

Kamala Harris turns down Trump's poll debate proposal on Fox News

WASHINGTON, Aug 4 (IANS)

US Vice President and Democratic Presidential nominee Kamala Harris has turned down a September 4 debate on Fox News proposed by Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump. The Harris campaign said that Trump was trying to "back out" of a debate with US President Joe Biden that had already been set to run on ABC. After securing the Democratic nomination for the November 5 election, Harris said on Saturday that she plans to participate in the originally planned debate.

Taking to social media platform X, she said, "It's interesting how 'any time, any place'



becomes 'one specific time, one specific safe space.' "I'll be there on Sept. 10, like he agreed to. I hope to see him there," she posted. Trump had suggested that the debate should be moved to Fox, which is most popular with his followers.

On the proposed debate, Trump posted on the social media platform on Friday 'Truth Social' that the rules would be similar to the first debate with President Joe

Biden, who has since dropped his reelection bid."

On Saturday, Trump said Harris is "afraid to do it" and that he will see her on Sep 4, "or, I won't see her at all". Trump could face disaster if he does not debate Harris before November, former White House Communication Director Anthony Scaramucci was quoted as saying by The Hill. However, Trump, citing his lead in the polls, said that a debate with Harris is not required.

Recently Trump triggered a controversy by raising questions on the racial identity of Harris during a convention of the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) in Chicago.

Houthi missile attack hits container ship

■ By Jon Gambrell

DUBAI, Aug 4 (AP)

A SUSPECTED missile attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels struck a container ship travelling through the Gulf of Aden, authorities said on Sunday, likely the first assault by the group since Israeli airstrikes targeted them.

The Houthis have offered no explanation for the two-week pause in their attacks on shipping through the Red Sea corridor, which have seen similar slowdowns since the assaults began in November over Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

But the resumption comes after the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Iran, the Houthis' main benefactor, amid renewed concerns over the war breaking out into a regional conflict.

The attack on Saturday happened some 225 kilometers (140 miles) southeast of Aden in a stretch of the Gulf of Aden that has seen numerous Houthi attacks previously.

A security official on the vessel said a missile struck the vessel, but "no fires, water ingress or oil leaks have been observed", according to a statement from the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre, a clearinghouse for information on attacks in the Mideast. The UKMTO did not immediately identify the vessel hit. The private security firm Ambrey also reported the attack. Details reported by the two organisa-

Hamas starts talks to choose new chief

GAZA, Aug 4 (IANS)

HAMAS said that wide consultation has started in its leadership and consultative institutions to choose a new chief for the movement.

Past decades witnessed the killing of a number of its leaders, but the group was quick to choose alternatives to them in accordance with the regulations of the movement, Hamas said in a statement on Saturday. The movement's executive institutions and its Shura, the main consultative body, are continuing their work, and it will announce the results of its consultations once they are completed, reports Xinhua news agency, quoting the Hamas statement.

Hamas Politburo Chief Ismail Haniyeh was killed in the Iranian capital city of Tehran on Wednesday morning after he attended the inauguration of Iran's new President Masoud Pezeshkian.

tions suggested the vessel targeted was the Liberian-flagged container ship Groton, which had left Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates bound for Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Indian submarine INS Shalki on 2-day visit to SL

NEW DELHI, Aug 4 (PTI)

INDIAN submarine INS Shalki is on a two-day visit to Sri Lanka in reflection of growing maritime security cooperation between the two countries.

The Shishumar class diesel-electric submarine arrived in Colombo on August 2, the Indian Navy said on Saturday.

India sends submarines to a handful of countries with whom it has close defence and strategic ties. The Indian submarine's visit to Colombo comes against the backdrop of China's persistent attempts to enhance its strategic and military influence over the island nation.

IAF gives clearance to DRDO, BDL for production of Astra missile

NEW DELHI, Aug 4 (ANI)

IN A boost to indigenous missile manufacturing capabilities, the Indian Air Force has given clearance to public sector firm Bharat Dynamics Limited for the production of 200 Astra Mark 1 air-to-air missiles.

The Astra Mark 1 missiles have been developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation with BDL as its production agency.

The production clearance to the BDL was given during a visit by the Indian Air Force Deputy Chief Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit to Hyderabad recently, Indian

Air Force officials said.

"The IAF Deputy Chief had visited the DRDO's Defence Research and Development Laboratory which is the development agency for the Astra missiles," they said.

"The approval for the over Rs 2,900 crore project was granted in 2022-23 by the Defence Acquisition Council and the production clearance has been given for that order now after completion of all tests and developments," defence sources said.

The Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL) is the nodal lab for this project. The Astra missiles will

be integrated on both the Russian-origin Su-30 as well as the indigenous LCA Tejas fighter aircraft after production.

The Indian Air Force is helping a lot of indigenous projects for missiles and three to four such programmes are nearing completion including air-to-ground missiles.

The Astra programme is being progressed gradually by the DRDO and IAF and they are now looking at testing the Mark 2 of the weapon system at around 130 kms. The plans are also afoot to test and develop a long-range Astra with a strike capability of 300 kms.

91 KILLED

in Desh

- Protesters and ruling party supporters clash on the first day of a non-cooperation movement announced by the students' movement demanding PM Sheikh Hasina's resignation
- PM Hasina said that those engaging in sabotage are not students but terrorists, asked people to suppress them with a firm hand

DHAKA, Aug 4
(PTI)

AT LEAST 91 people, including 14 policemen, were killed and hundreds injured on Sunday in fierce clashes between protesters

demanding Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's resignation and the ruling party supporters in different parts of Bangladesh, forcing authorities to cut off mobile Internet and enforce a nationwide curfew for an indefinite period.

The clashes broke out Sunday morning when protesters attending the non-cooperation programme under the banner of the Students Against Discrimination with the one-point demand of the Government's resignation over a job quota system faced opposition from the supporters of the Awami League, Chhatra League, and Jubo League activists.

At least 91 people have been killed in clashes, shootings and counter-chases across the country surrounding the non-cooperation programme, leading Bengali-language daily *Prothom Alo* reported.

(Contd on page 5)



Stay alert: India issues advisory

DHAKA, Aug 4 (IANS)

THE Indian Embassy in Bangladesh on Sunday issued an advisory urging Indian nationals residing in the country to "remain alert" as the student protests resumed in Sylhet, in which an unspecified number of people have got injured.

One of the protesters was hit by a bullet amid the clashes and was immediately taken to the hospital, local media reported.

"All Indian nationals including students living in the jurisdiction of Assistant High Commission of India, Sylhet are requested to be in touch with this office are advised to remain alert," the Assistant High Commission of India (AHCI) said in a post on X.

A helpline number was also shared for emergencies.

K'taka task force to clear encroachments in Western Ghats

BENGALURU, Aug 4 (PTI)

KARNATAKA Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre on Sunday said the State Government has constituted a 'forests and Western Ghats encroachment clearance task force' to clear illegal resorts, home stays and all forest encroachments in the entire ghat regions of the State, including the Western Ghats, which covers 10 districts.

This task force has been formed under the leadership of Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of Forest Force, and it will carry out forest encroachment clearance operations in Western Ghats and other ghat areas from

tomorrow itself, the Minister said in a statement.

Khandre had on Friday directed the forest department's additional chief secretary to issue orders for the removal of all forest encroachments that have sprung up after 2015 in the Western Ghats region, and to submit an action taken report in a month's time. Pointing to terrible tragedies caused by landslides at Wayanad in neighbouring Kerala and Shirur in Uttara Kannada district, resulting in loss of lives, Khandre said hills that existed for thousands of years have disappeared, landslides are continuously occurring in the Western Ghats region of the State including

Shiradi Ghat, Channadi Ghat.

He said, "We do not wake up now, the next generation will not forgive us." The Minister said clear instructions have been given to carry out clearance operations in all the cases where the 64A (of the Karnataka Forest Act) process has been completed with regards to the encroachment in the forests in the Ghat areas after 2015. Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF), Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF), Conservator of Forests (CF), Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF), Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (APCCF) are allowed to inquire into forest encroachment cases and issue

orders under 64A.

He further said, "In order to dispose of all pending 64A cases expeditiously, all officers above ACF have been instructed to conduct proceedings in their respective zones on two days in a week and issue orders at the earliest." Section 64A of the Karnataka Forest Act deals with encroachment of forest land and ways to evict encroachers. Khandre said that he has instructed the task force to take appropriate action in consultation with the Advocate General to settle the cases already in courts.

Instructions have been given to first vacate the illegal resorts and homestays built by encroaching forests on a

large scale, and then to vacate the plantations and buildings. "All are equal before the law. Those who encroach the Western Ghats and are involved in commercial activities will not be allowed. Damage caused to the environment by such activities cannot be offset."

Noting that unscientific cutting of the hill at 90 degrees angle during the upgradation and expansion of roads in the Western Ghats region has led to landslides, the Minister said contractors and engineers carrying out such work have also been given notice and directions have been issued to take action against them.

US General arrives in Middle East

WASHINGTON, Aug 4 (ANI)

US CENTRAL Command's General Michael Kurilla arrived in the region on Saturday amid preparations for a possible attack by Iran on Israel in response to the recent killings of senior Hamas and Hezbollah leaders.

General Kurilla's visit is now seen as a strategic move. Three US and Israeli officials said that they expect Iran to launch an attack on Israel as early as Monday. Iranian and Hezbollah leaders have pledged to retaliate for the recent killings.