

Germany wants nuclear weapons to boost deterrence

BERLIN: (News Desk) German Chancellor-in-waiting Friedrich Merz on Sunday said he would like talks with France and Britain about sharing their nuclear weapons, but not as a substitute for US nuclear protection of Europe. "Sharing nuclear weapons is an issue that we need to talk about ... we have to become stronger together in nuclear deterrence," he said in an interview on Deutschlandfunk radio, a day after agreeing on the cornerstones of a coalition deal between his conservative party and the Social Democratic SPD party. "We should talk with both countries (France and Britain), always also from the perspective of supplementing the American nuclear shield, which we of course want to see maintained." Germany, due to its Second World War past, has bound itself to non-nuclear defence in a number of international treaties but participates in Nato weapons-sharing arrangements. At a summit in Brussels on Thursday, EU leaders backed plans to spend more on defence amid fears that Russia, emboldened by its war in Ukraine.

Mark Carney wins vote to replace Trudeau as Canada PM

Toronto (News Desk) Canada's Liberal Party overwhelmingly elected Mark Carney as the country's next prime minister on Sunday, as the former central banker warned of "dark days" brought on by the US under President Donald Trump. Carney lost no time taking a defiant stance against a US president he accused of "attacking Canadian workers, families, and businesses." "We cannot let him succeed," added the 59-year-old, who will take over from outgoing Liberal leader, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, in the coming days. Carney may not have the job for long. Canada must hold elections by October but could well see a snap poll within weeks. Current polls put the opposition Conservatives as slight favorites. In his victory speech to a boisterous crowd of party supporters in Ottawa, Carney warned the US under Trump was seeking to seize control of Canada. "The Americans want our resources, our water, our land, our country," he said. "These are dark days, dark days brought on by a country we can no longer trust." Carney, who previously led both the Bank of Canada and the Bank of England, soundly defeated his main challenger, Trudeau's former deputy prime minister Chrystia Freeland, who held several senior cabinet positions in the Liberal government that was first elected in 2015.

Hamas pushes for phase two of Gaza truce talks

CAIRO: (News Desk) Hamas reiterated on Sunday its insistence on moving directly into negotiating a second phase of the Gaza truce, as Israel announced it would dispatch a delegation to Doha for further talks. Meanwhile, Israel carried out an air strike in northern Gaza, rattling the already fragile ceasefire. Representatives of Hamas met with mediators in Cairo at the weekend, emphasising the need for humanitarian aid to re-enter the besieged territory "without restrictions or conditions", according to press release of the group. The high-level delegation also stressed the need for "moving directly to begin negotiations for the second phase" of the deal, which will aim to lay the groundwork for a permanent ceasefire. Hamas's demands for the second phase include a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, an end to the blockade, the reconstruction of the territory and financial support, an official told AFP. Hamas spokesperson Abdel Latif Al-Qanoua said indicators were so far "positive". Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office meanwhile said it would send delegates to Doha on Monday. Israel has maintained it wants an extension of the truce's first phase until mid-April. That initial period ended on March 1 after six weeks of relative calm that included the exchange of 25 living prisoners and eight bodies for the release of about 1,800 Palestinians held in Israel. The truce also enabled the flow of vital food, shelter and medical assistance into Gaza. After Israel turned the pipeline off again, UN rights experts accused the government of "weaponising starvation". Displaced Palestinian widow Haneen al-Dura told AFP she and her children spent a month and a half living on the street "among dogs and rats" before receiving a tent. "As the family's provider, it was distressing and I couldn't sleep at all during the night," she said. Besides, at their regular weekend rally in Tel Aviv, families of Israeli prisoners demanded the government fully implement the ceasefire. "The war could resume in a week — they have even picked a name for the operation," Einav Zangauker, the mother of Matan Zangauker, told the crowd. She said the war won't bring the prisoners back home, it will kill them. Israeli air strikes Israel carried out an air strike in northern Gaza on Sunday, rattling the fragile truce it prepared for fresh talks in Doha on the future of its ceasefire with Hamas. Despite the end of the truce's initial phase a week ago, both sides have refrained from returning to all-out war, though there have been sporadic episodes of violence.



A barber tends to a customer at a makeshift stall in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip, on Sunday.

Trump's plan to displace Palestinians 'taking shape', says Israeli minister

JERUSALEM/GAZA CITY: (News Desk) Israel's far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said on Sunday that US President Donald Trump's plan to remove Palestinians from war-battered Gaza was "taking shape", despite widespread rejection by governments in the region. "This plan is taking shape, with ongoing actions in

coordination with the (US) administration," Smotrich told an event in the Israeli parliament, adding that preparations were underway to form a managing body that would oversee displacement. "This has the potential to create a historic change in the Middle East and for the state of Israel," said Smotrich, who has repeat-

edly backed resuming the attacks against Hamas and has expressed support for re-establishing permanent Israeli presence in the territory. The plan proposed by Trump would require finding countries willing to take in at least some of the Gaza Strip's 2.4 million people, Smotrich noted. Tel Aviv decides to cut off electricity to the devastated territory 'immediately'

"It involves identifying key countries, understanding their interests — both with the US and with us — and fostering cooperation," he said. Implementing the plan, which other Israeli leaders have welcomed but Palestinians, Arab governments and some world leaders have condemned, would be a massive logistical operation, said Smotrich.

India clashes injure four in Champions Trophy win celebrations

Delhi (News Desk) At least four people were injured in the central Indian town of Dr Ambedkar Nagar on Sunday in clashes that erupted when revellers celebrating India's Champions Trophy win lit firecrackers outside a mosque, officials said. India won the Champions Trophy title on Sunday evening after beating New Zealand by four wickets in the final in Dubai, claim-

ing its second successive global title. The clashes in Dr Ambedkar Nagar, earlier known as Mhow, involved stone pelting from both sides, officials said, and several cars, shops, and bikes were also vandalised and torched. The town is located about 200 kilometres from Madhya Pradesh state's capital Bhopal. "Some processions were

being taken out in which some people lit firecrackers outside the masjid (mosque), after which there was a disagreement between both sides," senior police officer Hitika Vasal told reporters. Police used tear gas shells to quell the violence, local media reported. Video footage showed deserted lanes with police personnel in riot gear, as some cars with shat-

tered windows and others blackened as a result of being torched stood by the side. The footage also showed glass shards on the road and shops that had been vandalised. "The situation is currently under control," another senior police officer, Nimish Agarwal, told reporters, adding that police patrols had been started in sensitive areas.



Friedrich Merz, chancellor-in-waiting and leader of Christian Democratic Union party (CDU), looks on as he addresses the media following the federal state election of Hamburg, at the CDU headquarters in Berlin, Germany, March 3

Pakistan seeks clarity as US mulls restrictions on entry

WASHINGTON: (News Desk) Pakistan has reached out to the State Department for clarity after reports of possible travel curbs being imposed on entry to the US. Last week, a Reuters report suggested that Pakistan may also be included on a list of countries whose citizens would be barred from

entering the US, as part of the Trump administration's tightening noose on illegal immigration. Subsequent reporting in the New York Times suggested that Pakistanis may not face an outright ban on travel, but may undergo "more scrutiny" when applying for a visa. "We are in contact with

the State Department, but nothing has been shared yet," Pakistan's US Ambassador Rizwan Saeed Shaikh. Embassy in Washington 'talking to State Dept'; US officials say visa plan under review. Earlier this week, NYT reported that Pakistan could be placed in an "orange" category, which would impose

restrictions on certain types of visas. Countries in this category would only be eligible for visas such as business travel for affluent individuals, but not for immigrants or tourists. The length of these visas could also be shortened, and applicants would be required to attend in-person interviews.

Musk backs US' Nato exit as EU faces new reality

BRUSSELS: (News Desk) Elon Musk, senior adviser to US President Donald Trump, has supported the US exit from Nato, saying on his social media platform that it "doesn't make sense for America to pay for the defence of Europe." Despite verbal broadsides by President Donald Trump and Musk against Nato and the EU, the European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said on Sunday the bloc still sees the United States as "allies". The senior adviser to US President Donald Trump was responding to a post on X early Sunday that asserted the US should "Exit Nato now!" "We really should," the billionaire co-founder and chief executive officer of Tesla said. European Commission chief hopes 'common interests outweigh differences' with Washington Musk's comments came at a time when the future of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato), which will mark its 76th anniversary in April, hung in the balance.

Syria hit by deadliest violence since Assad's fall

DAMASCUS: (News Desk) Hundreds of people were killed in some of the deadliest violence in 13 years of civil war, pitting loyalists of deposed President Bashar al-Assad against security forces of the country's new interim rulers as UN human rights chief called on Syria's interim leaders on Sunday to intervene and prevent mass killing of people in coastal areas. The clashes, which a war monitoring group said had already killed 1,000 people, mostly civilians, continued for a fourth day in Assad's coastal heartland. A Syrian security source said the pace of fighting had slowed around the cities of Latakia, Jabla and Baniyas, while forces searched surrounding mountainous areas where an estimated 5,000 pro-Assad insurgents were hiding. The United Nations Human Rights chief called on Syria's interim leaders on Sunday to intervene to prevent reported mass killings in coastal areas and bring perpetrators to account. UN calls on Syria's interim leaders to prevent mass killing of people in coastal areas "The caretaker authorities' announcements of their intention to respect the law must be followed by swift actions to protect Syrians, including by taking all necessary measures to prevent any violations and abuses and achieve accountability when these occur," UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk said in a statement. Interim leader of Syria Ahmed Sharaa urged Syrians not to let sectarian tensions further destabilise the country.

Pakistan's absence from Champions Trophy presentation ceremony raises eyebrows

Lahore (News Desk) Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) officials' absence from the Champions Trophy 2025 final's presentation ceremony on Sunday has drawn criticism from the country's former senior players of the game. India beat New Zealand in the final in Dubai, with Pakistan playing all their matches at the same venue after they refused to tour hosts Pakistan for the eight-nation event for unspecified reasons. Lahore was the alternate venue for the final had India chief Mohsin Naqvi was conspicuous by his absence from the occasion. Instead, Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president Binny presented jackets to the Indian players. Even Tournament Director Sumair Ahmed Syed was not on stage for the presentation ceremony, making it seem like a complete family affair for team India. Speaking on the topic on the Ten Sports programme "The DP World Dressing Room," former Pakistan cricket captain Wasim Akram said, "We [Pakistan] were the hosts, weren't we?" Then the chief operating officer or whoever was representing the PCB chairman.

India captain Rohit heads off retirement rumours

Delhi (News Desk) India captain Rohit Sharma has no plans to quit the 50-overs format anytime soon, the opener said after guiding the team to the Champions Trophy title in Dubai. Rohit quit Twenty20 Internationals immediately after leading India to their second 20-overs World Cup title in West Indies last year. Speculation was rife that the opener, who turns 38 next month, might do likewise after India beat New Zealand in the 50-overs final on Sunday. Though not asked about retirement plans, Rohit headed off speculation by ending his post-match press conference saying, "One more thing, I'm not going to retire from this format, just to make sure that no rumours are spread moving forward." Sunday's win marked India's second successive title in a global tournament organised by the International Cricket Council. Under Rohit, India have lost just one match — the final of the home 50-overs World Cup in 2023 to Australia — in their last three ICC events. Like in the T20 World Cup last year, India were unbeaten throughout the tournament and Rohit saved his best for the final when he smashed a match-winning 76 in a low-scoring contest. "I know how important it is to score runs in the powerplay, because we saw in all five games that after 10 overs, it becomes very difficult (to score) when the field spreads and spinners come in," India's test and one-day international captain said. "It becomes a little tough because the pitch is already slow and we're batting second." India's captain Rohit Sharma plays a shot during the ICC Champions Trophy one-day international (ODI) final cricket match between India and New Zealand at the Dubai International Stadium in Dubai. Rohit, who scored a record five hundreds in a single ODI World Cup in 2019 — even though India crashed out in the semi-finals — said team success gave him more joy than personal milestones. "I contributed a lot in the 2019 World Cup, but we didn't win. It wasn't fun.

Russia claims counter-offensive into Ukraine's Sumy region

KYIV: (News Desk) Russia on Sunday announced it had captured territory in Ukraine's Sumy region for the first time since 2022 in a cross-border offensive as Kyiv struggles to hold onto territory in Russia's neighbouring Kursk region. Russia also claimed the recapture of four new villages in its Kursk border region as its troops pushed against Ukrainian soldiers who had seized territory there. Kyiv wants to use the territory it holds in Kursk as a potential bargaining

chip in any peace negotiations. US and Ukrainian negotiators are set to meet for parts in Saudi Arabia next week, with US President Donald Trump's administration keen to secure a ceasefire and a "framework" for a peace agreement. The United States has cut off Ukraine's access to intelligence sharing and satellite data in a bid to force it to negotiate. The Russian defence ministry said in a briefing that its forces, in a counter-offensive, had "liberated"

the small village of Novenke in Sumy near the border with Kursk. Russia briefly occupied parts of Sumy at the start of its all-out invasion in 2022 but has not conquered any territory there since. Russian President Vladimir Putin said in mid-February that his forces had entered this part of north-eastern Ukraine, a claim branded a "lie" by Kyiv, although it has acknowledged isolated attacks. Novenke is located about a kilometre (less than one mile) from Kursk and

Russian military bloggers said its capture brought troops closer to blocking a major Ukrainian supply route. Kyiv has not yet commented on Russia's claim to have captured Novenke. Incursion's 'final phase' Ukraine's state Centre for Countering Disinformation on Saturday denied reports of a "massive breakthrough" by Russia, saying its own forces were destroying small groups trying to cross the border. Russia on Sunday announced the recapture of the villages of Lebedevka,

Malaya Loknya, Cherkasskoye Porechnoye and Kositsa in Kursk, bringing its troops closer to taking back the Ukraine-held town of Sudzha, about 10 kilometres (six miles) away. Ukraine launched its incursion into Kursk last August, seizing territory as a buffer zone. But since then, Russia has taken back more than two-thirds of the territory. A Russian army commander, Aпти Alaudinov, wrote on Telegram on Saturday that "all units have launched a large-scale offensive across all areas on

the Kursk section of the front." A Russian military blogger, Yevgeny Poddubny, on Sunday wrote that the Kursk incursion "is in its final phase". Prominent Ukrainian journalist Yuriy Butusov wrote on Sunday that holding onto the Kursk territory was no longer tactically justified. Gas pipe Ukraine's General Staff on Saturday confirmed reports that Russian special forces had used an underground gas pipe to reach the outskirts of the main town controlled by Ukraine in the region, Sudzha.