [Israel] regarding previous agreements... There is absolutely no trust in the Zionist regime.

Abbas Araghchi
Iranian foreign minister says he has no confidence that Israel would respect the terms of the Gaza ceasefire



Palestinians collect aid supplies from trucks that entered Gaza in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

US explosives factory blast kills 16

AFP, Washington

A huge blast at an explosives factory in Tennessee killed 16 people, authorities said Saturday, lowering the toll after locating two people who were previously missing and presumed dead.

The explosion Friday in the town of Bucksnort took place at a factory owned by Accurate Energetic Systems, which makes explosives for both military and demolition purposes.

The blast destroyed an entire building at the plant's large campus, shook homes miles away and sent debris flying, news reports said.

After initially reporting a toll of 18 people presumed dead, "we have been able to locate and determine the two other folks (were) not on the site," Humphreys County Sheriff Chris Davis said.

Their vehicle and personal items were found at the scene, leading to the initial belief they were among the victims.

In a statement, the company called the blast "a tragic accident."

But Brice McCracken, an official from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, told reporters late Saturday that authorities "are not any closer today to determining the origin and cause of this explosion."

DNA testing will be used to identify remains.

Kremlin warns West of 'dramatic' escalation

Says Tomahawk supply to Ukraine 'unacceptable'



REUTERS, Moscow

The Kremlin yesterday said Russia was deeply concerned about the possibility of the US supplying Tomahawk missiles to Ukraine, warning that the war had reached a dramatic moment with escalation from all sides.

US President Donald Trump said on Monday that before agreeing to provide Tomahawks, he would want to know what Ukraine planned to do with them because he did not want to escalate the war between Russia and Ukraine. He said, however, that he had "sort of made a decision" on the matter.

Tomahawk missiles have a range of 2,500 km, meaning Ukraine would be able to use them for long-range strikes deep inside Russia, including Moscow. Some retired variants of Tomahawks can carry a nuclear warhead, according to the US Congressional Research Service.

"The topic of Tomahawks is of extreme concern," Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told Russian state television reporter Pavel Zarubin in remarks published on Sunday. "Now is really a very dramatic

moment in terms of the fact that tensions are escalating from all sides."

Peskov said that if Tomahawks were launched at Russia, Moscow would have to take into account that some versions of the missile can carry nuclear warheads.

"Just imagine: a long-range missile is launched and is flying and we know that it could be nuclear. What should the Russian Federation think? Just how should Russia react? Military experts overseas should understand this," Peskov said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said earlier this month that it was impossible to use Tomahawks without the direct participation of US military personnel and so any supply of such missiles to Ukraine would trigger a "qualitatively new stage of escalation".

The Financial Times yesterday reported that the US has been helping Ukraine mount long-range strikes on Russian energy facilities for months. The FT said US intelligence helps Kyiv shape route planning, altitude, timing and mission decisions, enabling Ukraine's long-range, one-way attack drones to evade Russian air defences.

French PM races against time to form government

AFP, Paris

French Prime Minister Sebastian Lecornu was negotiating yesterday to form a government after losing a key political ally, with time running short before a fast-approaching budget deadline.

France has been gripped by political instability since President Emmanuel Macron called snap polls last year that he hoped would consolidate power but instead resulted in a hung parliament and gains for the far right.

Macron reinstated Lecornu late Friday, just four days after the premier resigned and his first government collapsed, triggering outrage and vows from opponents to topple any new cabinet at the first chance.

The former defence minister must now assemble a government to present a 2026 draft budget before a Tuesday deadline, giving parliament the constitutionally required 70 days to scrutinise the plan before year's end.

But the right-wing Republicans (LR), a key political ally, dealt a blow to his chances Saturday by announcing they would not take part in the new government but only cooperate on a "bill-by-bill" basis.

For his part, the premier has pledged to work with all mainstream political movements and vowed to select cabinet members who are "not imprisoned by parties".

The French president, facing the worst domestic crisis since the 2017 start of his presidency, has yet to address the public since Lecornu's first government fell.

Lecornu's reappointment comes as France faces political deadlock and a parliamentary impasse over an austerity budget against a backdrop of climbing public debt.

US-INDIA RELATIONSHIP

Trump's envoy 'optimistic' after meeting Modi

AFP, New Delhi

Newly confirmed US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor used his first meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to talk trade, defence and critical minerals, as the nations seek to amend soured ties.

Relations between the world's two largest democracies have plummeted in recent months over tariffs, ongoing negotiations for a trade deal and policy changes like an annual \$100,000 fee for H-1B skilled worker visas.

Trump imposed among the heftiest tariffs in the world on India, punishing it for purchasing Russian oil, which Washington says helps finance Moscow's war in Ukraine.

Ahead of his confirmation by the Senate last week, Trump acolyte Gor had voiced hope for keeping New Delhi in US good graces.

"We just finished an incredible meeting with Prime Minister Modi where we discussed bilateral issues including defence, trade, and technology," Gor said in a statement released by the US Embassy in New Delhi late Saturday.

"We also discussed the importance of critical minerals to both of our nations."

Gor said the United States values its relationship with India.

"I am optimistic about the days ahead for both of our nations."

Modi said he was "glad" to meet Gor and wished him a "successful tenure" in India.

"I am confident that his tenure will further strengthen the India-US comprehensive global strategic partnership," Modi posted on X.

Gor also met India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, top diplomat Vikram Misra and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval.



3 terminals to get foreign operators by December

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\$3 billion in FDI in 2023, while Vietnam received \$18 billion, and India \$28 billion. Why such a difference? It is because of structural bottlenecks."

One such bottleneck is in Chattogram Port, where syndicates have controlled operations for 50 years, Yousuf said.

"Without expanding capacity, port performance will never improve. So, we are bringing in international terminal operators to boost efficiency."

Currently, Bangladesh's logistics cost is 15-16 percent of GDP, one of the highest in the world, whereas most countries average around 8 percent.

"With such high logistics costs, how can we compete globally?"

About the new tariff structure, Yousuf said the last major revision occurred in 1986, nearly four decades ago. Although partial updates were attempted in 2007-08 and again in 2012, they were never fully implemented.

"We finally appointed a

consultant in 2020, and only now, in 2025, have we been able to finalise and enforce a new tariff. Yes, the rate has increased somewhat, but after forty years, it was unavoidable and necessary."

The tariff increase per container is about \$170-\$180.

"If we cut turnaround time even slightly, the savings per container will offset that increase. We must reduce turnaround time. There's no alternative -- globally, you have to compete."

The turnaround cost per container at Sri Lanka's port is \$0.86, while in Bangladesh it is \$3.23, he said.

If that gap could be reduced, about \$15,000 could be saved per vessel per day, he said.

"If we can implement our short- and medium-term plans properly, export competitiveness could rise by 90 percent."

The government must also ensure that international terminal operators remain profitable under fair and transparent terms.

A negotiation committee,

headed by an additional secretary, has already been formed to review concession agreements.

"Once finalised, we will publish the agreements on our website so the public can see that we have not compromised national interests. Our main message is this: we will not allow the country to be sold. That is also the stance of our chief adviser and the advisers in the interim government," he added.

At the event, Azam J Chowdhury, the president of the Bangladesh Ocean Going Ship Owners' Association, criticised the government decision to have two flags for government and private sector ocean going ships under the Bangladesh Flag Vessels (Protection) Rules.

"This goes against fundamental rights. The private sector, while being praised verbally, was being discriminated against in practice."

He said the move seems to be to favour the Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC), which at the time had only three ships, while the private

sector had six.

Today, private operators handle most of the freight but receive no government privileges, he said.

"I believe the movement we have been seeing in Bangladesh is fundamentally about equal rights -- that all sectors should have equal opportunities."

He also highlighted bureaucratic hurdles, including the requirement for ministerial approval to sell ships, and urged reforms to prepare for upcoming Maritime Organisation (IMO) rules mandating zero-emission fuels by 2029.

Delivering the keynote, Zaidi Sattar, chairman of the Policy Research Institute (PRI), cautioned that increasing protectionism and stricter climate regulations are transforming global shipping.

In the future, the shipbuilding industry has the potential to export over \$1 billion. Therefore, it is essential to ensure financing facilities, including bank guarantees, he said.

Mexico flood toll rises to 41

AFP, Tenango De Doria

Floods caused by torrential rains have killed at least 41 people in Mexico in recent days and left behind a trail of destruction, the government said Saturday.

Mexico's civil defense authorities reported intense rainfall in 31 of 32 states, causing rivers to overflow, flooding entire villages, triggering landslides and collapsing roads and bridges.

The central state of Hidalgo has been among the worst-affected areas, with authorities there reporting at least 22 dead, 1,000 homes damaged and 90 communities inaccessible to rescuers.

It said that neighboring Puebla state had at least nine dead. Around 80,000 people have been affected by the extreme weather in Puebla alone, the state government said.

Israel vows to destroy Gaza tunnels once hostages free

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel plans to destroy what remains of Hamas's network of tunnels under Gaza, working with US approval after its hostages are freed, it said yesterday.

Defence Minister Israel Katz said the operation would be conducted under an "international mechanism" led by the United States, sponsor of the three-day-old Gaza ceasefire.

"Israel's great challenge after the hostage release phase will be the destruction of all Hamas terrorist tunnels in Gaza," Katz said in a statement.

"I have ordered the army to prepare to carry out this mission."

The Palestinian group Hamas operates a network of tunnels under Gaza, allowing its fighters to operate out of sight of Israeli reconnaissance.

Some have passed under the border fence into Israel, allowing surprise attacks.

Many have already been destroyed during the two-year war triggered by the group's October 7, 2023 cross-border assault into Israel.

Katz said the remainder would be destroyed under the framework of Hamas's disarming and demilitarisation,



foreseen in the next stages of the US-backed ceasefire plan.

Hamas has agreed to the first stage of the plan, which led to a ceasefire on Friday and on Monday should see the release of 48 Israeli hostages, living and dead.

In exchange, Israel is expected to release 250 "national security prisoners", including several blamed for deadly attacks, and 1,700 Gazans detained by the military.

But Hamas has resisted calls to disarm, and on Sunday senior official Hossam Badran told AFP the second phase of the US plan "contains many complexities and difficulties".