

Iranian Foreign Minister in Separate Calls With His Regional Counterparts as Well as the Chiefs of the United Nations and the European Union Discussed Iran's Recent Legitimate Response to the Israeli Regime

# IRAN NEWS

President Ebrahim Raisi Lauded the Yemeni Nation's Perseverance and Resistance, Saying Their Support for Palestine Has Been Extremely Effective in Deterring the Zionist Regime's Atrocities and Altered the Equations in Favor of the People of Gaza

## 2 DOMESTIC

### UK Slammed for Double Standards on Israeli Crimes, Iran's Lawful Response



> SEE PAGE 2

## 3 INTERNATIONAL

### Biden, Iraqi PM Agree on Talks for U.S.-Led Coalition Withdrawal



> SEE PAGE 3

### Slightest Act Against Iran's Interests Will Be Met With Painful Response



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - President Ebrahim Raisi has warned that any slightest action against Iran's interests will be met with a "severe, extensive and painful response against all its perpetrators," the Iranian president said. Raisi issued the warning during a telephone conversation with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani on Monday, two days after Iran launched hundreds of missiles and drones at the occupied territories in retaliation for Israel's terrorist attack against the Islamic Republic's diplomatic premises in Syria. "Now, we declare with conviction that the slightest action against Iran's interests will definitely be met with a severe, extensive and painful response against all its perpetrators," the Iranian president said. Israel's April 1 strike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus, which killed seven members of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), demonstrated the regime's "frustration" caused by its failure to achieve its declared goals during the genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, he added. Raisi also complained about the inaction of the United Nations and its Security Council on the Israeli crimes in Gaza and their failure to condemn Israel's terrorist raid on Iran's consulate. Therefore, he noted, the Islamic Republic "designed and conducted" a retaliatory operation against "the same centers that had done acts of mischief against us, exercising our legitimate right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter." The Iranian chief executive further underlined the need for taking acts of deterrence, especially by Muslim countries, against Israel as it keeps committing crimes in Gaza.

### Iran to Respond to Any fresh Israeli Mistake Within Seconds



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's deputy foreign minister has warned that the Islamic Republic would respond to any fresh Israeli "mistake" against the country "within seconds." Ali Bagheri Kani, deputy foreign minister for political affairs, made the remarks in a televised interview on Monday. "In case of repetition of another mistake, they should expect a harsher, faster, and more immediate response," he said. "This time, the Zionists should know this that they will not have a 12-day-long timespace," the official noted, adding, "The response that they are going to receive [this time around] cannot be measured by [such time standards as] days or hours, but [will come in a matter of] seconds." On April 1, the Israeli regime committed a terrorist attack against Iran's diplomatic premises in the Syrian capital Damascus. In retaliation, the IRGC targeted the occupied territories late on Saturday with a barrage of drones and missiles. The retaliatory strikes, dubbed Operation True Promise, has inflicted damage on Israeli military bases across the Palestinian occupied territories. "If there is any [measure of] rationality within the Zionist regime, they [will know this that they] must not repeat their strategic mistake with another mistake," Bagheri said. The Zionists, the official stated, should know that if their mistake concerning the Iranian consulate warrants such a crushing retaliation, then their likely malign intentions against the Iranian soil would "principally entail a much more vehement response."



### Iran Retaliatory Attack Debunks Israel's Invincibility Myth More Than Ever

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Commander of the Iranian Army's Ground Force Brigadier General Kioumars Haydari says Iran's retaliatory operation against Israel has further dispelled the threadbare myth that the wicked and child-killing Tel Aviv regime is unbeatable. Haydari stated on Tuesday that the successful launch of hundreds of missiles and drones at the occupied territories in retaliation for the Israeli regime's April 1 terrorist strike on the Islamic Republic's consulate in Syria was a severe and crushing response to the notorious Zionist regime. He emphasized that the destruction of Israeli military bases falls within the framework of Tehran's success in countering and neutralizing the financial, logistical and intellectual support of the criminal US administration and its allies in West Asia and across the globe. "The Iranian Armed Forces can now confront any type of threats and nip any threat in the bud, thanks to constant vigilance and watchfulness... The courageous and decisive action of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran melted the hearts of millions of freedom-loving Muslims, grief-stricken Gazans and fighters from resistance factions, and lived up to the divine promise about the victory of truth over falsehood," the Iranian Army's Ground Force chief pointed out. Haydari further highlighted that the Iranian retaliatory attack targeted the most strategic base and surveillance site of

the Israeli military at the Jabal al-Sheikh Heights on the border between occupied Palestinian territories and Syria. "The strike on that base and Nevatim Airbase, which accommodates the Zionist regime's strategic logistics, delivered a crushing blow to the Zionist regime's decision-making and deterrence power," the high-profile Iranian military figure stated. Haydari underscored that the deterrence power and combat preparedness of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Armed Forces have warded off any act of aggression against the country, stating that the recent retaliatory attack against Israel showcased a fraction of Iran's military might and made the Israeli army taste a great defeat. "A much severe response awaits the Zionist regime's forces if they commit another strategic mistake," he stressed. Separately, Haydari said at a news briefing in Tehran on the occasion of the National Army Day, which is celebrated annually on April 18, that the Tel Aviv regime will receive a much stronger response if it opts to carry out a new act of aggression against Iran. He stated that Iranian Armed Forces are now at the apex of their combat preparedness, and that the Israeli regime must know that he have created a new equation and will respond to their vicious bids. "Armed Forces decisively responded to the nation's request. Our forces proved that the Zionist regime is weaker than a spider's web," Haydari stated.

### Anti-Israeli Retaliation Could Have Been Wider in Scope



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's foreign minister has said the country's recent retaliatory strikes against the Israeli regime could have been wider in scope. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks in a telephone conversation with the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Monday. The top diplomat was referring to the Islamic Republic's Saturday reprisal against the Israeli regime's deadly attack of April 1 against the country's diplomatic premises in the Syrian capital Damascus. "Although, the Islamic Republic was capable of conducting this operation across a wider radius, it just targeted parts of the Zionist regime's positions, from which the [Israeli] attack against our country's Embassy in Damascus had taken place," the foreign minister said. The retaliation, he added, fitted within the country's right to legitimate defense and the international law. Due to the UN Security Council's refusal to condemn the attack, the Islamic Republic was left with no option but to resort to the defensive operation and punish the Zionist regime, Amir-Abdollahian stated. Elsewhere in his remarks, the foreign minister pointed to the Israeli regime's genocidal war against the Gaza Strip, which began on October 7 last year following Operation al-Aqsa Storm by the coastal sliver's resistance groups. "The United States and its allies refuse to stop the regime," he noted, and denounced the international community's failure to put an end to the genocide. The Iranian official welcomed the United Nations' efforts towards cessation of the warfare and transfer of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian territory. For his part, Guterres pointed to Iran's retaliation against the Israeli regime, advising parties to regional conflicts to exercise restraint. The UN chief noted how he had condemned acts of violation targeting diplomatic premises on several occasions. He expressed delight in Iran's current refusal to take additional measures against the occupying regime, advising Tel Aviv to refrain from committing fresh aggression against the Islamic Republic.

### White House Warned About Consequences of Repeated Israeli Adventurism



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian says Iran has warned the United States about potential consequences of repeated Israeli military adventurism against the Islamic Republic. The top diplomat made the remarks in a Monday phone call with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi. "We have clearly warned the White House that, in case of [fresh] adventurism by the Zionist regime in repeating terrorist aggression against Iran's interests and security, Tehran's subsequent response and action would be decisive, immediate, and extensive," Amir-Abdollahian said. On April 1, the Israeli regime committed a terrorist attack against Iran's diplomatic premises in the Syrian capital Damascus. The Israeli attack resulted in the martyrdom of Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Zahedi, a commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), his deputy, General Mohammad Hadi Haji Rahimi, and five of their accompanying officers. Retaliating against the attack, the IRGC targeted the occupied territories late on Saturday with a barrage of drones and missiles. The retaliatory attack, dubbed Operation True Promise, has inflicted damage on Israeli military bases across the occupied territories. Following the reprisal, Iran both relayed the message that it viewed the matter as "concluded," and also warned the US, the Israeli regime's biggest ally, against trying to involve itself in the conflict. For his part, the Chinese official said Beijing vehemently condemned the attack on the Iranian Embassy in Damascus, considering it to be in violation of international rules and principles. Wang noted how his country had likewise supported the Islamic Republic's just demands at the United Nations Security Council, despite double-standard practices on the part of the US and its Western allies, which saw them refusing to condemn the Israeli atrocity.

### Biden Told to Cancel \$10b Sanctions Relief for Iran

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Joe Biden is under mounting pressure to scrap \$10 billion in sanctions relief for Iran after its drone and missile attack on Israel. Republican congressmen have demanded the U.S. president reverse his decision to unfreeze Iranian funds generated from electricity shipments to Iraq. The U.S. first waived sanctions on the \$10 billion (£8 billion) in 2018, giving Iran access to money that had been frozen. The order was renewed by Mr Biden in November. The State Department said the money, which is held in euros in Oman, can only be used for humanitarian purposes under the terms of the waiver. However, critics argue this has freed resources and enabled Iran to fund its proxies across the Middle East and step up its nuclear weapons program. G7 countries are thought to have discussed the prospect of further sanctions on Iran in a call on Sunday, after Iran sent more than 350 drones, missiles and rockets towards Israel on Saturday. Jeremy Hunt, the chancellor of the exchequer, will begin a three-day trip to Washington DC, where he will attend meetings with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), members of the G7 and G20, and finance ministers from Five Eyes intelligence sharing countries. "At times of instability across the globe, we are reminded that we are stronger when we stand together," he said in advance of the visit. "The U.S. is our most important strategic ally and we are both at the forefront of keeping the world safe." His visit comes as legislators across the West call on their governments to step up sanctions against Iran, which are already significant. In the UK, Labour has demanded the government introduce a raft of measures in response to the attack. The EU has also announced it will discuss whether to impose new sanctions, although the bloc's leaders suggested on Monday they were focused on de-escalating the conflict first. Josep Borrell, the EU's top diplomat, who has been keen to soften sanctions talk, warned Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Iranian foreign minister, "not to escalate further." Charles Michel, the European Council's president, who attended a meeting of G7 leaders over the weekend, added: "We will continue all our efforts to work towards de-escalation." The strikes will feature prominently in discussions between EU leaders when they meet for a summit in Brussels later this week. At their last meeting, they discussed whether to hit Iran with new economic sanctions in response to intelligence warnings that Tehran was preparing to ship ballistic missiles to Russia. Republicans in Washington demanded that Mr Biden restrict Iranian imports and sanction Chinese companies which buy oil from Tehran. Joni Ernst, a senator from Iowa, has proposed one of several bills in Congress to increase restrictions on Iranian trade. "President Biden must enforce sanctions on Iran now," she said on Monday.





# IRAN NEWS



## Iran Attack on Israel Controlled Powerful Response

TEHRAN (MNA) – The spokesman of the Iranian Parliament National Security Commission says that Iran’s attack on Israel was a controlled powerful response to the regime’s aggression against the country’s diplomatic annex in Damascus. “It has been about 190 days since the Zionist usurper regime bombed Gaza and killed the oppressed Palestinian people. This regime did not adhere to the UN Security Council resolution to stop the Gaza war and did not implement it,” Abolfazl Amouei said. Referring to Iran’s retaliatory attack on Israeli military bases in occupied Palestine in response to the Tel Aviv regime’s airstrike on the country’s consulate building in the Syrian capital of Damascus on April 1, the senior Iranian lawmaker said that the anti-Israeli attack was carried out based on Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, and Iran’s action was a legitimate defensive action.

### Iran Reports Growth in Exports to Russia, Belarus



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – An official at the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) said the country’s export of products to Russia and Belarus in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended March 19, 2024) registered a considerable growth in volume and value. Head of the Central Asia, Caucasus and Russia Office of the TPOI Akbar Godari said Iran exported 2.185 million tons of non-oil products, valued at \$946 million, to Russia from March 21, 2023, to March 19, 2024, registering a hike in value and volume compared to a year earlier. The statistics indicate that Iran’s export of various types of products to Russia in this period registered a 26 and 52 percent growth in value and volume respectively, Godari stated. He pointed to the import of products into the country from Russia and said \$1,691 million of products were imported into the country from the Russian Federation last year, showing a 9 and 27 percent growth in value and volume respectively compared to a year earlier, IRIB news reported. Elsewhere in his remarks, Godari pointed out that Iran exported \$20 million of products to Belarus from March 21, 2023, to March 19, 2024, showing a 34 percent hike in value compared to a year before. In this period, Iran imported \$59 million of products from Belarus, registering a 35% growth compared to a year earlier, he added.

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK



## UK Slammed for Double Standards on Israeli Crimes, Iran’s Lawful Response

TEHRAN - The foreign minister of Iran lashed out at the UK for throwing its weight behind Israel, which is slaughtering people in Gaza, saying it is surprising how the UK may allow itself to voice concern about Iran’s legitimate response to the Israeli fatal attack on its embassy in Syria. In a telephone conversation on Monday, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and British Foreign Secretary David Cameron talked about the latest state of developments in the region. Amir-Abdollahian referred to Iran’s legitimate defense with the aim of punishing the Israeli regime, saying the crises in West Asia stem from the destructive role of the occupying Israeli regime. He further expressed surprise at the extent of support that Britain gives to the crimes of the Zionist regime and its killing of children and innocent people in Gaza. Amir-Abdollahian asked Cameron, “What does the British government gain from this amount of irresponsible support for Israel?” The Iranian foreign minister added that it is surprising that while several thousand tons of bombs have been dropped on the oppressed people of Gaza in the past six months, Britain is worried about Iran’s response to the brutal Israeli attack

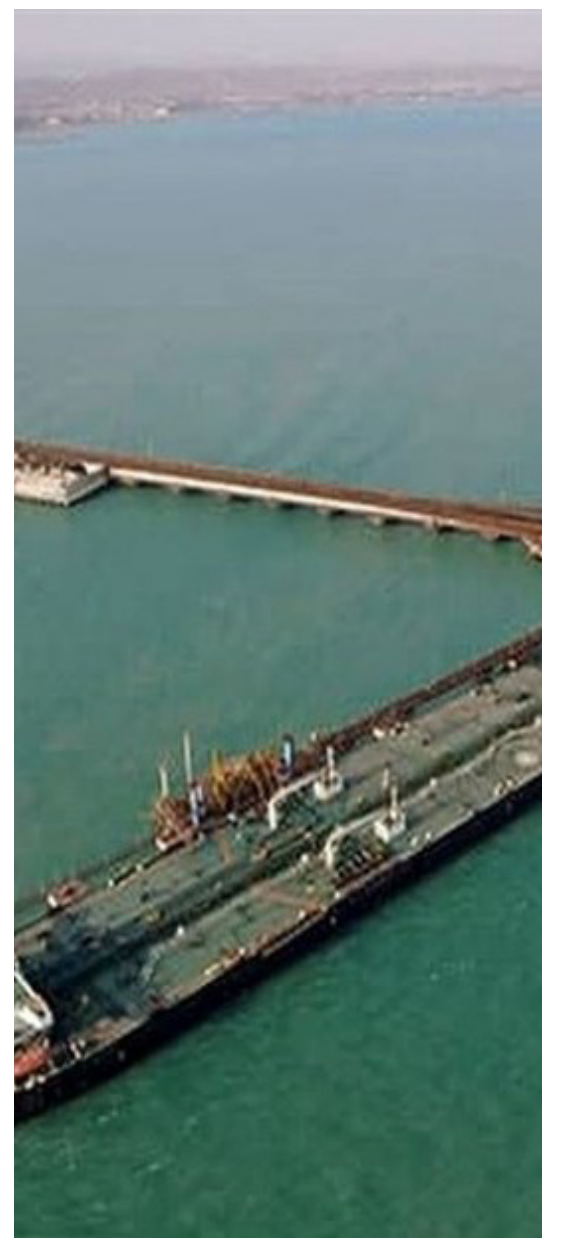
on the Iranian diplomatic mission in Damascus. He underlined that Iran’s retaliatory action has conformed with the principle of legitimate defense under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. Iran does not welcome an escalation of tensions in the region, but if the Israeli regime is looking for an act of adventurism, then Iran’s next response will be immediate, stronger and more extensive, Amir-Abdollahian said, the Foreign Ministry’s website reported. Cameron, for his part, expressed concern over rising tensions in the region following the response Iran gave to the Israeli regime’s acts of aggression. He also spoke about the situation in Gaza, saying Britain worked round the clock during the recent debate on a UN Security Council resolution in order to establish a ceasefire in Gaza. Cameron added that Britain is making an effort to get the two sides to exchange their prisoners as well. He alleged that the Iranian military action against Israel was worrying and increased regional tension. The UK diplomat said that London, at the same time, will ask Tel Aviv not to make any move as it does not want a repetition of what happened in a much wider manner.

### Iran to Inaugurate Major Water Project in Sri Lanka



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran will inaugurate the “Uma Oya” multipurpose project in Sri Lanka during the Iranian month of Ordibehesht (to start April 20). This significant project will be launched in the presence of the presidents of the two countries. The Uma Oya multipurpose project is located in the southeast of Sri Lanka, 200 km away from Colombo and includes two dams namely Dyraaba and Puhulpola and two major hydroelectric power plants each with a capacity of 60 megawatts. The ‘Uma Oya’ multipurpose project is regarded as one of the greatest technical and engineering service projects of Iranian companies in Sri Lanka, according to ISNA. The purpose of the project is to improve the irrigation of 5,000 hectares of agricultural land, transferring 145 million cubic meters of water and generating 290 GW/h of power in a year. One of the important features of the Uma Oya project is its scattered and diverse components.

### Exports from PGSEZ Up 23% in One Year



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The chief executive of the Persian Gulf Special Economic Zone (PGSEZ) said exports of products from the zone registered a 23% growth in the previous Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2023 to March 19, 2024) compared to a year earlier. Mohammad-Reza Pirhosseinloo said \$2.6 billion of products were exported from the Persian Gulf Special Economic Zone last year. He put the weight of products exported from the Persian Gulf Special Economic Zone between March 21, 2023, and March 19, 2024, at more than 10 million tons, showing a 149% growth compared to a year before, Mehr news agency reported. More than four million tons of products had been exported from the zone between March 21, 2022, and March 20, 2023, he added.

## Non-Oil Exports to Afghanistan Up 13%

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - An official at the Iranian Embassy in Afghanistan said that Iran exported over \$1.8 billion of non-oil products to the neighboring country in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended March 19, 2024), registering a 13% growth compared to a year earlier. Iran’s Commercial Attache in Afghanistan Hossein Roustaei said the country exported \$1.871 billion of non-oil products to Afghanistan from March 21, 2023, to March 19, 2024, showing more than 13.6 percent hike compared to a year before. He went on to say that 3,414 tons of non-oil products were exported from the country to Afghanistan in the 12 months of the previous Iranian calendar year, indicating a 28-percent up compared to the same period last year, according to Mehr news agency. Increasing the number of

trade and business delegations, facilitating the activities at border crossings, increasing working hours at the customs offices, holding joint economic commission meetings between the two countries in Tehran, holding business conferences in Kabul, Herat, Tehran and Mashhad, and holding an exhibition of the export potentials of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Herat were among the most important factors in the rise in the export of non-oil goods from Iran to Afghanistan, he emphasized. Oil products, iron and steel ingots, natural gas, light and heavy hydrocarbons, iron, steel, foodstuff, types of polyethylene, fresh fruits and vegetables, and cement were among the main products exported from Iran to Afghanistan in this period, Roustaei added.



### Iran Exports over \$1.2b of Technical-Engineering Services in One Year

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – An official at the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) said the country exported more than \$1.292 billion worth of technical and engineering services overseas in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended March 19, 2024). The director general of the export office of the knowledge-based products and technical-engineering services of the organization pointed to the dispatching of Iran’s technical and engineering services delegations to Iraq, China and Russia and said more than \$1.292 billion worth of technical and engineering services were exported from the country from March 21, 2023, to March 19, 2024. Mohammad Reza Karimzadeh went on to say that competent domestic companies have concluded 30 contracts in 20 countries for fulfilling the technical and engineering services, Mehr news agency reported. Elsewhere in his remarks, he pointed to the determination of the government to facilitate the export of technical and engineering services and noted that it took effective measures last year, including the compilation of a comprehensive program for developing the export of technical and engineering services and also formulation of an incentive package to support exporters of these services.



### Four Dead, 19 Missing After Boat Capsizes in Indian Kashmir

SRINAGAR (Dispatches) - Four people died and at least 19 more were missing after a boat ferrying them across a swollen river capsized in Indian-administered Kashmir, officials said. Rescuers in rubber boats joined by marine commandos were scrambling to find survivors as hundreds of worried and mourning family members gathered at the riverbanks after the accident. The missing included several children who had been on their way to school when the boat overturned in the Jhelum river in the city of Srinagar. "We have four dead from the tragedy," Muzaffar Zargar, the superintendent for the city's main hospital, told reporters. Three others were being treated, he added. At least 26 people were on the boat when it capsized, a top official in Kashmir told AFP on condition of anonymity, as they were not authorised to speak to media. Days of rain across the Himalayan Kashmir valley had swelled the river.



### Pakistan, IMF Discussing New Multi-Billion-Dollar Program



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Pakistan has initiated discussions with the IMF over a new multi-billion dollar loan agreement to support its economic reform program, its new finance minister told AFP on Monday. The South Asian nation is nearing the end of a nine-month, \$3 billion loan program with the International Monetary Fund designed to tackle a balance-of-payments crisis which brought it to the brink of default last summer. With the final \$1.1 billion tranche of that deal likely to be approved later this month, Pakistan has begun negotiations for a new multi-year IMF loan program worth "billions" of dollars, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said during an interview in Washington. "The market confidence, the market sentiment is in much, much better shape this fiscal year," said Aurangzeb, a former banker who took up his post last month. "It's really for that purpose that, during the course of this week, we have initiated the discussion with the Fund to get into a larger and an extended program," he added. An IMF spokesperson told AFP that the Fund is "currently focused on the completion of the current Stand-by Agreement program," referring to the ongoing nine-month program scheduled for completion shortly. "The new government has expressed interest in a new program, and Fund staff stands ready to engage in initial discussions on a successor program," the spokesperson added. During his visit to Washington, Aurangzeb will also attend the spring meetings organized by the IMF and World Bank, which kick off in earnest Tuesday, with two clear objectives: to help countries combat climate change, and to assist the world's most indebted nations. The meetings -- which bring central bankers together with finance and development ministers, academics, and representatives from the private sector and civil society to discuss the state of the global economy -- will kick off with the IMF's publication of its updated World Economic Outlook. During his visit to Washington, Aurangzeb will also attend the spring meetings organized by the IMF and World Bank, which kick off in earnest Tuesday, with two clear objectives: to help countries combat climate change, and to assist the world's most indebted nations. Pakistan held elections in February this year which were marred by allegations of rigging, with opposition leader Imran Khan jailed and barred from running, and his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party subject to a crackdown.



### Biden, Iraqi PM Agree on Talks for U.S.-Led Coalition Withdrawal

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Joe Biden and Iraq's Prime Minister Mohamed Shia al-Sudani said they would keep working towards the withdrawal of a U.S.-led anti-jihadist coalition in the country. Their meeting at the White House came amid soaring tensions in the Middle East after Iraq's neighbor Iran launched a massive aerial attack on US ally Israel over the weekend. The U.S.-led military coalition was formed in 2014 to fight the Islamic State group -- the year the jihadists overran nearly a third of Iraq's territory and swaths of neighbouring Syria. Iraq has been trying to stay out of regional tensions amid the six-month war waged by Israel against Iran-backed Palestinian militants in Gaza, following Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel. Armed groups, including some based in Iraq, have since carried out a series of attacks on facilities belonging to the United States, which is Israel's main ally. Iraq, hoping not to be consumed by U.S.-Iran hostility, strongly protested a U.S. drone strike in February that killed an Iraqi militia leader, carried out in retaliation for an attack that killed three U.S. service members in Jordan. But tensions have since subsided between Washington and Baghdad, and they resumed talks on the future

of the coalition. In a joint statement, Biden and Sudani said they discussed the "natural evolution" of the coalition "in light of the significant progress that has been made in ten years." They would now look at issues including the continued threat from IS, the needs of the fragile Iraqi government for support, and bolstering Iraqi security forces, they said. "The two leaders affirmed they would review these factors to determine when and how the mission of the Global Coalition in Iraq would end," they said in the statement. The aim would be to move to a bilateral agreement that could still keep some U.S. troops in Iraq. The United States currently has some 2,500 troops in Iraq and 900 in Syria as part of the coalition. Biden and Sudani, making his first visit to Washington since taking office in 2022, also discussed the fractious situation in the region following Iran's attack on Israel. At the start of their meeting in the Oval Office, Sudani urged "restraint" on all sides to "stop the expansion of the area of conflict." U.S. forces based near the northern Iraq city of Erbil were involved in the operation to counter the attack, using a Patriot missile battery to shoot down an Iranian ballistic missile.

### Chinese Economy Beats Growth Expectations in First Quarter



BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's economy expanded far more than expected in the first quarter of 2024, data showed Tuesday, but disappointing retail and industrial figures suggested leaders face severe headwinds to hit their annual growth target. Beijing has set a goal of around five percent for 2024, which officials have already admitted will "not be easy" and which analysts said was ambitious given the challenges the world's second-largest economy is confronting. For the first three months of the year, gross domestic product rose 5.3 percent, compared with 5.2 in the previous quarter, the National Bureau of Statistics said. The figures well exceeded analysts' expectations, with those pooled by Bloomberg having forecast 4.8 percent. "The national economy continued the good momentum of a rebound," the NBS said, calling it a "good start". The GDP data remains a key insight into the health of the world's second-largest economy, despite being eminently political. Tuesday's figures "beat the market expectation by a wide margin", Dan Wang, chief economist at Hang Seng Bank China, told AFP. "Consumption and housing investment (were) the main drag, while manufacturing and infrastructure were the main engines," she said. It reflects

"the fundamental policy shift from a focus on (the) consumer market and service sector to... industrial growth". But woes in the property market remained a millstone for the economy as home prices continued to fall and top developers including Country Garden and Vanke sent out distress signals over their profits and challenges paying off debt. Reflecting those difficulties, last month also saw a fall in property prices in China's major cities, data showed. Fears about a return to deflation are also looming. Derek Scissors, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), warned that "the good news ends" with the real GDP figure, which is adjusted to take into account inflation. "Deflation is evident in GDP and in producer prices," he said, adding that "benchmark indicator retail sales were slower than last year at this time." "There are two reads on the full set of figures: China's surprising real GDP growth is unsustainable or China's surprising real GDP growth is fake." Some sectors are doing well, notably services, as customers return to restaurants, travel internally and visit tourist spots. However, both retail sales -- the main indicator of household spending -- and industrial output slumped last month, officials said.



### Jury Selection Under Way in Historic Trump Criminal Trial

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The judge in Donald Trump's trial dismissed dozens of potential New York City jurors on Monday who said they could not fairly decide whether the 2024 Republican presidential candidate illegally covered up a hush money payment to a porn star. On the first day of the historic criminal trial, the first to involve a former U.S. president, Justice Juan Merchan told nearly 100 prospective jurors they must set aside any biases or personal attitudes about the defendant or the case, including "political orientation." At least 50 were dismissed after saying they could not be impartial in judging Trump. Others were excused who said they could not serve for other reasons. "I just couldn't do it," one prospective juror was heard to say outside the courtroom. Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, a Democrat, has charged Trump with falsifying records to cover up a \$130,000 payment in the waning days of the 2016 presidential campaign to buy the silence of porn star Stormy Daniels about a 2006 sexual encounter she has said they had. Trump has denied any such relationship with Daniels and has pleaded not guilty. Trump's former lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen has testified that he made the payment to buy Daniels' silence ahead of the 2016 election, in which Trump defeated Democrat Hillary Clinton. Trump must attend the trial, which is expected to last through May, the judge ruled, denying a request for Trump to miss a session to attend a U.S. Supreme Court session in Washington next week where Trump's lawyers will argue he should not face separate criminal charges of election interference.

### Pro-Palestinian Protesters Block Golden Gate Bridge, Roads Across U.S.

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Pro-Palestinian demonstrators blocked San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge yesterday, completely halting traffic for hours as part of a coordinated day of action against Israel's war in Gaza. Aerial footage Monday morning showed stationary traffic in one direction on the iconic bridge, while lanes in the other direction were empty, with police present. Similar protests were held across the United States and around the world, after the group A15 Action called for coordinating a "multi-city blockade... in solidarity with Palestine." "In each city, we will identify and blockade major choke points in the economy, focusing on points of production and circulation with the aim of causing the most economic impact," the group said on its website. Protesters blocked roads Monday in Philadelphia and shut down highway traffic heading into Chicago's O'Hare International Airport -- forcing some passengers to make their way by foot to catch their flights. Protests were also planned in Canada, Italy, South Korea, Colombia and Belgium, while the X account for A15 posted photos of demonstrations in Greece, Spain and Australia. Demonstrators who were blocking traffic on the Golden Gate Bridge held a banner reading "Stop the world for Gaza." "We know that money is really what speaks to (elected leaders)," an organiser, who gave her name as Hayshawiya, told the San Francisco Chronicle from the bridge, adding they

would stay until the police forced them out. The California Highway Patrol said on X that officers were making arrests before announcing that traffic had reopened in both directions just before 12.30pm (1.30am Malaysian time). Monday's protests come as U.S. President Joe Biden faces continued criticism from within his own party about Washington's continued support of Israel. Israel launched its punishing offensive in Gaza last October after an unprecedented attack by Hamas resulted in the deaths of 1,170 people, mostly civilians, according to Israeli figures. At least 33,797 people have since been killed in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory. The growing death toll has unnerved both voters and some elected officials, including Biden ally Senator Chris Coons, who called on conditioning U.S. aid to Israel after a strike killed seven aid workers from an American charity operating in Gaza. As the country heads toward elections in November, Biden will have to juggle the discontent among Democrats with those in the party who support Israel, all while battling Republican nominee Donald Trump. In another protest, in Los Angeles, a few hundred people marched downtown behind a banner reading "End the siege on Gaza now, end U.S. funding to Israel". The demonstrations came on the same day as the U.S. tax deadline, protesters in Philadelphia noted.







## Palmer Scores Four as Improving Chelsea Hit Everton for Six

LONDON (Dispatches) - Cole Palmer scored four goals to put Chelsea within touching distance of the Premier League's top six after a 6-0 win over Everton. The England international has been a shining light in an otherwise disappointing campaign for the Blues and moved level with Manchester City striker Erling Haaland's 20 Premier League goals in the race for the Golden Boot. Palmer killed the game as a contest as he completed his hat-trick inside 30 minutes before Nicolas Jackson also struck before half-time. However, the night was not without drama for Chelsea as Palmer had to fend off teammates Jackson and Noni Madueke to score his fourth from the penalty spot. "We cannot behave in this way. I told them this is the last time I accept this type of behaviour," said Pochettino after his biggest win as Chelsea boss to date. Despite an eight-game unbeaten Premier League run, Chelsea remain in ninth but are now just three points adrift of sixth-placed Newcastle with a game in hand to come. And they will head into Saturday's FA Cup semi-final against City confident they can end the holders' quest for a second consecutive treble. "The most important thing now is to build a team which is consistent," added Pochettino. "We were not consistent enough. We need to learn and learn quick." A demoralising defeat leaves Everton still perilously placed just two points above the relegation zone. Nottingham Forest visit Goodison Park in a huge relegation six-pointer on Sunday

and Sean Dyche's men will need to improve at both ends of the field to prolong their 70-year stay in the top flight. "It's the most embarrassed I've felt as an individual and part of a team in my time in football," said Everton defender James Tarkowski. The visitors were dealt a blow before kick-off as Dominic Calvert-Lewin missed out due to a hamstring injury. His deputy Beto spurned a glorious chance to open the scoring when he somehow turned over Seamus Coleman's cross from point-blank range. Palmer was not so forgiving at the other end as he made another case to be crowned as the Premier League's player of the year. City must regret letting the 21-year-old leave for what now looks like a bargain £40 million (US\$50 million) in September. Palmer nutmegged Jarrad Branthwaite before exchanging a neat one-two with Jackson and curling home from the edge of the box to open the scoring. With Enzo Fernandez absent due to injury, Pochettino flanked Palmer and Jackson with Madueke and Mykhailo Mudryk for the first time in his starting line-up. Everton failed to live with the sharpness of the front four and Palmer was left with an easy task to head in his second after Jordan Pickford denied Jackson from a Mudryk cross. The England goalkeeper then had a moment to forget as he gifted possession to Palmer, who nonchalantly chipped his international teammate on his weaker right foot from midway inside the Everton half.

## Murray Will Not Have Surgery on Injured Ankle



MIAMI (Dispatches) - Andy Murray will not undergo surgery on the ankle he injured at the Miami Open last month but no timeline has been given for his return, the BBC reported. The 36-year-old Scot rolled his ankle in the deciding set of his loss to Czech Tomas Machac in southern Florida and withdrew from this month's Monte Carlo Masters and Munich Open. "Latest update from Andy is that he is now out of the walking boot and will not be having surgery on his ankle," a spokesperson for Murray was quoted as saying. "His rehab is going well and he is hoping to start hitting again on court soon. As yet he doesn't have a date yet for returning to competition." Former world number one and three-times Grand Slam champion Murray, who had hip resurfacing surgery in 2019, previously said he did not plan to "play much past this summer" but hoped to compete at another Olympics. Murray had also said he hoped to play at the French Open, which starts at Roland Garros on May 26. Wimbledon, where Murray has twice been champion, begins on July 1 and the Paris Games get under way later that month.

## LeBron's Lakers Take on Pelicans as NBA Play-in Tips Off

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - LeBron James will be out to extend his 21st NBA campaign when his Los Angeles Lakers open the NBA play-in tournament against the New Orleans Pelicans, the winner booking a playoff meeting with the defending champion Denver Nuggets. The Lakers closed the regular season with a dominant victory over the Pelicans on Sunday. James said the Lakers can't afford a let-down against a Pelicans team eager to turn the tables. "They're going to be extremely ready for us, and we have to come in with the same sense of urgency," said James, who at 39 remains a formidable force in the league. The losing team will get one more chance to reach the playoffs, taking on the winning team from today's game between the ninth-seeded Sacramento Kings and 10th-placed Golden State Warriors for a first-round meeting with Western Conference top seeds Oklahoma City. Last season the Lakers came through the play-in to reach the Western Conference finals, where they were swept by Nikola Jokic and the Nuggets. The Miami Heat did even better out of the play-in, earning the eighth seed in the East and reaching the NBA Finals where they also succumbed to Denver. The Heat will be trying to retrace that path when they travel to Philadelphia tomorrow to play the 76ers — the winner booking a first-round meeting with Eastern Conference second seeds the New York Knicks. "We've had some great battles with (Miami)," 76ers coach Nick Nurse said. "I always expect that versus them." Nurse was confident that reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Joel Embiid, who sat out the final game of the regular season to rest his surgically repaired knee, would be "ready to go" against Miami. The Sixers are 31-8 with Embiid playing this season. The loser of that game will play the winner of tomorrow's Atlanta-Chicago contest for the

eighth and final playoff berth in the East — and a first-round meeting with the top-seeded Boston Celtics. In New Orleans on Sunday, James posted a triple-double and spearheaded the Lakers' defensive effort on Pelicans big man Zion Williams. "He's a beast," James said of Williams, who is trying to lead New Orleans to the playoffs for the first time since 2022. But the Lakers' might be more concerned on Tuesday with the status of their own star Anthony Davis, who hobbled out of Sunday's win in the final minutes, saying his back "locked up" after he took a shove. The Warriors and Kings will be fighting for their post-season lives in Tuesday's second game in Sacramento. Warriors star Stephen Curry scored 50 points in game seven to lead Golden State to victory over the Kings in the first round last year.



## Nadal Confirms Comeback at Barcelona Open



LONDON (Dispatches) - Rafa Nadal has confirmed he will play this week's Barcelona Open in what will be the Spaniard's first tournament since January. "I arrived here a bit like in a last minute decision as I didn't know if I was going to be able to play," the 22-time Grand Slam champion told a press conference on Monday. "Tomorrow I'm going to be on the court." The 37-year-old Nadal, whose last ATP Tour match was in Brisbane in January, withdrew from last week's Monte Carlo Masters, saying his body was not ready for competition. Former world number one Nadal has said he expects to retire after the 2024 season but is desperate to play at the French Open where he has won a record 14 titles. Nadal's appearance in Brisbane was his first match in almost a year in which he was sidelined by a hip flexor injury. He has won the Barcelona title on 12 occasions but has not played in the claycourt event since 2021.

## Alcaraz Hopeful But Uncertain over Madrid Open Recovery

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Carlos Alcaraz hopes to defend his Madrid Open title but the Spanish world number three said yesterday he is uncertain whether he will be fully fit to do so. Alcaraz pulled out of the Barcelona Open on Sunday because of an injury to his right forearm and explained his current fitness situation. The Madrid Open starts on April 22 and Alcaraz said his goal is to play there after withdrawing from the Monte Carlo Masters earlier in April, and then from Barcelona, with the French Open approaching on the horizon. "My intention is (to play at) the Madrid Open, but I am not sure about anything," Alcaraz told reporters. "I don't want to get ahead of myself, I don't want to say that I will be 100 per cent at the Madrid Open, but that is my intention." "We will try and do everything that is in our power." Alcaraz has won two Grand Slams and is building towards Roland Garros which starts on May 26, having reached the semi-finals last year in Paris. The 20-year-old said he would have liked to play in Barcelona after winning the tournament in each of the last two years. "I went home (from Monte Carlo) to see if with recovery, days, training and patience I could arrive for Barcelona in the best shape," said Alcaraz. "I did a test on Saturday morning and the images were quite positive ... but on Sunday it didn't go how we wanted, every time I was increasing the intensity on my right, the discomfort went up."

