

**Asim Iftikhar Ahmad to take over as Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN on March 31** **Celina Ali**

Islamabad: Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad will formally step into his role as Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN) on March 31, 2025, following the retirement of Munir Akram. At 80 years old, Munir Akram has concluded

(Page-5)

**British diplomat Jo Moir highlights key areas for climate journalists** **Celina Ali**

Islamabad: Jo Moir, Development Director at the British High Commission, this week highlighted key area for reporting for the climate journalists. Speaking at a Climate Journalist workshop, she acknowledged the challenges faced by journalists covering climate stories.

(Page-11)

# China rolls out raft of measures to curb drones' interference



**Henan Daily**  
Zhengzhou: China this week rolled out a raft of measures to curb drones' interference with flight operations, as part of efforts to strengthen airspace security at civil transport airports and surrounding areas. The move aims to address growing con-

cerns over drone activities interfering with commercial flights across the country, according to the office of the central air traffic management committee on Friday. The office will improve the top-level coordination mechanism, strengthen oversight of airspace management, and curb illegal drone activities in collaboration with local governments. To raise public awareness, efforts will be

made to carry out drone policy interpretation activities and promptly release relevant information such as maps of restricted airspace. Detection systems will be improved to better identify, track, and intercept unauthorized drones, while those engaging in illicit drone activities such as disrupting flight operations will be severely punished, according to the office.

## Pakistan and Denmark discuss \$2 billion maritime investment



**Celina Ali**

Islamabad: Pakistan and Denmark this week reviewed the progress of Denmark's \$2 billion investment in Pakistan's maritime sector. Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry met with Danish Ambassador Jacob Linulf to discuss the project. They focused on implementing the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed last year. Both sides emphasized the need to modernize ports and improve efficiency. The investment aims to upgrade Pakistan's maritime infrastructure and promote sustainable shipping practices. The minister highlighted the importance of Danish expertise in maritime technology. He said this partnership could boost Pakistan's economy and global trade. They also explored future investments in green shipping and renewa-

ble energy for ports. Strengthening Pakistan's maritime workforce was another key topic. Ambassador Linulf expressed Denmark's strong interest in expanding its role in Pakistan's maritime industry. He assured support for sustainable and innovative solutions. The Pakistani minister welcomed this commitment and promised full cooperation. Both countries also discussed enhancing cultural ties and promoting tourism. Both sides agreed to speed up the MoU's implementation and explore new opportunities. They aim to expand collaboration in trade, investment, and cultural exchange. Strengthening the Pakistan-Denmark relationship remains a shared goal. The meeting reinforced their commitment to long-term cooperation.

## Bilawal Bhutto launches job portal for unemployed youth



**Liaquat Ali**

Islamabad: Pakistan People's Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari this week inaugurated an "I Work for Sindh" smartphone application, as part of a job portal developed by the Sindh Information Department, to help unemployed youth get jobs in the province. The inauguration ceremony, held at the Chief Minister House in Karachi, was attended by Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, Senior Minister for Information and Transport Sharjeel Inam Memon, provincial ministers, special assistants, advisers, spokespersons, members of the business community, social media activists, and individuals from various other fields. Speaking at the ceremony, Bilawal stated that following the Jaffar Express hijacking, Pakistan's security forces bravely defeated the terrorists, for which the armed forces deserved tribute. He emphasised that a resolute struggle would be waged against religious extremism and terrorism and reaffirmed the Sindh government's commitment to public welfare projects. He told the audience that a clear stance had been taken in the National Assembly regarding the issue of the proposed new canals on the Indus River. He added that the people of Sindh sought greater employment opportunities, but due to the limited availability of government jobs, the government would now focus on creating opportunities for direct employment. The PPP chairman said that in addition to providing houses to flood victims, ownership rights of newly construction houses are also being granted to women to help them achieve financial stability. He emphasised that the private sector played a key role in job creation and encouraged its participation in the newly launched digital platform to provide employment opportunities for the skilled youth of Sindh.

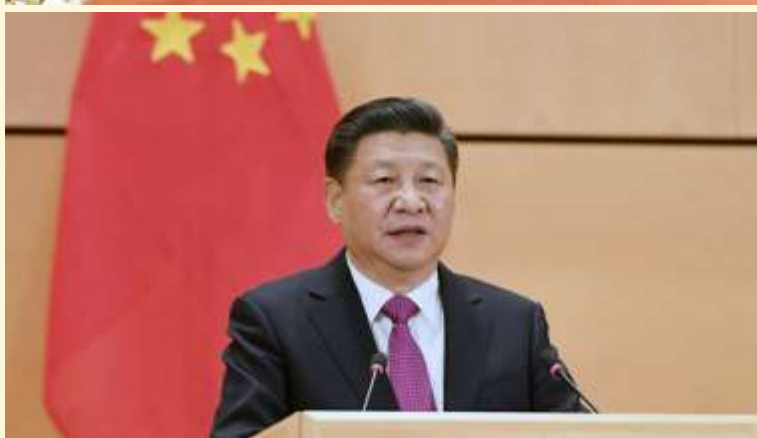
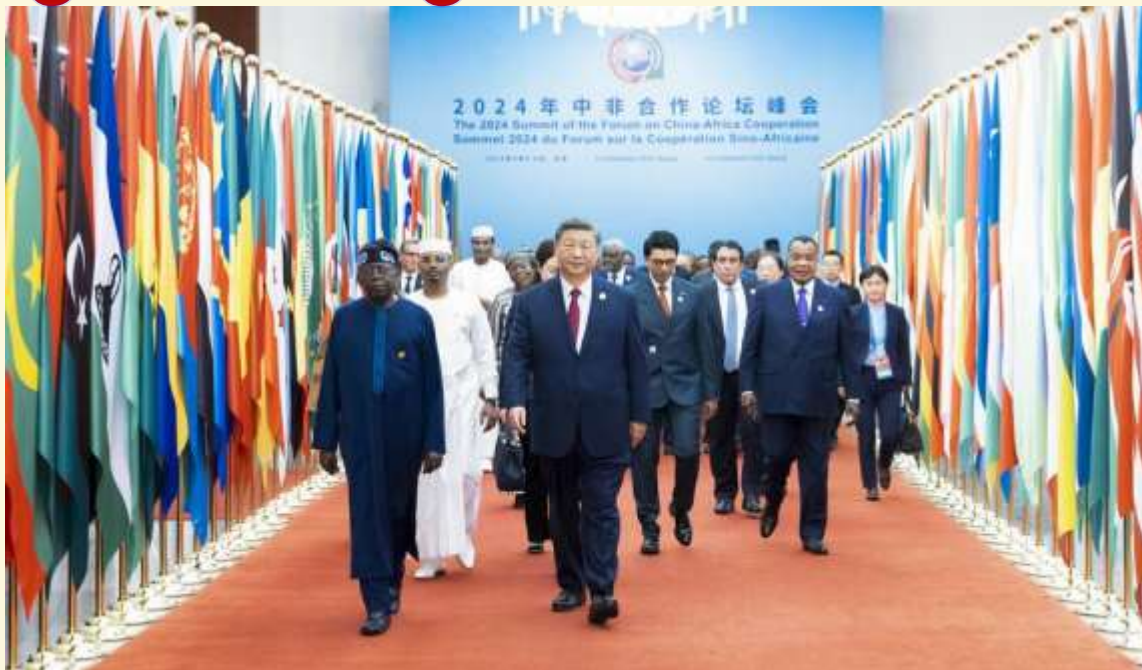
He added that the PPP Youth Wing and Peoples Students Federation would launch a promotional campaign for the new app of the information department to ensure that as many young people as possible could benefit from it. He also shared the good news that the people of Sindh will now have the opportunity to pursue education at major universities worldwide, including Oxford. The PPP chairman noted that inflation is decreasing, which is a positive development, and emphasised the government's commitment to maximizing the use of modern technology. Addressing the ceremony, the CM stated that the Sindh government has launched a job portal, allowing the province's youth to register themselves to get jobs. He explained that this platform will connect job providers and job seekers at one place, helping them to accelerate the province's development. He urged all job providers and job seekers to register on the portal as much as possible. The CM added that job advertisements for grades one to four posts would also be posted on the portal, while jobs for grades five to fifteen would be filled through the IBA to ensure complete transparency. He further stated that the portal will be linked to temporary job opportunities, enabling individuals working on various projects to access employment opportunities more easily. Shah stated that the PPP had always emerged as the largest party of the people in Sindh and would continue to serve the province through its performance. He added that, under the vision of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, a plan had been formulated to construct 2.1 million houses, of which more than 800,000 have already been completed. He stated that the government would take all necessary steps to ensure the success of the job portal and would actively promote it to maximize its reach and benefit as many people as possible.



# Xi Jinping — a champion of mutual learning among civilizations



That aspiration is best embodied in his Global Civilization Initiative (GCI), launched at a conference between the Communist Party of China (CPC) and global political parties in 2023, where he stressed that tolerance, coexistence, exchanges and mutual learning among different civilizations play an irreplaceable role in advancing humanity's modernization process when the future of all countries are closely connected. With the GCI nearing its second anniversary on Saturday, Xi's vision — to build a world where civilizations don't collide but converse — has become ever more relevant, standing both as a nod to ancient times and as a bold stitch in a fraying global tapestry. "The boy was an avid reader of literature and history, particularly captivated by the poetry of Du Fu," said Chen Quying, who taught Xi Chinese in 1965, when Xi was a teenager. Du, the most revered realist poet of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), was celebrated for his profound empathy and compassion for the common people in his works. This spirit is echoed in Xi's firm commitment to fighting poverty and promoting the wellbeing of the people. "Xi implored me to recommend



"Civilizations have come in different colors, and such diversity renders exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations relevant and valuable," he said in a speech at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris in 2014. Months after he put forward the GCI in 2023, Xi explained at an event in San Francisco that the initiative is meant "to urge the international community to address the imbalance between material and cultural advancement and jointly promote continued progress of human civilization." French tourists Paul Baisse (L) and Jules Ramos visit Yuyuan Garden area in East China's Shanghai, Feb 1, 2025. [Photo/Xinhua] China's global initiatives, including the GCI, advocate for an egalitarian and inclusive order in pursuit of just and coherent global governance, said Ong Tee Keat, president of the Belt and Road Initiative Caucus for Asia Pacific and a former transport minister of Malaysia. In the meantime, he said, "the GCI has driven home a clear message that all nations have the right to choose their own development paths in their pursuit of modernization, which is not necessarily synonymous with Westernization."

## Henan Daily

Beijing: In the book-lined office of Professor Stelios Virvidakis at the University of Athens, Greece's oldest and most esteemed academic institution, a letter is carefully preserved like a precious, delicate bridge model. It came from President Xi Jinping, delivered to congratulate the inauguration of the China-Greece Center for Mutual Learning of Civilizations in the time-honored university in February 2023. "It was a delightful surprise to us all," said Virvidakis, his philosopher's gaze softening at the memory. In the letter, Xi noted that over 2,000 years ago, China and Greece, two civilizations glittering at each end of the Eurasian continent, made groundbreaking contributions to the evolution of human civilization. Now, he pointed out, it is of profound historical and contemporary significance for them to work together to promote exchanges and mutual learning and enhance the development of all civilizations. The well-preserved letter reflects Xi's broader vision of fostering cross-cultural dialogue and mutual learning as a catalyst for global peace and development, a vision that has been driving his diplomatic action worldwide.

more of Du Fu's works," Chen recalled. "He possessed a composed and rational demeanor, immersing himself in extensive reading and profound contemplation." Four years later, as an educated young student, Xi volunteered to go to Liangjiahe, a secluded and impoverished village nestled in the rugged terrain of Northwest China's Shaanxi province. With him, Xi carried two suitcases filled with books. During his seven years there, Xi devoured whatever books he could find, from ancient Chinese textbooks to foreign novels such as Stendhal's *The Red and the Black* and Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. "During those days in Liangjiahe, Xi never ceased reading and reflecting," said Dai Ming, who shared a cave dwelling with Xi back then. Xi's keen interest in different cultures has since continued unabated, whether as a local official or as the top leader of China. When serving as secretary of the CPC Zhejiang Provincial Committee, he invited scholars to deliver lectures on both Chinese and Western philosophies. In November 2019, during his first state visit to Greece, Xi toured the Acropolis Museum at the foot of the iconic and ancient Acropolis. He took a moment at the sunlit entrance on the museum's third floor, the east and west

sides adorned with exquisite pediment sculptures from the Acropolis: the birth of Athena and the fierce contest between her and Poseidon for the title of protector of Athens.

"This is Greece's version of Shan Hai Jing," Xi remarked, alluding to China's own ancient compendium of ancient myths and legends. "He is not only interested in a single artifact," said Dimitrios Pandermalis, then president of the Acropolis Museum. "He possesses a profound fascination with the civilization of ancient Greece and its history, along with a keen appreciation for ancient Greek art and architecture."

Ahead of his state visit to Peru in November last year, Xi published a signed article in Peruvian newspaper *El Peruano*, reflecting on the Intihuatana stone — an ancient altar in Machu Picchu where the Incas tracked the seasons and crafted calendars based on the shifting solar shadows.

He noted that the structure operated on the same principles that inspired the creation of sundials in ancient China. "Many told me that Chinese and Peruvian peoples would feel an instant warmth upon their first encounters and would have a *deja vu* when appreciating each other's ancient artifacts," he wrote. Since assuming Chinese presidency, Xi has made cultural exchange a hallmark of his diplomatic approach. Cultural exchange is a project aimed at "bringing the hearts and minds of the people closer together and building a better future," he has said, a belief he has carried since his days working at local positions.

In 2005, as Zhejiang's Party chief, he sent a congratulatory letter to the opening of the province's first Culture Week program in Europe. Among the highlights of the event, held in France's Alpes-Maritimes, was an exhibition of paintings by local farmers and fishermen — a unique form of Chinese folk art depicting the rhythm and beauty of rural and coastal life through vibrant hues and evocative forms. As Chinese president, Xi has been consistently advocating for mutual respect, mutual understanding and mutual learning between different cultures and civilizations. During his state visit to France in May last year, he brought Chinese translations of classic French novels as gifts for his French counterpart, Emmanuel Macron. In return, Macron presented him with a special work by French author Victor Hugo.

Thanks to his steadfast push, cultural exchanges between China and other countries are flourishing. Over the past decade, China has organized over 30 cultural and tourism year programs with other countries, notably those participating in Belt and Road cooperation. "The Chinese civilization ... has become what it is today through constant interactions with other civilizations," Xi said at the opening ceremony of the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations held in May 2019 in Beijing. "Long-term self-isolation will cause a civilization to

decline, while exchanges and mutual learning will sustain its development. A civilization can flourish only through exchanges and mutual learning with other civilizations," he added.

In recent years, some scholars and politicians in the West have been peddling once again the clash of civilizations theory, first proposed by American political scientist Samuel Huntington in 1993. They portray some civilizations as superior to others and seek to divide countries through ideological and racial lines. On the background of the resurgence of such sentiments is a world undergoing unprecedented transformations rarely seen in a century. Global South countries, on a collective rise, are demanding their legitimate right to modernization in louder voices, while the global deficits in peace, security, development and governance are growing ever larger. In Xi's eyes, no civilization in the world is superior to others, and every civilization is equal and unique.



# Shaping crypto policy: Italy aligns with EU and US shifts



**Newswire**

Rome: Italy is advancing its crypto regulatory framework through Legislative Decree 129/2024, aligning domestic law with the EU's MiCAR. With enforcement set for June 2025 and oversight by Consob and the Bank of Italy, the initiative aims to balance innovation and risk, mirroring similar shifts in Washington. Driving the future, Italy is moving decisively to advance its crypto regulatory framework in line with global developments. A high-level meeting hosted by the Prime Minister's Office on Wednesday focused on implementing Legislative Decree 129/2024, which aligns Italian law with the EU's Markets in Crypto-Assets Regulation (MiCAR).



Italy's ambassador to Pakistan Marilina Armenlin



## BREAKING NEWS

**🇮🇹 Shaping crypto policy: Italy aligns with EU and US shifts.**

Full enforcement of these measures is scheduled for June 2025. Why it matters. The decree sets a clear regulatory perimeter and assigns oversight powers to both Consob, the authority responsible for regulating the Italian securities market, and the Bank of Italy. This strategic approach recognises both the opportunities and risks of the crypto revolution and mirrors policy shifts underway in Washington. Consob and the Bank of Italy have signed a memorandum of understanding to coordinate supervisory roles, inspections, and enforcement, ensuring cross-border cooperation and unified regulatory responses. Parallel developments in Washington.

Across the Atlantic, the US is recalibrating its crypto stance. The White House recently held its first Digital Asset Summit last week, framing bitcoin as a national strategic asset. The US Administration began rolling back restrictions from "Operation Chokepoint 2.0", with regulators easing limits on banks engaging in crypto. Driving the future. From Rome to Washington, crypto is now a matter of strategic policy. Both jurisdictions are building frameworks to attract innovation while asserting regulatory control.

# Archimedes' mirrors and dawn of a new energy age in China

Ding Gang

More than two thousand years ago, atop the walls of Syracuse in Sicily, Archimedes was said to have directed soldiers to raise polished bronze shields. According to legend, these reflective surfaces concentrated sunlight into deadly beams, igniting the sails of Roman warships. When I stood on a platform to see the vast array of heliostats in the Gobi Desert near Dunhuang, where 12,000 mirrors track the sun with millimeter-level precision, it suddenly struck me that this ancient Western myth is being constructed on the eastern edge of the world, but on a much grander, more transformative scale. This reflection was inspired by China's recently concluded two sessions. Deputies and political advisors discussed the growing role of solar thermal energy, which brought me back to the legend of Archimedes. I had once been among the millions of visitors awestruck by the murals of the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang. But it wasn't until a local friend drove me 20 kilometers westward to a vantage point overlooking a sea of mirrors converging on a 260-meter-tall solar tower that I truly felt the pulse of Dunhuang, an old and new model of Eastern civilization. This super mirror power station, built by Shouhang High-Tech Energy, spans 780 hectares, equivalent to over 1,000 standard

soccer fields. Each heliostat, with its 115-square-meter reflective surface, captures the sun's image. The mirrors are laid out in precise mathematical arrays: the outermost circles ripple outward like waves, while the inner circles form dense, honeycomb-like patterns. At noon, sunlight converges at the top of the tower, creating a focal point of heat that reaches 565°C. By nightfall, the stored heat in massive molten salt tanks continues to drive turbines, generating 390 million kilowatt-hours of clean electricity annually. And therein lies the essential difference between the ancient myth and modern technology: While Archimedes' mirrors only unleashed momentary destruction, China's mirrors generate enduring vitality. On the silvered surface of the molten salt storage tanks, I saw the reflection of a global energy revolution. The Dunhuang solar plant produces enough green electricity each year to power local households, freeing them from coal dust. Even more remarkable is that this entirely homegrown project has spurred innovation across 600 upstream and downstream enterprises, weaving a symphony of energy transformation. Meanwhile, across the Pacific, Washington's policymakers seem trapped in a Western war mentality - clinging to outdated paradigms of competition and domi-

nance. Canada's retaliatory tariffs on electricity exports to the US have increased costs for American consumers and highlighted the vulnerability of the US grid, especially in the Northeast, which depends on Canadian hydropower due to insufficient domestic capacity. This is from a nation that once pioneered alternating current and is now dependent on imports to stabilize its grid. It's a stark contrast to the divergent paths China and the US are taking in renewable energy development. Even more ironic is that the US has imposed high tariffs under Section 301 on Chinese photovoltaic components, yet this has done little to slow China's progress. Reports show China hits 277.17 GW of new PV installations in 2024. China's cumulative installed solar capacity hit 886.66 GW at the end of 2024, setting a new historical record. Standing on the observation deck in Dunhuang, I suddenly grasped the more profound metaphor of the energy revolution. As sunlight falls equally on all corners of the earth, any human-constructed technological barrier is little more than a line drawn in the sand. The US ban on Huawei's 5G technology did not stop China from making breakthroughs in quantum communication; semiconductor restrictions have driven China to explore more independent paths in



artificial intelligence. As twilight descended, the mirrors in Dunhuang began to pivot, catching the last rays of sunlight and directing them toward the solar tower. This reveals the essence of the race between civilizations: actual progress is never achieved by extinguishing the light of others but by becoming a brighter source of light yourself. While lawmakers on Capitol Hill

debate whether to ban Chinese batteries, the mirrors in Dunhuang quietly execute nearly 10 million precise adjustments to track the sun. In this "mirror array" of renewable energy, every nation will ultimately see a reflection of its own future.

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

# 'Greater BRICS' a platform to foster constructive consensus



be the rule rather than the exception. However, BRICS challenges this world conception. Many believed that BRICS' heterogeneity was its weakness. However, over time, BRICS has demonstrated that it is possible to establish a well-intentioned dialogue platform among different countries, leading to concrete initiatives capable of benefiting all populations involved. The most illustrative example of this ability to foster constructive consensus - not just rhetorical consensus - is the New Development Bank. The recent expansions of BRICS demonstrate its vitality and credibility on the international relations chessboard. On January 1, 2024, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates joined BRICS. In January of this year, Brazil announced the official admission of Indonesia as a full member. The "Greater BRICS" proves the success of this heterogeneous platform of countries united around common objectives, particularly the reform of global governance institutions and the deepening of South-South cooperation. The "Greater BRICS" comprises 46 percent of the world's population and has a global GDP in purchasing power parity (PPP) close to 40 percent, exceeding the global GDP in PPP of the G7 countries, which is approximately 30 percent. On January 1, 2025, Belarus, Bolivia,

Kazakhstan, Cuba, Malaysia, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan and Nigeria joined BRICS as "partner countries." This modality of membership was created during the Kazan Summit in October 2024. These nine nations can endorse the BRICS Summit Declaration, the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Joint Declaration and other official documents. The legitimacy of the "Greater BRICS" is further reinforced by more than 30 countries' interest in joining the group. The "Greater BRICS" has demonstrated its strong appeal to developing countries. Its most significant asset lies in its respect for the principle of sovereign equality and its advocacy for a more democratic international system. The focus is not on imposing rules or values but on promoting a more inclusive international order by respecting and valuing the differences of each country, including cultural. The "Greater BRICS" is the materialization of the dream of a fairer, more peaceful international system. We must nourish this dream even while acknowledging the difficulties of the real world. Brazil's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mauro Vieira, said, "BRICS represents a new vision of global governance - one that prioritizes inclusion, equity and cooperation over hegemony, injustice, inequality and unilateralism."

The theme of the next summit, to be held in Brazil, highlights the strengthening of Global South cooperation for more inclusive and sustainable governance. The agenda proposed by the Brazilian presidency includes facilitating trade and investment among BRICS countries, including payment methods and discussions on the impacts of AI and climate change on the labor market. Global health cooperation and the institutional development of BRICS are also on the agenda and deserve our attention. Because it is more representative of humanity as a whole and driven by the spirit of cooperation that unites Global South countries, the results of the 17th BRICS Summit could have more positive impacts on humanity than the G20 has been able to offer.

The writer is a professor of international law at the Federal Fluminense University in Rio de Janeiro, and Wutong chair professor at the Beijing Language and Culture University

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

**Evandro Menezes de Carvalho**  
The first few months of the Trump administration have shaken up the chessboard of the international system. Some pieces on this board, which were accustomed to playing in certain positions, are being discarded or forced to assume new roles. Using chess as a metaphor, those who were once "queens" are now being treated as "pawns," while those who were seen as "rooks" are beginning to be perceived as "kings." The dispute becomes even more chal-

lenging when those who believe they own the board frequently change the rules that everyone is accustomed to. For a long time, it was believed that countries with similar regimes and shared political conceptions were naturally inclined toward solidarity, leading to the conciliation of interests when conflicts arose between them. On the other hand, in heterogeneous state systems, the consequences would be the opposite, as countries would uphold values that are considered contradictory. In such heterogeneous systems, conflict would

# Asim Iftikhar Ahmad to take over as Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN on March 31



**Celina Ali**

Islamabad: Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad will formally step into his role as Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN) on March 31, 2025, following the retirement of Munir Akram. At 80 years old, Munir Akram has concluded a diplomatic career that spanned nearly two decades at the UN, during which he represented Pakistan across multiple administrations. His tenure was extended multiple times, making him one of the most enduring figures in Pakistan's foreign service.

Asim Iftikhar Ahmad – who was recently promoted to Grade 22 – will replace Akram, marking the first time in years that a career diplomat rather than a political appointee has been selected for the position. Prior to this appointment, Asim Iftikhar Ahmad served as Alternate Permanent Representative to the UN, meaning that for the past several months, Pakistan had two envoys of equal status at the UN headquarters. Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, an experienced career diplomat, brings extensive foreign service expertise to his new role. Before his

posting to the UN, he served as Pakistan's Ambassador to France and Thailand and as Permanent Representative to the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).

His tenure at the Foreign Ministry has also been distinguished, holding key positions such as Additional Secretary for UN Affairs and Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. With Pakistan having recently assumed its non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council (UNSC) in January 2025, Ambassador Iftikhar Ahmad's appointment comes at a pivotal moment. His leadership is expected to ensure continuity in Pakistan's diplomatic efforts and strengthen the country's position on key global issues.

As part of his farewell engagements, Ambassador Munir Akram met with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who commended his remarkable contributions to multilateral diplomacy. In their discussions, Akram emphasized the need to strengthen multilateral cooperation, reform global financial institutions, and advance the sustainable development agenda. Additionally, he held a meeting with UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed, where they explored strategies for supporting the Global South, addressing climate change, and enhancing the role of the UN in sustainable development initiatives.

# Australia HC condemns Jaffar express attack, offers sympathies to Pakistan



**Celina Ali**

Islamabad: The Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Neil Hawkins, this week strongly condemned the attack and hijacking of the Jaffar Express Train in Balochistan province, Pakistan.

Australian Government denounces the incident and offers its deepest sympathies to those affected, he said in his post on social media platform, X.

Hawkins emphasized that Australia stands in solidarity with Pakistan during this chal-

lenging time. This statement reflects Australia's commitment to supporting Pakistan in the face of adversity. The Australian High Commissioner's condemnation of the attack underscores the strong diplomatic ties between Australia and Pakistan. Hawkins has been actively engaged in promoting bilateral relations and cooperation between the two nations.



# Kazakhstan Welcomes Peace Agreement Between Azerbaijan and Armenia

**Covert Report**

Astana: Kazakhstan this week welcomed the statements from the Ministries of foreign affairs of Azerbaijan and Armenia regarding the conclusion of negotiations on the draft Agreement on Peace and the Establishment of Inter-State Relations between the two countries.

"We express confidence that the agreements reached and the signing of this historic document will be an important step toward normalizing relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia and ensuring stability, secu-

rity, and prosperity for the entire South Caucasus region.

Kazakhstan reaffirms its strong support for efforts to continue the constructive dialogue between the two countries, with a view to establishing enduring and lasting peace," reads the Kazakh Foreign Ministry's statement on March 14.

Armenian and Azerbaijani officials announced on March 13 that they had reached an agreement on the text of a peace treaty, marking a significant breakthrough in their decades-long conflict.



# Umar Rehman Malik strongly condemns Jaffer Express attack, calls for national unity



He further stressed that any threat to Pakistan's sovereignty, whether internal or external, must be met with decisive action. He condemned those who exploit national crises for separatist agendas, calling for unity against such elements. "At a time when our enemies seek to destabilize Pakistan, we must rise above political and ideological divides and stand united in the fight against terrorism and separatism," he added.



**Abdullah Jan**  
Islamabad: Umar Rehman Malik, Head of PPP Digital Media, has strongly condemned the barbaric terrorist attack on Jaffer Express, calling it an unforgivable crime against innocent civilians. He emphasized that such cowardly acts will never break Pakistan's spirit or weaken the nation's unwavering resolve against terrorism. "Our prayers are with the victims and their families, and we hope for the safe rescue of all hostages and the swift recovery of the injured. The perpetrators of this heinous attack must be brought to justice. Pakistan will never bow to terror, Inshallah," said Umar Rehman Malik. Commending the heroic efforts of Pakistan's security forces, he praised their swift and courageous response, which led to the rescue of 155 passengers and the elimination of 27 terrorists. He reaffirmed that the bravery and dedication of the security forces reflect their steadfast commitment to the nation's security.



# What is in the huge German spending plan agreed by parties?

**Covert Report**

Berlin: German Chancellor-in-waiting Friedrich Merz reached an agreement with the Greens this week on a massive increase in state borrowing just days ahead of a parliamentary vote next week.

This should ensure the package's approval in the lower house of Germany's parliament on Tuesday and by the upper house on Friday. Of the promised infrastructure

fund of 500 billion euros (\$543 billion) over 12 years, 100 billion euros will be channelled into the climate and economic transformation fund, as requested by the Greens. The remainder of the fund are



dedicated to additional infrastructure investments, with 300 billion euros designated for the federal government and 100 billion euros for the state governments. Apart from the 100 billion euros from the infrastructure fund, Germany's states will be allowed to run a small structural deficit of 0.35% of GDP, as the federal government can, giving them an extra 16 billion euros to spend. Until now, states were not allowed to incur any debt. A reform of the nation's constitution-

ally enshrined 'debt brake' - which limits public borrowing to 0.35% of GDP - will exempt defence spending above 1% of gross domestic product from the debt rule. The definition of such spending is broad, including civil protection, intelligence and "aid to countries under illegal attack". Germany will support Ukraine in its defence against Russia's invasion with 3 billion euros in military aid, upon its approval in the upper house of parliament. The vote is expected to take place next week.

# Bulgaria's producer prices surge to second-highest in EU in early 2025

**Newswire**

Sofia: Producer prices in Bulgaria this week saw significant growth at the beginning of 2025, positioning the country among the fastest-growing in the European Union. According to Eurostat data, Bulgaria recorded the second-highest increase in producer prices within the EU in January 2025.

Producer prices across the euro area and the EU increased more than anticipated in January compared to the previous month. The euro area saw a 0.8% rise in producer prices, following a 0.5% increase in December 2024, with expectations set at a 0.5% increase. Similarly, EU-wide producer prices also grew by 0.8% from December to January, surpassing the 0.4% increase from the previous month.

In Bulgaria, producer prices soared by 5.4% in January, compared to a 5.1% rise in December 2024. Only Ireland saw a stronger increase, with

producer prices rising by 6.2%. In contrast, the most significant declines in monthly producer prices were recorded in Portugal, where prices fell by 2.2%, Austria (down by 0.6%), Slovenia (down by 0.5%), and Cyprus (down by 0.3%).

On an annual basis, producer price growth accelerated in both the EU and the euro area. In January 2025, producer prices in the EU and euro area increased by 1.8%, up from just 0.1% in December 2024. Bulgaria's year-on-year increase in January 2025 was even more significant, rising by 14.4%. Only Ireland reported a stronger annual increase in producer prices, at 14.9%.

At the same time, Lithuania, Luxembourg, and Estonia reported the most significant annual declines in producer prices, with drops of 5.3%, 4.7%, and 4.5%, respectively.



# Japanese cinema wins big at Portugal's Fantasporto film awards



**Newsire**

Lisbon: Since the Annabelle doll became an instantly recognisable icon in the horror universe just over 10 years ago, the myth of the doll that comes to life (as old as cinematic horror itself) has come back into fashion. With Dollhouse, by Japanese director Shinobu Yaguchi, the big winner at this year's Fantasporto, which ended its 45th edition on Saturday in Porto, this myth makes its grand entrance into the J-horror universe. The film is produced by the giant Toho and had its world premiere here, bringing a team of more than 20 people to Porto and receiving a standing ovation of more than 10 minutes. A couple lose their five-year-old daughter in a domestic accident and decide to buy a lifelike doll to help make up for the dead girl's absence. Forgotten for years after the couple have a second daughter, the doll is rediscovered by the family's new daughter, who ends up establishing an unhealthy relationship with it. Dollhouse ends up fitting into all the canons of classic horror and, in the decision of the jury for the fantastic cinema competition, it beat out bolder productions such as Prédio Vazio, the new blood orgy by Brazilian Rodrigo Aragão (who the festival organisers consider to be the main successor to José Mojica Marins as the master of Brazilian horror) or the American Succubus (RJ Daniel Hanna), a modern tale about addiction to social networks and online contacts. According to the jury notes, Dollhouse is "remarkably realised, offering a poignant and unforgettable exploration of human vulnerability". It's true that the Porto festival has been establishing

itself as a showcase for Asian cinema, particularly Japanese, in Europe. With three Japanese winners in the last five editions, is Fantasporto becoming too centred on the Land of the Rising Sun? Beatriz Pacheco Pereira, founder and director of the festival, says: "We don't prioritise Japanese films, in fact we have as many Japanese films as European ones in competition. The truth is that Japanese production has been very strong in recent years, particularly in the field of fantastic cinema, and it's normal for this to be reflected in the awards." Mário Dorminsky, who together with Beatriz Pacheco Pereira has been running the festival since it was founded in 1981, adds that the prominence that the festival gives to Japanese cinema is also reflected in the prestige that Fantasporto has achieved in Japan, where it is referred to as "one of the world's three main festivals in the field of the fantastic, alongside Sitges and Brussels". If Dollhouse took the top prize, the other big winner was Cielo, a British production directed by Spaniard Alberto Sciamma and shot entirely in Bolivia. With "fabulous cinematography and an intentional and striking palette, enriched by the arid landscape of Bolivia", in the words of the jury, the film wowed both the public and the judges with its visual component, winning the Special Jury Prize, the Best Cinematography Award and the Audience Award. "This film stands out as one of the most original and mesmerising fantasy films of recent years," adds the jury. "The film was born out of two mental images," director Alberto Sciamma tells Euronews Cul-

ture. "In those images, I saw a little girl swallowing a fish and pushing a pram with her mother's body through the desert. I didn't have any storyline. I only began to imagine the story when I travelled to Bolivia in the company of producer John Dunton-Downer and pianist Ana-Maria Vera, who convinced me to shoot in Bolivia. The film owes a lot to the entire Bolivian team, especially the young actress, just eight years old, Fernanda Gutierrez Aranda. The entire technical team and actors, with the exception of myself, the producers and the director of photography, were hired in Bolivia, and their work was excellent and decisive for the final result of the film," adds the director. If all humans were obliged to have a happiness index of between 0 and 99 printed on their necks, as stated in the premise of the Hungarian short Happy People, winner of the award for best short film in fantastic cinema; what would be the index if you were market shopping in Budapest on a Saturday morning and received word of the prize and had to go to Porto the same evening to collect it? "It corresponds to an index of 98," say the couple formed by director Balázs Budavári and actress Angéla Eke. "The only reason it's not 99 is because the rest of the team couldn't be there," they say. The couple, who are preparing their first feature, chose Porto for the world premiere of the short.

Although he doesn't participate as a screenwriter or filmmaker, Luis Diogo is always present at Fantasporto, at least as a spectator each year. His previous film, A Sublime Life, became the most awarded Portuguese film ever. As a regular, it's not surprising that the organisation invited Luis Diogo to open the festival with his latest film, Criadores de Ídolos (Idol Makers), which featured in both the fantastic cinema competition and the Portuguese cinema competition, where it eventually won the best film honour. The film is based on one of the many ideas that Luis Diogo comes up with: what if a secret society was murdering celebrities all over the world in order to make them universal idols and thus perpetuate the concept of the idol created by Socrates? Sofia is recruited into this secret society by her father and grandfather. Her mission is to assassinate a famous singer, whose brother she ends up getting involved with. Will she be able to carry out this macabre mission? Idol Makers is already guaranteed distribution in Portugal next autumn. However, Luis Diogo admits that he is not a fan of Portuguese cinema and that he doesn't write his films with the intention of making them in Portugal: "I always write a script first that can be filmed in the United States," he says. "Then I end up adapting them to the Portuguese reality."

Still on the subject of Portuguese participation, it's worth highlighting the presence of another Fantasporto regular, José Pedro Lopes (A Floresta das Almas Perdidas) in the Luso-Brazilian collection Histórias Estranhas 2, presented out of competition, in which he is the only Portuguese participant, among six Brazilian filmmakers, including the aforementioned Rodrigo Aragão, who is also a regular at Fantas, and, entering this edition in double doses. "I started coming here as a teenager, as a spectator," José Pedro Lopes tells Euronews Culture. "So it's only natural that it's a great pleasure to come here as a filmmaker." It was at the festival that José Pedro Lopes met the organiser of the collection, Ricardo Ghorzi. Alongside the fantastic cinema section, Fantasporto also celebrates auteur cinema of all genres with the Directors' Week. While, as in the fantastic competition, Japanese cinema was in the spotlight, winning four of the six prizes on offer, the main prize in this section went to Zero (USA) by Jean-Luc Herbulot. The first prize in the Orient Express section, dedicated to Asian cinema, once again went to a Japanese film, this time to River Returns, by Masakazu Kaneko. So it's sayonara from Fantasporto and see you in 2026. Check out the video below for some of the best moments from this year's edition.





# The Japanese town turning cowpats into hydrogen fuel

**Paul Carter and Kitty Knowles**

Tokyo: In Japan, a smelly waste product is being reimagined as a potential clean fuel of the future that is powering cars and tractors. We're being eyed suspiciously by dozens of cows. Their breath fogs cartoonishly from their nostrils.

It's a brisk morning in snowy Hokkaido, an island in the north of Japan. The cold air carries the distinct scent of cow manure – a smelly yet familiar side-effect of the region's thriving dairy industry. Accounting for 20% of the country's landmass, this island is the second-largest in Japan. It's also home to over a million cows, which produce over half of the country's milk and dairy products.

We are visiting one farm in Hokkaido that wants to transform the source of the pungent aroma in the air into something valuable. They are turning cattle manure into hydrogen.

When it is burned, hydrogen does not emit carbon, making it an attractive alternative to fossil fuels. There are widespread hopes it could be used as a sustainable fuel to heat homes and power cars, trains, aircraft and ships in the future.

But the most common way of producing hydrogen today involves using methane – a fossil fuel piped up from deep underground, meaning it is still associated with significant carbon emissions. Hydrogen can also be produced by splitting water using electricity, but this can be expensive and is only low carbon if renewable sources of electricity are used.

The Shikaoi Hydrogen Farm, however, is using a different source – a waste product that there is no shortage of on Hokkaido. Around 20 million tonnes of cow manure is generated in Hokkaido annually. If not treated correctly, it can be an environmental burden, producing significant methane emissions as well as affecting water quality if allowed to leak into streams and rivers. So can it instead be used as a source of sustainable energy?

"This project to produce hydrogen from livestock manure originated in Japan and is unique to this place," says Maiko Abe from Air Water, one of several compa-

nies involved in the hydrogen farm project. We are visiting the facility in Shikaoi, a town in central Hokkaido, to film an upcoming episode of the BBC's TechXplore focusing on Japan. "Shikaoi accounts for 30% of Hokkaido's cow waste and urine, so it has great potential for renewable energy."

Launched in 2015 by Japan's Ministry of the Environment, the project aims to convert agricultural by-products into hydrogen to supply the local, rural community in a circular economy. The cow excrement and urine is collected from local dairy farms before being fed into an anaerobic digester at a central facility. Here bacteria break down the organic waste to produce biogas and a liquid fertiliser. The biogas is then purified into methane that is used to manufacture hydrogen.

The plant now has a hydrogen production capacity of 70 cubic metres (18,500 gallons), with an onsite fuelling station that can fill around 28 vehicles fitted with hydrogen fuel cells per day, says Abe. Although the fuel can be used by cars with fuel cells, the plant's fuelling station has been specially designed to accommodate agricultural vehicles such as tractors and forklift trucks. These farm vehicles are difficult to electrify with batteries due to their size and the type of work they do. The hydrogen-powered vehicles are used around the farms' sites, reducing the emissions that would otherwise be created by using other fuel sources.

Cattle-made-hydrogen is also stored in canisters that are transported to provide power and heat to other facilities in the area, including a local sturgeon fish farm and the nearby Obihiro Zoo.

But hydrogen isn't without its problems. It needs to be stored in high-pressure tanks as a gas, and can be prone to leakage due to its low molecular weight. It can also degrade metal storage containers, leaving them embrittled, and is easily ignited and so requires additional safety precautions when handling it.

Hydrogen can also be stored as a liquid by chilling it to cryogenic temperatures of below -253C (-423F), but this can be energy intensive and requires large amounts of additional infrastructure.

Hydrogen has nearly three times the energy content of petrol (gasoline) when taken by mass alone. But its low molecular weight also means that by volume, the energy packed into a litre of liquid hydrogen is a quarter that of petrol. Put simply, as the lightest gas in the Universe, hydrogen takes up more space kilogram for kilogram than petrol. This means a lot more storage space is needed for hydrogen compared to fossil fuels like petrol, diesel and natural gas.

It also means producing and storing it at scale can require large amounts of energy and infrastructure.

But as well as these hurdles, the hydrogen farm project in Hokkaido also faces other challenges specific to northern Japan's climate.

Hokkaido's subzero winters means new technologies are needed to produce the hydrogen stably without the small amounts of water vapour in the methane freezing.

Using agricultural waste as a methane source to produce hydrogen is relatively uncommon, but it ultimately uses the same process as is used to produce hydrogen from natural gas: steam reforming. Here, steam heated to 800C (1,472F) reacts with the methane to produce hydrogen, along with the byproducts carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide (CO2).

In the case of cow manure, however, says Abe, the project remains sustainable as this carbon originated in the grass the cows grazed on: "Since it was originally in the atmosphere, it is considered carbon neutral."

In addition, it helps to prevent the methane that would otherwise have been emitted from the manure from getting into the atmosphere, where it is a potent greenhouse gas.

Leftover slurry from the manure after the biogas has been extracted is sprayed as fertiliser onto nearby fields, while formic acid – which is both used in and created by the processes – could be offered as a preservative for cattle feed, says Abe.

Currently, the electricity needed to produce and store the hydrogen comes from the national grid. But Abe says there's potential to shift to green energy, given Hokkaido's promising sea, wind and geothermal potential, thus reducing the carbon emissions of this electricity. Still, other challenges remain. The high cost of the hydrogen compared to fossil fuels and low demand mean expanding the operation is difficult.

"The construction costs of hydrogen stations are very high," says Abe. "Since hydrogen vehicles are not yet widespread, we're keeping our filling capacity low to manage initial investment. As adoption increases, we'll expand supply."

The Hydrogen Farm on Hokkaido is demonstrating how waste from one industry can be turned into useful fuel for others (Credit: BBC)

The Hydrogen Farm on Hokkaido is demonstrating how waste from one industry can be turned into useful fuel for others (Credit: BBC)

To encourage hydrogen vehicle adoption in the area, hydrogen prices are subsidised by the plant, matching the cost of petrol. Hydrogen refuelling stations are also being developed in major Hokkaido cities like Sapporo and Muroran.

The process to make clean hydrogen fuel from cow manure in Shikaoi Hydrogen Farm is worth paying attention to, especially as it also reduces methane which would otherwise be released from the manure. With other countries exploring how to use other types of waste, from pig dung to coconut husks, to produce hydrogen using similar processes, it appears this could be a model adaptable to other local contexts.

With the scale still small, however, and costs of production high, it remains to be seen how widespread this industry can be. There are also other ways of producing fuel from cow waste, such as simply using the biogas produced from manure as a fuel itself without needing to convert it to hydrogen.

Japan is the world leader in hydrogen vehicles and has invested considerably in developing the technology. But



for now battery-powered electric vehicles remain cheaper than hydrogen powered ones.

Though it's unlikely that cow manure alone will ever meet Japan's hydrogen demand, it could contribute significantly, and Shikaoi is creating a model for a circular economy that it hopes will show how costs can fall with the economies of scale.

And there is growing interest in other parts of the world in using waste materials to produce hydrogen, with pig dung, poultry waste and even coconut husks having been explored as potential feedstocks. In Thailand, vehicle manufacturer Toyota is even exploring the use of hydrogen made from chicken waste to fuel its vehicles. Meanwhile, engineers at the University of Illinois Chicago in the US recently developed another promising method to make hydrogen involving manure. In their case, they used the manure, along with sugarcane waste and corn husks, to make biochar, a carbon-rich substance which vastly reduces the amount of electricity needed to convert water to hydrogen.

"We are the first group to show that you can produce hydrogen utilising biomass at a fraction of a volt," says Meenesh Singh, a chemical engineer at the University of Illinois Chicago who led the project.

In the southern Japanese city of Fukuoka, on Kyushu, meanwhile, another waste product is being used to produce hydrogen – and here the dung is from humans. For more than a decade, hydrogen has been created at the city's sewage treatment plant for use in hydrogen-powered vehicles. Most recently it has been used to fuel a fleet of zero-emission rubbish trucks.

Akira Miyaoka, hydrogen utilisation manager for Fukuoka City, says trucks that transport daily products are the town's main source of CO2, rather than large factories as in many other cities. "So we are working to reduce CO2 emissions from commercial trucks," she says.

The initiative started as a collaboration between Kyushu University and Fukuoka City, but now involves several major companies including Toyota.

"Sewage is something that is steadily discharged every day in the daily lives of citizens, so by making effective use of that sewage and extracting hydrogen as energy, we can achieve local production and local consumption of energy," says Miyaoka.

Generating hydrogen from human waste starts with water from various household sources – including showers, dishwashers and toilets – arriving at the

treatment plant. As the water is cleaned, the residual sludge is kept as a source of biogas and converted into hydrogen.

"Sewage and biogas contain various impurities, so the process begins with the process of removing those impurities, which I think is a little different from other hydrogen production processes," says Miyaoka. In 2024, Toyota helped the city launch Japan's first hydrogen-powered service vehicle fleet, including ambulances, delivery vans and bin trucks. Officials at the sewage treatment plant say it is capable of producing 300kg (661lbs) of hydrogen in 12 hours – enough to fuel 30 trucks.

The rubbish trucks head out six nights each week, each collecting 1.7 tonnes (3,700lb) of rubbish, all while running silently and emission-free on the bodily waste of the people they are collecting other waste from. Fukuoka's sewage-to-hydrogen fuelling station has been around since 2015, and several other countries around the world are now adopting a similar approach.

Concord Blue has developed waste-to-energy plants in Germany, India, Japan and the US, converting waste and biomass into hydrogen and bioenergy. Several water authorities in the UK are also working on projects to derive hydrogen from sewage.

A prototype race car has also been developed using sewage-derived hydrogen in the UK. The Warwick Manufacturing Group (WGM), in partnership with Severn Trent Water, is harnessing microbes that generate hydrogen fuel from waste. They anticipate the technology could hit the mainstream within five years, despite existing challenges. (Read about how sewage-powered cars could be the future of motorsport.)

On a larger scale, aviation accounts for 2% of global carbon emissions, and researchers in a UK lab have developed jet fuel made entirely from human sewage. Still, despite the promise, all of these technologies have yet to be delivered at significant scale.

Whether in rural or city landscapes, the Japanese projects we've seen during in filming are inspiring because they have the local community at their heart.

While adoption of hydrogen cars has stalled, hydrogen truck adoption is increasing gradually and it is these larger heavier industrial vehicles that contribute most significantly per vehicle to greenhouse gas emissions. By reimagining waste as a resource, these projects demonstrate that energy can be found in even the most unlikely of places.



# Pakistan may face travel ban by US if govt doesn't address 'deficiencies within 60 days'

**Covert Report**

Islamabad: Donald Trump's administration in Washington is considering issuing sweeping travel restrictions for the citizens of dozens of countries as part of a new ban and Pakistan has been placed in a group that would be considered for a partial suspension of visa issuance if their governments "do not make efforts to address deficiencies within 60 days", according to sources familiar with the matter and an internal memo.

The memo lists a total of 41 countries divided into three separate groups. The first group of 10 countries, including Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Cuba and North Korea among others, would be set for a full visa suspension.

In the second group, five countries — Eritrea, Haiti, Laos, Myanmar and South Sudan — would face partial suspensions that would impact tourist and student visas as well as other immigrant visas, with some exceptions.

In the third group, a total of 26 countries that includes Belarus, Pakistan and Turkmenistan among others would be considered for a partial suspension of US visa issuance if their governments "do not make efforts to address deficiencies within 60 days", the memo said.

A US official speaking on the condition of anonymity cautioned there could be changes on the list and that it was yet to be approved by the administration, including US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. The New York Times first reported on the list of countries. The move harkens back to President Donald Trump's first term ban on travelers from seven majority-Muslim nations, a policy that went through several iterations before it was upheld by the Supreme Court in 2018.

Trump issued an executive order on January 20 requiring intensified security vetting of any foreigners seeking admission to the U.S. to detect national security threats.

That order directed several cabinet members to submit by March 21 a list of countries from which travel should be partly or fully suspended because their "vetting and screening information is so deficient".

Trump's directive is part of an immigration crackdown that he launched at the start of his second term.

He previewed his plan in an October 2023 speech, pledging to restrict people from the Gaza Strip, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Yemen and "anywhere else that threatens our security."



# Ambassador Riina Kionka calls on Prime Minister



**Celina Ali**  
 Islamabad: Ambassador of the European Union (EU), Dr. Riina Kionka on Friday paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif here at the Prime Minister's House. At the outset, the Prime Minister thanked the EU Ambassador for expressing condolences on the

recent terrorist attack on Jaffar Express train in Balochistan and conveyed Pakistan's firm resolve to eliminate the scourge of terrorism from the country, said a Prime Minister's Office statement. The Prime Minister noted that Pakistan and the EU enjoyed cor-

dial and friendly ties and expressed satisfaction at the positive momentum in these relations. He reaffirmed Pakistan's desire to further strengthen its cooperative partnership with the EU, particularly through the continuation of the GSP Plus scheme,

which had benefited both sides since its inception. In addition to discussing various facets of Pakistan-EU ties, including human rights, the Prime Minister welcomed the convening of the first ever Pakistan-EU High Level Business Forum in Islamabad to be held in May and assured the EU Ambassador of

Pakistan's full support and facilitation in making this event successful. The EU Ambassador briefed the Prime Minister about recent visits by EU delegations to Pakistan as well as the upcoming Pakistan-EU engagements.



# British diplomat Jo Moir highlights key areas for climate journalists



High Commissioner of United Kingdom to Pakistan Jane Marriott

and ensuring the government remains accountable for its promises. The core of conversations about addressing climate change lies in the nationally Determined Contributions. Journalists have a vital function in monitoring these pledges and making sure nations are held responsible, particularly when goals begin to falter," she stated. She pointed out that climate finance is the second vital element. "This topic is technical and pertains to global climate financing, climate discussions, and the involvement of private sector investments." It is crucial that financial obligations for

climate action are fulfilled and resources are used efficiently. The third crucial concern relevant to Pakistan is the preservation of glaciers. Moir emphasized that the UN has proclaimed this year as the International Year of Glacial Preservation. "Pakistan, home to 7,000 glaciers, confronts significant issues like quick glacial melting, glacial lake outburst floods, and a lack of water." These have a direct effect on communities, highlighting the need to raise these concerns on a global scale. She emphasized the significance of elevating young people's voices in climate journalism. "Adolescents are taking on a world that requires immediate action."



Deputy high commissioner of UK to Pakistan H.E. Matt Cannell

**Celina Ali** climate journalists to concentrate their reporting on: Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), climate financing, and the preservation of glaciers. Jo Moir said that Pakistani journalists play a vital role in emphasizing climate action



"Say something positive, and you'll see something positive." - Jim Thompson

"Each day comes bearing its gifts. Untie the ribbon."

- Ann Ruth Schabacker

# Italy rejects peacekeeper role in Ukraine, sticks to security guarantees



Italian Ambassador to Pakistan, Marilina Armellini

ly's commitment to working alongside European and US partners to establish lasting and effective security guarantees for Ukraine. However, she emphasized that Italy would not participate in any potential deployment of peacekeepers or military personnel on the ground in Ukraine. The announcement follows discussions about the possibility of forming a "coalition of goodwill" to send peacekeepers to Ukraine, a move that has been under consideration by Western leaders as the war in Ukraine continues to unfold. While Italy's position remains focused on diplomatic and security assistance, Meloni's comments underscore the country's preference for non-combat roles in supporting Ukraine, aligning with broader European efforts to ensure long-term peace and stability in the region. On March 2, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer had already convened a meeting in London with mostly European leaders to discuss assistance to Ukraine, amidst declining support from the United States. The current virtual meeting is expected to further explore the intentions of the "coalition of goodwill" to send peacekeepers to Ukraine. Earlier, both France and the UK had proposed such a move, although they acknowledged that the idea would be unrealistic without



backing from the US. Initially, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni was highly skeptical of the idea of sending European troops to Ukraine, even in a peacekeeping capacity. Rome only agreed to consider such a mission under very specific conditions: after a ceasefire and only under the auspices of the United Nations, with a larger, more diverse contingent. Meloni's skepticism was so pronounced that there were even reports

suggesting she might not attend the video conference, and her participation was not announced in advance. As local observers point out, Meloni is reluctant to jeopardize Italy's privileged relationship with US President Donald Trump. She is also cautious about supporting any European initiative that could be seen as opposing the actions of the US administration.

**Covert Report**  
Rome: Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni this week confirmed that Italy does not foresee any involvement in a potential military mission on the ground in Ukraine. The statement came following her partici-

pation in a videoconference with around 25 Western leaders, convened by British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, to discuss the ongoing situation in Ukraine, Caliber.Az reports citing Russian media. According to a release from the Prime Minister's office, Meloni reaffirmed Ita-

# France's Macron says Russia must accept Ukraine 30-day ceasefire proposal



Paris: French President Emmanuel Macron said this week that Russia must accept a proposed 30-day ceasefire deal put forward by the United States and Ukraine. Macron added he had discussed the situation on Friday with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Zelenskyy, speaking in his nightly video address, said he

and Macron had discussed the "state of diplomacy, the possibilities that exist and the...technical aspects of overseeing a ceasefire".

Zelenskyy said that in all these matters, "we have clear support from France".

