

TEDPIX, the Main Index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Dropped 7,191 Points (0.35 Percent) to 2,038,875 on Wednesday, as the TSE in Recent Days Has Witnessed Instability in the stock market

IRAN NEWS

Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance Ehsan Khandouzi Stated That Iran's Recent Foreign Exchange Cooperation With Saudi Arabia Continues to Facilitate the Activities of Iranian Businessmen

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Leader Hails Allameh Tabatabai Scientific, Personal Features



TEHRAN (MNA) – The Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei hailed the scientific and personal characteristics of Iranian scholar and philosopher Ayatollah Allameh Seyyed Mohammad Hossein Tabatabai. "One of the important works of Ayatollah Mohammad Hossein Tabatabai in the midst of the invasion of imported and foreign ideas was intellectual jihad and the formation of a strong intellectual base with an aggressive structure," the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said in a meeting with organizers of the International Congress in Honor of "Ayatollah Allameh Seyyed Mohammad Hossein Tabatabai. Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism and Tafsi al-Mizan, written by Allameh Tabatabai, are examples of this scientific jihad, the Leader said. The Leader of the Islamic Revolution considered the second outstanding feature of Allamah to be the practice of moral teachings instead of just presenting moral content. Allameh Tabatabai, despite all his scientific aspects, was a soft-spoken, humble, warm, charming, and eloquent person in friendly and public interactions, he said. Allameh Tabatabai was not as well known during his lifetime as he is now, and thanks to his sincerity, Allameh Tabatabai's character and works will be known more day by day in the country and the world, the Leader added. Ayatollah Allameh Seyyed Mohammad Hossein Tabatabai was an Iranian scholar, cleric, and philosopher, one of the most prominent thinkers in modern Shia Islam.

Israel Intentionally Using Disproportionate Force in Gaza to Deter Iran



THE HAGUE (Dispatches) - The Israeli regime is deliberately using "disproportionate force" against Palestinian civilians during its ongoing brutal onslaught on the besieged Gaza Strip in an attempt to showcase its so-called "military force" to Iran and what it claims to be Iran's affiliated resistance groups, an official document has revealed. The revelation was made in leak of confidential memo from the Dutch Embassy in Tel Aviv after a full analysis by the Dutch defense attaché of the Israeli occupation's military strategy in Gaza, which has so far claimed the lives of thousands of Palestinians, including women and children. The defense attaché was reported by Dutch outlet NRC as saying that the Israeli occupation army was using lethal force in an attempt to limit its own losses and "showcase credible military force to show Iran and its proxies that they will stop at nothing." The Dutch diplomat underlined that the occupying regime has the "intention of deliberately causing massive destruction to the infrastructure and civilian centers" in Gaza by targeting houses, bridges, and roads, and causing massive civilian casualties, which explains the "high number of deaths" among Palestinians. Israel's approach violates "international treaties and laws of war" and increases the chance of regional escalation, the memo said. The Dutch embassy's defense attaché also said Israel was trying to completely eliminate the "threat" of Palestinian resistance movement Hamas but described it as a "military goal that is virtually impossible to achieve." Israel is motivated by revenge, the memo said, as "the emotion and anger reverberate in IDF [Israeli army] briefings." The memo accused the Dutch government of being aware of Israel's "ruthless approach," yet failing to condemn the barbaric aggression or call for a ceasefire. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement last week that the Netherlands is "highly concerned" about the "severity and scale" of the war in Gaza and that "further civilian casualties on both sides must be avoided." "We call for restraint, and we continue to emphasize this in all our diplomatic conversations," the ministry said. "The situation is highly complex. And that only goes to reaffirm the importance of investigating events on the ground." Israel waged the brutal war on Gaza on October 7 after Hamas-led Palestinian resistance groups launched Operation Al-Aqsa Storm against the occupying entity. Since the start of the war, the Tel Aviv regime has claimed the lives of at least 11,500 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and left upwards of 29,000 others wounded.

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK



Iran Calls for Immediate Halt to Gaza War

TEHRAN - Iran's foreign minister has called for an immediate halt to Israel's bloody aggression against the Gaza Strip, stressing that the occupying regime has "no chance" to win the war. In a meeting with Martin Griffiths, head of UN humanitarian operations, in the Swiss city of Geneva on Wednesday, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said that the Israeli assaults on the Palestinian people in Gaza only increase the costs for Washington as Tel Aviv's ally. "Unfortunately, the scope of the Zionist regime's attacks on Gaza is expanding, and it is necessary to take immediate and effective measures to stop them," he said. "There is no chance for the Zionist regime to win the war and it will only increase the costs for the US government as the biggest supporter of the Zionist regime that is responsible for the continuation of the aggression. As a result, it is necessary to focus efforts on a ceasefire and an immediate halt to the war." Iran foreign minister also said, "Unfortunately, the US sends all kinds of weapons, including phosphorous and prohibited weapons, to Tel Aviv on a daily basis from Cyprus or directly through its bases throughout the region, and these bombs are dropped on the oppressed Palestinians in Gaza." The top Iranian diplomat added that the amount of humanitarian aid sent to Gaza is very small, contrary to what the Americans claim. He called for strong and urgent management on the part of the United Nations to open the Rafah border crossing for the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza. The UN, he added, can count on the Islamic Republic's capacity to achieve peace and security in the region. Referring to his meetings in Doha with Qatari and Hamas officials, Amir-Abdollahian said that the Palestinian resistance movement is ready to act regarding the captives being held by Hamas since the October 7 operation. "If the Israeli regime stops the genocide in Gaza, resistance groups will also stop counterattacks," he noted. The UN humanitarian chief, for his part, expressed his satisfaction with the meeting and expounded on the UN humanitarian efforts in Gaza. He also underlined the need to find a solution to the issue of Israeli captives and provide basic needs, especially fuel, to the Gazans. Griffiths further voiced concerns about the terrible condition inside Gaza's al-Shifa hospital, which is a tragedy amid Israel's military raid. He appreciated Iran's efforts to prevent the spread of the war and stressed the need for more efforts to stop the war and end the current alarming situation in Gaza. Israel waged the brutal war on Gaza on October 7 after Hamas's Operation Al-Aqsa Storm against the usurping entity.

President Slams Organized Collective Punishment of People in Gaza

LONDON (IRNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi has slammed the collective punishment of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip which he says is being done in an organized manner. In a letter addressed to world leaders on Tuesday, Raisi said that the Israeli regime's killing of thousands of people in Gaza, including many women and children, its destruction of hospitals, mosques, churches, houses and critical infrastructure as well as its refusal to lift a blockade that has led to a shortage of water, electricity and food in the enclave amounts to an "intensive and organized collective punishment" of the people in Gaza and is in clear violation of all fundamental principles of the international law. Raisi said in the letter that Palestine, as a nation under occupation, is entitled to the

right to resist aggression and occupation through all means, including armed struggle, adding that the same international laws do not give the Zionist regime of Israel a legitimate right to defend itself through killing civilians. He called on world leaders to condemn the crimes committed by the Israeli regime in Gaza and to force the regime to stop its aggression on the enclave. President Raisi said the international community has a duty to force the Israeli regime to lift its blockade on Gaza to allow humanitarian aid, including food, medicine and fuel, to reach the people in the territory. At the end of letter, the Iranian president expressed hope that the Almighty God may save the oppressed Palestinian nation from occupation, aggression and crimes of the Zionist regime.



Iran, Russia Power Grids to Connect in 6 Months



TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran's minister of energy said the electricity grids of Iran and Russia would be connected, adding that feasibility studies for the connection via the Republic of Azerbaijan's territory have been conducted. Speaking during a visit to the 23rd edition of the Iran Int'l Electricity Exhibition (IEE) and the first edition of the Iran Electricity Industry Tech Market Festival at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds on Tuesday, Ali Akbar Mehrabian said feasibility studies for connecting power grids have been conducted through three routes including Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan. The Republic of Azerbaijan has been chosen as the best route for this aim, Mehrabian added. It is hoped that electricity exchange between Iran, Russia, and Azerbaijan will start in six months, he said, adding that this project is very economical because the peak of consumption of power is completely different in Iran and Russia. In other words, when the use of electricity is high in Russia, Iran has the lowest consumption rate, the energy minister added. Elsewhere in his remarks, the energy minister said the use of electricity in Iran's industrial sector has exceeded that of the household sector for the first time in the history of the country's power industry. Holding the exhibition with the participation of foreign companies indicates the privileged status of Iran's power industry both in the regional and international arenas, he emphasized. The exhibition kicked off at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds on November 14 and will run through November 17.

UN Says Racism Systemic in U.S.



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - A United Nations special rapporteur has expressed shock at the "mutually reinforcing manifestations of systemic racism" in the United States, saying the country is at a "critical juncture" in the fight against racism. Ashwini K.P., the UN special rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, xenophobia, and related intolerance, made the remarks during an interview with UN News on Tuesday, following her 14-day fact-finding mission on systematic racism in the US. "These manifestations of racism impacted those from racially marginalized groups at every stage of their lives, historically, systematically, and institutionally," she said. The independent expert went on to say that "selective amnesia" was an issue in some states when it comes to reckoning with race. The US Justice Department confirms systematic police brutality and racism in city of Minneapolis in a report three years after the police killing of an African American man amid persisting police cruelty across the country. Ashwini further noted that mainstream America is now more aware of systemic racism following the large-scale racial protests of 2020 and the positive response from the Biden administration "to improve racial equality." However, she said, racism very much persists in the US and has manifested in different forms, adding that she was "disheartened" and "disappointed" by how systemic racism can impact the lives of individuals. Ashwini also stressed that "one of the major worries is the dissemination of misinformation and disinformation, which further escalates racism, racial discrimination, hate crimes, xenophobia." "I think the moment and the space to take this challenge forward - to eliminate and eradicate racism or racial discrimination - should be taken very positively, in a mindful manner," she said. Ashwini traveled across the US between 31 October and 14 November, from Detroit in Michigan to the Louisiana coast, also visiting Los Angeles, Atlanta, and Washington DC. She explained that the fact-finding mission in the US was her first official country mission, and the purpose was majorly to assess the country's situation, and her mandate covered racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia. The UN special rapporteur further stated that she will surely elaborate on her findings in the report that will be presented next year at the Human Rights Council.

IRAN NEWS



Taliban Admits Iran's Water Share

TEHRAN (IP) - The Head of Iran's Department of Environment (DoE) said the Taliban admitted to the fact that they should give Iran its water share from the Helmand River. Ali Salajegheh told reporters on Wednesday that for the first time, the Taliban have accepted that Iran's water share should be released from the Helmand River. Salajegheh told reporters that the decision was made during the recent visit of the Taliban's economic delegation to Tehran. Salajegheh also answered a question about the dust crisis in the region and said that in the first step, it is supposed to moisten the surface of the Hamoun Lake by releasing water to the lake to prevent the spread of dust.

Iran Vindicated in Its 4-Decade Approach to Palestine



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Ali Bagheri Kani says the recent developments in the Gaza Strip vindicated Iran in its four-decade approach to the issue of Palestine. "Today, the international and regional players openly or secretly admit that Iran had foresight and clear-sightedness in standing with the people of Palestine and countering the occupiers and aggressors," said Bagheri Kani in an address to students at the School of International Relations of Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He further said in the speech that the United States will be the ultimate loser of the ongoing war in Gaza, adding that the Israeli regime and its American supporters are trying to kill as many people as possible in Gaza to cover up their defeat against Palestinian resistance forces in early October. More than 11,000 people have been killed in over a month of Israeli aggression on Gaza. The aggression started on October 7 when Gaza-based resistance group Hamas launched attacks on Israeli-occupied territories, killing some 1,400 Israeli settlers and military personnel.



Rail Transportation Brings Iran \$1.3b in Fuel Savings in a Year

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The managing director of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) has said using rail transportation has made the country \$1.3 billion in fuel savings during the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20). According to Miad Salehi, more than 29.67 million passengers were transported through the railway network in the previous Iranian year, which was a record in the history of the country's rail transportation, IRIB reported. The development of the railway network will ultimately lead to an increase in using the railway transportation which, in addition to having economical and safety benefits, will have significant positive impacts on the environment by reducing fuel consumption and preventing air pollution, the official said. Mentioning a recent comprehensive plan for the development of the maritime economy in the country, Salehi said the promotion of railway transportation

and transit is a major step towards the realization of the goals set for the maritime economy. In this regard, the connection of the country's industrial centers to the railway network and the development of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) are of utmost importance, he said. He further mentioned a plan for the renovation of the railway fleet, saying that currently, the average age of the country's freight transportation fleet is about 25 years, which shows improvement in comparison to the previous years. "During the previous year, we managed to manufacture 1,598 new freight wagons, which was about 48 percent more than the preceding year (1400) when we produced about 1,080 new freight wagons", Salehi said. According to the official, all the above-mentioned measures have been taken in order to encourage people and investors to partake in the development of the railway industry in the country.

Russian Firms Developing 7 Oilfields in Iran



TEHRAN (MNA) - Seven oilfields in Iran are being developed by Russian companies, the chief executive of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) said. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the signing ceremony of a memorandum of understanding for setting up an artificial intelligence strategic center and digital oil and gas fields, Mohsen Khojastehmehr said seven oilfields of the country are being developed by Russian companies. He added that a considerable portion of technical and engineering services, though, is being carried out by competent Iranian companies. Based on a law that requires taking maximum advantage of the high potential and capacities of domestic engineers, Iranian companies in tandem with Russian firms are active in developing seven oilfields in the south and northwest part of the country, Khojastehmehr added.

AEOI to Produce New Radiopharmaceuticals for Health Ministry



TEHRAN (MNA) - The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) has received an order to produce over 60 new radiopharmaceuticals for the domestic market, a spokesperson said. AEOI Spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi said on Tuesday that the Atomic Energy Organization has offered considerable assistance to the healthcare sector in recent years. He noted that the AEOI has signed a contract with the Food and Drug Administration of the Health Ministry to produce 66 new radiopharmaceuticals. A series of homegrown radiopharmaceuticals for the diagnosis and treatment of cancer are developed with world-class quality, he added. In December 2022, the AEOI chief said Iran aims to become a global hub for manufacturing deuterium drugs. "In a not too distant future we will turn into a hub for manufacturing drugs based on deuterium which are good alternatives to chemical drugs and have lower side effects in comparison (to those drugs)," he stated. The AEOI launched a second phase of its deuterium production unit in the Arak Heavy Water Reactor Facility in central Iran in April 2021.

Iran Transferring Electricity With All Bordering Countries



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iranian official says the country exports and imports electricity with all the countries with whom it shares a land border. Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi, the spokesman of Iran's electricity industry, told reporters on Tuesday that Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan are three main destinations for Iranian electricity. Asked about the possibility of electricity transfer with Qatar, the official said that the necessary studies have been carried out for electricity connection with countries with whom Iran does not share a land border. There have been negotiations over this plan and if it becomes implemented, there is the possibility of electricity exchanges up to 1,000 MW, he noted. The official said that Iran is also importing electricity from two neighboring countries without naming them. He added that it is possible for Iran and Turkey to exchange electricity and the two countries can easily exchange electricity up to 400 MW. Negotiations have been made for both exports and imports of electricity with Turkey, the official said.



Senior Iranian Lawyer Slams Efforts in UK to Blacklist IRGC

TEHRAN (IRNA) - A senior member of Iran's constitutional body the Guardians Council has slammed efforts by members of the parliament in the United Kingdom to designate the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps as a terrorist organization. Abbasali Kadkhodayi said in a tweet on Tuesday that politicians and the government in the UK needed to change their behavior and stances on issues like terrorism. "The contradiction in London's Behav & PERF in dealing with HR, democracy, extremism and terrorism is becoming more manifest. Attempts by UK MPs to designate IRGC - the military of a SOV state, as a 'terrorist ORG' would have serious consequences. London should change its Behav," said Kadkhodayi. The comments came after a group of British parliament members called on the government in London to designate the IRGC as a terrorist organization for what they claimed was IRGC's support for resistance movements in Palestine. The British government has so far resisted calls for blacklisting the IRGC with authorities warning that the move could have serious regional and international repercussions for the UK.



Iranian, Qatari FMs Reiterate Call for End to Israeli Crimes in Gaza

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The foreign ministers of Iran and Qatar have discussed Israel's ongoing brutal war against the Gaza Strip, reiterating their call for an immediate end to the regime's war crimes and the dispatch of humanitarian aid to the besieged territory. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian held a phone conversation with his Qatari counterpart Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani on Tuesday to exchange views about the recent developments in Palestine as well as the Gaza Strip. During the phone call, the two sides discussed the ongoing genocide in Gaza and the dire humanitarian situation there, emphasizing the need to immediately stop the war crimes against the territory and deliver immediate aid to the homeless people of Palestine. They also exchanged views on the latest status of

efforts and diplomatic initiatives to stop the brutal aggression of the Israeli regime against Gaza. The two top diplomats also discussed the issue of bombing the headquarters of the Qatari Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza. Israel waged the war on Gaza on October 7 after the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas carried out the surprise Operation Al-Aqsa Storm into the occupied territories in response to the occupying regime's intensified crimes against the Palestinian people. According to the Gaza-based health ministry, at least 11,250 Palestinians have been killed in the strikes, most of them women and children. Tel Aviv has also imposed a "complete siege" on Gaza, cutting off fuel, electricity, food and water to the more than two million Palestinians living there.



Israeli regime forces storm al-Shifa hospital in Gaza Strip

Tehran, IRNA – Israeli forces have stormed the al-Shifa hospital in the Gaza Strip after days of besieging the largest medical complex in the coastal enclave. According to Palestinian media outlets, the occupation forces stormed the hospital on Wednesday morning after the regime's military announced that it was "carrying out a precise and targeted operation" inside the medical complex. The government media office in the Gaza Strip held the occupiers, the United States, and the international community responsible for the lives of thousands of medical staff, the wounded, and the displaced in the medical complex. It also warned of a massacre in the hospital by the occupying Zionist forces.



China, U.S. Pledge Climate Cooperation Ahead of Xi-Biden Meet



BEIJING (Dispatches) - China and the United States pledged Wednesday to work more closely together to fight global warming, declaring the climate crisis "one of the greatest challenges of our time". The announcement came hours ahead of a summit between presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping in San Francisco, further fuelling hopes the two nations can mend relations following years of turmoil over issues including trade, human rights and the future of Taiwan. In a joint statement following climate talks in the United States, they pledged to make a success of a crucial UN climate summit starting at the end of this month in Dubai. And they re-committed to the 2015 Paris climate accord goals of holding global warming to "well below" 2C, while pursuing efforts to limit the increase to 1.5C. "The United States and China recognize that the climate crisis has increasingly affected countries around the world," the statement said. "They will work together... to rise up to one of the greatest challenges of our time for present and future generations of humankind." U.S. and Chinese climate envoys John Kerry and Xie Zhenhua met this month at the Sunnylands resort in California in a bid to restart stalled cooperation. Experts agree that keeping the Paris goals in reach will require an enormous collective effort to slash greenhouse gas emissions this decade. But that goal is seen as even more challenging in a world roiled by geopolitical storms, including China-United States rivalry. The International Energy Agency (IEA) warned last month that "immediate reductions" in methane emissions were needed to limit climate warming. A broad plan by Beijing last week to control its emissions of the gas offered no specific target for reducing them. But in their joint statement, the two sides agreed to develop their respective methane reduction targets for inclusion in their 2035 emission-cutting plans, known as Nationally Determined Contributions, or NDCs. With temperatures soaring and 2023 expected to become the warmest year in human history, scientists say the pressure on world leaders to curb planet-heating greenhouse gas pollution has never been more urgent. Countries are set to meet in Dubai later this month for the COP28 summit. And success at those talks will hinge on agreement between the United States and China -- still at loggerheads over a litany of issues from trade to human rights. Asked about what he expected from looming talks with Xi, Biden told reporters at the White House before heading to San Francisco. He said he wanted "to get back on a normal course of corresponding; being able to pick up the phone and talk to one another if there's a crisis; being able to make sure our (militaries) still have contact with one another".



Germany Says EU Won't Reach Ammo Target for Ukraine

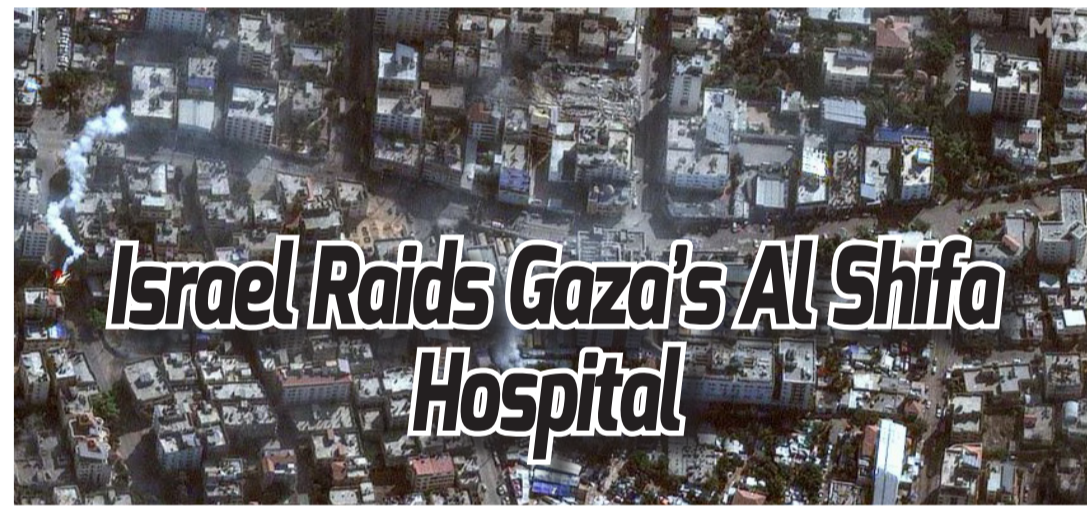
BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - Germany deepened the despondency around Western efforts to back Ukraine by saying the EU would not reach a target to supply Kyiv with a million artillery shells by March. The pessimistic assessment came at a bleak time for Ukraine after its counter-offensive failed to regain territory and as Israel's war with Hamas distracts its key allies. The European Union pledged last year to deliver one million desperately needed howitzer rounds to Ukraine by March 2024 to help Kyiv battle against Russia's invading forces. So far, EU nations have only managed to provide 300,000 rounds from their existing stocks. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said countries have placed joint orders for 180,000 more 155-millimetre shells, but that figure is due only by the end of next year. "Unfortunately, the cautionary voices are now right," German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said at a meeting with his EU counterparts in Brussels on Monday. "The one million will not be reached. We have to assume that." Borrell said a major issue was that European defence firms were exporting about 40 percent of production to other countries. "Maybe what we have to do is to try to shift his production to the priority one, which is Ukrainian. That would be quite a change," he said. EU internal market commissioner Thierry Breton said efforts to ramp up production were having an impact and the EU should be able to turn out a million shells a year. Estonian Defence Minister Hanno Pevkur said his country had placed a 280-million-euro (\$303 million) order for ammunition -- "the biggest procurement in

Europe at this very moment". "Look at Russia. They are producing today more than ever. They are getting shells from North Korea. Europe cannot say that Russia and North Korea can deliver and we cannot," he said. "We don't have the luxury to say we are tired, because Ukrainians are not tired," Pevkur told AFP. The EU's struggles to make good on promised deliveries comes as opposition in the US Congress has thrown doubt on key ally Washington's ability to sustain supplies. "Certainly the war is lasting more than expected," Borrell said. "We have to continue providing support stubbornly, more of the same." Brussels says that together with EU member states it has funnelled military support worth 27 billion euros to Ukraine since Moscow invaded in February 2022. But a plan to provide guaranteed support for Kyiv over the longer-term has stumbled. Borrell in July proposed a new 20-billion-euro defence fund over the next four years to help cover arms deliveries to Ukraine. The plan was part of a broader G7 vow to provide Kyiv long-term security commitments to help it ward off Russian aggression. Discussions over the EU initiative have stalled amid doubts from key member states. Germany -- which last week said it would double its own funding for Ukraine to eight billion euros next year -- is reluctant to commit more money to the EU pot. Hungary, Russia's closest ally in the bloc, has also expressed scepticism over the plan. Borrell said the EU would present a revised plan to Ukraine by the end of the month ahead of a debate by EU leaders in December on approving it.

Mali Junta Seizes Strategic Northern Stronghold of Kidal



KIDAL (Dispatches) - Mali's army has recaptured the strategic northern town of Kidal, a stronghold of Tuareg-dominated separatist groups that has long posed a major sovereignty issue for the ruling junta. The capture of Kidal is a significant symbolic success for Mali's military leaders, who seized power in 2020. Violence has escalated in the north of Mali since August, with the military, rebels and jihadists vying for control as the UN stabilization mission, MINUSMA, withdraws from the country and evacuates its camps, triggering a race to seize territory. "Today our armed and security forces have seized Kidal," the head of the junta, Colonel Assimi Goita said in a statement read by a presenter during a special news flash on state television. "The (Malian Armed Forces) took up position in the town of Kidal this Tuesday," the general staff said earlier in a statement on social media. The rebels also issued a statement later in the day, admitting they had lost their stronghold town but vowing to keep fighting. The Permanent Strategic Framework (CSP), an alliance of predominantly Tuareg armed groups, said it had withdrawn from Kidal "for strategic reasons" after having "for several days halted (the army's) advance by inflicting great human and material losses". "The fight continues," the group insisted. The army and the state have for years been virtually absent from the town of Kidal, which has been controlled by the predominantly Tuareg armed groups. But the junta had long signalled its determination to retake it. The authorities did not release any images following the recapture of Kidal, a historic centre of independence insurgencies and a crossroads on the road to Algeria. Two officers told AFP on condition of anonymity that the rebels had left the town when the soldiers entered. Another officer said the army controlled the airstrip and a camp recently evacuated by the UN peacekeepers. The gathering and verifying of information is complicated by the impossibility of gaining access to the terrain. On Friday, separatist rebels had the telephone network cut off as the army advanced towards the town. The insubordination of the Kidal region -- where the army suffered humiliating defeats between 2012 and 2014 -- was a source of irritation for the government in the capital, Bamako. Mali's current military leaders have made the restoration of territorial sovereignty their mantra. The state had until now barely regained a foothold in Kidal since May 2014, when its armed forces were driven out after a visit by then-prime minister Moussa Mara led to clashes with the rebels. The fighting left many soldiers dead. More recently, as the army advanced towards Kidal, many of the town's tens of thousands of residents fled, according to social networks. The army called for calm. It said it had taken steps to ensure the safety of the residents, whom it asked to obey soldiers. A large military column stationed since early October in the village of Anefis, about 110 kilometres (70 miles) south of Kidal, set off last weekend in its direction. Supported by air assets, it encountered battles along the way. The junta leader spoke of "heavy losses" inflicted on the enemy. "Our mission is not over. I remind you that it consists in recovering and securing the integrity of the territory," he said. The rebels do not want the UN peacekeepers to hand their camps back to the Malian army, saying it contravenes previously agreed ceasefire and peace deals struck with the government. When MINUSMA left its camp in Kidal on October 31, the rebels immediately seized control. Since July, the UN mission has withdrawn nearly 6,000 civilian and uniformed personnel, after the ruling junta demanded the mission depart from Mali. The deadline for withdrawal, set by the UN Security Council, is December 31.



Israel Raids Gaza's Al Shifa Hospital

GAZA (Dispatches) - The Israeli military said it was carrying out a raid on Wednesday against Hamas militants in Al Shifa Hospital, having urged them to surrender with thousands of Palestinian civilians still sheltering inside Gaza Strip's biggest hospital. Dr. Munir al-Bursh, director-general of the Gaza health ministry, told Al Jazeera television that Israeli forces had raided the western side of the medical complex. "There are big explosions and dust entered the areas where we are. We believe an explosion occurred inside the hospital," Bursh said. Hours later, Gaza health ministry spokesperson Ashraf al-Qidra to Al Jazeera: "The occupation army is now in the basement, and searching the basement. They are inside the complex, shooting and carrying out bombings." Israeli forces first raided the surgery and emergency departments, Mohammed Zaqout, the Gaza health ministry's director of hospitals, told Al Jazeera. Reuters was unable to independently confirm the situation at Al Shifa. Global calls for a humanitarian ceasefire have mounted in recent days, and the fate of Al Shifa has become a focus of international alarm because of worsening conditions in the facility, where thousands of patients, medical staff and displaced people have been trapped during the Israeli assault on Gaza in the past five weeks. Israel has said that Hamas has a command center underneath Al Shifa and uses the hospital and tunnels beneath it to conceal military operations and to hold hostages. Hamas denies it. In a statement, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said: "Based on intelligence information and an operational necessity, IDF forces are carrying out a precise and targeted operation against Hamas in a specified area in the Shifa hospital." The military added: "The IDF forces include medical teams and Arabic speakers, who have undergone specified training to prepare for this complex and sensitive environment, with the intent that no harm is caused to the civilians." Israeli army spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Peter Lemer told CNN the hospital and compound were for Hamas "a central hub of their operations, perhaps even the beating heart and maybe even a center of gravity." The U.S. said on Tuesday that its own intelligence supported Israel's conclusions. Hamas said on Wednesday that U.S. announcement had effectively given a "green light" for Israel to raid the hospital. The group said it held Israel and U.S. President Joe Biden fully responsible for the operation. "We do not support striking a hospital from the air and we don't want to see a firefight in a hospital where innocent people, helpless people, sick people trying to get medical care they deserve are caught in the crossfire. Hospitals and patients must be protected," a White House National Security Council spokesperson said in a statement. Israeli forces have waged fierce street battles against Hamas fighters over the past 10 days before advancing into the center of Gaza City and surrounding Al Shifa. In the West Bank, a separate Palestinian enclave not controlled by Hamas, Palestinian Authority Health Minister Mai Alkaila said Israel was "committing a new crime against humanity, medical staff and patients by besieging" Al Shifa. "We hold the occupation forces fully responsible for the lives of the medical staff, patients and displaced people in Al Shifa," Alkaila said in a statement. Al Shifa is a sprawling complex of buildings and courtyards a few hundred metres from Gaza City's fishing port. Buildings on the western side of the complex, which the Gaza official said was the site of the raid, include the internal medicine and dialysis departments. Hamas says 650 patients and 5,000 to 7,000 other civilians are trapped inside the hospital grounds, under constant fire from Israeli snipers and drones. Amid shortages of fuel, water and supplies, it says 40 patients have died in recent days. Thirty-six babies are left from the neo-natal ward after three died. Without fuel for generators to power incubators, the babies were being kept as warm as possible, lined up eight to a bed. Palestinians trapped in the hospital dug a mass grave on Tuesday to bury patients who died and no plan was in place to evacuate babies despite Israel announcing an offer to send portable incubators, Qidra, Gaza's health ministry spokesman, said. Qidra said there were about 100 bodies decomposing inside and no way to get them out. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was deeply disturbed by the "dramatic loss of life" in the hospitals, his spokesman said. "In the name of humanity, the secretary-general calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire," the spokesman told reporters. Medical officials in Hamas-run Gaza say more than 11,000 people are confirmed dead from Israeli strikes, around 40% of them children, and countless others were trapped under rubble. Around two-thirds of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been made homeless, unable to escape the territory where food, fuel, fresh water and medical supplies are running out.



Chinese Troops will not replace Indians in Maldives

MALE (Dispatches) - The Maldives' incoming president Mohamed Muizzu has vowed to expel Indian troops after taking office later this week, but told AFP he does not want to redraw regional balance by bringing in Chinese forces instead. "Maldives is too small to be entangled in geopolitical rivalry," the president-elect said in an interview on the strategically located Indian Ocean archipelago. "I am not very much interested to engage the Maldivian foreign policy in this." Muizzu's election success in September hinged on a sustained campaign against India's outsized political and economic clout in the Maldives, and specifically his pledge to eject Indian forces. But he said he will not allow China -- or any other nation -- to replace them, and dismissed reports of him being closer to Beijing. He insists he is only "pro-Maldives": "We are going to work together with all the countries, India, China and all other countries as well," the 45-year-old leader, who will be sworn in on Friday, said at his home in the capital Male. Known for its pristine beaches and secluded resorts as one of the most expensive holiday destinations in South Asia, the Maldives has also become a geopolitical hotspot. Global east-west shipping lanes pass the nation's chain of 1,192 tiny coral islands, scattered around 800 kilometres (500 miles) across the equator. Muizzu was regarded as a proxy of pro-China former president Abdulla Yameen, who had shifted the country heavily into Beijing's orbit till his 2018 defeat. Muizzu said he hoped to begin formal negotiations with New Delhi on the withdrawal of an estimated 50 to 75 Indian personnel, a sensitive campaign issue.

Indonesia Hosts Regional Defense Chiefs Amid Multiple Global Crises

JAKARTA (Dispatches) - Defense ministers in ASEAN called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and a durable solution to the crisis in Myanmar during the opening of a regional meeting in Jakarta on Wednesday. Defense ministers from the Asian bloc are attending the 2-day meeting alongside key players in the Indo-Pacific as major powers jostle for regional influence, and as conflicts deepen from Myanmar to the Middle East. Opening the annual get-together, Indonesian Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto said the world's largest Muslim-majority nation was deeply saddened by the "dramatic loss of life" in the hospitals, his spokesman said. "Indonesia's stance is clear and firm. We push and call for immediate cessation of hostilities and the immediate setting up of corridors for humanitarian assistance," he said in his opening remarks. Visiting Washington this week, Indonesian President Joko Widodo pressed U.S. President Joe Biden to do more to end Israel's war with Hamas. Malaysian Defence Haji Mohamad bin Haji Hasan reiterated the calls for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, saying that Malaysia "condemns terrorism in all forms", including taking people as hostages and the bombing of civilian homes. As chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) this year, Prabowo also urged his counterparts to push for concrete progress toward a peaceful solution in Myanmar, which has been riven by chaos and violence since a 2021 coup. The annual meeting comes as conflict rages in the Middle East and Ukraine and as tensions ratchet up in disputed waters in the South China Sea, where China is accused of aggression against the Philippines, which has U.S. backing and seeks to boost its military ties with Japan. All ASEAN

defense ministers, with the exception of Myanmar's, attended Wednesday's forum, with U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to meet counterparts later in the day. The talks will expand on Thursday to include Russia, China, Japan, South Korea, India, New Zealand and Australia. ASEAN, a region of about 660 million people with a combined gross domestic product of more than \$3.2 trillion, has for years been courted by Washington and Beijing, but their fierce rivalry has caused its members concern. "Competition is good. But competition should not deteriorate into a zero-sum game," Indonesia's defense minister and presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto told a foreign policy forum this week, where he stressed the importance of non-alignment. Air Lieutenant General Jing Jianfeng, deputy chief of staff of the Joint Staff Department of China's Central Military Commission, will represent China. The country removed its defence minister in October, raising questions about the stability of the leadership around President Xi Jinping. Austin comes to Indonesia from South Korea, where he reiterated concerns about Russia and China helping North Korea to evade sanctions and Moscow's closer military ties with Pyongyang. Aaron Connelly, senior fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in Singapore, said conflict in Gaza and Ukraine and China's moves to block Philippine resupply missions at a disputed reef will most likely feature at the meeting. "This forum is not one where major geopolitical developments are really addressed or moved forward in any significant way. But we do expect discussions from the U.S. and Philippines on topics like the Second Thomas Shoal, Israel-Hamas, Ukraine," Connelly said.





Sinner Edges Djokovic to Close in on ATP Finals' Last Four

TURIN (Dispatches) - Jannik Sinner edged towards becoming the first ever Italian to reach the last four of the ATP Finals after a thrilling 7-5, 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (7/2) win over Novak Djokovic. World number four Sinner needed a straight-sets victory in front of enthusiastic home support in Turin over tennis icon Djokovic to guarantee passage from the Green Group with a match to spare. And while the 22-year-old couldn't quite make that happen, a superb performance gave him his first win in four attempts over Djokovic, who is bidding to win for a record seventh time at the year-ending tournament. "It means a lot to me," said Sinner on court. "When you win against the world number one who has won 24 Grand Slams it's obviously in the top-top." Fans made an almighty din for Sinner, chanting his name to the rafters once he claimed victory in an exciting, three-hour contest which ran way past midnight at the Pala Alpitour. Sinner has had the best year of his career and looks to be fulfilling the promise he has long shown, winning four titles this season including the Toronto Masters, and looks on form in Italy. He made the first breakthrough when he capitalised on Djokovic handing him advantage in game 11 with a double fault, moving 6-5 ahead with a big backhand before claiming the set with a service game to love. Djokovic pulled level after a bruising second set in which neither player faced a single break point, but after fighting back from 4-2 down in the decider he wilted in the tie-break and ended his winning run at 20 matches. Both players' fate will be decided in the final round of group

matches, with Djokovic facing Hubert Hurkacz who has stepped in for Stefanos Tsitsipas after the Greek pulled out of the tournament with a back injury against Sinner's next opponent Holger Rune. And Rune will have the benefit of having played just three games before being awarded a straight-set win. Tsitsipas was trailing the opening set of his match with Finals debutant Rune 2-1 when he was forced to quit, handing his opponent his first ever win in the tournament. The sixth seed was loudly booed by the crowd who saw barely a quarter of an hour of singles play in the afternoon session, fans angered by him playing despite persistent rumours of injury. "I'm gutted that I wasn't able to finish the match," Tsitsipas, 25, told reporters. "My doctors and the countless visits that I had in the last few days suggested that I play... Unfortunately I felt terrible on the court. I did what I could do in best possible way to be ready and fit for this match, but it didn't work out for me." Tsitsipas said after pulling out that he had felt problems during his warm up and that once on the court he felt too much pain to complete the match. "I've gone through pain during matches in the past... But this was clearly too much to handle and I had to take the difficult decision to do what I did," he said. Tsitsipas also hinted that a "lack of rest" in a packed schedule could have contributed to him having to drop out. The ATP has come under fire from players and coaches for scheduling which often leads to late-night matches and short recovery times during tournaments.

Man City 84% Likely to Win Premier League



LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester City have one Premier League point less than they had after 12 games last season but according to data analysts Opta are overwhelming favorites to claim a fourth successive title. The number crunchers at Opta Analyst have predicted where each of the 20 teams will finish the season based on 10,000 simulations of the 2023-24 campaign, based on form and remaining fixtures, fed into a supercomputer. And the outlook looks good for Pep Guardiola's side and worryingly grim for Burnley. City, according to Opta Analyst, have an 84.6% probability of lifting the trophy again with Liverpool given only a 9.1% chance and last season's runners-up Arsenal on 5.6%. Back-to-back defeats for Tottenham Hotspur mean that, according to Opta, their title hopes are virtually non-existent at 0.3%, the same as Aston Villa. Manchester United, currently in sixth place, are predicted to finish seventh and only have a 5.9% chance of finishing in the top four, although that has risen slightly of late. Newcastle United have a 25% chance of a second-successive top-four finish while Chelsea are predicted to finish ninth. Opta's calculations also suggest that the bottom three, currently the three clubs promoted last season, will all go down with 20th-placed Burnley given an 86.9% chance of relegation.

South Korea Will Not Take Singapore, China Lightly



SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korea begin their World Cup qualifying campaign against Singapore in Seoul on Thursday followed by a trip to face China, and while Juergen Klinsmann's side are expected to make short work of both opponents the German is taking nothing for granted. The Koreans, who have appeared at the last 10 World Cups, are heavy favorites to top Group C in the second phase of qualifying for the 2026 tournament, which will be hosted in the U.S., Canada and Mexico and is the first to feature 48 teams. After a rocky start to his tenure, Klinsmann has guided Korea to three straight wins in friendly matches and should make it five victories on the trot against 155th-ranked Singapore and number 79 China. "I don't agree with that at all. It will be the wrong way to look at it," Klinsmann said. "All the teams that fight for a spot in the World Cup will fight even harder now. It will be still very difficult." "You have to have a very professional mindset. We will be very serious in every World Cup qualifying game." South Korea, number 24 in the FIFA rankings, have won the Asian Cup twice, but the regional heavyweights have not lifted the trophy since 1960. Klinsmann said winning the next edition in Qatar early next year was their number one target. "We want to go there and win the Asian Cup," he added. "Not say maybe final four. Not maybe. We go there to win it." "You have to put this into your mind because a tournament is mainly a mind game. You have to build belief. You have to build credibility within the team that you can win it." "We have to aim for the highest goal. If we don't reach it, then it's the fault of the coach. It's no problem."

Haliburton, Pacers End 76ers' Winning Streak

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Tyrese Haliburton had 33 points and 15 assists, Obi Toppin added 27 points and the Indiana Pacers defeated the host Philadelphia 76ers 132-126 in the NBA in-season tournament. Myles Turner scored 15 of his 17 points in the fourth quarter, while Bruce Brown had 14 for the game and T.J. McConnell posted 11. Turner hit a 3-pointer as the shot clock expired for a 122-116 lead with 3:03 remaining. Haliburton then sealed the victory with his seventh trey for a 127-118 advantage with 1:03 left. Joel Embiid led the Sixers with 39 points and 12 rebounds while hitting all 17 of his free throws. De'Anthony Melton added 30 points and Tyrese Maxey had 27. Tobias Harris scored 22. The Sixers, who closed within four twice in the final 30 seconds, had their eight-game winning streak snapped. Harris and Brown collided with 10:40 left in the fourth and Harris appeared to strain his neck. But after a quick trip to the locker room with trainer Kevin Johnson, Harris returned a few minutes later. Maxey made a 3-pointer with 9:07 remaining to give the 76ers a 103-101 lead. But the Pacers kept pace and Toppin threw down an alley-oop dunk with 5:17 to go, and the Pacers led 115-111. Haliburton dropped in a deep 3-pointer, his sixth of the first half, with 4:02 left in the second quarter for a 59-48 Pacers lead. Embiid continued to attack the rim and hit a pair of free throws with 59.3 seconds remaining to close the Sixers within 62-54. The Pacers led 63-54 at halftime thanks in large part to Haliburton's 20 points. Indiana shot 11 of 25 from 3-point territory in the half. Embiid led the Sixers with 18 points on 3-of-10 shooting, but he knocked down all 12 of his free throws. Sixers coach Nick Nurse was assessed a technical foul with 10:08 to go in the third as his team fell behind 72-59. Philadelphia responded with a 6-0 run capped by Harris' dunk with 8:58 left. Embiid hit a tough left-handed shot off the glass with 3:04 left and the Sixers trailed 85-82. McConnell snapped that 7-0 spurt with a jump stop and short jumper in the lane for the Pacers. Indiana led 95-94 at the end of the third. Melton kept the Sixers close with 15 points in the third.



McLaren Can Be a Real Threat to Red Bull Next Season

LONDON (Dispatches) - Ross Brawn is tipping a resurgent McLaren to take the fight to dominant Red Bull and triple world champion Max Verstappen next season. Brawn knows all about Formula One domination, having worked with Michael Schumacher through a golden period at Ferrari and then winning titles with his own eponymous team in 2009 before getting Mercedes started on the road to unprecedented success. Speaking ahead of the British launch on Wednesday of the four-part series Brawn: The Impossible Formula 1 Story on Disney+, the 68-year-old former F1 managing director and ex-Ferrari technical director saw McLaren as a team to watch. "They've clearly got a much stronger organisation now. Hats off to (team principal) Andrea Stella. He was one of my engineers at Ferrari. And I guess you don't see these little tiger cubs growing up to be big tigers," he said. "I'm really pleased how well he's doing and he seems to have galvanised the organisation. So, I think with that improvement going into next season they can be a real threat." "They've got fantastic drivers as well, pushing each other very hard." Britain's Lando Norris has finished second six times in 20 races while Australian rookie team mate Oscar Piastri won the Qatar Saturday sprint and finished second to Verstappen in the Sunday grand prix with Norris third. After failing to score in their first two races of the campaign, McLaren have staged an impressive recovery and are now fourth overall. Brawn was also optimistic Ferrari would improve under Fred Vasseur's guidance but recognised Red Bull would not be standing still and had the added benefit of being able to switch attention early to next year's car. Red Bull have so far won 19 of 20 races, with Verstappen triumphant 17 times — a record for a single season that he can extend in Las Vegas this weekend — and team mate Sergio Perez twice. "It's been a bit frustrating. I think sometimes when you get a team dominating you'd hope that both drivers would be fighting each other and that hasn't happened with Red Bull, which is a shame," said Brawn.



India Focused on World Cup Progress and Not History Ahead of Semis

MUMBAI (Reuters) - India's young team will not be weighed down by history when they face New Zealand in the World Cup semi-final as they have already shown they can handle the high expectations during their unbeaten run in the group stage, skipper Rohit Sharma said. India won their first World Cup in 1983 and endured a long wait before MS Dhoni's side claimed the trophy on home soil in 2011 and the current side has raised hopes of another triumph with nine wins in a flawless campaign before Wednesday's game. "That's the beauty of this team. Half of the guys weren't even born when we won our first World Cup. And then when we won our second World Cup in 2011, half of the guys weren't even playing the game," Rohit told reporters in Mumbai. "This current crop of players, they're very much into what's happening today, what can happen tomorrow. Those are things they try and focus on. I don't see them talking about how we won the last World Cup, how we won our first World Cup." The focus is on how they can get better as players, what they can bring to the team and what are the things they need to improve. "Rohit said he was impressed with how his men had managed the pressure from an expectant nation. "From the first game to the last game, be it a league match, semi-final or final, whenever you play a World Cup game there's always pressure," Rohit said. "This is obvious because the World Cup is a World Cup, that's why there's pressure. But we have handled that pressure very well in the last nine games." New Zealand represent a bogey team for India having beaten them in the 2019 semi-finals and Rohit acknowledged the threat of Kane Williamson's side. "Whenever we've come up against New Zealand, (they are) probably the most disciplined team in terms of how they want to play the game. And they play their cricket very smartly. They understand the opposition quite well," he added. "Obviously having played with a lot of our players in different stages of their careers, different tournaments, they do understand the mentality of the opposition. It's the same for us as well."