

News in brief

Israeli Foreign Minister

Gideon Saar said yesterday that Samoa will open an embassy in Jerusalem this year, a rare move as most foreign diplomatic missions to Israel are located in Tel Aviv. Samoa will become the eighth country to open its mission in Jerusalem, and the third from the Pacific region after Fiji and Papua New Guinea. "Just spoke with the Prime Minister of Samoa, La'auli Leuatea Schmidt. I thanked him for his moral decision to open an embassy in Jerusalem in 2026," Saar wrote on X. "I also expressed our appreciation for Samoa's consistent support for Israel in the multilateral arena," he said, adding that he had invited the prime minister to visit Israel. The status of Jerusalem is one of the thorniest issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel annexed east Jerusalem after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, in a move not recognised by the international community.



Israel says Samoa to open embassy in Jerusalem

Malaysia suspends access to Musk's Grok AI: regulator

access to Elon Musk's chatbot Grok over AI-generated pornographic content, the country's tech regulator said yesterday. The decision follows global backlash after it emerged that Grok's image creation feature allowed users to sexualise pictures of women and children using simple text prompts. On Saturday Indonesia became the first country to deny all access to the tool, which has been restricted to paying subscribers elsewhere. The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission said in a statement it had "directed a temporary restriction on access to the Grok artificial intelligence for users in Malaysia" with immediate effect. When an AFP reporter in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur fed Grok prompts on Sunday, there was no response. "This action follows repeated misuse of Grok to generate obscene, sexually explicit, indecent, grossly offensive and non-consensual manipulated images," the regulator said.

US and allied forces carried out "large-scale" strikes against the Islamic State jihadist group in Syria on Saturday, the US military said, the latest response to an attack last month that killed three Americans. S Central Command (CENTCOM), which oversees American military forces in the region, said multiple strikes "targeted ISIS throughout Syria," using an acronym for the jihadist group. ENTCOM's post on X did not give specifics on where they took place. Grainy aerial video accompanying the post showed several separate explosions, apparently in rural areas. The strikes were part of Operation Hawkeye Strike, which was launched "in direct response to the deadly ISIS attack on US and Syrian forces in Palmyra," CENTCOM said.

US announces 'large-scale' strikes against IS in Syria



SPOTLIGHT

Saudi Arabia's oldest man dies at 142 after a life spanning country's history



Nasser bin Radan Al Rashid Al Wadaei Agencies

Saudi Arabia has lost its oldest known man, Nasser bin Radan Al Rashid Al Wadaei, who passed away at the age of 142, local media reported. He died in Riyadh, leaving behind a remarkable legacy of longevity and devotion. Al Wadaei was born in the late 19th century in the Dhahran Al Janoub area — years before the unification of the Kingdom — and lived through the reigns of Saudi Arabia's rulers from the founder, King Abdulaziz, to the current sovereign, King Salman. His life thus spanned more than a century of profound political, social and economic transformations in the country. His funeral was held in Dhahran Al Janoub, in the southern region, and was attended by more than 7,000

people, a testament to his deep standing in the community. He was then laid to rest in his home village of Al Rashid. According to family accounts and local reporting, Al Wadaei was known for his strong religious devotion. He is said to have performed the Hajj pilgrimage more than 40 times, an unusual feat reflecting both his faith and physical resilience. He also had an exceptionally large family: he is survived by 134 children and grandchildren. Reports indicate that he married for the last time at the age of 110 and subsequently had a daughter. News of his passing attracted widespread attention across Saudi social media, where many users described him as a symbol of faith, resilience and living memory of more than a century of Saudi history.

Trump tells Cuba to 'make a deal, before it is too late'

Havana since 2000 has increasingly relied on Venezuelan oil

Trump threatens there will be 'no more oil or money' going to Cuba

AFP | Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump urged Cuba yesterday to "make a deal" or face unspecified consequences, warning that the flow of Venezuelan oil and money to Havana would now stop.

"THERE WILL BE NO MORE OIL OR MONEY GOING TO CUBA - ZERO!" Trump said on his Truth Social channel. "I strongly suggest they make a deal, BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE."

His remarks come a week after US forces seized Venezuela's authoritarian leader Nicolas Maduro in a nighttime operation in Caracas that killed dozens of Venezuelan and Cuban security forces.

Earlier on Sunday Trump reposted a message suggesting that US Secretary of State Marco Rubio could become the pres-

Rubio next Cuba leader

Washington, United States

President Donald Trump reposted a social media message on Sunday suggesting that US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, born to Cuban immigrant parents, would become the next leader of Cuba.

Trump republished a Truth Social message from user Cliff Smith, posted on January 8, that read "Marco Rubio will be president of Cuba," accompanied by a crying laughing emoji.

Trump's comment on the repost was "Sounds good to me!"

The largely unknown user, whose bio refers to him as a "conservative Californian" has

The United States "behaves like an out-of-control criminal hegemon that threatens peace and security, not only in Cuba and this hemisphere, but throughout the entire world," Rodriguez posted on X.

less than 500 followers.

But shortly after Trump's post, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez insisted "right and justice are on Cuba's side."

The United States "behaves like an out-of-control criminal hegemon that threatens peace and security, not only in Cuba and this hemisphere, but throughout the entire world," Rodriguez posted on X.



ident of now communist-ruled Cuba.

Trump shared that post with the comment: "Sounds good to me!"

In his own post soon afterwards, Trump said that "Cuba lived, for many years, on large amounts of OIL and MONEY from Venezuela. In return, Cuba provided 'Security Services' for the last two Venezuelan dictators, BUT NOT ANYMORE!"

"Most of those Cubans are DEAD from last week's U.S.A. attack, and Venezuela doesn't need protection anymore from the thugs and extortionists who held them hostage for so many years."

Under a US trade embargo, Havana since 2000 has increasingly relied on Venezuelan oil provided as part of a deal struck with Maduro's predecessor Hugo Chavez.

Germany, Sweden warn Trump over new Greenland threats

AFP | Berlin, Germany

Germany and Sweden on Sunday pushed back as US President Donald Trump again suggested using force to seize the self-governing Danish territory of Greenland.

The US general who is NATO's supreme commander in Europe said meanwhile that the military alliance was having "healthy" talks on Greenland's importance.

Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson condemned US



The motorcade of US Vice President JD Vance travels through the US military's Pituffik Space Base in Greenland (file)

"threatening rhetoric" after Trump repeated that Washington was "going to do something on Greenland, whether they like it or not".

"On the contrary, the United States should thank Denmark, which over the years has been a very loyal ally," Kristersson said at a conference on Swedish defence.

"Sweden, the Nordic countries, the Baltic states, and several major European countries stand to-

gether with our Danish friends," he said.

Kristersson stressed a US takeover of the mineral-rich Arctic territory would be "a violation of international law and risks encouraging other countries to act in exactly the same way".

"It is a dangerous path to take," he added.

No 'immediate threat' Meanwhile, Germany reiterated its support for Denmark and Greenland ahead of meetings in

Washington on Monday.

Before talks with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepul will stop Sunday in Reykjavik to address the "strategic challenges of the Far North", according to the foreign ministry statement.

"The legitimate interests of all NATO Allies, as well as those of the inhabitants of the (Arctic) region, must be at the centre of our discussions," Wadepul said in the statement.

"It is clear that it is exclusively up to Greenland and Denmark to decide questions of Greenland's territory and sovereignty," he previously told Germany's Bild daily.

NATO Supreme Allied Commander General Alexus Grynkeiwich told the Swedish defence conference that alliance members were having talks on Greenland's future. The US general added that while there was "no immediate threat" to NATO territory, the Arctic's strategic importance is fast growing.

YOU KNOW WHAT

A Danish colony until 1953, Greenland gained home rule 26 years later and is contemplating eventually loosening its ties with Denmark.