

BBC NEWS

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BBC News with Chris Barrow.

The office of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Sarah Mullally, has withdrawn an award given last week to a Pakistani Muslim cleric for promoting religious tolerance. There had been criticism of the recognition of Hafiz Tahir Ashrafi after it emerged that he had previously praised the al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. Here's our religion editor, Aleem Maqbool.

After fierce criticism, Lambeth Palace says those comments have led to the award being withdrawn. But it still says the award was given to Mr. Ashrafi for his commitment to promoting religious tolerance, though he's also known as a supporter of Pakistan's blasphemy laws that rights groups say only perpetuate religious discrimination.

Hafiz Tahir Ashrafi told the BBC his comments had been taken out of context.

The State Department says it gives no credibility to a U.N. report alleging that the U.S. military may have committed war crimes in the initial stages of its war on Iran. A fact-finding mission said the deadly missile strikes on a school in Minab and a sports complex in Lamerd were indiscriminate attacks. The State Department insisted that the protection of civilians was of the utmost importance to Washington.

The report also alleged the Iranian authorities committed crimes against humanity during their repression of anti-government protests in January. Tehran denies committing rights violations.

A state governor in northwestern Nigeria says a police commander has been detained after 37 teenagers were found dead two days after being taken into custody. The civil defense force in Borgu in Niger State rounded up the boys on Tuesday, accusing them of illegal gold mining.

When their bodies were discovered two days later, police suggested they may have fallen victim to a disease outbreak. Reports say an investigation suggests they suffocated due to overcrowding and insufficient ventilation in the detention center.

Ibrahim Mohammed is one of the grieving relatives seeking answers. "We woke up to the news that our younger brothers had died. They only went out to look for a way to earn a living and provide food for their families and now they are dead. We are appealing to the government to help us. We want them to investigate what happened and ensure justice for our brothers and our families."

Voting has begun in Russia's Far East in the country's first parliamentary election since it launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. President Putin's party is all but guaranteed to win and in the absence of open debate and with protests banned, the Kremlin will use the vote to gauge public support for the conflict. From Moscow, here's our Russia editor Steve Rosenberg.

Russia's political system is often referred to as "managed democracy" where the Kremlin does the managing and the Kremlin is likely to use this election to claim that despite problems in the country, Russians are united behind their president and behind the war in Ukraine.

World news from the BBC.

The Sudanese army says it's recaptured 11 areas in North Kordofan state following fierce fighting with the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. An army spokesman said the RSF suffered heavy losses and that military operations would continue until state authority was restored and civilians were protected.

The RSF has not commented and the report has not been independently verified.

The United States has approved the potential sale of 48 F-35 advanced stealth fighter planes to Saudi Arabia, though the move could face opposition in Congress. Saudi Arabia has pushed for the warplanes to modernize its air force in the face of regional threats, notably from Iran.

The sale signals a policy shift for Washington which has ensured Israel has a qualitative equipment edge over regional rivals.

Guinea's media regulator has banned the French media outlet France 24 from broadcasting after a presenter called the country's leader a "putchist president." With more details, here's Mimi Swaby.

The sanction from Guinea's media regulator, the High Authority for Communication, followed a statement on Wednesday accusing France 24 of partiality and attacking the honor of the President Mamady Doumbouya.

He's tightly controlled Guinea since seizing power in a military coup in 2021 and quashing all dissident voices. Despite an apology from France 24, Guinea's High Authority for Communication stood by the decision, also revoking press accreditations for all correspondents, special envoys and collaborators of the channel in the country with immediate effect.

These latest actions against the media have raised concerns over press freedom in the West African nation.

As the U.S. grapples with its worst measles outbreak in three decades, the Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has told opponents of childhood vaccines they had a friend in the White House.

He was addressing a vaccine skeptic group he helped found before entering government and mentioned the deadly measles outbreak only once.

And that's the latest world news from the BBC.