

## Trump's business ventures spark new conflict-of-interest concerns

WASHINGTON: (News Desk) US President Donald Trump faces renewed accusations of monetising the presidency, with potential conflicts of interest emerging from ventures that include cryptocurrency, social media and other avenues for those seeking to funnel money his way. Trump handed over management of those assets to his children before returning to the White House and he will have no role in day-to-day decision making, according to his company. An outside ethics lawyer will monitor the company's activities and his investments will likewise be handled by an outside firm. The Trump Organisation also says it will not enter into new material transactions with foreign governments and says it will donate all profits from foreign government patronage to the US Treasury. That largely mirrors the arrangement he had during his first term from 2017-2021, which ethics experts said did not do enough to prevent conflicts between his official duties and his business empire.

## Japan's worst wildfire in 50 years makes 4,000 homeless

TOKYO: (News Desk) Firefighters were on Tuesday battling Japan's worst wildfire in half a century, which has left one dead and forced the evacuation of nearly 4,000 local residents.

White smoke billowed from a forested area around the northern city of Ofunato, aerial TV footage showed, five days after the blaze began after record low rainfall. The fire also follows Japan's hottest summer on record last year, as climate change pushes up temperatures worldwide. As of Tuesday morning, the wildfire had engulfed around 6,400 acres, the fire and disaster management agency said — over seven times the area of New York's Central Park.

That makes it Japan's largest wildfire since 1975 when 2,700 hectares burnt in Kushiro on northern Hokkaido island. It is estimated to have damaged at least 80 buildings by Sunday, although details were still being assessed, the agency said.

Military and fire department helicopters are trying to douse the Ofunato fire, a city official told reporters. "At the moment, there is no indication that the fire is under control," the official said.

Snow is expected overnight, changing to rain, but the official said he could not say whether it would help extinguish the blaze. "The poor weather may prevent helicopters from dropping water," he warned.

## Israeli agency admits failure over Oct 7 raid

JERUSALEM: (News Desk) Israel's top security agency ignored signs Hamas would attack in Oct 2023 and was fooled into believing the fighter group did not want all-out war, the agency reported in its own inquiry into one of Israel's most devastating security failures.

The Shin Bet's report was published on Tuesday, five days after the military released the result of an investigation saying it had drastically underestimated Hamas' capabilities and "failed in its mission to protect Israeli civilians".

Hamas fighters from Gaza raided southern Israel on Oct 7, 2023. More than 48,000 people have been killed in Israel's conflict on Gaza since then, according to Palestinian health officials, with the small enclave largely demolished and most of its 2.3 million people displaced, humanitarian agencies say. military released the result of an investigation saying it had drastically underestimated Hamas' capabilities and "failed in its mission to protect Israeli civilians. Around 400 Israeli soldiers have also been killed.

A fragile ceasefire has held in Gaza since Jan 19. A published summary of Shin Bet's investigation said that if it "had acted differently in the years preceding the (Hamas) attack and on the night of the attack...., the massacre would have been prevented". "This is not the standard that we expected from ourselves and the public from us," the report said.

Both investigations were published as calls grow from within the Israeli opposition and civil society for a national inquiry into the government's failures on the deadliest single day in modern Israeli history. Soon after the start of the conflict, Israel's military and its main intelligence agencies admitted they had failed to foresee the lightning attack by thousands of Hamas-led gunmen military released the result of an investigation saying it had drastically underestimated Hamas' capabilities and "failed in its mission to protect Israeli civilians. The Israeli military's findings focused on tactical, battle and intelligence failures before, during and in the days after Oct 7. The armed forces chief of staff, Lieutenant General Herzli Halevi, announced his resignation in January, taking responsibility for the army's failure. But the political establishment has so far avoided a reckoning despite repeated calls on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to hold a full national inquiry. In a fiery parliamentary debate on Monday, Netanyahu said an inquiry would be held eventually but it must be "objective...., balanced and not dependent" on predetermined findings.



Germany is set to rearm in a way not seen since World War II after the likely next chancellor, Friedrich Merz, said his government would vastly increase defence spending.

## Germany set for massive rearmament as divide with US widens

Washington (News Desk) Germany is set to rearm in a way not seen since World War II after the likely next chancellor, Friedrich Merz, said his government would vastly increase defence spending. The announcement means Germany will effectively have to override its constitutionally enshrined "debt brake" so it can up its defence budget by \$107

billion a year as Europe braces for a weakening of the US defence umbrella. "There are moments in which the history of a country takes an unexpected turn," the Zeit newspaper said today, adding that Merz's plans "may turn out to be one such moment". The plans were unveiled on Tuesday as part of expedited talks between

Merz's centre-right CDU/CSU alliance and the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) on a possible coalition after last month's general election. Their tempo was stepped up further after Friday's televised row between US President Donald Trump and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky, with the White House then freeing aid to Kyiv. Merz,

a longtime Atlanticist who had previously balked at financing public spending through large-scale debt, has quickly changed his tune given the head-spinning pace of events. Germany's EU partners, who are gathering for a key summit on Thursday to discuss Ukraine and defence, had been waiting for action from Berlin after months of political paral-

## Trump hails Pakistan's help in arresting IS terrorist behind 2021 Kabul airport bombing

Washington (News Desk) US President Donald Trump on Wednesday said the person responsible for killing 13 US service members during the withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 had been arrested with the help of Pakistan and was now on his way to the United States to face justice.

The 2021 Abbey Gate bombing killed 13 US service members and ap-

proximately 170 Afghan civilians during the chaotic US withdrawal from Afghanistan. The militant Islamic State (IS) group had claimed responsibility for the killings. Trump shared the news in his first address to Congress since returning to the White House for a second term. While he gave no further details, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, in a post on X, identified

the held terrorist as Sharifullah, a "top tier operational commander" of the militant IS-KP chapter. "Tonight, I am pleased to announce that we have just apprehended the top terrorist responsible for that atrocity, and he is on his way here to face the swift sword of American justice," the US president told the Congress. In a rare public gesture of appreciation, Trump

thanked Islamabad for its role in the capture, saying: "I want to thank especially the government of Pakistan for helping arrest this monster."

Trump emphasised his personal connection with the US victims' families, stating: "I spoke to many of the parents and loved ones, and they're all in our hearts tonight. Just spoke to them on phone. We had a big call."



US President Donald Trump addresses a joint session of Congress at the US Capitol on March 04, 2025 in Washington, DC

## 'America is back,' Trump declares in divisive Congress speech

Washington (News Desk) Donald Trump declared "America is back" on Tuesday in his first address to Congress since returning to power, touting his radical policies in the face of raucous Democratic hostility while proclaiming a breakthrough on Ukraine. In the longest presidential speech to lawmakers on record,

the Republican repeatedly hailed billionaire advisor Elon Musk's controversial assault on the federal bureaucracy and said his administration was "just getting started". "The American Dream is unstoppable," said Trump in a speech lasting over one hour and 40 minutes, which beat Bill Clinton's record for his State of

the Union speech in 2000. Almost every line got loud applause from Republican Party members, including on two occasions when Trump singled out SpaceX and Tesla tycoon Musk, who stood up to salute Congress. But protests also began within minutes. One Democratic congressman, Al Green, was ejected because he refused

to stop heckling Trump over healthcare programmes, and shaking his walking stick at the president. Other Democrats silently held up placards including "False" and "Musk steals" and "That's a lie!" And at one moment, numerous Democrats yelled "January 6!" at Trump, referring to his supporters' violent attack.

## Scottish Sikh man acquitted in India terror case

Delhi (News Desk) A SCOTTISH Sikh man detained in India for seven years on terror charges has been cleared in one of nine cases against him, according to a BBC News report. Jagtar Singh Johal from Dumbarton was arrested in 2017 in Punjab, India, weeks after his wedding there. He has been held in prison ever since, on trial for his alleged role in a series of targeted killings of religious and political figures. Now a verdict in the District Court in Moga, Punjab, has acquitted him of conspiracy under the country's anti-terror law and of being a member of a "terrorist gang". His legal team said the allegations against Johal in all the cases, for which he faces the death penalty, are close to identical and that the other charges should now be dismissed. His brother Gurpreet Singh Johal has called on the UK government to secure the 38-year-old's release. He told BBC Scotland News: "My brother has had seven years of his life wasted in jail."

## Australia's Steve Smith retires from one-day internationals

Sydney (News Desk) Steve Smith announced his retirement from one-day international cricket on Wednesday after captaining Australia to a semi-final exit at the Champions Trophy, bringing down the curtain on a career in the format that included two World Cup wins.

The 35-year-old batsman, who was his team's top scorer with 73 as Australia lost to India by four wickets in Dubai on Tuesday, said he would still be available for selection for T20 internationals and test matches.

"It has been a great ride and I have loved every minute of it," Smith said in a Cricket Australia statement. "There have been so many amazing times and wonderful memories. Winning two World Cups was a great highlight along with the many fantastic teammates who shared the journey."

"Now is a great opportunity for people to start preparing for the 2027 World Cup so it feels like the right time to make way."

Smith scored exactly 5,800 runs at an average of 43.28 with 12 centuries in 170 ODIs since making his debut in the format in early 2010 as a spin-bowling all-rounder. He scored five half-centuries, including an unbeaten 56 in the final, to help Australia win the 2015 World Cup on home soil, and was part of the team that regained the trophy in India in 2023.

## Travel logistics could've been more efficient, says Bavuma ahead of semi-final

LAHORE: (News Desk) South African captain Temba Bavuma hinted on Tuesday that the unnecessary trip to Dubai for his side could've been avoided, although he added there was little they could do with the Champions Trophy schedule having been made the way it was. Having clinched top spot in their section after winning the final Group 'B' match against England, South Africa had to travel to Dubai for the last Group 'A' match between New Zealand and India to see where they will play the semi-final.

India, who refused to travel to Pakistan, were to play their semi-final in Dubai regardless of where they finished in their group and once they secured top spot by beating New Zealand, they set up a last-four clash against Group 'B' runners-up Australia.

It meant South Africa had to spend an ultimately pointless day in Dubai before reaching Lahore on Monday afternoon ahead of their semi-final against New Zealand on Wednesday. "The logistics, the scheduling, it is what it is," Bavuma told reporters at the Gaddafi Stadium on the eve of their last-four match.

## Santner admits Champions Trophy schedule a challenge for players to overcome

LAHORE: (News Desk) Mitchell Santner, droopy-eyed with his hair a mess, yawned as soon as he sat down for his press conference at the Gaddafi Stadium on Tuesday. It's been a quick turnaround between games for New Zealand and their skipper — two days on from playing their final group game against India in Dubai, here they were preparing for the Champions Trophy semi-final against South Africa on Wednesday.

"It was actually probably more of a day's sleep by the time we got here," said Santner, whose side landed in Lahore on Monday afternoon, when asked if New Zealand had a good night's sleep.

"But yeah, I think it was obviously a tough travel. But I think it was nice to get it done, get here. We can kind of reset. The boys obviously recovered yesterday after the travel, but we're good to go today and tomorrow." The Champions Trophy schedule has come under heavy fire, many accusing it of favouring India. New Zealand played Pakistan in the tournament opener on Feb 19 before playing Bangladesh in their second Group 'A' game five days later. Their clash against India came another six days later but it's been a squeeze between that game and the semi-final, especially since they had to travel from Dubai to Lahore.

"I think scheduling is an issue just all around," said Santner. "I think when you do have time to rest and recover, I think it's very important, like you said, with the quick turnaround of games. One-day cricket can be quite exhausting on the body, so I think for us today it might be making sure the bowlers are ready for tomorrow."

"I can't imagine they'll be doing much today just getting ready. I think, yeah, I mean, I don't know what you can change, I think with the heavy international schedule, franchise schedule, and then trying to schedule ICC events, it can be quite a challenge."

## China 'ready to fight till the end' in US trade war

Hongkong (News Desk) The Chinese Embassy in the United States said on Wednesday that it was "ready to fight till the end" with the US in its trade war. Major Asian markets traded up on Wednesday, reversing their losses a day after US President Donald Trump imposed more blanket tariffs on Chinese imports following a similar move last month.

US tariffs are expected to hit hundreds of billions of dollars in total trade between the world's two

largest economies. Chinese exports have also reached record levels last year. "If war is what the US wants, be it a tariff war, a trade war or any other type of war, we're ready to fight till the end," the Chinese Embassy in the United States said in a post on X. The embassy quoted a post by the Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson which said that, "The fentanyl issue is a flimsy excuse to raise US tariffs on Chinese imports. Our countermeasures to

defend our rights and interests are fully legitimate and necessary." Earlier in the month, the US decided to impose a 10-per cent tariff on goods imported from China. The White House said the 10pc tariff is on all imports from China and on top of existing tariffs. The tariff hike will come into effect on Tuesday. The US side cited the fentanyl issue in the US as the justification for the move. Fentanyl is a highly addictive synthetic opioid, 50 times more potent than

heroin. It is often used to make counterfeit narcotics because of its relatively cheap price, and it has played an increasingly central role in an opioid crisis in the United States. Beijing had announced its own measures on Tuesday in retaliation for Washington's latest tariff hike and vowed it would fight a trade war to the "bitter end". The moves will see China impose levies of up to 15pc on a range of US agricultural products including soybeans, pork and wheat starting from

early next week. Beijing's countermeasures represent a "relatively muted response" in comparison to Trump's all-encompassing tariffs, wrote Lynn Song, chief economist for Greater China at ING. "The retaliation could have been a lot stronger, and with every further escalation the risks are also rising for a stronger response," he said. Analysts say authorities could announce further plans to boost the economy this week, adding to a string of aggressive support measures announced late last year.

China eyes 5pc growth despite US trade war. China set an ambitious annual growth target of around five per cent, vowing to make domestic demand its main economic driver as an escalating trade war with the United States hit Beijing's exports. Beijing also announced a rare hike in fiscal funding, allowing its budget deficit to reach four pc this year as it battles stuttering employment for young people, stubbornly low consumer demand and a persistent property sector debt crisis.