

At least 40 killed in weekend US tornadoes

California (News Desk) At least 40 people were killed and dozens more injured by tornadoes and violent storms that ravaged the central and southern United States at the weekend, local authorities said. Local news channels across the affected region showed video of roofs torn off homes, trees felled, and trucks overturned by high winds. Eight people died in Kansas in a crash involving more than 50 vehicles, caused by low visibility during a “severe dust storm”, local police said. In Oklahoma, four people were killed as wildfires and strong winds swept across the state, the local emergency management department said. “We are actively monitoring the severe tornadoes and storms that have impacted many States across the South and Midwest,” President Donald Trump posted on Sunday on Truth Social.

France asks for return of Statue of Liberty

PARIS: (News Desk) France should take back the Statue of Liberty because the US no longer represents the values that led France to offer the statue, a French Euro-deputy said on Sunday. “Give us back the Statue of Liberty”, centre-left politician Raphael Glucksmann said at a convention of his Place Publique centre-left movement. “We’re going to say to the Americans who have chosen to side with the tyrants, to the Americans who fired researchers for demanding scientific freedom: ‘Give us back the Statue of Liberty,’” he told cheering supporters. “We gave it to you as a gift, but apparently you despise it. So it will be just fine here at home,” he added. The Statue of Liberty was unveiled in New York City’s harbour on October 28, 1886 for the centennial of the American Declaration of Independence as a gift from the French people to America. It designed by Frenchman Auguste Bartholdi. Paris does have a far smaller copy of the statue on a small island on the Seine in Paris. Glucksmann, a staunch defender of Ukraine, has strongly criticised President Donald Trump’s radical change of US policy on the war. He also took aim at Trump’s cuts to US research institutions, which has already prompted a French government initiative to attract some of them to work in France. “The second thing we’re going to say to the Americans is: ‘if you want to fire your best researchers, if you want to fire all the people who, through their freedom and their sense of innovation.

59 dead as blaze rips through North Macedonia nightclub

SKOPJE: (News Desk) A fire tore through a nightclub in North Macedonia early on Sunday, killing 59 people, apparently after on-stage fireworks set the venue ablaze, authorities said, announcing arrest warrants for four people. They said 155 injured people had been taken to hospitals across the country, 18 of them in critical condition. Some of the serious cases were to be taken to other European countries for treatment. The blaze started in the Club Pulse in the eastern town of Kocani around 3am (0200 GMT), as the place was packed with more than 1,000 mostly young fans attending a concert by a popular hip-hop duo called DNK. “Initially we didn’t believe there was a fire. Then there was huge panic in the crowd and a stampede to get out,” one young woman who was at the concert told local media outside a hospital in the capital Skopje. Fire crews and paramedics responded quickly and “tried to resuscitate people... but it wasn’t enough”, said the woman, who was waiting outside for one of her friends, who was being treated for burns to his hand. The fire was probably caused by the use of pyrotechnic devices “used for light effects at the concert”, said Interior Minister Pance Toskovski, who visited the scene with Prime Minister Hristijan Mickoski. “Sparks caught the ceiling, which was made of easily flammable material, after which the fire rapidly spread across the whole discotheque, creating thick smoke,” Toskovski said. The interior ministry announced that arrest warrants had been issued for four people in relation to the tragedy, and a criminal investigation opened. They did not immediately give further details about those targeted by the warrants. “According to the information that we have, there are 59 persons deceased of which 35 are identified. Of the identified, 31 persons are from Kocani and four from Stip,” Toskovski said. “The number of wounded, according to latest information up to noon (1100 GMT), is 155 persons who are in hospitals across the country,” Toskovski said. “Preparations are being made to transport people seriously injured in the fire in Kocani to top hospitals in several European countries,” the head of North Macedonia’s Crisis Centre, Stojanche Angelov, said. The head of the Kocani hospital, Kristina Serafimovska, told media that the patients being treated there were aged between 14 and 25.



This handout image released by the Missouri State Highway Patrol on March 15, 2025 shows a damaged marina on Clearwater Lake, near Piedmont, Missouri, after severe storms hit the area

Modi says Trump has ‘clear roadmap’ in second term

Delhi (News Desk) India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi said US President Donald Trump was “far more prepared” for his second term, furnished with a clear roadmap, speaking in a podcast interview weeks ahead of reciprocal tariffs planned by Washington. India is among the trading partners set to face the tariffs from April, which threaten to cause distress to its exporters in industries from automobiles to agriculture. After Modi and Trump met last month, the two nations agreed to resolve tariff rows and work on the first segment of a deal by the fall of 2025, aiming to reach two-way trade of \$500 billion by 2030. “This time, he seems far more prepared than before,” Modi said in a podcast with American computer scientist and podcaster Lex Fridman released on Sunday, referring to Trump’s second term, which began in January. “He (Trump) has a clear roadmap in his mind with well-defined steps, each one designed to lead him toward his goals,” Modi added. During the discussion, which ran more than three hours, Modi spoke on issues from diplomacy and artificial intelligence to his early life, in a conversation Fridman called one of the most “powerful” of his life. Modi praised Trump for his graciousness and humility, underscoring a strong bond between the leaders. “His (Trump’s) reflection showed his ‘America First’ spirit, just as I believe in nation first.

Trump admin begins mass layoffs at Voice of America

Washington) (News Desk) President Donald Trump’s administration on Sunday began mass layoffs at Voice of America and other US-funded media, making clear its intent to gut outlets long seen as critical for US influence. Just a day after all employees were put on leave, staff working on a contractual basis received an email notifying them that they were terminated at the end of March. The email, confirmed to AFP by several employees, told contractors that “you must cease all work immediately and are not permitted to access any agency buildings or systems.” Contractors make up much of VOA’s workforce and dominate staffing in the non-English language services, although recent figures were not immediately available. Many contractors are not US citizens, meaning they likely depend on their soon-to-disappear jobs for visas to stay in the United States. Most full-time VOA staff, who have more legal protections, were not immediately terminated but remain on administrative leave and have been told not to work. Voice of America, created during World War II, broadcast around the world in 49 languages with a mission to reach countries without media freedom. Liam Scott, a VOA reporter who covers press freedom and disinformation, said he was notified that he also reported that he was being dismissed as of March 31.



The World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Monday that 80 per cent of services that it supports in Afghanistan could shut down by June due to a funding shortage.

WHO says 80pc of Afghanistan operations risk shutdown by June

New York: (News Desk) The World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Monday that 80 per cent of services that it supports in Afghanistan could shut down by June due to a funding shortage. The UN health agency said the cash shortfall, which comes amid massive US aid cuts, is tied to a shift in “development aid priorities”. “Without urgent intervention, over 220 more facilities could close by June 2025, leaving an additional 1.8 million Afghans without access to primary health care,” the WHO said in a statement. The agency said that 167 such operations have already closed due to a lack of financial support. “The consequences will be measured in lives lost,” said WHO’s Afghanistan chief Edwin Ceni-za Salvador. “This is not just about funding. It is a humanitarian emergency that threatens to undo years of progress in strengthening Afghanistan’s health system.” The WHO has been sounding the alarm since US President Donald Trump signed an executive order withdrawing the United States from the agency. This pullout and the end of Washington’s contributions put at risk the global measles surveillance network, which until now has been entirely funded by Washington.

US Strategic Bitcoin Reserve to be a ‘digital Fort Knox’

LONDON: (News Desk) While the creation of a “Strategic Bitcoin Reserve” in the United States is proof of President Donald Trump’s support for the cryptocurrency sector, there are misgivings about the move, with some blaming the US government for not returning bitcoin to all victims identified as suffering from a hack. Trump signed an executive order earlier this month establishing the reserve that White House crypto chief David Sacks likened to “a digital Fort Knox”, comparing it to the stockpiling of gold bars at the US military base. Gold is held in reserves by countries worldwide as the metal is seen as a safe-haven asset, protecting against financial instability such as high inflation. The metal surpassed \$3,000 per ounce for the first time, boosted by an uncertain economic outlook amid Trump’s tariffs.

Trump and Putin expected to speak this week as US pushes for Russia-Ukraine ceasefire

Washington (News Desk) US President Donald Trump is expected to speak with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, this week on ways to end the three-year war in Ukraine, US envoy Steve Witkoff told CNN on Sunday after returning from what he described as a “positive” meeting with Putin in Moscow. “I expect that there will be a call with both presidents this week, and we’re also continuing to engage and have conversation with the Ukrainians,” said Witkoff, who met with Putin on Thursday night, adding that he thought the talk between Trump and Putin would be “really good and positive.” Trump is trying to win Putin’s support for a 30-day ceasefire proposal that Ukraine accepted last week, as both sides continued trading heavy aerial strikes through the weekend and Russia moved closer to ejecting Ukrainian forces from their months-old foothold in the western Russian region of Kursk. Trump said in a social media post on Friday that there was “a very good chance that this horrible, bloody war can finally come to an end”. He also said he had “strongly requested” that Putin not kill the thousands of Ukrainian troops that Russia is pushing out of Kursk. Putin said he would honor Trump’s request to spare the lives of the Ukrainian troops if they surrendered. The Kremlin also said on Friday that Putin had sent Trump a message about his ceasefire plan via Witkoff, expressing “cautious optimism” that a deal could be reached to end the conflict.

Australian schoolboy Gout Gout clocks world-leading 200m time

BRISBANE: (News Desk) Australian sprinting prodigy Gout Gout ran the fastest men’s 200m in the world this year on Sunday, with the 17-year-old saying he felt “literally free”. The youngster rose to prominence in December when he clocked the quickest time ever by a 16-year-old. That mark broke Usain Bolt’s personal best at the same age, with his 20.04secs also bettering Peter Norman’s Australian record of 20.06 from the 1968 Olympics. He turned heads again on Sunday with a 20.05 in the heats of the Queensland State Championships — the fastest in the world this year. Gout then smashed through the 20-second barrier in the final with a 19.98, but it was wind-assisted so deemed illegal. “I felt literally free. I had 80 metres left to go, and I thought, let’s send it,” he said of the final. “Only from then did I believe I had a chance of going sub (20).

South Africa’s Corbin Bosch served legal notice by PCB

LAHORE: (News Desk) South African Corbin Bosch has been served a legal notice by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) “alleging breach of the all-rounder’s contractual obligations” to the board, it said on Sunday. The 30-year-old Bosch was picked by Peshawar Zalmi in the Diamond category during the 10th edition of the HBL Pakistan Super League Player Draft, held in Lahore on January 13. However, Indian Premier League (IPL) side Mumbai Indians had also signed him as a replacement for his injured compatriot Lizaad Williams. Bosch’s signing with Mumbai meant he will forgo his PSL contract, alleging breach of the all-rounder’s contractual obligations” to the board, it said on Sunday. Alleging breach of the all-rounder’s contractual obligations” to the board, it said on Sunday the IPL begins on March 22 and overlaps with the PSL’s April-May schedule. The legal notice was served through his agent, and the player has been asked to justify his actions of withdrawing from his professional and contractual commitments. The PCB management said it had outlined the repercussions of his departure from the league and said it expected Bosch’s response within the stipulated time frame. The 2025 season would be the first instance of the PSL window clashing with a part of the IPL since the inception of the former in 2016. The PCB had to move its PSL window from its regular February-March to April-May because of the Champions Trophy and other international commitments in Pakistan. Alleging breach of the all-rounder’s contractual obligations” to the board, it said on Sunday. Number of overseas players who were not picked in the IPL as the IPL begins on March 22 and overlaps with the PSL’s April-May schedule. The legal notice was served through his agent, and the player has been asked to justify his actions of withdrawing auction later signed on for the PSL, including Bosch.

Yemen’s Houthis claim attacks on US carrier group as toll from strikes rises to 53

Damascus: (News Desk) Yemen’s Houthi rebels claimed on Monday to have twice attacked an American aircraft carrier group within 24 hours, calling it retaliation for deadly US strikes. The Houthis initially said they launched 18 missiles and a drone at the “aircraft carrier USS Harry Truman and its accompanying warships” in the Red Sea, before hours later claiming to have fired a

second round. There was no immediate comment from the United States about the Houthis’ claimed attacks. Meanwhile, the death toll from the first US strikes on Yemen under President Donald Trump has risen to 53, including five children, the health ministry said. In what it said was the definitive toll from Saturday’s strikes, ministry spokesperson Anis

Al-Asbahi posted on X that 53 people had been killed including “five children and two women” and that 98 people had been wounded. In a statement posted to Telegram on Monday, a Houthi spokesperson said the attacks on the carrier group were “in retaliation to the continued American aggression against our country”. Washington has vowed to keep striking Yemen until the rebels

stop attacking Red Sea shipping, with Trump warning he will use “overwhelming lethal force”. Houthi media reported more explosions on Sunday night, accusing the Americans of targeting a cotton ginning factory in the western region of Hodeida as well as the Galaxy Leader, an Israeli ship captured more than a year ago. Houthi leader Abdulmalik Al-Houthi called on Yemenis to march in

defiance today. A man gestures as he searches in the rubble of a house hit by a US strike in Saada, Yemen on March 16, 2025. — Reuters/Naif Rahma In response to the latest escalation along the maritime trade route, the United Nations has urged both sides to “cease all military activity”. China, meanwhile, called for “dialogue” and a de-escalation of tensions in the Red Sea after the rebels claimed

to have attacked the US aircraft carrier group twice. “China opposes any action that escalates the situation in the Red Sea,” foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told a regular briefing. The Houthis, who control much of the Arabian Peninsula’s poorest country, have attacked Israel and Red Sea shipping throughout the Gaza conflict, claiming to be acting in solidarity with Palestinians.