



8 arrested The female students nabbed by the Kenyan police after a fire destroyed a dormitory at a boarding school, killing 16 children

GLOBAL WEATHER table with columns for location, temperature, and weather conditions.

NO TRUST IN U.S. 'WORDS', WAITING FOR WASHINGTON TO ACT: TEHRAN

Vance claims progress on peace deal, waiting for Prez Trump to sign

WASHINGTON

IRAN top negotiator said Friday that Tehran would only trust Washington's actions, not its words, after US Vice President JD Vance said progress had been made on a deal to extend a ceasefire and provide a framework for peace talks.

President Donald Trump has remained notably silent about the deal despite US sources telling AFP it only needed his sign-off, underscoring the unpredictability of talks three months after the conflict engulfed West Asia and shook the global economy. "We place no trust in guarantees or words; only actions matter. No step will be taken before the other side acts first," Iran's Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf wrote on X.

Hopes of an agreement had risen on Thursday after US officials were positive about the direction of diplomacy. "It's hard to say exactly when or if the presi-



A fireball erupts from a building following an Israeli strike in Tyre, southern Lebanon, on Friday | AFP

dent is going to sign the MoU," Vance told reporters on Thursday.

Optimism around a possible US-Iran deal boosted Asian stock markets on Friday, while oil prices receded slightly. Energy markets have whipsawed this week as investors parse the chances of an agreement that could potentially resume normal shipping through the crucial Strait of Hormuz.

The potential deal would end restrictions on shipping through the strait, with no tolls or harassment, while Tehran

would remove mines within 30 days and the US would lift its naval blockade of Iranian ports if commercial traffic resumed, according to US media reports. But Iran has not confirmed any commitments to a deal, and sources have told Iranian media that any agreement unilaterally announced by Trump would not be recognised.

On Friday, Iran's Tasnim news agency, citing a source, said the text had not yet been finalised and the wording of the potential memorandum of understanding had "undergone some changes in recent days".



CAPE CANAVERAL

A rocket belonging to Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin exploded during a test at the launch pad Thursday night, shaking nearby homes and briefly painting the sky orange.

Blue Origin said its New Glenn rocket exploded during an engine-firing test being conducted ahead of a satellite launch planned for next week. No one was hurt, according to officials at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station.

"It's too early to know the root cause but we're already working to find it," Bezos said via X. "Very rough day, but we'll rebuild whatever needs rebuilding and get back to flying. It's worth it." The massive New Glenn was grounded in April after it left a satellite in the wrong orbit because of engine failure. It was only the third flight of the rocket that Blue Origin intends to use to launch landers to the moon for NASA, including the landers that will take astronauts to the lunar surface.

The company had been on track to launch a prototype lunar lander to the moon on a flight test this fall. Earlier this week, the space agency awarded Blue Origin a contract worth hundreds of millions of dollars to launch a pair of moon buggies in the next few years as part of the Artemis program.

"Spaceflight is unforgiving, and developing new heavy-lift launch capability is extraordinarily difficult," NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman said via X.

HEAVIER NEW GLENN CRASH Blue Origin rocket explodes on launch pad during test. Includes a large image of the explosion and a TIMELINE table with key events from 2016 to 2026.

Pak FM Ishaq Dar meets Marco Rubio

Washington: Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar met US Secretary of State Marco Rubio here on Friday, amid reports of the US and Iran closing in on an agreement to end the three-month war. Dar's meeting with Rubio comes days after US President Donald Trump urged countries mediating the US-Iran talks to end the three-month war to join the Abraham Accords, which establish diplomatic, economic and security ties between Israel and Arab nations.



Trump meeting with aides on Iran deal

Washington: US President Donald Trump said Friday he's holding a White House Situation Room meeting with his advisors as he looks to make a "final determination" on moving forward with a deal to extend the Iran ceasefire. Trump confirmed the White House talks the day after The Associated Press and other news outlets reported that US and Iranian negotiators had come to terms on a tentative agreement.

EXPRESS READ

Remains of 6 workers recovered in massive US chemical tank rupture

Longview: Crews have recovered the remains of six of nine workers who were missing after a massive chemical tank ruptured at a paper mill in Washington state, releasing a flood of caustic liquid capable of causing severe burns and lung injuries, officials said on Thursday.

US labels Brazil's 2 biggest drug gangs as terrorist organisations

Sao Paulo: The US State Department designated two Brazilian criminal groups as foreign terrorist organisations on Thursday. The two gangs -- First Command of the Capital, or PCC, and Red Command, or CV -- likely have more than 50,000 members combined, according to experts.

Indian-American teen wins Scripps Spelling Bee

WASHINGTON

INDIAN-AMERICAN student Shrey Parikh, aged 14, from California, won the Scripps National Spelling Bee on Friday after correctly spelling 32 of 35 words in 90 seconds.

Parikh, an eighth-grade student from Day Creek Intermediate School, spelt 'Bromocriptine' correctly in the 90-second spell-off, beating seventh grader 12-year-old Ishaan Gupta of Frank R Conwell Middle School, Jersey City, New Jersey. Twelve-year-old Sarv Dharavane from Peachtree Charter Middle School in Tucker, Georgia, finished third. Ishaan



Shrey Parikh lifts the Scripps National Spelling Bee trophy in Washington on Friday | AP

takes home \$25,000, while Sarv gets \$15,000 in prize money. Parikh also beat the previous spell-off record set in 2024 by Bruhat Soma, who spelled 29 out of 30 words correctly

in the spell-off. "Spelling fast is what I do every day," Shrey said in comments after winning the competition.

Parikh, who was also a finalist in the 2024 edition

of the competition, takes home a slew of prizes, including \$50,000, a commemorative medal, the Scripps Cup, as well as \$2,500 from Merriam-Webster, \$1,000 in flight credits from Delta and \$400 of reference works from Encyclopaedia Britannica.

The three-day competition began Monday at DAR Constitution Hall here with 247 contestants from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, Defence Department schools in Europe and five other countries: the Bahamas, Canada, Ghana, Nigeria and the United Arab Emirates.

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