

Trump administration guts car fuel-economy standards

AFP | Washington, United States

President Donald Trump's administration on Monday finalized its rollback of US fuel-economy standards that were meant to spur the transition towards electric vehicles. "Thanks to President Trump's leadership, we have finally ended the illegal mandate that forced automakers

to produce more expensive electric vehicles that American families didn't want," Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said in a statement.

The statement accused the administration of Joe Biden of having broken the law by setting standards that went beyond the requirements mandated by Congress.

Iran denies link to suspected bomb plot at UK airbase used by US

AFP | Fairford, United Kingdom

Iran yesterday denied involvement in a suspected bomb plot at a UK airbase used by the United States, as counter-terror police said five men in their mid-20s arrested nearby were all London-based Britons.

Tehran's denial, issued via its embassy in London, followed widespread UK media reports that police were probing possible Iranian links to the security scare early Sunday at the Royal Air Force (RAF) Fairford base.

The UK interior ministry has previously accused Iran and Russia of using proxies to carry out criminal activities on their behalf on UK territory.

US President Donald Trump said the UK and US had the suspects "under investigation" for a while.

"They were looking to do big damage to our fort," Trump said while on a visit to Chicago. "We had them under view for a long time, and we got them."

He later told reporters "we know all about them" when asked about the suspects, appearing to nod when asked if there was a connection to Iran.

"You'll be hearing about it very soon. We caught them," said Trump, without giving further details.

Iran's embassy in London said Monday it "categorically rejects and strongly condemns" speculation that Tehran was involved.

In an X post, it criticised "the recent unfounded and malicious speculations published by some British individuals and media outlets attempting to link Iran" to the incident.

New Delhi to ban construction for six weeks to tackle air pollution



AFP | New Delhi, India

New Delhi will ban construction for six weeks in the country's capital, as part of a slew of measures announced yesterday to tackle the city's air pollution.

Delhi, a sprawling megacity of 30 million people, is regularly ranked among the world's most polluted capitals due to a mix of emissions from power plants, heavy traffic, construction activity and the burning of crop stubble.

The construction ban will run from December 10 to January 20 as part of a winter action plan which will include restrictions on vehicular traffic aimed at encouraging residents to use public transport.

"Early implementation of these stringent measures would help prevent the city's air from reaching hazardous levels during winter," Delhi Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa told report-

ers.

Air pollution in Delhi regularly reaches dangerous levels during winter months when cooler air traps pollutants close to the ground.

A study in The Lancet Planetary Health in 2024 estimated that 3.8 million deaths in India between 2009 and 2019 were linked to air pollution.

Levels of cancer-causing PM 2.5 microparticles often hit more than 300 micrograms per cubic metre in the city, 20 times the World Health Organization's recommended daily maximum.

Government-led initiatives such as partial restrictions on fossil fuel-powered transport and water trucks spraying mist to clear the air have failed to make a noticeable impact.

Under the new plan, Sirsa said "staggered office timings will be implemented from November 1 to February 28 to reduce peak-hour traffic congestion and vehicular emissions".

Pope Leo joins Air France cockpit crew, blesses Rafale pilots

AFP | Paris, France

Pope Leo spent half an hour in the cockpit of a plane yesterday, chatting with the pilots and speaking by radio to the crews of the Rafale fighter jets escorting his aircraft, Air France said.

The leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics is wrapping up his four-day visit to France with a trip to the northeastern city of Metz, near the German border.

On Monday morning, the 71-year-old pontiff and aviation enthusiast, spent around 30 minutes in the cockpit of the Air France aircraft that flew him from the southwestern city of Lourdes to Metz, the final leg of his apostolic journey.

"The Holy Father came into the cockpit for the entire Lourdes-Metz cruise phase," said Eric Marguerite, the flight's co-pilot.

"We had informal conversations with him. He is passionate about aviation, cars and mechanics in general," he added, after landing in Metz.



The flight, commanded by Captain Clemence Coussonneau, was escorted by two Rafale jets flying about 50 metres (yards) from the pope's plane.

"We handed the microphone to the Holy Father, who spoke to the Rafale pilots," said Marguerite.

"He offered his blessing to them and to all military person-

nel working to protect people and promote peace around the world."

The pope also took time to greet the cabin crew on board.

"After all the meticulous planning that went into this flight, receiving a blessing from the pope in person was a unique moment," flight attendants Landee Van Keeken told AFP.

Throughout his trip -- the first official papal visit to France in nearly two decades -- Leo appeared smiling and warm, readily engaging with crowds.

He blessed countless babies, celebrated a giant mass in Paris at the weekend and engaged with young people at the packed Stade de France stadium.

Trump offered to sell arms to Xi



AFP | Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump offered to sell arms to his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in response to concern over weapons sales to Taiwan, the US ambassador to China said in a Fox News interview that aired yesterday.

US arms sales to the self-ruled island, which China claims is part of its territory and has threatened to seize by force, have long been a thorny issue between Washington and Beijing.

The United States is required by law to supply Taiwan, which has a democratically elected president and legislature, with weapons for its defense.

US Ambassador to China David Perdue said the issue was raised again when Xi visited the United States last week.

"President Trump continues to say, 'Hey, we sell arms to other people around the world.' He actually asked President Xi -- would he like to buy some? -- at one point," Perdue said in the interview.

"There are continuing conversations about other sales,

US ambassador tells Fox News

(Trump) and President Xi talk about that every time they get together," Perdue said, adding that the US position has not changed.

The White House did not immediately respond to AFP's request for comment.

White House officials said that the US had no plans to sell arms to China, according to the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal.

The US State Department said in a statement to the New York Times that "US law prohibits arms sales to China and there is no offer or plan to sell arms to China."

The Chinese foreign ministry did not directly answer when asked about the comments on Monday, but said China has "always strengthened its national defense capabilities based on its own needs, and remains committed to maintaining world peace and stability."

Beijing warned Taiwan in June that seeking independence "by relying on the United States or through military means is a dead end."

Washington approved a \$11.1 billion arms sale to Taiwan in December, which Perdue said was a sale of "more arms to Taiwan than any other president since 1979."

The US paused a \$14 billion weapons purchase by Taiwan in May, with Trump calling it a "very good negotiating chip"

in dealings with China, raising fears that Taiwan's security could be traded away.

During his Washington trip, Xi repeated his warning that Trump should show "prudence" over Taiwan, and went further to urge the United States to oppose Taiwan independence explicitly.

Both leaders confirmed they would meet again at the APEC summit in Shenzhen, China, in November and the G20 forum at Trump's Doral resort in Miami in December.



China has built the world's largest arsenal of ground-based conventional and dual-use missiles, including the DF-26 intermediate-range ballistic missile, which has an estimated range of up to 4,000 km. These weapons are designed in part to threaten major US and allied military assets in the Asia-Pacific.