

VOA NEWS

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Hi, I'm VOA's Alexis Strobe with your worldwide news update.

President Donald Trump signed a plan for reciprocal tariffs on U.S. trading partners. AP Washington correspondent Sagar Meghani reports.

President Trump has rolled out his plan for reciprocal tariffs on American trading partners, potentially triggering an economic confrontation with friends and foes alike.

The president says it's simple, the tariffs will match tax rates other countries charge on American imports.

"No more, no less."

He says it's about fairness.

"No other country can complain," and insists the tariffs will help cut U.S. trade imbalances and equalize the ability of both American and foreign manufacturers to compete.

But they likely could backfire on the president. American consumers and businesses would likely have to pay the new taxes either directly or through higher prices.

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

Hamas signaled on Thursday that a crisis threatening to unravel the Gaza cease-fire deal could be avoided. Zachary Goelman from Reuters reports.

That deal appeared near to unraveling this week amid accusations of violations on both sides.

Hamas on Thursday said it did not want the agreement to collapse, but it said it rejected what it called the, quote, "language of threats and intimidation" from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. President Donald Trump.

The Israeli and American warnings came after Hamas accused Israel of holding up an expected influx of aid deliveries and said it would not hand over three more hostages on Saturday until the issue was resolved. That prompted Netanyahu and Trump to warn the cease-fire should be canceled if the hostages were not freed.

In a statement, Hamas said it, quote, "reaffirms its commitment to implementing the agreement as signed, including the exchange of prisoners according to the specified timeline."

That was Reuters correspondent Zachary Goelman.

This is VOA News.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a vaccine critic who had pledged to tackle chronic disease, was named U.S. healthcare secretary on Thursday. Reuters correspondent Jillian Kitchener reports.

Kennedy, a longtime vaccine critic, will be overseeing agencies like the FDA and CDC. Only one Republican, former Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, voted against Kennedy's nomination along with all 47 Democrats.

In a bid to secure votes of hesitant lawmakers, Kennedy made pledges earlier this month to protect existing vaccination programs and honor decisions by the CDC's outside panel of experts.

Kennedy says he wants to work to end chronic disease, break any ties between employees at the U.S. drug regulator and industry and advise U.S. water systems to remove fluoride.

That was Reuters correspondent Jillian Kitchener.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday the United States and India have set a target of doubling their bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030. Modi made the comment at a press conference after a summit meeting with President Donald Trump in Washington.

Modi said the U.S. and India would work together on artificial intelligence and semiconductors and focus on establishing strong supply chains for strategic minerals.

Panama has received the first U.S. flight of deportees from multiple nations. AP correspondent Donna Warder reports.

Panamanian President José Raúl Mulino says 119 citizens of China, Uzbekistan, Pakistan and Afghanistan arrived in Panama Wednesday on a U.S. Air Force flight after being deported from the U.S.

Panama had offered to act as a stopover for migrants expelled from the U.S., and Wednesday's flight was the first of three planned flights expected to total about 360 people.

The migrants are expected to stay in a shelter in Panama's Darién region before being returned to their native countries.

Last week Secretary of State Marco Rubio traveled to Panama to discuss President Donald Trump's demands to retake control of the Panama Canal. But Mulino also discussed Panama's efforts to slow migration through the Darién Gap, and he said the U.S. could use Panama as a bridge to send U.S. deportees back to their countries.

I'm Donna Warder.

Mexican President Claudia Scheinbaum says her government is not ruling out a civil lawsuit against Google if it maintains its stance of calling the stretch of sea between northeastern Mexico and the southeastern United States the Gulf of America.

Scheinbaum, in her morning press conference on Thursday, said President Donald Trump's decree to change the name of the Gulf of Mexico is restricted to "the continental shelf of the United States" because Mexico still controls much of the body of water.

She said, "We have sovereignty over our continental shelf."

That wraps up this update, but the world and news never stop. For additional updates, visit our website. I'm Alexis Strobe, VOA News.