

News in brief

Ally of Myanmar junta chief jailed for corruption: state media



A close ally of Myanmar's top general has been imprisoned for five years on corruption charges, state media said yesterday. In recent months, the military - which has faced armed resistance since seizing power in a 2021 coup - has detained a number of officials as the civil conflict batters the already struggling economy. The cash-strapped junta is also battling a recent offensive in the north by ethnic armed groups that has choked vital cross-border commerce with China and poses the most serious military challenge to the generals since they took power.

FBI agents seized the New York mayor's cell phones and other devices, his campaign lawyer said Friday, in an apparent escalation of a federal investigation into campaign fundraising.

FBI agents seized New York mayor's cell phones: lawyer



The seizure appears to be part of a corruption investigation into whether Eric Adams' 2021 campaign conspired with Turkey's government and others. "On Monday night, the FBI approached the mayor after an event. The Mayor immediately complied with the FBI's request and provided them with electronic devices," said Boyd Johnson, the campaign's attorney.

North Korea slams Blinken's comments on ties with Moscow



North Korea's foreign ministry yesterday slammed US Secretary of State

Antony Blinken's comments on Pyongyang's relations with Moscow, saying the remarks would "only escalate the dangerous political and military tension" on the peninsula. Blinken was in Seoul earlier this week after attending a G7 foreign ministers' meeting in Japan. He met with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and other top officials. During his visit to the South Korean capital, he said military ties between Pyongyang and Moscow were "growing and dangerous", and urged Beijing, Pyongyang's main ally, to restrain the nuclear-armed North. Pyongyang yesterday condemned Blinken and said his comments were "irresponsible and provocative".

SPOTLIGHT

Grain tune: Indian PM's millet music gets Grammy nod



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a speech

AFP | New Delhi

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made an entry into the halls of global music with a song featuring him and his passion for millet nominated for a Grammy.

"Abundance In Millets" by Falu and Gaurav Shah, a tune the musicians say was "written and performed" with the prime minister, features speeches by Modi expounding the benefits of his favourite grain.

India is the world's largest producer and second-largest exporter of millet, a gluten-free grain which can grow on marginal land with limited water, and Modi's government has been working to boost its production and consumption since coming to power in 2014. "Millets are a wonder", Falu and Shah sing, pondering "what if we could change the world?"

The tune was nominated Friday in the Best Global Music Performance category, alongside six others, ranging from Nigerian Afrobeats star Burna Boy and Davido, to Mexico's Silvana Estrada and

Franco-Lebanese trumpeter Ibrahim Maalouf.

Grammy-winning Indian-American singer Falguni Shah, popularly known as Falu, has said the song was a "smart idea" from Modi himself who collaborated in its making to realise his "vision" of helping overcome hunger and alleviate poverty in the world.

The song was "written and performed with Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi to help farmers grow millets and help end world hunger", Falu said on X in June.

Modi, 73, has called the tune "very creative" and said he believes it "will inspire more people to embrace millets for healthy living!"

It was India's suggestion that the United Nations declare 2023 as the International Year of Millets, and at the G20 summit in September in New Delhi world leaders were served an all-vegetarian dinner dominated by millet.

Millet was a staple food in many regions of India for thousands of years, and was eaten as porridge, flatbread, dosa pancakes and with lentils.

Two premature babies die at Gaza hospital: Israeli NGO citing doctors



A picture shows a view of the exterior of Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City
AFP | Jerusalem

Two premature babies have died due to power cuts at Gaza's largest hospital, Physicians for Human Rights Israel said yesterday, citing doctors there, as fighting rages around the Al-Shifa complex.

"As a result of the lack of electricity, we can report that the neonatal intensive care unit has stopped working. Two premature infants have died, and there is a real risk to the lives of 37 other premature infants" at Al-Shifa hospital, the Israeli doctors' group said in a statement.

No fuel has entered Gaza in more than five weeks of war, prompting multiple hospitals and clinics relying on generators to shut down.

"The hospital is besieged, with no option to bring in the corpses and injured people sprawled outside. There is no movement in or out of the hospital," Physicians for Human

No fuel has entered Gaza in more than five weeks of war, prompting multiple hospitals and clinics relying on generators to shut down

Rights Israel said.

The Israeli military has denied there is a siege at the hospital, where thousands of residents have taken shelter, as troops battle Palestinian militants in the area.

Heavy gunfire and explosions were heard throughout yesterday from AFP's live camera, situated a few hundred metres from Al-Shifa hospital.

"The picture we are now seeing at Shifa is no longer of a humanitarian catastrophe -- it is a collective death sentence," Physicians for Human Rights Israel said.

Combat hits as Israel con

Gaza's largest hospital, Al-Shifa, repeatedly hit, losing power for hours after a generator was targeted

AFP | Jerusalem

Gaza hospitals reported being under constant fire and running on nearly exhausted supplies as Israel rejected key allies' condemnation of a rising civilian death toll in the Hamas-controlled territory.

The director of the besieged Palestinian territory's largest hospital, Al-Shifa, said yesterday the compound was struck repeatedly overnight and lost power for hours after its generator was hit.

"We received calls about dozens of dead and hundreds wounded in air and artillery strikes, but our ambulances weren't able to go out because of gunfire," said hospital director Mohammad Abu Salmiya.

Israel has denied targeting hospitals and its army has accused Hamas of using the medical facilities as command centres and



Patients and internally displaced people ar

hideouts, a charge the Palestinian group denies.

The Hamas-run Gaza health ministry said dozens of premature babies at Al-Shifa compound were at risk of dying because the lack of generator fuel meant their incubators could be shut down yesterday as fighting raged.

They added one of the babies had died, and one person was killed and several others wounded in a strike on Al-Shifa early yesterday.

The suffering in Gaza has

Thousands march in London at Armistice Day pro-Palestinian demo

AFP | London

Huge crowds marched through the British capital yesterday, as pro-Palestinian supporters made their latest mass call for a ceasefire, with police out in force to prevent clashes with counter-protesters.

The "National March for Palestine", organised by the Stop the War Coalition, set off after a two-minute silence to remember Britain's war dead on Armistice Day was observed at The Cenotaph war memorial in central London at 1100 GMT.

Huge crowds of protesters waved black, red, white and green Palestinian flags and held aloft placards proclaiming "Stop Bombing Gaza", just over a month since the crisis began.



Former Labour party leader Jeremy Corbyn (C) joins protesters with placards and flags taking part in the 'National March For Palestine' in central London

As the march set off, protesters shouted "free Palestine" and "ceasefire now".

London's Metropolitan Police

has made a total of nearly 100 arrests at previous pro-Palestinian marches.

But yesterday's march has gen-

erated concern because it coincides with Armistice Day, commemorating the end of fighting in World War I in 1918 -- and political criticisms about the policing operation.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak made a late plea for calm late on Friday, calling for protesters to do so "respectfully and peacefully".

Met Police deputy assistant commissioner Laurence Taylor said march organisers had changed the route from Hyde Park to the US Embassy in south London to ensure it will not pass any landmark memorials.

Previous events have seen "small groups break away" and that "their behaviour has been escalating and becoming more violent", Taylor, who is leading the policing operation, told reporters.

Israel drone strikes deep into Lebanese territory: official media

AFP | London

An Israeli drone struck yesterday a vehicle deep in Lebanese territory, official media in Lebanon said, after weeks of skirmishes mainly limited to border areas since the Israel-Hamas war began.

Lebanon's National News Agency (NNA) said "an enemy drone targeted a pick-up truck" on a farmland in the Zahrani area on Lebanon's coast, some 45 kilometres (28 miles) from the Israeli border, without reporting any casualties.

The frontier between the two countries has seen daily exchanges of fire, mainly between Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah



Shells fired from northern Israel fall close to the village of Yarine near Lebanon's southern border with northern Israel

movement and Israel, since October 7 when attacks on Israel by Palestinian militant group Hamas

sparked war.

Yesterday's was the deepest Israeli strike on Lebanese territory

since the latest hostilities began. It also came hours before Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah was due to make a televised address at 3:00 pm (1300 GMT).

The Lebanese army prevented journalists from approaching the area, which is near the Zahrani power plant, one of Lebanon's ailing energy facilities.

The NNA reported Israeli attacks on areas near the border yesterday, while an AFP correspondent in northern Israel reported apparent incoming rocket fire after air raid sirens sounded.

Hezbollah said it carried out two cross-border attacks on Israeli troops yesterday, claiming they caused casualties.