Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and His Algerian Counterpart Ahmed Attaf in a Telephone Conversation Underlined the Need to Halt the Brutal Attacks by the Zionist Regime on the Gaza Strip

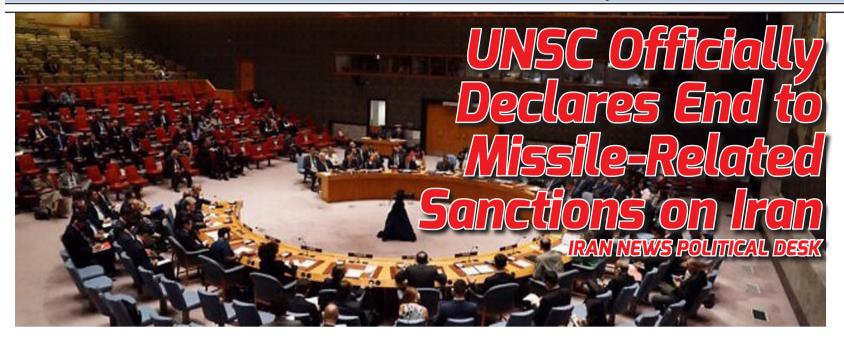


Iran's Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Bagheri Stressed the Need for All Regional Countries to Prevent the Dispatch of Arms and Other Equipment From the U.S. Bases in the Region to the Occupied Lands

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TEHRAN - The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has officially declared an end to restrictions it had imposed on Iran's missile program, according to the organization's secretariat. In a note sent to the member states of the UN, the secretariat of the UNSC officially ended curbs set out in paragraphs 3, 4, and 6 (c) and (d) of Annex B to Resolution 2231. The termination came into force on October 18, eight years after the 2015 Iran nuclear deal with major world powers, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The restrictions included curbs on ballistic missile-related activities and transfers, as well as sanctions on some Iranian individuals and entities. Rosemary A. DiCarlo, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, also confirmed the termination in a separate letter to Iran's permanent ambassador to the United Nations, Amir Saeid Iravani."As a consequence,... the Secretariat removed

on 19 October 2023 from the Security Councilwebsite the list of 23 individuals and 61 entities subject to the aforementioned restrictive measures," DiCarlo said in the letter. The changes were also made to the UNSC Consolidated List of all sanctioned people and entities. The termination, which means Iran is no longer subject to any UN sanctions, occurred despite extensive political and legal efforts made by the United States and Western countries in recent years to lay the ground for keeping the measures in place. On the same day the UN sanctions expired, the United States imposed new unilateral sanctions against Iran's missile program. Last month, the three European signatories to the JCPOA -- the UK, Germany, and France -- said they plan not to terminate their anti-Iran sanctions, including ballistic missile bans, arguing that Iran has been in non-compliance with the deal

# UNSC Rejection of Gaza Resolution Double Oppression Against Palestinians

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Pesident Ebrahim Raisi says the US veto of a UN Security Council resolution calling for a pause in Israel's attacks and crimes against the people of Gaza is "double oppression" against the Palestinians and humanity. The ongoing events against the oppressed people of Palestine in Gaza belie West's claims about advocating civilization, freedom and human rights, Raisi said on Thursday while addressing a meeting in Tehran to honor great achievements of the country's health sector. The president described the incidents in Gaza as heart-wrenching, which aroused anger and hatred of people across the globe towards the US and the Israeli regime. Pointing to injustices practiced by the global arrogant system, Raisi said the US blocked a United Nations Security Council draft resolution calling for a humanitarian pause in the crimes perpetrated against the oppressed people of Gaza who have been either forced to flee their houses or their houses have been razed to the ground as a result of Israel's airstrikes. The US on Wednesday vetoed the resolution that had been drafted by Brazil and had sought to broker aid access to Gaza amid the incessant Israeli airstrikes and shelling against people in the tiny strip of land. Representatives of 12 countries in the 15-member UNSC voted in favor of the resolution while Britain and Russia abstained. A UNSC resolution needs the approval of all five veto-wielding members of the body, including the US, to pass. Besides, for the resolution to pass, no permanent member should cast a veto. The Iranian president emphasized that the US, Israel and their supporters are committing genocide and crimes against humanity in Gaza. We believe that the blood of the oppressed Palestinian martyrs will definitely shatter the current world order and will establish a just system in the world." Raisi stated. He noted that nations in the Muslim world and across the globe are currently witnessing heinous crimes by arrogant powers against the oppressed Palestinian people in Gaza. He said nations across the globe are enraged by the current unjust world order, describing the ongoing oppression against women and children in Gaza as a testimony of it. The UNSC resolution vetoed by the U.S. on Wednesday had called for the cancelation of an order for civilians in northern Gaza to evacuate to south of the coastal sliver in anticipation of major ground offensive by Israel.



# Kandovan Named As One of World Tourism Villages

By: F. Taherpoor

KANDOVAN - Concurrent with announcing Kandovan as one of the world tourism villages, a ceremony was held in Kandovan village in East Azarbaijan of Iran in the presence of officials of cultural hertitage, tourism and handicrafts ministry as well as provincial officials. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) announced its list of Best Tourism Villages 2023. The accolade recognizes villages that are leading in nurturing rural areas and preserving landscapes, cultural diversity, local values, and culinary traditions. In this third edition 54 villages from all regions were selected from almost 260 applications. A further 20 villages have joined the Upgrade Programme, and all 74 villages are now part of the UNWTO Best Tourism Villages Network. The villages were named during the UNWTO General Assembly, taking place this week in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.Kandovan village in the town of Osku of East Azarbaijan was one of the winners of the awards in this event in Samarkand while people and officials in Kandovan village burst into joy in a ceremony for celebrating this historic award as Kandovan is Iran's first ever villages winning this award. Iran had sent docu of eight villages to the UNWTO for the recognition and Kandovan achieved this success. Addressing to the ceremony in Kandovan village, Director-General of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts in East Azarbaijan Mr. Ahmad Hamzehzadeh welcomed the guests in the event like deputy minister of cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts Ms. Maryam Jalali and thanked all people who had a role in achieving such success and winning the world tourism village award. He also congratulated Iranians for this achievement and reiterated this will be a good step for social development in the area and now Kandovan village can play a great role in tourism of the province and the country. He added that so far some 60,000 foreign tourists and more than one million Iranians have visited Kandovan village. Then Deputy Minister Ms. Jalali congratulated the participants and the nation for this achievement and praised the integration and coordination among all people involved in the success and hailed the people of the province for their hospitability. He said Kandovan is now the first Iranian village recognized by the UNWTO and expressed hope more villages are recognized by the UNWTO. Kandovan is an ancient village in Sahand Rural District in the Central District of Osku County, East Azerbaijan Province, northwesternIran. It is situated in the foothills of Mount Sahand, near the city of Osku with some 50,000 population. The village exemplifies manmade cliff dwellings which are still inhabited. The troglodyte homes, excavated inside volcanic rocks.



# Regional Situation Resembles "Powder Keg" Ready to Explode

TEHRAN - Iran's foreign minister has likened the current situation in West Asia to a "powder keg" ready to explode, expressing hope for an end to Israel's war crimes against the Palestinians in the fully besieged Gaza Strip. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks on Thursday before leaving the Saudi port city of Jeddah, where he attended an emergency meeting of the Executive Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on the bloody Israeli bombardment of Gaza. He said all the foreign ministers who participated in the session agreed on the immediate cessation of the regime's war crimes. The top diplomats, he said, were also seriously concerned about the spillover of the war, something that seems inevitable and may happen at any hour. "The circumstances in the region resemble a powder keg with the possibility of being exploded or getting out of control. We hope to see an end to war crimes against the people of Gaza as soon as possible," Amir-Abdollahian said. The Iranian foreign minister also noted that in talks with his counterparts on the sidelines of the OIC meeting he had censured US President Joe Biden for his visit to the region in support of the criminal and warmongering side. "In the bilateral meetings, there was serious criticism of US President Biden; first of all, because a hospital in Gaza has

been targeted by Zionist bombs and more than a thousand civilians, patients and medical staff have been martyred, but Biden visits the region in support of the warmonger and secondly, as put by one of the foreign ministers, 'Biden came and a dinosaur gave birth to a fly' - where with all boasts of Democrats about human rights and humanitarian issues, he announced that they had arranged for 20 trucks of humanitarian aid to enter Gaza in the coming days," Amir-Abdollahian said.Amir-Abdollahian said, "I would like to announce out loud that time is running out and if the warmongers think that they can remove the resistance and Hamas from Gaza, they are definitely bluffing. "They used to make such a claim years ago about removing and disarming Hezbollah in Lebanon, but the world has witnessed that Hezbollah is in its strongest condition and position." Referring to the Israeli carmage. Amir-Abdol-

lahian said the occupiers along with the White House have made a "ridiculous claim" by blaming the attack on the Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement. "The US cannot whitewash [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu's image despite standing behind him to attribute this rare crime against Gaza patients to the resistance," Iran's foreign minister stated. In his address to the OIC meeting, the Iranian foreign minister had underlined the need for political and economic sanctions against Israel and the trial of the regime's leaders for crimes against humanity.

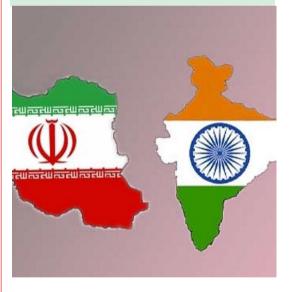


# Tehran, Beijing Mayors Discuss Scientific, Cultural Cooperation



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Mayors of Tehran and Beijing have explored ways for the enhancement of scientific and cultural cooperation between the two cities. The two mayors met on the sideline of the Belt and Road Forum in Beijing. Speaking during the meeting, Tehran Mayor Alireza Zakani referred to nine years of sisterhood between Tehran and Beijing and said, "The current level of relations between the two cities and the level of ties need to expand and the two capitals can be the drivers of their countries on the path of development." Beijing Mayor Yin Yong said in the meeting that Iran has a special position in the Silk Road and can play a key role in the Belt and Road Initiative. He also said that Beijing has prepared the way for further cooperation between the two countries in civil management, trade and economic relations, and cultural exchanges. He said that one of the examples of cooperation in urban management is the issue of smartification and that the Beijing Municipality is ready to expand cooperation in this field.

# Iran Non-Oil Exports to India Hit \$1.1b in H1



TEHRAN- Iran exported non-oil commodities valued at \$1.1 billion to India during the first six months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22), the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced. According to Mohammad ezvanifar, India was the fifth top export destination of Iranian non-oil goods in the mentioned six-month period. According to the data previously released by the Indian Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the value of Iran's exports to India increased nine percent in the first seven months of 2023, as compared to the same period of time in 2022. The Indian ministry put the worth of Iran's exports to India at \$393 million in January-August 2023, while the figure was \$361 million in the same time span of 2022, IRIB reported. Petroleum products, raw materials for dye production, and various fruits were the top exported goods to India in the first seven months of 2023. India imported \$156 million of petroleum products, \$105 million of raw materials for the production of dyes, and \$70 million of fruits from Iran during this period. As reported, the two countries' trade dropped 27 percent to \$1.171 billion in the first seven months of this year from \$1.604 billion in the same period of the past year. The decrease in trade between Iran and India in the first half of 2023 was caused by the drop in the country's exports to Iran. India's exports to Iran in the mentioned seven months experienced a 37 percent drop and reached \$778 million. In the January-August of last year, India exported \$1.243 billion of goods to Iran.Rice had the largest share in India's export basket to Iran in the first seven months of this year, accounting for \$539 million of the country's total exports to Iran in this period. Fruits with \$30 million and tea with \$18 million were the second and third top exported goods to Iran, respectively.Based on the data previously released by the Indian Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the value of Iran's exports to India increased by 60 percent in 2022 as compared to the preceding year.The Indian ministry put the worth of Iran's exports to India at \$653 million in 2022, while the figure was \$409 million in 2021.As reported, petroleum products were the major goods imported by India from Iran in the said months. According to the mentioned data, the value of trade between Iran and India reached \$2.5 billion in 2022, rising 48 percent from \$1.693 billion in 2021.During January-December 2022, India's exports to Iran also increased by 44 percent to stand at \$1.847 billion, while the figure was \$1.284 billion in 2021. Rice was India's major product exported to Iran in the said period during which the country shipped \$1.098 billion worth of rice to the

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ceremony to mark the Independence Day in presence of diplomats, distinguished guests and deputy agriculture minister of Iran Dr. Hooshang Mohammadi. Kazakhstan Ambassador Mr. Askhat Orazbay hosted the reception marking the Independence Day of his country and celebrated the day with the Kazakh nationals in Tehran and the distinguished guests. Addressing the ceremony, Mr. Orazbay briefed the participants in the event with achievements and progresses of Kazakhstan since its independence. He said, "During short period by historical standards, our country has passed a long and hard way of establishing its statehood. At the beginning of independence, Kazakhstan started implementing reforms aimed at transforming from a Soviet type planned economy to a modern free market economy. Modernization and economic growth were the main priorities."He went on to say that facts convincingly speak about Kazakhstan's success in state-building and conducting economic reforms. The ambassador further noted that as a result, Kazakhstan has become a leading country in the Central Asian region, adding that Kazakhstan is a country with a rich historical and cultural heritage as the country is located in the heart of Eurasia, at the crossroads of the world's oldest civilizations, connecting the East

with the West, where traditional Islamic values harmoniously coexist with the western values. Orazbay went on to say that despite being the world's 9th largest country by territory and having the longest land borders, Kazakhstan at the outset of its independence has managed to fully complete the legal process of delimitation and demarcation of its borders with all neighboring countries including Russia and China. He reiterated that Kazakhstan has any territorial with all of its neighboring countries and because of its multivectoral foreign policy, Kazakhstan has no any single enemy country in the world. He stated that Kazakhstan has established positive, constructive and friendly relations with all the states including USA, European Union, China,

upon on Kazakhstan ties with Iran and said cooperation with Iran is comprehensively, examples of which are the official visit of the President of Kazakhstan to Iran last year, the visit of the Prime Minister this spring, as well as the official visit of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ibrahim Raisi to Kazakhstan expected in the near future. He stressed that these will certainly give a new impetus to further development of bilateral cooperation. Then Deputy Agriculture Minister of Iran Mr. Mohammadi congratulated the day and touched upon significance of ties with neighboring



# **Private King** Charged With Desertion Over Dash Into North Korea

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The U.S. Army has charged Private Travis King with crimes ranging from desertion for running into North Korea in July to assault against fellow soldiers and solicitation of child pornography, according to documents obtained by Reuters. The Army's case against King, which has not been previously reported, includes eight distinct charges under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, setting up a substantial legal battle for the 23-year-old soldier after his release from North Korean custody in September. The Army did not immediately respond to a reques for comment. In a statement provided by a family spokesperson, King's mother, Claudine Gates, expressed her unconditional love and asked that her son "be afforded the presumption of innocence." "The man I raised, the man I dropped off at boot camp, the man who spent the holidays with me before eploying did not drink," Gates said. "A mother knows her son, and I believe something happened to mine while he was deployed. The Army promised to investigate what happened at Camp Humphreys, and I



RAFAH (AFP) - Desperately needed international aid piled up Friday near Gaza, with Palestinians in dire need of food and water after relentless bombing by Israel, still reeling from the bloodiest attack in its history.Israel has vowed to destroy Hamas after the Islamist militant group launched a massive attack from the Gaza Strip on October 7, killing at least 1,400 people, mostly civilians who were shot, mutilated or burned to death, according to Israeli officials.Hamas gunmen also took nearly 200 people hostage including foreigners from around two dozen countries ranging from Paraguay to Tanzania.In response, Israeli war planes have levelled entire city blocks in Gaza in preparation for a ground invasion they say is coming soon. More than 3,785 Palestinians, mostly civilians, have died in the bombing, according to the latest toll from the Hamasrun health ministry. The United Nations says more than one million of Gaza's 2.4 million people have been displaced and that the humanitarian situation is worsening by the day, with no green light yet to send in the trucks lined up at the border. Medicine, water purifiers and blankets were being unloaded at El Arish airport near Gaza, an AFP reporter saw, with Ahmed Ali, head of the Egyptian Red Crescent, saying he was getting "two to three planes of aid a day". The situation inside Gaza is "beyond catastrophic", said Sara Alzawqari, UNICEF spokeswoman for the Persian Gulf. "Time is running out and the numbers of casualties amongst children are rising." Egyptian state-linked broadcaster Al Qahera News had said the Rafah crossing -- the only route into Gaza -- would open on Friday, but Cairo later said it needed more time to repair roads.In Geneva, the WHO's emergencies director called a deal struck by US President Joe Biden to allow in 20 trucks 'a drop in the ocean of need". "It should be 2.000 trucks." Michael Ryan said Within Israel, still coming to terms with the deadliest attack in its 75-year history, the drumbeat of war was growing louder, as leaders rallied troops for a ground offensive. Decked out in body armor, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited front-line troops near Gaza, urging them to "fight like lions" and "win with full force". Defense Minister Yoav

Gallant also toured the front line, telling some of the tens of thousands of troops awaiting the ground invasion that new orders would come soon."Right now you see Gaza from afar, soon you will see it from the inside. The order will come soon," he said, predicting "difficult" battles ahead. The horror of what Israel suffered on October 7 and following days was still emerging, as traumatised residents recounted their stories. Shachar Butler, a security chief at the Nir Oz kibbutz, where Hamas militants killed or kidnapped a quarter of the 400 residents, recalls more than a dozen gunmen spraying bullets indiscriminately and lobbing grenades at homes. "It's unimaginable," the 40-year-old told AFP as part of a trip organised by the Israeli military."Anytime someone tried to touch my window, I shot him," he said. "The people who came out got kidnapped, killed, executed, slaughtered."Butler estimated as many as 200 militants attacked the kibbutz, entering from three sides before going house-to-house. Homes there were still charred with burned bersonal belongings strewn everywhere.Israel says around 1,500 Hamas fighters were killed in clashes before its army regained control of the areas under attack. During a rare address from the Oval Office, Biden urged the United States to take the lead in supporting Israel and Ukraine, saying he would make an "urgent" request to Congress for aid later Friday."American leadership is what holds the world together," Biden said in just the second primetime speech to the nation of his presidency from behind the historic Resolute Desk. While solidly backing Israel, he also pointed to the plight of those trapped in Gaza, saying they "urgently need food, water and medicine". Fresh from a whirlwind trip to Israel this week, Biden is hoping to staunch the possibility of a wider Middle East war. The United States has already moved two aircraft carriers into the eastern Mediterranear to deter Iran or Lebanon's Hezbollah, both allies of Hamas, from getting involved.But fears of a wider conflagration are growing, with Israel announcing plans to evacuate the northern city of Kiryat Shmona after days of clashes with Hezbollah fighters along the

#### Canada Withdraws 41 Diplomats From India



MONTREAL (AFP) - Canada said Thursday it had withdrawn 41 diplomats from India -- fallout from a bitter row over the killing of a Sikh separatist on Canadian soil. New Delhi planned to revoke diplomatic immunity for all but 21 of Canada's diplomats and their families by Friday, forcing Ottawa to pull out the others, Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly said."We have facilitated their safe departure from India," Joly added, "This means that our diplomats and their families have now left."Relations between India and Canada have plunged since Prime Minister Justin Trudeau last month publicly linked Indian intelligence to the killing of Canadian citizen Hardeep Singh Nijjar, which New Delhi has denied. Nijjar, who advocated for a separate Sikh state carved out of India, was wanted by Indian authorities for alleged terrorism and conspiracy to commit murder. "Revoking the diplomatic immunity of 41 diplomats is not only unprecedented, but also contrary to international law" Joly said Wednesday but said Canada did not plan to retaliate in kind, so as to not "aggravate

the situation." Canada will continue to defend international law, which applies to all nations and will continue to engage with India," she said. "Now more than ever we need diplomats on the ground and we need to talk to one another." Joly added, Canada has called for India to cooperate in the investigation but New Delhi has rejected the allegations and taken countermeasures, such as shutting down visa services for Canadians Ottawa also expelled an Indian diplomat over the affair. Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said last month in New York that his country would be willing to examine any evidence presented by Canada. "We have actually been badgering the Canadians. We've given them loads of information about organized crime leadership which operates out of Canada," Jaishankar said, referring to Sikh separatists.

# **Argentines Head to Polls**

BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - Argentines will vote for a new president on Sunday, gripped by anxiety and with one thing in mind: escaping an economic quagmire that has seen annual inflation hit almost 140 percent. Fury and fatigue after decades of economic crises have provided fertile ground for outsider Javier Milei, a libertarian who has surged to the front of the race with his vow to take a chainsaw to the bloated state and dollarize the economy. The Ruenos Aires lawmaker, who rails against the "thieving and useless political class" in power, is leading the polls against Economy Minister Sergio Massa and tough-talking former security minister Patricia Bullrich Argentina is Latin America's third-biggest economy -- the grand boulevards and 19th-century European-inspired architecture in the capital hark back to its glory days as one of the world's richest nations. That gilded age, fueled by beef and grain exports, is a distant memory after decades of



debt, inflation and financial mismanagement, which this year pushed poverty levels to 40 percent in the country of 46 million. "It's total uncertainty -- you never know if your rent will go up, (or) prices in the supermarket," said university student Valentin Figarra, 20. "It's madness, madness!""One wants to grow... but this generation is falling behind, it's sad." Massa represents the center-left Peronist coalition, a populist movement heavy on state intervention and welfare programs that has dominated Argentine politics for decades but has grown deeply unpopular. To woo voters, he has gone on a pre-election spending spree, slashing income tax for much of the population in a move analysts say will only make the country's fragile financial situation worse.



## China Weighs Options to Blunt U.S. Sanctions in a **Taiwan Conflict**



BEIJING (Dispatches) - In a war with the U.S. over Taiwan, China would need to create a global network of companies under U.S. sanctions, seize American assets within its borders, and issue gold denominated bonds, according to Chinese government-affiliated researchers studying the Western response to Russia after its invasion of Ukraine. The sanctions against Moscow have prompted hundreds of Chinese economists, financiers, and geopolitical analysts to examine how China should mitigate extreme scenarios, including loss of access to U.S. dollars, according to a Reuters review of more than 200 Chinese-language policy papers and academic articles published since February 2022. "In the context of intensified Sino-U.S. strategic competition and the Taiwan Strait conflict, we should be wary of the U.S. replicating this financial sanction model against China," wrote Chen Hongxiang, a researcher at a branch of the People's Bank of China (PBOC) in eastern Jiangsu province. China, he said, should "prepare for a rainy day" to ensure its financial and economic stability The specificity of the scenarios and potential countermeasures are being reported for the first time by Reuters.In assessing Russia's experience, many of the researchers warn that China's much larger economy and dependence on advanced foreign technology and commodity imports mean a sanctions fight with the West could be far more destructive. Some doubled down on the view that increasing interdependence could be a better approach than pulling up the shutters. Senior U.S. military officers have said that Chinese President Xi Jinping has ordered the People's Liberation Army to be prepared to invade Taiwan by 2027. Beijing has not ruled out using force to take the island, though it has never shared details about war preparations.But discussions about U.S. sanctions, including from researchers within China's foreign and financial policy establishment, surged 50% in the 12 months following the start of the war in Ukraine compared with the corresponding period a year earlier, according to a review of China National Knowledge Infrastructure, the country's largest database of academic literature."Analysing various possible scenarios and coming up with China's prevention, response and countermeasures are undoubtedly a top priority for China's policymakers," Yu Yongding, an economist and former central bank adviser, wrote in a journal article in July 2022. Reuters contacted all the researchers named in this story directly or through their institutions but most declined to comment or did not respond. Yu referred Reuters to an op-ed he wrote on decoupling. The PBOC said in a statement that the research papers written by its employees represent their personal views. The central bank did not address questions about its sanctions planning. China's State Council Information Office did not respond to queries about Beijing's contingency planning. The freezing of more than \$300 billion in Russian central bank foreign currency assets and the removal of Russian banks from the SWIFT interbank payments system last year have particularly worried Chinese experts, given China's more than \$3 trillion in foreign exchange reserves and its export-dependent economy."The risk that China's overseas reserve assets may be frozen seems more imminent," wrote Wang Yongli, general manager of China International Futures, one of the country's largest commodities and financial futures brokerage businesses. Wang and several PBOC researchers wrote in articles that if the U.S. implemented Russia-style sanctions on China, Beijing should freeze U.S. investment and pension funds and seize the assets of U.S. companies. The papers did not name individual companies as potential targets.Researchers have also formulated unconventional solutions to China's dependence on the U.S. dollar, partly inspired by Moscow's policies. The Beijing-based China Center for International Economic Exchanges (CCIEE), which counts former commerce ministers among its leaders published several analyses on lessons China should learn from Russia.Sun Xiaotao, a CCIEE researcher, published an article in February that argues China should push for more gold-denominated trade to prevent major fluctuations of the yuan - echoing the Russian central bank's decision to increase its gold reserves by one million ounces since the Ukraine war began. Reuters could not determine the extent to which the think tanks influence China's decision-making, but they are known to brief and write reports for leading officials. Some of China's policies align with the papers' recommendations. Central bank data earlier in October showed the PBOC increased its official gold reserves for the 11th consecutive month

## **UK's Ruling Conservatives** Suffer Two Damaging **By-Election Losses**



LONDON (AFP) - Britain's ruling Conservative Party suffered two damaging by-election defeats to Labor on Friday, boding ill for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and his party's chances at the next general election. The elections were in traditionally safe Tory seats, but Labour managed to overturn huge majorities in both on a notable evening for the opposition party.Labour had played down its prospects in the "super safe" seats of Tamworth and Mid Bedfordshire in central England, but its candidates Sarah Edwards and Alistair Strathern will now take their places in the House of Commons, where the Tories still hold a large overall majority. However, the Conservatives' prospects of winning another term at the next election, due before January 2025, are looking bleak after the latest blows, with voters taking out their frustrations over an ongoing cost-of-living crisis and a series of scandals Edwards, who overturned a majority of 20,000 to win in Tamworth, said voters had sent a message that "they have had enough of this failed government that has crashed the economy and destroyed public services". The Tamworth poll was triggered when Chris Pincher, who had the seat since 2010, quit after being found to have groped two men in an "egregious case of sexual misconduct". Then-prime minister Boris Johnson's handling of the case led to a raft of ministerial resignations that spelt the beginning of the end of his premiership The Mid Bedfordshire poll was called when former culture secretary Nadine Dorries, a loyalist to Johnson who blames Sunak for his political downfall, quit her seat. She accused the new prime minister of having abandoned "the fundamental principles of conservatism". She had won the seat, which the Tories have held since 1931, by a thumping 24,664 votes in 2019, but Labor candidate Strathern overturned that deficit to win by 1,192 votes on Friday.Strathern said the result proved that "nowhere is off limits for this Labour Party". As well as the two safe seats lost on Friday, the Tories saw a 20,000 majority overturned in a July by-election on a 21 percent swing. Labour have also been leading national polls by more than 10 points for over a year.