

BBC NEWS

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Hello, I'm Gurrinder Gill with the BBC News.

President Trump has declared that peace in the Middle East is "beyond very close" as he presented a new plan to end the war in Gaza in the presence of the Israeli prime minister. Benjamin Netanyahu said he supported the scheme, with both men saying Hamas must also do so or Israel would finish its offensive. Hamas says it's studying the plan. Peter Bowes is our North America correspondent.

The 20-point proposal calls for a ceasefire, an exchange of hostages held by Hamas in return for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel, a staged Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and the disarmament of Hamas.

President Trump said it could herald a new chapter of security, peace and prosperity for the entire region.

The agreement marks a significant stepping up of diplomatic efforts by the Trump administration to end the war in Gaza. But while the Israeli prime minister said he was on board, praising Mr. Trump as a friend of his country, he appeared to distance himself from some aspects of the plan, adding that Israel would "retain security responsibility" in Gaza after the war and would "finish the job" against Hamas should it reject Mr. Trump's proposals.

The U.S. peace plan for Gaza has been hailed in the Middle East and beyond. The Palestinian Authority said it welcomed Donald Trump's "sincere and determined efforts" to end the war. There was a similar reaction from eight Arab and Muslim nations ranging from Egypt to Indonesia.

The U.S. Vice President JD Vance has said the federal government is heading towards a shutdown and pin the blame on congressional Democrats. Neither side has been able to agree to a way forward on a spending bill introduced by the Republicans ahead of a Wednesday deadline. Democrats say the bill will make it harder for Americans to afford healthcare.

Mr. Vance said that shouldn't mean a shutdown. "We have disagreements about healthcare policy, but you don't shut the government down. You don't use your policy disagreements as leverage to not pay our troops, to not have essential services of government actually function. You don't say the fact that you disagree about a particular tax provision is an excuse for shutting down the people's government and all the essential services that come along with it."

An internet watchdog says Afghanistan has been hit by a communications blackout. The Taliban rulers have begun severing fiber-optic internet connections to prevent what they see as immorality. Anbarasan Ethirajan reports.

The internet blackout was imposed at the end of business hours on Monday and the full impact will be known on Tuesday when banks and businesses reopen.

For weeks, internet users in several Afghan provinces have been complaining about either slow internet access or no connectivity. The Taliban earlier said an alternative route for internet access would be created without elaborating.

World News from the BBC.

The governor of the U.S. state of Illinois, which includes Chicago, says the federal government is set to send 100 troops to the state in what would be Donald Trump's latest use of the military in Democrat-run areas. JB Pritzker said it was being claimed troops were needed to protect facilities of the immigration department which is carrying out mass deportations.

The Ecuadorian government says a humanitarian convoy led by President Daniel Noboa was attacked late on Sunday. It was said to have been ambushed by a group of more than 300 people throwing petrol bombs. A spokesman said 17 of the 50 military personnel guarding the group were kidnapped.

The European human rights body, the Council of Europe, has awarded its annual Václav Havel Prize to the Ukrainian journalist and human rights advocate, Maksym Butkevych. The prize honors outstanding actions in defense of human rights across Europe. Tom Bailey reports.

Maksym Butkevych is the first Ukrainian recipient of this annual award, with the council describing him as a powerful symbol of courage in defense of justice and freedom.

Despite his lifelong pacifism, the journalist and rights advocate volunteered for the Ukrainian armed forces at the start of the Russian invasion in 2022. He was captured and endured over two years of harsh imprisonment, but was released in a prisoner exchange last year.

Mr. Butkevych said one could only appreciate the importance of human rights when one has had to live without them.

The U.N.'s cultural agency, UNESCO, has launched a virtual museum showcasing hundreds of looted artefacts. It said it hoped the museum would raise awareness of the illicit trafficking of cultural property, but the goal was that pieces would be recovered.

The platform used 3D modelling and virtual reality to recreate stolen cultural objects. Around 250 stolen objects will be on display.

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