

White House’s doctor finds Trump in ‘excellent health’

WASHINGTON: (News Desk) Donald Trump is in “excellent health,” a White House doctor’s assessment said on Sunday, after he underwent his first annual medical checkup since returning to the US presidency. Republican Trump, 78, has repeatedly boasted about his own vigor since starting a second term, while mocking his 82-year-old Democratic predecessor Joe Biden as decrepit and mentally unfit for office.

“President Trump exhibits excellent cognitive and physical health and is fully fit to execute the duties of the Commander-in-Chief and Head of State,” read a physician’s letter shared by the White House.

It noted a few abnormalities that included minor sun damage to Trump’s skin, as well as scarring on his right ear from a gunshot wound suffered in an assassination attempt last July.

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A colonoscopy revealed last year that Trump had diverticulosis — small pouches in the colon — and a benign polyp, the report said, adding that a follow-up exam was recommended in three years.

It said Trump is taking four medications: two for cholesterol control, aspirin for cardiac prevention, and a steroid skin cream.

The report overall was complimentary of Trump’s health, praising his “active lifestyle” and citing his “frequent victories in golf events” — a common boast of the billionaire who also abstains from alcohol and cigarettes.

He is known, however, to indulge in fast food and famously enjoys well-done steaks — although he appears noticeably thinner than during his first term.

Bangladesh govt says process of model Meghna’s arrest was not proper

DHAKA:(News Desk) Asif Nazrul, adviser to the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, said on Sunday that the arrest of model Meghna Alam was not conducted in accordance with proper procedures.

“There are some allegations against her; however, the arrest under the Special Powers Act was not carried out properly,” he said during a press briefing at the Secretariat.

Meghna, winner of Miss Earth Bangladesh 2020, was arrested by police from her residence in Dhaka recently. Two days after her detention, she was sent to jail following the court proceedings. The court ordered a 30-day detention under the Special Powers Act.

The 30-year-old’s father, Badrul Alam, said her arrest followed a relationship with the then Saudi ambassador to Dhaka. “The ambassador and Meghna were in a relationship, and my daughter refused his marriage proposal because he already has a wife and children,” he said.

“Her detention was approved by the Ministry of Home Affairs. A high-level meeting involving senior government officials has been held in this regard. We are aware of the comments made by various human rights activists concerning the incident. The police are currently investigating the matter,” Asif Nazrul said. Asked whether the Special Powers Act should be abolished, the adviser said, “There should be no repressive laws. We can easily repeal any law if we wish.

Netanyahu says Macron ‘gravely mistaken’ in promoting Palestinian state

JERUSALEM: (News Desk) Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday that French President Emmanuel Macron was “gravely mistaken” in advocating for a Palestinian state. “President Macron is gravely mistaken in continuing to promote the idea of a Palestinian state in the heart of our land — a state whose sole aspiration is the destruction of Israel,” Netanyahu said in a statement. He was addressing Macron’s remarks earlier this week in which he said that France could recognise a Palestinian state within months. “To this day, not a single figure in Hamas or the Palestinian Authority has condemned the horrors of the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust,” Netanyahu said, referring to the Oct 7, 2023 raid led by Hamas on Israel. He described this as “a silence that reveals their true attitude toward the Jewish state.” “We will not endanger our existence over illusions detached from reality, and we will not accept moral lectures about establishing a Palestinian state that would threaten Israel’s survival — especially not from those who oppose granting independence to Corsica, New Caledonia, French Guiana, and other territories, whose independence would pose no threat to France whatsoever. His remarks echoed those of his son Yair, who lashed out at Macron in an earlier post on X. “Screw you!” Yair Netanyahu wrote in English late on Saturday. “Yes to independence of New Caledonia! Yes to independence to French Polynesia! Yes to independence of Corsica! Yes to independence of the Basque Country! Yes to independence of French Guinea!” he added, apparently confusing it with French Guiana.



PEOPLE sift through the rubble in the aftermath of Sunday’s Israeli strike on the Al-Ahli hospital, also known as the Baptist or Ahli Arab hospital, in Gaza City

Israel bombs Gaza’s Baptist hospital

GAZA CITY: (News Desk)

An Israeli strike on Sunday heavily damaged one of a few functioning hospitals in Gaza, leaving behind scenes of devastation and fear and putting nearly one million people without access to emergency or ambulance care.

The strike on Al-Ahli Hospital in northern Gaza — also known as the Baptist or Ahli Arab Hospital — came a day after Israeli forces seized a key corri-

dor in the territory and signalled plans to expand their bombing campaign. Marwan al-Hams, director of field hospitals in the Gaza Strip, warned that putting the Baptist Hospital out of service has left nearly one million people without access to emergency or ambulance care. He stressed that no medicine, medical supplies, or fuel had entered the Gaza Strip in over 40 days. He also revealed that most

hospital oxygen stations are now out of service, placing the lives of dozens of patients in immediate danger. Attack has left one million people without access to emergency treatment, says director of field hospitals “The remaining hospitals in Gaza are severely under-equipped and unable to provide essential medical and surgical care,” al-Hams stressed, sounding the alarm over a looming

collapse of the healthcare system. He urged the international community to act urgently, warning that “without intervention from the free world, Gaza’s entire medical infrastructure could collapse.” Since the outbreak of war, tens of thousands of Gazans have sought refuge in hospitals, many of which have suffered severe damage in the ongoing hostilities.

Bangladesh reintroduces ‘except Israel’ phrase on passports

Dhaka (News Desk) Bangladesh has restored an “except Israel” inscription on passports, local media reported on Sunday, effectively barring its citizens from travelling to that country. Israel is a flash-point issue in Muslim-majority Bangladesh, which does not recognise it.

The phrase “valid for all countries except Israel,” which was printed on

Bangladeshi passports for decades, was removed during the later years of ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina’s tenure. Nilima Afroze, a deputy secretary at the home ministry, told Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) news agency on Sunday that authorities had “issued a directive last week” to restore the inscription. “The director general of

the department of immigration and passport was asked to take necessary measures to implement this change,” local newspaper The Daily Star quoted Afroze as saying on Sunday. In 2021, the words “except Israel” were removed from passports, although the then government under Hasina clarified that the country’s stance on Israel had not changed.

The country’s support for an independent Palestinian state was visible on Saturday when around 100,000 people gathered in Dhaka in solidarity with Gaza. Muslims carry flags during a protest rally called “March for Gaza”, to express solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza, at Suhrawardy Udyan, in Dhaka, Bangladesh on April 12.



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Indian fugitive jeweller accused in nearly \$2bn bank fraud arrested in Belgium: report

Belgium (News Desk) Fugitive jeweller Mehul Choksi has been arrested in Belgium, a source with India’s Enforcement Directorate told Reuters, seven years after details of his involvement in one of India’s biggest bank frauds became public.

The Indian government had sent a request for Choksi’s extradition prior

to his arrest, but he is likely to challenge it on medical grounds, the source added. Punjab National Bank (PNB), India’s second largest state-run lender by assets, had announced in 2018 that it had discovered alleged fraud worth \$1.8 billion at a single branch in Mumbai. The bank had filed a criminal complaint with In-

dia’s federal investigative agency against several entities, including billionaire jeweller Nirav Modi and Choksi, his uncle and the managing director of Gitanjali Gems, saying they had defrauded PNB. Indian federal police filed fraud charges against Choksi, Nirav Modi and others in connection with suspected involvement in

fraudulent transactions that led to huge losses for PNB. The two diamond tycoons have denied any wrongdoing. Choksi said in a letter in 2018 that the “investigating agencies were acting with pre-determined minds and interfering with the course of justice.” Reuters was unable to immediately contact his lawyer on Monday.

Saudi Arabia, US on ‘pathway’ to civil nuclear agreement

RIYADH: (News Desk) The United States and Saudi Arabia will sign a preliminary agreement to cooperate over the kingdom’s ambitions to develop a civil nuclear industry, US Energy Secretary Chris Wright told reporters in the Saudi capital Riyadh on Sunday.

Wright, who had met with Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman earlier on Sunday, said Riyadh and Washington were on a “a pathway” to reaching an agreement to work together to develop a Saudi civil nuclear programme.

Wright, on his first visit to the kingdom as secretary as part of tour of energy-producing Gulf states, said further details over a memorandum detailing the energy cooperation between Riyadh and Washington would come later this year.

Israeli military attacks 35 targets in Gaza in the past day

Gaza (News Desk) The Israeli military claims that its warplanes attacked “sites for launching rockets and producing weapons” in the Rafah area in southern Gaza, Al Jazeera reports.

It said in a statement that it continues to work with internal security agency Shin Bet in Rafah, having destroyed a tunnel in the past 24 hours that was used by Hamas. An Israeli air strike also targeted “a terrorist ambush” in northern Gaza, the army added without providing any evidence. It again claimed that air strikes on central Gaza targeted a “weapons production site”. Jerusalem Governorate condemns storming of al-Aqsa by settlers The Islamic Endowments Department in Jerusalem says at least 765 Israeli settlers have stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound to perform religious rituals and celebrate Passover today, Al Jazeera reports. This comes a day after nearly 500 settlers had come into the holy Muslim site in the occupied East Jerusalem under armed protection from Israeli soldiers. The Jerusalem Governorate said the fact that some Knesset members and rabbis were photographed at the site “is a provocation to Muslims’ feelings and a violation of international law”.

Hamas says will free hostages if end to Gaza offensive guaranteed

Gaza (News Desk) A senior Hamas official has said that the Palestinian group is prepared to release all Israeli hostages in exchange for a “serious prisoner swap” and guarantees that Israel will end the offensive in Gaza.

“We are ready to release all Israeli captives in exchange for a serious prisoner swap deal, an end to the war, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and the entry of humanitarian aid,” Taher al-Nunu, a senior Hamas official, told AFP.

However, he accused Israel of obstructing progress towards a ceasefire. “The issue is not the number of captives,” Nunu said, “but rather that the occupation is reneging on its commitments, blocking the implementation of the ceasefire agreement and continuing the war”.

“Hamas has therefore stressed the need for guarantees to compel the occupation (Israel) to uphold the agreement,” he added.

Israeli news website Ynet has reported that a new proposal had been put to Hamas.

Under the deal, the group would release 10 living hostages in exchange for US guarantees that Israel would enter negotiations for a second phase of the ceasefire.

More Israeli soldiers, graduates join call for end to Gaza offensive

Talabib (News Desk) More than 1,600 former Israeli army paratroopers and infantry soldiers have joined the band of military personnel demanding a deal to bring captives back from Gaza and end the offensive, Al Jazeera reports.

The group said they want the captives returned, “even at the cost of halting the fighting”, to save Israeli lives, according to Yedioth Ahronoth and other Israeli media.

More than 170 graduates from an elite tech leadership programme of the Military Intelligence Unit signed their names to a separate letter calling for an end to the offensive and the return of captives.

The calls are the latest among growing voices from within the military pressuring the government to end the offensive.

Air Force reservists, doctors, ex-Mossad members, navy reservists and military intelligence members have been among those signing similar letters. Israel working on deal to return 10 captives, Netanyahu tells family.

The Israeli prime minister has told the parents of Eitan Mor, who is being held in Gaza, that the government is working on a deal to bring back 10 of the remaining captives, Al Jazeera reports.

Benjamin Netanyahu called Mor’s parents on Sunday night, according to Tikva Forum, a captive advocacy group.

Zvika Mor, the captive’s father and co-founder of the group, said he demanded Netanyahu reach an agreement that would bring back all captives at the same time. He warned against “selection” among the captives, and said that trying to return them in multiple exchanges would risk their lives. Israeli settlers enter Al-Aqsa Mosque compound to perform rituals.

Groups of Israeli settlers have once again entered the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound to perform religious rituals, Al Jazeera reports.

The latest challenge of the status quo of the holy Muslim site comes as Jewish people mark the Passover holidays. Non-Muslims are allowed to visit the compound but are prohibited from engaging in religious rituals there.

Israeli settlers were also seen moving through the Qattanin Market area in the Old City around the compound. Israel releases 9 Palestinian prisoners to Gaza. Nine Palestinian prisoners released from Israeli military prisons have arrived at the Al-Aqsa Matryrs Hospital in central Gaza’s Deir el-Balah, Al Jazeera reports. Al Jazeera’s correspondent on the ground reported that the prisoners were handed over by Israeli authorities to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

UAE wants to support Syria reconstruction, says Al Nahyan

DUBAI/DAMASCUS: (News Desk) The president of the United Arab Emirates said his country wants to support Syria’s reconstruction as he met on Sunday with interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa in Abu Dhabi. Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan “affirmed the UAE’s keenness to support... Syria to confront the challenges of the transitional phase and rebuild Syria” during the meeting, the official Emirat news agency WAM reported. Sharaa has sought Gulf

financial support for war-devastated Syria since he led a lightning offensive that toppled longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad in December. But nearly a week after rebels toppled Assad, UAE presidential adviser Anwar Gargash said his government found the Islamist affiliation of Syria’s new rulers “quite worrying”. In mid-January Sharaa spoke by phone with the UAE president about ways to reinforce ties and “ensure the stability and development of the

region”, Syria’s state news agency SANA said at the time. Powerful armed faction integrates into govt forces “Syria’s stability and enhanced security are in the interest of the entire region,” the UAE president was quoted as saying on Sunday. He added that the Gulf country would “spare no effort in providing all possible support to Syria and its brotherly people in the coming period”. On its Telegram channel, SANA said Sharaa was travelling with Foreign

Minister Asaad al-Shaibani to the UAE to hold talks on “numerous common issues”. Analysts have said the UAE is deeply suspicious of Syria’s new leaders, reflecting its distrust of political Islam and fear of outsized Turkish influence in the war-scarred country. Shaibani visited Abu Dhabi in January. Syria’s President Ahmed al-Sharaa and UAE’s President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan stand for a photograph before a meeting at Al Shati Palace

in Abu Dhabi on Sunday. After more than 13 years of conflict, Syria’s new rulers are seeking international support for reconstruction and reviving the sanctions-hit economy. Eighth Brigade dissolved A powerful armed faction in southern Syria led by defected military officer Ahmed al-Awdeh on Sunday announced that it was dissolving itself and integrating into the government’s armed forces. The Eighth Brigade, the most prominent armed faction in southern Syria,

announced its dissolution and placed its weapons and personnel at the disposal of the Syrian defence ministry, according to a statement read by the official spokesman on Sunday in a video recording. “We, members, soldiers and officers of what was previously known as the Eighth Brigade, officially announce the dissolution of this formation and handing over all its military and human capacities to the defence ministry,” said Colonel Mohamed al-Hourani.