

4th-Century BC Tomb of Warrior discovered in Campania, Italy **Newswire**

Rome: A team of archaeologists and law enforcement officials has uncovered ancient tombs in southern Italy, including what may be a warrior's tomb, following an investigation into illegal construction that **(Page-6)**

Pakistan seeks Germany's support for climate action plans **Celina Ali**

Islamabad: Pakistan this week sought technical support from Germany to develop its climate action plans and accelerate the transition to clean energy sources, according to Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam. **(Page-10)**

Henan handles 303 China-Europe freight trains in Jan

Henan Daily
Zhengzhou: In the first month of 2025, Henan Zhongyu International Port Group operated 303 China-Europe freight trains, transporting goods worth approximately

\$490 million with a total weight of about 385,000 tons. This marks the highest January record in the company's history, laying a solid foundation for high-quality development in the

new year and providing a strong boost to Henan's export-oriented economy. In January, Henan Zhongyu International Port Group fully utilized its "channel + hub + network" logistics system, enabling



the smooth operation of China-Europe, China-Central Asia, China-Russia, and China-RCEP (member countries) international freight trains. This diverse channel system provided strong support for Henan's imports and exports. It is worth noting that the cargo transported has gradually shifted from the previous goods such as clothing, chemicals and mineral products, to new energy vehicles,

lithium batteries, photovoltaic products, and other items. The volume of the three new type items has seen strong growth, marking a key step in the transformation and upgrading of Zhengzhou International Hub Development and Construction Company from traditional bulk commodity transportation to high-tech industry logistics services.

Denmark grants 'historic' low asylum requests in 2024



Covert Report
Copenhagen: Denmark's strict immigration policies resulted in the granting of just 860 asylum requests last year, the lowest number with the exception of 2020, when Covid-19 lockdowns halted new arrivals. Denmark's immigration approach has been influenced by the far-right parties for over 20 years, with Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, the head of the Social Democrats, pursuing a "zero refugee" policy since coming to power in 2019. The country of around six million people registered 2,300 asylum requests last year. "Last year, authorities granted the smallest number of residency permits to asylum seekers that we have seen in recent years," Immigration Minister Kaare Dybvad Bek said in a statement, calling the figure "historic". The decline comes as the European Union is preparing plans on how they will implement overhauled rules for asylum seekers to be operational in mid-2026. Denmark has already managed to negotiate an agreement to keep it outside the EU's common asylum

policy, and Copenhagen has over the years implemented a slew of initiatives to discourage migrants and



Ambassador of Denmark to Pakistan His Excellency Jakob Linnell

Bilawal Bhutto advocates stronger Pakistan-US public relations



Liaquat Ali
Islamabad: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said this week that public relations between Pakistan and the United States should be strengthened. Bilawal Bhutto, while talking to Pakistani media representatives in Washington after attending the national prayer breakfast hosted by President Donald Trump, said that he had important meetings with leaders from around the world including American officials at the breakfast ceremony. He said that the most important personalities from around the world were present at the National Prayer Breakfast ceremony in Washington, and the American President addressed the ceremony. Earlier, Bilawal Bhutto had also addressed the National Prayer Breakfast event. He said that public relations between Pakistan and the United States should be strengthened and religion should be used to unite instead of divide.

Addressing the ceremony at the National Prayer Breakfast, Bilawal said that the Prayer Breakfast is a great opportunity for interfaith harmony. He also met with members of Congress. Now he is no longer the foreign minister, he held all the meetings in a personal capacity. He further said that President Trump attended the ceremony, people from all over the world participated, he also delivered the closing speech. Bilawal said that people should be treated equally, every Muslim is a follower of Jesus Christ and this is not a national prayer ceremony but a global prayer ceremony. He further said that instead of dividing religion, we should establish unity, there is scope for more work with Pakistanis living in the US, interfaith programmes are important to save society from division.

Henan's film market kicks off 2025 with record Spring Festival sales

Henan Daily

Zhengzhou: Henan's film market kicks off 2025 with a strong start in Spring Festival sales. During the eight-day Spring Festival holiday, the province's box office revenue reached 587 million yuan, a 15.47% increase from the same period in 2024, according to the local authority on February 5, accounting for 6.15% of the national total, ranking fifth nationwide. During this year's Spring Festival holiday, the number of movie goers in Henan reached 11.32 million, an 11.82% increase compared to the same period last year. Both box office revenue and the number of movie goers set new historical records. Zhengzhou led the province with a box office of 115 million yuan, followed by Luoyang, Nanyang, Zhoukou, and Xinyang, which ranked second to fifth.



Chinese folk arts attract Serbian audience with Spring Festival flash performance

China Economic Net

Belgrade: The Hubei Performing Arts Group brought a vibrant showcase of Chinese folk arts to Belgrade, on Saturday evening with a flash performance at Galerija Shopping Mall, as part of Serbia's Spring Festival celebrations. The "Charming Hubei" program kicked off with a suona solo, "Snow Lantern Festival," immediately drawing a crowd. This was followed by a mesmerizing display of Wudang martial arts, which earned enthusiastic applause. The highlight of the evening was a face-changing opera performance, where enthusiastic

children and teenagers eagerly interacted with the performer. The 30-minute show concluded with a series of traditional and classical Chinese folk music performed on Chinese instruments, including the guzheng, pipa, and erhu. Adding a cross-cultural touch, Serbian violinist Milica joined the Chinese performers. "It is a great pleasure to work and perform with musicians from China. It's always a unique experience to share music together," she said. Milica, a member of the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra, noted that although she had met many Chinese musicians during

previous visits to China, this was her first official collaboration with a Chinese ensemble. "The music is amazing. I love its melodies and unique style," she added. Audience member Andjela praised the performance for its artistry, costumes, and diverse instruments. "It was something different and truly beautiful. I haven't seen a Chinese show like this before, but now I definitely want to experience more," she said. This marked the Hubei Performing Arts Group's third appearance in Serbia's Spring Festival celebrations, following performances in Bor and Nis.



Over 100m parcels handled in Henan during Spring Festival

Henan Daily

Zhengzhou: During the 2025 Spring Festival holiday (from January 28 to February 4), Henan's postal and express delivery services saw a steady increase, with more than 100 million parcels collected and delivered, according to the local authority on February 7. Of these, 56.3967 million parcels were collected, marking a 30.01% increase compared to the same period last year; while 43.9457 million parcels were delivered, reflecting a 26.6% year-on-year growth. According to statistics, from January 14, the start of the Spring Festival travel rush, to February 6, Henan's postal and express delivery services collected 474 million



4th-Century BC Tomb of Warrior discovered in Campania, Italy



Inside the tombs, archaeologists found black-glazed pottery and red-figure vases, often decorated with images of women. These artifacts likely came from workshops in the Lucania region, possibly in Vallo di Diano. Some vases were discovered outside the graves, suggesting they played a role in burial rituals.

One of the most remarkable findings was Tomb 64, which contained several black-glazed vases and a small, undecorated pot. Archaeologists found a silver diobol coin, minted in Tarentum between 380 and 325 B.C. inside the pot. It featured Greek goddess Athena on one side and Hercules strangling the Nemean lion on the other. A significant detail emerged on one of the slabs covering the tomb. Before being hardened in a kiln, someone had engraved an image of a man riding a galloping horse.

The rider, wearing a helmet, has an arm raised as if preparing to throw a spear. Experts believe this suggests that the tomb belonged to a warrior, possibly an important figure in his community.

In another grave, archaeologists uncovered a krater, a large vessel linked to drinking ceremonies, along with an iron knife, a bronze belt, metal spits, two fire supports, and a lead candelabrum.

The bronze belt, worn by the deceased at burial, suggests another warrior's grave. Meanwhile, the presence of household items indicates the individual may have held an important social role.

The graves' layout and the range of objects found suggest the burial site may have been connected to an ancient settlement or farm from the same period. Experts believe further excavations could provide more insight into the lives of the people buried there.

Authorities emphasized the need to protect cultural heritage, warning against damage to historical sites. The warrior's tomb in Italy is a striking reminder of the region's deep history and the importance of continued preservation efforts.



Newsire Wednesday, shedding light on a significant archaeological find linked to the region's past. The discovery was made in Contrada Cicirelli, near Padula, following reports last summer of unauthorized building work disturbing the land. A stable was under construction, but the project severely damaged several ancient graves. Authorities quickly seized the site, halting all activity. Experts then launched an urgent excavation to recover and preserve the historical remains. Ancient tombs date back to the 4th century B.C. Archaeologists have identified 19 tombs, most constructed using large ceramic slabs arranged in a tent-like shape. Some graves contained bodies placed directly into pits, marked by large stones at the deceased's head. Researchers have dated the burials to the late 4th century B.C.



What US should grasp from DeepSeek's technological leap

Ding Gang

The Chinese AI firm DeepSeek has recently garnered significant attention in the global technological landscape. It has developed AI models that not only rival but, in some cases, surpass those of leading American companies. This achievement is particularly noteworthy as it has been accomplished despite hardware constraints, through the application of innovative algorithms and efficient engineering design.

However, this has raised concerns in the US, not only regarding the so-called national security but also about American hegemony in the technological field. Access to DeepSeek technologies has been blocked in the Pentagon and NASA. A senator even proposed jail time for individuals who download DeepSeek.

Still, with DeepSeek serving as a microcosm of China's technological advancement, the US anxiety and various crackdown measures only serve as a testament to the resilience and adapta-

bility of Chinese innovation in the face of external pressures. DeepSeek's success illustrates the "effect" of Washington's technological blockade against China.

Taking chip export restrictions as an example, the US believes that Nvidia's high-end chips (such as the H100) are key to training large-scale AI models. By restricting China's access to these chips, the US aims to slow down the development of AI technology in China.

However, DeepSeek has not only developed advanced AI models on performance-limited chips through optimized algorithm design and resource allocation but it has also significantly reduced costs. This demonstrates that technological innovation does not solely rely on high-end hardware. It can also be achieved through various paths, such as algorithm optimization, improved computational efficiency and utilizing open-source technologies.

In fact, past technological successes in the US

have followed such diverse paths, but Washington forgot about this when launching its containment strategy against China. It has been blinded by a desire for sustaining hegemony.

The current US strategy to curb high-end technology in China can be classified as a continuation of a "Cold War mentality." This mind-set, reminiscent of the ideological and technological competition of the Cold War era, holds that implementing technological blockades, resource restrictions and economic isolation can stifle a strategic opponent's rise. This strategy is based on two significant misjudgments: the belief that China's technological progress can be halted through such measures, and the assumption that the global technological landscape remains under the control of a few dominant players.

First, China is an economically powerful country deeply embedded in globalization. It is the global manufacturing center and the largest creator and consumer of data, possessing the world's most active digital economy market. From production to application, China's technological development has always been integrated with both domestic and international markets, and over the years, it has nurtured a large pool of technical talent.

Second, Washington has misjudged the current international technological ecosystem. The world has undergone profound changes; China is not only an essential powerhouse for the world economy but it has also formed deep economic ties with many countries, along with technological and talent connections. In the era of the global internet, the diffusion of technology is more complex to control than at any time in history.



Even if specific high-end hardware and software are restricted, China can still achieve technological development through open-source communities and its own engineering capabilities.

China is the world's most significant data producer and the most prominent internet market with data serving as the "fuel" for AI training. Chinese companies can leverage rich application scenarios to accumulate key data in natural language processing, computer vision and industrial applications. This endogenous cycle of market and technology provides lasting momentum for China's AI innovation.

In this context, attempting to curb technological development by restricting hardware is akin to blocking a main river while ignoring the flow of countless small streams. When companies face resource constraints, they often spark greater technological innovation, as demonstrated by the DeepSeek team's strong adaptability, which reflects the Chinese idiom: "finding a new path."

The core issue of Washington's strategy to curb China lies in a flawed "power-hegemony" logic, which fundamentally overlooks the complex realities of globalization and the characteristics of China's growth. This situation resembles the traditional Chinese game of Go, where one player tries to block their opponent's liberties, only to forget that the opponent had already taken control of the board yesterday. The game will ultimately demonstrate that hegemonism's arrogance and misjudgment of reality will continually undermine Washington's foundational path of strategic development.

The writer is a senior editor with the People's Daily, and currently a senior fellow with the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at the Renmin University of China



DeepSeek demonstrates strengthen of China's homegrown innovation

Global Times

DeepSeek has emerged as a captivating topic of discussion in the global AI community. This small team of fewer than 140 people has achieved what even some tech giants struggle to accomplish.

Nearly all the engineers and researchers powering this company's success were educated at China's universities, and the average age of the R&D team members is about 28. This challenges long-held assumptions about talent distribution in the tech industry and signals a profound shift in the global innovation landscape.

DeepSeek's engineers primarily come from prestigious Chinese universities, such as Tsinghua University, Peking University, Sun Yat-sen University, and Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications.

This paints a powerful picture: cutting-edge innovation no longer relies on expatriate expertise or foreign-educated professionals.

For decades, global innovation narratives have centered on the US, particularly Silicon Valley. The Silicon Valley's success stems from attracting top minds across

the globe, a convergence of talent nurtured by Ivy League institutions and supported by a robust start-up ecosystem.

The implicit assumption has often been that this model could not be replicated elsewhere, especially in countries like China, where education and innovation systems were once dismissed as rigid and overly focused on rote learning.

DeepSeek turns that assumption on its head. Its success proves that China's universities and research infrastructure have evolved to the point where they are producing first-class scientists and innovators. Rote learning has ceded ground to critical thinking, problem-solving, and cutting-edge experimentation. The team's achievements suggest that China's education reforms, particularly in STEM fields, are starting to bear fruit globally.

This transformation is no accident. Over the past two decades, China has made dramatic funding in higher education, ramping up funding for research and fostering international collaborations.

Universities like Tsinghua University and Peking University now rival MIT and Stanford in specific



research fields, earning places on global rankings. More importantly, they nurture graduates who can compete with the best minds anywhere. DeepSeek is one of the reform era's most striking success stories but will not be the last.

For years, the US has relied on attracting international researchers, particularly from China, as a cornerstone of its tech dominance. But the tables are beginning to turn. As opportunities improve and ambitious projects like DeepSeek thrive in China, fewer Chinese scientists are leaving abroad. Many are choosing to stay, building cutting-edge companies at home and fueling innovation ecosystems in Beijing, Shenzhen and other rising tech hubs.

While China's innovation engine is rapidly gathering momentum, it would be premature to conclude it has overtaken the US' Silicon Valley, which still leads in its sheer concentration of capital and infrastructure and has a profoundly ingrained risk-taking culture. But the gap is unquestionably narrowing. With consistent investment in education and technology, China is emerging as a true contender in the global innovation race.

This shift has important implications for the world. For

one, it challenges the notion that talent, and innovation, must be concentrated in a few key regions such as Silicon Valley.

DeepSeek exemplifies the growing decentralization of innovation. Talent is everywhere, and as countries like China continue to invest in their local ecosystems, global innovation is becoming more evenly distributed. More competition means more breakthroughs and diversity of ideas, as well as faster technological advancement for humanity.

DeepSeek is far more than a story about one company's achievements. It symbolizes China's rise as an incubator of world-class talent and innovation.



Global Times

Editor-in-Chief: S. Ali
Associate Editor: Afzal Butt
Email: editor@covert.com.pk
Phone/Fax : +92-51-2723419
690. Street 17 Block E Bahria Town phase 8, Islamabad, Pakistan

Prince Karim Aga Khan's death great loss for the whole world: High Commissioner Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri

Covert Report



Canberra: Pakistani High Commissioner to Australia Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri said this week that the demise of Prince Karim Aga Khan IV was a great loss for the whole world. "With the passing of H H Prince Karim Aga Khan IV, the world has lost a visionary leader dedicated to improving lives through education, healthcare, and development. His legacy of service, pluralism, and ethical governance will continue to inspire generations," the envoy posted on X. Earlier, Prince Karim Aga Khan Al Hussaini, the 49th imam of Ismaili Muslims, was buried in the Egyptian city of Aswan. His funeral at the Ismaili Centre in Lisbon was attended by more than 300 guests, including Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa and former Spanish king Juan Carlos I, leaders of the Ismaili community and other dignitaries on Saturday. In Gilgit-Baltistan and other parts of Pakistan, thousands of followers of the late spiritual leader gathered at their community centres and Jamaat Khanas to view the funeral ceremony broadcast from Lisbon. In Gilgit, Hunza and Nagar, shops and businesses remained closed to mourn the death of Prince Karim, who passed away in Lisbon after nearly seven decades as the spiritual leader of the Ismaili Muslims. His son and successor, Prince Rahim Al-Hussaini, who was named the 50th hereditary Imam, or spiritual leader, according to his father's will, also attend the funeral ceremony.



Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad reaffirms Pakistan's support for Kashmiris

Celina Ali



Islamabad: Pakistan's Alternate Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad this week reaffirmed Pakistan's support for the Kashmiris right to self-determination. "On #KashmirSolidarityDay we reaffirm our full support for the Kashmiri people in their just struggle for self-determination promised to them by the UN," the envoy said. He added: "International community must proactively promote peaceful settlement of the J&K dispute in accordance with relevant UNSC resolutions." This week Pakistan observed Kashmir Solidarity Day, vowing to continue its "moral" and "diplomatic" support to the pro-independence movement in the disputed Jammu and Kashmir. Human chains, rallies, and protest demonstrations were held across the country to mark the day, which has been an annual affair since 1990 amid lingering tensions with longtime rival India on the Kashmir dispute. The day, a national holiday, began with special prayers in the mosques for the liberation of Kashmir. A minute's silence was observed throughout the

country. Thousands of people formed human chains on roads connecting the capital Islamabad to the Pakistan-administered Kashmir. The main rally was held near the Parliament House in Islamabad, which was

attended by a large number of people, including federal ministers, lawmakers, women, students, and Kashmiri leaders. Diplomats, students, and civil society members attended another rally taken out from the Foreign Ministry. Rallies, conferences, and seminars were also held in all four provincial capitals – Karachi,

Lahore, Peshawar, and Quetta –, in addition to other big cities and remote towns, to denounce the "human rights violations" in the Indian-administered part of Kashmir. In Muzaffarabad, the capital of Azad Jammu Kashmir, Bagh, Rawlakot, Kohlu, Mirpur, and other districts, human chains were formed to express solidarity with the pro-freedom struggle.



Greece's Deputy Foreign Minister highlights the global importance of Greek language

Newsire



Athens: In recognition of International Greek Language Day, Greece's Deputy Foreign Minister, Giorgos Kotsiras, emphasized the crucial role of the Greek language as a cornerstone of global culture. In his message, Kotsiras stated, "International Greek Language Day presents a valuable chance to contemplate the enduring and universal nature of the Greek language – a language spoken for millennia, encapsulating Greek identity through the ages. It has made unmatched contributions to global culture, science, and the arts by providing unity, interpretation, and meaning." Kotsiras assured that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is steadfast in its mission to promote the Greek language worldwide. "Through various initiatives, the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs is diligently working to elevate the Greek language on a global scale. Promoting Greek language education is a pivotal goal within the Ministry's Strategic Plan for the Greek Diaspora 2024–2027, which includes the February 9 celebration, a longstanding aspiration of the Greek Diaspora," he noted. Among these efforts, the Ministry has enhanced educational partnerships. "To bolster the Greek language, history, and culture, we have signed a Cooperation Protocol with the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. [...] We have strategically reinforced Greek studies programs worldwide. Concurrently, we have entered into a Memorandum of Cooperation with 'Study in Greece' to link Greece's academic community with the Diaspora and to globalize Greek higher education,"

stated Kotsiras. He urged Greeks abroad to preserve the language for future generations. "With pride in our linguistic heritage, alongside our diplomatic and consular entities abroad, Greek educational institutions, and Diaspora organizations, we continuously underscore the Greek language's impact on global culture. It is a language shaped by our rich, shared history, embodying Greek civilization, universal concepts, and timeless values. It is imperative to protect this significant legacy, a treasure beyond measure," he added. International Greek Language Day, marked annually on February 9, is a time for reflection and celebration for the Greek Diaspora and all who value the depth of the Greek language.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari a ray of hope for future: Umar Rehman Malik



Shahnawaz and Mir Murtaza Bhutto. Bilawal also recalled the tragic assassination of his mother, former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, in 2007, just weeks before she was scheduled to speak at the National Prayer Breakfast in 2008. "Everybody has their own faith journey, and for me, and for many people, faith has to do with loss. The more you lose, the stronger your faith," Bilawal explained. The PPP chairman emphasised that religion should serve as a unifying force rather than a source of division. "Religion is often used to divide us. But the great thing about faith, about God, about the Almighty, about religion, is that

it's not a force that divides us-it is a force that unites us," he said, urging others to never let religion be used as a tool for separation. Bilawal also touched on the shared belief in Jesus between Islam and Christianity, noting that "Jesus doesn't just belong to the Christians." He explained how his mother taught him about Jesus, as depicted in both the Quran and the Bible, and how this shared belief in Jesus is fundamental to both faiths. Commenting on the PPP chief's remarks, Umar Rehman Malik said Bilawal Bhutto was a hope for the youth of the country. "People are waiting to see him as the PM and lead Pakistan to glory," he added.



Abdullah Jan
Islamabad: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader Umar Rehman Malik said this week that PPP chief Bilawal Bhutto Zardari was a ray of hope for the future. "The more you lose, the stronger your faith is". A very inspiring talk by Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. His message on interfaith harmony is direly needed in the current times. Islam and Christianity are bonded by the common love for Jesus, who is also our Prophet, as mentioned in the

Holy Quran," Umar Rehman Malik said. Earlier, Bilawal Bhutto called for stronger public ties between Pakistan and the United States, at the National Prayer Breakfast hosted by US President Donald Trump on February 6, 2025, highlighting the unifying power of faith. In his address at the closing ceremony, Bilawal shared personal reflections on the role of faith in his life, particularly during times of loss. He spoke about the devastating impact of losing his grandfather, former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and his uncles,



Pakistan seeks Germany's support for climate action plans



She reaffirmed the government's commitment to tackling climate challenges through the implementation of the National Climate Change Policy and the Pakistan Climate Change Act.

Celina Ali
 Islamabad: Pakistan this week sought technical support from Germany to develop its climate action plans and accelerate the transition to clean energy sources, according to Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam. During a meeting with a three-member delegation from Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, led by Christiane Amari, she emphasized the need for stronger collaboration. Romina Khurshid underscored the importance of enhancing bilateral cooperation on climate change and sustainable development. The discussions focused on ongoing and future initiatives related to environmental protection, climate adaptation, and mitigation efforts, as per the press release.



New Bulgarian government confirms commitment to eurozone entry

Covert Report
 Sofia: The newly elected government in Sofia this week reaffirmed its commitment to the country's entry into the eurozone in 2026 and promised to keep a tight lid on budget spending. PM Rosen Zhelyazkov announced that the 2025 budget will set a deficit of no more than 3%, which would meet the Maastricht criteria, amid concerns that the deficit could reach 7-8%. "The budget must enable the government to request a convergence report on the implementation of the criteria for eurozone membership," the prime minister said. "We will not propose exotic measures," Zhelyazkov said, expressing hope that the opposition would also support the budget because of "the possibility for Bulgaria to meet the criteria for eurozone membership." The new government in Sofia was elected in early January with the support of the largest party, GERB (EPP), the pro-Russian Bulgarian Socialist Party, the populist There Is Such a People and one of the parties of the country's Turkish minority, the MRF-DPS. The socialists and populists in the coalition have repeatedly called for a delay in

Bulgaria's entry into the eurozone, while GERB and MRF-DPS support it. The four parties signed a coalition agreement in which the adoption of the euro is a top priority, but Bulgarian politics has shown that agreements are often violated for populist purposes. A survey by the sociological agency Myra published on February 1st shows that Bulgarians are sceptical about the introduction of the euro. While 41% of Bulgarians do not want the country to adopt the euro, 30.8% of Bulgarians accept the introduction of the euro



after 2026 and only 25.7% are in favour of immediate entry into the euro zone. The pro-European liberal coalition We Continue the Change - Democratic Bulgaria (PP-DB) last week accused GERB leader Boyko Borisov of sabotaging the euro's introduction by manipulating budget data. Borisov is publicly trying to prove that GERB inherited a heavy financial burden and a large budget deficit that the new government will have to deal with. If it is proven that the budget deficit is above 3% of GDP, this could halt the process of joining the eurozone. Zhelyazkov's statement that the government will work to maintain a deficit of 3% has calmed the opposition, which has promised support. "A budget with a 3% deficit and entry into the Eurozone on 1 January 2026 is our priority. If Rosen Zhelyazkov works to achieve this goal, he will have our support for these specific steps," former prime minister Kiril Petkov, who is one of the parliamentary leaders of the PP-DB commented.

Portugal Ambassador Frederico Silva visits UoG to foster research collaboration



Celina Ali Gujrat: Portuguese Ambassador to Pakistan, Mr Frederico Silva this week visited the Hafiz Hayat Campus of the University of Gujrat (UoG) where he was warmly received by Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Zahoorul Haq, senior academics, and administration officials. Mian Imran Masood, former education minister of Punjab and vice chancellor of the University of South Asia, accompanied the Portuguese delegation. During a meeting presided over by the UoG vice chancellor, and attended by deans, directors, senior academics, and administration officials, Mr Frederico Silva commended the long-standing bilateral relations and economic and trade cooperation between Portugal and Pakistan. He expressed a keen desire for collaboration with the University of Gujrat to promote research.

Prof. Dr Zahoor-ul-Haq thanked Mr Silva for his initiative to enhance and strengthen collaboration in higher education. The VC also appreciated the visit by the Portuguese envoy and Mian Imran Masood. He mentioned that the university's strategic plan and key areas of collaboration would be

identified during their next meeting. Later, the Portuguese envoy visited the Faculty of Architecture, Design, and Fine Arts, praising the student

projects. He also visited UoG TV and Radio station and recorded a message for the students.



Pakistan wants to further strengthen bilateral ties with Japan: Chairman Senate Akamatsu Shuichi meets Yousaf Raza Gilani

Celina Ali

Islamabad: Chairman of the Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani this week reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening its ties with Japan and expanding cooperation in multiple sectors for the mutual benefit of both nations. During a meeting with Akamatsu Shuichi, Ambassador of Japan, the Chairman Senate emphasized the need to strengthen economic ties and address the trade imbalance between Pakistan and Japan. He noted that the current bilateral trade remains below its true potential and called for joint efforts to unlock economic opportunities. He stressed the importance of high-level visits and parliamentary exchanges to further cement bilateral relations. He extended an invitation to his Japanese counterpart to visit Pakistan and noted that the last high-level visit from Pakistan to Japan was in 2019 when former President Arif Alvi attended

the enthronement ceremony of Japan's new Emperor. He reiterated the need for more leadership-level interactions to set a strategic direction for bilateral ties. He also highlighted the role of the Parliamentary Friendship Group in the Pakistani Parliament as a key mechanism for enhancing collaboration. Gilani commended Japan's special assistance package in response to Pakistan's devastating 2022 floods and acknowledged Japan's contributions to educational scholarships and capacity-building programs for Pakistan's civil service officers. He welcomed Pakistan's participation in Expo Osaka 2025 and highlighted the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) and the Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) Program, under which Pakistan and Japan signed cooperation agreements in 2019. He expressed appreciation for Japan's decision



to conduct skill tests in Pakistan under these programs, recognizing their potential to enhance bilateral workforce collaboration. The Chairman emphasized the need for regular engagement through institutional mechanisms to consolidate and expand cooperation across various sectors. He urged Japan to revisit its security-related travel advisory for Pakistan, which he said would help boost investment, tourism, and people-to-people exchanges. He underscored the resilience of diplomatic ties between Pakistan and Japan, established in 1952, and noted that both nations share common views on global peace and stability. He stressed the importance of continued collaboration to foster sustainable regional peace. Gilani acknowledged Japan's invaluable support through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which has contributed to Pakistan's health, education, gender equality, and disaster management sectors. He also highlighted the potential for greater cooperation in climate change, stating that joint initiatives could enhance Pakistan's ability to

mitigate the risks of floods and other natural calamities. He praised the role of the Pak-Japan Friendship Forum (PJFF), launched in 2018, in promoting cultural exchanges and deepening public ties between the two nations. He proposed leveraging Pakistan's young workforce to address labor shortages in Japan, particularly in healthcare, construction, and transportation. He called for targeted training programs in Pakistan that align with Japan's labor market needs. He further emphasized the need to expand vocational education initiatives, particularly in South Punjab, to enhance the employability of Pakistani youth and prepare them for global economic opportunities. Chairman Senate reiterated that Japan remains a key investment partner for Pakistan. He introduced the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), a cross-sectoral initiative aimed at simplifying the investment process and attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) in key sectors such as agriculture, minerals, infor-

mation technology, and energy. During the meeting, Chairman Senate also invited the Ambassador of Japan to visit Multan, highlighting the city's rich cultural heritage and its economic potential. He noted that the Multan Chamber of Commerce is actively promoting business opportunities and encouraged Japanese investors to explore potential collaborations. Gilani praised the contributions of Pakistan's 25,000-strong diaspora in Japan, recognizing their pioneering role in used automobile exports, carpet trade, and halal food industries. He acknowledged their importance as economic contributors to both Pakistan and Japan. He reiterated the shared commitment of Pakistan and Japan to regional peace and prosperity. He emphasized the importance of continued dialogue and cooperation to address common challenges and promote stability in the region. In response, Ambassador Akamatsu Shuichi reaffirmed Japan's commitment to deepening economic cooperation with Pakistan and exploring new avenues for collaboration.



Trump says he has spoken with Putin about ending Ukraine war

Covert Report

Washington: Donald Trump has said he held talks with the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, over a negotiated end of the three year Russia-Ukraine war, indicated that Russian negotiators want to meet with US counterparts. Trump told the New York Post that he had spoken to Putin, remarking that "I better not say" just how many times. In comments to the outlet aboard Air Force One, Trump said he believed Putin "does care" about the killing on the battlefield but did not say if the Russian leader had presented any concrete commitments to end the nearly three-year conflict. Trump revealed that he has a plan to end the war but declined to go into details. "I hope it's fast. Every day people are dying. This war is so bad in Ukraine. I want to end this damn thing." Last month, Trump estimated that approximately 1 million Russian soldiers and 700,000 Ukrainian troops have been killed since the invasion began - an estimate far in excess of numbers that Ukrainian officials or independent analysts have presented. The Post said the national security adviser, Michael Waltz, joined the president during the interview. "Let's get these meetings going," Trump said. "They want to meet. Every day people are dying. Young handsome soldiers are being killed. Young men, like my sons. On both sides.

All over the battlefield". Waltz would not confirm that Trump had spoken with Putin, telling NBC's Meet the Press on Sunday that "there are certainly a lot of sensitive conversations going on" and that senior US diplomats would be in Europe this week "talking through the details of how to end this war and that will mean getting both sides to the table". Ending the war, Waltz added, had come up in conversations with India's prime minister Narendra Modi, China's president Xi Jinping and leaders across the Middle East. "Everybody is ready to help President Trump end in this war," Waltz said, and repeated Trump's comments that he is prepared to tax, tariff and sanction Russia. "The president is prepared to put all of those issues on the table this week, including the future of US aid to Ukraine. We need to recoup those costs, and that is going to be a partnership with the Ukrainians in terms of their rare earth (materials), their natural resources, their oil and gas, and also buying ours." But Waltz reiterated what he said was the Trump administration's "underlying principle" that the Europeans "have to own this conflict going forward. President Trump is going to end it, and then in terms of security guarantees that is squarely going to be with the Europeans." During his presidential campaign, Trump made repeated vows to end the war quickly if he was re-elected, often pointing to the loss of life on

the battlefield. Last month, Trump said "Most people thought this war would last about a week, and now it's been going on for three years," and said the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, had expressed interest in a negotiated peace deal. During the interview on Friday, Trump again expressed sorrow for the loss of life in the war and compared the young men dying to his own sons. "All those dead people. Young, young, beautiful people. They're like your kids, two million of them - and for no reason," Trump told the Post, adding that Putin also "wants to see people stop dying". The Kremlin on Sunday declined to confirm or deny the report of the phone call. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told TASS state news agency he was unaware of any such call. "What can be said about this news: as the administration in Washington unfolds its work, many different communications arise. These communications are conducted through different channels. And of course, amid the multiplicity of these communications, I personally may not know something, be unaware of something. Therefore, in this case, I can neither confirm nor deny it." The Kremlin has previously said it is awaiting "signals" on a possible meeting between Trump and Putin. The head of the State Duma Commit-



tee on International Affairs, Leonid Slutsky, has said that work on preparing contacts between Moscow and Washington "is at an advanced stage". The US president also ventured into the current stand-off between Israel and Iran, saying he "would like a deal done with Iran on non-nuclear" and would prefer a negotiated deal to "bombing the hell out of it... They don't want to die. Nobody wants to die."

If there was a deal with Iran, he said, "Israel wouldn't bomb them". But he declined to go further on any approach to Iran: "In a way, I don't like telling you what I'm going to tell them. You know, it's not nice." "I could tell what I have to tell them, and I hope they decide that they're not going to do what they're currently thinking of doing. And I think they'll really be happy," Trump added.

EU foreign policy chief says defence spending must rise



Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan, Dr Riina Kionka



NewsWire
Brussels: The European Union's member states need to increase defence spending to keep pace with the threats facing the continent, its foreign policy chief warned this week. Kaja Kallas, who served as prime minister of Estonia until July 2024, said "every euro spent on school, healthcare and welfare [was] vulnerable" if the bloc didn't maintain strong defences. US President Donald Trump was right to criticise Europe's spending, which sits at an average of 1.9%, she added. She also pointed to Russia spending 9% of its gross domestic product (GDP) on defence and said Europe's expenditure was "clearly not enough" in light of the war in Ukraine. "To prevent the war, we need to spend more, that is clear," she told the BBC World Service's Weekend programme. Kallas said member states also need

to work together to "pressure" Russia economically, and hinted at a new sanctions package next month to mark three years of the war in Ukraine. The EU needs to be "creative" in terms of limiting Russia's "ability to wage this war", she said, adding that pressuring Russian President Vladimir Putin "is the way to end this war because Putin is the one who started it". Before taking up the EU post last December, Kallas repeatedly called for higher levels of defence spending while she was serving as Estonia's first female prime minister. In February 2024, she said she wanted Nato countries to increase defence spending to 3% of their GDP. Alliance members committed to spending at least 2% of GDP on defence after Russian forces seized Ukraine's southern peninsula of Crimea and Moscow-backed proxies took control large areas of eastern

Ukraine in 2014. As Estonian prime minister, Kallas pledged more than 1% of the country's GDP to Kyiv to help bolster Ukraine's war effort. "If every Nato country did this,

Ukraine would win," she told the BBC last year. According to Nato estimates for 2024, Estonia's defence spending as a proportion of GDP was the second highest in the military alliance.

Trump put pressure on Nato members to increase defence spending and later called for a commitment to meet 4% of GDP.

Shortly before his second inauguration in January, Trump urged Nato's European members to spend 5%, telling reporters: "They can all afford it."

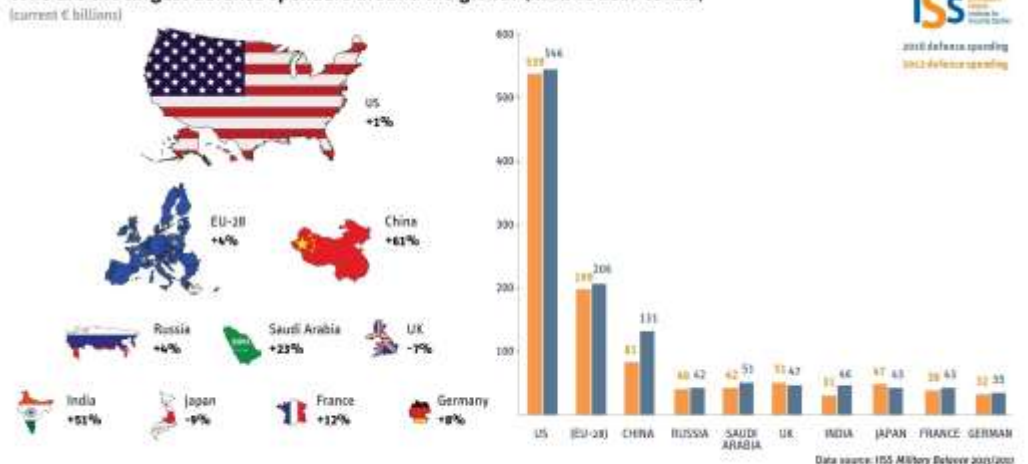
When asked whether she saw the war concluding in Ukraine's favour, Kallas said that was "absolutely" still alive in her mind.

"I don't see any other option really. I mean, if we let the brutal aggression flourish, then we will see this in other parts of the world," she added.

She said: "All the aggressors or would-be aggressors in the world are clearly taking notes how we react to Russia's aggression."



Who are the largest defence spenders around the globe? (2012 vs 2016 levels)



UK scientist wins prize for invention that could help avert 'phosphogeddon'



about to undergo trials with a local water company in Somerset and these will be followed up in a few months with tests with a national company. "Essentially, the PRM we have developed acts like a sponge that absorbs phosphates," said Pearce, who set up Rookwood Operations with her partner, Liam, and a friend, Josh Hares. "It sits in the water in an open container until it has absorbed as much phosphate as possible and it is then transferred to farmland. PRM is made entirely of natural materials, so it can be put on to a field and left there for its phosphate fertiliser to be taken up by crops. On its own, PRM will enhance the quality of the soil. The production of PRM is one of the more intriguing developments in a growing crisis that has been dubbed "phosphogeddon" by

scientists. Phos-phates are essential to life. Bones and teeth are largely made of calcium phosphate, while DNA has a phosphate backbone that provides crucial support for its structure. Yet the vital role of phosphates within fertilisers – about 50m tonnes of phosphate fertiliser are sold around the world every year and play a key role in feeding the planet's 8 billion inhabitants – means that phosphate reserves are drying up. Only those in Morocco, the western Sahara and China contain significant amounts, while reserves in the US are down to 1% of previous levels. Britain has always relied on imports. Simultaneously, humanity has become dangerously profligate. Fertilisers are washed from fields, along with phosphate-rich sewage discharges, and these contaminate lakes and waterways around the world. Phosphate run-offs trigger algal blooms that consume oxygen and block sunlight from underwater plants with deadly effects. Many British rivers have been badly polluted this way, such as the River Wye, which has become a foul-smelling pea soup in many places.

It is against this background that Pearce and her colleagues at Rookwood Operations have developed PRM as a method for tackling the excess phosphates while doing something that restores its presence in the soil. "What we have developed is a -simple material that could have a very wide impact on a really worrying environmental problem," said Pearce. "We hope it will stabilise phosphate use in this country and reduce our need to import mined supplies from other countries. That can only help the environment."



Matt Caswell British Deputy High Commissioner in Pakistan

Newsire
London: It is one of the least appreciated substances on the planet and its misuse is now threatening to unleash environmental mayhem. Phosphorus is a key component of fertilisers that have become vital in providing food for the world. But at the same time, the spread of these phosphorus compounds – known as phosphates – into rivers, lakes and streams is spreading algal blooms that are killing fish stocks and marine life on a huge scale. It is a striking mismatch that is now being tackled by a project of remarkable simplicity. The company Rookwood Operations, based

in Wells, Somerset, has launched a product that enables phosphates to be extracted from problem areas and then reused on farmland. This week one of the -company's founders, Jane Pearce, will be awarded a £75,000 Innovate UK Women in Innovation Award for her role in setting up the project. "Our product has a straightforward goal – to transfer phosphates from rivers and lakes where they are causing real damage and move them in a simple manner to farmland, where they can be of use in growing crops," Pearce told the Observer last week. The key to the intriguing transfer is a substance simply known as Phosphate Removal Material or PRM. Recently developed, it is



"We must be willing to let go of the life we planned so as to have the life that is waiting for us."

Joseph Campbell

COVERT

TRUTH UNFOLD

February 16 - 22, 2025

"To succeed in life, you need three things: a wishbone, a backbone and a funny bone." - Reba McEntire

Migration management 'fertile ground for crime,' says Meloni



Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan, J.E. Marlina Armellini

Covert Report

Rome: The arrest this week of a treasurer of a local chapter of the Democratic Party (PD) in Italy, following allegations of his involvement, along with 35 others, in immigration crimes has led to intense political debate between Italy's ruling right-wing coalition and the center-left opposition.

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni said that she believed the illegal arrival of migrants provided "fertile ground" for crime in response to the news of a major corruption probe in the southern city of Salerno regarding residence permits.

"The investigation by the Salerno DDA (anti-mafia investigators), which has led to 36 being investigated, and uncovered over 2,000 false applications for residence permits, confirms once again what the government has been saying that the man-

agement of migratory flows has been fertile ground for unscrupulous criminals for years," Meloni said via social media. "There was a system that speculated on immigration, exploiting foreign citizens who were willing to pay in order to obtain a residence permit, fuelling illegal earnings of millions of euros. It is no coincidence that we have decided to strengthen controls to prevent legal entry quotas from ending up in the hands of those who exploit immigration to do business. And it is no coincidence that I have submitted a complaint to the (national) Anti-Mafia (prosecutor's department) to shed light on the all-too-many anomalies in this system. Immigration cannot be left to the mercy of crime. We will continue to work to re-establish serious rules and legality," continued Meloni.

The opposition, center-left Democratic Party (PD) confirmed on Monday (February 3) that it has suspended its treasurer in Campania, Nicola Salvati, after he was put under house arrest in relation to the residence-permit probe. It was reported that foreign citizens were willing to pay up to 7,000 euros in order to enter Italy and obtain a permit to stay. At least 2,000 false applications for residence are at the center of the investigation, while 36 suspects have been arrested. Much of the reporting has focused on Nicola Salvati, one of those arrested. Salvati lives in the town of Poggioreale near Naples, where he was deputy mayor from 2016 until 2020 and then became a councillor in the opposition. Salvati was also a treasurer in the local chapter of the center-left Democratic Party (PD), a role from which he was removed by the party's regional commissioner Antonio Misiani on Monday (February 3) as soon as news of the probe was reported. He was replaced on Tuesday (February 4) by national treasurer Michele Fina. Salvati



became in just a few hours a source of conflict between the ruling center-right coalition and the opposition, amid which Meloni posted her statements on social media. A boom in work permit applications by foreign citizens in Campania led to the probe being opened. Magistrates opened an investigation into suspected criminal association aimed at organizing the illegal entry and residence of non-EU citizens, judicial sources said. The system allegedly took advantage of the so-called 'click days' regulating the legal entry of foreign workers, with national online applications. The irregular applications filed by fake employees and intermediaries were allegedly managed by an organization which investigators believe was led by Raffaele Nappi.

Nicola Salvati and his father Giovanni, according to the 300-page court document signed by Salerno preliminary investigations judge (GIP) Giovanni Rossi, who are accountants, are alleged to have "compiled and corrected the forged documentation for the proper presentation and/or good outcome of applications, also providing indications to the employees directly affected on how to 'correct it', as well as how to issue fake invoices." Investigators said the strategy was key to "falsely boost the turnover in order to subsequently present applications" to hire workers as part of the 'click days' and also "to launder money of illicit provenance." According to investigative sources, tapped conversations purported to show the "stable, long-term and reiterated involvement" of Salvati in the case.

France opens probe into Musk's X over algorithm



NewsWire

Paris: French investigators have opened a probe into social media platform X over allegations that the company owned by billionaire Elon Musk manipulated its algorithm, the Paris public prosecutor's office said on Friday.

In a written response to POLITICO, the prosecutor's office said the investigation followed a "report from a member of parliament dated January 12, 2025, denouncing biased algorithms in the operation of X as likely to have distorted the operation of an automated data processing system," confirming earlier reports by French media.

The member of parliament behind the complaint is centrist lawmaker Eric Borthorel.

In his letter, seen by POLITICO, Borthorel underlines that "Elon Musk's personal involvement in the management of the platform, but also in several elections concerning European countries, represents a real danger and threat to our democra-

cies." The probe is also based on a separate complaint, initially reported on by French weekly Le Canard enchaîné and obtained by POLITICO, according to which X "now offers an enormous amount of hateful, racist, anti-LGBT+ and homophobic political content, which aims to skew the democratic debate in France."

The investigation comes a few days before the AI Summit in Paris, to which Musk has been invited and which U.S. Vice President JD Vance plans to attend. The news came a day after X, formerly known as Twitter, suffered a legal defeat in Germany, where a court ruled on Thursday that the platform must immediately

provide researchers with access to data on politically related content ahead of the country's Feb. 23 election.

The German court decision, seen by POLITICO, raises fresh questions about X's compliance with European regulations ahead of Germany's federal election and marks one of the first major judicial tests of the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA).

