



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz (L) & EU Prez Ursula Von der Leyen at press conference at the EU Headquarters in Brussels



US Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent looks on as he attends a meeting to discuss trade relations and tariffs, in Geneva



Oxen are presented with a tray of various choices of food by Thai officials during a royal plowing ceremony in Bangkok, Thailand



Britain's King Charles III and Queen Camilla attend a concert to mark the 80th Anniversary of V-E Day at Horse Guards

allovertheworld



Lainey Wilson accepts the award for female artist of the year during the 60th annual Academy of Country Music Awards, in Frisco, Texas

Five dead, two missing in Colombia landslide, rescue team on site

BOGOTÁ: At least five people were killed and two are missing after a landslide near Colombia's second-largest city Medellin on Thursday, local authorities said. Rescue teams were deployed to Sabaneta municipality, south of Medellin, where heavy rains caused landslides and flooding, Antioquia department governor Andres Julian Rendon said on X. Videos shared on social media appeared to show several homes buried in the region. The mayor's office said it had set up shelters for victims while rescue efforts are ongoing. "Geologists, engineers, social professionals are on site, and (heavy) machinery has been activated to remove material," said the department's disaster relief agency. Antioquia is often affected by landslides during the rainy season.

Six killed out of 12 on board in Sri Lanka helicopter crash: Military

COLOMBO: A Sri Lankan Air Force helicopter crashed on Friday, killing six of the 12 people on board, the military said. The personnel were taking part in a demonstration flight and preparing for a rope jump when their Bell 212 plunged into a lake at Maduru Oya, east of capital Colombo, a military official told AFP. They had been due to perform a "fast-roping" manoeuvre during a graduation ceremony of Special Forces commandos, showcasing their skills at descending from the helicopter while it hovered above roof height. "There were 12 people on board, and six of them survived with minor injuries," the official said, saying those killed included four commandos and two Air Force gunners.

African charity admits abuses against locals at Congo park

JOHANNESBURG: A major African conservation charity has acknowledged its rangers were involved in rights violations reportedly including rape and torture against indigenous people at a national park in the Republic of Congo. African Parks, which has Prince Harry on its governing board and receives EU and US funding, said an independent investigation had confirmed allegations of abuses at its Odzala-Kokoua National Park in northern Congo. "African Parks acknowledges that, in some incidents, human rights abuses have occurred, and we deeply regret the pain and suffering that these have caused to the victims," the Johannesburg-headquartered organisation said Thursday.

Building collapse kills nine in Moroccan city of Fez

RABAT: Nine people were killed and seven injured when a condemned residential building in the northern Moroccan city of Fez collapsed, local authorities said on Friday. Some of those hurt were "seriously injured when a multi-storey residential building in the Al-Hassani district" came down late Thursday, a spokesperson told AFP. A search was under way for any other casualties. The spokesperson said neighbouring houses have been evacuated as a precaution. The building "had already been listed as being at risk of collapsing, and tenants had received an evacuation order", authorities said. In February last year, five people died in a building collapse in Fez's old town.

Two men found guilty of chopping down iconic UK tree

LONDON: An English court found two men guilty on Friday of the "deliberate and mindless" felling of one of the UK's most iconic trees, an incident that sparked national outrage. A jury at Newcastle Crown Court found former friends Daniel Graham, 39, and Adam Carruthers, 32, guilty of criminal damage for the 2023 felling of the tree at Sycamore Gap. It had stood for nearly 200 years next to Hadrian's Wall, a UNESCO World Heritage site in northern England. The tree was so striking it featured in the 1991 Hollywood film "Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves".

Former presidential aide jailed in Chad for corruption

N'DJAMENA: Chadian President Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno's former chief of staff was on Friday sentenced to five years in prison for corruption at a court in N'Djamena. Businessman About Hachim Boudier brought a case in January against Idriss Youssouf Boy, accusing him of extorting nearly nine billion CFA francs (about \$15 million) over two years.

Pentagon orders removal of 1,000 transgender troops from military

AP, WASHINGTON: The Pentagon will immediately begin moving as many as 1,000 openly identifying transgender service members out of the military and give others 30 days to self-identify under a new directive issued Thursday.

Buoyed by Tuesday's Supreme Court decision allowing the Trump administration to enforce a ban on transgender individuals in the military, the Defence Department will begin going through medical records to identify others who haven't come forward. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, who issued the latest memo, made his views clear after the court's decision.

"No More Trans @ DoD," Hegseth wrote in a post on X. Earlier in the day, before the court acted, Hegseth said that his department is leaving wokeness and



Pentagon will give other trans service members 30 days to self-identify while it enforces recently approved ban

weakness behind.

"No more pronouns," he told a special operations forces conference in Tampa. "No more dudes in dresses. We're done with that s---."

Department officials have said it's difficult to determine exactly how many transgender service members there are, but medical records will show those

who have been diagnosed with gender dysphoria, who show symptoms or are being treated.

Those troops would then be involuntarily forced out of the service. And no one with that diagnosis will be allowed to enlist. Gender dysphoria occurs when a person's biological sex does not match up with their

Leo XIV's brother recalls feeling of 'disbelief' over his sibling becoming pope

PTI, NEW PTI: When white smoke poured out of the Sistine Chapel revealing that a new pope had been chosen, John Prevost turned on his television in Illinois, called his niece and they watched in awe as his brother's name was announced.

She started screaming because it was her uncle and I was in the moment of disbelief that this cannot be possible because it's too far from what we thought would happen," Prevost said Thursday in an interview with The Associated Press from his home in New Lenox, Illinois.

Next, he said he felt an intense sense of pride that his brother, Cardinal Robert Prevost, had become the 267th pontiff to lead the

POPE LEO XIV TO BE FORMALLY INSTALLED ON MAY 18 SAYS VATICAN

AP, VATICAN CITY: The Vatican says Pope Leo XIV will be formally installed as pope at a Mass on May 18 and will preside over his first general audience May 21. The Vatican on Friday provided a schedule of Leo's upcoming agenda. It includes meetings with cardinals, Vatican officials, the media, diplomatic corps and the general public. The Vatican also said that Leo had asked all heads of Vatican offices, who technically lost their jobs with the death of Pope Francis, to return to work until further notice. It said he wanted to take time for "reflection, prayer and dialogue" before taking any further decisions on confirming them definitively. (AP) SCY

Catholic Church, making the Chicago-born missionary the first US pope.

It's quite an honour; it's quite a once in a lifetime," he said. But I think it's quite a responsibility and I think it's going to lead to bigger and better things, but I

think people are going to watch him very closely to see what he's doing.

Robert Prevost, a 69-year-old member of the Augustinian religious order who spent his career ministering in Peru, took the name Leo XIV.

Victory Day parade in Russia celebrates 80th anniversary of defeat of Nazi Germany



Participants with portraits of their relatives - WWII soldiers - take part in the "Immortal Regiment" march to mark the 80th anniversary of the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany in World War Two (WWII), in Saint Petersburg

AP, MOSCOW: Russia on Friday celebrated the 80th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II, as President Vladimir Putin presided over a massive parade of tanks, missiles and troops through Red Square and welcomed over two dozen world leaders - the most since Moscow sent troops

into Ukraine. Victory Day, which Russia marks on May 9, is the country's most important secular holiday. The parade and other festivities underline Moscow's efforts to project its global power and cement the alliances it has forged while seeking a counterbalance to the West amid the conflict in Ukraine that is grinding through a



Russian President Vladimir Putin and foreign leaders, including Chinese President Xi Jinping, attend a ceremony to lay flowers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier by the Kremlin wall in central Moscow

fourth year.

Friday's parade was the largest since Russia sent troops into Ukraine in 2022 and drew the most global leaders to Moscow in a decade, including high-profile guests like Chinese President Xi Jinping, who sat next to Putin, and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. Their attendance

underscored how Putin has tried to emphasise the failure of the West to turn Russia into a global pariah. "It's again showing that Russia is not isolated, that Russia is seen as a very legitimate victorious nation that is among victors in World War II," said Alexander Gabuev, director of Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center.

Trump floats cutting China tariffs to 80% ahead of trade talks

AP, WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump on Friday floated cutting tariffs on China from 145 per cent to 80 per cent ahead of a weekend meeting among top US and Chinese trade officials as he looks to deescalate the trade war between the world's two largest economies. Top US officials are set to meet with a high-level Chinese delegation in Switzerland in the first major talks between the nations since Trump sparked a trade war with stiff tariffs on imports.

"80 per cent Tariff on China seems right! Up to Scott B," Trump wrote on his social media account on Friday morning, referring to Scott Bessent, his Treasury chief, who has been a point person on trade. The Republican president also called on China to open its markets to the US, writing: "WOULD BE SO GOOD FOR

THEM!!! CLOSED MARKETS DON'T WORK ANYMORE!!!"

Bessent and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer will meet Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng in Geneva in the most-senior known conversations between the two countries in months, according to announcements this week by the Trump administration and the Chinese commerce ministry. It comes amid growing US market worry over the impact of the tariffs on the prices and supply of consumer goods.

No country has been hit harder by Trump's trade war than China, the world's biggest exporter and second largest economy. When Trump announced his "Liberation Day" tariffs on April 2, China retaliated with tariffs of its own, a move that Trump viewed as demonstrating a lack of respect.

UNITED THEY STAND



Protesters hold placards and a banner during a demonstration organised by education unions, calling for reforms and salary increases in Zagreb, Croatia

US, Iran to hold new nuclear talks on eve of Trump travel

AFP, WASHINGTON: The United States and Iran will hold a new round of nuclear talks Sunday in Oman, officials said, just ahead of a visit to the region by President Donald Trump.

Trump, who will visit three other Gulf Arab monarchies next week, has voiced hope for reaching a deal with Tehran to avert an Israeli military strike on Iran's nuclear program that could ignite a wider war.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said that Oman, which has been mediating, had proposed Sunday as the date and both sides had accepted.

"Negotiations are moving ahead and naturally, the more we advance, the more consultations we have, and the more time the delegations need to examine the

issues," he said in a video carried by Iranian media.

"But what's important is that we are moving forward so that we gradually get into the details," Araghchi said.

Steve Witkoff, Trump's friend who has served as his globe-trotting negotiator, will take part in the talks, the fourth since Trump returned to the White House, according to a source familiar with arrangements. "As in the past, we expect both direct and indirect discussions," the person said on condition of anonymity.

Iranian and US representatives voiced optimism after the previous talks that took place in Oman and Rome, saying there was a friendly atmosphere despite the two countries' four decades of enmity.

US, Swiss agree to speed up tariff talks

AFP, GENEVA: Switzerland and the United States agreed Friday to speed up negotiations towards a deal on averting further tariffs planned by Washington, the Swiss president said after talks with top US officials.

As part of US President Donald Trump's global tariffs offensive unleashed on April 2, his administration has threatened to impose a 31 per cent levy on Swiss exports to the United States.

Measles roars back in the US, topping 1,000 cases

AFP, WASHINGTON: The United States' measles outbreak has surpassed 1,000 confirmed cases with three deaths so far, state and local data showed Friday, marking a stark resurgence of a vaccine-preventable disease that the nation once declared eliminated.

The surge comes as Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. continues to undermine confidence in the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine -- a highly effective shot he has falsely claimed is dangerous and contains fetal debris. An AFP tally showed

there have been at least 1,012 cases since the start of the year, with Texas accounting for more than 70 per cent.

A vaccine-skeptical Mennonite Christian community straddling the Texas-New Mexico border has been hit particularly hard.

A federal database maintained by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has lagged behind state and county reporting, as the globally renowned health agency faces deep workforce and budget cuts under President Donald Trump's ad-

ministration. North Dakota is the latest state to report an outbreak, with nine cases so far. Around 180 school students have been forced to quarantine at home, according to the North Dakota Monitor.

"This is a virus that's the most contagious infectious disease of mankind and it's now spreading like wildfire," Paul Offit, a pediatrician and vaccine expert at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia told AFP.

He warned the true case count could be far higher, as people shy away from

seeking medical attention. "Those three deaths equal the total number of deaths from measles in the last 25 years in this country."

The fatalities so far include two young girls in Texas and an adult in New Mexico, all unvaccinated -- making it the deadliest US measles outbreak in decades.

It is also the highest number of cases since 2019, when outbreaks in Orthodox Jewish communities in New York and New Jersey resulted in 1,274 infections but no deaths.

Nationwide immunization rates have been drop-

ping in the United States, fueled by misinformation about vaccines, particularly in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The CDC recommends a 95 per cent vaccination rate to maintain herd immunity.

However, measles vaccine coverage among kindergartners has dropped from 95.2 per cent in the 2019-2020 school year to 92.7 per cent in 2023-2024.

Measles is a highly contagious respiratory virus spread through droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes or simply breathes.