

80pc of scrapped AID schemes didn't benefit US, says Rubio

WASHINGTON: (News Desk) The Trump administration has cancelled more than 80 per cent of all the programmes at US Agency for International Development following a six-week review, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Monday. "The 5200 contracts that are now cancelled spent tens of billions of dollars in ways that did not serve, (and in some cases even harmed), the core national interests of the United States," Rubio said in an X post that he sent from his personal account. He then pinned it on his timeline. The remaining approximately 1,000 programmes, he said, would now be administered "more effectively" under the State Department and in consultation with Congress. US President Donald Trump returned to office on Jan 20 and immediately ordered a 90-day pause on foreign aid pending a review of whether the programmes align with his "America First" foreign policy. The order, and ensuing stop work orders, threw USAID into turmoil, halting the agency's operations around the world.

Palestinian detained for leading anti-Israel rallies at US varsity

NEW YORK: (News Desk) Immigration officers have arrested a leader of the protests at Columbia University against Israel's conflict in Gaza, authorities said on Sunday, after US President Donald Trump vowed to deport foreign pro-Palestinian student demonstrators. Mahmoud Khalil, one of the most prominent faces of the university's protest movement that erupted in response to Israel's conduct of the conflict, was arrested on Sunday, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said on X. The agency said the action was taken "in support of President Trump's executive orders prohibiting anti-Semitism, and in coordination with the Department of State." Trump said that the detention of Mahmoud Khalil is "the first arrest of many to come." "We know there are more students at Columbia and other Universities across the Country who have engaged in pro-terrorist, anti-Semitic, anti-American activity, and the Trump Administration will not tolerate it," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform. Trump threatened in his post further action against other campus protesters, some of whom he alleged without evidence to be "paid agitators." "We will find, apprehend, and deport these terrorist sympathisers from our country — never to return again," he wrote. The Student Workers of Columbia Union said in a statement that Khalil had been detained on Saturday.

Pakistan's gender pay gap among highest in the world: International

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) Pakistan has one of the largest gender pay gaps (GPG) globally, with women earning significantly less than men across most sectors, according to a report by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The report, released on Monday, says that the majority of the pay gap in Pakistan is not due to differences in skills, education or labour market characteristics but is instead largely unexplained, suggesting the presence of gender-based discrimination. The report highlights that Pakistan's GPG remains higher than that of many other South Asian countries. In Sri Lanka, the GPG based on hourly wages stands at 22pc. In Nepal, it is 18pc. In Bangladesh, the pay gap is actually reversed (-5pc), meaning women, on average, earn slightly more than men. In Pakistan, the GPG is estimated at 25pc when using hourly wages and 30pc when considering monthly wages, meaning women earn between Rs700 and Rs750 for every Rs1,000 earned by men.

While the gender pay gap in Pakistan remains high, the report notes that it has decreased over the years. In 2018, the GPG was 33pc, indicating gradual improvement. The annual report benchmarks the current state and evolution of gender parity across four key dimensions: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.

In the report, which was released on Wednesday, Pakistan has been placed near the bottom of both the regional and global rankings. Only Iran, Algeria, Chad and Afghanistan are below Pakistan. In 2022, Pakistan ranked 145 out of 146. However, the country has improved by 5.1 percentage points on the "economic participation and opportunities" sub-index in the last decade to attain 36.2 per cent parity, though this level of parity remains one of the lowest globally, the report pointed out. The report also finds that the GPG varies significantly across different segments of the labour market. In the formal sector, the GPG is close to zero, meaning wages are nearly equal when employment laws are enforced. In informal and household sectors, the pay gap exceeds 40pc, indicating severe wage disparities in jobs without regulatory oversight. In the public sector, the gap is also relatively low, suggesting that strict labour regulations help reduce wage inequality. GPG is a measurable indicator of inequality between women and men. Most governments have legislated to guarantee equality of treatment between men and women in remuneration. The ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) is one of the most highly ratified conventions.



An apartment damaged by recent Ukraine's drone attack, according the local authorities, in the course of Russia-Ukraine conflict, in Ramenskoye in the Moscow region, is seen in this image released March 11.

India brings home nearly 300 citizens rescued from Southeast Asian scam centres

Delhi: (News Desk) India has brought home nearly 300 of its nationals who were lured to various southeast Asian countries, including Myanmar, with fake job offers and made to engage in cybercrime and other fraudulent activities in scam compounds, the government said. Thousands of people have been freed

from cyber scam centres along the Thailand-Myanmar border this year as countries work together to crack down on the criminal networks. China and Indonesia repatriated some of their citizens last month. "Indian embassies in Myanmar and Thailand have coordinated with local authorities to secure the repatriation

of 283 Indian nationals today by an IAF (Indian Air Force) aircraft from Mae Sot in Thailand," India's foreign ministry said late on Monday. Thailand arrested 100 people last week as a part of its crackdown on the scam centres. Billions of dollars a year from illegal online schemes Criminal gangs have trafficked hundreds of

thousands of people to the centres, which generate billions of dollars a year from illegal online schemes, according to the United Nations. India also warned its citizens against the scams, advising them to "verify" the credentials of foreign employers and check the "antecedents" of recruiting agents and companies before taking up job offers.

Pakistan ranks 3rd in list of most polluted countries for 2024

Washington: (News Desk) Pakistan ranked the third most polluted country in 2024 — when it faced a record smog season — while Chad topped the list, according to an annual report published by Swiss air technology company IQAir on Tuesday. The country last year witnessed unprecedented smog levels, especially in Punjab where the situation was declared a "calamity"

and around two million people had to seek treatment for resulting health issues. The government had taken various steps to combat pollution, including imposing lockdowns and closing schools. According to IQAir's 2024 World Air Quality Report, Chad topped the rankings for the most polluted country overall, followed by Bangladesh, Pakistan, Democratic Republic of

Congo and then India in fifth place. For Pakistan, the average concentration of particles less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM2.5) for Pakistan was 73.7 micrograms per cubic metre (µg/m³) — nearly 15 times higher than the safe levels set by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Interestingly, despite the record smog, Pakistan's average pollution last year

remained the same as in 2023. In the Central and South Asia region, Pakistan ranked second — just behind Bangladesh — with Lahore, Multan, Peshawar and Sialkot among the 15 most polluted cities in the region. Pollution rankings for 2024 for the Central and South Asia region. — screengrab from IQAir annual report.



Jeddah: (Left) Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is being welcomed by the deputy governor of Makkah region, Prince Saud bin Mishal bin Abdulaziz, upon his arrival on Monday for talks between Ukrainian, Saudi and US officials.



Ukraine strikes Moscow in biggest drone attack on Russian capital

Moscow: (News Desk) Ukraine launched its biggest drone attack on the Russian capital on Tuesday with at least 91 drones targeting Moscow, killing at least one person, sparking fires, closing airports and forcing dozens of flights to be diverted, Russian officials said. A total of 337 Ukrainian drones were downed over Russia,

including 91 over the Moscow region and 126 over the Kursk region, where Ukrainian back, the defence ministry said. The massive dawn drone attack unfurled just as a team of Ukrainian officials prepare to meet a US team in Saudi Arabia to seek grounds for possible peace talks in the three-year-old war, and as Russian

forces try to encircle thousands of Ukrainian soldiers in the western Russian region of Kursk. As rush hour built, Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said air defences were still repelling attacks on the city, which along with the surrounding region has a population of at least 21 million and is one of the biggest metropolitan areas in

Europe. "The most massive attack of enemy UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) on Moscow has been repelled," Sobyanin said in a post on Telegram. Moscow Region Governor Andrei Vorobyov said at least one person was killed and three injured, and he posted a picture of a wrecked apartment with its windows blown out.

Bracewell leads depleted New Zealand in Pakistan T20 series on home soil

Lahore: (News Desk) New Zealand for the first time on home soil when they meet Pakistan in a five-game T20 series, leading a squad named on Tuesday, which missed several key players because of the Indian Premier League (IPL). Bracewell starred as the Black Caps reached the final of the Champions Trophy and is one of seven players from that one-day team selected for the T20s. But a host of top names are not available due to IPL commitments, including regular skipper Mitchell Santner, along with Devon Conway, Lockie Ferguson and Glenn Phillips. Kane Williamson also made himself unavailable for the series, which gets under way on Sunday in Christchurch.

"It's a great honour and a real privilege to captain your country," said Bracewell, who led the side on their white-ball tour of Pakistan last year but has yet to take the reins at home.

PCB accuses ICC of sidelining it from Champions Trophy

LAHORE: (News Desk) The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has lodged a formal protest against the International Cricket Council's (ICC) failure to include its representative in the post-match ceremony of the Champions Trophy final.

Despite the presence of PCB's Chief Operating Officer Sumair Ahmed Syed — who was also the director of the tournament — at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium during the decider between eventual winners India and New Zealand on Sunday, the official didn't feature among the dignitaries featured in the ceremony. The PCB has called out what it believes to be "blatant disregard for Pakistan's role as the host nation" by the ICC. "A formal complaint has been lodged with the ICC, demanding an explanation and a public apology," the board's spokesperson told Dawn on Monday. "We are appalled by this blatant disregard for Pakistan's role as the host nation."

Board formally complains to cricketing body over slew of 'blunders, double standards' and incidents of 'selective governance' "The ICC's decision to exclude Mr Syed — who was both the Tournament Director and the PCB Chair's designated representative — violates its own standard operating procedure," the board said. "This is a matter of principle, fairness, and respect for the game's global stakeholders."

Mr Syed had attended the final in place of PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi, who was initially invited by the ICC, but was unwell and couldn't travel.

Veterans' inclusions in National T20 Cup squads raises eyebrows

LAHORE: (News Desk) Amid Pakistan cricket's ongoing decline — evidenced by the national team's dismal performances in the last three International Cricket Council events, including two World Cups and the Champions Trophy — the Pakistan Cricket Board appears reluctant to adopt a fresh approach.

Instead of prioritising young talent in the upcoming National T20 Cup, scheduled to begin this month, the PCB included veteran players Shoaib Malik (43), Wahab Riaz (39), and Sarfaraz Ahmed (37) in the squads for Sialkot, Karachi, and Lahore, respectively despite the trio serving as those sides' mentors.

The inclusion of these senior players drew widespread criticism, leading to the withdrawal of Wahab and Sarfaraz from their respective teams on Monday. However, Shoaib Malik remains part of the Sialkot squad.

Wahab, a former left-arm pacer, has held multiple roles within the PCB since 2023. Currently serving as head of the board's five-member mentorship panel, he oversees a group featuring Pakistan cricket stalwarts such as Waqar Younis, Misbah-ul-Haq, Saqlain Mushtaq, Sarfraz, and Shoaib.

When you leave, you want to leave Indian team in better place: Kohli

DUBAI: (News Desk) Star batter Virat Kohli said on Sunday his job is not just to win ICC trophies but also ensure that Indian cricket is at a better place when he walks into the sunset, as the team won a third Champions Trophy title with a four-wicket victory over New Zealand, the Press Trust of India news agency reported.

"When you leave, you want to leave the team in a better place, I feel we've a squad that's ready to take on the world for the next eight years," an ecstatic Kohli said after the end of the final.

While Kohli was out for one in the final, his match-winning hundred against Pakistan and a composed half-century against Australia in the semi-final went a long way in India's title triumph. "It's been amazing, we wanted to bounce back after a tough Australian tour, and wanted to win a big tournament, so to win the Champions Trophy is amazing," Kohli told broadcasters.

He then explained that as one of the senior-most players in the team, he also has to focus on grooming the Next-Gen.

"So much talent in the dressing room, they're trying to take their game further and we're just happy to be of help (role of the seniors), sharing our experience and that's what makes this Indian team so strong." He loved that the final went the distance as India completed a chase of 252 with six balls to spare. "These are the things you want to play [for titles], playing under pressure and putting your hand up." He was happy that the title win was a fantastic team effort.

"The whole team, everyone has put their hands up sometimes or other [during the course of the tournament], everyone has put up impactful performances, we've been part of an amazing team, the amount of work we've done in the practice sessions, it feels great [to win]." Shubman [Gill] has been outstanding, Shreyas [Iyer] has played some top knocks, KL [Rahul] has finished games and Hardik [Pandya] has been superb with the bat."

Zelensky, Rubio arrive in Jeddah for Russia truce talks

JEDDAH/KYIV: (News Desk) Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and chief US diplomat Marco Rubio arrived in Saudi Arabia ahead of ceasefire talks on Monday as Ukraine's proposal for a partial truce raised hopes of a breakthrough after three years of war. Zelensky, embroiled in a public row with US President Donald Trump last month, touched down in Jeddah as Rubio cautiously welcomed the idea of an aerial and naval ceasefire. Tuesday's talks between Ukrainian officials

and Rubio's US team will be the first between the two sides since the White House blow-up, when Zelensky left without signing a minerals deal demanded by Trump. Washington has since suspended military aid to Ukraine as well as intelligence sharing and access to satellite imagery. "We do have a proposal for a ceasefire in the sky and ceasefire at sea," a Ukrainian official said on Monday. "Because these are the ceasefire options that are easy to install and to monitor, and it's possible to start with them."

Rubio indicated the idea had promise. "I'm not saying that alone is enough, but it's the kind of concession you would need to see in order to end the conflict," he told reporters. "You're not going to get a ceasefire and an end to this war unless both sides make concessions." Trump says US has 'just about' ended pause on Ukraine intel sharing. Rubio added that he hoped to "resolve" the suspension of military aid that is threatening to hamper Ukraine's campaign. "I think the notion of the pause in

aid, broadly, is something I hope we can resolve. Obviously, what happens tomorrow will be key to that," he said. Zelensky was expected to meet the de facto Saudi ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman later before his officials sit down with the US side on Tuesday. Britain's Financial Times newspaper, citing a source briefed on preparations for the talks, said Kyiv's offer of a partial ceasefire was aimed at convincing Washington to resume military aid and intelligence-sharing. British Prime Minister

Keir Starmer told Trump in a call on Monday that he hoped the talks would lead to the US resuming military aid to Ukraine, Downing Street said. Before his departure for Jeddah, Zelensky said Ukraine wanted peace, insisting Russia was the sole reason that the war was carrying on. "Ukraine has been seeking peace since the very first second of the war, and we have always said that the only reason that the war is continuing is because of Russia," he wrote on social media. US Middle East envoy Steve

Witkoff said Washington wanted to use the talks "to get down a framework for a peace agreement and an initial ceasefire as well". In Jeddah, several Ukrainian and Saudi flags flew on a main roundabout near the airport and on thoroughfares. As well as Rubio, Mike Waltz, Trump's national security adviser, has also confirmed his participation. Zelensky said his negotiators will include Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiga and Defence Minister Rustem Umerov, his chief of staff Andriy Yermak and Pavlo Palisa.