

The 16th edition of the Fajr Visual Arts Festival, on the Eve of the 45th Anniversary of the Victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, Kicked Off Late on Sunday at the Museum of Contemporary Arts in Tehran

# IRAN NEWS

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy Has Confiscated a Foreign Tanker Carrying Two Million Liters of Smuggled Fuel in the Country's Southern Waters, a Commander Says

2

DOMESTIC

## \$1b Annual Trade between Tehran, Tashkent Achievable

> SEE PAGE 2

3

INTERNATIONAL

## 3 U.S. Troops Killed, Up to 34 Injured in Jordan Drone Strike

> SEE PAGE 3

## Iran Has No Links to Attacks on U.S. Forces in Region



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's mission to the United Nations says Tehran has no links to attacks on U.S. forces in the region as they are related to conflict between resistance groups and the U.S. military. The mission issued a statement published late on Sunday after a drone attack on a US base on the border of Jordan and Syria that killed three American forces. The statement said Iran had no link to the attack, adding that the incident was part of the "conflict between the army of the United States of America and resistance groups in the region, which reciprocate retaliatory attacks." U.S. President Joe Biden blamed what he called "Iranian-backed groups" mainly based in Iraq for the attack, which killed three American forces and wounded at least 34. The attack marks the first time that U.S. military personnel were killed since the start of the Israeli onslaught on Gaza on October 7. In his statement, Biden said the attack took place in northeast Jordan near the Syrian border. Jordan, however, says it did not occur on its soil but in Syria. The U.S. president said efforts are underway to gather the facts of the attack and vowed revenge. "Have no doubt - we will hold all those responsible to account at a time and in a manner of our choosing," he said. According to a statement from U.S. Central Command, the number of those injured in the drone attack is expected to change as more people seek care. Eight personnel were evacuated from Jordan for higher-level care, but are in stable condition. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, an umbrella group of anti-terror fighters, claimed attacks on three bases, including one on the Jordan-Syria border. Since the beginning of Israel's war against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip on October 7, there have been around 160 attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria. Most of those have been claimed by regional resistance forces. Iran has frequently said resistance groups act on their own in response to Israeli crimes in Gaza.

## Yemen Targets U.S. Warship in Aden Gulf in Fresh Pro-Palestine Strike



SANAA (Dispatches) - Yemen's Armed Forces have conducted a fresh strike against an American warship in the Gulf of Aden in another show of support for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, who have come under a genocidal US-backed war by Israel. In a statement on Monday, the forces' spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Saree said that USS Lewis B. Puller had been targeted by a naval missile on Sunday evening. He added that one of the tasks of the US Navy ship is to provide logistical support to the American forces participating in the Saudi-led military aggression against Yemen. "The operation lies within measures taken by the Yemeni Armed Forces in defense of Yemen and support of the oppressed Palestinian people," Saree said. He also stressed that the Yemeni forces will continue to block Israeli navigation in the Arabian Sea and the Red Sea and prevent ships from heading to ports in the occupied lands until Israel's Gaza onslaught ceases and its siege on the Palestinian territory is lifted. Israel waged its brutal war on Gaza on October 7 following a historic operation by the Palestinian Hamas resistance group against the occupying entity. The U.S. has offered untrammelled support for Israel during the aggression that has so far killed at least 26,422 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injured at least 65,087 others. In solidarity with the Palestinians in besieged Gaza, Yemeni forces have targeted ships in the southern Red Sea, the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, the Gulf of Aden, and even in the Arabian Sea with owners linked to Israel or those going to and from ports in the occupied territories. In response to the maritime campaign in support of Palestine, the US and its allies have launched strikes on Yemen in violation of the country's sovereignty and international law. The illegal strikes prompted Yemen to declare American and British vessels as legitimate targets for its armed forces.



## Leader Visits Exhibition of Iran's Homegrown Products

TEHRAN - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei paid a visit to an exhibition of the capabilities of Iranian-made products on Monday. The exhibition was held at the Imam Khomeini Hussainiyah of Tehran. The most important feature of this year's exhibition was domestic production with a focus on knowledge-based companies and the manufacturing supply chain. The latest achievements and products of knowledge-based companies in various sectors such as "energy", "the oil and petrochemical industry", "automotive industries", "mining, mineral and metal industries", "communications, information technology and satellite manufacturing", "food and agriculture industries", "medical equipment", "air, sea, rail, and land transportation", "textile industries", and "housing and household appliances" were showcased in the exhibition. The capabilities of knowledge-based companies in designing and manufacturing equipment for oil well drilling, the petrochemical industry and catalysts were one part of the exhibition, Khamenei.ir reported. Additionally, knowledge-based companies active in the field of electricity and power plants also presented their achievements and capabilities during the event. In the exhibition, electric cars, motorcycles and their charging devices, as well as fuel-efficient car engines were presented. The event included various sections explaining plans for transforming major industrial companies into knowledge-based organizations, as well as activities of knowledge-based companies. The exhibition also spotlighted the steel industry, the capabilities of knowledge-based companies in this field, and their involvement in mineral industries such as the copper industry. Leader has always emphasized boosting domestic production and cutting dependence on foreign products especially in naming the year he puts emphasis on this issue.

## Tehran Calls on Islamic Nations to Cut Off Economic Arteries of Israeli Regime

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanaani has called on Islamic countries to use the tools they have to cut off the economic and political arteries of the Israeli regime to support the Palestinian people in war-torn Gaza and the occupied West Bank. "Islamic countries have tools at their disposal which they can use to cut off the economic and political arteries of the Zionist regime," Kanaani said on Monday, adding that those countries should not wait for action by international organizations which he said are under the influence of Western states. "At these difficult times that the innocent people of Gaza and the West Bank are under constant attacks by the Israeli regime, their first expectation from Islamic nations and governments is that they use their tools to exert pressure on Israel and support Palestine", the spokesman said during his weekly press briefing in Tehran. He said that while Israel is receiving an all-out support from the U.S. and Europe, Islamic countries should also use "the tool of energy" to put pressure on the regime. Iran backs putting pressure on the Israeli regime, and fortunately, good legal and international measures have also been taken, Kanaani said, expressing hope that all those actions and tools can be used well to stop the Israeli war machine against Palestinians. Reacting to speculations over Iran's role in the death of US forces in the West Asia region, Kanaani said that the Islamic Republic has time and again warned about the spillover of tensions since the beginning of the crisis in Gaza due to the United States' all-out support for the Israeli attacks on the Palestinians and that Tehran has also emphasized that the constant violation of the sovereignty

of Iraq, Syria, and Yemen by the U.S. exacerbates the insecurity. Thus, those who promote U.S. military presence in the region to achieve their objectives, reiterate such allegations against Iran with the aim of covering up challenges and hardships that they are facing, the spokesman argued. On Iranian Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali-Akbar Ahmadian's visit to Iraq after Iran's attack on an Israeli spy center in the Iraqi city of Erbil, he said that military, security, and government officials of both countries hold regular negotiations, so this trip is in line with bilateral coordination in fighting terrorism and strengthening collaborations for peace, security, and stability in common border areas. Naturally, he said, recent issues of mutual interest are scheduled to be discussed by the Iranian SNSC secretary and the Iraqi side. Meanwhile he said Iran and China believe that the recent developments in the Red Sea are attributed to the spillover from the cruelty being inflicted on Gaza. Kanaani reacted to media reports that the Chinese officials have called on Iran to help rein in the attacks the Yemeni forces launch on Israel-bound ships in the Red Sea or risk harming business relations with Beijing. Dismissing the stories on such a Chinese demand, the spokesman advised journalists to refer to the official sources in this regard. Kanaani said the spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry has adopted a clear stance in this relation. "We (Iran and China), as two countries favoring convergence, have expressed our commitment to and stance on the establishment of regional justice, settlement of conflicts, and countering tensions," he added.



## Iran, Pakistan Agree on High-Level Consultative Mechanism



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Foreign Minister of Pakistan Jilani Abbas Jilani unveiled plans for the formation of a high-level consultative mechanism with Iran. Speaking at a joint press conference with his Iranian counterpart Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in Islamabad on Monday, Jilani said the two neighbors have agreed to establish a consultative mechanism at the level of the foreign ministers. The Pakistani foreign minister said the mechanism will oversee the course of cooperation between the two neighbors. Expressing Pakistan and Iran's determination to broaden their political and security relations, Jilani said the two countries have agreed to adopt collective and concerted stances based upon cooperation in the fight against terrorism. On the joint plans for the war on terrorism, he said the two countries will soon introduce officers coordinating interaction between them. He also described mutual "respect for the sovereignty" of each other as a principle of cooperation between Pakistan and Iran. The two neighbors have agreed to broaden cooperation in the economic field and promote welfare in the common border areas, the Pakistani diplomat stated. For his part, Amir-Abdollahian said Iran and Pakistan have never had border troubles. Few countries in the world share as many cultural, historic and geographical commonalities as Iran and Pakistan do, he stated. Describing Iran and Pakistan as two friendly and brotherly nations whose security is interrelated, Amir-Abdollahian said they respect each other's national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Iran and Pakistan will never allow the terrorists to jeopardize the security of the two nations, he underlined, noting that the terrorists along the border areas are undoubtedly supported by the third countries.

## Pakistan Seeks Close, Deep Security Cooperation With Iran



ISLAMABAD (IRNA) - Pakistan's Ambassador to Iran Muhammad Mudassar Tipu has emphasized the importance of Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian's ongoing visit to Islamabad, saying Pakistan seeks deep intelligence and security cooperation with Tehran. Tipu said on Monday that Pakistan enjoys close, long-standing relations and historical cooperation with Iran, adding that the neighboring countries are well aware of the sensitivity of bilateral relations as well as the unfolding events in the region. Iran's Foreign Minister's visit to Pakistan is considered very important at the current time and shows the will of both neighbors to deal with common issues, said the ambassador who presented his credentials to Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi on Saturday. Tipu said terrorism is a common challenge between Pakistan and Iran, adding that the two countries are aware of their common enemies and working together to overcome the challenges facing their relations. Referring to the recent attack on Pakistani nationals in the southeastern Iranian city of Saravan, the Pakistani ambassador appreciated the cooperation shown by the Iranian government and authorities of Sistan and Baluchistan province and said the incident was in line with plots of enemies and terrorists to harm bilateral relations between the two countries.



# IRAN NEWS



## Steel Ingot Export Up 7.6% in 9 Months on Year

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The export of steel ingot from Iran rose 7.6 percent in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2023), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, the Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA) announced. The ISPA put the country's steel ingot export at 5.621 million tons at the first nine months of this year, and at 5.224 million tons in the first nine months of the previous year. As the association has announced, the production of steel ingot in Iran rose three percent in the first nine months of the current year, as compared to the same period of time in the past year. The ISPA put the country's steel ingot output at 24.492 million tons at the first nine months of this year, and at 23.786 million tons in the first nine months of the previous year. According to the latest report released by the World Steel Association (WSA), Iran's steel production reached at 3.0 million tons in November, 2023, registering a 7.6 percent increase compared to the previous month. The Islamic Republic produced 28.1 million tons of crude steel in the first 11 months of 2023, also registering a 0.6 percent increase as compared to the same period in the past year, the WSA report said. Based on the WSA data, Iran maintained its place as the world's 10th largest steel producer in the mentioned period. The WSA data put the world's 11-month crude steel production at 1.715 billion tons, indicating a 0.5 percent increase compared to the first 11 months of 2022. The world's 71 steel producers managed to produce 145.5 million tons of steel in November 2023, 3.3 percent more than the figure for the previous year's same month.

## Nine-Month Carpet Exports Insignificant



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran's carpet exports have had an insignificant share of the country's total non-oil exports over the past nine calendar months to December 22, according to a recent report. A report by Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (TCCIMA) suggests that Iran exported as low as \$100 million worth of carpets and handicrafts in the nine-month period which accounted for merely 0.27% of the country's total non-oil exports in the time span. Iran has exported some \$36.5 billion worth of non-oil products in the period under review, according to the report. The TCCIMA report noted that the average export price of Iranian carpets and handicrafts was \$2900 per ton which is \$27 more than that of last year's corresponding period. It also put Iran's last year carpet exports at \$50.7 million which have registered a meaningful decline in comparison to \$427.3 million reported 10 years ago when carpet exports accounted for 1.3% of the Iranian total non-oil exports. Germany, the UAE, China and Pakistan are the top four destinations for Iranian carpet, together receiving more than a half of the country's carpet exports.



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

## \$1b Annual Trade between Tehran, Tashkent Achievable

TEHRAN - Iran and Uzbekistan can boost the annual bilateral trade to \$1 billion, the Iranian industry minister said. The two countries have high capacities and potentials to enhance the mutual trade, so attaining \$1 billion worth of trade between the two countries is possible, Iran's minister of industry, mine and trade stated. Abbas Aliabadi, who has traveled to Uzbekistan at the head of a high-ranking trade-economic delegation, in a meeting with the newly-appointed ambassador of Uzbekistan to Iran Fariddin Nasriyev pointed to the volume of the trade transactions between the two countries and said, "In the meeting with the president of Uzbekistan, Leader of the Islamic Revolution called for the expansion of bilateral relations in the fields of trade, transportation, science, technology and tourism." He put the current value of the trade exchanges between Iran and Uzbekistan at about \$500 million. Tehran and Tashkent have a high potential to boost bilateral trade to \$1 billion, Aliabadi emphasized, IBENA reported. In his visit to this Central Asian country, Iran's minister of industry will hold an expert-level meeting with the Iranian economic activists and businesspersons based in Uzbekistan. Developing trade and economic cooperation with Uzbekistan has been cited as the main aim behind the visit. Meanwhile the deputy director of International Business Promotion

of Iran Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) has highlighted the achievements of a visit by Iranian Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade Aliabadi to Uzbekistan, emphasizing that the Iranian administration aims to make use of political capacities to expand economic relations with countries in the region. "Considering the approach of the current administration for maximum utilization of political capacities for development of economic and commercial relations, this opportunity can be used in the best possible way," Mohammad-Sadegh Ghanadzadeh said on Monday, referring to Aliabadi's recent trip to Tashkent. Ghanadzadeh said the central banks of Iran and Uzbekistan agreed during the trip to activate the banking exchange mechanism and to introduce commercial banks to advance technical negotiations between the two countries. The Uzbek government also accepted the most favored nation (MFN) principle in its dealings with Iran after several years of fruitless talks, he said, adding that the two sides signed a preferential trade agreement (FTA). The official further explained that the two sides reached extensive agreements under which Iran will participate in the overhaul of gas turbines and establishment of a regional service center for the repair and overhaul of oil, refinery and power plant equipment in Uzbekistan.

## Iranian Destroyer Attracts Customers after Round-The-World Mission



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Many foreign countries have become interested in purchasing Iran's homegrown Dena destroyer, which has circumnavigated the world as part of the 86th flotilla, Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani said. The Dena destroyer, which has circumnavigated the globe without any breakdown or even a mere fracture in its antennas, has attracted many customers after the mission, the Navy commander said on Sunday. Pointing to Iran's success in developing indigenous maritime methods and navigational techniques for riding out storms, the commander said the 86th flotilla's contact with Iran was not disconnected even for a second during its mission. The admiral also unveiled plans for Iran's naval presence in the Antarctic. The Iranian Navy's 86th flotilla, comprising the Dena destroyer and the Makran forward base ship, left Iran's southern port city of Bandar Abbas in September 2022 and returned home in May 2023 after sailing 63,000 kilometers of sea routes. Dena is a Mowj-class destroyer that joined the Iranian Navy in June 2021. The military vessel is equipped with anti-ship cruise missiles, torpedoes and naval cannons. Makran is a forward base ship weighing 121,000 tons. The warship can carry five helicopters and is employed for providing logistical support for the combat warships.

## Disposal Costs Environment \$1.7b Annually

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Improper management of waste in the country causes 870 trillion rials (some \$1.7 billion) in damage to the environment and natural resources every year, an official with the Department of Environment (DOE) has said. Some 445 thousand tons of urban, rural, medical, agricultural, and industrial waste are generated per day, equaling 164 million tons per year, leading to land, water, and air pollution, IRNA quoted Mehdi Khadem-Sameni as saying. Converting waste into fertilizer and energy, using standard waste incinerators, and modern methods such as digesters and pyrolysis are among the known strategies used in the world for handling waste, but these methods do not exist in the country, he added. The current methods used in the country for waste management are old, the official noted, regretting that up to 80 percent of the waste that can be recycled to be used for different purposes is discarded. "Out of around 600 waste management centers across the country, just four to five are standardized. In other words, some 96 percent of the waste is just dumped in landfills." According to World Bank, the pollution of resources in 2004 incurred a loss of about 8 billion dollars to the country, and the figure rose to about 10 billion dollars in 2009. Today, one of the most serious problems of the country's environment is improper management of all municipal, household,

industrial, hospital, and hazardous wastes, which has caused environmental pollution and a negative impact on the quality and quantity of biological resources (water, soil, and air) and incurs a loss of huge sum of money annually. According to the DOE, an estimated 10 to 17 percent of the total produced waste is recycled. While in developed countries this number reaches up to 70 percent. In 2021, Iran ranked 17th in terms of waste production, according to the World Population Review. Although there will be pollution as long as there is consumption in any way, it can be kept to an acceptable level by considering green options so as not to cause excessive pollution of the environment. Some 65 percent of waste is "wet" and 35 percent is "dry", while 25 percent is processed and the remaining 75 percent without processing is buried directly and only 10 percent is separated at the source. Every Iranian consumes an average of three plastic bags daily, and the average life of each bag is only 12 minutes, while it remains in nature for hundreds of years. In addition to this, disposable plastic containers, plastic tablecloths, plastic packaging, etc., have been produced in large quantities in the country, which has been used a lot due to the change in people's lifestyles in recent decades and has put double pressure on the environment.



## Iran Imports 21m mt of Basic Goods in 10 Months

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran has imported some 20.93 million metric tons (mt) of basic goods at the value of \$13.6 billion in 10 calendar months to January 20, according to a recent report by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA). The IRICA report suggested that Iran's imports of essential goods in the period under review have posted a slight 0.02% increase in terms of tonnage, while declining 8.24% in value terms. The figures indicated that corn, edible oils, different types of oil seeds, rice and wheat were the top five items among the essential goods imported into Iran in the 10-month period. Imports of corn, edible oil and oil seeds have registered 12.93%, 1.64% and 3.94% year-on-year increases respectively, while imports of rice and wheat have dropped by 46.52% and 35.61% compared to figures reported in last year's corresponding period.

## Iran Non-Oil Product Export Hit \$40b in 10 Months



TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran exported non-oil products valued at \$40.5 billion during the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2023-January 20, 2024), the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration said. Mohammad Rezvanifar said on Monday that Iran exported 113 million tons of non-oil goods, valued at \$40.5 billion, to foreign countries in ten months, registering a 9.4 percent hike in volume and an 11 percent decline in value compared to last year's corresponding period. Iran imported 32.7 million tons of goods, valued at \$54.3 billion, in the mentioned period, showing a 6 and an 11.6 percent YOY rise in volume and value respectively, he added. He named China, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Turkey, and India as the major export destinations of Iranian goods at the said time, and the UAE, China, Turkey, Germany, and India as the main import sources. Rezvanifar said that the value of Iran's transit in the first ten months is 14.2 million tons, which shows 29 percent year-on-year growth.



### Armenia PM Proposes Non-Aggression Pact to Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (Dispatches) - Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said that he has proposed the signing of a non aggression pact to Azerbaijan, pending a comprehensive peace treaty between the arch-foe Caucasus neighbors. Yerevan and Baku have fought two wars -- in 2020 and in the 1990s -- over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, which Azerbaijan recaptured in a lightning offensive last year. "We have presented Azerbaijan with a proposal for a mutual arms control mechanism and the signing of a non-aggression pact if the signature of a peace treaty encounters delays," Pashinyan said in a speech during an Armenian Army Day celebration event. Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev had previously said that a peace agreement could have been signed by the end of the last year. But internationally mediated peace talks have so far failed to produce a breakthrough. Aliyev sent troops to Karabakh on September 19 and after just one day of fighting Armenian separatists -- who had controlled the region for three decades -- surrendered and agreed to reintegrate with Baku.



### Stubb, Haavisto Through to Finland's Presidential Run-Off Vote



HELSINKI (Dispatches) - Favorites Alexander Stubb and Pekka Haavisto on Sunday qualified for the second round of Finland's presidential election, which took place against a backdrop of soured relations with neighboring Russia. With all votes counted, conservative former Prime Minister Alexander Stubb won 27.2 percent of votes, while ex-foreign minister Pekka Haavisto of the Green Party, running as an independent, secured 25.8 percent, said election officials. Voter turnout was 71.5 percent. They will meet in the runoff election on February 11. "No matter who I'd face in the second round, I know we'll have a constructive, civilised and good discussion about difficult foreign policy questions," Stubb had told public broadcaster Yle earlier. While the president's powers are limited, the head of state -- who also acts as supreme commander of Finland's armed forces -- helps direct foreign policy in collaboration with the government. That means that the changing geopolitical landscape in Europe will be the main concern for the winner. "Experience in foreign policy could be what people were looking for, looking at the two who will go to the next round," Hanna Ojanen, research director of politics at Tampere University, told AFP as the results became clear. Heading into the vote, experts had thought far-right Finns Party candidate Jussi Halla-aho might make it to the second round. In the end, he came third with 19 percent of the vote. Voter Hannu Kuisi told AFP the country needed a president with "leadership" and "humanity." "Of course, he must also be tough when necessary," he added. Relations between Moscow and Helsinki deteriorated following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, prompting Finland to drop decades of military non-alignment and join NATO in April 2023.

### 3 U.S. Troops Killed, Up to 34 Injured in Jordan Drone Strike



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Three U.S. service members were killed and dozens may be wounded after an unmanned aerial drone attack on U.S. forces stationed in northeastern Jordan near the Syrian border, President Joe Biden and U.S. officials said on Sunday. Biden blamed the groups for the attack, the first deadly strike against U.S. forces since the Israel-Hamas war erupted in October and sent shock waves throughout the Middle East. "While we are still gathering the facts of this attack, we know it was carried out by radical Iran-backed militant groups operating in Syria and Iraq," Biden said in a statement. "Have no doubt - we will hold all those responsible to account at a time and in a manner of our choosing," he said. Biden later asked for a moment of silence for the three killed service members during a campaign event in South Carolina, adding, "We shall respond." U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin echoed that threat. He and other senior officials briefed Biden earlier in the day on the attack. At least 34 personnel were injured in the attack, but that number is expected to change as more people seek care, according to a statement from U.S. Central Command. Eight personnel were evacuated from Jordan for higher level care, but are in stable condition. Two U.S. officials said the drone struck near the barracks early in the morning, which could explain the high number of casualties. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, an umbrella organization of hardline Iran-backed militant groups, claimed attacks on three bases, including one on the Jordan-Syria border. The attack is a major escalation of the already tense situation in the Middle East, where war broke out in Gaza after Palestinian Islamist group Hamas' attack on Israel on Oct. 7 which killed 1,200. Israel's subsequent assault on Gaza has killed over 26,000 Palestinians, according to the local health ministry. Since then, U.S. forces have come under attack more than 150 times by Iran-backed groups in Iraq and Syria, causing at least 70 casualties prior to Sunday's attack, most of them traumatic brain injuries. U.S. warships have also been fired

at by Houthi forces in Yemen, who are regularly attacking commercial ships passing through Red Sea waters off Yemen's coast. While the United States has thus far maintained an official line that Washington is not at war in the region, it has been retaliating against the Iran-backed groups in Iraq and Syria and carrying out strikes against Yemen's Houthi military capabilities. Republican opponents of Biden seized on the attack as evidence of the Democratic president's failure to confront Iran as its proxies strike against U.S. forces across the region. "The only answer to these attacks must be devastating military retaliation against Iran's terrorist forces... Anything less will confirm Joe Biden as a coward," said Republican Senator Tom Cotton in a statement. U.S. Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell said Biden's inaction was emboldening enemies of the United States in the Middle East. "The time to start taking this aggression seriously was long before more brave Americans lost their lives," McConnell said. A senior official with the Palestinian militant group Hamas, Sami Abu Zuhri, directly tied the attack to Israel's campaign in Gaza. "The killing of three American soldiers is a message to the U.S. administration that unless the killing of innocents in Gaza stops, it must confront the entire nation," he told Reuters. "The continued American-Zionist aggression on Gaza is capable of exploding the situation in the region." The U.S. military said the attack occurred at a base in northeastern Jordan, near the Syrian border. It did not name the base, but a person familiar with the matter identified it as Tower 22 in Jordan. U.S. military activity in Jordan can be a sensitive issue, particularly at a time of heightened tensions due to the Israel-Hamas conflict, because of increasing concern in Jordan about the war spreading. The Jordanian government said only that the attack occurred at an "advanced post" along its border with Syria. Late last year, Amman asked Washington to deploy Patriot air defense systems to bolster its border defense.

### Seeking Western Support, Zelenskiy Voices World War Risk



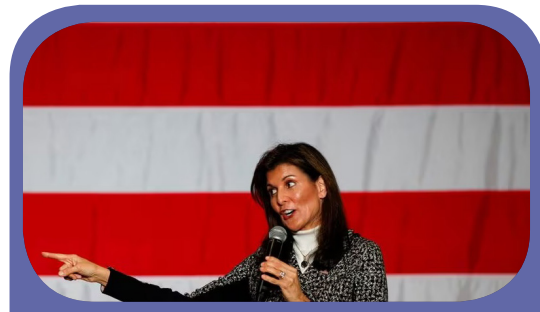
BERLIN (Dispatches) - President Volodymyr Zelenskiy voiced the danger of the Ukraine conflict escalating into World War Three, as he pressed his case for support from nations from Germany to the United States in an interview with German state broadcaster ARD. "It seems to me that the Chancellor (Olaf Scholz) is aware of this risk," Zelenskiy said, adding that if Russia hit a NATO country, it would be "the beginning of the Third World War." Asked whether he was disappointed that Germany did not plan to supply Ukraine with Taurus cruise missiles, Zelenskiy said he was only disappointed Germany had not played "the role it should have played in the first occupation of Ukraine." Referring to the weakness of the West's response to Russia's invasion of Crimea in 2014 that was a precursor for Moscow's invasion in February 2022, he said it wasn't just about the German response. "It's not just about Olaf Scholz," he said. "It concerns European leaders and the U.S." In the U.S., Zelenskiy said Ukraine has support from across the political divide. "There are individual Republicans who do not support Ukraine, but the vast majority of Democrats and Republicans support Ukraine," he said. On whether a second term of Donald Trump in the White House would affect support for his country, he said U.S. policy does not depend on a single person.

### North Korea Leader Oversees Test of Submarine-Launched Cruise Missiles



SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un oversaw the test launch of a new strategic cruise missile from a submarine, state media said Monday, the latest tension-raising move by the nuclear-armed state. The two Pulhwasal-3-31 missiles "flew in the sky above the East Sea ... to hit the island target" on Sunday, state-run news agency KCNA reported, adding that Kim Jong Un had "guided" the launch. It said the missiles were in the air for 7,421 seconds and 7,445 seconds, but did not say how far they flew or whether they had been launched from above or below the water. The Pulhwasal-3-31 is a new generation of strategic cruise missile that Pyongyang said it had only tested for the first time on Wednesday, firing multiple missiles toward the Yellow Sea. North Korea's exact sea-based launch capabilities remain unclear. Previous tests were carried out from older vessels, including from a submerged platform, rather than an actual submarine. In March last year North Korea launched two cruise missiles that flew 1,500 kilometres (930 miles), according to Pyongyang, putting all of South Korea and much of Japan within range. But analysts said it appeared they had been launched from above water level, thereby removing the stealth benefit of the weapon. North Korea also has a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) called the Pukgukong-3, with an estimated range of 1,900 kilometres. It announced a successful test of a new version of that missile in October

2021. SLBMs can be launched from under the ocean, making them extremely mobile and hard to detect. Proven SLBM capability would take North Korea's arsenal to a new level, allowing deployment far beyond the Korean peninsula and a second-strike capability in the event of an attack. North Korea has also conducted what it called simulations with its "first tactical nuclear attack submarine." Sunday's test from the submarine "had no impact on the security of a neighboring country and has nothing to do with the regional situation," the KCNA report continued, adding that Kim had "expressed great satisfaction" with the launch. South Korea's military said Sunday that it had detected cruise missiles fired near waters around the North's Simpo area. Pyongyang has accelerated weapons testing in the new year, including tests of what it called an "underwater nuclear weapon system" and a solid-fuelled hypersonic ballistic missile. Unlike their ballistic counterparts, the testing of cruise missiles is not banned under current UN sanctions against Pyongyang. Cruise missiles tend to be jet-propelled and fly at a lower altitude than more sophisticated ballistic missiles, making them harder to detect and intercept. Recent months have seen a sharp deterioration in ties between the two Koreas, with both sides jettisoning key tension-reducing agreements, ramping up frontier security, and conducting live-fire drills along the border.



### Haley Suggests She'll Stay in Republican Race After South Carolina

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley accused party leaders of not being honest brokers in her campaign against Donald Trump and said she did not have to win the nominating contest in South Carolina to stay in the race. Haley, a former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, told NBC's Meet the Press that the former president would become even more "uninged" as the campaign for the Republican presidential nomination progressed. Haley is trying to gain momentum against Trump after coming in third place behind him in the Iowa caucuses and second place in New Hampshire. Both are now seeking victory in South Carolina, where Haley once served as governor. Trump is far head of Haley in the polls, but Haley said she did not necessarily need to win her home state to keep going. The Republican primary takes place on Feb. 24. "I need to show that I'm building momentum. I need to show that I'm stronger in South Carolina than New Hampshire," she said. "Does that have to be a win? I don't think that necessarily has to be a win. But it certainly has to be better than what I did in New Hampshire and it certainly has to be close." Republican heavyweights have thrown their support behind Trump, who has long been the frontrunner for the nomination, but the RNC stepped back from a proposal to declare him the presumptive nominee. A proposal to declare him as such was withdrawn last week after Trump soured on the idea. Asked if the RNC had been an honest broker on the issue, Haley said no. "Clearly not," Haley told NBC. "If you're going to go ... and basically tell the American people that you're going to go and decide who the nominee is after only two states have voted... this is a democracy. The American people want to have their say in who is going to be their nominee." Trump has repeatedly attacked Haley and the two have traded barbs over his age in recent days after he made some verbal slip-ups, while RNC Chair Ronna McDaniel has said she does not see a path forward for Haley in the race. Haley, the only remaining challenger in the race against Trump, has stepped up her attacks against him in recent weeks.

## China Allows Philippines to Supply Troops at Disputed Reef

BEIJING (Dispatches) - The Chinese coastguard said it had made "temporary special arrangements" to allow the Philippines to deliver supplies to troops at a grounded World War Two-era vessel at a disputed reef. The Chinese coastguard has previously deployed vessels to block missions by the Philippines to supply troops on the transport ship, which has become a military outpost at the Second Thomas Shoal, 190 km (118 miles) off the Philippine island of Palawan. In a statement on its official WeChat account late on Saturday, the Chinese coastguard said it had allowed necessary supplies, but also that it would resolutely defend China's sovereignty and maritime rights and interests at the Second Thomas Shoal and its adjacent waters. "On Jan. 21, a small aircraft from the Philippines airdropped supplies to the illegally beached warship," the WeChat statement said. "The Chinese coastguard has followed up and monitored the situation in real time, controlled and dealt with it in accordance with laws and regulations, and made temporary special arrangements for the Philippines to replenish necessary daily supplies," it added. China, which claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea, points to a line on its maps that cuts into the exclusive economic zones of Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia. It has repeatedly called on the Philippines to tow away the ship on the basis of a promise it said Manila made, but Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr has denied. Saturday's WeChat message said the "relevant parties" in the Philippines had deliberately misled international opinion and ignored the facts, and that was not conducive to easing tension in the South China Sea.







## San Francisco Comeback Stuns Lions as Niners Reach Super Bowl

SAN FRANCISCO (Dispatches) - The San Francisco 49ers produced a stunning second-half fightback to beat the Detroit Lions 34-31 and reach their second Super Bowl in four years. The 49ers set up a rematch of the 2020 Super Bowl against Kansas City after recovering from a 24-7 halftime deficit to score 27 points and seal a dramatic NFC Championship victory in Santa Clara. The loss was a heartbreaking blow for Detroit, who had been bidding to remove themselves from the list of four NFL teams who have never reached a Super Bowl. Ultimately, however, Detroit's risky calls to pass up two kickable field goals in the second half in favor of failed fourth down conversions came back to haunt them. Instead it was San Francisco who showed the composure that will send them into the February 11 Super Bowl showdown against the Chiefs in Las Vegas, where they will be looking to avenge their 31-20 loss to Kansas City in the 2020 showpiece in Miami. "We played as bad of a first half as we could but we were still within 17," San Francisco head coach Kyle Shanahan said. "It's been a long year to get to this point and we got it done today. It was hard at the beginning, but the character we have on our team, we can't wait to get to Vegas." Detroit got off to a dream start, with Jameson Williams weaving over from 42 yards on the Lions' first possession to rock an expectant 49ers crowd, with Michael Badgley adding the extra point. The 49ers had no answer to the Detroit running game, and the Lions went 14-0 ahead with another rushing touchdown, this time David Montgomery barreling over from a yard out to cap an 11-play, 62-yard drive. The 49ers finally got on the board early in the second quarter with the first touchdown of the day from Christian McCaffrey, the star running back walking in from two yards out to make it 14-7. But the San Francisco score was only

a fleeting interlude to Detroit's dominance. Soon afterwards, Brock Purdy's deep pass intended for Deebo Samuel was picked off by Malcolm Rodriguez to leave Detroit in prime field position. The Lions duly took advantage of the interception, with running back Jahmyr Gibbs going over from 15 yards out to help stretch the score to 21-7. A 21-yard Badgley field goal completed the first half scoring to leave Detroit in total command at 24-7. But if everything went right for Detroit in the first half, everything went wrong after the restart. Jake Moody's 43-yard field goal cut Detroit's lead to 14 points. Meanwhile a superb defensive performance from the Chiefs stifled Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson as Baltimore's hopes of returning to next month's NFL showpiece ended in disappointment. Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes meanwhile marshalled a clinical offensive performance, throwing for one touchdown and 241 yards with no interceptions to leave Kansas City within sight of a third Super Bowl title since 2020. "It's been a heck of a year, we've been underdogs for the last few games but we never feel like underdogs," Mahomes said after the AFC Championship victory. "We've got a lot of guys on this team that know how to win when playoffs come around. I knew we were gonna make it happen and now we're in the Super Bowl." The job's not done -- we gotta go out there to Vegas and play a great team. Mahomes was given assistance by trusty tight end Travis Kelce, who made 11 receptions for 116 yards and also hauled in the Chiefs opening touchdown. Kelce's performance saw him surpass the legendary Jerry Rice in the record books for most all-time postseason catches. Kansas City will face either the Detroit Lions or San Francisco 49ers in the February 11 Super Bowl in Las Vegas.

## Tajikistan Make More History to Join Australia in Asian Cup Quarters



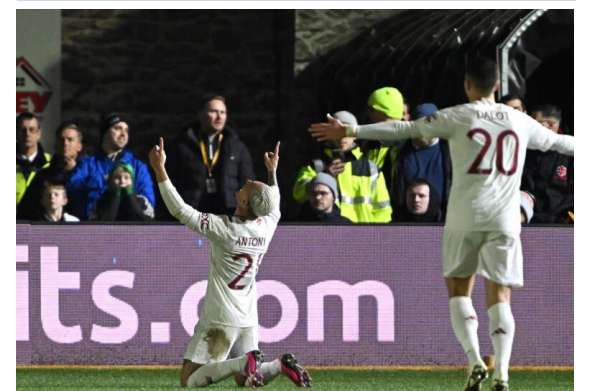
DOHA (Dispatches) - Asian Cup debutants Tajikistan celebrated making more history as they stunned the United Arab Emirates on penalties to join Australia in the quarter-finals. After the game ended 1-1 in Doha following 120 tense minutes, Tajikistan won a dramatic shootout 5-3 with Alisher Shukurov holding his nerve with the final spot-kick. The Central Asians, ranked 106th in the world and at their first Asian Cup, will now face either Jordan or the 2007 champions Iraq in the last eight. Goalkeeper Rustam Yatimov made the decisive save from Caio Canedo with the UAE's second penalty of the shootout, and his outfield team-mates did the rest. Tajikistan's charismatic Croatian coach Petar Segrt called his team "the black horses of the tournament" and said "nobody knows how far we can go." "I have no limits for the players because every game they surprise me again," he said. "My next dream is to go to the next round again. I think in Tajikistan tonight, nobody will sleep." Tajikistan had looked set for a famous victory in normal time when Vakhdat Khanonov scored with a 30th-minute header, only for Khalifa Al-Hammadi to equalise in the 95th minute and send the game into extra-time. "I dedicate this goal to my brother who passed away," the defender Khanonov said. "He is not with us and can't see my happiness." The UAE reached the semi-finals at the last two Asian Cups but Paulo Bento's side bow out to a side ranked more than 40 places lower than them.

## Sinner Stages Epic Fightback to Win Australian Open

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Jannik Sinner stormed back from two sets down to beat Daniil Medvedev in an energy-sapping five-set Australian Open final, claiming his first Grand Slam title. The Italian fourth seed had no answer to the Russian's aggression in the first two sets but dug deep to win 3-6, 3-6, 6-4, 6-4, 6-3 in three hours and 44 minutes. He collapsed to the floor before returning to his feet to savour his moment on Rod Laver Arena, climbing into his box to hug coaches Simone Vagnozzi and Darren Cahill. Sinner thundered 14 aces, hit 50 winners and broke Medvedev's serve four times to become the first Italian champion in the tournament's history. The 22-year-old is the first Italian man to win a Slam since Adriano Panatta in 1976 and the youngest man to win the Australian Open since Novak Djokovic in 2008. Sinner's semi-final victory over 10-time winner Djokovic had guaranteed there would be a new name on the trophy. But the result is a bitter blow for the third-ranked Russian, who also blew a two-set lead against Rafael Nadal in the 2022 final. "I'm feeling great, I just have to process it all," said Sinner. "It was a great match and a great opportunity and I took it in the right way. I'm happy. I think the best moment was when I went into the locker room to hug my people. They have made me feel so, so special and they also know the process behind it all. It's a great, great moment for me." "It's been a hell of a journey till now, even if I am still only 22." Sinner admitted he had been forced to scramble for answers because Medvedev was "crushing" it in the first two sets. "The match was going so fast and I had zero chances in the first two sets, but I was looking for any small chance and I managed to break him in the third set and that's it," he said. Former US Open champion Medvedev, who has now lost five of his six finals in the majors, said Sinner deserved to win. "You fought to the end and you managed to raise your level," said the 27-year-old. "You and your team are doing an amazing job. I hope I can try to get the next one if we play in a final." The Russian, in his previous six matches, had spent nearly six hours longer on court than Sinner, who had only lost one set. But, looking fresh, he was quickly into his stride, unsettling the usually calm Italian, who was unable to find any sort of rhythm. Sinner, playing in his first Grand Slam final, had been broken just twice in the tournament before the final but Medvedev doubled that tally in the first set.



## Antony Spares Man Utd's Blushes Against Newport



NEWPORT (Dispatches) - Manchester United survived a major FA Cup scare from Newport County as Antony's first goal this season inspired a dramatic 4-2 victory over the fourth-tier minnows on Sunday. Erik ten Hag's side were in danger of falling victim to an epic giant-killing after blowing a two-goal lead at Rodney Parade. Bruno Fernandes put United ahead and Kobbie Mainoo's first goal for the club doubled their lead in the first half of the fourth round clash. But Bryn Morris pulled one back for plucky Newport -- currently 16th in League Two -- before Will Evans rocked United with his second half equaliser. With United wobbling, Antony was their unlikely saviour as the Brazil forward bagged his first goal since April after a difficult campaign marred by poor form and domestic violence allegations that he denies. Rasmus Hojlund put a flattering gloss on the scoreline for United when he netted in stoppage-time. United's victory came on another problematic day for Ten Hag, who had to fend off reports of a row with Marcus Rashford. Ten Hag, whose side are languishing in eighth place in the Premier League and have been eliminated from the Champions League, explained Rashford's absence from the team by saying he had "reported ill". However, reports claimed the 26-year-old England forward had been in a nightclub in Northern Ireland on Thursday evening, hours before failing to attend training on Friday. Asked specifically about that Ten Hag said, "It's an internal matter. I will deal with it." All the ingredients for a shock were there, given United's spluttering form this term and Newport's past FA Cup heroics. A raucous crowd, some waving homemade tin foil FA Cups, crammed into the tiny, ramshackle stadium in the hope of witnessing history. Temporary seating was added to accommodate demand for tickets, while enterprising fans climbed on scaffolding outside the ground to catch the action. Newport memorably knocked Leicester out of the FA Cup in 2019, but initially it seemed United would easily avoid becoming another victim of the FA Cup's rich history of upsets. Ten Hag had taken no chances as he named a strong side featuring all United's key players. A flowing move produced United's opener in the seventh minute as Luke Shaw's pass was deftly flicked into Fernandes's path by Antony and the Portugal midfielder finished with authority from the edge of the area.

## Duren Double-Double Powers Pistons Over Thunder

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Jalen Duren scored 22 points and grabbed 21 rebounds to lead the lowly Detroit Pistons to a 120-104 NBA victory over Oklahoma City, snapping the Thunder's five-game winning streak. The Pistons posted just their sixth win of the season despite the absence of leading scorer Cade Cunningham, who was a late scratch to manage knee trouble. It looked like more disappointment for Detroit -- who matched a league record for futility with 28 straight defeats this season -- when the Thunder jumped to a 10-point lead early in the first quarter. But the Pistons were up by nine at halftime and never trailed in the second half. Duren's career-high in rebounds included nine of the Pistons' 15 offensive boards. "It's cool," Duren said of his first career 20-20 game, but he was more pleased to put up a win after the Pistons lost four of their previous five games. That included a double-digit loss to the woeful Washington Wizards on Saturday in Cunningham's first game back from an eight-game injury absence. "It was big-time," Duren said of beating the Thunder, who had 31 points from newly named All-Star Shai Gilgeous-Alexander in a defeat that dropped them to 32-14 -- tied with the Minnesota Timberwolves atop the Western Conference. "Especially after yesterday -- we didn't come out nothing like we wanted to yesterday, we were really flat. Today the main focus was keeping that energy. We knew what type of team this is, they've been playing great this year. We knew we had to come out ready to play," Duren said. Next up for the Thunder is a clash with the Timberwolves on Monday for top spot in the West. "That's the best thing about the NBA schedule is it keeps turning," said Thunder coach Mark Daigneault. "Tomorrow is a new opportunity, obviously a big challenge for us against a team that we just beat on the road. We've got to throw our best punch in that game." At Indianapolis, Canadian guard Bennedict Mathurin came off the bench to score 24 points and lead the Indiana Pacers over Memphis 116-110. Cameroonian forward Pascal Siakam and Jalen Smith each added 19 for the Pacers, who improved to 27-20. Sadiq Bey



grabbed a rebound and jammed in the game-winning dunk with 1.1 seconds remaining to give the Atlanta Hawks a 126-125 victory over visiting Toronto. Trae Young had game highs of 30 points and 12 assists for the Hawks while Bey contributed 26 points and 13 rebounds and Bogdan Bogdanovic added 24 points for Atlanta. Young's jumper with 27 seconds remaining gave Atlanta a 124-123 lead but Scottie Barnes answered with a jumper to put the Raptors ahead 125-124 with

7.1 seconds remaining. Young missed a final jumper with two seconds to play but Bey grabbed the ball and slammed in the decisive dunk. Paolo Banchero scored 26 points to lead the Orlando Magic over visiting Phoenix 110-96, the Suns losing despite a 44-point performance from Devin Booker. Kevin Durant was the only other Phoenix player in double figures as the Suns fell to 26-20, sixth in the West.