

Trump’s policies trigger protests in US, Europe

WASHINGTON: (News Desk) Thousands streamed into downtown Washington on Saturday as protests got underway against efforts by President Donald Trump and his billionaire ally Elon Musk to overhaul government and expand presidential authority. Organisers said more than 20,000 people attended the rally at Washington’s National Mall. Over 1,200 demonstrations were planned across the United States in what organisers expect to be the largest single day of protest which will give Trump’s opponents an opportunity to demonstrate their displeasure en masse in response to a raft of executive orders. Some 150 activist groups have signed up to participate, according to the event’s website. Protests were planned in all 50 states plus Canada and Mexico. Protesters were lining the busy thoroughfare of Connecticut Avenue in Washington under gloomy skies and light rain, awaiting buses to take them downtown.

Iran top diplomat rejects direct negotiations with US

Tehran (News Desk) Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Sunday rejected direct negotiations with the United States as “meaningless”, after US President Donald Trump said he would prefer direct talks with the Islamic Republic. Trump had called last month on Tehran to hold negotiations on its nuclear programme with Washington, but threatened to bomb Iran if diplomacy fails. On Thursday, the US president said he would prefer to hold “direct talks” with Iran. “I think it goes faster, and you understand the other side a lot better than if you go through intermediaries,” he argued. But on Sunday, Araghchi said “direct negotiations would be meaningless with a party that constantly threatens to resort to force in violation of the UN Charter and that expresses contradictory positions from its various officials.” “We remain committed to diplomacy and are ready to try the path of indirect negotiations,” he added, according to a foreign ministry statement.

US to revoke all visas for South Sudanese, says secretary of state

Washington (News Desk) Washington is revoking all visas for South Sudanese passport holders and blocking new arrivals, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Saturday, complaining that the African nation is not accepting its nationals expelled from the United States. The State Department “is taking actions to revoke all visas held by South Sudanese passport holders and prevent further issuance to prevent entry,” Rubio said in a statement. It was the first such measure singling out all passport holders from a particular country since Donald Trump returned to the White House on January 20, having campaigned on an anti-immigration platform. Rubio accused the transitional government in Juba of “taking advantage of the United States,” saying that “every country must accept the return of its citizens in a timely manner when another country... seeks to remove them.” Washington “will be prepared to review these actions when South Sudan is in full cooperation,” Rubio added. The world’s newest country and also one of the poorest, South Sudan is currently prey to tensions between political leaders. Some observers fear a renewal of the civil war that killed 400,000 people between 2013 and 2018. South Sudanese nationals had been granted “temporary protected status” (TPS) by the administration of Trump’s predecessor Joe Biden, with the designation set to expire on May 3, 2025. The United States grants TPS, which shields people against deportation, to foreign citizens who cannot safely return home because of war, natural disasters or other “extraordinary” conditions. There were about 133 South Sudanese in the United States under the TPS programme, with another 140 eligible to apply, the Department of Homeland Security said in September 2023. But the Trump White House has begun overturning TPS designations, revoking protection in January from more than 600,000 Venezuelans. A federal judge this week put that decision on hold after calling into question the government’s claims that the majority of Venezuelans in the US were criminals. According to the Pew Research Center, as of March 2024 there were 1.2 million people eligible for or receiving TPS in the US, with Venezuelans making up the largest group. The Trump administration’s singling out of South Sudan also comes after growing numbers of Africans attempted to enter the US via its southern border — an alternative to risky routes into Europe.



People carry the body of a Palestinian recovered from the site of an Israeli strike on a house, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip on April 6, 2025

Death toll from Israeli attacks on Gaza nears 50,700

Gaza (News Desk) Israeli attacks on Gaza have killed at least 26 Palestinians in the past 24 hours, taking the death toll since October 2023 to 50,695, Al Jazeera reports quoting the enclave’s health ministry. A ministry statement said that at least 113 other people were transferred to hospitals with injuries, taking the number of wounded people in the

conflict to 115,338. “Many victims are still trapped under the rubble and on the roads as rescuers are unable to reach them,” it added. Medical sources have given Al Jazeera a higher death toll for today, saying at least 46 people have been killed in Israeli attacks across Gaza in the previous 24 hours. British MPs ‘astounded’ after be-

ing denied entry to Israel. Two British members of parliament who were denied entry to Israel say they are “astounded” by the decision, Al Jazeera reports. “We’re astounded at the unprecedented step taken by the Israeli authorities to refuse British MPs entry on our trip to visit the occupied West Bank,” Labour politicians Abtissam Mohamed and Yuan

Yang said in a joint statement on X. “It is vital that parliamentarians are able to witness first-hand the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory,” they added. “We are two, out of scores of MPs, who have spoken out in parliament in recent months on the Israel-Palestine conflict and the importance of complying with international humanitarian law.

Israel seizes Rafah, forcing hundreds of thousands to flee

CAIRO: (News Desk) Hundreds of thousands of fleeing Gazans sought shelter on Thursday in one of the biggest mass displacements of the war, as Israeli forces advanced into the ruins of the city of Rafah, part of a newly announced “security zone” they intend to seize. A day after declaring their intention to capture large swathes of the crowded enclave, Israeli forces pushed

into the city on Gaza’s southern edge which had served as a last refuge for people fleeing other areas for much of the war. Gaza’s health ministry reported at least 97 people killed in Israeli strikes in the past 24 hours, including at least 20 killed in an airstrike around dawn in Shejaia, a suburb of Gaza City in the north. Later on Thursday, an Israeli air strike killed at least

27 Palestinians, including women and children, inside a school building that served as a shelter for displaced families in Gaza City, local health authorities said. Medics said three missiles slammed into the Dar Al-Arqam school building in Tuffah neighbourhood in Gaza City, and the Israeli military said it struck a command centre that had been used by Hamas fighters to plan

and execute attacks against Israeli civilians and army troops. Rafah “is gone, it is being wiped out,” a father of seven among the hundreds of thousands who had fled from Rafah to neighbouring Khan Younis, told Reuters via a chat app. “They are knocking down what is left standing of houses and property,” said the man who declined to be identified for fear of repercussions.



Emergency personnel work at the site of an office building damaged by a Russian missile strike, amid Russia’s attack on Ukraine, in Kyiv, Ukraine on April 6, 2025.

Rain complicates recovery in quake-hit Myanmar as death toll nears 3,500

Mayanmar (News Desk) Rain is compounding misery and presenting new hurdles for relief efforts on Sunday in Myanmar, where state media reported the death toll from a devastating earthquake has risen to nearly 3,500 people. The 7.7-magnitude quake struck on March 28, razing

buildings, cutting off power and destroying bridges and roads across the country. Damage has been particularly severe in the city of Sagaing near the epicentre, as well as in Mandalay, Myanmar’s second city with more than 1.7 million residents. State media in the military

junta-led country now say that the earthquake has caused 3,471 confirmed deaths and injured 4,671 people, while 214 remain missing. With people either having lost their homes entirely or reluctant to spend time in cracked and unstable structures, many residents have been sleeping out-

side in tents. Around 45 minutes of heavy rain and winds lashed tent cities on Saturday evening in Mandalay, according to the UN Development Programme. People and their belongings were soaked because of a shortage of tarpaulins, Tun Tun, a programme specialist at the UN agency, told AFP.

US starts collecting Trump’s new 10pc tariff on imports

WASHINGTON: (News Desk) US customs agents began collecting President Donald Trump’s unilateral 10 per cent tariff on all imports from many countries on Saturday, with higher levies on goods from 57 larger trading partners due to start next week. The initial 10pc “baseline” tariff to be paid by US importers took effect at US seaports, airports and customs warehouses at 12:01am ET (0401 GMT), ushering in Trump’s full rejection of the post-World War Two system of mutually agreed tariff rates. “This is the single biggest trade action of our lifetime,” said Kelly Ann Shaw, a trade lawyer at Hogan Lovells and former White House trade adviser during Trump’s first term. Shaw told a Brookings Institution event on Thursday that she expected the tariffs to evolve over time as countries seek to negotiate lower rates.

Protesters rally across Spain against housing crisis, tourist flats

MADRID: (News Desk) Hundreds of thousands marched across 40 Spanish cities on Saturday to protest against soaring rents and a lack of affordable homes in a country that enjoys Europe’s fastest economic growth and yet suffers from a severe housing shortage exacerbated by a tourism boom. Spain’s centre-left government has struggled to find a balance between attracting tourists and migrants to fill job gaps and keeping rents affordable for average citizens, as short-term rentals have mushroomed in major cities and coastal destinations alike. “No matter who governs, we must defend housing rights,” activists shouted as they rattled keychains in Madrid, where more than 150,000 protesters marched through the capital’s centre, according to the local tenants’ union. Average Spanish rents have doubled and house prices swelled by 44pc over the past decade, data from property website Idealista showed, far outpacing salary growth. Meanwhile, the supply of rentals has halved since the 2020 pandemic. “They’re kicking all of us out to make tourist flats,” said Margarita Aizpuru, a 65-year-old resident of the popular Lavapies neighbourhood.

US envoy discusses situation in south with Lebanese govt

BEIRUT: (News Desk) Senior Lebanese officials said Saturday’s talks with visiting US deputy special envoy for the Middle East Morgan Orttagus were positive, focusing on south Lebanon amid a fragile truce between Israel and Hezbollah. President Joseph Aoun and Orttagus discussed “south Lebanon, the work of the international monitoring committee and the Israeli withdrawal” from Lebanese territory, a statement from the presidency said, characterising the talks as constructive. The United States chairs a committee, which also includes France, that is tasked with overseeing the ceasefire that ended more than a year of hostilities including two months of all-out war between Israel and Hezbollah. Prime Minister Nawaf Salam’s office, in a statement, also said the discussions with the envoy were “positive”. Orttagus’s second visit to Lebanon comes as Israel continues to carry out strikes in Lebanon despite a Nov 27 ceasefire with Hezbollah, and as its troops remain in several points in the country’s south. Under the truce, Hezbollah was to redeploy its forces north of the Litani River, about 30 kilometres from the Israeli border, and dismantle any remaining military infrastructure in the south. Prime Minister Nawaf Salam describes talks as positive. Israel was due to complete its withdrawal from Lebanon by February 18 after missing a January deadline, but it has kept troops in five places it deems “strategic”.

Inaugural U23 World Squash Championships underway in Karachi

Karachi (News Desk) The inaugural edition of the Under-23 World Squash Championships kicked off on Sunday with six Pakistani players looking to wow the home crowd at Karachi’s Creek Club. The newly introduced championships from April 6 to 10 feature a men’s individual championship draw of 32 players and a women’s individual championship draw of 22 players. The winner receives automatic qualification through to the PSA World Championships as well as the lion’s share of a \$60,000 prize pot, according to World Squash. Mariam Malik was the first Pakistani player in action this morning. The 21-year-old was thrashed by Spain’s Noa Romero Blazquez 11-3, 11-2, 11-4 in the opening match. Next up for Pakistan was Noor Zaman. The second seed stormed to victory against Kuwait’s Hussain Al-zaatari with 6-11, 11-5, 4-11, 3-11. Former world junior squash champion Hamza Khan cruised to victory in three straight sets over Romania’s Radu Stefan Pena 3-11, 1-11, 5-11. Khan made history in 2023 when he won the World Junior Squash Championship 2023 on Sunday after beating Egypt’s Mohamed Zakaria, becoming the country’s first champion since 1986. Pakistan’s Muhammad Ammad lost to Malaysia’s Ameeshenraj Chandaran in a close five-set match, with Chandaran winning the final set 11-8. Sana Bahadar went up against Czechia’s Tamara Holzbauerova and was beaten by Holzbauerova 13-11, 11-6, 8-11 and 11-8. A total of 22 matches across five courts at Creek Club are set to place take today. Pakistan Squash Federation (PSF) Vice President and Sindh Squash President Adnan Asad made no secret of his and his colleagues’ goal to return Pakistan to the summit of the game. “My vision is to create a few Jahangir Khans in the next five years,” Asad told World Squash earlier this week. He adds that hosting the championships forms part of a two-pronged strategy that will see Pakistan host more high-profile events in the future to give local players more opportunities to compete with the world’s best talents, coupled with an increased PSF and private investment in facilities, equipment and grassroots programmes.

Missile strike on Kyiv kills one amid ‘massive’ attack

Kyiv (News Desk) A missile attack on the Ukrainian capital Kyiv early on Sunday killed one person and injured at least three people, city officials said, as missile and drone strikes across the country left at least one more person dead. Russia “in the early hours of this morning launched a massive nationwide attack on Ukraine using ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and drones”, said First Deputy Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko. In Kyiv, explosions were heard overnight and a

dark plume of smoke rose up from the city early Sunday morning, AFP journalists saw. In the capital, “preliminarily, one person was killed, and three were wounded, two of them were hospitalised”, the head of the city’s military administration, Tymur Tkachenko, wrote on social media. City mayor Vitali Klitschko said that “the body of a man killed in an enemy attack was discovered in Darnytsia district. He was on the street, near the epicentre of the explosion.

The man’s identity is being established.” Emergency services said that during attacks, fires broke out in Kyiv in non-residential buildings, damaging a multi-storey business centre, a furniture factory and warehouses. The emergency services posted video of smoke rising from charred debris, a gutted hangar and a large multi-storey administrative building with the roof torn off and windows blown out. Overnight, Russia attacked Ukraine with 23

cruise and ballistic missiles and 109 drones, the Ukrainian air force said, causing damage to six regions. The air force said it shot down 13 of the missiles and 40 drones while 54 others caused no damage. In the southern Kherson region, a drone killed a 59-year-old man, while in the northeastern Kharkiv region near the border with Russia two were injured in an attack using guided aerial bombs, regional officials said. In western Ukraine’s Khmelnytsky region, au-

thorities said air defences destroyed a missile but falling fragments damaged a house and a woman was injured. Russian air attacks on Ukraine ‘increasing’: Zelensky. The attacks come as US President Donald Trump pushes for a partial ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine, more than three years into Moscow’s full-scale invasion, and seeks a thaw in ties with the Kremlin. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said today the number of Rus-

sian air attacks is increasing, indicating that there is not enough international pressure on Moscow. Missile and drone attacks across the country killed at least two people overnight and injured at least four people, as well as damaging offices of state broadcasters, officials said. “The number of air attacks is increasing,” the president wrote on Facebook. “The pressure on Russia is still insufficient, and the daily Russian strikes on Ukraine prove it,” Zelensky said.