

The Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Grossi, Is Reportedly Preparing to Visit Tehran in March to Address Outstanding Safeguards Issues.

IRAN NEWS

TEDPIX, the Main Index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Rose 731 Points (0.04 Percent) to 2,071,506 on Tuesday, Which Is the Fourth Day of the Iranian Calendar Week

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IRGC Ground Force Equipped with Suicide, Combat Drones



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) furnished its ground troops with two homegrown drones used for assault and combat. The IRGC Ground Force has recently received the 'Shahed-131' suicide drone and 'Ababil-5' combat drone. With a length of 2.6 meters, Shahed-131 weighs 135 kg and can detonate targets within a radius of 900 km. The Iranian drone had played a leading role in an IRGC war game that included exercises to attack the Zionist regime's Dimona nuclear reactor with great accuracy. Shahed-131 has also been employed in many operations against secessionist hostile groups in the Kurdistan Region in northern Iraq. The other drone, Ababil-5, has been manufactured by the Defense Ministry. Shorter wings allow the combat drone to carry a heavier payload of weapons. A retractable landing gear has expanded the angle of cameras in Ababil-5. In October 2023, IRGC Commander Major General Hossein Salami said Iran's homegrown drones that use artificial intelligence can wreck any desired part of a hostile naval target thousands of miles away from the mainland.

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK



Pakistan Advances on Iran Gas Pipeline to Avoid \$18b Fine

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan initiated talks with Tehran, committing to finalize the initial phase of the 80-kilometer Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline project within its territory to prevent a potential \$18 billion fine. The Petroleum Division is seeking cabinet approval to start the IP gas pipeline project, and the board of Gas Infrastructure Development Cess (GIDC) has been instructed to accelerate the financing of this initiative. Reports indicate that Iran extended the project deadline by 180 days until September 2024 to avoid any legal disputes in international courts. This extension aims to prevent potential litigation and the strain it could cause on diplomatic ties between Pakistan and Iran, as Tehran may seek legal recourse to protect its interests in the pipeline project. In response to these developments and despite facing sanctions from the United States, Pakistan has resolved to move forward with the pipeline's construction on its soil to meet Tehran's requirements. Iran has completed its section of the pipeline, spending \$2 billion, while Pakistan has yet to begin construction. Previously, the 80km segment of the IP pipeline was part of the LNG Gwadar Pipeline project, which would connect Gwadar with other national regions. It was decided that Pakistan could undertake this construction if the diplomatic climate between Tehran and Washington improved and Pakistan received an exemption. However, due to Iran's increasing pressure, Pakistan has decided to construct a segment of the IP gas pipeline on its territory. The decision to propel the Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline project into action marks a strategic pivot in bilateral relations, heralding a new era of cooperation and mutual support. With Iran completing its segment of the pipeline stretching from the gas fields to the border, the onus was on Pakistan

to bridge the final stretch. The Special Investment Facilitation Council's approval signifies more than just a procedural step; it embodies a commitment to shared goals and economic prosperity. Iran's extension of the deadline to September 2024, coupled with an offer for legal and technical assistance, underscores a partnership that transcends mere transactional interactions, aiming instead to fortify energy ties and regional stability. The strategic importance of this pipeline cannot be overstated. Stretching from Gwadar to Nawabshah, this 781-kilometer marvel is not just a conduit for natural gas but a lifeline for Pakistan's energy-starved populace. The Gwadar port, with its advantageous positioning on the Arabian Sea, emerges as the linchpin in this energy equation, offering a cost-effective gateway for the transport of gas from Iran. This project is a testament to the power of collaboration, with both nations pulling together resources, expertise, and goodwill to turn the tide on the energy crisis. As the pipeline inches closer to completion, it promises to usher in an era of economic revival, with businesses and households alike reaping the benefits of affordable energy. While the Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline project is a monumental step towards addressing immediate energy needs, it also serves as a clarion call for introspection on the importance of developing indigenous energy resources. The path to energy security is fraught with challenges but also brimming with opportunities. By harnessing domestic resources and diversifying energy sources, Pakistan can pave the way for a future where reliance on external energy supplies is minimized. This project, therefore, is not just about securing an energy lifeline from Iran but about sparking a broader dialogue on energy independence and sustainability.

UN Urged to Take Action to Prevent Israel's Mass Atrocities in Rafah



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian says the United Nations must take action to prevent further mass atrocities by the Israeli regime in the city of Rafah in southern Gaza Strip. In a letter to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Amir-Abdollahian warned against the "devastating" outcomes of Israel's plan to carry out a full-fledged ground invasion of Rafah. He said an all-out offensive on Rafah would be devastating for the 1.5 million Palestinian people, most of them displaced, who have already been squeezed into the city and are on the edge of survival. He urged the international community not to let such carnage happen and cautioned that any military offensive on Rafah would undoubtedly be another phase in the Israeli genocide of the Palestinian people. "It is imperative that the United Nations system fulfill its responsibilities in this critical juncture and avert further mass atrocities against the Palestinians who have taken refuge in Rafah," the top Iranian diplomat emphasized. He highlighted the need for the UN and the international community to act united in urging for an instant and permanent cessation of atrocities against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

President Invited for Official Visit to Sri Lanka

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK



TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi has been invited for an official visit to Sri Lanka. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said on Tuesday during a visit to Sri Lanka that he had received the invitation for President Raisi's visit to the capital Colombo. "This visit will be a priority for Iran despite Ayatollah Raisi's busy schedule," said the minister. Amir-Abdollahian arrived in Colombo late on Monday for talks with senior officials of the Sri Lankan government amid Iran's efforts to boost its ties with the Indian Ocean island nation. Foreign Minister, who is on an official visit to Sri Lanka, met with his Sri Lankan counterpart to discuss the expansion of bilateral cooperation. Amir-Abdollahian met with his Sri Lankan counterpart Ali Sabry to discuss the expansion of bilateral cooperation. The two sides, during their diplomatic session, exchanged views on the latest developments and issues of mutual interest. A joint meeting of the delegations of the two countries was also convened in a bid to discuss the expansion of bilateral relations in various areas. As part of his trip, Amir-Abdollahian was scheduled to meet Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena and President Ranil Wickremesinghe.

Iran Dismisses Baseless U.S. Allegations About Arms Smuggling to Yemen

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has roundly dismissed as "baseless" U.S. allegations that Tehran is transferring weapons and ammunition to Yemen, stressing that Washington is abusing the Security Council podium to pursue its short-sighted political objectives. Iran's Permanent Ambassador to the United Nations Amir-Saeid Iravani, in a Monday letter addressed to the rotating president of the UN Security Council, Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, brushed off the unfounded claims leveled against his country by the Alternate Representative for Special Political Affairs of the United States Mission to the United Nations. During the recent session of the United Nations Security Council on February 14, Robert Wood alleged that Iran is enabling and supporting the attacks being carried out by Yemeni naval units against Israeli-affiliated commercial vessels in the Red Sea, and has provided Yemen's Armed Forces with advanced weapons in violation of UN Security Council Resolutions 2140 and 2216. "It is deeply regrettable that, once again, the representative of the United States has misused the Security Council platform to advance its short-sighted political agenda by spreading misinformation and baseless accusations against the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding the situation in Yemen and the Red Sea," Iravani wrote in the letter. He underscored that Iran categorically rejects such baseless allegations, and regards them as a pretext used by the United States to justify and legitimize its illegal actions and military aggression against Yemen. "Iran remains committed to its adherence to Security Council Resolutions 2140 (2014) and 2216 (2015) and has not engaged in any activities in contravention of these resolutions, including the sale or transfer of arms or weaponry systems. "Moreover, Iran consistently advocates for the peaceful resolution of the Yemen crisis through diplomatic channels and underscores its dedication to maritime security and freedom of navigation," the senior Iranian diplomat pointed out. Iravani also noted that Iran unequivocally condemns the US and British airstrikes against Yemen, stating the attacks flagrantly violate Yemen's sovereignty and territorial integrity, international law, the UN Charter as well as relevant Security Council resolutions, and pose a serious threat to regional peace and stability. The US and the UK have been carrying out strikes against Yemen after the Joe Biden administration and its allies offered the Tel Aviv regime unqualified support and said that Yemeni forces bear the consequences of their attacks against Israeli-owned ships or merchant vessels heading to the occupied territories. Yemenis have declared their open support for Palestine's struggle against the Israeli occupation since the regime launched a devastating war on Gaza in October after the territory's Palestinian resistance movements carried out a surprise retaliatory attack, dubbed Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, against the occupying entity.



People Main Factor in Iran's Decision-Making, Governance



TEHRAN (IP) - The Government Spokesman emphasized that the people are the main factor in decision-making in various fields and governance in the country. Attending his weekly press brief on Tuesday, Ali Bahadori-Jahromi highlighted the role of the people in various fields, including elections. Bahadori-Jahromi considered the role of the government to be the most important in increasing people's participation in the upcoming elections and noted that the government and parliament are trying to improve the living conditions of the people. He further said that the glorious presence of the Iranian nation can enhance the endeavor of parliament with a pre-planned schedule to solve the country's issues. The government spokesman said the people of Iran, with their direct votes, elect their representatives and form the next parliament according to the constitution. The Islamic Republic of Iran is getting prepared to hold the 12th parliamentary election in the country on March 1, 2024. Nearly 15,000 candidates will compete with each other to take 290 seats in the Iranian Parliament.

IRAN NEWS



Iran, Tatarstan Trade Turnover Increases 25%

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Iran's Consul General to Kazan, Russia, Davoud Mirzakhani, has said that the trade turnover between Tatarstan and Iran during 2023 has increased by 25% compared to the same period of the previous year, reaching \$200 million. In an interview with Russia's Tatar-Info news agency, Mirzakhani said that the volume of trade between Iran and the Republic of Tatarstan in 2022 was about \$182 million. Referring to the signing of the free trade agreement between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union, of which Russia is a member, he said that by the implementation of this agreement after its approval in the parliaments and the removal of the customs tariff on about 7,000 items of goods, bilateral trade is expected to increase significantly. Stating that Iran has achieved 97% self-sufficiency in the production of medicine, he added that Iran has achieved good global ranks in the production of petrochemical products, agriculture, steel, cement, copper, and car production, and is the 17th largest economy in the world. Iran's Consul General to Kazan emphasized that Iran has not achieved these improvements in a normal situation and a calm geopolitical environment, but it has achieved them under the most severe US sanctions, which is a very important point.

Iran Not to Tolerate Presence of Unauthorized Immigrants



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of the Iranian National Immigration Organization Abdollah Mobini has said that the country will not tolerate the presence of unauthorized immigrants. Speaking on the sidelines of a visit to the 24th Iran Media Expo on Monday, the official said that the presence of unauthorized immigrants has led to some incidents in Iran, which indicate that the issue should not be ignored. "We are determined to send all of them [the unauthorized immigrants] back," he said, stressing that Iran will not even tolerate the presence of a single unauthorized immigrant on its soil. Mobini said that the terrorist incidents in Kerman and Shahcheragh proved that the issue of undocumented immigrants must not be ignored, and Tehran has even informed international organizations that these immigrants have to leave Iran. The official added that Iran is hosting as many as 3.5 million documented immigrants of different nationalities, who have ID cards. Some 670,000 of these immigrants are school students, around 170,000 of them study in Iranian universities, and 300,000 others are young children, Mobini said.

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



Nuclear Industry Helps Iran Cope With Sanctions

TEHRAN - The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) is using its nuclear industry to mitigate the effects of the sanctions imposed against Iran, said Vice President and AEOI Chief Mohammad Eslami. VP noted that in the last three years, the AEOI has repaired various kinds of equipment in other sectors using its own vehicles and devices. These pieces of equipment are normally made and serviced by foreign firms, but the sanctions prevent them from doing so. Eslami also said that over 150 facilities in different industries, such as mining, oil, gas, petrochemicals, and cellulose, are using tools and equipment made by the AEOI. He announced that the AEOI plans to apply nuclear, laser, and plasma hybrid technologies to major industrial and economic projects. It should be noted that Iran's nuclear program has various applications in fields like agriculture, health, electricity, and more, and that the country has achieved self-sufficiency in the nuclear fuel cycle, from uranium exploration to yellowcake production. Eslami further reported the operationalization of the Emergency Control Room

Simulator designed in the country and installed in the Bushehr Nuclear Plant, in southern Iran. He said that the emergency control room simulator system of Unit 1 of Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant was designed and constructed fully indigenously. Eslami said that the emergency control room is a part of the main plan of Unit 1 of the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant, which is used in case the main control room goes out of reach. All the components of the ECRS, including hardware and software components, are made by the AEOI experts, he reiterated. In late 2020, the Iranian parliament decided to implement a strategic plan to tackle the sanctions, citing the non-implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) signed between Iran and six countries and the imposition of sanctions on Iran. According to the decision of the Iranian parliament, as of February 23, Iran suspended the implementation of additional steps and an additional protocol provided for in the nuclear deal. As a result, the control mechanism of the IAEA decreased by 20-30 percent.

Iran Exports to India Stands at \$1.8b



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran exported commodities valued at \$1.8 billion to India 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 (IRICA) announced. According to Mohammad Rezvaniyar, IRICA head announced. As announced by India's Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the value of trade between Iran and India reached \$1.836 billion in 2023. The trade exchange between the two countries declined by 26 percent in 2023 compared to its previous year, the figure was reported to be \$2.499 billion in 2022. According to the Indian Ministry data, Iran exported commodities valued at \$699 million to India during the past year, registering no significant change from 2022. Petroleum products were the top goods imported by India from Iran in 2023, and India imported \$221 million worth of such products from Iran this year. The import of Iranian oil products by India in 2023 increased by 26 percent compared to the previous year. Raw materials for dye production and various fruits were also among the top exported goods to India in 2023. India's exports to Iran in January-December 2023 experienced a 35 percent decrease and reached \$1.187 billion. In the previous year, India had exported \$1.847 billion worth of goods to Iran.

Italian University Ready to Expand Academic Ties With Iran

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Luiss University of Italy has announced readiness to reinforce scientific and academic cooperation with Iranian universities. Andrea Prencipe, the rector of the Rome-based university, met with Mohammad-Reza Sabouri, the Iranian ambassador to Rome, on Thursday. During the meeting, Prencipe said that a number of Iranian students are studying at Luiss University. He expressed the university's readiness to attract more Iranian students. Sabouri, for his part, highlighted scientific and academic achievements and capabilities of the country in various fields, including economics, management, political science, and international relations, announcing Iran's readiness to exchange professors and students with Luiss University. A total of 435 Iranian institutions are among 11,989 institutions ranked in Webometrics world ranking 2024. Tehran University is the top among Iranian institutions. Its ranking has improved from 305 in 2023 to 285 in 2024, Mehr news agency reported. Tehran University of Medical Sciences (445), Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Science (606), Sharif University of Technology (639), Amirkabir University of Technology (792), Iran Science and Technology (890), Isfahan University of Medical Sciences (920), Iran Medical Sciences University (940), Ferdowsi University of Mashhad (940), and Shahid Beheshti University (967) are ranked second to tenth, respectively,

in the country. The Ranking Web is not a ranking of the websites of universities. It is a Ranking of Universities. It uses both webometric (all missions) and bibliometric (research mission) indicators. According to the results of the 2023-2024 edition of the University Ranking by Academic Performance (URAP), 71 Iranian institutions were included in the ranking compared to 64 institutions in the 2022-2023 edition. URAP World Ranking is based on six academic performance indicators including number of articles, citations, total document, scientific productivity, research impact, and international collaboration. In the academic performance ranking of 71 universities in Iran, Tehran University was ranked first nationally with a global rank of 231, IRNA reported. Tehran University of Medical Science (277), and Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Science (436) were ranked second and third, respectively. In the 2023 edition of URAP, the University of Tehran was ranked first nationally with a global rank of 231. The main objective of URAP is to develop a ranking system for world universities based on academic performance indicators that reflect the quality and the quantity of their scholarly publications. The most recent ranking gathered data about 3,000 Higher Education Institutes (HEI) in an effort to rank these organizations by their academic performance. The overall score of each HEI was based on its performance over several indicators.

Iran Attending FAO Int'l Conference on Agrifood Systems Reform



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The Islamic Republic of Iran is taking a step to reshape agrifood systems across the Asia-Pacific region by dispatching a high-level delegation to the 37th Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific being held from February 19 to 22 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The conference aims to address the complex challenges stemming from prolonged pandemics, climate emergencies, and volatile markets that have significantly impacted millions of agrifood producers and consumers in the region. Headed by Alireza Mohajer, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture for Agronomy, the Iranian delegation is set to participate in the multilateral effort for regional agrifood system reform. Technical support for the delegation is being provided by the FAO Representation in Iran. Yubak Dhoj GC, FAO representative ad interim to the Islamic Republic of Iran, highlighted that "FAO in the Islamic Republic of Iran is contributing to sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation while strengthening the community resilience against natural disasters and climate change impacts." "This country's high-level participation in this important conference will help guide FAO's work here in Iran and right across the Asia and Pacific region, as all FAO Member Nations share a common goal of achieving the SDGs by 2030, particularly those goals relating to hunger, poverty and inequality," he added.

Iran in Talks with 21 Countries to Launch Joint Free Zones

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Hojjatollah Abdolmaleki stated that cooperation documents have been inked with six countries for setting up joint free zones. He noted that giant strides have been taken in the administration of President Ebrahim Raisi to make the balance of trade at free zones positive. He put the country's total non-oil exports in the free- and special economic zones in 2022 at about \$18 billion. Iran is one of the countries that has designed a perfect model for the launch of joint free zones, he said. Abdolmaleki further pointed out that priority has been given to the neighboring states for launching joint free zones, stressing that cooperating with countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Russia and China has been put on the agenda of the organization.

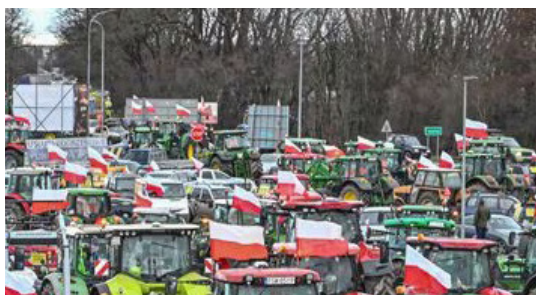


Sweden Donates Another \$680m in Military Aid to Ukraine

STOCKHOLM (Dispatches) - Sweden's defense ministry said on Tuesday the Nordic country will donate military aid to Ukraine worth some 7.1 billion Swedish crowns (\$682 million), including the transfer of equipment and fresh cash for arms procurement. It will be Sweden's 15th round of aid for Ukraine and the Nordic country's biggest such package to date, taking its overall aid since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022 to around 30 billion crowns. "We will continue to support Ukraine for as long as it takes," Defence Minister Pal Jonson told a press conference. The package includes around 2 billion crowns worth of artillery ammunition as well as anti-aircraft artillery and recoilless rifles, Sweden said. It also includes maritime assault vessels and other vessels, and underwater arms such as mines and subsea drones. As part of the package Sweden also earmarks cash for the purchase of material through international Ukraine funds, and 1 billion crowns for the purchase of around 10 new armoured combat vehicles that will be ready for delivery to Ukraine in 2026.



Polish Farmers Anger Ukraine With Border Blockade, Grain Spillage



OKOPY (Dispatches) - Protests by Polish farmers sparked anger in neighbouring Ukraine on Tuesday, as Kyiv called on the European Commission to take robust action after demonstrators blockaded the border and opened railway carriages to let grain spill out. Warsaw has been a staunch supporter of Kyiv in its fight to repel a full-scale Russian invasion launched in 2022, but protests from farmers complaining of unfair competition have strained ties that were already on edge after truckers blocked border crossings around the turn of the year. Tuesday's protests from farmers marked an escalation from previous demonstrations, with a near-total blockade of all Ukrainian border crossings and disruption at ports and on roads nationwide. Television footage showed protesters at the Medyka border crossing opening railway carriages to allow grain to pour onto the tracks. "The scattering of Ukrainian grain on the railroad tracks is another political provocation aimed at dividing our nations," Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Oleksandr Kubrakov said in a post on X. Ukrainian Economy Minister Yulia Svyrydenko said Kyiv has informed the European Commission of the actions of Polish protesters at the Ukrainian border and expected a robust response. Agriculture Minister Mykola Solskyi said the grain was headed to Germany and would not have entered the Polish market. Polish President Andrzej Duda told Ukrainian Radio and the Suspilne broadcaster that the Polish government is negotiating with the farmers and trade unions and that he hopes the issue will be resolved through talks. "We are trying to solve this problem," Duda said, according to a transcript published on Tuesday on his presidential website. "This is a certain conflict of interests between farmers and producers of agricultural products in Ukraine - farmers who fear for their existence." Farmers across Europe have been demonstrating over a range of grievances, including constraints placed on them by European Union measures to tackle climate change, and what they say is unfair competition from abroad, particularly Ukraine, after an EU decision in 2022 to waive duties on Ukrainian food imports.

Russia, Venezuela to Boost Cooperation in Energy, Including Nuclear



CARACAS (Dispatches) - Anti-American allies Russia and Venezuela vowed to boost cooperation in oil and gas production and the "peaceful use of nuclear energy" at a meeting of foreign ministers in Caracas Tuesday. Russia's Sergei Lavrov arrived in Venezuela late Monday from Cuba as part of a Latin American tour as Moscow seeks new diplomatic and trading partners amid Western sanctions and isolation over its war on Ukraine. In Caracas, Lavrov met his Venezuelan counterpart Yan Gil and Vice President Deley Rodriguez and discussed "expanding cooperation in oil production, gas field development, agriculture, medicine and pharmaceuticals," he told reporters afterward. "We also consider promising the area of peaceful use of nuclear energy; we also discussed this issue today (and) we agreed to increase the volume of cooperation in all these areas," said an official translation of the minister's statements. Lavrov last visited Venezuela in April last 2023, when he urged like-minded countries to "join forces" against the "blackmail" of Western sanctions. Venezuela has long been a key Moscow ally, and Maduro has repeatedly expressed his support for Russia and President Vladimir Putin before and after the invasion of Ukraine. Russia, for its part, has supported Caracas in the face of US sanctions against the government of Maduro, whose 2018 reelection was not recognized by dozens of countries. Until the end of an oil-based economic boom in 2014, Venezuela had purchased Russian weapons and military equipment worth hundreds of millions of dollars. "Venezuela is one of (Russia's) closest and most trusted friends in Latin America and in the world..."



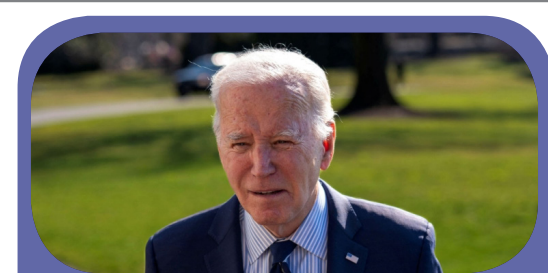
UNITED NATIONS (Dispatches) - The United States on Tuesday again vetoed a draft United Nations Security Council resolution on the Israel-Hamas war, blocking a demand for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire as it instead pushes the 15-member body to call for a temporary ceasefire linked to the release of hostages held by Hamas. Thirteen council members voted in favor of the Algerian-drafted text, while Britain abstained. It was the third U.S. veto of a draft resolution since the start of the current fighting on Oct. 7. Washington has also used its veto to block an amendment to draft resolution in December. "A vote in favor of this draft resolution is support to the Palestinians right to life. Conversely, voting against it implies an endorsement of the brutal violence and collective punishment inflicted upon them," Algeria's U.N. Ambassador Amar Bendjama told the council before the vote. U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Linda Thomas-Greenfield signaled on Saturday that the U.S. would veto the draft resolution over concerns it could jeopardize talks between the U.S., Egypt, Israel and Qatar that seek to broker a pause in the war and the release of hostages held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip. "Demanding an immediate, unconditional ceasefire without an agreement requiring Hamas to release the hostages will not bring about a durable peace. Instead, it could extend the fighting between Hamas and Israel," Thomas-Greenfield told the council ahead of the vote. The Algerian-drafted resolution vetoed by the U.S. did not link a ceasefire to the release of hostages. It separately demanded an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. "The message given today to Israel with this veto is that it can continue to get away with murder," Palestinian U.N. envoy Riyad Mansour

told the council. Israel's U.N. Ambassador Gilad Erdan said the word ceasefire was being mentioned "as if it is a silver bullet, a magical solution to all of the region's problems." "A ceasefire achieves one thing and one thing only - the survival of Hamas," Erdan told the council. "A ceasefire is a death sentence for many more Israelis and Gazans." The U.S. has now proposed a rival draft resolution calling for a temporary ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war and opposing a major ground offensive by its ally Israel in Rafah, according to the text seen by Reuters on Monday. It said it plans to allow time for negotiations and will not rush to a vote. Until now, Washington has been averse to the word ceasefire in any U.N. action on the Israel-Hamas war, but the U.S. text echoes language that President Joe Biden said he used last week in conversations with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The U.S. draft resolution would see the Security Council "underscore its support for a temporary ceasefire in Gaza as soon as practicable, based on the formula of all hostages being released, and calls for lifting all barriers to the provision of humanitarian assistance at scale." This is the second time since Oct. 7 that Washington has proposed a Security Council resolution on Gaza. Russia and China vetoed its first attempt in late October. Washington traditionally shields Israel from U.N. action. But it has also abstained twice, allowing the council to adopt resolutions that aimed to boost aid to Gaza and called for extended pauses in fighting. In December, more than three-quarters of the 193-member U.N. General Assembly voted to demand an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. General Assembly resolutions are not binding but carry political weight, reflecting a global view on the war.



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - President Vladimir Putin said that Russia was against the deployment of nuclear weapons in space, and his defense minister flatly denied U.S. claims that Russia was developing a nuclear capability for space. A source familiar with the matter told Reuters that Washington believes Moscow is developing a space-based anti-satellite nuclear weapon whose detonation could disrupt everything from military communications to phone-based ride services. "Our position is clear and transparent: We have always been categorically against and are now against the deployment of nuclear weapons in space," Putin told Sergei Shoigu, his defense minister. "We urge not only compliance with all agreements that exist in this area, but also offered to strengthen this joint work many times," Putin said. He added that Russia's activities in space did not differ from those of other countries, including the United States. The clearest public sign that Washington thinks Moscow is working on a space-based anti-satellite nuclear weapon was a White House spokesperson's comment on Thursday that the system being developed would violate the Outer Space Treaty. The 1967 treaty bars signatories — including Russia and the United States — from placing "in orbit around the earth any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction." The New York Times has reported that the U.S. intelligence was related to Russia's attempts to develop a

space-based anti-satellite nuclear weapon. Commenting on the U.S. allegation, Shoigu said there were no plans of the kind outlined by the unidentified sources in the United States. "Firstly, there are no such projects — nuclear weapons in space. Secondly, the United States knows that this does not exist," Shoigu told Putin. He accused the White House of trying to scare U.S. lawmakers into allocating more funds for Ukraine as part of Washington's plan to inflict what he said was a strategic defeat on Russia. He said the second reason for the leaked information about the alleged Russian weapon was to encourage Russia to engage in a dialogue about strategic stability. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has led to the most serious confrontation between Moscow and the West since the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, and the post-Cold War arms control architecture has crumbled. Putin said Russia had never been against discussions about strategic stability, but he said it was impossible to divide what he said was the West's aim to defeat Russia and talks about strategic security. "If they seek to inflict a strategic defeat on us, then we must think about what strategic stability means for our country," Putin said. "Therefore, we do not reject anything, we do not give up anything, but we need to figure out what they want. They usually want to achieve unilateral advantages. That's not going to happen."



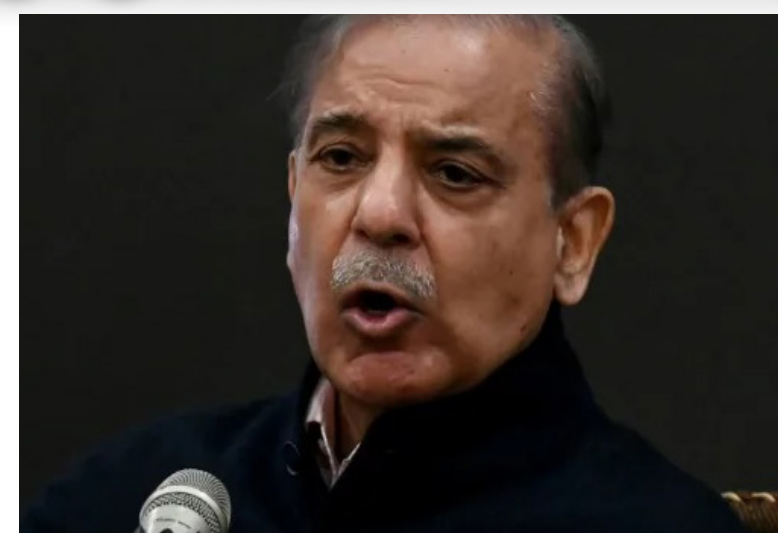
Biden Assails Trump Over Navalny

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Joe Biden yesterday thrashed Republican rival Donald Trump's response to the death of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, asking, "Why does Trump always blame America?" After Navalny's death was reported on Friday, Biden directly blamed Russian leader Vladimir Putin, as did Trump's main rival for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, Nikki Haley. Trump did not mention Navalny until a Monday post on his Truth Social platform that did not cast blame or express remorse, but alluded to his own legal problems as persecution and called the United States a nation in decline. "The former president, Trump, and other Republicans, refuse to hold Putin accountable for his death," Biden said. "Instead, Trump said Navalny's death made him realize how bad America was. 'He said and I quote, 'We are a nation in decline, a failing nation.' Why does Trump always blame America? Putin is responsible for Navalny's death. Why can't Trump just say that?'" Biden said earlier yesterday the United States will announce a major package of sanctions against Russia on Friday over the death of Navalny. Trump, the Republican frontrunner, is likely to face Democrat Biden in a rematch in November's presidential election. In an interview yesterday with Fox News, Trump praised Navalny as "very brave" for voluntarily returning to Russia in 2021 from Germany, where he underwent treatment for what Western laboratory tests showed evidence of a Russian nerve agent. However, the former U.S. president also second-guessed that decision. "He probably would have been a lot better off staying away and talking from outside of the country, as opposed to having to go back in, because people thought that (death) could happen and it did happen," Trump said. During his 2017-2021 tenure in the White House, Trump drew criticism for his praise of Putin. Last week, he suggested the United States might not protect NATO allies who do not spend enough on defense from a potential Russian invasion. Biden yesterday called the NATO comments dangerous. "It does nothing but encourage bad behavior," Biden said. Biden folded the criticism into a video posted in Twitter in which he urged Republicans who control the House of Representatives to pass emergency security assistance for Ukraine in its war against Russia.

Pakistan Parties Reach Power-Sharing Agreement

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Two Pakistan parties have reached a power-sharing agreement that will return Shehbaz Sharif to the premiership, leaving out politicians loyal to jailed former leader Imran Khan despite winning the most seats in this month's vote. The army-backed Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) said they had settled days of negotiations on securing a majority to form a coalition government that will also include several smaller parties. Candidates loyal to Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party won the most seats but were forced to stand as independents following a sweeping crackdown on the party. There were widespread allegations of vote-rigging and result manipulation in the February 8 election after authorities switched off the nation's mobile phone network on election day, ostensibly on security grounds, and the count took more than 24 hours. After weeks of negotiations, Khan's adversaries announced at a late-night press conference in the capital Islamabad that a power-sharing agreement had been reached. Under the deal, the PML-N and PPP will put forward former leader Sharif as prime minister and Asif Ali Zardari, the husband of assassinated former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, as president. "The Pakistan Peoples Party and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz have attained the numbers and we will form a government," said PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the son of Zardari and Bhutto. "We are hopeful that Shehbaz Sharif will soon become the prime minister of the country and the whole of Pakistan should pray that the government should be successful." Sharif, seated next to Bhutto, added: "After 76 years, we find ourselves dependent on loans, and overcoming

this situation is easier said than done. There are significant challenges that we are facing ... We have to take Pakistan out of these challenges." Bhutto Zardari said that ministerial portfolios had been agreed upon and would be announced in the coming days. The National Assembly must convene by February 29, when the coalition can be formally approved. The PTI lashed out against the agreement, reiterating its accusations of foul play. "The PML-N and the Peoples Party deserve some praise for their epic 30-year journey, from stealing taxpayers' money together to stealing an election together," the party said on social media platform X. It also referred to Sharif and Bhutto's parties as "mandate thieves". The PML-N and the PPP combined in 2022 to oust former leader Khan in a no-confidence vote before sharing power in a shaky coalition that also saw Sharif at the helm, until the National Assembly was dissolved in August ahead of elections. Sharif's brother, three-time premier Nawaz Sharif, returned to Pakistan from self-imposed exile to lead the election campaign but failed to secure the expected majority despite analysts saying they had the backing of the military, the country's kingmakers. Former cricketing legend Khan has been languishing in jail since August, slapped with lengthy sentences for corruption, treason and an illegal marriage — charges he says are politically motivated and designed to keep him from power. Khan was brought to power in 2018 by a young electorate weary of the dynastic politics of PML-N and PPP, but also reportedly with the blessing of the generals. He was booted from power after analysts say he fell out with the military and went on to wage a risky campaign of defiance against the establishment.





Inter Milan Beat Atletico Madrid, Eindhoven Tie With Borussia Dortmund

MILAN (Dispatches) - Simone Inzaghi is ready to give Marko Arnautovic more game time after the wasteful Austria forward redeemed himself with the winning goal in Inter Milan's 1-0 win over Atletico Madrid on Tuesday. Arnautovic won the last 16, first leg clash at the San Siro after replacing injured Marcus Thuram at half-time, and he is set for more minutes as his French teammate recovers and matches come thick and fast. The 34-year-old, who has had a tough season, had frustrated home fans with a series of wasted opportunities including a dreadful miss just after the hour mark which had supporters' heads in their hands. "He will be really valuable to us as he has been up to now. He and Alexis Sanchez are doing well for how they work, how they train and how they are with teammates," Inzaghi told reporters. "He came into the match really well, we were disappointed for the chances he missed but strikers should worry when they're not getting any opportunities. I was a striker, I had periods in which I didn't have any chances and I was always more worried than when I did have them and I either had a great goalkeeper in front of me or I missed the target." Inzaghi said that he hoped to lose Thuram only "for a short period of time" before he has tests on the thigh injury which ended his match. Diego Simeone said that he is positive for next month's return leg in Madrid despite his team not having a single shot on target on Tuesday. "We didn't have many chances unlike recent games. We controlled the match for long periods, but in the second half they created more chances," he said. "I'm optimistic, we lost today but we still have the home leg to play. We know what we'll come up against, and how

they play as we've just played them. Hopefully we'll be able to take advantage." PSV Eindhoven coach Peter Bosz was left rueing missed chances after his side squandered several opportunities in a 1-1 draw with Borussia Dortmund in the Champions League last-16 first-leg tie on Tuesday. "In the second half, we had loads of chances. It was a shame that we didn't score a second," Bosz told reporters after the game at the Philips Stadion. Donyell Malen snatched a vital goal to earn the Bundesliga giants the away draw at his old club but wasteful PSV were left to wonder what could have been. The big question pre-match was which Borussia Dortmund would show up: the team that topped the Champions League 'Group of Death' or the outfit struggling for consistency in the Bundesliga? And it was a cagey opening in an intimidating atmosphere in Eindhoven, the home fans letting off a volley of fireworks at kick-off. "We started very nervously, I think both sides were nervous in the first minutes," said Dortmund coach Edin Terzic. When the smoke cleared, the hosts had the better of the opening exchanges, Mexico international winger Hirving Lozano causing the Dortmund defence headaches down the left. PSV midfielder Malik Tillman fluffed two gilt-edged chances in front of goal, once firing wide after a clever through-ball from veteran Dutch striker Luuk de Jong. And the visitors punished PSV's profligacy, taking the lead against the run of play in the 24th minute when Malen squeezed a deflected shot into the top corner. Malen had been prolific for the Dutch giants, scoring 55 goals in all competitions in just 43 games, and chose not to celebrate in front of PSV's hardcore fans.

Son Apologizes for Bust-Up With South Korea Team-Mate Lee



SEOUL (Dispatches) - Son Heung-min apologized on Wednesday for his role in a bust-up with South Korea team-mate Lee Kang-in at the Asian Cup and urged fans to forgive the Paris Saint-Germain player. South Korea were beaten 2-0 by Jordan at the tournament earlier this month and it later emerged that skipper Son had dislocated a finger in an altercation with Lee on the eve of the semi-final. Both players released social media statements on Wednesday, with Tottenham's Son posting a picture of the pair together, smiling and with arms around each other's shoulders. The 23-year-old attacking midfielder Lee, who has been blamed by fans for the fracas and dumped by advertisers, said that he had travelled to London to apologise to Son in person. Addressing the controversy publicly for the first time, Son wrote in a statement on Instagram: "I am sincerely sorry for causing trouble and will work harder to make the national team grow further." The incident at the Asian Cup reportedly happened after some younger players in the national squad, including rising star Lee, rushed through their meal so they could leave early to play table tennis. This displeased Son and some of the older players because meals on the eve of big games are traditionally seen as a time for bonding. As tension grew Lee tried to punch Son, local media reported. Lee's representatives denied a punch was thrown. The altercation was cited as a factor in the dismissal last week of coach Jurgen Klinsmann after 12 months in the post. "I think my actions could be criticized," Son wrote. But he added: "I would do it again for the team if the same situation arrived because it's one of the captain's duties."

Ankle Injury Forces Alcaraz out in First Round of ATP Rio Open

RIO DE JANEIRO (Dispatches) - World number two Carlos Alcaraz retired from his first-round match yesterday at the ATP Rio Open after rolling his right ankle on just the second point of the contest against Thiago Monteiro. The Spanish star took a medical timeout, had the ankle taped and won the first game but after dropping his serve in the second game he called it quits, in another setback to a so-far disappointing 2024 campaign. Shortly after the match Alcaraz told reporters the decision to withdraw was a "precaution" and that the physiotherapists who treated him had indicated the injury "is not serious." "I spoke with the physiotherapist on the court and we decided, together, that I would continue to see if it improved. It didn't, so we preferred to be careful and withdraw as a precaution," Alcaraz said, adding that he would have further tests. The two-time Grand Slam winner's tough start to 2024 included a four-set defeat by Alexander Zverev in the Australian Open quarter-finals. Last Saturday he fell to 21st-ranked Chilean Nicolas Jarry in the semi-finals at Buenos Aires, and hasn't won an ATP title since his stunning Wimbledon triumph over Novak Djokovic last July. Hopes that he could start turning things around in Rio — where he lifted the trophy in 2022 and finished runner-up to Britain's Cameron Norrie last year — were quickly dashed. He and 117th-ranked Brazilian Monteiro were two points into the match when Alcaraz's right foot stuck in the red clay surface at Jockey Club Brasileiro, where rain had delayed the start of play for three hours. Four of the day's tennis matches were postponed until Wednesday and the first players to take the court on Tuesday played in misty conditions. Meanwhile Iga Swiatek survived a gruelling affair against Sloane Stephens while Aryna Sabalenka blamed unfavourable conditions for her second round defeat to Donna Vekic in Dubai. The top-seeded Swiatek, who clinched her third consecutive Doha title on Saturday and had a first round bye in this event, had to dig deep to overcome former US Open champion Stephens 6-4, 6-4 in a tug of war that witnessed eight breaks of serve and a combined 23 break points. "We had a lot of tight games. I really needed to perform a little bit better in those important moments because I couldn't

convert some break points. But I'm happy that at the end I did," said Swiatek, who takes on two-time Dubai champion Elina Svitolina in the last-16. "Yeah, it wasn't easy. It's nice that I played even a longer match here so I could adjust to the surface." Meanwhile, second seed Sabalenka fell 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 6-0 to familiar foe Vekic in what was her first appearance since she successfully defended her title at the Australian Open last month. Sabalenka blew a 7-6, 2-0 lead and lost the last nine games of the clash to succumb to her Croatian opponent in two hours and 22 minutes. "I feel like the conditions here don't fit me well at all. It's really tricky for me to compete here in Dubai. Really tricky court for me. It's super-fast for me. Like no rhythm at all," said the world number two. The 31st-ranked Vekic, who now owns a 6-2 head-to-head lead in lifetime meetings against Sabalenka, was aggressive throughout the match and enters her next clash with big-hitting Romanian Sorana Cirstea searching for her first WTA 1000 quarter-final of her career.



Klopp Says Jota Faces Months out



LIVERPOOL (Dispatches) - Diogo Jota faces "months" on the sidelines after damaging his knee in Liverpool's win at Brentford, adding to manager Jurgen Klopp's mounting injury woes as they chase Premier League glory. Saturday's 4-1 win victory in London on Saturday came at a heavy cost as forward Jota and midfielder Curtis Jones were both forced off in the first half. Jones left the stadium on crutches after injuring his ankle and Jota departed on a stretcher, while forward Darwin Nunez was also withdrawn with a knock. Goalkeeper Alisson Becker, Trent Alexander-Arnold and Dominik Szoboszlai will be sidelined for Liverpool's home match against struggling Luton at Anfield on Wednesday while Thiago Alcantara and Joel Matip remain out of action. Speaking about the injury situation on Tuesday, Klopp, whose team are two points clear of second-placed Arsenal, said the situation was "not great": "I would like to sit here and say we have absolutely no issues but obviously we have some," the Liverpool boss said on Tuesday. "So, not available is obviously Ali (Becker). That's a muscle injury where we don't know exactly how long it takes but definitely not for the foreseeable time coming back. "Then we have Diogo with a knee issue, is ruled out. Curtis, with a bone/ligament issue, ruled out. "And then we have the others where we will deal with it day by day with muscle things. We will see for tomorrow." The German did not give an update on Nunez during his pre-match press conference. When pressed on timeframes for the injuries, Klopp said: "With Diogo, it will obviously take rather months." "It's with the injuries as well, so like you have important days. So, day five, day 10, they are always important days when you then judge the situation again because nobody reacts in the same way and it depends on the pain level they still have and stuff like this. "I couldn't give you a timeframe even if I wanted to, so that's just how it is." Liverpool, locked in a Premier League title tussle with Arsenal and Manchester City, take on Chelsea in Sunday's League Cup final and are still in the FA Cup and Europa League. Klopp, in his final season at Anfield, praised his squad players for stepping up when required.

Haaland Shuts Mouths as Man City Close on Liverpool

MANCHESTER (Dispatches) - Pep Guardiola said Erling Haaland had "shut the mouths" of his critics after scoring the only goal of a nervy 1-0 win for Manchester City over Brentford. Just two points separate the top three in a fascinating Premier League title race as City moved to within a point of leaders Liverpool, with third-placed Arsenal one point further back with 13 games to go. Haaland was keen to make amends for a frustrating night in front of goal as City were held 1-1 at home by Chelsea on Saturday. The Norwegian has only recently returned from a two-month injury layoff and Guardiola said he was also coping with the loss of his grandmother off the field. But Haaland was more like his old self in front of goal when he raced onto Julian Alvarez's pass to slot in his 22nd goal of the season 19 minutes from time. "Top strikers score a lot of goals. Don't criticise, he will shut your mouth. Sooner or later he is there," said Guardiola. "He was out for two months, he lost his grandmother, it is not easy for a human being. "We spoke about the moment (missing chances against Chelsea), and I realised this later, but he didn't say anything about the passing away of his grandmother." Kevin De Bruyne was left on the bench for the entire match as Guardiola revealed he has "niggles" in his hamstring. The

Belgian missed the first five months of the season due to a hamstring tear. De Bruyne's ingenuity was missed as City struggled to make their domination count despite enjoying nearly 70 per cent possession and having 25 shots on goal. The Bees were the last visiting side to win at the Etihad 14 months ago and had their chances to spring another huge surprise. Frank Onyeka failed to beat Ederson when one-on-one midway through the first half before Ivan Toney sent a dipping free-kick inches over the bar. The vast majority of goalmouth action came at the other end. Oscar Bobb came closest to opening the scoring in the first half, on a rare start for the Norwegian youngster, when his effort was cleared off the line by Ben Mee. Bernardo Silva also headed a glorious chance wide as Thomas Frank's men held out until the break. Liverpool and Arsenal's hopes of a second unlikely gift from City in the title race in four days would have been raised by a quiet start to the second period. However, City remain well in the hunt to become the first side ever to win four consecutive English top-flight titles for a reason. One slip by Brentford defender Kristoffer Ajer provided the moment Haaland had been waiting for as he galloped clear on goal and kept his composure to score for just the third time in his last eight games.

