

IRAN NEWS

Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on Sunday morning departed for Muscat, Capital of Oman, as the first Destination of His New Regional Tour

A Provincial Official in Tehran Province Said That Legal Immigrants Will Receive Smart ID Cards, Adding That No Service Would Be Provided to the Illegal Immigrants and They Must Return to Their Countries

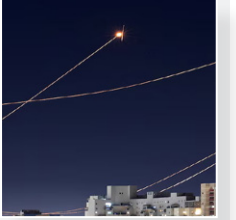
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Iran HR Chief Calls for Pursuing Military Advisers' Martyrdom in Syria



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights Kazem Gharibabadi in a letter to Iran's prosecutor general called for the prosecution of the Zionist regime's crime in attacking diplomatic premises and the martyrdom of the Iranian military advisers. Because the Zionist regime's attack on diplomatic premises and martyring the Iranian military advisers in Damascus is a clear violation of international law and the perpetrators' crimes are against national security, and interests, according to Article 290 of the Criminal Code of Procedure, please order the necessary follow-up and monitoring for criminal prosecution and legal action through qualified domestic, foreign or international authorities, Gharibabadi said in his letter to Mohammad Kazem Movahedi Azad on Sunday. On April 1, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) confirmed the martyrdom of generals Mohammad Reza Zahedi and Mohammad Hadi Haj Rahimi and five of their companions in an Israeli missile strike on the Consulate of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Damascus.



Gov't Determined to Support Palestinians

TEHRAN - President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi described the holding of various meetings by the statesmen with the country's student community as an effective and valuable opportunity to take advantage of the students' ideas, capacities, abilities and even fair criticism and added, "The highest level of presence of statesmen in universities in the history after the victory of the Islamic Revolution is related to the 13th Administration, which shows the importance of the position of the university and students in this government". In continuation of his Ramadan meetings, Raisi hosted a group of representatives of student organizations, movements, and activists on Friday evening, and in a friendly atmosphere, he listened to their words and concerns, and reacted to some of the issues raised. In this meeting, the ministers of science and research, economic affairs and finance, roads and urban development, and health and medical education were also present and answered the students' questions in their respective areas of responsibility. In this meeting, the President, while appreciating the epic and unique presence of the people, especially the young generation, in the International Quds Day protests in all parts of the country, explained the decisive and authoritative positions of the Islamic Republic of Iran in defense of the cause of Palestine and Holy Quds, and said, "The issue of Palestine, as it has been among the main issues of our holy system since the early days of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, is also the strong logic of the strategy of supporting the ideals and rights of the oppressed people of Palestine,

especially the oppressed people of Gaza, today, and has been strongly pursued in the government". Raisi said, "The clear and decisive position of the Islamic Republic of Iran to solve the Palestinian issue is a completely logical and democratic solution to refer to the general votes of all Palestinians and each Palestinian has one vote, which has been emphasized in all international circles and meetings". The President described the holding of various meetings by the statesmen with the country's student community as an effective and valuable opportunity to take advantage of the students' ideas, capacities, abilities and even fair criticism and added, "The highest level of presence of statesmen in universities in the history after the victory of the Islamic Revolution is related to the 13th Administration, which shows the importance of the position of the university and students in this government". While welcoming the announcement of the readiness of various student groups to help the government, Raisi added, "Using the capacity of universities and student associations as valuable assets of the country is on the agenda of the government". The President continued by emphasizing the government's special effort to maintain and improve its position among the people, and stated, "As the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution has emphasized on the popular nature of this government, and this virtue for the government has also been formed in the people's belief, the government seeks to strengthen the role and participation of people in the executive affairs of the country in government organizations and ministries".

Iran Urges Completing "Basra-Shalamchek" Railway ASAP



TEHRAN - Minister of Roads and Urban Development stressed on completing the "Basra-Shalamchek" railway as soon as possible. The railway lines in Iran are connected to the border point of Shalamchek, the border with Iraq. In Iraq, rail lines are connected from Basra to cities such as Karbala and Baghdad, and in the case of a connection between Shalamchek and Basra, which is about 32 kilometers long, the rail network of the two countries will be connected. Mehdi Bazrjani, Minister of Roads and Urban Development of Iran, met with "Razzaq Muhaybis al-Saadawi, the Minister of Transport of Iraq, who traveled to Tehran at the head of a delegation including the CEO of the Railway Company and the Ports Organization of this country. Bazrjani also stressed the fast completion of the Basra-Shalamchek railway as soon as possible and said that this mega project includes several parts, including demining operations, bridge construction operations, and railway track construction. It is worthy to say that the main part of this project, which is the start of the construction of the Shalamchek-Basra railway in September 2023, has started at the border zero point. Furthermore, increasing the capacity of moving pilgrims during the days of Arbaeen through different transport sectors, increasing airport services and flights between Iran and Iraq, completing the Kermanshah to Islamabad railway line, and increasing the volume of transit between the two countries, especially by completing the east-west corridors, from other matters discussed by the Minister of Roads and Urban Development of Iran with the Minister of Transport of Iraq have also been announced as topics of discussions between the two sides. Among the Arab countries of West Asia, Iraq has the most cultural and religious affinities with Iran. Having the longest border among the neighbors (about 1258 km of land border and 351 km of water border), racial, historical, linguistic ties, religious commonalities, and the existence of threats and common security and economic interests are considered important points in Iran-Iraq relations. The expansion of Iran-Iraq relations in recent years has always been on the agenda of the authorities of the two countries due to the many cultural, political, and religious commonalities.

Iran Calls on Ecuador, Mexico to Resolve Dispute Via Dialogue



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Nasser Kanaani invited the governments of Ecuador and Mexico to resolve the differences between them through dialogue. Emphasizing the importance and necessity of respecting the immunity and guaranteeing the security and safety of diplomatic and consular places and agencies, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Nasser Kanaani expressed concern about the raid on the Mexican embassy in Quito. Stressing the commitment of the host government to maintain and protect the immunity and security of diplomatic and consular places, Kanaani invited the governments of Ecuador and Mexico to a dialogue to resolve the differences between them. Mexico suspended relations with Ecuador after security officials there raided its embassy late Friday night. During the raid, Ecuadorian authorities arrested their country's former vice president, Jorge Glas, who had been holed up at the Mexican Embassy in Ecuador's capital Quito since a warrant was issued for his arrest in December. Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador instructed his foreign minister to cut diplomatic ties with Ecuador, calling the raid "a flagrant violation of international law and of Mexico's sovereignty." Obrador said Glas was "a refugee and seeking asylum due to the persecution and harassment he is facing." The Ecuadorian presidency confirmed Glas' arrest in a statement on X, formerly Twitter. "No criminal can be considered a politically persecuted person," the presidency said, stressing that Glas, convicted twice for corruption, "has been convicted with an enforceable sentence and had an arrest warrant issued by the competent authorities."

Consular Section of Iranian Embassy in Syria Resumes Activity

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Consular section of the Iranian Embassy in the Syrian capital of Damascus has resumed its activities after four days of a halt due to the Israeli regime's terrorist attack against the diplomatic mission. The Iranian consulate started its work in a new building adjacent to the previous one on Saturday. The consular section is one of the double buildings of the Iranian Embassy which was destroyed last Monday as a result of a missile attack by the Israeli regime. Earlier, the Iranian Embassy in Damascus had announced that its consular section would be reactivated this Saturday and all kinds of consular services would be provided. Israel targeted the Iranian consulate in the Syrian capital in a terrorist attack on April 1, leaving seven people martyred including a senior Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) commander. Iran's Ambassador to Damascus Hossein Akbari confirmed the reports of the Israeli attack and said the regime had targeted the consular building with six missiles. During a ceremony to mark International Quds Day at the Iranian embassy in Damascus on Friday, Akbari said Iran has requested an extraordinary session of the UN Security Council (UNSC) by filing a complaint over the Israeli attack on the consular section of the embassy. "Given the failure of the Security Council to take necessary measures to prevent the recurrence of such heinous crimes by the Zionist regime, Iran reserves the right to respond," he said. The ambassador also called on members of the Security Council and the United Nations not to remain silent in the face of these crimes and to fulfill their obligation in preserving international peace and security. Akbari further noted that after Iran vowed to give a decisive response to the latest aggression, the Israeli regime was panicked and began stockpiling generators, food, and medicine in more secure areas. "This indicates they are deeply frightened of Iran's retaliation," he said. "But Iran's answer is not clear and only the Zionists are aware of its depth," he continued.



UN Calls for \$620m to Support Afghan Migrants in Iran and Pakistan



GENEVA (Dispatches) - The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in South Asia has said that it requires \$620m to safeguard and assist Afghan migrants in Iran and Pakistan, reported Khaama Press. In a post on social media platform X, the organization stated that the situation in Afghanistan and its bordering countries will be challenging in 2024. According to the UNHCR report, 4.8 million Afghan migrants and 2.5 million members of their host communities will be assisted in 2024. Citing UNHCR, Khaama Press reported that in addition to the deportation of Afghan migrants from Iran and Pakistan to Afghanistan, the country's circumstances got worse in 2022 and 2023 due to fatal earthquakes, catastrophic natural disasters, and the climate change problem. The UNHCR has characterized the state of human rights, particularly the rights of women and girls as well as religious and ethnic minorities in Afghanistan, as grave, citing the urgent need for humanitarian aid for 23.7 million people to survive. According to the report, Iran and Pakistan host around 7.7 million Afghan citizens, approximately 1.6 million of whom were deported to Afghanistan since 2021. Meanwhile, Amnesty International and some human rights organizations have expressed concern about the continuation of the process of expelling Afghan migrants from Pakistan and demanded a halt to this trend. "The plan to repatriate undocumented foreign nationals in Pakistan violates the rights of refugees and international human rights law, especially the principle of non-refoulement, endangering the lives of all Afghan refugees, especially women, girls, journalists, and human rights defenders, Khaama Press, quoted Amnesty International official as saying.

IRAN NEWS



Investments in Oil Industry Promising

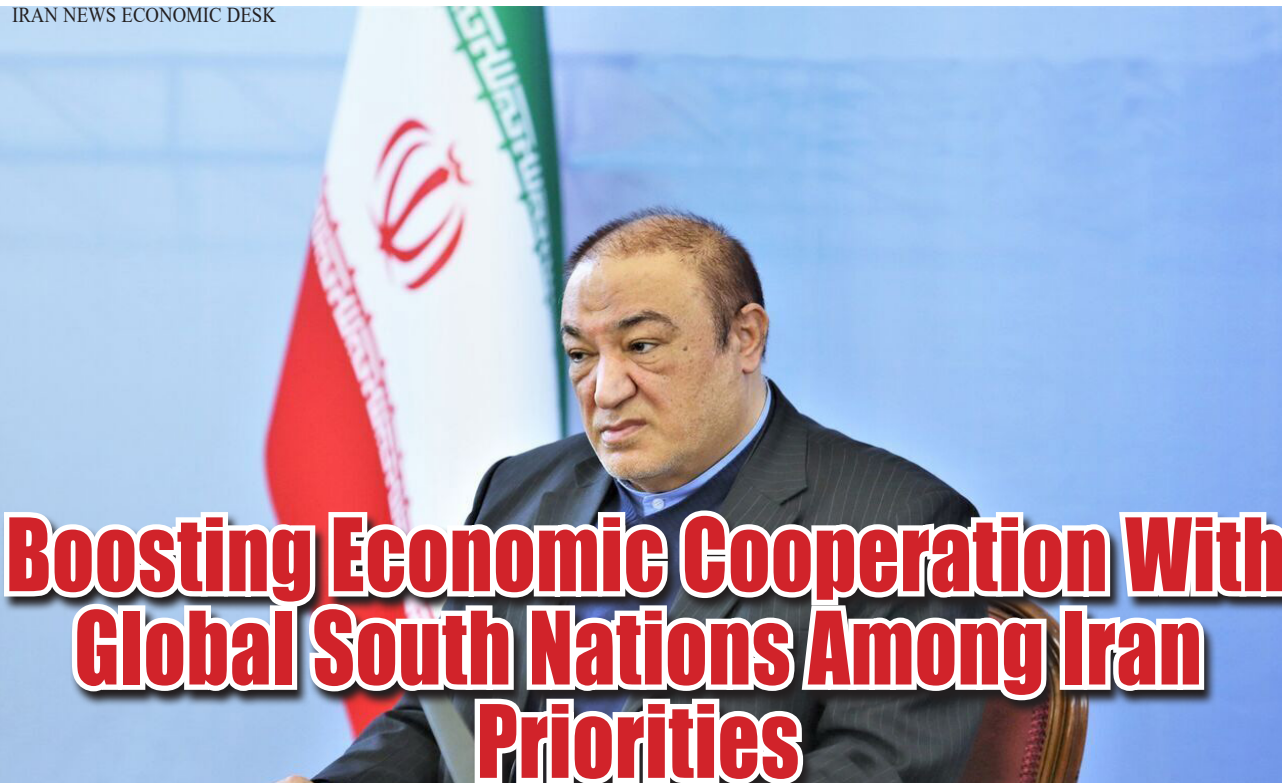
TEHRAN (Shana) - A member of Iran's Parliament said increasing investments, development of oil fields, and infrastructure measures in the oil industry are among promising economic moves. Gholamhossein Rezvani pointed to the oil sector's first rank in attracting foreign investment in 2023 and added, "These measures' medium- and long-term effects will emerge in the economic sector and will have impacts on all positive economic parameters, including the increase in gross national product (GNP)." Touching upon the oil industry's recent achievements, the lawmaker said it was told in the past that "we cannot sell oil due to sanctions", but now the country is selling oil and earning its revenues and this is a great success. Shahbaz Hassanpour Biglari, also a parliamentarian, said, "Under the 13th administration, effective infrastructure measures have been carried out in different sectors, including the oil and gas industry." The member of the Parliament's Economic Committee added the oil, gas, and energy industry is regarded as one of the main sectors of the country's economy and any progress in the energy production is praiseworthy.

Iran Has No Restrictions in Developing Ties With Italy



TEHRAN (MNA) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian says that there are no restrictions for Tehran to develop and strengthen bilateral relations with Rome. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and Italy's new ambassador to Tehran held a meeting on Saturday, discussing the bilateral relations between the two countries. During the meeting, the newly-elected Italian ambassador to Iran Paola Amadei presented a copy of her credentials to the top Iranian diplomat. During the meeting, Amadei briefed Amir-Abdollahian about her plans regarding the development of bilateral relations between Tehran and Rome. Referring to the position of the European Union in condemning the Israeli attack on Iran's consulate in Damascus, the Italian envoy said that her country is opposed to the growth of tension and war in the region. She also hailed the role of the Islamic Republic of Iran as one of the main actors in ensuring stability and security in the region. Amir-Abdollahian, for his part, said that Iran has no limits in expanding relations with Italy, calling for developing ties between the two states in different fields, including politics, science, trade and economy, and culture. The approach of the Iranian administration is to develop and expand ties with all countries of the world, including Europe, he stressed.

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



Boosting Economic Cooperation With Global South Nations Among Iran Priorities

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mehdi Safari has said that his country attaches paramount importance to expanding economic cooperation with neighboring and regional countries as well as nations in the "Global South". "The deepening and expansion of economic cooperation with our neighbors, regional countries, Asian states, and countries in the "Global South" constitutes one of the main priorities of the economic diplomacy of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran", Safari said on Saturday. He made the comments as he addressed ambassadors of BRICS countries to Tehran. BRICS is a bloc of emerging economies made up of Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the UAE. The last four countries joined BRICS in January this year. Addressing the BRICS ambassadors, Safari said: "This is a pleasure for me to welcome you all to this Ifar reception hosted jointly by Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mine and Agriculture of Iran. Let me express my heartfelt congratulations for this Holy Month: Ramazan Mubarak Insha'Allah." He added: "At the outset, I would like to pay tribute to the great souls of those we lost in the terrorist attack by Zionist regime against Iran's Consular mission in Syria. We appreciate worldwide condemnation of this blatant violation of international law and

UN Charter." Safari further said: "The deepening and expansion of economic cooperation with our neighbors, regional countries, Asian states, and countries in the "Global South" constitutes one of the main priorities of the economic diplomacy of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Multilateral and regional organizations and arrangements such as the ECO, ACD, IORA, D-8, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS Group, Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Eurasian Economic Union and others hold a crucial place in our economic diplomacy. We also look into these multilateral organizations and arrangements as great potential to form patterns of a new South-South Cooperation." He went on to say: "Despite the illegal and cruel unilateral sanctions which have deprived it from full realization of existing potential and capacities, the Islamic Republic of Iran has actively played its role as a member and partner in multilateral organizations. As a founding member of the ECO and D-8, Iran has always been a key player to promote their ultimate goals and objectives. Also, since joining to the ACD and IORA, which are two important continent and Ocean-wide cooperation arrangements, Iran started to make meaningful contribution and inputs in line with their noble goals and objectives. Our current chairmanship in the ACD is also a manifestation of this strong commitment."

Era of Zionist Regime's Bullying on Wane



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf has said that the era of Zionist regime's bullying in the region is on the wane. By targeting Iran's consulate in Syria, the Zionist enemy once again proved to the world that it knows no boundaries in committing crime and openly violates all international laws, Qalibaf said addressing the parliament's open session on Sunday. As the Zionist regime continues to perpetrate crimes, it inadvertently weakens itself and fuels the determination and resolve of the resistance, he added. The aftermath of the October 7 operation further highlights the destructive impact of the Zionists' actions, he stated. The Iranian nation will administer a punitive response to the Zionist regime, he said adding that the punishment will serve as both an instructive lesson and a harsh consequence, hastening the decline of the Zionist regime.

Iran's Exports to Pakistan Up by 39% in Year to March



TEHRAN (IRNA) - During the last Iranian fiscal year (beginning on March 21, 2023), Iran's exports to Pakistan surged by 39%, as reported by the spokesman of the International Relations and Trade Development Committee of Iran's House of Industry, Mining, and Trade. The overall bilateral trade volume between Iran and Pakistan 4,933 million metric tons of goods, valued at \$2.752 billion, which represents a 14.7% increase in weight and a 10% increase in value compared to the previous fiscal year. In specific terms, Iran exported products worth \$2.078 billion to Pakistan, while Pakistan reciprocated by exporting goods valued at \$673.932 million to Iran. Both nations have set their sights on achieving a \$5 billion bilateral trade volume, a goal that seems attainable given the attempts made. During this period, Iran's exports to Pakistan included 4,379 million metric tons of goods, reflecting a 23% growth in weight and a 39% increase in value compared to the preceding fiscal year.

Littoral States Highly Value Importance of Caspian Sea

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Caspian Sea represents great value for Caspian states, Iran's Deputy Attorney General for Public Rights Division Gholamabbas Torqi said. Torqi made the remark at the five-party meeting of the prosecutor generals of the Caspian states held in Baku. "We must maintain the Caspian Sea's biodiversity, which is extremely valuable to our countries. It is vital to handle these concerns jointly, which is why we have convened here," he emphasized. The official stated that there are currently over 200 documents on the conservation of the Caspian Sea, which serve as a solid foundation for preventing abuses of Caspian resources. According to him, in order to protect the Caspian Sea, national management mechanisms must be established, which

necessitates substantial coordination. "Prosecutors' offices will play an important part in this process. Today's conference is critically crucial for future work on maintaining the Caspian Sea's ecosystem," he added. The five-party meeting of the prosecutor generals of the Caspian states is dedicated to environmental threats in the Caspian Sea and the strategy of the prosecutor's offices of the Caspian countries in the field of protection of the marine environment. The event is attended by Azerbaijan's Prosecutor General Kamran Aliyev, senior officials of the Prosecutor General's Offices of Azerbaijan and other Caspian countries, as well as Azerbaijani Deputy Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources Umayra Taghiyeva, and some other high-ranking officials.



Tehran, Brasilia Underline Fighting Money Laundering, Terrorism Financing

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of Iran's Financial Intelligence Unit Hadi Khani and Chairman of Council for Financial Activities Control Ricardo Lião in a video conference stressed strengthening relations to fight money laundering and terrorism financing. To strengthen anti-money laundering and financing terrorism activities within the framework of the Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Council of BRICS member countries, Khani underlined reinforcing relations and doing joint work with Brazil. The two sides reviewed maintaining mutual interactions and using each other's experiences in fighting money laundering and financing terrorism.

Polish Nationalist Opposition PiS Comes First in Local Elections

WARSAW (Dispatches) - Nationalist opposition party Law and Justice (PiS) came first in Poland's local government elections, an exit poll showed on Sunday, in a setback for Prime Minister Donald Tusk's ambitions to cement his grip on power. If confirmed, the results would dash Tusk's hopes of leading his Civic Coalition (KO) grouping to first place in the election independently of its partners in the ruling alliance. While PiS came in ahead of KO, it was still well behind the combined score of the three groupings that make up the coalition government, and appeared set to lose power in some regional governments (6.8% respectively). "The unsinkable PiS... However you look at it, it's a substantial defeat for the image (of Tusk's party)," Krzysztof Izdebski, policy director at the Stefan Batory Foundation think-tank, wrote on X. Tusk swept to power following a national election in October on promises to reverse democratic backsliding, boost the rights of women and minorities and repair ties with Poland's Western allies that had become strained under the previous government.



Tens of Thousands Protest Against Orban in Budapest



BUDAPEST (Dispatches) - Tens of thousands of people staged a rally in Budapest on Saturday in support of a critic of Prime Minister Viktor Orban as he outlined plans to challenge the nationalist leader. The protest against Orban's government was called by lawyer and former insider Peter Magyar, who has shot to prominence in Hungarian politics over a child abuse scandal. AFP journalists said about 100,000 protesters gathered in Kossuth Square in front of the parliament, with many carrying national flags and holding up signs that read "Hungarians rise!" "We will take back our country step by step, and brick by brick we will build a sovereign, modern Hungary," Magyar told a cheering crowd. He said he would soon announce a new political party to run in European and local elections in June. Magyar, 43, is the ex-husband of Orban's former justice minister Judit Varga and was in the orbit of the ruling Fidesz party until he split, vowing to challenge Orban's "power factory" by forming a new party. Varga was forced to stand down from public life over her role in the pardoning of officials involved in a child abuse scandal and Magyar has since emerged as a fierce Orban critic. Last month, Magyar released a recording allegedly implicating a top minister in a high-profile corruption case, and called for the chief prosecutor to resign. "Magyar's initiative has to be supported because... with the current opposition, it is hopeless to fight Orban," 49-year-old cook Leo Szabo told AFP, adding he would vote for Magyar's party once it is operating. Sports coach Tamara, 36, who declined to give her full name, said she was "sceptical", but went to the protest since "something needed to be done because it's insane how much this government has gotten away with." Twenty-year-old student Peter Nagy said he was willing to give Magyar a chance as Hungarians "had nothing to lose". According to a recent poll, Magyar's party could get between 11 to 15 percent in the country of 9.7 million, where elections are due by 2026. Orban is facing the biggest political crisis of his 14-year premiership since it emerged in February that a man convicted in a child sex abuse case had been granted a presidential pardon and was released from jail. Since returning in 2010 to lead the EU member state, Orban has moved to curb press freedom and made other changes to tighten his grip on power, often clashing with Brussels over rule-of-law issues.



Israel Reduces Troops in South Gaza, Egypt to Host New Talks

CAIRO (Dispatches) - Israel said it had withdrawn more soldiers from southern Gaza, leaving just one brigade, as it and Hamas sent teams to Egypt for fresh talks on a potential ceasefire. Israel has been reducing numbers in Gaza since the start of the year to relieve reservists and is under growing pressure from its ally Washington to improve the humanitarian situation, especially after last week's killing of seven aid workers. The military spokesperson did not give details on reasons for withdrawing soldiers or numbers involved. But Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said the troops will be preparing for future operations in Gaza. Both Israel and Hamas, the Islamist movement that controls Gaza, confirmed they were sending delegations to Egypt. Hamas wants any deal to bring about an end to the war and withdrawal of Israeli forces. Israel has said that, after any truce, it would topple Hamas, which is sworn to its destruction. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said there would be no deal without a hostage release and that he would not cave to international pressure. Hamas says an agreement must include freedom of movement of residents across the Gaza Strip. More than 250 hostages were seized and some 1,200 people killed during Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, according to Israeli tallies. More than 33,100 Palestinians have been killed in the Israeli offensive, according to the health ministry in Gaza. Around 130 hostages are still being held in Gaza. Asked about troop withdrawals from the enclave, Israel's Chief of the General Staff Herzi Halevi told reporters that the military was adapting its methods

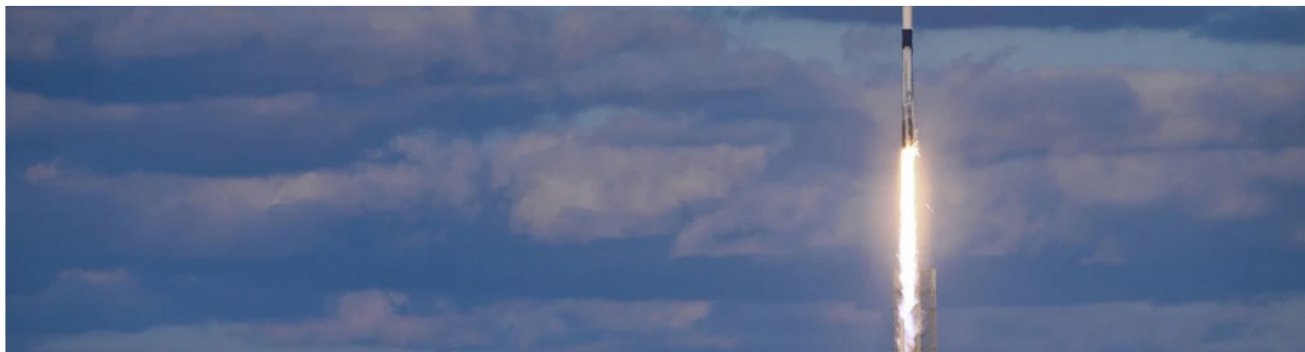
to what has been and will be a long war. Gallant said Israel will press on with the war until Hamas no longer controls Gaza or threatens Israel as a military group. "The forces are exiting and preparing for their next missions," Gallant said at a meeting with military officials, according to a statement from his office, and "also their coming mission in the Rafah area". Israel says an incursion into the Rafah area, near the border with Egypt, is needed to eliminate Hamas but anxious foreign powers have said it could exact an unacceptable toll on civilians, with more than a million people sheltering there. Israel says it will evacuate civilians before launching an incursion. Palestinian residents of the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis, which has come under Israeli bombardment in recent months, said they had seen Israeli forces leaving the centre of the city and retreating to eastern districts. Medics said they found at least 12 Palestinian bodies in the area. Some residents from Khan Younis, who have been sheltering in Rafah, began returning to their neighbourhoods after the Israeli troops left. "It seems at the end it may be a happy Eid," said Imad Joudat, 55, who lives with his eight-member family in a tent in Rafah, referring to the Muslim Eid al-Fitr holiday that starts mid-week. "The occupation withdrew forces from Khan Younis, the Americans are pressuring after some foreigners were killed and Egypt is holding a big round with the Americans, the Israelis, Hamas and Qatar. This time we are hopeful," Joudat told Reuters via a chat app.

Trump Rakes in \$50m as Fundraising War With Biden Heats Up



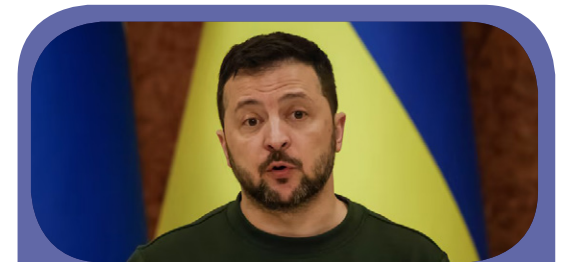
WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Donald Trump's campaign said it took in more than \$50 million at a single fundraising event Saturday in Florida -- the latest salvo in a swaggering, high-stakes battle for big money with Joe Biden. While spending huge sums of money on campaigning may not be something to brag about in some countries, it's often a source of pride for US political candidates. And this year, raising big bucks is as important as ever, with the November 5 presidential election expected to be the most expensive electoral cycle in US history. The Republican former president and the Democratic incumbent have been working to outpace each other for months, boasting about each new significant cash infusion. Biden, 81, raised the stakes at the end of March when he headlined a huge event in New York with former presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton at his side, raking in at least \$25 million -- a record, according to his team. But the 77-year-old Trump's campaign said he doubled that figure at the event at the Palm Beach home of billionaire hedge fund manager John Paulson, not far from Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort. In a joint statement with the Republican National Committee, Team Trump said the event raised more than \$50.5 million, calling Biden's event last week in New York "desperate" in comparison. As he entered the venue with wife Melania at his side, Trump said: "This has been some incredible evening before it even starts, because people -- they wanted to contribute to a cause of making America great again. And that's what's happened." In a statement, Paulson said: "This sold-out event has raised the most in a single political fundraiser in history. This overwhelming support demonstrates the enthusiasm for President Trump and his policies."

South Korea Launches Its 2nd Military Spy Satellite



SEOUL (AP) - South Korea has successfully launched its second military spy satellite into orbit, days after North Korea reaffirmed its plan to launch multiple reconnaissance satellites this year. The Koreans each launched their first spy satellites last year -- North Korea in November and South Korea in December -- amid heightened animosities. They said their satellites would boost their abilities to monitor each other and enhance their own missile attack capabilities. South Korea's second spy satellite was launched from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida on Sunday evening local time, which was Monday morning in Seoul. South Korea's Defense Ministry said it confirmed the satellite entered orbit and communicated with an overseas ground station after separation from a rocket. "With the success of the second military spy satellite launch, our military has acquired an additional independent surveillance ability and further bolstered our 'kill chain' capability," Defense Ministry spokesperson Jeon Ha Gyu told reporters, referring to the military's preemptive missile strike capability. Under a contract with SpaceX, South Korea was to launch five spy satellites by 2025. South Korea's first spy satellite launch on Dec. 1 was made from California's Vandenberg Space Force Base. South Korea in 2022 became the world's 10th nation to successfully launch a satellite with its own technology by using a homegrown rocket to place what it called a "performance observation satellite"

in orbit. But experts say it's economical to use a SpaceX rocket to launch spy satellite and that South Korea needs more launches to ensure the reliability of a rocket. North Korea is also eager to acquire its own space-based surveillance network to cope with what it calls military threats posed by the United States and South Korea. After two launch failures earlier in 2023, North Korea placed its Mallyong-1 spy satellite into orbit on Nov. 21. North Korea has since said its satellite had transmitted imagery with space views of key sites in the U.S. and South Korea, including the White House and the Pentagon. But it hasn't released any of those satellite photos, and foreign experts doubt whether the North Korean satellite can transmit militarily meaningful imagery. On March 31, Pak Kyong Su, vice general director of the North's National Aerospace Technology Administration, said North Korea is expected to launch several more reconnaissance satellites this year. During a key political conference in late December, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed to launch three additional military spy satellite in 2024. South Korean Defense Minister Shin Wonsik said Monday that North Korea will likely go ahead with its second spy satellite launch soon to mark the April 15 birthday of state founder Kim Il Sung, the late grandfather of Kim Jong Un. Shin said it's still possible for the North to perform the launch later due to technical reasons.



Zelenskiy Warns of Dwindling Air Defense Missiles

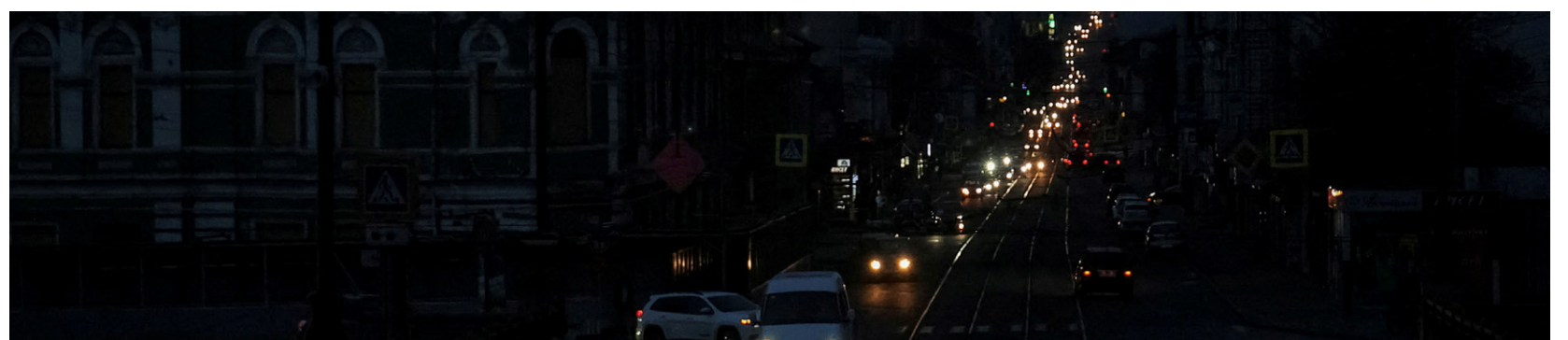
KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine could run out of air defense missiles if Russia keeps up its intense long-range bombing campaign, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy warned in remarks aired. The Ukrainian leader's stark warning to date of the deteriorating situation faced by his country's air defenses follows weeks of Russian strikes on the energy system, towns and cities using a broad arsenal of missiles and drones. "If they keep hitting (Ukraine) every day the way they have for the last month, we might run out of missiles, and the partners know it," he said in an interview that aired on Ukrainian television. Zelenskyy, who has been appealing to allies for weeks to rush in more air defenses, said that Ukraine had enough stockpiles to cope for the moment, but that it was already having to make difficult choices about what to protect. He singled out in particular the need for Patriot air defense systems and said Ukraine needed 25 of them. The sophisticated U.S. air defense system has been vital during Russian attacks with ballistic and hypersonic missiles which can hit targets within a matter of minutes. His remarks followed a fresh spate of attacks that Ukrainian officials said killed civilians. Two Russian missile and drone strikes, one in the early hours of Saturday and a second in the afternoon, killed eight people and wounded at least 10 more people in northeastern Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city. In the eastern region of Donetsk, artillery shelling killed four people in the village of Kurakhivka including a 38-year-old woman and her 16-year-old daughter, and a 25-year-old man in the village of Krasnohorivka was killed, while in Odesa in the south, a missile strike killed one civilian. Ukraine's largest private power company DTEK says the strikes had hit 80% of its generating capacity and the grid has introduced rolling blackouts to stabilise the system.

Ukraine's Energy System Stabilizes, Zelenskiy Makes Plea for Kharkiv

KYIV (Dispatches) - The Ukrainian energy system that was severely damaged by Russian missile attacks in recent weeks is now almost completely stabilized, and the energy ministry on Sunday said no major imports were expected. Ukraine's electricity imports reached a record high at the end of March after a string of Russian missile strikes on critical infrastructure caused blackouts in many parts of the country. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Sunday said he had discussed a wave of attacks and bombings on Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, with the heads of the Security Service, Defence Intelligence and the Interior minister. Later, in his nightly video address, the president said the world must "finally hear" the pain inflicted on Kharkiv and other cities by Russian attacks and renewed a call for "political will" to ensure that Ukraine secures proper air defenses. "It is quite obvious that our existing air defense capabilities in Ukraine are not sufficient and it is obvious to our partners," Zelenskyy said. "And the world must finally hear the pain that Russian terrorists are causing to Kharkiv." Zelenskyy has for months called on Ukraine's Western partners to provide the systems and munitions he says his country needs to oust Russian troops. In an interview broadcast on Saturday, he said he still believes that a major U.S. aid package would be approved by Congress, where it has faced Republican opposition for months. Ukraine has been hit for weeks by a long series of missile attacks on critical infrastructure throughout the country, triggering a record high in electricity imports. Since March 22, Russian forces have been attacking Ukrainian thermal and

hydropower stations as well as main networks on an almost daily basis, which has led to the blackouts. Grid company Ukrenergo said Russian drones had damaged the high-voltage network facility in the Kharkiv region overnight and the system operator had to introduce some power cuts. "Today, Ukrenergo's dispatch centre has been forced to increase the volume of emergency power outages in Kharkiv and the region," the company said on Telegram.

However, the country's power system remains "stable and balanced," the energy ministry said in a statement. It said power exports were expected at 115 megawatt hours (MWh) on Sunday while imports could total 1,179 MWh. Ukraine imported a record 18,649 MWh on March 26. National grid company chief Volodymyr Kudrytskyi told Reuters last week that Russian attacks had caused significant damage to the power system, but a total collapse was unlikely.





Verstappen Wins Japanese GP in Red Bull One-Two

SUZUKA (Dispatches) - Triple world champion Max Verstappen romped to victory at the Japanese Grand Prix today, leading team-mate Sergio Perez to a dominant one-two finish for Red Bull. Verstappen failed to finish in Australia a fortnight ago but he was in control for the entire race at Suzuka after starting from pole and claimed his third win from four grands prix this season. The Dutchman finished 12.535sec ahead of Perez, who came home in second in front of Ferrari's third-placed Carlos Sainz in dry, sunny conditions. Verstappen was back to his breathtaking best after a brake issue in Melbourne saw him retire from a race for the first time in two years. He was starting from pole for the fourth time in four races this season and he stamped his authority on the race by leading Perez to the first turn. Verstappen said this week that Suzuka was one of his favourite circuits and he has now won the Japanese Grand Prix three times in a row. Sainz, who triumphed in Australia, took third ahead of Ferrari team-mate Charles Leclerc, who started from eighth on the grid. McLaren's Lando Norris, who was second in last year's race, was fifth ahead of Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso. Mercedes' George Russell edged out McLaren's Oscar Piastri for seventh, while Lewis Hamilton was ninth in the other Mercedes. Japan's Yuki Tsunoda was

10th for RB, scoring points at his home grand prix for the first time. The race was red-flagged on the second lap after RB's Daniel Ricciardo and Williams' Alex Albon collided and crashed after a frenetic start. Albon's front wing clipped into the rear of Ricciardo's car as they jockeyed for position, and both slammed into the wall before getting out unscathed. Both drivers retired from the race. The action resumed from a standing start and Verstappen picked up from where he left off ahead of Perez. Leclerc took over the lead after Verstappen pitted on his 17th lap, but the Red Bull driver was back in front four laps later. Verstappen and Perez both consolidated their positions, leaving Norris fighting for third against the two Ferraris. A late lock-up cost the McLaren driver his chance of a podium finish. Sauber's Zhou Guanyu retired with a gearbox issue on his 19th lap. Williams' Logan Sargeant skidded off the track to a standstill late in the race but resumed driving. The championship resumes in a fortnight's time with the Chinese Grand Prix in Shanghai. It will be the first time the event has been held since 2019, before it was curtailed by the pandemic. The Japanese Grand Prix was being held in April after being shifted forward from its usual late-season slot.

George Late Show Sparks Clippers Over Cleveland



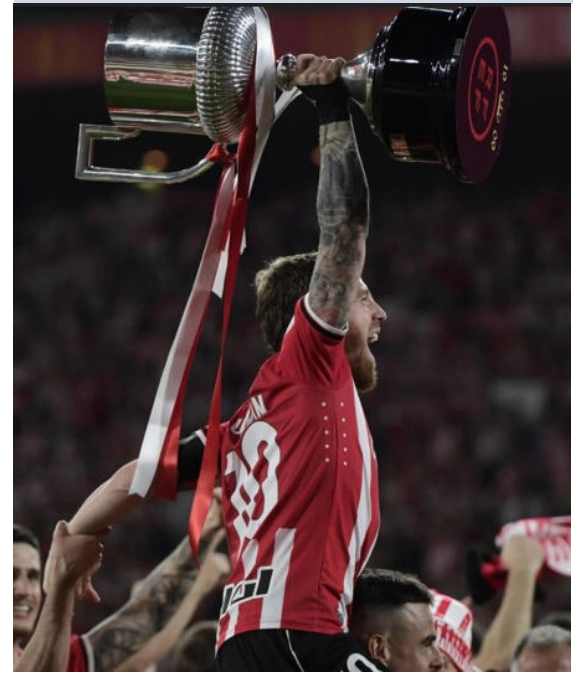
LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Paul George led a remarkable comeback as the Los Angeles Clippers overturned a 26-point deficit to defeat the Cleveland Cavaliers 120-118 in the NBA. George erupted for 23 points in a fourth-quarter charge, including the go-ahead shot with seven seconds remaining, and then made a crucial block to preserve the Clippers' lead just before the buzzer. It was the final act of an incredible individual display by George who finished with 39 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists and who was a perfect 16-of-16 from the free throw line. James Harden added 22 points, while Ivica Zubac, Terance Mann and Norman Powell all had 14 points apiece. "It was a collective team win," George said. "I can't take credit for none of it without them. It couldn't have happened without those guys chipping in and doing what they do." The Clippers had looked to be heading for a monumental beatdown after a disastrous first-half performance that saw Cleveland rack up back-to-back 40-point quarters to lead 80-59 at half-time. The victory boosts the Clippers' chances of securing the fourth seed in the Western Conference. Los Angeles improved to 50-28 to remain fourth in the standings, ahead of the fifth-placed Dallas Mavericks, who are 48-30. Both teams have four regular season games remaining. The Mavericks kept up their late-season charge with a third straight victory in a 147-136 overtime win over the Houston Rockets. Kyrie Irving led the way with 48 points, while Luka Donic had 37 points, 12 assists and nine rebounds as the Mavericks came back from 22 points down to prevail.

Hurkacz Wins at Estoril for 8th Career Title

ESTORIL (Dispatches) - April 7 - Poland's Hubert Hurkacz powered his way to his first clay-court title, beating Pedro Martinez of Spain 6-3, 6-4 in the final of the Millennium Estoril Open in Estoril, Portugal. The No. 2 seed, Hurkacz recorded 15 aces in capturing his eighth career ATP Tour crown in the 87-minute match. He won 29 of 35 first-serve points and did not have to save any break points, while Martinez saved 3 of 5. Hurkacz, now 3-0 against Martinez on the tour, will rise two spots to a career-high-tying No. 8 in the PIF ATP Rankings on Monday. Martinez, who defeated top seed and eighth-ranked Norwegian Casper Ruud in the semifinals, will improve 17 spots to No. 60 in the rankings. Martinez never led during the final. Italian Matteo Berrettini, playing in his third tournament since missing six months with an ankle injury, downed defending champion Roberto Carballes Baena of Spain 7-5, 6-2 in the final at Marrakech, Morocco. Berrettini, a 2021 Wimbledon finalist, had not won on the ATP Tour since his Queen's Club win two years ago. He will rise 51 spots to No. 84 in the PIF ATP Rankings. Baena had won nine consecutive matches in Marrakech before dropping Sunday's final in 1 hour, 46 minutes. He converted just 1 of 8 break points, while Berrettini converted 4 of 7. Meanwhile Danielle Collins captured the Charleston Open title with a dominant 6-2 6-1 victory over fourth seed Daria Kasatkina, extending her sensational winning run to 13 matches in her final season on the WTA Tour. The 30-year-old American, who won her first Masters 1000 title at the Miami Open last month, wrapped up the one-sided contest in 77 minutes. "Thank you to everyone who came up and support me. I feel at home playing here. Having this type of crowd really means a lot," Collins said. The 2022 Australian Open runner-up announced in January that she would be hanging up her racket this year in order to start a family. "First of all I wanted to say I'm going to miss you (Danielle), you're such a character, your personality is amazing. I think tennis is going to lose a lot after your retirement, enjoy this moment," Kasatkina told the American during the presentation ceremony.



Juve Scrape Past Fiorentina



MILAN (Dispatches) - Juventus consolidated third place in Serie A with the hard-fought 1-0 win over Fiorentina while a trio of fantastic goals helped Napoli to a thrilling 4-2 win at Monza. Federico Gatti prodded home the only goal of the game in the 21st minute at the Allianz Stadium in Turin, the Italy defender in the right place at the right time after Gleison Bremer's header came back out off the post. Gatti's goal pushed Juve four points ahead of Bologna who stayed fourth following their goalless draw at relegation-threatened Frosinone in the day's first kick-off. Bologna are aiming to reach the modern Champions League for the first time - they played one round in the old European Cup in 1964 - and are a good bet to do so thanks to eight wins from their last 10 matches. Juve had picked up just seven points from their previous nine league fixtures, but Sunday's win came days after comfortably beating Lazio in the first leg of their Italian Cup semi-final. It was a hard-fought three points however as they had three goals chalked off for offside, including a tap-in from former Fiorentina man Dusan Vlahovic, in the opening 45 minutes before sitting on their slender lead for almost the entire second half. In the end, Juve had Wojciech Szczesny to thank for the win as the Poland goalkeeper tipped Nicolas Gonzalez's curling strike onto the crossbar with a magnificent save in the 74th minute. Fiorentina, who dominated the second half without finding the breakthrough, stay 10th after a failing to win for a fourth consecutive league match. Trailing at half-time to Milan Djuric's early header and loudly barracked by protesting away fans, champions Napoli roared back to win at Monza following sumptuous strikes from Victor Osimhen, Matteo Politano and Piotr Zielinski in six second-half minutes. Andrea Colpani's deflected shot closed the gap to one, seconds after Zielinski's first goal since October, but Giacomo Raspadori added the fourth in the 69th minute to ensure Napoli went seventh.

Liverpool's Title Bid Dented by Man Utd Draw

LONDON (Dispatches) - Liverpool were held to a damaging 2-2 draw by Manchester United as they handed the initiative to Arsenal in the Premier League title race, while Tottenham moved into fourth place with a 3-1 win over Nottingham Forest on Sunday. Jurgen Klopp's side would have gone top with a victory against their bitter rivals at Old Trafford. But despite taking the lead through Luis Diaz's 23rd minute strike, Liverpool couldn't deliver the knockout blow. They wasted several chances to increase their advantage before Bruno Fernandes alertly pounced on Jarell Quansah's wayward pass to score from just inside the Liverpool half in the 50th minute. To Klopp's visible fury, Kobbie Mainoo found space to net United's second with an eye-catching curler in the 67th minute. Liverpool avoided a repeat of their FA Cup quarter-final defeat at United earlier this season as Mohamed Salah equalized with an 84th minute penalty after Aaron Wan-Bissaka chopped down Harvey Elliott. But it was still a frustrating final visit to Old Trafford for Klopp before his departure at the end of the season, with Liverpool stuck behind Arsenal, who hold a nine-goal advantage on goal difference. Klopp's team, who are one point ahead of third placed Manchester City, have seven games left to overhaul Arsenal as they chase a record-equalling 20th English title. "We should have won the game, that is clear. We should have had other goals in the first half. We dropped too deep," Klopp said. "The whole Liverpool community just stay calm. We are where we are and we keep giving it a proper go." "Do I wish we had 10 points difference? Of course. We are in the race

and I'm absolutely fine with it." United boss Erik ten Hag added: "Very mixed emotions. We have to blame ourselves for making stupid mistakes. "On the other side I'm very proud. You see how we are improving and the potential of this squad is amazing." At the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, the game went ahead despite a fatal stabbing just yards from the ground earlier on Sunday. Ange Postecoglou's side took the lead thanks to an own goal from Forest defender Murillo in the 15th minute. Timo Werner's low cross into the six-yard box caused panic and Murillo's stretching attempt to clear diverted the ball into his own net. Chris Wood equalised in the 27th minute with a clinical strike from Anthony Elanga's pass for his 12th league goal this season. But Micky van de Ven bagged Tottenham's second in the 52nd minute with a blistering strike from just inside the area. And six minutes later Pedro Porro produced a powerful half-volley from 14 yards to put the result beyond doubt. Tottenham are now above fifth placed Aston Villa on goal difference and also hold a game in hand in the race to qualify for the Champions League via a top four finish. "Everyone has been banging on about us getting fourth. We're fourth now but it doesn't stop, we'll keep going. We're in a good shape to finish the season strong," Postecoglou said. Fourth bottom Forest are outside the relegation zone by the slenderest of margins, above Luton only on goal difference. In Sunday's other game, Ole McBurnie's last-gasp equaliser forced Chelsea to settle for a 2-2 draw at bottom of the table Sheffield United. Fresh from scoring twice in the final seconds

of stoppage-time to beat Manchester United on Thursday, Chelsea took the lead after 11 minutes as Thiago Silva finished off Conor Gallagher's corner at the far post.

