

## News in brief

◆ Myanmar tells ICJ Rohingya genocide claims 'unsubstantiated'



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. 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



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.

◆ 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

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◆ 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 Tariela and an embassy official had been trading barbs since last week over issues concerning the disputed South China Sea. The crucial waterway, which

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 dangerous bushfires in the country's east after a flash flood swept cars into the sea.

Heavy rains on Thursday sent a deluge of water flowing through some parts of the eastern state of Victoria, which is still battling 10 major bushfires.

Photo and video images in local media showed one car rolling around in muddy waters as it was carried along the Wye River southwest of Melbourne.

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

A local record of 186 millimetres (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-extreme heat wave, catastrophic bushfires and now extreme flash flooding in the southwest of the state," Emergency Management Commissioner Tim Wiebusch told reporters.

"It really is a timely reminder 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 shouting," camper Matthew Stanhope 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 yesterday, one week after the start of the biggest protests in years challenging the Islamic republic's theocratic system.

The threat of new military action 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 Donald Trump to give the Iranian leadership a "chance".

Protests sparked by economic grievances started with a shutdown 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 immediately 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 protesters, outside Iranian embassy in Yerevan

aimed at masking the scale of the crackdown.

The repression has "likely suppressed the protest movement 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 security 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 verified to have been killed by security forces, but warns this could be a fraction of the actual toll.

Its director Mahmood

Amiry-Moghaddam said authorities under supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei have "committed one of the gravest crimes of our time".

He cited "horrifying eyewitness 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 protesters".

Lama Fakih, programme director 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 during 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 rhetoric 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 leader 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 after 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 supported 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 mandate," Machado told Fox.

## Nobel medal

Machado, 58, on Thursday presented 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 transferred.

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.