

Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad hails Russia-Ukraine accords banning attacks on energy sites, ensuring safe Black Sea navigation **Celina Ali**

Islamabad: Pakistan this week welcomed the diplomatic progress towards settling the “tragic” Russia-Ukraine conflict, highlighting the recent limited agreement prohibiting attacks on energy infrastructure followed by another to ensure safe navigation in the Black Sea, hoping

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EU-Pakistan business forum set to take place in May **Celina Ali**

Islamabad: The inaugural EU-Pakistan Business Forum is set to take place in Islamabad from May 14-15 to enhance economic cooperation, according to a joint announcement by the government and European Union delegation this week. The EU is the largest single market in the world and the largest destination for Pakistani ex-

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Expo to bridge China-Europe cooperation



The expo area will be 30,000 square meters this year and expects to draw 500 exhibitors and more than 50,000 visitors. Daily consumer goods, food and artifacts

will be displayed at the expo, which will also showcase international logistics and transportation equipment and technology, and cross-border e-commerce.

At the same time, more than 10 forums focusing on the development of the China-Europe Railway Express will be held.



Henan Daily

Zhengzhou: The second China-Europe Railway Express (Zhengzhou) Expo will be held in Zhengzhou, Central China's Henan province, from June 28 to 30. Held at the city's Central China International Convention and Exhibition Center, the expo aims to create a platform for cooperation and exchange among countries and cities along the China-Europe Railway route.

Pakistan-Denmark strengthen energy ties: Danish expertise to boost mining, green investments



The Minister extended his full support and offered the government's good offices to facilitate Danish investment and technology transfer in Pakistan's growing mining sector. He further emphasized the government's commitment to creating an investor-friendly environment and invited Danish companies, including FLSmidth, to explore partnerships with Pakistani firms during the Pakistan Minerals

Investment Forum happening on April 8-9, 2025. Ambassador reaffirmed Denmark's support for Pakistan's energy transition and industrial growth. He enlightened that Denmark is looking forward to Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum. FLSmidth will be launching a training program named BRIMM (Bradshaw Research Initiative for Minerals and Mining) under which hundred Pakistani Engineers will be provided training. FLSmidth has already entered into 5 partnership agreements in minerals sector of Pakistan. He noted that Danish companies are eager to share their expertise in green mining solutions, automation, and digitalization to help Pakistan achieve its economic and environmental objectives. Danish shipping company MAERSK has already committed to invest \$2 billion dollars in deep sea port and will be working for ship recycling and ship refueling with green ammonia. The meeting concluded with an agreement to facilitate further engagement between Pakistani stakeholders and Danish technology providers, with FLSmidth playing a pivotal role in advancing modern mining practices in Pakistan.

Celina Ali

Islamabad: Federal Minister for Petroleum, Ali Pervaiz Malik, held a meeting with His Excellency Jakob Linulf, the Ambassador of Denmark to Pakistan, this week at the Petroleum Division. The discussions focused on enhancing bilateral cooperation in the energy sector, with special emphasis on mining sector and technological collaboration. The meeting highlighted the critical role of Danish expertise in Pakistan's mining and mineral development sector. In particular, the contributions of FLSmidth, a global leader in sustainable mining technology and equipment, were recognized for their potential to modernize Pakistan's mining operations. FLSmidth's advanced solutions in cement production, mineral processing, and decarbonization align with Pakistan's goals of increasing efficiency and reducing environmental impact in its extractive industries. Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik expressed Pakistan's keen interest in leveraging Danish technology and investment to optimize resource extraction and processing as the country has significant mineral reserves.

Aseefa Bhutto vows to eliminate TB



Liaquat Ali

Islamabad: First Lady Aseefa Bhutto Zardari this week vowed to eliminate Tuberculosis.

“Today, on World Tuberculosis Day, we stand united in our resolve to eliminate a disease that has claimed far too many lives and continues to impact millions around the world. Tuberculosis is not just a health issue; it is a social justice issue that disproportionately affects our most vulnerable communities,” she said. She added: “Pakistan remains among the countries most burdened by TB, but we are also a nation of resilience and hope. Our government, in partnership with international organizations, healthcare workers, and civil society, is taking bold steps to strengthen our

healthcare system, improve early detection, and ensure access to free, effective treatment for all.” Aseefa said, as First Lady and as someone who has long championed public health initiatives, “I am deeply committed to supporting Pakistan's journey towards ending TB. We must break the stigma surrounding this disease, encourage testing, and stand in solidarity with those affected. No one should suffer in silence when the tools for prevention, treatment, and cure are within our reach.” On this important day, she added: “I call upon every citizen to play their part in raising awareness and supporting those in need. Together, we can fulfill our promise of a healthier, TB-free Pakistan.”

Boao forum sends reassuring message to unstable, uncertain world



Henan Daily

Zhengzhou: As crises flare across global hotspots — from geopolitical conflicts to rising protectionism — a strikingly different scene unfolded in the coastal town of Boao in southern Chinese province of Hainan. Amid the tranquility of the small town, the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) annual conference opened with a timely theme: “Asia in the Changing World: Towards a Shared Future,” offering a rare space for cooperation and dialogue in an increasingly fractured world. “Our world is experiencing far greater instability and uncertainty,” Chinese Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang said at the conference’s opening ceremony on Thursday morning. Ding, also a member of the Standing Committee of the

Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, called for strengthening mutual trust, enhancing win-win cooperation, promoting economic globalization and safeguarding the free trade system. Since Tuesday, when the BFA annual conference began its panels and sub-forums, the world has witnessed a series of escalating crises. U.S. President Donald Trump announced plans to impose 25 percent tariffs on all vehicles and auto parts imported into the United States, a move seen as expanding trade protectionism. In the Middle East, Yemen’s Houthi group launched fresh attacks on a U.S. aircraft carrier in the Red Sea and “military targets” in the Israeli city of Tel Aviv. Meanwhile, in East Asia, deadly

wildfires engulfed parts of the Republic of Korea (ROK), claiming lives and causing damage. Against this backdrop, Boao became more than just a venue for speeches; it became a space for confronting common challenges. Participants delved into issues that transcend borders, from building an open global economy and accelerating modernization in the Global South to addressing the climate crisis, demographic shifts, and the implications of artificial intelligence (AI). Addressing the opening ceremony, Ding said that significant progress has been made in building an Asian community with a shared future over the past decade. He added that regional economic integration has been strengthened, and Asia’s share in the global economy is steadily rising. Highlighting the profound global transformations and the rise of unilateralism and protectionism, BFA Chairman and former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon described the “Asian miracle” as, to a large extent, a product of globalization, free trade, and open regionalism. Asian economic integration, many speakers noted, is gaining momentum, with regional frameworks like the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) serving as a cornerstone for deepening economic ties. The RCEP has emerged as an important anchor for global free trade, said Kuang Xianming, deputy head of the China Institute for Reform and Development, adding that the world’s largest free trade agreement keeps opening up regional markets and advancing regional liberalization. The RCEP includes 10 member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its five free trade agreement partners, namely China, Japan, the ROK, Australia, and New Zealand. Signs of growing cooperation were also seen in a recent high-level economic dialogue between China and Japan, which reached 20 consensus points on collaboration in areas such as green development, environmental protection, and elderly care services, among others. Meanwhile, a BFA report identified China and ASEAN as the most appealing economies in Asia. It noted that the inward and outward foreign direct investment dependence of Asian economies on the region itself reached 49.15 percent in 2023, underscoring the region’s

growing economic interdependence. For many participants, the BFA annual conference was more than just an event for Asia. It served as a reminder that, amid global turbulence, platforms for dialogue and trust-building still exist and still matter. The Global South, whose economies contribute 80 percent to world economic growth, took center stage at the meeting. South-South cooperation today is greener, smarter, and more inclusive, said Xiaojun Grace Wang, Trust Fund Director of UN Office for South-South Cooperation, calling on the Global South nations to seize this era’s opportunities by enhancing collaboration on digital and data-driven solutions for sustainable development. Helena McLeod, deputy director general and head of the Green Growth Planning & Implementation Division at the Global Green Growth Institute, underscored the vital role of legislation in accelerating the global green transition. “The legislative approaches have to be addressed, and that includes the carbon pricing and pollution control policies.” On AI, experts have warned of the risks of unregulated development. “If countries fail to anticipate and manage the risks of AI, they may find themselves inadequately prepared when challenges arise,” said Zeng Yi, a researcher with the Institute of Automation of the Chinese

Academy of Sciences. China’s reform and opening up continue to draw global attention. Since launching the drive in 1978, the country has transformed from an impoverished nation into a market-oriented economic powerhouse, driving high-quality development and creating opportunities shared with the rest of the world. Its GDP grew by 5 percent year on year in 2024, ranking among the world’s fastest-growing major economies while continuing to contribute about 30 percent to global economic growth. China’s resolve to deepen reform and opening up, Ban noted, has bolstered confidence in inclusive globalization and an open world economy, injected fresh impetus into a strong and balanced global recovery, and created new opportunities for international cooperation. “Opening up is a distinct hallmark of Chinese modernization,” Ding said, adding that the country will steadily expand institutional opening up, further improve market access for foreign investors, and expand trials to open sectors such as telecommunications, medical services, and education. “We warmly welcome businesses from all countries to invest and operate in China, participate in the process of Chinese modernization, and share in China’s development opportunities,” he added.



German Ambassador visits Tarbela Hydropower extensions, praises progress

Gwadar Pro

Islamabad: German Ambassador to Pakistan, Alfred Grannas, and Counselor Dr. Sebastian Paust visited the Tarbela 4th and 5th Extension Hydropower Projects on March 24. These significant infrastructure developments were constructed by PowerChina. During their visit, they received a comprehensive briefing on the project's progress and the broader contributions of the Chinese company to Pakistan's energy sector. Ambassador Grannas and Dr. Paust praised PowerChina for its exceptional work on the Tarbela 4th Extension Hydropower Project, emphasizing the company's commitment from the initial construction phases to the successful start of power generation.

They emphasized the project's significance in strengthening Pakistan's energy infrastructure and expressed optimism for future collaboration between Chinese and German enterprises in the country. They noted that such partnerships could further support Pakistan's sustainable economic growth by combining expertise in engineering, renewable energy, and infrastructure development. The Tarbela 4th and 5th Extension Hydropower Projects are vital to Pakistan's efforts to increase its electricity generation capacity. The 4th Extension (T4HP) adds 1,410 megawatts (MW), while the 5th Extension (T5HP) contributes an additional 1,530 MW. Upon full completion, these expansions will raise the total installed capacity of the Tarbela Dam from 4,888 MW to 6,418 MW, significantly enhancing the national grid and assisting in meeting the country's growing energy demands.

Beyond power generation, the Tarbela Dam plays a multifaceted role in Pakistan's development. As the world's largest earth-filled dam, it supports irrigated agriculture, provides essential water storage, and mitigates flood risks. The additional capacity from the fourth and fifth extensions will not only enhance energy reliability but also strengthen the dam's role in sustaining agricultural productivity and economic stability. The visit highlighted the potential for enhanced international cooperation in Pakistan's infrastructure sector, with Ambassador Grannas reaffirming Germany's commitment to collaborative initiatives that promote sustainable development.



Xi meets Bangladeshi interim government's chief adviser

Henan Daily

Beijing: President Xi Jinping met with Bangladeshi interim government's Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus in Beijing this week. Noting that the peoples of the two countries have a long-standing history of friendly exchanges, Xi said the two sides have always supported each other and treated each other as equals for win-win cooperation since the establishment of diplomatic ties. China maintains a high degree of stability and continuity in its good neighbor and friendly policy toward Bangladesh, and continues to be a trustworthy neighbor, friend and partner of Bangladesh, Xi added. This year marks the 50th anniversary of China-Bangladesh diplomatic ties, and 2025 is also the year of people-to-people exchanges between the two countries, Xi said, while expressing the willingness to work with Bangladesh to push China-Bangladesh cooperation to a new level and bring more benefits to the two peoples.



Pakistan, Italy to boost energy sector collaboration



Italian Ambassador to Pakistan,
Marilina Armellini



this week. The discussions focused on energy exploration, technology transfer, and investment prospects. During the meeting, the minister highlighted Pakistan's commitment to fostering international partnerships to address energy challenges and drive economic growth. He acknowledged Italy's expertise in the sector and invited Italian energy firms to participate in the upcoming Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum (PMIF'25). The Italian envoy reaffirmed her country's interest in supporting Pakistan's energy sector, emphasizing the need for strong partnerships to promote



Celina Ali Islamabad: Pakistan and Italy have expressed optimism over the potential for joint ventures in the energy sector, particularly in oil and gas, as both sides explored opportunities for enhanced cooperation, the Petroleum Division said in a statement. This was discussed during a meeting between newly-appointed Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik and Italian Ambassador to Pakistan Marilina Armellini



Italy's ambassador to Pakistan
Marilina Armenlin



innovation and sustainability in energy production. Both sides agreed to explore

further avenues of cooperation to advance their respective energy industries.

Listen to the BRI story told by Nepal's Basantapur Tower



Ding Gang

The morning sun illuminates the intricate stone bricks of Durbar Square, bringing the exquisite stone carvings on the 18th-century palace walls to life.

My fingers gently touch the newly restored wooden doors, their surface warm and vivid — as if they had just awakened from a masterful surgery. The carved patterns tell a story: the meeting of ancient Nepali woodcarving craftsmanship with the new restoration technology from China — flexible steel cables that invisibly reinforce the structure of this ancient building as it recovers from the devastating earthquake.

The nine-story Basantapur Tower is not just a building;

it's Nepal's cultural DNA. This mid-18th-century pagoda-style structure suffered extensive damage in the 2015 earthquake.

Today, as I look up at the 30-meter-tall temple supported by several thousand meticulously restored wooden components, I am witnessing a miracle stitched together by two civilizations.

In Nepal's search for funding and technology to repair this ancient structure after the earthquake, the answer came from across the Himalayas.

In 2017, China's National Cultural Heritage Administration sent a team that resembled a tech startup more than traditional restorers. They brought laser scanners, high-

tech structural analysis software, and a philosophy: "Don't just fix the surface, strengthen the bones."

The most revolutionary intervention went unseen: flexible steel tendons running through hollowed-out pillars enabled the structure to sway safely during an earthquake.

Western narratives often simplify the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a program focused on ports, railroads and pipelines. But here, in this UNESCO World Heritage Site, I saw a different currency of influence. The restoration cost pales compared to the value of knowledge transfer: Nepali restorers were trained in seismic retrofitting and 3D modeling through workshops conducted in both Chinese and Nepali.

Chinese and Nepali workers were not simply restoring old buildings, they were preserving the essence of an ancient civilization. They worked to capture the smell of sandalwood during the monsoon rains and the precise angle of sunlight touching the fifth-floor goddess during the winter solstice.

This dance between tradition and innovation, fostered by the BRI, offers a robust response to those who seek to attack the BRI and stoke fears of the so-called China threat. It is a powerful demonstration of the transformative power of cultural exchange,

showing that it is no longer just an extension of roads or the expansion of power grids — it is the resonance that cultural exchanges create. If such exchanges can cross the Himalayas, they can transcend far greater distances, enlightening us all.

A key aspect of China's heritage conservation work under its 14th Five-Year Plan is technological innovation. This is not merely a technical export but an effort to advance the protection of humanity's shared cultural heritage. More Chinese heritage workers are venturing abroad, bringing China's advanced techniques to the world, while more international conservationists are coming to China to learn its preservation principles and



methods.

International cooperation in cultural heritage has consistently been highlighted in key meetings between heads of state and in multilateral and bilateral agreements. The international governance capabilities in the cultural heritage field are constantly strengthening, achieving institutional power within all international organizations related to cultural heritage and achieving full coverage of senior positions. Cultural exchanges and cooperation with countries along the "Belt and Road" are also on the rise, with dozens of foreign aid projects for cultural heritage protection forming an expanding network in neighboring countries.

Heritage conservation has become a bridge connecting China with Belt and Road countries and the world, deepening mutual understanding and emotional connections.

This may be the untold story of the BRI: it is not about China reshaping the world but rather about China using its accumulated expertise and experience to articulate the importance of cultural exchange.

As the morning winds of the Himalayas carry the

metallic whispers of temple bells, I recall a profound insight: "Civilizations become enriched through exchanges and thrive through mutual learning."

In an era when hegemonic forces increasingly fracture geopolitics, cultural preservation offers a vital communication bridge. It reminds us that a nation's soft power is not about domination; rather, it is about ensuring that a Nepali child a hundred years from now can experience the same feeling when touching the sun-warmed wood I touched today and marvel at how two nations once inscribed hope into the grain of that wood.

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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 disagreements, 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.

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Australia-Pakistan ties poised to grow, says High Commissioner Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri



Covert Report
Canberra: Pakistan’s High Commissioner to Australia, H.E. Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri, has highlighted the steady evolution of Australia-Pakistan relations since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1947. Speaking on the subject recently, he emphasized that the relationship, once primarily shaped by Commonwealth ties and Cold War-era cooperation, has since expanded to encompass trade, education, defense, and counterterrorism. “Australia and Pakistan share a history of diplomatic engagement that has deepened over time, evolving into a multifaceted partnership based on mutual

interests in regional security, economic growth, and people-to-people connections,” Chaudhri stated. He noted that while Australia’s early engagement with South Asia was limited, both nations have since found common ground in fostering economic cooperation and security collaboration. Education has also emerged as a vital pillar of the relationship, with thousands of Pakistani students choosing Australia for higher education each year. Looking ahead, Chaudhri expressed optimism about the future of bilateral ties but acknowledged the need to navigate regional complexities. “As Australia redefines its role in the Indo-Pacific and Pakistan continues to position itself strategically within South Asia, both countries must work together to address shared challenges such as climate change, economic development, and regional stability,” he said. He also stressed the importance of expand-

ing cultural and educational exchanges to strengthen people-to-people ties, which remain a cornerstone of the relationship. High Commissioner Chaudhri reaffirmed Pakistan’s commitment to deepening its partnership with Australia. “The potential for a stronger and more resilient relationship between our nations remains immense. With sustained engagement and mutual understanding, we can build a future that benefits both our countries and our people.” H.E. Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri is a seasoned diplomat currently serving as Pakistan’s High Commissioner to Australia, with concurrent accreditation to Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Nauru. He has held several prominent positions, including Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Additional Foreign Secretary for the Asia Pacific, and diplomatic postings in Washington D.C., London, and Paris. He is an alumnus of American University, University College London, and the National Defense University in Washington D.C.

Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad hails Russia-Ukraine accords banning attacks on energy sites, ensuring safe Black Sea navigation



Celina Ali
Islamabad: Pakistan this week welcomed the diplomatic progress towards settling the “tragic” Russia-Ukraine conflict, highlighting the recent limited agreement prohibiting attacks on energy infrastructure followed by another to ensure safe navigation in the Black Sea, hoping the parties

would honour their commitments. “We appreciate the United States and its leadership’s active engagement, also involving the Russian and Ukrainian leadership, in bringing this to fruition,” Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, permanent representative-designate of Pakistan to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council.

“We remain optimistic that this new dynamic and the momentum generated by these initial steps would eventually lead to a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire,” he said during a debate on the humanitarian situation in war-shattered Ukraine. The Pakistani envoy also commended the role of Saudi Arabia and its leadership in facilitating

dialogue for promoting peace. Earlier, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also welcomed the diplomatic progress, saying his good offices remain available to support all efforts towards a lasting peace in Ukraine. In his remarks, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad reiterated Pakistan’s position on the Ukraine conflict, saying Islamabad has enjoyed friendly relations with both the parties, advocating dialogue and diplomacy, cessation of hostilities and peaceful resolution of this conflict. “We believe that the security concerns, which remain at the center of this conflict, can only be addressed through an inclusive approach, which in turn would ensure the sustainability and durability of peace in the wider region.” Voicing deep concern over the humanitarian situation, the Pakistani envoy said that the conflict, now in its fourth year, has caused immense human suffering and massive damage to infrastructure, economy, and society that has had vast consequences for the global economy, particularly for the developing countries. “Every human life matters, and is not merely a number.” Pakistan’s position on these as other conflicts, he said, was based on adherence to the principles of the UN Charter, self-determination for peoples, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of states and non-acquisition of territory by the threat or use of force. “Consistent with the Charter, states must also implement international agreements and abide

by their respective obligations , and respond to the legitimate security interests of all states.” The ambassador pointed out that the protection of civilians and infrastructure was an obligation under international law and international humanitarian law, urging full and consistent adherence to these principles by all parties. In this regard, he underscored the need for ensuring access and protection for humanitarian workers in conflict zones, and said the Third Geneva Convention, which governs the treatment of prisoners of war (POWs), was binding on all parties. Opening the debate, a senior UN official warned that continuing daily attacks and humanitarian aid cuts were hitting Ukrainian civilians hard. Since March 1, there has not been a single day in Ukraine without an attack in which civilians were harmed, Joyce Msuya, deputy head of the UN humanitarian affairs office, told the Council. “This, and the severe global funding cuts for humanitarian operations, including for Ukraine, is further reducing our capacity to provide life-saving aid,” she said. The UN humanitarian programme for Ukraine this year calls for \$2.6 billion in aid, but it is only 17 percent funded so far. “Recent funding cuts have led to a reprioritization of Ukraine response efforts,” said Msuya, expressing concern in particular about women and girls.

Kazakhstan explores new trade opportunities with Pakistan

Abdullah Jan
Islamabad: Kazakhstan aims to boost exports and diversify its economy while addressing challenges in raw material exports. Kazakhstan has been actively developing its trade relations since gaining independence, with Italy, China, and Russia currently leading as its main trading partners. Experts are now discussing the potential for Kazakh goods to reach new markets, including Pakistan. The country’s strategic location in the center of Eurasia positions it as a crucial hub for international trade, appealing to both Western and Eastern partners. This historical significance is underscored by Kazakhstan’s role along the ancient Silk Road, which facilitated the exchange of goods like silk, spices, and precious metals, as well as knowledge and cultural traditions. Today, efforts are underway to establish a “New Silk Road,” which includes constructing highways to connect Kazakhstan with neighboring countries, opening new border crossings, and renovating existing ones. This initiative is part of Kazakhstan’s active participation in global supply chains, which not only boosts economic growth but also fortifies international relations. Rich in natural resources, Kazakhstan is a significant player in the raw materials market. According to official statistics from 2024, the country exports crude oil, petroleum products,

copper, and copper concentrates, while primarily importing consumer goods, food, household appliances, and electronics. The Ministry of Trade and Integration (MTI) has highlighted the potential for Kazakhstan to export high-value-added goods. Kairat Torebaev, the future Vice Minister of Trade and Integration, emphasized the importance of increasing the added value of products within Kazakhstan. “New export products are primarily related to deeper processing of the goods we have in Kazakhstan. We have a strong interest in added value within Kazakhstan—this includes metals, their extraction, processing, and subsequent export,” he stated. The MTI aims to achieve \$41 billion in exports of processed products by the end of 2025. Alongside this, the ministry is working to open new sales markets, with Pakistan being a focal point. “Geographically, it seems close, but there’s Afghanistan in between. Therefore, we are working closely with the Afghan government. Each year, Deputy Prime Minister Serik Zhumangarin travels there, and we invite them here. We are exploring both their market and that of Pakistan. Essentially, it’s two markets in one bottle. Everything produced in Kazakhstan, particularly in agriculture, is supplied there,” the spokesperson explained. Deputy of the Mazhilis, Aidarbek Khodzhanazarov, argues that Kazakhstan must first determine

what it can sell before deciding where to sell it. “Today, we export everything we can. However, the issue is that we mainly export raw materials. We need to consider adding value and pro-

cessing. We must start processing in our key sectors—subsoil use, processing of solid minerals, oil, gas, and, of course, agricultural products. I believe these three areas, given to us by

nature, have not yet been fully tapped. We need to move towards deeper processing in these areas, as these products are in demand,” he asserted.



PPP's Umar Rehman Malik hails Sindh govt-Google collaboration for 30,000 digital skills scholarships



Artificial Intelligence (AI), Cybersecurity, IT Automation, Digital Marketing, and Project Management. “By offering over 30,000 scholarships, we are not just investing in education; we are investing in the future of our youth and the economic prosperity of our province,” he said. The initiative reflects PPP’s longstanding commitment to education and technology. Under previous PPP-led governments, Sindh became the first province to introduce free WiFi zones in major cities, establish IT parks, and integrate coding into the school curriculum. This latest program continues the party’s push to make Sindh a leader in digital innovation. Developed by Google experts, the Career Certificates program offers flexible online learning, allowing students to gain industry-recognized credentials within three to six months. CM Shah highlighted real

pleting the Google AI Essentials course. Kyle Gardener, Government Affairs and Public Policy Lead at Google, emphasized the significance of the initiative, stating, “Google is committed to equipping individuals with the digital skills necessary to thrive in today’s economy. This partnership will unlock new career opportunities and drive economic growth in Sindh.” The 2025 program also prioritizes inclusivity, ensuring that at least 30% of participants are female and expanding outreach to marginalized communities. Two new specializations—Prompting Essentials and Agile Essentials—have been introduced, alongside the existing nine courses. The Soft Skills and Career Kamyabi Sindh Programme will continue to help students develop professional skills such as CV writing, interview techniques, and communication, enhancing their employability.



Abdullah Jan
Islamabad: Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) leader Umar Rehman Malik this week lauded the Sindh government’s initiative to offer 30,000 scholarships for Google Career Certificates in partnership with Google and Tech Valley. Calling it a “game-changing step toward digital transformation,” Malik emphasized that the initiative aligns with PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari’s vision of equipping youth with in-demand digital skills to drive economic growth. This initiative builds on the success of the 2024 Google Career Certificates Sindh Programme, which saw 1,500 students from 10 universities achieve a 100% success rate. Encouraged by these results, the Sindh government has expanded the program, offering scholarships to students from 30 public sector universities across the province. A high-level meeting at CM House, chaired by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, earlier formalized the initiative with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The meeting was attended by Education Minister Syed Sardar Shah, key government officials, university vice-chancellors, and

Tech Valley Pakistan CEO Umar Farooq. CM Murad Ali Shah stated that the program aims to equip students with expertise in high-demand fields, including

success stories from last year’s program, including Leena Kumari from the University of Sindh, Jamshoro, who secured a project internship at Evolution after com-



Education Minister Sardar Shah applauded the initiative, stating, “Tech Valley is not only imparting skills but shaping futures, creating a talent pool that will drive Sindh’s digital economy forward.” With strong government-industry

collaboration, the program is set to redefine digital education in Sindh, empowering students to compete in the global digital economy and contribute to the province’s socio-economic progress.



GERMANY AND BULGARIA

COVERT7

German industry seeks fresh start in challenging times

Nadine Mena Michollek

Berlin: More than 4,000 exhibitors are expected to showcase their innovations at what is billed as the world's largest industrial trade fair, with visitors from approximately 150 countries expected.

As in previous years, the fair is a must on the calendar especially of small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) from Germany and elsewhere, who are aiming to present their latest innovations — with the main focus this year being on robotics, mechanical engineering, power-train technology, and energy production.

Held in difficult economic times, the fair in the capital of the German regional state of Lower Saxony wants to "promote optimism," says Jochen Köckler, CEO of the fair organizers, Deutsche Messe AG.

"We want to provide a platform where politics and business can exchange ideas to discuss the framework conditions necessary for success," he told DW, with the main thrust being on building "trust in investments" and, above all, to "convey a sense of optimism."

This year's so-called partner country at the fair is Canada. Although the decision was made two years ago, the title has come to be particularly timely given the North American's fierce trade spat with the US administration of Donald Trump.

A closeup picture of Jochen Klöckner as he speaks at the fair's opening news conference. A closeup picture of Jochen Klöckner as he speaks at the fair's opening news conference.

Hanover fair chief Jochen Klöckner thinks the trade fair

comes just at the right time. Image: Julian Stratenschulte/dpa/picture alliance

Just recently, Washington has imposed higher import duties on Canadian goods in a trade war that is also affecting the European Union.

"Given the geopolitical tensions, we are especially pleased that a country like Canada is the partner country this year," Wolfgang Weber, CEO of the German Electrical and Digital Industry Association (ZVEI), told DW.

Speaking with DW, Thilo Brodtmann, managing director of the German Mechanical Engineering Industry Association (VDMA), shares the view, saying Canada's trade fair partnership is a valuable opportunity.

"We hope that the CETA free trade agreement [between Canada and the EU] ... along with the partnership at the Hanover fair, will further intensify trade between the EU and Canada. Since Canada has not been treated well by Mr. Trump, they will likely look for other markets," said Brodtmann.

The VDMA official described current EU-Canada ties as a "door wide open" that both sides now have the chance to "walk through."

Hanover fair also takes place at a time of political change, with the leadership of both Canada and Germany currently in limbo.

In previous years, government leaders the likes of former German Chancellor Angela Merkel or ex-US President Barack Obama used to open the fair during visits.



This year, however, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has been voted out of office recently and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has resigned. Their likely successors have not yet been officially inaugurated.

Olaf Scholz visiting the stand of Siemens at Hanover fair 2024, and examining an industrial robot

Outgoing German Chancellor Scholz (second right) will open Hanover fair for the last time as his likely successor isn't inaugurated yet

Image: Ronny Hartmann/AFP/Getty Images

After all, for the captains of industry gathered in Hanover, the presence of politicians seems to be the least they are focussing their attention on. What's currently ranking supreme in their minds is certainly the German parliament's recent decision to scrap constitutional limits to fresh government borrowing which is set to free up a whopping €500 billion (\$541 billion) in special funds for infrastructure investments.

VDMA chief Brodtmann is now expecting a "massive wave of orders," for which the trade fair is exactly the right venue to make first deals. "The fair can provide a boost, and we are confident that something will end up

in our wallets, meaning our order books."

ZVEI Chief Wolfgang Weber particularly welcomes the fact that climate protection is a high priority in the investment package — a precondition set by Germany's Greens party in exchange for allowing the package pass through parliament.

And so, the next government, likely led by conservative leader Friedrich Merz, will have to spent €100 billion of the extra funding on reaching Germany's ambitious climate goals.

"I think it's truly important for Germany to show the world with the investment that climate protection and economic viability can be brought together," Weber said.

While Germany is currently on track of meeting its climate goals, the country's economy has been thrown completely out of balance. At the end of the outgoing government coalition — comprising the environmentalist Greens, the liberal Free Democrats, and the leftist Social Democrats — Europe's biggest economy is heading into a third year of recession in a row.

Hanover fair chief Jochen Köckler, however, warns against pessimism saying that Germany has to be "careful not to undersell ourselves" because of the bad

economic news. "The message should be that [the reputation of] 'Made in Germany' is very strong, and we won't back down from global competition," he said.

Köckler even sees historical parallels to 1947, the year when Hannover Messe was established as a company and brand.

With World War II just over for two years at the time, the British occupying forces aimed to stimulate the German economy by showcasing the potential of German entrepreneurs and workers to the world. The plan worked, resulting in export contracts worth nearly \$32 million (€29.5 million) in that year.

Therefore, ZVEI's Weber thinks that while the German industry may be struggling at the moment, its technological leadership remains largely intact. "We have integrated automation and digitization into industrial production, significantly advancing efficiency."

The hottest topic at this year's trade fair, however, is the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in industry, says Köckler. But making AI a central theme for the fair isn't windowdressing "just for the sake of it," he noted.

"Visitors come to the fair to find technologies that will keep them competitive back home."

Archaeologists discover 1,700-year-old Roman settlement in Bulgaria


Linked to Emperor

Newswire

Sofia: An unexpected discovery emerged during preparatory work for the installation of a natural gas pipeline near the village of Borimechkovo in the Pazardzhik region of Bulgaria. Workers uncovered the remains of a Late Roman period settlement covering an area of 4,400 square meters, according to Enikos.

Archaeologists swiftly stepped in and found a site teeming with fragments of pottery, coins, and other artifacts dating back over 1,500 years, including architectural structures that shed light on life in this region during the Late Roman period.

The excavation uncovered two buildings with walls constructed



from mud bricks mixed with medium-sized stones, some showing evidence of mud mortar. One of these structures was approximately nine meters long and included at least three rooms, while the other consisted of two sections, according to Popular Mechanics.

Portugal, the new hotspot for hotel investment



ket fundamentals and sustained tourism demand.

Italy has overtaken the UK for second place, benefiting from a diversified hospitality sector and the rise of new international hotel groups. Portugal and the UK share the third position, while France and Greece hold fourth and fifth places, respectively. London continues to be the most attractive city for hotel investment, followed by Madrid and Rome, which climbed from fourth to third place. Lisbon and Barcelona complete the top five, marking a significant milestone for the Portuguese capital. According to the same survey, urban properties remain the top investment choice, with 65% of surveyed investors favoring central business districts and

major gateway cities due to their long-term demand from both business and leisure travelers. Secondary cities are also gaining interest, with 12% of investors viewing them as the most attractive opportunities, bolstered by improved infrastructure and shifting travel patterns. “The ongoing imbalance between supply and demand across Europe remains a key driver for the sector,” noted Kenneth Hatton, CBRE’s head of European hotels. “We are seeing strong bids from buyers seeking prime assets, reflected in last year’s hotel investment volume, which surged by 34% compared to 2023—the highest annual growth of any sector in the region.”

Ronald Chan, CBRE’s European Hotels Research Lead, added, “Europe was the most visited region worldwide last year,



offering a diverse range of destinations from vibrant urban centers to idyllic coastal towns. The luxury subsegment, in particular, has seen impressive growth in average daily rates, and there are still opportunities for those looking to enter the market.”

Newswire

Lisbon: Portugal has been reported as the third most attractive country for hotel investment in Europe, according to a survey made in 2025 by real estate consultants CBRE.

Above Portugal ranks just Spain and Italy.

The survey shows that Portugal has seen significant growth in its appeal to hotel investors, with Lisbon, the country’s capital, in particular being a hotspot.

Lisbon surged to fourth place on the list of Europe’s most attractive cities for hotel investment, a remarkable jump from not being listed at all in 2024. This change reflects the city’s increased competitiveness and growing appeal to investors.

“The Portuguese hotel sector has established itself as one of the most dynamic in Europe, driven by resilient tourism and an increasingly more sophisticated market. Portugal’s four-place rise in the ranking demonstrates the country’s recognized strength and potential for sustainable growth,” said Duarte Morais Santos, director of hotels at CBRE Portugal. Despite geopolitical concerns being a major challenge for investment in 2025, confidence in the European hotel market remains high, with over 90% of investors planning to either maintain or increase their capital allocations to the sector. For the second consecutive year, Spain remains the top destination for hotel investment in Europe. Spain is supported by strong mar-



In a first, Pakistan begins exporting cars to Japan



Aamir H. Shirazi, Chairman of Honda Atlas Cars (Pakistan) Ltd., commended the government's efforts in fostering a business-friendly environment and emphasized the vital role of the automotive sector in economic development. Meanwhile, Takafumi Koike, President & CEO of HACPL, highlighted Honda's global legacy, its commitment to innovation, and its industry-leading technological advancements. Following the ribbon-cutting, a tree plantation activity was held within the facility premises, symbolizing Honda's commitment to environmental sustainability. The ceremony concluded with a shared vision to enhance Pakistan's exports and economic prosperity. The event was attended by key government officials, esteemed industry stakeholders, media representatives, and prominent members of HACPL, marking a historic step in Pakistan's automotive sector and reinforcing the country's standing in the global market.



Celina Ali

Islamabad: Honda Atlas Pakistan has made history by initiating exports of completely built cars to Japan, marking a significant milestone for Pakistan's automotive industry. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Industries & Production Division, Haroon Akhtar Khan, this week participated as the chief guest in a ribbon-cutting ceremony marking the official commencement of Honda Atlas Cars (Pakistan) Limited (HACPL)'s export journey. The ceremony took place at HACPL's state-of-the-art manufacturing facility. During his visit to the plant, Haroon Akhtar Khan lauded Honda's advanced production facility, strong

regulatory compliance, and unwavering commitment to quality. He acknowledged Honda's legacy and its contributions to Pakistan's automotive industry, particularly in local manufacturing, exports, and industrial growth. He further appreciated Honda's initiative in export operations, recognizing it as a crucial step in alignment with government policies aimed at boosting economic growth. In a significant milestone for the company, HACPL successfully dispatched its inaugural batch of 40 Honda CITY 1.2L units to Japan, reinforcing its position as a key player in the international automotive market.



Pakistan says will hold counter-terrorism dialogue with US in June



Celina Ali

Islamabad: Islamabad and Washington will hold a counter-terrorism dialogue in June this year, a statement from Pakistan's interior ministry said this week amid efforts by both countries to forge closer ties and cooperation to battle militancy. Pakistan and the US have a history of cooperation in counterterrorism efforts,

particularly during the "War on Terror" following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. Despite periods of strained relations, Pakistan has captured and handed over several Taliban and Al-Qaeda members to US authorities.

Acting US Ambassador Natalie Baker called on Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi in Islamabad, the interior ministry said. Both sides discussed Paki-

stan-US relations, matters of mutual interest and bilateral cooperation, it said.

"Both sides also discussed to enhance mutual cooperation in the field of counter-terrorism efforts," the ministry said. "It was agreed to hold a counter-terrorism dialogue in June this year."

Earlier this month, US President Donald Trump acknowledged Pakistan for helping America arrest a senior Daesh operative implicated in the 2021 Kabul airport bombing that killed 13 US service members.

Baker strongly condemned the recent "terrorist attack" involving the Jaffar Express train, in which 31 people were killed this month after militants stormed it in southwestern Balochistan province earlier this month.

Hundreds of passengers were held hostage before the military rescued them after a day-long standoff.

Naqvi urged the global community to work together to combat "terrorism," describing it as an interna-

tional issue, the ministry said.

"He further said that the Government of Pakistan is taking strong action against terrorists and a comprehensive policy is being formulated related to counter-terrorism," the statement said.

Thanking Trump for acknowledging Pakistan's help in battling "terrorism," Naqvi said Islamabad would extend "full cooper-

ation" in the repatriation of illegal Pakistani immigrants residing in the United States.

The meeting between the two sides took place amid a surge in militant attacks in Pakistan's western provinces bordering Afghanistan, especially Balochistan, where ethnic Baloch militants have long carried out attacks targeting law enforcers.



EU-Pakistan business forum set to take place in May



Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan, Dr Riina Kionka



Celina Ali
Islamabad: The inaugural EU-Pakistan Business Forum is set to take place in Islamabad from May 14-15 to enhance economic cooperation,

according to a joint announcement by the government and European Union delegation this week. The EU is the largest single market in the world

and the largest destination for Pakistani exports. The EU is also the world's largest foreign investor representing 42 per cent of outward foreign direct investment globally.

Earlier this month, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed Pakistan's desire to further strengthen its cooperative partnership with the EU and welcomed the convening of the business

forum.
"With a rapidly growing market of over 240 million people, competitive labour costs, strategic geographical access to Central and South Asia and a preferential trade access to the EU, Pakistan offers immense business opportunities," the joint statement read.
The forum will bring together high-level policy makers — including the prime minister, ministers for finance and commerce — business leaders and CEOs from Pakistan and Europe, financial institutions such as the European Investment Bank, investors and other key stakeholders.
During the two day forum, Pakistan's potential, innovation and best practices in key sectors (including agribusiness, energy and renewables, green logistics, pharmaceuticals, IT and textiles) will be showcased.
EU Ambassador Dr Riina Kionka said, "European companies are recognising Pakistan as a potential business destination. This forum serves as a vital platform to strengthen collaboration between European and Pakistani businesses, deepens bilateral trade, and explores new avenues for economic partnership.
"It also is an opportunity for Pakistan to benefit from the opportunities of Global Gateway".
Besides dedicated Business-to-Business and Business-to-Government meetings, engaging discussions, dedicated exhibitions, the forum will also mark the launch of the EU-Pakistan Business Network — which will group together the 300 plus European companies active in Pakistan.
"The forum marks a crucial step in reinforcing the economic ties between Pakistan and the EU in the spirit of 'Stronger Together', paving the way for enhanced collaboration and mutual prosperity," the statement read.



High Commissioner Jane Marriott pledges continued healthcare support



Celina Ali
Islamabad: British High Commissioner Jane Marriott this week reaffirmed the United Kingdom's commitment to supporting Pakistan in achieving its healthcare goals. During a meeting with national health services minister Mustafa Kamal here, Marriott said her country would continue collaborating with Pakistan for the advancement of healthcare services in the country. The minister thanked the British government for continued support in family planning, polio, surveillance and provision of integrated health services, especially for mother and child health, and other healthcare programmes. He said Pakistan was committed to strengthening those programmes. The minister said the government was working

to enhance healthcare services, especially in underserved areas. He emphasised the role of digital health in enhancing access to health services by using telemedicine, electronic medical record and one patient one ID concept. "Modern technology will be leveraged to improve healthcare access across the country," he said. The minister said the government would ensure doctors and essential medicines are available on people's doorsteps. He reaffirmed Pakistan's dedication to eradicating polio and announced the launch of a nationwide Hepatitis C elimination programme, following the successful completion of a pilot project in Gilgit-Baltistan.



“If you are working on something that you really care about, you don’t have to be pushed. The vision pulls you.” —Steve Jobs

Eighty percent of success is showing up
Woody Allen

Italy curbs citizenship rules to end tenuous descendant claims

Covert Report

Rome: Italy's government tightened its citizenship laws this week, preventing people from delving deep back into their family history to try to claim a much sought-after Italian passport. Under existing rules, anyone who can prove they had an Italian ancestor who was alive after March 17, 1861, when the Kingdom of Italy was created, can seek citizenship. However, Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said the system was being abused, with would-be Italians swamping consulates abroad for requests for passports, which provide visa-free entry to more countries than almost any other nationality.

As a result, in future only individuals with at least one parent or grandparent born in Italy, a European Union member state, will automatically qualify for citizenship by descent. "Being an Italian citizen is a serious thing. It's not a game to get a passport that allows you to go shopping in Miami," Tajani told a press conference. The foreign ministry said there had been a surge in people abroad being granted citizenship, particularly in South America, where millions of Italians emigrated in the 19th and 20th centuries, often to escape grinding poverty back home. Between 2014 and 2024, the number of Italians





living abroad rose by 40%, from 4.6 million to 6.4 million, many registering thanks to their newfound nationality. In Argentina alone, citizenship recognitions jumped to 30,000 in 2024 from 20,000 in 2023, while Brazil saw a rise to 20,000 from 14,000. Tajani said companies were making a fortune by helping people track down their long-forgotten ancestors and seek birth certificates needed for applications - clogging up municipal offices with their demands for documentation.

"We are striking down very hard against those who want to make money from the opportunity of becoming an Italian citizen," Tajani said, adding that in future, nationality requests would be handled directly in Rome to free up overburdened consulates. Italy has a population of around 59 million, which has been shrinking for the past decade. The foreign ministry has estimated that under the old rules, 60 to 80 million people worldwide were eligible for citizenship.

Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has previously suggested that Italy could overcome its demographic decline by seeking Christians of Italian ancestry from nations like Venezuela. Critics of ancestry-based citizenship say it is grossly unfair, offering nationality to people who had no meaningful connection with Italy. By contrast, the children of migrants born and raised in Italy who speak Italian fluently, have to wait until they are 18 before being able to apply for a passport.

France announces \$2 billion military aid package for Ukraine



Newswire

Paris: France will provide Ukraine with a new military aid package worth 2 billion euros (\$2.1 billion), President Emmanuel Macron announced on March 26 at a press conference with his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Paris. "We must continue to provide immediate support to Ukraine — it is necessary in order to keep up the resistance," Macron said after announcing the aid. The package includes anti-tank missiles, air defense systems, Mirage fighter jet missiles, armored vehicles, ammunition, and other aid, Macron said. The assistance will also provide for the production of equipment in Ukraine. "Our goal is to help Ukraine firstly to hold the situation on the front line, to resist (Russian) aggression, but at the same time to bring closer the prospects for a lasting peace that we all want

to see," the French president said. The two leaders met ahead of a "coalition of the willing" summit. The Paris summit on March 27 will bring together Germany, Poland, the U.K., and other coalition members who have pledged to support Ukraine's post-war security. Over 30 countries have expressed willingness to contribute to the coalition's peacekeeping force, Starmer's spokesperson said on March 17, confirming that the initiative has entered an "operational phase." According to Macron, the nations are expected to discuss further military aid for Ukraine, maintaining and monitoring any ceasefire, "the future model of the Ukrainian army," and "forces that will ensure guarantees." Ukraine agreed to a U.S.-proposed full 30-day ceasefire, saying on March 11 that Kyiv is ready to take such a step if Russia also agrees to the terms. So far, Russia has refused from an unconditional ceasefire.

