

News in brief

Myanmar tells ICJ Rohingya  
genocide claims ‘unsubstantiated’



◆ Myanmar  
yesterday dismissed  
as “unsubstantiated”

allegations that it committed genocide  
against its Rohingya minority, telling  
the International Court of Justice that  
its brutal crackdown was a “counter-  
terrorism operation.” Myanmar is  
defending itself at the United Nations  
top court from accusations brought

by The Gambia that its actions against the Rohingya breached the 1948 UN  
Genocide Convention. “This case will be decided on the basis of proven facts, not  
unsubstantiated allegations. Emotional language and blurry factual pictures are  
not a substitute for a rigorous presentation of facts,” Ko Ko Hlaing, a minister in  
the president’s office, told the court.

◆ An Afghan man  
went on trial in Germany  
yesterday accused of  
ramming a car into a crowd in Munich last  
year, killing a two-year-old girl and her mother  
and injuring dozens.

Afghan man goes on trial over  
deadly Munich car-ramming



The suspect, partially  
identified as Farhad N., 25, faces two charges  
of murder and 44 of attempted murder, with  
prosecutors saying he acted out of a “religious  
motivation” and expected to die in the attack. The vehicle rampage in February  
2025 was one of several deadly attacks linked to migrants which inflamed a  
heated debate on immigration ahead of a general election that month.

China protests over Philippine  
coast guard’s Xi images



◆ The Chinese  
Embassy in Manila said  
yesterday it has filed a

diplomatic protest against a Philippine Coast  
Guard spokesman over a social media post  
that included cartoonish images of President  
Xi Jinping. Coast Guard spokesman Jay Tarriela  
and an embassy official had been trading barbs  
since last week over issues concerning the disputed

South China Sea. The crucial waterway, which  
Beijing claims historic rights to despite an international ruling that its assertion  
has no legal basis, has been the site of repeated clashes between Chinese and  
Philippine vessels.

SPOTLIGHT

Australia warns of floods,  
fires after cars washed away



A bushfire burns at Budgee Budgee Bushland Reserve near Dargo, in  
Australia’s Victoria state

AFP | Sydney

Australia’s emergency  
services warned people  
yesterday to stay prepared for  
sudden downpours and dan-  
gerous bushfires in the coun-  
try’s east after a flash flood  
swept cars into the sea.

Heavy rains on Thursday  
sent a deluge of water flow-  
ing through some parts of the  
eastern state of Victoria, which  
is still battling 10 major bush-  
fires.

Photo and video images in  
local media showed one car  
rolling around in muddy wa-  
ters as it was carried along the  
Wye River southwest of Mel-  
bourne.

Two cars were still partially  
submerged under the ocean  
waves yesterday, a few steps  
from the sandy coastline.

A local record of 186 mil-  
limetres (more than seven  
inches) fell in the 24 hours  
to yesterday morning in one  
spot, the state meteorology  
service said.

Most of that water fell on  
Thursday.

“We’ve seen severe-to-ex-  
treme heat wave, catastrophic  
bushfires and now extreme  
flash flooding in the southwest  
of the state,” Emergency Man-  
agement Commissioner Tim  
Wiebusch told reporters.

“It really is a timely remind-  
er that communities need to  
be prepared for all types of  
emergencies.”

The flash flood cut off the  
state’s Great Ocean Road and  
forced up to 300 people to flee,  
officials said. Many of them  
were reportedly holidaying  
at caravan camps. One child  
was injured and airlifted to  
hospital.

“It was raining, we were all  
in the tent playing cards with  
the gang, then we heard shout-  
ing,” camper Matthew Stan-  
hope told The Age newspaper,  
saying he and his friends ran to  
a nearby hill.

“It was lightning fast and  
quiet too. There’s no noise,  
just all of a sudden the water is  
up.”

Iran protests subside  
after ‘brutal’ crackdown

● Internet blackout  
exceeds 180 hours

● Rights groups report  
over 3,400 deaths

● Rights group  
cites “horrifying  
eyewitness accounts”

AFP | Tehran

The protest movement in  
Iran has subsided after a  
crackdown that has killed  
thousands under an internet  
blackout, monitors said yester-  
day, one week after the start of  
the biggest protests in years chal-  
lenging the Islamic republic’s  
theocratic system.

The threat of new military ac-  
tion by the United States against  
Iran has also appeared to have  
receded for the time being, with  
a Saudi official saying Gulf allies  
have persuaded President Don-  
ald Trump to give the Iranian  
leadership a “chance”.

Protests sparked by economic  
grievances started with a shut-  
down in the Tehran bazaar on  
December 28 but turned into a  
mass movement demanding the  
removal of the clerical system  
that has ruled Iran since the 1979  
revolution.

People started pouring into  
the streets in big cities from  
January 8 but authorities im-  
mediately enforced a shutdown  
of the internet that has lasted  
over a week and activists say is



Iranians residing in Armenia hold a demonstration in solidarity with Iranian protestors, outside Iranian embassy in Yerevan

aimed at masking the scale of the  
crackdown.

The repression has “likely  
suppressed the protest move-  
ment for now”, said the US-based  
Institute for the Study of War,  
which has monitored the protest  
activity.

But it added: “The regime’s  
widespread mobilisation of se-  
curity forces is unsustainable,  
however, which makes it possible  
that protests could resume.”

Norway-based rights group  
Iran Human Rights (IHR) says  
3,428 protesters have been ver-  
ified to have been killed by secu-  
rity forces, but warns this could  
be a fraction of the actual toll.

Its director Mahmood

Amiry-Moghaddam said au-  
thorities under supreme leader  
Ayatollah Ali Khamenei have  
“committed one of the gravest  
crimes of our time”.

He cited “horrifying eyewit-  
ness accounts” received by IHR  
of “protesters being shot dead  
while trying to flee, the use of  
military-grade weapons and the  
street execution of wounded pro-  
testers”.

Lama Fakih, programme direc-  
tor at Human Rights Watch, said  
the killings since last week “are  
unprecedented in the country”.

Monitor Netblocks said that  
the “total internet blackout” in  
Iran had now lasted over 180  
hours, longer than a similar

measure that was imposed dur-  
ing 2019 protests.

‘Give Iran a chance’

Trump, who backed and joined  
Israel’s 12-day war against Iran  
in June, had not ruled out new  
military action against Tehran  
and made clear he was keeping  
a close eye on if any protesters  
were executed.

But with the belligerent rheto-  
ric on all sides appearing to tone  
down for now, a senior Saudi  
official told AFP on Thursday that  
Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Oman  
led “a long, frantic, diplomatic  
last-minute effort to convince  
President Trump to give Iran a  
chance to show good intention”.

Machado vows to be Venezuela  
president ‘when the right time comes’

● Machado says she  
‘presented’ Trump  
with Nobel medal

AFP | Washington

Venezuelan opposition lead-  
er Maria Corina Machado  
has insisted she will be elected  
president “when the right time  
comes” despite the United States  
sidelining her after overthrowing  
Nicolas Maduro.

President Donald Trump has  
backed Maduro’s former vice  
president Delcy Rodriguez as  
interim leader of the oil-rich  
country following the January  
3 US military operation to seize  
Maduro.

“I believe I will be elected  
when the right time comes as  
president of Venezuela, the first  
woman president,” Machado  
told Fox News’s Fox & Friends  
show broadcast yesterday af-  
ter she met with Trump in  
Washington.

Machado’s party has presented  
evidence that Maduro stole the



Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado (R) presents her Nobel Peace  
Prize to US President Donald Trump

2024 election -- claims support-  
ed by Washington and much of  
the international community.

But Trump has said that  
Machado does not have enough  
support among Venezuelans, and

opted to stick with Rodriguez,  
so long as she toes the line on  
US access to Venezuela’s vast oil  
reserves.

“I want to serve my country  
where I am more useful. I got a

mandate, and I have that man-  
date,” Machado told Fox.

Nobel medal

Machado, 58, on Thursday pre-  
sented her Nobel Peace Prize  
medal to Trump in a bid to win  
over the US president.

“He deserves it,” she said. “And  
it was a very emotional moment,  
I decided to present the Nobel  
Peace Prize medal on behalf of  
the people of Venezuela.”

It was not immediately clear if  
Trump kept the award following  
their White House lunch. The  
Norwegian Nobel committee  
says its prizes cannot be trans-  
ferred.

Trump had campaigned hard  
to win last year’s Nobel Peace  
Prize for what he says are his  
efforts to stop eight wars.

Instead it went to Machado,  
who appeared in Oslo last month  
to collect her prize -- following  
a daring escape from Venezuela  
by boat.

Trump and Rodriguez had  
their first telephone call on  
Wednesday and the White House  
said he “likes what he’s seeing”  
from her.