

Pakistani entities linked to China face US curbs

WASHINGTON: (News Desk) The United States has added dozens of entities to a trade blacklist on Tuesday, its commerce department said, in part to disrupt Beijing's artificial intelligence and advanced computing capabilities. The action affects 80 entities from countries including China, Taiwan, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, Iran and South Africa, with the department citing their "activities contrary to US national security and foreign policy." Those added to the "entity list" are restricted from obtaining US items and technologies without government authorisation. "We will not allow adversaries to exploit American technology to bolster their own militaries and threaten American lives," said US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick. Beijing condemned the blacklisting of its firms, accusing Washington of "weaponising" trade and technology in a "typical act of hegemonism".

Trump signs order requiring proof of citizenship for federal elections

WASHINGTON: (News Desk) President Donald Trump on Tuesday ordered tighter controls on federal elections, including requiring proof of US citizenship when registering to vote, as the Republican continues to attack a system he insists remains tilted against him. Experts swiftly denounced his executive order as an abuse of presidential power that could ultimately prevent millions of Americans from casting ballots, and rights groups already have vowed to challenge it in court. Trump, now in his second term, has never acknowledged his defeat to Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential election, and he maintains baseless claims of massive election fraud — particularly in absentee voting, a method which has become widely used across the United States. "Perhaps some people think I shouldn't be complaining, because we won in a landslide" last November, Trump said as he signed the executive order in the White House. "But we've got to straighten out our election. This country is so sick because of the election, the fake elections," he said. "And we're going to straighten it out, one way or the other." The new rules will require proof of citizenship to be presented — through documents such as a passport — when registering to vote in one's state of residence.

Amnesty urges Pakistan not to expel Afghans

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) As the returns and deportations of Afghans decreased significantly in March, mainly due to the border closure, Amnesty International has called on Pakistan to withdraw the opaque 'illegal foreigners' repatriation plan targeting Afghan refugees. In a statement issued on Wednesday, Amnesty, ahead of the March 31 deadline, said that the "arbitrarily and forcibly expelling Afghan nationals, including refugees and asylum seekers, will only add to their plight". "The Pakistani government's unyielding and cruel deadline, which is less than a week away, to remove Afghan refugees and asylum seekers from two major cities, resulting in the deportation of many at risk, shows little respect for international human rights law, particularly the principle of non-refoulement," Amnesty says in a strong-worded statement. The exact content of the Pakistan government's 'Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan' used for deportations has never been made public, but it comes amid a campaign to wrongfully demonise Afghan nationals as so-called criminals and terrorists. Rights watchdog says repatriation plan for 'illegal foreigners' shows little respect for international law "The opaque orders contravene the government's own promises and repeated calls by human rights organisations to uphold the rights of Afghan refugees and asylum seekers," said deputy regional director for South Asia at Amnesty International, Isabelle Lassee. "It is disingenuous to frame Afghan refugees as a menace to the cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The Government of Pakistan is only making a scapegoat of a community that has long been disenfranchised and fleeing persecution," she said. Speaking to Amnesty, human rights lawyer Moniza Kakar pointed out that forcing Afghan refugees to relocate even within Pakistan is devastating for families. "Many PoR card holders are people who've been here for decades, asking them to relocate means you're asking them to leave homes, businesses, communities and lives they've built for years," she said. Meanwhile, Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders are to be immediately and unlawfully deported to Afghanistan, along with other undocumented refugees and asylum seekers, in violation of the principle of non-refoulement as set out in international human rights law. Afghan refugees due to be resettled in a third country will also be moved outside the cities, far from foreign missions who had promised visas and travel documents, and risk deportation due to the increased difficulty in coordinating their relocation with missions such as the US. Lawyer Umer Gillani, who has challenged the government's decision to deport refugees at the Supreme Court and Islamabad High Court, said that "the official notification [for the 31 March deadline] has not been issued under any particular law, it is just an executive instruction."



A member of Houthi security forces holds a fragment of a missile at the site of a US strike in Sanaa, Yemen March 24, 2025

Trump announces 25pc tariffs on foreign-built vehicles

Washington (News Desk) US President Donald Trump has announced steep tariffs on auto imports and parts, provoking threats of retaliation from trading partners ahead of further promised trade levies next week. Wall Street slumped ahead of Trump's Wednesday afternoon announcement, while the world's top-selling automaker Toyota

plunged more than three per cent. Japan's government described the announcement as "extremely regrettable," while Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said Tokyo was "considering all kinds of counter-measures." "What we're going to be doing is a 25pc tariff on all cars that are not made in the United States," Trump

said, as he signed the order in the Oval Office. The duties take effect at 12:01am (09:01am PKT) on April 3 and impact foreign-made cars and light trucks. Key automobile parts will also be hit within the month. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney branded Trump's tariffs a "direct attack" on his country's workers and said the cabi-

net would meet on Thursday to discuss retaliation. Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said his country "cannot stand still" in response to the levies. The move even appeared to raise eyebrows from Trump ally and Tesla boss Elon Musk, who said the cost impact of the tariffs on his firm's cars was "not trivial".

Houthis say US carried out 19 strikes in Yemen

SANAA: (News Desk) Houthi media said on Wednesday 19 strikes had hit rebel-held parts of Yemen, mostly Saada, blaming the United States, with the group later announcing they targeted a US warship and Israel. Al-Masirah TV reported that "the US aggression launched 17 raids on the Saada governorate during the night", and earlier said

two raids hit Amran. Saba, an Iran-backed news agency, said "the American aggression targeted the Oncology Hospital building in Saada". The hospital, which Houthi media said was under construction, was also hit last week. The rebel health ministry said two civilians were wounded in the latest hospital attack, which they

described as "a full-fledged war crime". Earlier on Wednesday, a Houthi military spokesperson said the group targeted "enemy warships in the Red Sea, led by the US aircraft carrier Truman" blamed for the Yemen strikes. The Houthis also claimed a drone attack on Tel Aviv, but did not specify when it occurred. Israel did not report such

an attack. Washington announced a military offensive against the Houthis on March 15, promising to use overwhelming force until the group stopped firing on vessels in the key shipping routes of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. That day saw a wave of US air strikes that officials said killed senior Houthi leaders, and which the Houthis said killed 53 people.



US President Donald Trump announces tariffs on auto imports in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC, on March 26, 2025

Gaza death toll rises to 50,208 since with 855 people killed since Israel resumed strikes

Gaza (News Desk) The Gaza health ministry has said that 855 people have been killed in the Palestinian territory since Israel resumed large-scale strikes on March 18, AFP reports. According to the ministry's statement, the figure included 25 people killed in the past 24 hours. It also reported that the overall death toll had reached

50,208 since the conflict began on October 7, 2023. Israel military says intercepts two missiles fired from Yemen. The Israeli military has said it intercepted two missiles launched from Yemen after it activated air raid sirens across multiple areas, including Jerusalem, AFP reports. "Following the sirens that sounded a short while ago in several

areas in Israel, two missiles launched from Yemen were intercepted prior to crossing into Israeli territory," the military said in a statement. Israeli forces enter Beit Jala as West Bank raids continue. The Israeli military has raided the town of Beit Jala, north of Bethlehem, as it continues to carry out assaults across the occupied West Bank, Al

Jazeera reports. Local Palestinian platforms posted videos on Telegram verified by Al Jazeera's Sanad fact-checking unit showing military vehicles entering the town and raiding a house. Separately, the Palestinian news agency Wafa reported that the Israeli army arrested four people in the town of al-Masara in Bethlehem governorate.

Magazine publishes Yemen chats after official denials

WASHINGTON: (News Desk) As the White House fought fiercely to defend itself over the slip-up, US magazine The Atlantic on Wednesday published the full exchange of leaked messages between officials laying out plans for an attack on Yemen. The story broke earlier this week after an Atlantic journalist was accidentally added to the chat, and the magazine said it was revealing full details of the attack plans now because Trump's team insisted that no classified details were involved.

Details including the times of strikes and types of planes used were shown in screenshots of the chat between President Donald Trump's top officials on the Signal messaging app. The White House reacted defiantly, seeking to contain the fallout from the revelation and launching a coordinated attack slammed the magazine's journalists as "scumbags" and dismissing the story as a "hoax." "There weren't details, and there was nothing in there that compromised, and it had no impact on

the attack, which was very successful," Trump told podcaster Vince Coglianese when asked about the latest revelations. Vice President JD Vance, who was on the Signal conversation, said The Atlantic had "oversold" the story. National Security Adviser Mike Waltz, who has taken responsibility for accidentally adding Atlantic journalist Jeffrey Goldberg to the chat, likewise insisted that the Signal chain revealed "no locations" and "NO WAR PLANS." Details of chat-Goldberg revealed Mon-

day that Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth sent information in the Signal chat about imminent strikes against Houthi targets on March 15. According to the released chats, it was Hegseth who texted plans to kill a Houthi leader two hours before a military operation, that would normally be a closely guarded secret. The magazine — which initially said it published only the broad outlines about the attacks to protect US troops — said it had published the full details after the Trump

repeatedly denied that any classified details had been included. The Atlantic said its full publication on Wednesday included everything in the Signal chain, other than one CIA name that the agency had asked not to be revealed. It added that it had asked the government whether there would be any problem in publishing the rest of the material, given the official insistence that no secrets were shared. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt had replied insisting there was no classified material

involved, but adding that "we object to the release". Congress grilling The depth of detail has fuelled a furious outcry from Congress, where lawmakers are accusing the Trump officials of incompetence and putting US military operations in peril. "I think that it's by the awesome grace of God that we are not mourning dead pilots right now," Democrat Jim Himes of Connecticut said at a hearing of the House of Representatives Intelligence Committee, on Wednesday.

Prisoners to return 'in coffins' if Israel uses force, Hamas warns

DOHA: (News Desk) Hamas warned on Wednesday that Israeli prisoners may be killed if Tel Aviv attempts to retrieve them by force and air strikes continue in the Gaza Strip. The group said in a statement that it was "doing everything possible to keep the occupation's captives alive, but the random Zionist bombardment is endangering their lives". "Every time the occupation attempts to retrieve its captives by force, it ends up bringing them back in coffins," it said. Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu threatened on Wednesday to seize parts of Gaza if Hamas does not release prisoners. The Israeli prime minister threatens to capture parts of Gaza Strip if Hamas does not agree to free prisoners.

Pilot, children survive plane crash into icy lake

WASHINGTON: (News Desk) A pilot and two children were rescued from a small plane that plunged into an icy lake in Alaska following an overnight search, officials said. The Piper PA-12 Super Cruiser propeller plane was reported missing in the area of Tustumena Lake and the Kenai Mountains on Sunday around 10:30pm after it failed to return as scheduled. But a volunteer pilot spotted the plane on the frozen lake, leading to the passengers' rescue around 12 hours after the aircraft was declared missing. "Earlier this morning, a good samaritan aircraft located the plane wreckage near the eastern side of Tustumena Lake," the Alaska State Troopers said in a statement on Monday. A photo of the partially submerged aircraft published by local media appeared to show three people sitting on the wings. Rescuers raced to locate the trio in sub-zero temperatures overnight, according to local weather records.

US religious freedom panel urges sanctions against Pakistan, Indian spy agency RAW

Washington (News Desk) A US panel on religious freedom has said the treatment of minorities in Pakistan and India is deteriorating, and it recommended sanctions be imposed on the former's officials and government agencies and the latter's external spy agency over its alleged involvement in plots to assassinate Sikh separatists. The commission is a bipartisan US government advisory body that monitors religious freedom abroad and makes policy recommendations. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) said, in its annual report, "In 2024, religious freedom conditions in Pakistan continued to deteriorate. Religious minority communities — particularly Christians, Hindus and Shia [Muslims] and [Ahmadis] — continued to bear the brunt of persecution and prosecutions under Pakistan's strict blasphemy law and to suffer violence from both the police and mobs, while those responsible for such violence rarely faced legal consequences. Such conditions continued to contribute to a worsening religious and political climate of fear, intolerance, and violence. The report released on Tuesday pointed out that accusations of blasphemy and subsequent mob violence continued to severely impact religious minority communities in the country."

Injured Latham out of Pakistan ODIs, Bracewell continues as NZ captain

Wellington (News Desk) New Zealand stumper-batsman Tom Latham was ruled out of the one-day series against Pakistan with a hand injury on Thursday leaving Michael Bracewell to continue as the side's captain. With regular white-ball captain Mitchell Santner busy in the Indian Premier League, Bracewell led New Zealand to a 4-1 victory in a T20 series against Pakistan. Latham was due to lead New Zealand in the three-match ODI series beginning in Napier on Saturday, but he fractured his hand while batting in the nets and will require at least four weeks to recover, the New Zealand Cricket (NZC) said in a statement. Opener Will Young, meanwhile, will miss the last two ODIs to be with his wife as they await the birth of their first child. "It's obviously disappointing to lose Tom as captain on the eve of the series and we wish him a speedy recovery," New Zealand head coach Gary Stead said. "The side is in safe hands with Michael, who's done a great job through the T20I series." Henry Nicholls will return from a calf strain to replace Latham, while Mitch Hay will keep wickets. Canterbury batsman Rhys Mariu earned his maiden call-up as a batting cover. "We've had to be flexible this tour with numerous players unavailable for different reasons," Stead said. "What it does do is offer opportunities to others players and it's nice to introduce Rhys into the environment for the first time, as well as welcome back Henry." While eight off the 13 players named in the squad featured in New Zealand's ICC Champions Trophy squad that finished runner-ups, there are fresh faces brought in the fray. Top-order batter Nick Kelly and left-arm pacer Muhammad Abbas, both of whom feature for Wellington Firebirds in New Zealand's first-class cricket set-up, have earned their maiden call-ups to the national side. Among the major names missing in the line-up are Santner, Rachin Ravindra, Devon Conway and Glenn Phillips owing to their commitments at the Indian Premier League (PL) T20 tournament that started in Kolkata on Saturday.