



A health official uses a thermometer to screen people in front of Kibuli Muslim Hospital in Kampala, Uganda | AP

Congo Ebola outbreak death toll rises to 80; burials mount

BUNIA

AT LEAST 80 deaths have been reported in Congo's new Ebola disease outbreak in the eastern Ituri province, authorities said, as health workers raced Saturday to intensify screening and contact tracing to contain the disease.

"Every day, people are dying ... and this has been going on for about a week. In a single day, we bury two, three, or even more people," said Jean Marc Asimwe, a resident of Bunia.

Congolese Health Minister Samuel-Roger Kamba said late Friday that there have been eight laboratory-confirmed cases, among them four deaths.

Test results confirmed the Bundibugyo virus, a variant of the disease that has been less prominent in Congo's past outbreaks. This is Congo's 17th outbreak since Ebola first emerged in the country in 1976.

Ebola is highly contagious and can be contracted through bodily fluids such as vomit, blood, or semen. The disease it causes is rare, but severe and often fatal. The suspected index case in the latest outbreak is a nurse who died at a hospital in Bunia, Kamba said.

He said the case dates back three weeks to April 24. He did not say whether samples from the nurse were tested, but said the person presented symptoms suggestive of Ebola. AP

Trump returns from China; hails talks with Xi as 'G-2' milestone

WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump returned from a visit to China, describing his discussions with President Xi Jinping as a meeting of leaders of "two great countries". Trump landed at the Joint Base Andrews in Maryland on the outskirts of the US capital on Friday evening, claiming to have struck important trade deals, including one for China's purchase of 200 aircraft from Boeing, with a promise for another 750, as well as agreements benefiting the American agriculture sector.

The US President reached here after a brief refuelling stop at Anchorage in Alaska. "It's the two great countries. I call it the G-2. This is the G-2. I think it'll go down as a very important moment in history," Trump told Fox News in an interview after meeting Xi on Thursday.

The Washington Post reported that Trump's remarks put China on an equal footing with the US, exactly what Xi had aimed to achieve with the visit. "Over two days of meetings here, the carefully choreographed pageantry and the reciprocal gestures of friendship

and respect between the world's two most powerful men displayed a geopolitical dynamic that the Chinese have long craved and Americans had resisted," the Post said.

Trump told Fox News that the relationship with Xi was important and suggested that China may not resort to any aggressive moves over Taiwan, at least till he is in office.

"It's not a takeover. They just don't want to see this place - we'll call it a place because nobody knows how to define it - but they don't want to see it go independent," Trump said. "I don't think they'll do anything when I'm here. When I'm not here, I think they might, to be honest with you," Trump said. "I want China to cool down. I want China to cool down," he said. "We're not looking to have wars, and if you kept it the way it is, I think China's going to be OK with that," he added.

"Xi has done something Chinese leaders have been working toward for decades - bringing an American president to Beijing as an undisputed peer," said Julian Gewirtz, former China director on President Joe Biden's National Security Council. PTI



US-Nigerian military operation kills Islamic State 'second-in-command'

Tinubu says Al-Mainuki, aides killed in Lake Chad strike; hails counterterrorism mission as success

WASHINGTON

US and Nigerian forces killed a leader of the Islamic State group in Nigeria in a mission carried out on Friday, US President Donald Trump said.

Trump announced the joint operation in Africa's most populous country in a late-night social media post. He said Abu Bakr al-Mainuki was second-in-command of the Islamic State group globally and "thought he could hide in Africa, but little did he know we had sources who kept us informed on what he was doing."

Al-Mainuki was viewed as the key figure in IS organising and finance, and had been plotting attacks against the United States and its interests, according to an official who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to share sensitive information.

Nigerian President Bola Tinubu confirmed the operation and said Al-Mainuki was killed alongside "several of his lieutenants, during a strike on his compound in the Lake Chad Basin."

The joint operation is the latest by both countries since their new security partnership that kicked off last year after Trump claimed Christians were being targeted in Nigeria's security crisis and threatened US military intervention.

Residents and security analysts have said Nigeria's security crisis affects both Christians, predominant in the south, and Muslims, who are the majority in the north.

According to the spokesperson for the Nigerian military task force that carried out the Friday operation, the mission was a "highly complex precision air-land operation" and was carried out during three hours of darkness early on Saturday without any casualties or loss of assets.

"His elimination represents the single most consequential counterterrorism outcome" in the region since the inception of the operation in 2015, Sani Uba, the spokesperson for the task force, said in a statement.

Born in Nigeria's Borno province in 1982, al-Mainuki took the helm of the IS branch in West Africa after the group's previous leader in the region, Mamman Nur, was killed in 2018, according to the Counter Extremism Project, which tracks militant groups.

Al-Mainuki was based in the Sahel area, the monitoring group said, adding that it is believed that he fought in Libya when IS was active in the North African nation more than a decade ago. He was sanctioned by the US in 2023. AP



NATIONALISM TAKES CENTRESTAGE

Supporters of British far-right activist Tommy Robinson, whose real name is Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, gather near Westminster Station during a Unite The Kingdom march in central London on Saturday. Police deployed 4,000 officers, drones, dogs and helicopters as rival far-right, anti-racism and pro-Palestinian demonstrations drew tens of thousands amid rising tensions over immigration, free speech and extremism in Britain, prompting one of London's biggest security operations in years | AFP

Pak to spend billions more on def under IMF reforms

ISLAMABAD

PAKISTAN is expected to raise its defence budget by about PKR 100 billion in the upcoming fiscal year as the government prepares its budget under an International Monetary Fund (IMF)-backed reform programme that projects a sharp rise in revenues, as per report.

The Dawn newspaper, citing the IMF staff report issued after the completion of the third review of the USD 7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and the second review of the USD 1.4 billion Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF), reported that defence expenditure for 2026-27 was estimated at Pakistani rupees (PKR) Rs 2.665 trillion, up from PKR 2.564 trillion this year.

The IMF projected Pakistan's total federal revenues for 2026-27 at PKR 17.144 trillion - that's more than PKR 2 trillion higher than the fiscal year and represents a 13.5 per cent increase, the report said.

It said Pakistan had also committed to increasing the combined expenditure of the federal and provincial governments by 0.2 per cent of GDP to PKR 4.227 trillion, while digitising provincial government payments by June 2027. PTI

European countries in talks with Tehran for Hormuz transit: Report

TEHRAN

IRANIAN state television said on Saturday that European countries were in talks with Tehran over transit for ships through the Strait of Hormuz.

"Following the passage of ships from East Asian countries, notably China, Japan and Pakistan, we received information today indicating that Europeans have also begun negotiations with the Revolutionary Guards navy" to get permission to pass, state television reported, without specifying which countries.

Iran has largely blocked shipping through the vital strait since the outbreak of war with the United States and Israel on February 28. A fragile ceasefire has been in place since April 8. Its grip over the waterway has rattled global markets and given Tehran significant leverage, while the United States has imposed its own naval blockade on Iranian ports.

In peacetime, the route accounts for roughly a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments, along with other key commodities.

Iran has in recent days allowed passage for dozens of ships including from China "after an agreement on Iran's strait management protocols," the Guards, the ideological arm of Iran's military, said.

Since the war broke out, Iran has repeatedly said that maritime traffic through the strait would "not return to its pre-war status" and last month said it has received the first revenue from tolls it imposed on the waterway. On Saturday, Ebrahim Azizi, head of the Iranian parliament's national security



Strikes in south Lebanon after truce extension

BEIRUT: Israel launched a series of airstrikes on southern Lebanon on Saturday, despite the extension of the truce between the two countries. Israel says it is targeting Hezbollah but the strikes were preceded by an evacuation warning covering nine villages. And the continuing bombardment has only increased scepticism about the truce. Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported strikes on at least five villages on Saturday, including one more than 50 kilometres from the border. At the same time it reported a new exodus of residents towards the southern city of Sidon and the capital Beirut.

Israel says it killed Hamas' military wing chief

JERUSALEM: Israel said Saturday it had killed Hamas armed wing chief Ezzedine Al-Haddad in an airstrike in Gaza the previous day, describing him as a key architect of the October 7 attacks. Since Hamas's October 7, 2023 cross-border assault, the Israeli military and intelligence services have waged a campaign targeting the group's senior political leaders and militant commanders in Gaza and across the region. The military said Friday it had carried out an airstrike in Gaza targeting Haddad, before confirming his death on Saturday.

commission, said Iran "has prepared a professional mechanism to manage traffic" through the strait, adding that it will be "unveiled soon".

"In this process, only commercial vessels and parties cooperating with Iran will benefit from it," he noted, adding

that "the necessary fees will be collected for specialized services". "This route will remain closed to the operators of the so-called 'freedom project,'" he said, referring to a temporary US military operation to guide stranded commercial ships through the strait. AFP

Collision between train and bus kills 8

BANGKOK

A collision between a freight train and a bus killed at least eight people and injured more than 30 in the Thai capital Bangkok on Saturday, police said. Firefighters and rescue workers cordoned off the collision site, with investigators seen peering into the burnt-out shell of the bus. Pedestrians were ushered

away from the busy downtown intersection, which is used by tens of thousands of vehicles each day.

"Eight people have died and 35 others were injured," Bangkok police chief Urumporn Koondesumrit told AFP, adding that two of the injured were in serious condition.

The collision happened early in the afternoon, with images on social media showing the

train approaching a level crossing at a moderate speed before colliding with the bus, which instantly burst into flames.

"The fire is now out and we are trying to recover the bodies," Urumporn said.

The flames appeared to spread quickly. "I didn't dare look back to see if there were any victims," a witness who was near the intersection told public broadcaster Thai PBS. AFP

ICICI Bank PUBLIC NOTICE-TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET. Includes details of three auction lots with amounts, dates, and locations.