

660 BC 1858

Traditional date
for the founding
of Japan by Em-
peror JimmuFirst vision of the
Virgin Mary to 14-year-
old Bernadette of
Lourdes, France

1945

Declaration of Liberated Europe is signed at the Yalta Conference by Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin, declaring that liberated nations are to establish democratic governments through free elections

1975

Margaret Thatcher
defeats Edward Heath for
leadership of the British
Conservative Party

X

TOP
4
TWEETS

01



G rawly concerned by reported decision of Israeli security cabinet to authorize a series of administrative & enforcement measures in the occupied West Bank. I call on Israel to reverse these measures & on all to preserve the only path to lasting peace: a negotiated two-State solution in line with international law.

@antonio_guterres

02



VP and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev (@presidentaz) sign the Charter on Strategic Partnership between the Government of Azerbaijan and the Government of the U.S. @RapidResponse47

03



R eliable security guarantees are the only real foundation for peace and for preventing the Russians from breaking agreements through strikes or hybrid operations of some kind. @zelenskyyua

04



T oday, the memorial of Saint Josephine Bakhita, we celebrate the World Day of Prayer and Reflection Against Human Trafficking. I thank the religious and all those who are committed to combating and eliminating current forms of slavery. Together with them, I say: peace begins with dignity! #PrayAgainstTrafficking @Pontifex

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stance)

South Korea police raid spy agency over drone

Pyongyang says it shot down a surveillance drone

● South Korea initially denied any official involvement

● Investigators raided 18 locations of interest

● Photos showed the wreckage of a winged craft

AFP | Seoul, South Korea



Photos showed the wreckage of a winged craft scattered across the ground next to a collection of grey and blue components that allegedly included cameras.

Investigators raided 18 locations of interest, including the Defense Intelligence Command and the National Intelligence Service.

The North Korean military downed a drone carrying "surveillance equipment" in early January, according to a statement published by the state-run Korean Central News Agency.

Photos showed the wreckage of a winged craft scattered across the ground next to a collection of grey and blue components that allegedly included cameras.

The drone had stored footage of "important targets" including border areas, a military spokesman said in the statement.

South Korea's disgraced ex-president Yoon Suk Yeol was accused of using unmanned drones to scatter propaganda leaflets over North Korea in 2024.

Lee has vowed to mend ties with North Korea by stamping

out such provocations, and has even suggested a rare apology may be warranted.

"I feel I should apologise, but I hesitate to say it out loud," he said in December.

"I worry that if I do, it could be used as fodder for ideological battles or accusations of being pro-North," he added.

Any government involvement in the January drone incursion would run counter to those efforts.

South Korea's Unification Minister Chung Dong-young has previously suggested the incursion may have involved government officials still loyal to former hardline leader Yoon.

Three civilians have already been charged for their alleged role in the drone scandal.

One of them has publicly claimed responsibility, saying he acted to detect radiation levels from North Korea's Pyongsan uranium processing facility.

Israel PM to meet Trump with Iran missiles high on agenda

● So far, Iran has rejected expanding the scope of its talks

AFP | Jerusalem, Undefined



their sixth such encounter in the United States since Trump returned to office a year ago.

They also met in Jerusalem in October when Trump announced a ceasefire in Gaza.

Wednesday's meeting comes days after arch-foes Iran and the United States held talks in Oman, after which Trump said another round of negotiations would follow.

Netanyahu and Trump will also meet amid growing international outrage over Israeli measures to tighten control and surveillance over internet use in Russia, amid a sweeping crackdown on dissent during the Ukraine offensive.

The two leaders are to meet in Washington on Wednesday,

allowing settlers to buy land directly from its Palestinian owners.

"On this trip we will discuss a range of issues: Gaza, the region, but of course first and foremost the negotiations with Iran," Netanyahu said, in a video statement before his departure.

"I will present to the president our views regarding the principles for the negotiations."



Israeli officials argue that Iran could strike Israel with little warning and also overwhelm the country's air-defence systems in a sustained conflict.

Thai man's prison term for royal insult extended to 50 years

AFP | Bangkok, Thailand

Thai court yesterday extended the prison sentence of a man convicted for criticising the country's king to 50 years, one of the longest terms imposed under the kingdom's strict royal insult law, a legal rights group said.

Thailand's lese-majeste law shields King Maha Vajiralongkorn and his family from criticism and carries a maximum sentence of up to 15 years per offence.

The criminal court sentenced Phuritikon Sarakul to 30 years under the law over posts made on his social media account between 2021 and 2022, Thai Lawyers for Human Rights (TLHR) said in a statement.

In December, the 43-year-old who lives outside of Thailand was sentenced in absentia to 20 years in prison for the same offence over separate internet posts, the rights group



Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn

said.

The combined sentences, totalling five decades in prison, meant he had received one of the "harshest sentences under Section 112 in history", TLHR said, referring to the law by its provision in the penal code.

Rights groups and critics say the lese-majeste law has long been used to stifle dissent and silence political opponents.

At least 289 people have been charged under the law since 2020, according to TLHR.

OpenAI starts testing ads in ChatGPT

AFP | Paris, France

OpenAI has begun placing ads in the basic versions of its ChatGPT chatbot, a bet that users will not mind the interruptions as the company seeks revenue as its costs soar.

"The test will be for logged-in adult users on the Free and Go subscription tiers" in the United States, OpenAI said Monday. The Go subscription costs \$8 in the United States.

Only a small percentage of its nearly one billion users pay for its premium subscription services, which will remain ad-free.

"Ads do not influence the answers ChatGPT gives you, and we keep your conversations with ChatGPT private from advertisers," the company said.

Since ChatGPT's launch in 2022, OpenAI's valuation has



OpenAI CEO Sam Altman

soared to \$500 billion in funding rounds -- higher than any other private company. Some analysts expect it could go public with a trillion-dollar valuation.

But the ChatGPT maker burns through cash at a furious rate, mostly on the powerful computing required to deliver its services.

Moscow chokes Telegram as it pushes state-backed rival app

AFP | Moscow, Russia

Russia's internet watchdog yesterday announced it was throttling the Telegram messenger platform for alleged legal violations, as Moscow tries to push its citizens into using a more tightly controlled domestic online service.

Moscow has been threatening a host of internet platforms with forced slowdowns or outright bans if they do not comply with Russian laws.

Those laws require data on Russian users to be stored inside the country, and for efforts to be made to stamp out their use for what Moscow calls "criminal and terrorist purposes".

Critics and rights campaigners say the restrictions are a transparent attempt by the Kremlin to ramp up control and surveillance over internet use in Russia, amid a sweeping crackdown on dissent during the Ukraine offensive.

The Roskomnadzor agency



said in a statement cited by state media that it will "continue to introduce phased restrictions" on Telegram, which it said had not complied with the laws.

Telegram is widely used across Russia, both as a messaging app and as a social media service.

Almost all major public figures, including government bodies and the Kremlin, post regular updates on the platform.