

Israel's former Mossad chief says spies 'toured' Iran nuclear site

AFP | Jerusalem, Undefined

A former head of Israel's Mossad intelligence agency yesterday said its spies had visited Iran's Fordow nuclear site "many times" in the past in order to better understand the facility.

In June last year, Israel launched a war against its arch-foe Iran with the stated goal of degrading its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, which it said posed an "existential threat".

The United States military briefly joined Israel during the 12-day conflict, and used its advanced aircraft to bomb three Iranian nuclear facilities at Fordow, Natanz and Isfahan. "We toured the Fordow nu-



clear site many times to understand the site," Yossi Cohen, who led the Mossad between 2015 and 2021, said during a conference of local authorities on Tuesday, Israeli media reported.

He didn't elaborate on when exactly the visits took place or who made them.

According to Israeli media, Cohen said "the bombing of the site by the Americans was the fulfillment of all my dreams".

Air India pilot tests positive for marijuana

TDT | agencies

The captain of an Air India flight that suddenly lost about 300 feet of altitude last week has tested positive for marijuana in a confirmatory drug test, according to a source familiar with the matter.

The Airbus A320neo, operating from Phuket to Delhi on August 4, was carrying

137 passengers and eight crew members when it experienced a sudden altitude loss over Odisha. The captain's initial post-flight screening had produced a result requiring further laboratory testing. The confirmatory test has now reportedly also returned positive for marijuana. Both pilots have been removed from flying duties pending the investigation.

Lebanon formally abolishes death penalty in Mideast first

AFP | Beirut, Lebanon

Lebanon's parliament yesterday abolished the death penalty, making the country the first in the Middle East to formally end the practice.

"The draft law aimed at abolishing the death penalty in Lebanon was approved," the speaker of parliament's office

announced.

Lebanon had not carried out an execution since 2004.

Justice Minister Adel Nassar called the abolition "historic", and said the spectre of capital punishment had previously prevented Beirut from obtaining the extradition of suspects from countries where it has been outlawed.

Trump Media reports first sales for early access to president's posts

AFP | Washington, United States

The parent company of US President Donald Trump's Truth Social platform said Monday it has signed up clients willing to pay for early access to Trump's posts.

It delivered the news while reporting a ten-fold increase in second-quarter losses.

Trump set up Truth Social in 2022 after being banned from Twitter -- later renamed X -- and now uses it as his go-to platform for major

announcements.

Trump Media & Technology Group announced last month that customers can pay for early access to the president's market-moving social media posts, a service dubbed Truth API.

"Our new Truth API product is already generating revenue, with more than ten customer agreements signed to date," interim

CEO Kevin McGurn said in a press release, without identifying the customers.



Former US Marine held in Russia has been released: State Dept

Washington, United States

Robert Gilman, a former US Marine held in Russia, has been released on "humanitarian grounds," the State Department said

yesterday..

"Mr. Gilman's release was not part of an exchange, and no other concessions were provided," a State Department spokesperson said in an email.

China rocket launch fails after 'flight anomaly'

Monday's rare launch failure involved a Long March 7A carrier rocket

AFP | Beijing, China

A Chinese rocket carrying a communications satellite failed in its launch, state media said, attributing the failure to a "flight anomaly" as reports and videos suggested the spacecraft had exploded in mid-air.

Beijing has ploughed billions of dollars into its space programme in recent years to achieve what President Xi Jinping calls the country's "space dream".

Monday's rare launch failure involved a Long March 7A carrier rocket, which lifted off from the Wenchang Space Launch Site in China's southernmost province of Hainan at 8:02 pm (1202 GMT),



Representative image

state news agency Xinhua said.

An "anomaly" occurred when the rocket, which was carrying the Zhongxing-4B communications satellite, was in flight, Xinhua added.

The cause of the failure is under investigation, it said.

Singapore-based broadcaster Channel NewsAsia said in an Instagram post that the rocket had exploded and posted foot-

age from the scene of awestruck crowds watching a fiery ball in the sky.

One video, posted a few hours after the launch by a social media profile located in Hainan, showed a rocket exploding into flames around 85 seconds after it blasted off, leaving behind a cloud of grey smoke as debris fell to the ground.

China successfully landed a

reusable rocket for the first time in July, according to its space agency, marking a major step in its space ambitions and in reducing launch costs.

The country is aiming to land astronauts on the Moon before 2030, a race in which the United States is also competing with its Artemis programme.

SpaceX CEO Elon Musk, commenting on a post about Monday's failed launch on X, said that "rockets are insanely hard". "I hope they have a speedy recovery," he added.

A four-tonne piece of a SpaceX rocket was believed to have unintentionally crashed into the Moon on Wednesday, a collision expected to leave behind a lunar crater. China's maiden launch of the Long March 7A from the Wenchang site in 2020 was also unsuccessful after "a malfunction occurred", Xinhua reported in March that year.

Colombia scrambles to find survivors as quake kills 181

Colombian pop megastar Shakira led the calls for unity

AFP | Pereira, Colombia

Colombian volunteers cleared rubble by hand through the night in the hunt for survivors from an earthquake that killed at least 181 people and levelled more than a hundred homes and office buildings.

The quake struck several cities across Colombia's coffee region and Pacific belt at 7:34 am (1234 GMT) Monday, toppling structures, swaying towers and tossing roof tiles to the ground.

Pereira, a city of half a million people, was the hardest hit.

Throughout the night, residents navigated blacked-out streets with torches.

Volunteers searched the ruins of a six-story building of shops and offices where two girls were believed to be trapped.

"It's so sad to see the whole city like this, knowing that there may still be people alive under there,"



A couple stands amid the rubble of a collapsed house after an earthquake in Pereira, Colombia

said Juana Marin, 25, who joined dozens of volunteers clearing rubble by hand.

This was Colombia's strongest earthquake in a century, according to the US Geological Survey, and one of its deadliest natural

disasters in years.

In a joint statement, the mayors of major affected cities said at least 181 had been killed, and more than 1,300 people had been injured.

Colombian President Abelar-

do de la Espriella -- just days into the job -- declared a state of emergency and vowed a concerted rescue effort.

Colombian pop megastar Shakira led the calls for unity.

"All my strength and love to my homeland. Let's hold each other tight," she said.

At least six local airports suspended operations, the civil aeronautics agency said.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Monday the United States was "closely monitoring" the situation and "stands ready to support the people of Colombia."

The US announced \$15.5 million in emergency relief.

European Union chief Ursula von der Leyen said the EU had mobilized Copernicus, a satellite service, to help with rescue operations.

Israel, Mexico, Ecuador and France also offered assistance.

Trump secretly flew out of Turkey on smaller plane: Washington Post

AFP | Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump secretly flew out of Turkey last month on a smaller plane than previously known due to an assassination threat from Iran, the Washington Post reported Monday.

According to an anonymous US official who spoke to the Post, Trump boarded an Air Force One jet in Ankara on July 8, but then moved into a catering container attached to the plane.

The container then ferried



him to a smaller C-32A aircraft that flew him to Britain, while media and some officials were led to believe Trump was still on the bigger jet.

The Iranian threat had previously been reported by US media

as the reason that Trump did not fly out of Turkey aboard the new Boeing 747-8, gifted to the United States by Qatar, which he had used to fly into the country.

Trump, who was in Ankara for a NATO summit, said at the time

he would be taking the older Boeing 747 so that members of the US military at an airbase in Britain could tour the new plane.

However, several US media outlets, including the New York Times, reported that a threat from Iranian proxy forces had prompted the switch.

Journalists on the old plane out of Ankara were also told to keep their window blinds down -- a step normally reserved for war zones -- furthering suspicions of security concerns.