

VOA NEWS

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This is VOA News. I'm Joe Ramsey.

A massive bridge collapsed on Tuesday in the U.S. city of Baltimore, Maryland, after a powerless cargo ship rammed into a support column. Six people are missing as U.S. President Joe Biden pledges help from the federal government. AP correspondent Sagar Meghani reports.

The president notes he's been over the Key Bridge many times during travels to and from Delaware and it will be rebuilt.

"It's my intention that federal government will pay for the entire cost of reconstructing that bridge."

He's also prioritizing reopening Baltimore's port, a major shipping hub.

"It's gonna take some time," but says the government will not leave the people of Baltimore until the job is done.

"Like the governor said, 'you're Maryland tough, you're Baltimore strong, and we're gonna get through this together.' And I promise we're not leaving."

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

A senior Israeli official said on Tuesday Israel has recalled its negotiators from Doha after deeming mediated talks on a Gaza truce "at a dead end" due to demands by Hamas, a U.S.-designated terrorist group.

The official accused Hamas's Gaza leader of sabotaging the diplomacy "as part of a wider effort to inflame this war over Ramadan."

A United Nations expert told the global body's Human Rights Council on Tuesday she believed Israel's military campaign in Gaza since October 7 amounted to genocide and called on countries to immediately impose sanctions and an arms embargo.

"I find that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the threshold indicating the commission of the crime of genocide against Palestinians as a group in Gaza has been met."

Israel, which did not attend the session, rejected her findings. Israel's diplomatic mission in Geneva said the use of the word genocide was "outrageous."

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Russian officials continued to say on Tuesday Ukraine and the West had a role in last week's deadly Moscow concert hall attack despite repeated denials of involvement by Kyiv and a claim of responsibility by affiliate of the Islamic State group.

Without offering evidence, Russia's head of the Federal Security Service followed similar allegations by President Vladimir Putin, who linked the attack to Ukraine.

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange's extradition to the United States from Britain was put on hold on Tuesday after London's High Court said the U.S.[t] must provide assurances he would not face the death penalty. Reuters correspondent Lauren Anthony reports.

U.S. prosecutors are seeking to put 52-year-old Assange on trial on 18 counts. They [are] all but one over WikiLeaks' high-profile release of confidential U.S. military records and diplomatic cables.

Assange's lawyers sought permission in February to challenge Britain's approval of his extradition, part of a more than 13-year legal battle in English courts.

In their ruling, two senior judges said he had a real prospect of successfully appealing against extradition on a number of grounds.

The judgement said that if U.S. assurances were not forthcoming by April 16, then Assange would be granted permission to appeal. A further hearing has been scheduled for May 20.

Reuters correspondent Lauren Anthony.

The United Nations children's fund says several eastern and southern African countries are dealing with severe food insecurity made worse by climate change. Columbus Mavhunga reports from Zimbabwe's capital.

In a statement, Eva Kadilli, the UNICEF director for eastern and southern Africa, said a prolonged heat wave and drought gripping several countries have left millions of people in a "dire situation."

She said 45 million children are living through multiple and often overlapping crises intensified by the 2023-2024 El Niño weather phenomenon, one of the strongest on record.

Columbus Mavhunga, VOA News, Harare, Zimbabwe.

A New York Judge has issued a gag order barring former U.S. President Donald Trump from making public statements about witnesses, prosecutors, court staff and jurors in his upcoming hush money criminal trial.

Judge Juan Merchan on Tuesday cited Trump's previous comments about him and others involved in the case, as well as the looming April 15 trial date, in granting the prosecution's request for a gag order.

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