



200 prisoners in Venezuela begin hunger strike

Seek release under new amnesty law

AFP, Caracas

More than 200 political prisoners in Venezuela have launched a hunger strike to demand their release, family members told AFP on Sunday, after a new mass amnesty law was enacted following the ouster of former leader Nicolas Maduro.

The strike began Friday night at the Rodeo 1 prison on the outskirts of Caracas, with the inmates complaining the law excludes many of them because they are accused of terrorism.

“Approximately 214 people in total, including Venezuelans and foreigners, are on hunger strike,” explained Yalitza Garcia, mother-in-law of a prisoner named Nahuel Agustin Gallo, an Argentine police officer accused of terrorism.

“They decided Friday to go on hunger strike because of the scope of the amnesty law, which excludes many of them,” said Shakira Ibarreto, daughter of a policeman arrested in 2024.

Not all the inmates at this prison are joining the hunger strike, the relatives said.

The amnesty law was engineered by interim leader Delcy Rodriguez under pressure from the United States.



Firefighters work at the compound of a private enterprise damaged in Russian drone strikes in Ukraine's Odesa region yesterday. Two people were killed, regional governor Oleg Kiper said, adding that three people were wounded.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Developing Russia’s nuke forces an ‘absolute priority’

Putin says after expiry of new START treaty with US

AFP, Moscow

President Vladimir Putin said Sunday that developing Russia's nuclear forces was now an “absolute priority” following the expiry of its last remaining nuclear treaty with the US.

“The development of the nuclear triad, which guarantees Russia's security and ensures effective strategic deterrence and a balance of forces in the world, remains an absolute priority,” Putin said in a video message.

His speech came on Russia's “Defender of the Fatherland Day”, a holiday that is an occasion for military pomp and Kremlin-sponsored patriotism.

Putin vowed to keep

“strengthening the army and navy” and draw on military experience from the nearly four-year conflict in Ukraine.



All branches of the armed forces would be improved, he said, including their “combat readiness, their mobility, and their ability to operate in all conditions, even the most difficult”.

Putin's remarks came just two days before the fourth anniversary

of Russia's assault on Ukraine that sparked a war that has shattered towns, uprooted millions and killed large numbers on both sides.

Moscow and Washington – the world's two main nuclear powers – are no longer bound by any arms control pact since the New START agreement expired earlier this month.

But Russia said it would continue taking a “responsible” approach to strategic nuclear capability and respecting the limits set on its arsenal.

Meanwhile, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz yesterday denounced the “utter barbarity” of Putin in a speech a day ahead of the fourth anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Human rights under assault globally

UN chief warns, citing widespread abuses of int'l law

REUTERS, Geneva

Human rights are under assault worldwide, the United Nations chief warned yesterday, citing widespread abuses of international law and devastating civilian suffering in conflicts in Sudan, Gaza, and Ukraine.

“The rule of law is being outmuscled by the rule of force,” said UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, speaking at the opening of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Human rights are being pushed back deliberately, Guterres said, urging member states not to view international human rights as a menu to pick from.

Guterres strongly defended the UN human rights system which is in “survival mode” because of funding cuts, attacks on some of its experts and the US' withdrawal from one of its key universal rights accountability mechanisms.

“Humanitarian needs are exploding while funding collapses,” he said.

The UN human rights office, like other parts of the organisation, faces a budget crunch following the decision to cut funding by the United States - the top donor to the UN - as well as other governments.

Washington in February paid about \$160 million of the more than \$4 billion it owes to the UN.

UN rights chief Volker Turk echoed the concerns. In a “deeply worrying trend”, he warned that “domination and supremacy are making a comeback”.

US-BACKED RAID Mexican military kills cartel boss ‘El Mencho’

Trump admin lauds ops as ‘great development’

REUTERS, Mexico City

One of Mexico's most notorious drug lords, Nemesio Oseguera, or “El Mencho,” was killed in a military raid on Sunday, sparking widespread retaliatory violence.

President Claudia Sheinbaum has been under mounting pressure from Washington to intensify her offensive against drug cartels blamed for producing and smuggling drugs, particularly the synthetic opioid fentanyl, across the border to the US.

Oseguera, 60, the mastermind of the powerful Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) died in custody after being injured in a military operation by Mexican special forces in the town of Tapalpa on Mexico's Pacific coast in Jalisco state, according to Mexico's defense ministry.



His corpse arrived in Mexico City on Sunday afternoon in a heavily guarded convoy of National Guard troops. Reuters had reported on Sunday that a new US military-led task force played a role in the raid led and carried out by Mexican forces. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt later posted on social media that the United States provided intelligence support.

Leavitt added that the Trump administration “commends and thanks the Mexican military for their cooperation and successful execution of this operation.”

After reports of El Mencho's death, cartel henchmen blockaded highways with burning cars and torched businesses in more than a half a dozen states, paralyzing parts of the country. No civilian deaths have been reported.

In Jalisco's popular beach resort of Puerto Vallarta, frightened tourists on social media described a “war zone” as plumes of dark smoke rose into the sky from around the bay. Air Canada, United Airlines, Aeromexico and American Airlines suspended flights in the area.



Protesters hold placards during a rally ahead of former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte's pre-trial hearings on alleged crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court (ICC), in Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines, yesterday. Duterte personally authorised murders and hand-picked some of the victims of his “war on drugs”, the ICC heard.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Major storm hits US

New York mayor orders citywide travel ban

AFP, New York

New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani ordered a shutdown Sunday of the city's entire traffic network to all but emergency travel ahead of a massive snowstorm expected to hit the northeast United States.

Starting at 9:00pm Sunday to noon yesterday a “state of emergency closes the streets, highways and bridges of New York City for all traffic, cars, trucks, scooters and E-bikes,” Mamdani told reporters.

The ban will not affect essential workers or New Yorkers needing to travel due to emergencies, according to Mamdani. New York is home to over eight million people.

“We are asking New Yorkers to avoid all non essential travel,” the mayor said. “New York City has not faced a storm of this scale in the last decade.”

The fast-developing storm is threatening to pummel the US East Coast with a foot or more of snow beginning Sunday, just weeks after the region

recovered from another devastating weather system.

Meteorologists issued blizzard warnings for New York and parts of at least six states, warning Saturday that heavy snow and gale-force winds are forecast to slam all major cities along the densely populated Interstate 95 northeast corridor, including Boston, Philadelphia, and even Washington further south.

The NWS headquarters said snowfall rates of more than one inch (2.5 centimeters) an hour will occur at times along parts of the East Coast, with huge snow totals making travel nearly impossible. Power outages are likely.

The mega storm that swept across the eastern half of the country in late January was linked to more than 100 deaths nationwide, and slammed some cities with heavy snow and sleet that froze into rock-hard ice.

Meanwhile, more than 5,000 flights have been cancelled, data from the tracker FlightAware showed early yesterday.

Indian forces kill three ‘rebels’ in J&K

AFP, Mumbai

Clashes between security forces and militants in Indian-administered Kashmir killed three suspected rebel fighters on Sunday, the Indian army said, the second such incident in the disputed territory this month.

An army statement said three militants were killed during a military operation in the high-altitude Kishtwar district after it received “credible” intelligence of a rebel presence in the area.

The army added that security forces had recovered weapons from the site. Earlier this month, three militants were killed in another army operation in Kashmir.

Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since their independence from British rule in 1947.

Curiosity in action

How inquiry-based learning shapes lifelong learners

By Tanjina Hossain

In today's ever-changing world, where adaptability and critical thinking matter more than memorising facts, education must go beyond teaching children what to know – it must teach them how to think. The International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme (PYP) embodies this belief by inspiring students to become curious inquirers, thoughtful collaborators and creative problem solvers who see learning as a lifelong pursuit.

At the heart of the PYP, a natural sense of curiosity inspires students to think critically about their world, act ethically within it and adapt with purpose and empathy. It cultivates more than academic excellence – it builds character, perspective and a sense of responsibility towards the greater good.

As one of my poems often shared with PYP teachers and students puts it:

“Every question asked opens a new door,
Every answer found leads to learning much more.
Young hands that create, and open minds that roam,
Inquiry makes learning a joy to explore.”

In PYP classrooms, teachers guide students to think deeply, make connections across subjects and translate abstract ideas into practical understanding. The result is a transformation of education from a routine exercise to an authentic journey of discovery.



Inquiry in action: Health and well-being

In the PYP, children learn through units of inquiry where they explore ideas for five to six weeks. Each unit has a central idea, such as “The choices we make affect our health and well-being”.

Within this unit, students investigate how everyday choices – from sleep and nutrition to exercise and hydration – affect their physical and emotional health. They begin not with textbooks, but with their questions, observations and personal reflections. Through this process, they learn to connect what they study in school to real-life experiences.

The learning in the PYP is transdisciplinary, drawing on different subject areas to develop an understanding of the central idea. Science lessons unpack how the digestive process works, while mathematics becomes practical as students record and analyse their personal sleep patterns or water intake, and survey peers about food habits.

Through connected learning experiences, students read scientific texts in their language class and



interview healthcare professionals. Throughout this process, learning becomes personal. Students begin to recognise the direct connection between knowledge and action, developing both self-awareness and responsibility for their own well-being.

Exploring energy and sustainability

Every choice we make affects the world around us, and our students are discovering this through experience. In our PYP classroom, curiosity drives learning as students explore where energy comes from, how it is used and the impact it has on the environment. They learn about the different types of energy and how factors, such as government decisions and local conditions, affect how people access and use them.

However, this curiosity does not stay confined to the classroom. Students conduct energy audits at home and school, observe how energy is used and record simple actions they can take to save energy. They design awareness posters and propose community initiatives, such as walking to school or carpooling, discovering how even small actions can create meaningful change.

Through this journey, curiosity and critical thinking grows into a sense of responsibility and a belief in their ability to make a difference, showing that learning about energy and sustainability is both meaningful and empowering.

A lifelong mindset of inquiry

Across these examples, inquiry-based learning helps students move beyond content mastery to develop the mindset of lifelong learning. Students are not merely absorbing information – they are constructing knowledge, developing agency and seeing themselves as capable learners.

Each question sparks curiosity, every investigation strengthens independence and every reflection nurtures compassion, creativity and confidence.

In the end, curiosity is not just a spark at the beginning of learning – it is the fuel that sustains it. Through inquiry, students are not only prepared to navigate the complexities of the future but to help shape it thoughtfully, responsibly and compassionately.

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