

Cambodian opposition leader's daughter named PM's 'special envoy'

AFP | Phnom Penh, Cambodia

The daughter of Cambodian opposition leader Kem Sokha was appointed an adviser to Prime Minister Hun Manet on Monday, a surprise move analysts said will further weaken the government's opponents.

A royal decree said Kem Monovithya had been appointed as a "special envoy" to the premier at his request, giving her a rank equal to a government minister.

Her father, Kem Sokha, was

sentenced to 27 years in prison in 2023 after being convicted of trying to topple the government of Hun Sen -- Hun Manet's father, who remains highly influential.

He was pardoned in May but is still banned from running for office.

Cambodia's ruling family has a long history of co-opting opponents during its decades in power, with Hun Sen offering government positions to opposition politicians and activists.

Iran says two French diplomats accused of 'interference' barred from returning

AFP | Tehran, Iran

Iran's foreign ministry said Monday that two French diplomats who were briefly arrested last month over accusations of "interference" would not be permitted to return to the country.

France's Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said on July 20 that the pair had been targeted by Iranian officials the night before "in flagrant violation of diplomatic immunity".

He said they had suffered "an extremely serious act of intimidation" at the hands of Iran's security service.

On Monday, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei hit back at French authorities, saying they should apologise for the actions of the diplomats, which he insisted had violated the Vienna Convention.

"The two individuals involved left Iran. We also officially announced that they would not be permitted to return," Baqaei said in a weekly press briefing.

Tehran had previously said the diplomats "interfered in Iran's internal affairs under the pretext of engaging with civil society".

Former child star actress Hayden Panettiere dead at 36



Hayden Panettiere

AFP | Los Angeles, United States

Hayden Panettiere, a former child star actress who went on to play roles in the popular TV series "Heroes" and "Nashville," has died aged 36. Her father confirmed the death in a statement to ABC News.

"It is with profound sadness that we share the tragic passing of our beloved Hayden. She was an incredible light and a force of nature who brought immeasurable love and joy to all who knew her -- and to the millions who watched her on-screen," he said.

Details about her death were not immediately made public but she was found unresponsive on Sunday at a residence in Greenville, South Carolina.

Born in 1989, Panettiere's credits include "Remember The Titans," "Ice Princess," "Scream 4" and "Scream VI."

She'd worked in Hollywood all her life, appearing in commercials at just 11 months and winning a Grammy nomina-

tion for voicing the "Princess Dot" character in the 1998 movie "A Bug's Life" when she was nine.

Behind the successful career lay a dark personal history.

In a memoir released in May, "This Is Me: A Reckoning," she described the pressures of being a child star and her experiences with alcohol and opioid addiction and recovery.

Panettiere also spoke of estrangement from her mother, who managed her career as a child and criticized the book.

Paying tribute, actress Viola Davis, who starred alongside Panettiere in the 2016 movie "Custody," referred to her struggles.

Davis called her "an old, wise soul with such a deep heart" and said "your tests became your testimony, and your testimony became your legacy."

"I wish the world had more time with you because I had a burning curiosity about who you were becoming. I saw this beautiful Phoenix rising from the ashes," she wrote on Instagram.

Trump appeal in sex assault, defamation case rejected again

AFP | Washington, United States

The US Supreme Court yesterday rejected for a second time President Donald Trump's attempt to overturn a jury judgment that he sexually assaulted and defamed writer E Jean Carroll.

The Supreme Court did not give any reason for its decision not to hear the president's challenge. The court in late June also refused to hear Trump's appeal against the original May 2023 verdict.

Carroll, 82, a former journalist and columnist, accused Trump

of assaulting her in a dressing room of a New York department store in 1996.

Trump paid \$5.6 million to Carroll last month after a civil jury found he sexually assaulted and defamed her.

When the allegations were published in a 2019 book she

wrote, the Republican billionaire called Carroll a "nut job" and claimed she had fabricated her case.

In a separate defamation case in New York, Trump was ordered to pay \$83.3 million to Carroll. Trump has also appealed that judgment to the Supreme Court.

Netanyahu, Kushner discuss US general for Hamas disarmament

US general could oversee Hamas disarmament

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

MIDDLE EAST UPDATES

Iran says 60-day deadline 'irrelevant'

- Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said on Monday that a 60-day deadline for negotiations was "irrelevant" because the US had violated the deal early on.

Houthi target Saudi ship

- Yemen's Houthi rebels said on Monday they had targeted a Saudi military vessel and four accompanying boats in the Red Sea, as part of their maritime blockade of Saudi Arabia.

Risk of 'full-scale conflict' in Yemen: UN

- The UN rights chief voiced alarm Monday at the rising civilian toll of escalating hostilities in Yemen, and called for efforts to avoid plunging the country back into full-scale war.

"I urge all parties to halt immediately any actions that risk returning Yemen to full-scale conflict."

Iranian drones attack Iraqi Kurdistan PM's office

- Two Iranian drones targeted the Iraqi Kurdistan prime minister's office and the home of the autonomous region's intelligence chief overnight, authorities said on Monday.

There were no reported casualties in the attack.

Iran says missing pilots prisoners in Qatar

- Iran's foreign ministry said on Monday it would consider three missing pilots to be prisoners in Qatar, despite Doha's denials, until it clarified their fate.

Tehran has said the Iranians went missing while carrying out an operation against the United States' Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar on March 2.

TENSIONS CONTINUE, DIPLOMACY NEEDED

● **Kushner, who has long family ties to Netanyahu, met with him in Jerusalem**

● **Kushner in the talks in Egypt had demanded that Hamas verify it is giving up its weapons**

AFP | Jerusalem, Undefined

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US envoy Jared Kushner discussed putting an American general in charge of verifying Hamas's disarmament yesterday, an Israeli official said, as the premier insisted there would be no pullout from Gaza until then.

Kushner, President Donald Trump's son-in-law, flew to the region after Netanyahu, facing a tough re-election fight, publicly rejected the latest part of a US plan aimed at ending the devastating Gaza war.

Kushner, who has long family ties to Netanyahu, met with him in Jerusalem a day after holding rare direct talks in Egypt with Hamas, which has publicly committed itself to the plan and to disarmament, winning praise from Trump but prompting deep scepticism in Israel.

Pentagon inks Tomahawk deal

Washington, United States

The Pentagon announced a \$22.9 billion contract with Raytheon yesterday for Tomahawk missiles amid reports of a shortfall due to the war with Iran.

Acting US Navy Secretary Hung Cao said the contract will "accelerate Tomahawk missile delivery to our war-

fighters at unprecedented speed." "Guaranteeing our naval and joint forces have the lethal firepower they need to deter aggression and protect the homeland is paramount," Cao said in a statement. "The Department is utilizing every available tool to meet the demands of our current operations."

The two sides "agreed that no redeployment or reconstruction would take place in the Gaza Strip before Hamas is disarmed throughout Gaza", a senior Israeli official told AFP.

"It was also agreed that the first step toward the demilitarisation of the Strip would be to require Hamas to hand over its weapons for decommissioning under the supervision of an American general," the official said.

Kushner was joined in the talks by other members of Trump's so-called Board of Peace on Gaza, including former British prime minister Tony Blair.

The group did not immediately comment on the meeting.

The Trump administration has already given a role to the US

military and friendly foreign forces in supervising an October ceasefire in Gaza that has reduced, but not ended, Israeli strikes in the ravaged Palestinian territory.

The call for a US general's involvement came after Netanyahu publicly rejected an earlier text by the Board of Peace in which it said Hamas would hand over its weapons to a nascent Palestinian governing committee.

Kushner in the talks in Egypt had demanded that Hamas verify it is giving up its weapons and that the group -- whose unprece-

dent October 7, 2023 attack against Israel launched the Gaza war -- renounce any future role in governing the Palestinian territory, the sources said.

A Hamas official said the group, represented by its new leader Khalil al-Hayya, told Kushner it was committed to the Gaza plan and wanted pressure on Netanyahu.

