

High Commissioner Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri celebrates Ramadan with Pakistani students

Canberra: Pakistani High Commissioner to Australia Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri this week celebrated Ramadan with the Pakistani students. "Delighted to collaborate with Pakistani students in hosting a special Iftar at the Australian National Univer (Page-5)

COVERT

TRUTH UNFOLD

March 30-April 5, 2025

Islamophobia has no place in any society: Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad Celina Ali

Islamabad: Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN Asim Iftikhar Ahmad said this week that Islamophobia has no place in any society. In a post on X, the envoy said Islamophobia is not just an (Page-5)

Yinxu Museum welcomes 1.8 million tourist visits in one year

Henan Daily

Zhengzhou: Located near the archaeological site of the Yinxu Ruins, which is the location of the last capital of the Shang Dynasty (1600–1046 BC), the new building of the Yinxu Museum in Anyang, central China's Henan Province, received 1.8 million tourist visits in a year since it opened to the public on February 26, 2024. In the spring of 1976, an unlooted square-shaped tomb of modest size was discovered at the archaeological site of the Yin Ruins. The excavation unearthed nearly

800 jade pieces, making it one of the pre-Qin (221–206 BC) tombs with the highest number of jade artifacts ever found. According to inscriptions on bronze vessels and oracle bones, the tomb belonged to Fu Hao, the beloved queen of King Wu Ding of the Shang Dynasty. The Tomb of Fu Hao contained not only jade objects of the Shang Dynasty but also numerous older pieces from the Xinglongwa, Hongshan, and Qijia cultures, many of them reworked—

suggesting that Fu Hao was something of an "ancient jade collector." She was recognized as the first female general documented in historical records.

The new building of the Yinxu Museum showcases the collection of the Tomb of Fu Hao, painting a comprehensive picture of this remarkable woman's life. Among Fu Hao's burial goods were over 460 bronze objects, including 210 ritual bronze vessels—the largest collection of ritual bronzes ever found in a single tomb during archaeological excavations at the Yinxu Ruins. The tomb's discovery gave scholars and the public their first glimpse into the lives of women in the Shang Dynasty and further unveiled the mysteries of the dynasty's bronze civilization. In July 2006, the Yinxu Ruins, ranked as China's top archaeological discovery of the 20th century, was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Among Yinxu's many archaeological treasures, oracle bone inscriptions stand out as particularly significant.

At a restaurant on the first floor of the Yinxu Museum, visitors can savor noodles featuring oracle bone characters printed with edible squid ink.

The Yinxu Museum's new building houses several pottery statues that date back over 3,000 years, offering invaluable insight into the physical appearance of people in the Shang Dynasty. During archaeological excavations at the Yinxu Ruins, researchers also discovered a vehicle with two people buried face-down at its front—likely a human-drawn vehicle historically known in ancient China.

In addition, the museum's new building houses

animal-inspired relics. Two artifacts shaped like pig heads have a cartoonish appearance, covered in colorful patterns with slightly protruding eyes and large ears, giving them an adorably chubby look reminiscent of modern-day emojis. They were likely artistic pieces from the Shang Dynasty—essentially the ancient equivalent of today's "collectible figurines."



Denmark backs Pakistan's green transition, calls sustainability 'a Business Opportunity'

Celina Ali

Islamabad: The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in collaboration with the Embassy of Denmark this week hosted a high-stakes pre-budget dialogue on carbon taxation, emphasizing the urgent need for a well-rounded policy approach. Speaking at the forum Danish Ambassador Jacob Linulf emphasized the urgent need for climate action in Pakistan, citing climate change as a fundamental threat that requires immediate attention. He highlighted the critical role of organizations like the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in guiding the government and private sector toward sustainable solutions, said a press release. Ambassador Linulf reaffirmed Denmark's commitment to supporting Pakistan's transition to renewable energy. He noted that despite Denmark's limited natural resources, it successfully shifted from fossil fuels to clean energy, proving that economic growth and sustainability can go hand in hand. He stressed that Pakistan, with its vast renewable energy potential, can adopt a similar approach by diversifying its energy sources for efficiency and resilience. The envoy underscored the role of energy efficiency in maintaining industrial competitiveness. He advocated for smart carbon taxation and modern technology adoption to phase out outdated fossil fuel-based systems. He further emphasized that firm and long-term government policies are essential for fostering innovation, attracting investment, and positioning Pakistan as a global supplier of green technologies. Ambassador Linulf highlighted the importance of individual and corporate responsibility in the green transition. He urged businesses to embrace energy efficiency by insulating buildings and optimizing production processes. Given that Pakistan exports a significant volume of textiles to Europe and North America, he stressed that adopting green value chains would enhance demand for Pakistani products in eco-conscious markets. Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, Senior Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan during the pre-budget seminar on carbon taxation underscored that Carbon taxation should be a tool for resilience that enable climate adaptation and resilience in the vulnerable nations. Justice Shah among the other experts at the session highlighted the complexities of carbon taxation, stressing that it should serve as more than just a revenue-generating tool—rather, it must align with environmental sustainability and economic resilience. He argued, citing South Africa's model, which directs 10% of carbon tax revenues to climate resilience projects. He called on global financial institutions to recognize adaptation credits and restructure carbon markets to support vulnerable nations. Justice Mansoor Ali Shah offered a legal perspective, stressing that Pakistan, as a low-emission but climate-vulnerable nation, must prioritize adaptation over mitigation. He pointed out that while global financial flows

are still skewed towards carbon reduction, adaptation remains critical for Pakistan's economic and social stability. He added that Pakistan must design a differentiated carbon tax regime that aligns with its economic realities, ensures climate justice, and supports industries in making a sustainable transition. In his keynote, Dr. Abid Qayyum Saleer, SDPI's Executive Director, noted Denmark's long-standing support in helping Pakistan navigate the complexities of carbon taxation and carbon markets. He highlighted the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)—a tax on carbon-intensive exports to the European Union (EU)—which will become fully operational by January 1, 2026. While Pakistan's current export mix might shield it from immediate impacts, Dr. Saleer warned that exporters failing to pay carbon taxes locally would be subjected to levies in their destination markets. Dr. Sajid Amin Javed, SDPI's Deputy Executive Director, opened the discussion by framing climate change as a macroeconomic risk that must be integrated into Pakistan's broader policy framework. He underscored the inefficiency of short-term tax policies, citing past failures in areas like tobacco taxation. With carbon levies emerging as a likely International Monetary Fund (IMF) condition, he called for immediate deliberation on the subject. Senior Economist, Afia Malik underscored that Pakistan's revenue shortfall was forcing a downward revision of tax collection targets from Rs12.9 trillion to Rs12.3 trillion, where carbon taxation has emerged as a potential fiscal tool. The experts floated ideas such as levying carbon-based vehicle registration fees or introducing a carbon levy on fuel, while economist Afia Malik cautioned that such measures could disproportionately burden low-income groups, leading to inflationary pressures. Atif Tanveer from Mari Petroleum warned that imposing a carbon tax on the heavily regulated oil and gas sector could stifle economic activity. Meanwhile, Saad Ahmed flagged the energy sector's circular debt crisis, urging the government to prioritize sustainable transport solutions over blanket taxation. Sohaib Becker, an advisor to the Pak-German Climate Energy Partnership (PGCEP), advocated for a hybrid carbon pricing model. She proposed a phased approach, starting with a Rs1,500 per ton carbon levy on high-emitting industries like cement, steel, and textiles, escalating to Rs2,500 per ton in later stages. By 2030, a mix of carbon taxes and emissions trading systems (ETS) could be in place, aligning Pakistan with global carbon market trends. Ali Kemal, Chief SDGs, Planning Ministry said Carbon taxation is essential—whether for reducing emissions or increasing government revenue—it must be implemented strategically. He noted that a carbon-neutral product market was emerging, and Pakistan should adapt to stay competitive. Kemal recommended that revenue from carbon taxation should be recycled into cash transfers and social protection programs, ensuring equitable distribution with proper compliance monitoring to ensure policy effectiveness as resistance to carbon taxation was expected, and implementation should be gradual and well-structured to manage challenges effectively.



Bilawal Bhutto praises Sindh Housing Project, promises shelter for millions

Liaquat Ali

Islamabad: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari this week praised the progress of the Sindh People's Housing Project, stating that its completion will provide permanent shelter to millions of homeless families. During a meeting chaired by Bilawal, attended by Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah and the chief secretary, officials shared key updates on the project. So far, over 2 million affected individuals have been verified, 1.14 million bank accounts have been opened, and financial aid has been provided to over

1 million people. The briefing highlighted that 660,000 houses have been constructed up to the foundation level, while 400,000 families have already moved into completed homes. Additionally, residential plots have been allotted to 301,442 families on government land. Bilawal emphasised the PPP's legacy of exceptional public service, noting that the homes were designed to meet local needs, featuring kitchens, bathrooms, and courtyards. District administrations have been instructed to begin distributing property rights within two weeks.



Production of traditional Chinese medicinal materials grows steadily

Henan Daily Zhengzhou: China's production of traditional Chinese medicinal materials has maintained stable growth in recent years, an agricultural official said this week. The supply capacity of traditional Chinese medicine materials has continued to climb. The planting areas have now reached around 50 million mu (3.33 million hectares) across

China, doubling over the past decade, Liu Lihua with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs told a press conference. The production layout has been optimized and seven major regions that specialize in authentic medicinal materials have formed across the country, Liu said. China will work to build a number of high-level authentic medicinal mate-

rial production bases, bolster the growth of advantageous TCM industrial clusters and specialized towns, and build distinctive herbal medicine brands to promote the high-quality development of the TCM industry, the official said.



Global companies share China's opportunities: Two Sessions told

China Economic Net Beijing: "It is known to all that the resilience and potential of the Chinese economy are obvious. In 2024, despite a series of uncertainties, China's contribution to global economic growth still remains at around 30%, making it a vital engine," Jiang Yi, Director of the Policy Research Office of the National Development and Reform Commission, said during a briefing on the 2025 Two Sessions. The event was held by the China Public Relations Association to provide Chinese and foreign-funded companies with an in-depth interpretation of related policies adopted by this year's

Two Sessions. "The expected GDP growth target of around 5% this year was proposed after comprehensive research and scientific demonstration, Jiang stressed. In 2025, China will implement more proactive and effective macroeconomic policies not seen in many years, as well as carry out extraordinary counter-cyclical adjustments." Wang Ya, Deputy Director of the Foreign Investment Department of the Ministry of Commerce focused on China's expansion of high-level opening-up, which is of most concern to domestic and foreign companies. Wang pointed out that the negative list for

foreign investment access in the Shanghai free trade zone (FTZ) has been revised eight times since its first version was released in 2013, and the special management measures have been reduced from 190 to 29 nationwide since 2024. Foreign investment access to areas outside the negative list will be managed strictly in accordance with the principle of consistency between domestic and foreign investment, ensuring that foreign-invested enterprises enjoy the same treatment as domestic enterprises in terms of market access. "The Chinese government is actively expanding the opening-up. In 2024, pilot projects were

launched in some regions in the fields of value-added telecommunications, biotechnology, and wholly foreign-owned hospitals to create more investment opportunities for foreign investors." The CEN reporter learned that a series of specific measures to attract foreign investment and expand opening up will continue to be effectively implemented. For instance, the Ministry of Commerce will formulate an annual plan about investment in China brands this year, vigorously promoting overseas investment. Secondly, Catalogue of Industries for Encouraging Foreign Investment will be revised to focus on guiding foreign investment to modern service industries and divert more foreign investment to the central, western and north-eastern regions.

"The new catalogue will be released within the year. After soliciting opinions from all parties, the new version has reached 1,700 entries, which is more than 200 more than the previous 2022 version, meaning a large proportion improvement," Jiang introduced. In addition, the Ministry of Commerce has selected some provinces and cities to carry out comprehensive pilot projects for expanding the opening up of the national service industry. By 2024, 11 provinces and cities had been involved, with the total foreign investment in the service industry reaching USD 41.3 billion, accounting for about 50.2% of China's foreign investment in the service industry. By now, more than 1,300 such pilot projects have been launched, covering 13 key areas. It has also in accordance with the rules and provisions of CPTPP and DEPA, and has promoted more than 190 innovative achievements nationwide. Foreign-invested enterprises attending the meeting noted that the basic long-term positive trend of China's economy, the super-large domestic market and the complete and efficient industrial system have formed comprehensive advantages in attracting investment, thus new investment opportunities are constantly emerging.



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Sea-rail direct transport boosts global reach for 'Made in Henan' products

Henan Daily Zhengzhou: With a resounding whistle, a container train carrying leather goods set off from Putian Railway Station in Zhengzhou this week. After reaching Qingdao Port by rail, the goods will seamlessly transition to a maritime route bound for Spain, where they will be shipped to the European market. "It's the first time Henan has exported leather goods via the 'land-sea coordination and sea-rail direct transport' model. This not only expands the range of goods benefiting from the model, but also opens up more efficient export routes for Henan's key industries, helping local businesses access international markets at a lower cost," said Shao Zhenwen, head of the Logistics Monitoring Division at Zhengzhou Station Customs under Zhengzhou Customs. Henan has developed a relatively comprehensive leather goods supply chain, with numerous industrial parks across the province showing significant agglomeration effects. As a result, Henan-made leather products are more cost-effective and highly competitive in both domestic and international markets. "Leather goods require high efficiency in both transportation and customs clearance.

To help Henan's leather industry expand into larger overseas markets and boost its global competitiveness, we've taken specific measures, adopting the 'land-sea coordination and sea-rail direct transport' model to help businesses cut costs and improve efficiency," said Shao Zhenwen. He added that this approach has shortened the overall logistics cycle for export goods by nearly a day compared to traditional methods, saving over 20 percent in port detention and logistics costs. In April last year, the "land-sea coordination and sea-rail direct transport" model was launched in Henan. By integrating railway and sea transport resources, the model has significantly reduced transfer times and enhanced Zhengzhou's role as a key logistics hub. This initiative is accelerating Henan's efforts to build a unified national market and circular hub, making it a key link in domestic and international trade. So far, over 700 tons of goods have been shipped under this model, with destinations including Italy, Greece, the United States, and other regions.



Italy excited to host rugby's next generation with World Rugby U20 Championship 2025



Italian Ambassador to Pakistan, Marilina Armellin

Covert Report

Rome: World Rugby this week confirmed that Italy will host the World Rugby U20 Championship 2025 from 29 June-19 July with matches held in four cities across the Lombardia and Veneto regions.

It will be the third time that Italy has hosted the prestigious tournament featuring the 12 best U20 teams in the world but the first for a decade with a New Zealand side featuring current All Black Anton Lienert-Brown having beaten England in the 2015 title decider in Cremona.

Four years earlier, the same two sides had also met in the final in Padova with a New Zealand outfit containing future Rugby World Cup winners Beauden Barrett, Sam Cane, Brodie Retallick, TJ Perenara and Codie Taylor emerging victorious.

The pools have been confirmed for the 15th edition of the prestigious age-grade tournament with the four host cities of Calvisano, Rovigo, Verona and Viadana hosting matches across the

three rounds of pool matches on 29 June, 4 and 9 July.

The knockout stages begin on 14 July with finals day taking place on 19 July to determine the final placings of the 12 teams with the Stadio Maria Bolognini in Rovigo to host the 2025 title decider. Kick-off times are still to be finalised and the full match schedule will be confirmed in due course.

England are the defending champions, having beaten three-time winners France 21-13 in the 2024 final in Cape Town, South Africa, while Scotland will return to the U20 Championship for the first time since 2019 after winning last year's World Rugby U20 Trophy on home soil. More than 1,000 players have graduated from an U20 Championship to play test rugby since the tournament was first held in 2008, including 32 Rugby World Cup winners and the last five World Rugby Men's 15s Players of the Year. Current Italy captain Michele Lamaro is one of more than 70 U20 Championship graduates capped by the Azzurri with Federico Ruzza, Paolo Garbisi, Tommaso Allan and Ange Capuozzo other high-profile players to have followed this pathway to the test stage.

Lamaro, who captained the Azzurri to eighth place in 2018, said: "The World Rugby U20 Championship is one of the first, most defining moments a young player can face at international level. It is a lifetime experience. You're away from home for a long time and you can develop yourself both as a player and as a human being, playing alongside your best peers in the world and creating life-lasting bonds."

"I lived the World Rugby U20 Championship with many team-mates with whom I'm currently playing on the test arena, and we all have such pleasant memories of the competition. I encourage all the players that will showcase their talents in the Championship to fully embrace the moment, as it will be a crucial milestone both in their career and their lives."

World Rugby Chair Brett Robinson said: "The World Rugby U20 Championship represents the pinnacle of age-grade rugby, showcasing the next generation of international stars before they reach the highest level. We are delighted to bring back this thrilling competition to Italy, a nation with a deep passion for the sport and a proven track record of hosting world-class events. This 15th edition will not only provide an incredible platform for young talent to shine but will also capture the imagination of fans and we look forward to working with our friends at Federazione Italiana Rugby to leave a lasting legacy for the sport in Italy."

Antonella Gualandri, Federazione Italiana Rugby (FIR) Vice-President and Organising Committee Chairman, said: "The World Rugby U20 Championship comes back to Italy 10 years after a very successful edition, which culminated in a thrilling final in a packed Cremona stadium between England and New Zealand, and we cannot be more excited."

"The U20 Championship is the ultimate platform for the future stars of international rugby and hosting the very best prospects of the game will not only bring some spectacular action to our passionate fans in northern Italy, but will also grant a solid legacy to our grassroots clubs, who can't wait to host the teams at their training facilities, establish relations and make memories that will last forever."

"Calvisano, Viadana and Rovigo have already successfully hosted the World Rugby U20 Championship back in 2011 and 2015 and they will be formidable venues for the teams, as will be Verona, a newcomer set for its debut as an international venue with its brand-new Payanini Center. The stage is set for an event the players, the teams, volunteers and our youngsters will never forget."



Gianni Fava, World Rugby Council member for FIR, said: "The return of the World Rugby U20 Championship to our country is a wonderful news for our game, as well as a great opportunity for our local clubs to reinforce and amplify the bond with their territories through a global event. Together with them and with the support of the Ministry of Sport, the Ministry of the Environment, the Lombardia region and the Veneto region we will guarantee, through the Championship, a fascinating platform for promoting both our sport and the local Italian excellence."

WORLD RUGBY U20 CHAMPIONSHIP 2025 29 June-19 July | Stadio San Michele (Calvisano), Stadio Mario Bolognini (Rovigo), Payanini Center (Verona), Stadio Luigi Zaffanella (Viadana)

- Pool A: England (1), Australia (6), South Africa (7), Scotland (12)
- Pool B: France (2), Argentina (5), Wales (8), Spain (11)
- Pool C: New Zealand (3), Ireland (4), Georgia (9), Italy (10)
- Pool matches
- Match day 1: Sunday, 29 June (Calvisano and Verona)
- Match day 2: Friday, 4 July (Rovigo and Viadana)
- Match day 3: Wednesday, 9 July (Calvisano and Verona)
- Knockout matches
- Match day 4: Monday, 14 July (Verona and Viadana)
- Match day 5 (final and ranking matches): Saturday, 19 July (Calvisano and Rovigo)



Europe's quest for 'strategic autonomy' needs refocusing

Andrey Kortunov

Lately the not-so-fresh idea of a "European strategic autonomy" has got back in circulation in many EU capitals. This should come as no surprise, given the condescending and even arrogant attitude displayed by the Donald Trump administration toward US' European allies. Politicians and state officials across the European continent can no longer take the transatlantic commonality of values or even the enduring US leadership for granted and they have to start thinking about Europe playing a more independent role in the turbulent and unstable world of today and tomorrow.

What is surprising, however, is that the ongoing discussions about the desired parameters of "strategic autonomy" almost exclusively focus on its military dimension. This emphasis may be understandable, but arguably it is not very practical. Even if all the needed political, legal, administrative and financial decisions were already in place, it would still take many years, if not decades, for Brussels to become a significant global military actor comparable to already established great powers. Furthermore, the likely cost of such an epic rearmament effort by the EU would be exceptionally high, and for many European nations that are currently faced with significant economic and financial challenges, the cost would be prohibitively high.

However, there is another, no less important dimension of "strategic autonomy," which is often overlooked or suppressed in Europe, and where tangible practical results can be achieved much faster and at a much lower cost. That is the vital economic dimensions of "strategic autonomy." These dimensions, above all, include the advancement of critical modern technologies (digital infrastructure, semiconductors, AI, green

economy) and diversification of supply chains to limit the current overwhelming EU dependence on US trading partners.

To achieve both goals, the EU would need stronger economic ties with China. The convergence of interests between the two major economic powerhouses on the opposite sides of the vast Eurasian landmass is evident. In many ways, Brussels and Beijing face similar challenges coming from Washington. Both the EU and China have trade surpluses in trading with the US and it is by no accident that the Trump administration intends to put more pressure on Brussels and Beijing to even out trade balances, assuming that they will ultimately have to accept the new rules of the game set for them in the White House.

At the same time, the EU-China trade remains one of the most significant economic partnerships in the modern world, amounting to \$762 billion. It is almost comparable with the EU-US trade or China's trade with ASEAN countries and it has a huge potential for further growth. However, after 2022, when the turnover reached a record \$847 billion, this trade was essentially stagnating. This is partially because of EU's concerns about China's rising economic and technological might and partially due to Washington pushing hard for Brussels to align more closely with US trade and investment restrictions on China, particularly regarding the high-tech field. Today, the Trump administration apparently tries to have its cake and eat it: to keep the EU as an obedient junior partner in dealing with China, but to treat the EU as a self-serving and uncooperative adversary in US-EU trade matters.

The natural complementarity of Europe and China is not limited to trade or investment only.



Brussels and Beijing have common or overlapping positions on many global issues ranging from the energy transition to the principles of AI governance to reforming WTO. On most of these crucial issues, the EU today is much closer to China than it is to the US. Furthermore, Europeans and Chinese largely share the fundamental commitment to the principle of multilateralism that has been explicitly dismissed by Washington. This is not to say that there are no disagree-

ments, contradictions or even direct conflicts of interest in China-EU relations. Still, in the rapidly changing international environment of today, the EU and China might find closer cooperation with each other instrumental in hedging numerous risks and uncertainties coming from deliberately unilateralist and often unpredictable US policies. It would also be a clear signal for Washington to demonstrate that the latter has no veto power over the rules of the game in the global

economic system. Over time, a situational partnership between Brussels and Beijing might evolve into a more comprehensive strategic partnership.

The writer is the academic director of the Russian International Affairs Council

Reflections within Europe need to be reflected more at the decision-making level

Global Times

Amid the complex and changing international situation, Europe's self-positioning and the development of China-Europe relations have drawn significant attention. However, a series of recent actions and statements from the European side have been puzzling. First, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas claimed that if the US and Europe engage in a trade war, China would "laugh on the side." Then, European Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security Maros Sefcovic said that if Chinese electric vehicle (EV) and battery manufacturers want to invest in the EU, they should be prepared to transfer technology.

Moreover, latest reports indicate that the EU is probing "whether China provided unfair subsidies for a BYD electric car plant in Hungary."

Meanwhile, five years after the release of the "EU's 5G cybersecurity toolbox," which urged member states to ban Huawei and ZTE from their networks, surveys indicate that 17 EU countries, including the biggest economies, have not fully implemented its provisions. In addition, Europe's 5G network deployment has clearly fallen behind North America and the Asia-Pacific region, leading to increasing discussions within Europe about strategic missteps in 5G development. Spain announced on Thursday that Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez will visit China and Vietnam next month, stating his intention to contribute to the rapprochement between the EU and "other powers and regional blocs" in the current "highly changing geopolitical context."

Clearly, there is a gap between the European Commission's stance on China and the views held by some European countries, the European business community, and insightful individuals.

It is not difficult to see that behind the European Commission and the European Parliament's perplexing stance on China, several prevailing mindsets are at play. The first mindset is that, under the threat of Washington's tariff war, there is a desire to shift blame and deflect attention by promoting the narrative that "China benefits from the US-EU trade war." The second mindset, anchored in maintaining transatlantic relations, seeks to use improved ties with China as a bargaining chip in negotiations with Washington. The third mindset is more awkward, with the belief that China has seen an opportunity in the discord between the US and Europe, but Brussels should not allow Beijing to profit without paying the price; instead, it should approach Beijing more cautiously and strategically.

The fourth mindset is shaped by a heightened defensive posture, especially after seeing China's industrial and technological advancements, leading to the attempt to cling even more stubbornly to the already struggling "de-risking" strategy.

Looking back at Europe's mindset over the past few years, from the Russia-Ukraine conflict to the current crisis in the transatlantic relationship, Europe's anxiety about its own vulnerabilities has been growing rapidly. In many policy areas, there is an increasing trend toward "pan-securitization." What stands out even more is that some in Europe instinctively point the finger at China, essentially crafting so-called "de-risking" against China, and formulating a variety of other toolkits such as "anti-coercion tools" that have profoundly affected the economic and trade relations between China and

Europe. But who really poses the greatest threat to Europe's economic security? Some Europeans previously entertained the illusion that the losses caused by reducing cooperation with China could be compensated elsewhere. In reality, not only has compensation failed to materialize, but Europe has also faced even greater pressure from those supposed alternatives.

The wrong prescription not only fails to address the EU's structural problems but actually highlights its shortsightedness and passivity in global competition. Europe should find ways to overcome its anxiety rather than be trapped by it or pushed into a dilemma by reactive impulses. In fact, more and more voices of reflection are emerging within Europe. For example, a recent Belgian media article noted that China in the past accumulated automotive expertise from cooperation with European players, and it seems that Europe should draw inspiration from this in the field of batteries and it's time to return to the path of cooperation with a humble attitude. Most pragmatic professionals in the European business community recognize the opportunities that come with cooperating with China. They hope to further strengthen forward-looking collaboration with China in fields such as technology and new energy. These pragmatic voices should be reflected in Europe's decision-making.

While most EU countries find it practically impossible to "cut ties" with Chinese products, those European nations that have already deepened cooperation with China are reaping the benefits. For example, Chery Automobile and Spain's Ebro-EV Motors have established a joint venture in Barcelona, creating over 1000 local jobs. After CATL set up factories in Germany and Hungary, it partnered with Stellantis to establish a large-scale lithium iron phosphate battery plant in Spain, providing European

consumers with higher-quality, longer-lasting, and more affordable EVs. This year, XPeng Motors and Volkswagen intensified their collaboration to build an ultra-fast charging network, while Hesai Technology secured an exclusive long-term project with a top European OEM. These developments demonstrate the countless opportunities emerging from China-Europe cooperation.

Europe has reached a point where it needs to rebalance its approach. Addressing Europe's vulnerabilities and fostering better development require cooperation with China, not the opposite. China-Europe cooperation is not merely a convergence of economic interests; it is also a strategic choice aimed at jointly addressing global challenges. On issues such as climate change, digital security, and public health, both sides share common interests and responsibilities. Strengthening cooperation in these areas would not only enhance their respective capabilities but also inject new vitality into global governance. China has no intention of exploiting others' difficulties or bullying anyone, and Europe, too, should pursue sincere communication and cooperation with China on the basis of equality and mutual respect.



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High Commissioner Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri celebrates Ramzan with Pakistani students

Covert Report Canberra: Pakistani High Commissioner to Australia Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri this week celebrated Ramzan with the Pakistani students. “Delighted to collaborate with Pakistani students in hosting a special Iftar at the Australian National University! Wishing everyone a blessed Ramzan,” the envoy tweeted. Earlier, Pakistan High Commission Australia, Canberra Australia hosted an Iftar dinner for Muslim students with cooperation from ANU Muslim Students Association (ANU MSA) at Australian National University (ANU) on Tuesday, 18 March 2025.

Qibei Goan, President of ANUMSA, expressed gratitude to the High Commission of Pakistan for their commitment to engaging with students, especially those from Pakistan. Over 120 students and community members gathered to break their fast and enjoy a delicious dinner together, creating a heartwarming atmosphere. The event was a great success, thanks to the support of the Pakistan High Commission and the hard work of the ANUMSA team, volunteers, and the dedicated efforts from volunteers of Anu who played a crucial role in ensuring the event's success.



Islamophobia has no place in any society: Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad



Celina Ali Islamabad: Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN Asim Iftikhar Ahmad said this week that Islamophobia has no place in any society. In a post on X, the envoy said Islamophobia is not just

an attack on one community but on the universal values of justice, equality and human dignity. “Combating it demands urgent international action and global solidarity - to confront hate, challenge disinformation and protect fundamental rights,” he added. In 2022, the General Assembly adopted

a resolution, co-sponsored by Pakistan, designating March 15 as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, which he called a “defining moment” as the world finally recognised the danger posed by this menace. The day was celebrated as the Muslim world was observing the holy month of Ramadan.

Pakistan celebrates Nowruz at UNESCO Headquarters Paris

Covert Report Paris: Pakistan, in collaboration with twelve (12) other countries, celebrated the vibrant and culturally significant festival of Nowruz at the

UNESCO Headquarters, Paris. Guests were treated to a feast of traditional Pakistani cuisine, including shami kebabs, aromatic basmati biryani and refreshing lassi, offering a

glimpse into Pakistan’s delicious culinary heritage. Nowruz is recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and was jointly registered by



Pakistan with twelve (12) other countries. The celebrations featured traditional music and performances, with cultural and food exhibitions that showcased the diverse customs and traditions of the participating countries. Guests were treated to a feast of traditional Pakistani cuisine, including shami kebabs, aromatic basmati biryani and refreshing lassi, offering a glimpse into Pakistan’s delicious

culinary heritage at UNESCO. The well-attended event at UNESCO underscored Pakistan’s ongoing commitment to fostering cultural understanding and promoting the value of Nowruz at the global stage. The celebrations not only highlighted the importance of cultural diversity, but also reinforced the spirit of unity among countries over food and music.

Umar Rehman Malik highlights Sindh govt's plan to educate convicted prisoners' children



Abdullah Jan
 Islamabad: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader Umar Rehman Malik this week highlighted Sindh government's decision to educate the children of convicted prisoners. "Sindh government has taken a historic step by launching Pakistan's first-ever initiative to educate the children of convicted prisoners. This groundbreaking program will provide 4,684 children across Sindh with access to education from primary to university level, breaking cycles of poverty, stigma, and injustice," the PPP leader said. He said through this decision, the PPP had reaffirmed its commitment to a more just, inclusive, & compassionate society where every child has the right to education, regardless of their circumstances. Earlier, the PPP-led Sindh government launched Pakistan's first-ever programme to support the education of children of convicted prisoners. The launch ceremony, held at Central Jail Karachi, was attended by Sindh's Minister

for Education and Mines & Minerals Development, Sardar Ali Shah, and Minister for Prisons, Hasan Ali Zardari. This initiative, which aims to provide free education from primary school to university, is a joint effort of the Sindh Education Department, the Sindh Prisons Department, and Paigham-e-Pakistan. Under the programme, children of 4,684 convicted inmates in Sindh's jails will receive educational support from primary to university level. Speaking on the occasion, Sindh Education Minister Sardar Ali Shah emphasised that the state must act like a mother, saying, "We are helping children who have committed no crime. Denying them education would be the greatest injustice because children should not be punished for the actions of their parents." He said just as it is the state's responsibility to punish criminals, it is also the state's duty to ensure education for their children. "We are setting a positive precedent," he added.



Germany's landmark spending bill wins final lawmaker backing



Merz and the SPD have been forced to act after President Donald Trump pulled back from US commitments to European security, laying bare the increased threat to the region from President Vladimir Putin's Russia. Meanwhile, Germany's economy has stagnated for two years and Merz has pledged to tackle structural problems including high energy costs and tangled bureaucracy. Markets have generally reacted positively to the fiscal shift, which Bloomberg economists say should help bolster growth across the euro region. "If you look at Germany from the outside, what we're hearing in Europe and from countries beyond Europe is an overwhelmingly positive assessment of what we have agreed," Merz said earlier Friday at a FAZ newspaper forum in Berlin. Germany's Spending Package: Defense spending in excess of 1% of gross domestic product will be released from constitutional borrowing restrictions. Special, off-budget infrastructure fund will be empowered to borrow as much as EUR500 billion (\$723.13 billion) over 12 years.

Of that amount EUR100 billion will be transferred to the Climate and Transition Fund and states will receive EUR100 billion for regional projects. Germany's 16 states will have leeway to borrow as much as 0.35% of GDP, or the equivalent of around EUR16 billion, instead of having to run balanced budgets. After the passage of the spending bill, attention turns to the coalition talks. Merz's conservatives and the Social Democrats aim to have an agreement in place by Easter at the latest, though there have been rumblings in recent days that the negotiations could drag on longer. A coalition deal would pave the way for Merz to secure Bundestag approval to take over as chancellor from Scholz, who has been running the government in a caretaker capacity since the CDU/CSU's February election victory. "The next German government must put the economy back on a growth path — and this also requires unpopular decisions," Tanja Gönner, head of the BDI industry lobby, said Thursday. "There can and must be no way around bold structural reforms, efficient use of budget funds and clear priorities for investments," she added.



Covert Report

Berlin: The armed forces are also a focus, with Merz and the Social Democrats committed to a massive military buildup after years of neglect, as well as continued backing for Ukraine. Germany's move to unlock hundreds of billions of euros in debt-financed defense and infrastructure spending passed its final legislative hurdle on Friday when lawmakers in the upper house of parliament in Berlin approved the measures. An alliance of Chancellor-in-waiting Friedrich Merz's conservatives, the Social Democrats and the Greens rammed the unprecedented investment package through the lower house on Tues-

day and together controlled enough votes in the Bundesrat, where Germany's 16 federal states are represented, to ensure its backing there too. The bill passed with 53 votes in favor, more than the required two-thirds majority of 46 and paving the way for President Frank-Walter Steinmeier to sign it and submit it for publication in the Federal Law Gazette. Investors have been closely watching the passage of the measures, which end decades of German austerity and usher in a new period of deficit spending designed to boost Europe's biggest economy and modernize creaking infrastructure.

German debt held on to gains after the bill's approval, leaving the 10-year yield close to a two-week low at 2.76%. The armed forces are also a focus, with Merz and the Social Democrats — his prospective partners in the next government — committed to a massive military buildup after years of neglect, as well as continued backing for Ukraine. Merz said this week that wherever possible defense contracts should go to European manufacturers. Contractors ranging from Thyssenkrupp AG to BAE Systems Plc and smaller drone makers stand to gain the most, Bloomberg reported Monday.

Bulgaria risks losing €2.5 billion from EU Social Climate Fund



Newswire

Sofia: Bulgaria risks losing €2.5 billion in EU grants from the Social Climate Fund because it is late in preparing its national plan, influential NGOs such as WWF, Za Zemyata (For the Earth) and Habitat Bulgaria have warned. "There are concerns that Bulgaria will not be able to submit its Social Climate Plan to the European Commission on time,

which would mean losing the money allocated," the organizations say. The Bulgarian Social Climate Plan is due to be presented in Brussels by the end of June this year. A week ago, the government's coordination unit was closed, without it being clear who exactly is working on this issue in Sofia. The social plan aims to help Bulgarian citizens and local companies at risk of

energy and transport poverty to be supported with money from carbon trading. Nearly 30% of the Bulgarian population (1.8 million people) are considered energy poor due to their low monthly incomes, according to data from the Bulgarian Agency for Sustainable Energy Development. "It is extremely important to create a simple procedure that reduces administrative obstacles so that the money is accessible to all social groups, including the most vulnerable groups and people with permanent disabilities," commented Za Zemiata energy expert Svetoslav Stoykov. Bulgaria risks losing another 4 billion euros in grants from the European Recovery and Resilience Plan, Deputy Prime Minister Tomislav Donchev admitted earlier in March. The current government in Sofia, which was elected in January, promises to try to catch up by adopting the necessary reforms to save the funding from the Recovery Plan, but the political situation is complicated. Late last week, the Constitutional

Court declared that the populist Velichie (Greatness) party was entitled to 10 seats in the Bulgarian parliament, reducing the ruling coalition's majority to an absolute minimum of 121 votes out of a total of 240.

Political experts predict that this could lead to another snap election in Bulgaria, which has been rocked by a political crisis for the past four years. A prolonged crisis would lead to delayed reforms and the loss of billions in European grants.



I went to Sintra, Portugal, to find its castles closed, but hearts open



Alex McClintock Lisbon: The Spanish Steps were closed for renovations when I visited Rome for the first time. The Flatiron Building was covered in scaffolding during my last trip to New York. And I've lost count of the number of museums and art galleries I've missed out on by turning up on the wrong day.

But I've never had a situation quite as unfortunate as the one that unfolded during my recent trip to the picturesque town of Sintra in Portugal. If you're not familiar with Sintra, you should be. A half-hour drive from Lisbon, it's one of the most beautiful, eccentric towns in Europe. For centuries, this forested hillside hamlet was the favoured retreat

of the Portuguese royal family and nobility. What Angkor Wat is to temples and Naples is to pizza joints, Sintra is to pastel-coloured palaces. Which brings us to my ill-timed visit. The day I arrived, the Portuguese national parks service announced that all but one of Sintra's palaces would be closed due to the risk of fire. Bushfires were burning across more than 100,000ha of Portugal. Several people had died. Sintra was not directly under threat, but the dry conditions meant any spark could ignite the Unesco-listed town. The fate of my castle-hopping getaway was obviously unimportant compared with such a serious emergency, so I resolved not to complain and to make the most of Sintra, even without its major attractions. It did help that my accommodation was in a hilltop palace. The Valverde Sintra Palácio de Seteais was built in the 18th century in grand neoclassical style and is leased by the Portuguese government to the Leading Hotels of the World group. Driving down the horseshoe-shaped driveway towards the hotel entrance and the monumental arch that joins the building's two wings, I had to dodge crowds of tourists who'd come to stare at the palace from the outside. Rarely have I felt as smug as I did when I handed over the hire car keys to a grey-suited valet and stepped inside, away from the hoi polloi. If anything, the residence was even more impressive on the inside, with golden sunlight spilling through French windows onto polished floors and walnut furniture, soaring ceilings and intricate botanical frescoes. After checking into my Deluxe Garden room, which looked out towards the (closed) ruins of the Moorish Castle on the hills above, the only thing to do was grab a drink from the elegant bar, sit in the manicured garden and watch the sun set crimson in the smoky haze over the distant Atlantic. I could easily have spent two whole days by the heated pool, but I resisted the temptation to remain sedentary in my opulent surrounds. The next morning, after a buffet breakfast served with proper silverware on fine

china, I set out to explore Sintra on foot. Walking down steep, twisting lanes into the centre of town, I passed the (closed) road up to the banana-coloured Pena Palace and peeped over the gate into the twisted Gothic madness of the Regaleira Palace (also closed). Fortunately the National Palace, recognisable for its giant chimneys shaped a bit like a pair of bowling skittles, was open. Home to a museum that recreates the feel of a royal household in the Middle Ages, the palace's ornate tiling, friezes and furniture give a sense of Portugal's wealth during the Age of Discovery. The palace is directly across the main square from Casa Piriquita, the bakery that invented the travesseiro, Sintra's answer to the more standard custard tart. It's a mix of floral almond and rich egg enfolded by an oblong case of delightfully flaky pastry, and well worth the wait in the fast-moving queue. A challenging combination of labyrinthine streets and steep gradients make Sintra somewhat difficult to navigate by foot – most visitors opt to take the local buses, which travel in a circuit, or hire one of the slightly dodgy electric tuktuks that clog the streets. I was not so smart, and ended up with a serious thirst after a long day of walking around looking at palaces from a distance. That's how I found myself on the balcony of a no-frills locals' bar called the 4 Caravelas, drinking a tiny, ice-cold bottle of Sagres beer next to a small man with a large, and very naughty, spaniel. The man was named Pedro and the dog Kaiser. Pedro and I started to chat while Kaiser made repeated attempts to

run down the steps and out on to the road. Pedro was a lifelong Sintra local: his grandfather had been born in the servants' quarters of the Seteais and grew up to be a gardener there. As a teenager, he used to hop palace fences to smoke spliffs. But there was no hint of bitterness about the upstairs-downstairs nature of life in Sintra. "This is a beautiful town," said Pedro. "Paradise." A friend of his had recently opened a wine-focused restaurant called Diztinto, and Pedro put in a call to save me a table. There I feasted on battered broad beans, cured ham from the Alentejo region and beef stew with pickle juice, all washed down with a velvety avesso, a rare white wine grape almost unknown outside Portugal. I wandered out into the warm, smoky night and ran into the smiling Pedro in front of another bar a few doors down. "Let me buy you a beer," he shouted. I agreed, obviously. Then I bought him one. And at that point, it didn't matter whether I'd seen all the palaces. I'd still made the most of Sintra. The distances may look short but Sintra's terrain is very hilly. Driving is near impossible so use the public 434 bus, which runs in a circuit. It's \$22 for a 24-hour ticket.



Japan awards MEXT Research Scholarships to 11 Pakistani students



Celina Ali
Islamabad: The government of Japan this week awarded eleven outstanding Pakistani students the esteemed MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan) Research Scholarships for the 2025 academic year. These scholarships will enable the students to pursue Master's and Doctoral degrees at leading Japanese universities, fostering academic excellence and strengthening bilateral ties. The MEXT Research Scholarship, a flagship program of the Japanese government, provides fully funded opportunities for graduate/postgraduate studies globally, including Pakistan. Besides the scholarships granted through the Embassy, numerous Pakistani students also secure MEXT scholarships annually through direct applications to

Japanese universities. The Embassy of Japan organized a pre-departure orientation session for the scholarship grantees. The orientation session included detailed briefings on the program, along with invaluable insights and personal experiences shared by Pakistani alumni of Japanese universities. These alumni offered practical advice and guidance to the new scholars embarking on their academic journey in Japan. Following the orientation, AKAMATSU Shuichi, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, hosted an iftar reception at his official residence to honor the members of MEXT Alumni Association of Pakistan (MAAP) as well as to bid farewell to the departing scholarship grantees. In his welcome remarks, Ambassador AKAMATSU congratulated the students on their remarkable achievement and extended best wishes for their studies in Japan's prestigious institutions. He emphasized that the MEXT Research Schol-

arship offers a transformative experience, combining world-class education with the opportunity to immerse themselves in Japanese culture and society. The ambassador expressed his hope that the scholars would return to Pakistan acquired advanced knowledge and enriching experiences, and also contribute to the nation's progress and serve as bridges of friendship between Japan and Pakistan, in collaboration with MAAP alumni. He acknowledged and appreciated MAAP's ongoing efforts in promoting Japanese educational and cultural activities, thereby reinforcing the strong bond between the two countries. Established in 1954, the MEXT Research Scholarship program has benefited numerous Pakistani students since the first recipient traveled to Japan in 1963. These alumni are now making significant contributions to Pakistan's development across

academia, public, and private sectors. The Japanese government continues to offer fully funded undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate scholarships, as well as short-term training programs, to Pakistani students throughout the year.



Acting US Ambassador Natalie Baker, Finance Minister discuss economic cooperation

Celina Ali
Islamabad: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb held a meeting with Ms. Natalie Baker, Charge d' Affaires and Acting US Ambassador to Pakistan, who called on him here this week. The meeting focused on matters of mutual interest, including avenues for enhancing economic cooperation and increasing US investment in Pakistan's priority sectors, according to press release issued by finance ministry. During the discussion, the Finance Minister briefed Ms. Baker on the government's macroeconomic reform agenda, in line with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's vision for structural reforms and export-led economic growth. He highlighted key initiatives being undertaken to improve economic efficiency and ensure sustainable and inclusive growth, including privatization, tax reforms, energy sector restructuring, and right-sizing of the federal government. Ms. Natalie Baker commended Pakistan's economic progress and its commitment to implementing necessary but challenging structural reforms. She acknowledged the country's resilience and the measures taken to strengthen the foundation for long-term economic stability. She reiterated the US Administration's commitment to fostering a strong bilateral relationship with Pakistan, with a particular emphasis on deepening economic cooperation and expanding investment opportunities. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening economic ties and exploring new areas of collaboration to advance shared economic goals.



EU Ambassador Riina Kionka calls on Commerce Minister, discusses business, trade cooperation



European Union ambassador to Pakistan Dr Riina Kionka



Celina Ali
Islamabad: The Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to Pakistan, Dr. Riina Kionka, called on Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan this week to discuss strengthening bilateral trade ties and upcoming business engagements between the EU and Pakistan. During the meeting, Dr. Kionka invited the Commerce Minister to deliver closing remarks at the European Un-

ion-Pakistan Business Forum (EU-PKBF), scheduled in on 14-15 May 2025, in Islamabad. The forum aims to facilitate high-level dialogue, strengthen business partnerships, and unlock trade and investment opportunities between the EU and Pakistan. It will feature investment presentations, B2B and B2G matchmaking sessions, and focus would be on key sectors such as agribusiness, IT, machinery, textiles, pharmaceuticals, and green infrastructure.

Another key highlight of the discussion was the launch of the EU-Pakistan Business Network (EUPBN) in during the Forum. This network, comprising of more than 300 EU companies operating in Pakistan, will serve as a unified voice of European businesses, fostering investment and trade relations.

Minister Jam Kamal Khan welcomed these initiatives and appreciated the EU's role in supporting economic cooperation. He acknowledged that the growing engagement between Pakistan and the EU will create stronger business ties and new investment opportunities.

The EU is Pakistan's second-largest trading partner and primary export destination, accounting for around €12 billion in bilateral trade in 2024. The EU-Pakistan Business Forum will further deepen the long-standing economic and diplomatic partnership between Pakistan and the European Union.



British High Commissioner Jane Marriott holds key meeting with Sanaullah



people ties were discussed to further strengthen relations between the two nations.

Sanaullah emphasized that the Government of Pakistan is committed to deepening cooperation

with the UK across all sectors and will take all necessary measures to achieve this goal.

Celina Ali

Islamabad: Adviser to Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs Rana Sanaullah Khan this week held an important meeting with British High Commissioner Jane Marriott to discuss strengthening economic partnerships, enhancing trade relations, and exploring new avenues of mutual cooperation between Pakistan and the United Kingdom. During the meeting, Sanaullah, who also holds the portfolio of Ministry of Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC) reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to expanding bilateral ties with the UK. The discussion also focused on adopting a joint strategy against terrorism, increasing security cooperation, and taking collaborative measures to ensure regional peace and stability. Both dignitaries agreed on reinforcing intelligence sharing and operational cooperation in counter terrorism efforts. Additionally, cultural exchanges and the promotion of people-to-



"The only way to do great work is to love what you do." - Steve Jobs

"It is never too late to be what you might have been." - George Eliot

Leonardo: Board of Directors approves the new organization with two Deputy General Managements

Covert Report

Rome: The Board of Directors of Leonardo, meeting today under the chairmanship of Stefano Pontecorvo, has approved the new organizational structure of Leonardo, which includes the establishment of two Deputy General Managements. These Deputy General Managements are

respectively dedicated to commercial development and business program coordination, led by Carlo Gualdaroni, and to Strategy, Innovation, and Strategic Alliances, led by Simone Ungaro. The Corporate Bodies & Institutional Affairs Unit is also established, under the leadership of Filippo Maria Grasso, who will be responsible for the integrated man-

agement of the Corporate Bodies of Leonardo S.p.A. and for national and international institutional relations. This new structure replaces the previous one, which included a single Deputy General Management under the responsibility of Lorenzo Mariani, who will take on a new apical role within the Group. The new organization aims to ensure



operational acceleration in line with the evolution of the Industrial Plan launched in March 2025, and a capital allocation policy that is consistent with Leonardo's long-term development. Specifically, the company needs to accelerate both the achievement of results relat-

ed to organic growth, with an increase in the execution capacity of the order backlog, and the establishment of the business in the medium-to-long term (inorganic growth), through a stronger focus on strategic alliances, defining product strategies, and developing digital technologies.

From France comes a call for Trump's America to return Lady Liberty



Newsire

Paris: Hey, America: Give the Statue of Liberty back to France. So says a French politician who is making headlines in his country for suggesting that the U.S. is no longer worthy of the monument, which was a gift from France nearly 140 years ago. Raphaël Glucksmann, as a member of the European Parliament and co-president of a small left-wing party in France, can't claim to speak for all of his compatriots. But his assertion in a speech this weekend that some Americans "have chosen to switch to the side of the tyrants" reflects the broad shockwaves that U.S. President Donald Trump's seismic shifts in foreign and domestic policy are triggering in France and elsewhere in Europe.

"Give us back the Statue of Liberty," Glucksmann told supporters of his Public Place party, who applauded and whistled, on Sunday. "It was our gift to you. But apparently you despise her. So she will be happy here with us," Glucksmann said. The White House brushed back on the comments Monday, saying France instead should still be "grateful" for U.S. support during World War I and World War II. Glucksmann, in turn, then shot back that French gratitude for Americans' wartime sacrifices is "eternal," but added: "If the free world no longer interests your government, then we will take up the torch, here in Europe." "No one, of course, will come and steal the Statue of Liberty," he wrote in X posts. "The statue is yours. But what it embodies belongs to

everyone." UNESCO, the United Nations' cultural arm that has the statue on its list of World Heritage treasures, notes that the iconic monument is U.S. government property. It was initially envisaged as a monumental gesture of French-American friendship to mark the 100th anniversary of the July 4, 1776, Declaration of Independence. But a war that erupted in 1870 between France and German states led by Prussia diverted the energies of the monument's designer, French sculptor Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi. The gift also took time to be funded, with a decision made that the French would pay for the statue and Americans would cover the costs of its pedestal. Transported in 350 pieces from France, the statue was officially unveiled on Oct. 28, 1886. No. French-U.S. relations would have to drop off a cliff before Glucksmann found support from French President Emmanuel Macron's government. For the moment, the French president is treading a fine line — trying to work with Trump and temper some of his policy shifts on the one hand, but also pushing back hard against some White House decisions, notably Trump's tariff hikes. Macron has let his prime minister, François Bayrou, play the role of being a more critical voice. Bayrou tore into the "brutality" that was shown to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during his White House visit and suggested that Trump's administration risked handing victory to Russia when it pushed military aid to Ukraine. Glucksmann's party has been even more critical, posting accusations on its website that Trump is wielding power in an "authoritarian" manner and is "preparing to deliver Ukraine on a silver

platter" to Russia. In his speech, Glucksmann referenced New York poet Emma Lazarus' words about the statue, the "mighty woman with a torch" who promised a home for the "huddled masses yearning to breathe free." "Today, this land is ceasing to be what it was," Glucksmann said. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt was asked Monday about Glucksmann's comments, and responded that the U.S. would "absolutely not" be parting with the landmark in New York Harbor. "My advice to that unnamed low-level French politician would be to remind them that it's only because of the United States of America that the French are not speaking German right now," Leavitt said, apparently referencing the U.S.

fight with Allied powers to free France from Nazi occupation during World War II and alongside France during World War I. "They should be very grateful." But the debt of gratitude runs both ways. Leavitt skipped past France's key role in supporting the future United States during its war for independence from the United Kingdom. In his subsequent follow-up, Glucksmann said that his call for Lady Liberty to travel back across the Atlantic to France had been intended as "a wake-up call." "We all in Europe love this nation to which we know we owe so much," he posted. "It will rise again. You will rise again. We are counting on you."

