

Putin, Trump to discuss Ukraine today

MOSCOW: (News Desk) Russian President Vladimir Putin and US counterpart Donald Trump will speak by phone on Tuesday, as one US official expressed hope the two could agree a Ukraine ceasefire within weeks.Trump said earlier “a lot of work” had been done between the United States and Russia on settling the three-year Ukraine conflict, and that there was a “very good chance” hostilities would end.Putin said last week he agreed with the idea of a ceasefire but warned he had “serious questions” about how it would be implemented that he wanted to discuss with Trump.Kyiv has agreed to the ceasefire, while its European allies have criticised Putin for not committing to an unconditional and immediate halt in fighting, with the UK accusing the Russian leader of “dragging his feet”.The US president last spoke to Putin last month in a call that broke Western efforts to isolate the Russian leader as long as his forces keep up their Ukraine offensive.

Netanyahu’s move to fire chief of Shin Bet sparks outrage

JERUSALEM: (News Desk) Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s bid to dismiss a top security official has threatened to plunge Israel back into deep political crisis, with opponents on Monday organising protests and a former court president warning against the “dangerous” move.Netanyahu on Sunday cited an “ongoing lack of trust” as the reason for moving to sack Ronen Bar, head of the Shin Bet internal security agency, following a similar bid by the government to oust the attorney general. Bar, who has been engaged in a public spat with Netanyahu in recent weeks over reforms to the agency, suggested there were political motives behind the premier’s decision to ask the government to dismiss him.

Attorney General Gali Baharav Miara — the executive’s top legal adviser who has often taken positions that clashed with those of Netanyahu’s government — said the move was “unprecedented” and its legality needed to be assessed. Bar said it stemmed from his own refusal to meet Netanyahu’s demands for “personal loyalty”.

The agency led by Bar has been accused of failing to prevent the October 7, 2023 Hamas raid that triggered conflict in the Gaza Strip.Several opposition parties have already announced they will jointly petition the High Court against Bar’s dismissal.

Sudan army, paramilitaries battle for Khartoum

KHARTOUM/OMDURMAN:(News Desk) Shelling by Sudan’s paramilitary Rapid Support Forces killed six civilians including two children in Khartoum’s twin city of Omdurman, a doctor said on Monday, as the army inched closer to the capital’s presidential palace. Sunday’s attack also wounded 36 civilians, half of them children, the doctor at Al-Nao hospital said. The bombardment struck residential areas in northern Omdurman, hitting civilians inside their homes and children playing on a football field, the Khartoum regional government’s media office said.

The army says its units are now positioned less than a kilometre from the presidential palace, which the RSF seized at the outset of the war. Despite these advances, RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo remains defiant, vowing that his forces will not withdraw from the capital. “We will not leave the Republican Palace,” Daglo said in a video address shared on Telegram. In a video address shared on Telegram, RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo vowed his troops “will not leave the Republican Palace”. Agency journalists saw thick plumes of smoke rising over central Khartoum as fighting raged across the capital, with gunfire and explosions heard in several areas.

Two years of war have left large swathes of the capital unrecognisableA city destroyedSince April 2023, the conflict has pitted army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan against his former deputy Daglo. The war has left tens of thousands dead and uprooted more than 12 million, according to UN figures, with many living in makeshift camps.

The RSF initially seized the streets of Khartoum, but in recent months, the army has clawed back territory, regaining control of Bahri — also known as Khartoum North — and East Nile to its east.

“We are coming for Port Sudan,” he added, referring to the de facto capital on the Red Sea, where the government has been based since Khartoum fell.

One of agency’s team, travelling under military escort, crossed from Khartoum’s twin city of Omdurman — recaptured by the army last year — into Bahri and its war-ravaged outskirts. The convoy passed through eerie, abandoned neighbourhoods including Al-Haj Yousif, where the skeletal remains of shuttered shops and crumbling pavements stretch along the streets.

Rubble, debris and discarded tires litter the roads. Every few blocks, small clusters of people sit outside empty buildings and stores pockmarked with bullet holes. Hospitals and schools no longer function. The army says it has uncovered multiple mass graves, including one at the Omdurman courthouse.



A man walks through the rubble of a destroyed section of a school-turned-camp following an Israeli strike in Gaza City on March 18, 2025

Israel violates ceasefire as strikes in Gaza kill at least 330 Palestinians

Gaza(News Desk) The health ministry in Gaza has said the death toll from a massive Israeli campaign launched throughout the Palestinian territory had risen to “at least 330”, including children, as attacks hit dozens of targets early on Tuesday, ending a weeks-long standoff over extending the ceasefire that halted fighting in January.

“The health ministry has recorded more than 330 deaths, most of them Palestinian women and children, and hundreds of wounded, dozens of them in critical condition,” the head of the ministry, Mohammed Zaqut, told AFP. Gaza’s civil defence agency spokesman Mahmud Basal told AFP that the military operation was ongoing and affecting schools

and camps sheltering displaced people. Strikes were reported in multiple locations, including northern Gaza, Gaza City and the Deir al-Balah, Khan Younis and Rafah in central and southern Gaza Strip.The Israeli military, which claimed it hit dozens of targets, said the strikes would continue for as long as necessary and would extend beyond air

strikes, raising the prospect that Israeli ground troops could resume fighting.The attacks were far wider in scale than the regular series of drone strikes the Israeli military has said it has conducted against individuals or small groups of suspected fighters and follow weeks of failed efforts to agree an extension to the truce agreed on January 19.

India orders curfew in Nagpur after violence over demands to demolish Emperor Aurangzeb’s tomb

Nagpur(News Desk) Authorities clamped indefinite curfew on parts of the Indian city of Nagpur after more than a dozen police officers were hurt in clashes sparked by a Hindu group’s demand for the removal of the tomb of 17th-century Mughal ruler Aurangzeb, police said on Tuesday.Monday’s violence in the central Indian city damaged many vehicles and injured several peo-

ple, among them at least 15 police personnel, one of whom was in serious condition, a police officer said, speaking on condition of anonymity.Devendra Fadnavis, chief minister of the western state of Maharashtra, where the city is located, criticised the violence in a video message, calling for every effort to maintain law and order.I have told the police commissioner to take whatever strict steps

are necessary,” Fadnavis added.Police said in a statement that members of the group, the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), burnt an effigy of the Emperor Aurangzeb and his tomb as they chanted slogans demanding its removal from the nearby city of Aurangabad.The police officer told Reuters the situation escalated after several members of Muslim groups marched near a police station and

threw stones at police.The attackers, wearing masks to hide their faces, carried sharp weapons and bottles, a resident of the area told the ANI news agency, in which Reuters has a minority stake.The VHP denied accusations of engaging in any violence. It wants the tomb to be replaced with a memorial for rulers from the local Maratha community, its general secretary, Milind Parande.



Members of police stand as vehicles burn after clashes erupted due to demands over removal of the tomb of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, in Nagpur, India, March 17, 2025.

Hamas says head of its government in Gaza killed in Israeli strike

Gaza(News Desk) Hama has named the head of its government in the Gaza Strip, Essam al-Dalis, among a list of officials it said were killed in a wave of Israeli strikes on the Palestinian territory, AFP reports. “These leaders, along with their families, were martyred after being directly targeted by the Zi-

onist occupation forces’ aircraft,” said the Hamas statement, which also named interior ministry head Mahmud Abu Watfa and Bahjat Abu Sultan, director-general of the internal security service, among those killed. Hamas official say ‘working with mediators to curb’ Israel ‘aggression’

A Hamas official has told AFP that the group was “working with mediators to curb the aggression”, after Israel unleashed its deadliest strikes since a ceasefire took effect in January.

“Hamas adhered to the ceasefire agreement and implemented it precisely, but the Israeli occupation reneged on its com-

mitment and reversed it by resuming aggression and war,” the official told AFP, adding that “Hamas and the resistance factions are in constant session to assess the situation and working with mediators to curb the aggression.”

So far, Hamas has not responded to the Israeli strikes.

Tech entrepreneur wins libel case against UK paper

LONDON: (News Desk) The UK’s Telegraph Media Group has issued an apology and agreed to pay “substantial” damages to tech entrepreneur Zia Chishti in a libel settlement.

Between 2021 and 2023, The Telegraph published reports on allegations of sexual misconduct made by Tatianna Spottiswoode, a former employee of Afiniti, the artificial intelligence company founded by Mr Chishti. She had presented her claims before the US Congress Judiciary Committee.

Mr Chishti, the Pakistani-American businessman, refuted the allegations and initiated libel proceedings against The Telegraph.

In July 2023, a high court judge ruled that two of The Telegraph’s articles carried a defamatory meaning.

Initially, the newspaper defended its reporting, asserting that it was both in the public interest and substantially true. However, it has since withdrawn its defence and opted for a settlement.

Astronauts finally head home after unexpected nine-month ISS stay

Washington(News Desk) A pair of astronauts stranded in space for more than nine months were finally headed home on Tuesday after their capsule undocked from the International Space Station (ISS).The SpaceX craft carrying Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams detached from the orbital outpost at 5:05 GMT (10:05am Pakistan time), ending their prolonged mission that has captivated global attention.The Nasa duo are joined onboard by American Nick Hague and Russian cosmonaut Aleksandr Gorbunov.The crew are now settling in for the 17-hour journey back to Earth, and were given permission to change from their space suits into more comfortable clothes.If all goes smoothly, the capsule will deploy its parachutes off the coast of Florida for an ocean splashdown around 9:57pm GMT on Tuesday, when a recovery vessel will retrieve the crew.Wilmore and Williams flew to the orbital lab in June last year, on what was supposed to be a days-long roundtrip to test out Boeing’s Starliner on its first crewed flight.But the spaceship developed propulsion problems and was deemed unfit to fly them back, instead returning empty.Ex-Navy pilots Wilmore and Williams, aged 62 and 59 respectively, were reassigned to the Nasa-SpaceX Crew-9 mission, which saw a Dragon spacecraft fly to the ISS last September with a team of two, rather than the usual four, to make room for the “stranded” pair. Then, early Sunday, a relief team called Crew-10 docked with the station, their arrival met with broad smiles and hugs as they floated through the hatch. Crew-10’s arrival cleared the way for Wilmore and Williams to depart, along with Hague and Gorbunov.

Delhi airport operator sues govt over flights from defence airbase

NEW DELHI: (News Desk) The operator of the Indian capital’s international airport, majority owned by GMR Airports, is suing the government for allowing commercial flights from a nearby defence aerodrome, flagging financial risks, legal papers showed. The airport in Delhi is one of India’s busiest, with about 73.6 million passengers last year, although it made a loss of \$21 million because of higher government fees. As more and more Indians fly, airports are a lucrative business for the likes of GMR and billionaire Gautam Adani who also operates in the sector. The Delhi airport will become “economically and financially unviable”, after the government permitted commercial flights from the airbase, DIAL said in the March 10 lawsuit.In the lawsuit, DIAL told the Delhi High Court that the government had breached aviation rules barring a new airport within an aerial distance of 150 km of an existing one, unless there was passenger demand. The Hindon Airport operates over 120 flights weekly, India’s Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the court on Monday as the judge asked the government to file written responses to DIAL’s plea.

Big-hitting New Zealand crush Pakistan by five wickets for 2-0 lead

Otago(News Desk) New Zealand men’s openers went on a six-hitting blitz on Tuesday to thrash Pakistan by five wickets and go 2-0 up in their Twenty20 series.

The home side reached 137-5 with 11 balls to spare in Dunedin to take control of the five-match series after Pakistan posted 135-9 off 15 overs in a rain-reduced second match.

New Zealand’s highlight was a ferocious opening stand between Tim Seifert and Finn Allen in which seven of the first eight scoring shots were sixes.

Remarkably, Seifert played out a maiden off Shaheen Shah Afridi’s opening over before Allen cleared the small University Oval boundary three times in the second over, bowled by Mohammad Ali.

Seifert then smashed 26 off Afridi’s second over, including four sixes. Seifert, who top-scored with 44 in the nine-wicket win in Christchurch on Sunday, departed on 45 off 22 balls.

Allen fell soon afterwards for 38 off 16, with the openers hammering five sixes each.

Four New Zealand wickets fell in the space of four overs midway through the chase before Mitch Hay’s unbeaten 21 made the outcome safe.

Earlier, captain Salman Agha top-scored with 46 off 28 balls, launching a recovery after Pakistan were sent in and lost opener Hasan Nawaz without scoring for the second time in the series.

They were 19-2 in the fourth over before the skipper embarked on a knock that featured four fours and three sixes.

Shadab Khan was aggressive in the middle order with 26 off 14 balls and Afridi was not-out 22 off 14.

A pitch invader (2nd R) tries to take selfies with Pakistan’s Shaheen Shah Afridi (C) during the second Twenty20 international cricket match between New Zealand and Pakistan at the University of Otago Oval in Dunedin on March 18. — AFP

Four New Zealand bowlers took two wickets, including seamer Ben Sears and all-rounder Jimmy Neesham, who were both recalled, in place of Tim Robinson and Kyle Jamieson.

Yemenis take to the streets amid fresh US strikes

SANAA: (News Desk) Huge crowds joined protests in rebel-controlled Yemen on Monday after deadly US strikes killed several and sparked fears of a new cycle of violence in the conflict-torn country.

Tens of thousands of demonstrators chanted “Death to America, death to Israel!” in the capital Sanaa. There were also large crowds in Saada, birthplace of the Houthi movement, and demonstrations in Dhamar, Hodeida and Amran, footage from the rebels’ Al-Masirah TV

station showed. “Yemen will never back down — we defy the Americans, we defy the Zionists,” said a man shouting slogans to the Sanaa crowd, who chanted back: “We are the men of the Prophet.”

Houthi media reported fresh US air strikes on Monday targeting rebel-held Hodeida on Yemen’s western coast. “A strike by the American aggression targeted the region of Bajel in the Hodeida governorate”, while others targeted a steel factory in the Al-Salif region

in the same governorate, according to the Houthis’ Saba press agency. Al-Masirah also reported the strikes.

Trump vows to hold Iran responsible for Houthi attacks.The protests came after the first US strikes on Yemen under President Donald Trump, aimed at ending the Houthis’ Red Sea harassment campaign, which killed 53 people and wounded 98 on Saturday. The rebels, at war with a Saudi-led coalition for a decade, launched scores of attacks on ships in the vital route during

the Gaza conflict, claiming solidarity with the Palestinians.Houthis also claimed they had attacked the USS Harry S. Truman aircraft carrier group twice within 24 hours. Washington has vowed to keep hitting Yemen until the rebels stop attacking Red Sea shipping, with Trump warning he would use “overwhelming lethal force”. In the capital Sanaa, controlled by the Houthis since 2014, giant Yemeni and Palestinian flags punctuated a sea of demonstrators at Al-Sabeen Square, which has

hosted large-scale demonstrations on a weekly basis throughout the Gaza conflict.US President Donald Trump said on Monday he would hold Iran responsible for any attacks carried out by the Houthi group that it backs in Yemen, as his administration expanded the biggest US military operation in the Middle East since Trump returned to the White House.“Every shot fired by the Houthis will be looked upon, from this point forward, as being a shot fired from the weapons and leadership

of IRAN, and IRAN will be held responsible, and suffer the consequences, and those consequences will be dire!” Trump said on his Truth Social platform. The White House said that Trump’s message to Iran was to take the United States seriously. The Houthis, an armed movement that has taken control of the most populous parts of Yemen despite nearly a decade of Saudi-led bombing, have launched scores of attacks on ships off its coast since November 2023, disrupting global commerce.