

'Powerful forces' undermining global ties

Says UN chief

AFP, London

UN chief Antonio Guterres yesterday deplored a host of "powerful forces lining up to undermine global cooperation" in a London speech marking the 80th anniversary of the first UN General Assembly.

Guterres, whose term as secretary-general ends on December 31 this year, delivered the warning at the Methodist Central Hall in London, where representatives from 51 countries met on January 10, 1946, for the General Assembly's first session.

Guterres paid tribute to Britain for its decisive role in the creation of the United Nations and for continuing to champion it.

But he said 2025 had been a "profoundly challenging year for international cooperation and the values of the UN".

"We see powerful forces lining up to undermine global cooperation," he said, adding: "Despite these rough seas, we sail ahead."

Guterres cited a new treaty on marine biological diversity as an example of continued progress.

The treaty establishes the first legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of marine diversity in the two thirds of oceans beyond national limits.

"These quiet victories of international cooperation -- the wars prevented, the famine averted, the vital treaties secured -- do not always make the headlines," he said.

"Yet they are real. And they matter."



Nasa Administrator Jared Isaacman speaks during the rollout of Nasa's next-generation moon rocket, the Space Launch System (SLS) rocket with the Orion crew capsule, to the launch pad at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida, US, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

AFP, Washington

The son of Iran's late shah said Friday he was confident that mass protests would topple the Islamic republic and urged international action, as US President Donald Trump holds off on intervening in the unrest.

Reza Pahlavi, who lives in exile in the Washington area, has presented himself as leader of the opposition as the cleric-run state ruthlessly represses mass protests.

"The Islamic republic will fall -- not if, but when," Pahlavi told a news conference in Washington.

Since the demonstrations erupted in late December with a rallying cry of solving Iran's severe economic woes, Pahlavi has pleaded for US intervention.

Trump had repeatedly warned Iran that if it kills protesters, the United States would intervene militarily. He also encouraged Iranians to take over state institutions, saying "help is on the way."

But two weeks after he first suggested help, he has not acted. Security forces in the meantime have killed at least 3,428 protesters, according to Norway-based group Iran Human Rights, with other estimates putting the toll at more than 5,000 or possibly as high as 20,000.

Pahlavi took to social media Friday, with posts on X and Instagram calling for Iranians across the country to "raise your voices in anger and protest with our national slogans" at 8:00 pm on Saturday and Sunday.

Pahlavi, seeking to touch a nerve with Trump, called on him not to be like Democratic predecessor Barack Obama who negotiated with Tehran.

"I believe that President Trump is a man of his word and ultimately he will stand with the Iranian people as he has said," Pahlavi said when asked if Trump had given false hope.

"Iranian people are taking decisive actions on the ground. It is now time for the international community to join them fully."

Pahlavi called for targeting the command

structure of the elite Revolutionary Guards, as it is key to "instituting terror at home or terrorism abroad."

"I'm calling for a surgical strike," said Pahlavi, who controversially backed Israel's military campaign on Iran in June.

He also urged all countries to expel diplomats from Iran and to help restore internet access, which has been severely hampered.

Pahlavi, 65, said he wants to be a figurehead to lead a transition to a secular democracy, with a popular referendum to choose the next system of government.

He also has plenty of detractors who suspect a desire by his supporters to restore the monarchy and say changes should come from the opposition within Iran.

"I reaffirm my lifelong pledge to lead the movement that will take back our country from the anti-Iranian hostile force that occupies it and kills its children," Pahlavi said.

"I will return to Iran."

Avoid Iranian airspace EU advises airlines

AFP, Paris

The European Union Aviation Safety Agency on Friday advised airlines to avoid Iranian airspace, after threats of US attacks that have put the Islamic republic on guard.

"Given the ongoing situation and the potential for US military action, which has placed Iranian air defence forces on a heightened state of alert, there is currently an increased likelihood of misidentification," the regulator said.

"The presence and possible use of a wide range of weapons and air-defence systems, combined with unpredictable state responses and the potential activation of SAM (surface-to-air) systems, creates a high risk to civil flights operating at all altitudes and flight levels."

Until Wednesday, the US had threatened military action if Iran did not abandon plans to execute arrested protesters. But after warnings from its Gulf allies of regional repercussions, Washington has since stepped back. US President Donald Trump on Thursday thanked the Iranian government for cancelling "all scheduled hangings" after threatening Tehran with "serious consequences" if the crackdown continued.

SEARCH MONOPOLY CASE Google files appeal against decision

AFP, Washington

Google filed a notice on Friday to appeal a federal judge's ruling that it held an illegal monopoly on online search, court records show.

A US district judge decided in 2024 that the internet giant had a monopoly on search and text advertising through exclusive distribution agreements that made it the "default" option people were likely to use.

On Friday, Google said the ruling "ignored the reality that people use Google because they want to, not because they're forced to."

"The decision failed to account for the rapid pace of innovation and intense competition we face from established players and well-funded start-ups," Lee Anne Mulholland, Google's vice president of regulatory affairs, wrote in a blog post.

The company asked District Court Judge Amit Mehta to pause an order in the case requiring Google to share data with its rivals in an effort to level the playing field in online search.

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