



Denmark's King Frederik X and Queen Mary wait prior to welcome attendees during a reception dinner, in Paris



Police buses are parked to make walls on the road as part of precautions for an eventuality near the Constitutional Court in Seoul, South Korea



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer leaves 10 Downing Street to attend the weekly session of Prime Minister's Questions in parliament, London



Assyrian revellers dressed in traditional clothing attend 'Akutu,' the Assyrian New Year celebrations, in Dohuk, Iraq

allovertheworld



Ronald McDonald and Ellie the Elephant attend the 48th Annual McDonald's All-American Games with halftime performance from GloRilla at Barclays Center in New York

Nigerian president sacks board of state oil company

LAGOS: President Bola Tinubu dismissed the entire leadership of Nigeria's state-run oil company Wednesday, naming a former Shell executive to lead the outfit in a sweeping overhaul that one commentator described as "long overdue." The National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Limited's group chief executive, Mele Kyari, as well as its chairman Pius Akinyelure - a close ally of Tinubu - were among those ousted. Kyari was immediately replaced by Bayo Ojulari, a former managing director of Shell Nigeria Exploration and Production Company (SNEPCO), a subsidiary of the multinational oil giant. "The board's restructuring is crucial for enhancing operational efficiency, restoring investor confidence, boosting local content, driving economic growth and advancing gas commercialisation and diversification," Tinubu's media adviser, Bayo Onanuga, said in a statement.

Greece to spend 25 bn euros in defence overhaul: PM

ATHENS: Greece will spend 25 billion euros (\$27 billion) through to 2036 in the "most drastic" defence overhaul in its modern history, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said on Wednesday. "The plan involves the most drastic transformation of the armed forces in the country's modern history," Mitsotakis told parliament. "The world is changing at an unforeseeable pace," he said. The drive, which includes a new anti-aircraft defensive dome, is aimed at addressing rapidly changing geopolitical challenges and fraying transatlantic ties, Mitsotakis said. Greece has traditionally invested at least two percent of gross domestic product in its defence - NATO's spending target - owing to decades of tension with regional rivals Turkey. But the new initiative is also designed to make the country of under 11 million "a key branch" of the European Union's defence mechanism, contributing one of the bloc's "most advanced" armies, Mitsotakis said.

UK drawing up new action plan to tackle rising TB

LONDON: Britain on Wednesday urged health experts and sufferers of tuberculosis (TB) to come forward to help draw up a new five-year action plan as it deals with record rises in the disease. In 2023, England recorded its largest annual increase (11 percent) in cases since enhanced surveillance began in 2000. Provisional figures for 2024 indicate a further 13-percent annual rise to 5,480 cases, reflecting a similar global trend. The government is in the preliminary stages of preparing its new National Action Plan (2026-2031), which aims to improve the prevention, detection and control of TB in England. It called for academic, health and social care professionals, public health experts, data scientists and those with lived experience of tuberculosis to share their insights. "TB is curable and preventable, but the disease remains a serious public health issue in England," said Esther Robinson, head of the TB unit at the Health Security Agency (UKHSA).

Germany takes down major child sex abuse images platform

BERLIN: German investigators said Wednesday that they had dismantled a major platform for the distribution of child sex abuse images with 1.8 million users worldwide in an international operation coordinated by Europol. The move to shut down the "KidFlix" streaming service was "one of the biggest blows against child pornography in recent years, if not ever," said Guido Limmer, deputy head of the Bavarian criminal police. The investigation was led by German police and supported by authorities in 38 countries under the coordination of Europol. In all, "KidFlix" is said to have hosted more than 91,000 videos with images of child sex abuse, totalling around 6,288 hours of film, according to Bavarian police.

Trump to announce 'reciprocal' tariffs, sparking global trade tensions

AP, WASHINGTON: After weeks of White House hype and public anxiety, President Donald Trump is set on Wednesday to announce a barrage of self-described reciprocal tariffs on friend and foe alike.

The new tariffs, coming on what Trump has called "Liberation Day," are a bid to boost US manufacturing and punish other countries for what he says are years of unfair trade practices. But by most economists' assessments, the move threatens to plunge the economy into a downturn and upend decades-old alliances. The White House is exuding confidence despite the political and financial gamble.

"April 2, 2025, will go down as one of the most important days in modern American history," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Tuesday. She said the new tariffs would take effect immediately.

Details of Trump's tar-

iff plans were unclear hours before the president's scheduled afternoon speech. The S&P 500 stock index sold off slightly in morning trading as investors hope to have more certainty about his agenda.

The tariffs are expected to follow similar recent announcements of 25 per cent taxes on auto imports; levies against China, Canada and Mexico; and expanded trade penalties on steel and aluminum.

Trump has also imposed tariffs on countries that import oil from Venezuela and he plans separate import taxes on pharmaceutical drugs, lumber, copper and computer chips.

None of the warning signs about a falling stock market or consumer sentiment turning morose has caused the administration to publicly second-guess its strategy.

White House trade adviser Peter Navarro has suggested the new tariffs

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would raise USD 600 billion annually, which would be the largest tax increase since World War II.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told lawmakers the tariffs would be capped and could be negotiated downward by other countries, according to the office of Rep. Kevin Hern, R-Okla.

Importers would likely pass along some of the cost of the taxes on to consumers. The Budget Lab at Yale University estimates that a 20 per cent universal tar-

iff would cost the average household an additional USD 3,400 to USD 4,200.

The Republican administration's premise is that manufacturers will quickly increase domestic production and create factory jobs.

Based on the possibility of broad 20 per cent tariffs that have been floated by some White House aides, most analyses see an economy tarnished by higher prices and stagnation.

US economic growth, as measured by gross do-

Russian drone strikes on Ukraine kill one, wound 10

AFP, KHARKIV: Russian drone strikes killed at least one person and wounded 10 in the eastern Ukrainian regions of Zaporizhzhia and Kharkiv, officials said on Wednesday.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russia was intentionally attacking Ukrainian energy infrastructure and called on allies to mount pressure on Moscow to halt its invasion.

He said there had been "another round of deliberate strikes and damage to energy facilities" in the eastern Sumy region and the central city of

Nikopol, adding that the strikes had cut power to thousands of people.

Russia and Ukraine have stepped up aerial attacks even as US President Donald Trump pushes the Kremlin and Kyiv to agree to a ceasefire after more than three years of costly fighting.

A 45-year-old man was killed when a Russian strike hit cars parked outside a house in Zaporizhzhia, the head of the Ukrainian region's military administration Ivan Federov said on Telegram.

Two other people -- a 44-year-old man and a

39-year-old woman -- were wounded.

In Kharkiv, several people were wounded in drone strikes, mayor Igor Terekhov said.

An AFP reporter saw firefighters hosing down smoke from a building in Kharkiv, where a blaze was raging and black smoke billowed from windows.

Zelensky said Russia had launched 74 drones in total at targets across Ukraine.

Russia also said that Ukraine had fired twice on its energy sites in the Kursk border region overnight.

SpiceJet, Air India Express get approval to operate flights from airport

PTI, KATHMANDU: Two Indian airlines have been allowed to operate regular flights to and from Nepal, according to the Himalayan nation's civil aviation authority.

SpiceJet, which had regular flights to Nepal before the COVID-19 pandemic, and Air India Express, making its debut in the country, have received scheduled approval and slots from Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA), according to Hansa Raj Pandey, spokesperson at the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN).

SpiceJet, which mainly flew from Delhi to Kathmandu before its hiatus, will operate daily flights, while Air India Express has received approval for two

flights per day.

Currently, Air India and Indigo conduct flights between Nepal and India. With the addition of SpiceJet and Air India Express, there will be four Indian airlines operating regular flights between the two countries.

Meanwhile, maintenance work on the taxiway at TIA, which previously required flight suspensions, continued its service without halting flights starting April 1. The airport started operating for 18 hours daily, from 6 am to midnight, from Tuesday, according to Pandey.

Since the third week of October, the airport has been operating for 14 hours daily to allow maintenance work.

Israel's operations in Gaza expand to seize 'large areas', Palestinians say dozens killed

AP, JERUSALEM: Israel's military operation in the Gaza Strip is expanding to seize "large areas," the defence minister said, while officials at hospitals inside the Palestinian territory said that Israeli strikes overnight and into Wednesday had killed more than 40 people, nearly a dozen of them children.

Israel's offensive in the Palestinian territory was "expanding to crush and clean the area" of militants and "seizing large areas that will be added to the security zones of the State of Israel," Defence Minister Israel Katz said in a written statement.

The Israeli government has long maintained a buffer zone just inside Gaza along its security fence and has greatly expanded since the war began in 2023. Is-



Smoke billows on the horizon east of the Bureij camp for Palestinian refugees in the central Gaza Strip following Israeli bombardment

rael says the buffer zone is needed for its security, while Palestinians view it as a land grab that further shrinks the narrow coastal territory, home to around 2 million people.

Katz didn't specify which

areas of Gaza would be seized in the expanded operation, which he said includes the "extensive evacuation" of the population from fighting areas. His statement came after Israel ordered the full evacuation

of the southern city of Rafah and nearby areas.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said Israel aims to maintain an open-ended but unspecified security control of the Gaza Strip once it achieves its aim of crushing Hamas.

The minister called on Gaza residents to "expel Hamas and return all hostages". The militant group still holds 59 captives, of whom 24 are believed to still be alive, after most of the rest were released in ceasefire agreements or other deals.

The Hostage Families Forum, which represents most captives' families, said that it was "horrified to wake up this morning to the Defence Minister's announcement about expanding military operations in Gaza".

China concludes high-intensity military drills around Taiwan

PTI, BEIJING: China concluded its two-day high-intensity military drills around Taiwan on Wednesday, saying that it completed all designated tasks of the joint exercises.

The Strait Thunder-2025A drills in the central and southern Taiwan Strait focused on blockade enforcement of the estranged island. China claims Taiwan as part of its mainland.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Eastern Theatre Command has successfully completed all designated tasks of the

joint exercises carried out on Tuesday and Wednesday, a spokesperson for the theatre command, Senior Colonel Shi Yi, was quoted as saying by the state-run Xinhua news agency.

The drills tested the troops' integrated joint operation capabilities, Shi said, adding that the troops of the theatre command remain on high alert at all times and will continue to strengthen combat readiness with intensive training to resolutely thwart all separatist activities seeking "Taiwan independence."

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