

## Pro-Trump senator visits Beijing amid trade war

BEIJING: (News Desk) US Senator Steve Daines on Saturday met China's Vice Premier He Lifeng, who "firmly" criticised Washington's economic policy while appealing for dialogue in talks with the staunch supporter of Republican President Donald Trump. He, responsible for economic matters, adopted a warm and welcoming tone in greeting the 62-year-old lawmaker and his wife, underlining the two countries can become "friends" despite trade tensions.

The visit by Daines, who will meet Premier Li Qiang on Sunday, is seen as a way to ease strained relations during a burgeoning trade war launched by Trump. Daines said while in Beijing he would raise trade and the smuggling of fentanyl — a drug which has ravaged the US — with raw materials sourced from China. The lawmaker, who represents the state of Montana and worked for years in China, was praised by He for his knowledge of the country.

## Afghan Taliban say US has lifted \$10m reward for information on Sirajuddin Haqqani

Kabul(News Desk) The United States has lifted a \$10 million reward offer for information leading to the arrest of a major Taliban leader, Sirajuddin Haqqani, an Afghan interior ministry spokesperson said on Saturday.

Sirajuddin was wanted by America's Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for questioning, with the US offering the \$10m reward.

He heads his own group called the Haqqani network, which has been designated a terror outfit by the US for carrying out several major attacks on foreign and Afghan forces during the 20-year-long war in Afghanistan. However, the Taliban insist that there is no separate faction within the group. The US State Department did not immediately respond to Reuters' request for comment. The FBI still lists the reward on its website, saying Haqqani was "believed to have coordinated and participated in cross-border attacks against United States and coalition forces in Afghanistan". This development comes after the Taliban on Thursday freed an American citizen detained in Afghanistan for over two years following direct talks between US hostage envoy Adam Boehler and Taliban officials in Kabul, a source briefed on the release had said.

## Families say tattoos landed Venezuelan migrants in Salvadoran jail

MAIQUETA: (News Desk) Lawyers and relatives of Venezuelans flown from the United States to a notorious jail in El Salvador believe the men were wrongly labelled gang members and terrorists because of their tattoos.

Jhon Chacin, a professional tattoo artist, has images of "a flower, a watch, an owl, skulls" and family members' names etched onto his skin. Last October, the 35-year-old was arrested at the Mexican border for entering the United States illegally. A HONDURAN police officer checks the tattoos of migrants travelling on a bus to ascertain whether they are members of a Venezuelan gang who were deported from the United States

Then last weekend, after not hearing from him for several days, shocked family members spotted him in a video of shaved and chained prisoners at a maximum security prison in El Salvador. He was one of 238 men declared as a member of Venezuela's Tren de Aragua — a terrorist group under US law — and deported by US President Donald Trump. Still, the Supreme Court could ultimately determine if the White House has the far-reaching power it claims to decide who should be deported. President Donald Trump, a Republican, has drawn pushback from Democratic lawmakers and civil rights groups for deporting alleged Venezuelan gang members to El Salvador by citing a wartime law from 1798, and for trying to deport a lawful permanent resident under an untested statute passed in 1952.

"He doesn't have a criminal record, he'd never been arrested," Chacin's sister Yuliana, who lives in Texas, said. She is convinced her brother was designated a gang member because of his body art.

At the US detention centre, before being deported, "ICE (immigration) agents told him he belonged to a criminal gang because he had a lot of tattoos." In the western Venezuelan city of Maracaibo, family members of several other deportees denied their loved ones were criminals.

Twenty-three-year-old Edwuar Hernandez Herrera, known to family and friends as Edward, left Venezuela in 2023. He made a fraught journey across the jungle-filled Darien Gap before reaching the United States, where he was detained.

He has four tattoos — his mother and daughter's names, an owl on his forearm and ears of corn on his chest, according to his mother Yarelis Herrera.



Palestinians carry the body of a relative, killed in Israeli strikes, during their funeral in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip on March 23, 2025

## Istanbul court formally arrests mayor in graft probe amid protests

Istanbul(News Desk) A Turkish court formally placed Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu under arrest as part of a graft investigation on Sunday, after a fourth night of mass protests sparked heavy clashes with riot police. The decision was confirmed by one of Imamoglu's lawyers, with the court also due to rule in a second "terror-related" probe into the popular

opposition mayor, whose detention has sparked Turkey's worst street protests in over a decade. "No despair! Keep fighting!" wrote the main opposition CHP party on X, denouncing it as "a political coup d'etat". The news came as voters cast their ballots in a CHP primary to name Imamoglu the party's candidate for the 2028 presidential race.

The long-planned vote was

the event which triggered the arrest of Imamoglu, who is widely seen as the only politician capable of challenging President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. He was detained in connection with two probes alleging graft and "aiding a terror organisation" — accusations which he on Saturday told police were "immoral and baseless".

The move against him

sparked protests in Istanbul that have since spread to more than 55 of Turkey's 81 provinces, unleashing running battles with police, who arrested 323 people overnight, officials said. Polls opened at 8am (10am PKT) with 5,600 ballot boxes in 81 cities. The CHP said the vote was open to everyone, not just members, in the hope of a massive show of support for Imamoglu.

## Iran unveils missile systems on strategic Gulf islands

Tehran(News Desk) Iran's Revolutionary Guards have unveiled new missile systems on three strategic islands in the Gulf, saying they can target nearby "enemy bases, vessels, and assets", state media reported on Saturday. The weapons were deployed on Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa near the Strait of Hormuz, a globally vital shipping

lane. The Guards recently held military manoeuvres in the area. Saturday's announcement comes with Iran poised to respond to a letter from US President Donald Trump urging a resumption of nuclear talks and warning of possible military action if Iran refuses. "We have a tactic that we must arm" the island group "and make it operative", said Alireza

Tangisiri, naval commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the ideological branch of Iran's military. "We are capable of attacking enemy bases, vessels, and assets in the region," he told state television. The new systems "can completely destroy any target within 600 kilometres (370 miles)". On Friday, supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

said US threats against Iran "will get them nowhere", and warned that "if they do anything malign to the Iranian nation, they will get a hard slap". On Thursday, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi described Trump's letter as "more of a threat" but said it appeared to offer opportunities and noted that Tehran would respond "in the coming days".



Supporters of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu gather in front of police officers holding riot shields, on the day Imamoglu was jailed as a part of a corruption investigation, in front of the Istanbul Justice Palace, known as Caglayan Courthouse, in Istanbul,

## Chinese premier calls for 'dialogue' as US senator visits Beijing

Beijing(News Desk) China's number two leader on Sunday called for "dialogue" with Washington, during a meeting in Beijing attended by prominent US business executives and a key congressional ally of President Donald Trump. Relations between the world's two largest economies have plunged in

recent weeks, as blanket tariffs imposed by Trump threaten China's trade prospects. Premier Li Qiang's comments came during a meeting with Trump supporter Steve Daines, a Republican senator from Montana. His visit has been viewed as a bid to ease strained relations, with an eye to-

ward setting up a summit between Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping. "Our two sides need to choose dialogue over confrontation, win-win cooperation over zero-sum competition," Li told Daines. CEOs of major firms including FedEx, Pfizer and Qualcomm were also present. Li said he hoped Washington

would "work together with China to promote the steady, sound and sustainable development" of relations. Earlier on Sunday, Li told the China Development Forum that Beijing would pursue economic globalisation despite "fragmentation", a thinly veiled reference to trade turmoil sparked by Trump.

## Stem cell treatment helped improve spinal cord injuries

TOKYO: (News Desk) A stem cell treatment helped improve the motor function of two out of four patients with a spinal cord injury in the first clinical study of its kind, Japanese scientists said. There is currently no effective treatment for paralysis caused by serious spinal cord injuries, which affect more than 150,000 patients in Japan alone, with 5,000 new cases each year. Researchers at Tokyo's Keio University are conducting their study using induced pluripotent stem cells (iPS) — created by stimulating mature, already specialised, cells back into a juvenile state. They can then be prompted to mature into different kinds of cells, with the Keio researchers using iPS-derived cells of the neural stem. The university said on Friday that the motor function score for two patients improved after an operation to implant more than two million iPS-derived cells into a spinal cord.

## Putin not a 'bad guy', Trump envoy says

WASHINGTON: (News Desk) White House envoy Steve Witkoff has praised Vladimir Putin in glowing terms as trustworthy and said the Russian leader told him he had prayed for his "friend" US President Donald Trump when he was shot.

Witkoff met with Putin over multiple hours last week in Moscow and told US media the talks — which involved discussions about forging a path towards ending Russia's war in Ukraine — were constructive and "solution-based."

In an interview with right-wing podcast host Tucker Carlson, the envoy said he has come to regard Putin as not a "bad guy", and that the Russian president was a "great" leader seeking to end Moscow's deadly three-year conflict with Kyiv.

"I liked him. I thought he was straight up with me," Witkoff said in the interview aired on Friday. "I don't regard Putin as a bad guy. That is a complicated situation, that war, and all the ingredients that led up to it."

He also described a "personal" element of the discussion in which Putin recalled his reaction to the assassination attempt on Trump in July 2024 as the Republican held a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. Putin "told me a story... about how when the president was shot, he went to his local church and met with his priest and prayed for the president," Witkoff said.

"Not because... he could become the president of the United States, but because he had a friendship with him and he was praying for his friend."

## New Zealand hand sorry Pakistan biggest defeat to clinch T20 series at home

Wellington(News Desk) New Zealand's ruthless pace attack carved up Pakistan to deliver a crushing 115-run win in the fourth T20 on Sunday and clinch the five-match series.

The home side moved 3-1 ahead after defending 220-6 in Mount Maunganui and then dismissing a ragged Pakistan for just 105 in the 17th over.

Jacob Duffy claimed 4-20 and fellow seamer Zak Foulkes 3-25 as Pakistan suffered their biggest T20 loss by runs against all nations, eclipsing a 95-run defeat against New Zealand in Wellington nine years ago.

The tourists were reduced to 9-3 after two overs with Duffy bagging two scalps in his first over, both caught by wicketkeeper Mitch Hay. Duffy's first victim was Hasan Nawaz for one, two days after the Pakistan opener blasted a maiden century in game three in Auckland to keep the series alive. Teetering at 56-8, Pakistan's innings had some credibility restored thanks to 44 off 30 balls from allrounder Abdul Samad.

## 'PCB snub in Champions Trophy final ceremony due to ICC's mismanagement'

LAHORE: (News Desk) Pakistan Cricket Board chief operating officer Sumair Ahmad has blamed mismanagement from the International Cricket Council as the reason for the absence of a representative from hosts Pakistan during the final ceremony of the Champions Trophy.

Sumair was nominated by PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi as the board's representative for the final in Dubai on March 9 but he was not called up to the stage to distribute prizes after India won the title with victory over New Zealand.

"I was at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium as Mr. Naqvi was unable to attend," Sumair told a news conference after the announcement of the youth talent hunt programme at school and college levels on Saturday.

"We had asked for an explanation from the ICC but the response received wasn't satisfactory so we've sent another letter seeking explanation.

"It was a result of mismanagement on part of the ICC and everyone knows who's involved in it. We did not take the matter in a positive way."

During the final ceremony, Board of Control for Cricket in India president Roger Binny presented the white jackets to India players and the medals to match officials, while ICC chairman Jay Shah handed the trophy to skipper Rohit Sharma and gave the medals to the winners.

BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia and New Zealand Cricket's CEO Roger Twose were also present on stage but the host representation was absent.

In other Champions Trophy-related issues Sumair blamed the contractor for one of the leaking roofs of the newly-renovated Gaddafi Stadium after it rained heavily during the match between Australia and Afghanistan in Lahore. "We have claimed damages and the fault has been removed by the same contractor," he said.

Sumair informed that the talent hunt programme will allow the PCB to pick around 10,000 players from educational institutions with the best players among them being provided coaching by the board. The PCB will also hold a tournament for them, he said.

## Under threat from Trump, Canada set to hold snap elections

Toronto(News Desk) Canada's new prime minister Mark Carney is expected to announce snap elections on Sunday, seeking a stronger mandate as his country fights off a trade war and annexation threats from Donald Trump's United States. The former central banker was chosen by the centrist Liberal Party to replace Justin Trudeau as prime minister, but he has never faced the broader Canadian electorate.

That will change on April 28, if, as expected, Carney announces he is bringing

parliamentary elections forward several months from October.

Government sources told AFP that he would announce the decision at 12:30pm in Canada (4:30pm GMT) (9:30pm in Pakistan time) in a speech to Canada's 41-million-strong nation. In power for a decade, the Liberal government had slid into deep unpopularity, but Carney will be hoping to ride a wave of Canadian patriotism to a new majority — thanks to Trump's threats.

Trump has riled his

northern neighbor by repeatedly dismissing its sovereignty and borders as artificial, and urging it to join the United States as the 51st state.

The ominous remarks have been accompanied by Trump's trade war, imposing tariffs on imports from Canada that could wreck its economy.

"In this time of crisis the government needs a strong and clear mandate," Carney told supporters on Thursday in a speech in the western city of Edmonton.

Poll favourites Domestic

issues such as the cost of living and immigration usually dominate Canadian elections, but this year one key topic tops the list: who can best handle Trump.

The president's open hostility toward his northern neighbor — a Nato ally and historically one of his country's closest partners — has upended the Canadian political landscape. Trudeau, who had been in power since 2015, was deeply unpopular when he announced he was stepping down, with Pierre Poilievre's Conser-

vatives seen as election favourites just weeks ago. But the polls have narrowed spectacularly in Carney's favour since he took over the Liberals, and now analysts are calling this Trump-overshadowed race too close to call. "Many consider this to be an existential election, unprecedented," Felix Mathieu, a political scientist at the University of Winnipeg told AFP. "It is impossible at this stage to make predictions, but this will be a closely watched election with a voter turnout that should be on

the rise." Poilievre, aged 45, is a career politician, first elected when he was only 25. A veteran tough-talking campaigner, he has sometimes been tagged as a libertarian and a populist. Carney, aged 60 years, has spent his career outside of electoral politics. He spent over a decade at Goldman Sachs and went on to lead Canada's central bank, then the Bank of England. Smaller opposition parties could suffer if Canadians seek to give a large mandate to one of the big two, to strengthen his hand against Trump.