

Government Spokesman Ali Bahadori-Jahromi Says President Raisi Will Head for Sri Lanka to Sign MOUs in the Agricultural, Economic and Commercial Fields, as Well as Inauguration Development Projects There

IRAN NEWS

Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi Says That He Will Travel to Iran in the Near Future, Claiming That the IAEA Does Not Receive as Much Access as It Needs to Iran's Nuclear Program.

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Situation of Region Changed After Iran Attack on Israel



TEHRAN (MNA) - Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Bagheri says that the situation of the region has changed after Iran's retaliatory attack on Israel on April 13. The situation in the region has changed after Iran's retaliatory and punitive action against critical Israeli bases, General Bagheri said in a ceremony on Tuesday morning. Hailing the efforts of military forces in conducting Operation True Promise against the Israeli regime, General Bagheri said that the operation caused strategic effects in the regional and international arenas. The Israeli regime attacked Iran's consulate in the Syrian capital of Damascus on April 1. The Israeli aggression led to the destruction of the entire building and the martyrdom and injury of the entire people inside it. Seven of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) military advisors were martyred following the Israeli attack on Iran's consulate in Damascus, IRGC said in a statement. In response to the Israeli aggression, Iran attacked the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories with a barrage of drones and missiles early on Sunday. Following the attack, Iran announced that it does not seek to create tension in the region and had carried out the anti-Zionist operation to punish the Zionist regime. However, the Iranian political and military officials have strongly warned that the country would give a severe response in case of any fresh Israeli aggression.

Hamas to Survive, Reconstitute as Israel Fails to Destroy Command Centers, Tunnels



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - An American daily has highlighted Israel's failure to destroy tunnels dug by Hamas below the Gaza Strip, saying the underground passages will allow the resistance group to "survive and reconstitute" after the ongoing Israeli aggression. Citing current and former US officials, The New York Times reported on Monday that Israel has not been able to dismantle Gaza's extensive tunnel system that runs for hundreds of miles, at points reaching 15 stories below ground. The system contains larger complexes of underground rooms, used for command posts, it added. "Despite Hamas's heavy losses, much of its top leadership in Gaza remains in place, ensconced in a vast underground network of tunnels and operations centers," the report said. "Those tunnels will allow Hamas to survive and reconstitute once the fighting stops." The NYT report also said that the occupying regime has not achieved its primary goals of the Gaza onslaught, including "fully destroying Hamas" and finding Israeli captives held in the besieged Palestinian territory. Israel waged its genocidal US-backed war on Gaza on October 7 after Hamas carried out a historic operation against the usurping entity in retaliation for its intensified atrocities against the Palestinian people. So far, the Tel Aviv regime has killed at least 34,151 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injured 77,084 others. Douglas London, a retired officer of the US spy agency CIA, said the Palestinian resistance against Israel "is an idea as much as it is a physical, tangible group of people." "So far as much damage Israel might have inflicted on Hamas, it still has capability, resilience, funding and a long line of people most likely waiting to sign up and join after all the fighting and all the destruction and all the loss of life," he added. A US intelligence assessment says Hamas is likely to pose a "lingering" challenge to the Israeli regime for years. Last month, a US intelligence assessment questioned Israel's ability to eliminate Hamas, saying the resistance group is likely to pose a challenge to the regime for years. "Israel probably will face lingering armed resistance from Hamas for years to come, and the military will struggle to neutralize Hamas's underground infrastructure," the assessment read.

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK



TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has censured the European Union over tightening sanctions on the country in reprisal for the recent extensive missile and drone strikes against Israel, saying the bloc should not yield to Washington's demands to appease the occupying Tel Aviv regime. "It is regrettable to see the EU deciding quickly to apply more unlawful restrictions against Iran just because Iran exercised its right to self-defense in the face of Israel's reckless aggression," Amir-Abdollahian wrote in a post published on the social media platform X on Tuesday. He added, "The EU should not follow Washington's advice to satisfy the criminal Israeli regime." The top Iranian diplomat also lamented the EU's reactions in the face of the Israeli regime's genocide against Palestinians, describing them as "almost nothing more than hollow words." Amir-Abdollahian finally called on the EU to apply sanctions on Israel instead. The remarks came a day after EU foreign ministers agreed to impose new sanctions on Iran that would cover the alleged supply of missiles to other countries and entities following the large-scale Operation True Promise against the Israeli-occupied territories. Iran launched

hundreds of drones and missiles on the occupied Palestinian territories in retaliation against a deadly Israeli strike on its embassy compound in Damascus. On Monday, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said that members of the bloc had agreed in principle during a meeting in Luxembourg to expand the EU's current drone-related sanctions on Iran to cover missiles and their transfers out of the country. "We have reached a political agreement in order to enlarge and expand the existing drone (sanctions) regime in order to cover missiles and their potential ... transfer to Russia," Borrell said, adding that the bans would also be expanded beyond Russia to cover alleged supply of missiles to regional groups deemed to be allied to Iran. He said, however, that the EU must do more work to develop a legal framework to prepare the ground for the implementation of the new sanctions on Iran. Iran has denied it has supplied drones or missiles to regional groups while reiterating on numerous occasions that the drones supplied to Russia which have reportedly been used in its war against Ukraine were delivered to Moscow long before the Ukraine war started in February 2022.

New Round of MKO Terrorists Trial Begins in Tehran



TEHRAN (IP) - The new round of court hearings of the charges against 104 members of the People's Mojahedin Khalgh Organization, known as MKO was held on Tuesday in Tehran. 104 members of the MKO terrorist outfit will be tried in the Tehran courthouse, and this court has asked the fugitive members of this group to present their lawyers to this court. In this session, it was said that the Albanian people urged their government to expel the members of the MKO terrorist group. The head of the court expressed hope that the Albanian government, by prioritizing the security of its people, would extradite the accused MKO terrorists to the Islamic Republic of Iran. The MKO terrorist outfit is responsible for the assassination of more than 12,000 Iranians, including members of parliament, high-ranking government and military officials, innocent ordinary citizens, and foreign nationals. Since the first years of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, this terrorist organization has committed massive crimes with its approach to terror and armed actions. Within two years, from 1979 to 1981, elements of this terrorist outfit assassinated many officials, revolutionary forces, and ordinary people and claimed responsibility for all these assassinations. This trial was held in the 11th branch of the criminal court in the province of Tehran, presided over by Judge Delghani at the Imam Khomeini judicial complex.

Israel Thirsty for Murder, Blood



GAZA (Dispatches) - The Palestinian resistance movement of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, which is enduring a genocidal Israeli war, reacts amid discovery of more bodies from mass graves created by the occupying regime at a hospital in the southern part of the coastal sliver. On Monday, Palestinian civil defense workers announced digging up about 73 more bodies of those, who have been buried inside the Nasser Medical Complex in the city of Khan Younis. So far, Palestinians have recovered the remains of some 300 people, mostly women, children, and the elderly, who were buried in the mass graves that were created last month, when Israeli forces were besieging the facility. "What are revealed of heinous scenes of brutal crimes every day, especially with the discovery of the bodies of children and women who were executed and buried in hospital courtyards, confirm that we are facing a fascist enemy thirsty for murder and blood," Hamas said. It further called Israel, a regime that was "devoid of all human values, who does not hesitate to commit the most heinous crimes against civilians." At least 34,097 people have died across Gaza since October 7 last year, when the Israeli regime started taking the blockaded strip of land under the war in response to Operation Al-Aqsa Storm by the territory's resistance movements. Women and children comprise some 72 percent of the victims of the war, which has also wounded as many as 76,980 others. Despite the unabated campaign of bloodshed and destruction, the regime has so far fallen short of realizing its goals, including defeating Gaza's resistance and causing forced displacement of the territory's entire population to neighboring Egypt. Hamas, meanwhile, lamented that the "criminal cover" that was being provided for the Israeli regime by the United States - Tel Aviv's biggest ally - which, the movement denounced as, "a full partner in the crimes of genocide and massacres." Throughout the onslaught, the US has supplied the Tel Aviv regime with more than 10,000 tons of military equipment. Last month, The Washington Post reported that the US had quietly authorized over 100 separate weapons sales to Israel since the start of the Gaza war.

Iran, Pakistan to Bring Peace, Stability to Region Through Cooperation

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - President Ebrahim Raisi has stressed that the Islamic Republic and Pakistan can play a major role in achieving regional peace through promotion of their bilateral ties. "Iran and Pakistan, by strengthening cooperation between their armed forces, can bring peace and stability to the two nations and the entire region," Raisi said during a meeting with General Syed Asim Munir, Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, on Monday. The talks between Raisi and Munir revolved around regional peace and border security. The two sides shared views on strengthening bilateral ties and cooperating to achieve regional stability and economic prosperity. For his part, General Syed Asim Munir stressed the necessity for coordinated efforts along Iran-Pakistan border to prevent terrorists from jeopardizing the long-standing ties between the two neighboring countries. He described the border between the two countries as "the border of peace and friendship." Heading a high-ranking politico-economic delegation, Raisi left Tehran for Islamabad on Monday for a two-day visit. Meanwhile Raisi lauded the Pakistani elites' role in unifying the Iranian and Pakistani nations and frustrating enemies' divisive plots. "Despite all conspiracies aimed at sowing schism between the two nations and among Muslim peoples, enemies were frustrated due to your insight," Raisi said on Monday. The Iranian chief executive made the remarks, meeting with scientific elites in the Pakistani capital Islamabad, to which he has traveled at the head of ranking politico-economic delegation. Raisi said the people of Pakistan viewed the Iranian nation as people, "who would raise their voices against oppression and [in favor of] emancipation of the oppressed on the basis on [their] religious teachings." The president said Iran's Islamic Revolution -- which deposed the country's tyrannical United States-backed Pahlavi monarchy in 1979 -- was characterized by opposition to oppression, injustice, and colonialism. "The Islamic Revolution is in favor of the oppressed and the [international] Muslim nation's unity and esteem," he added. He considered the anti-oppression nature to be a common feature between the two nations, saying, "In this regard, the Pakistani and Iranian nations stand together." Elsewhere in his remarks, Raisi commended the Pakistani nation's pro-Palestinian sentiments and endeavors, including their pro-Palestinian rallies throughout the country. "Today, the presence of all nations across Muslim and non-Muslim countries is effective towards [creating] deterrence against the Zionist regime [of Israel] and smashing the regime's and its supporters' fake power," the president said.



IRAN NEWS



Vice President Underscores Potentials of Private Sector

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber has stressed the significance of the country's private sector, calling for its contribution to realizing the motto of the year presented last month by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. The vice president made the call in his second meeting with the board members of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA). Referring to the Supreme Leader's naming the Persian New Year as the year of "surge in production through participation of the people", Mokhber said that the country's economy can only be saved through the management, and creativity of the people. He believed that the chambers of commerce and cooperatives, with their knowledge of the economy and conditions of the market, can play a key role in prompting the presence of people in the economic sector. Mokhber welcomed a proposal by the private sector for offering vocational training to high school students which he said can ensure the training of a skillful generation in the future and job security in the country.

Iran's Nuclear Facilities 100% Secure



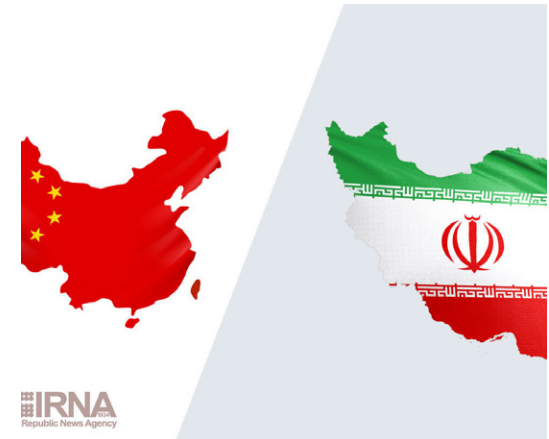
TEHRAN (MNA) - The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Mohammad Eslami says that the country's nuclear facilities are completely safe. Eslami made the remarks while speaking at a ceremony in Bushehr in southwestern Iran on Monday. "Our security is 100% established and the country has a strong security and defense system and will respond to any invasion," the Iranian official stressed. There are no concerns in this regard, Eslami added. His remarks come amid recent heightened tensions between Iran and the Israeli regime following an unprecedented retaliatory airstrike by the Iranian armed forces on Israel. The Israeli regime attacked Iran's consulate in the Syrian capital of Damascus on April 1. The Israeli aggression led to the destruction of the entire building and the martyrdom and injury of the entire people inside it. Seven of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) military advisors were martyred following the Israeli attack on Iran's consulate in Damascus, IRGC said in a statement. In response to the Israeli aggression, Iran attacked the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories with a barrage of drones and missiles early on Sunday.



TEHRAN (Shana) - Iran and Pakistan have decided to boost the level of their bilateral commercial exchange to as much as 10 billion dollars annually, President Seted Ebrahim Raisi said. Speaking in a joint press conference in Islam Abad, in the presence of Pakistan's prime minister Shahbaz Sharif, Raisi said: activating the existing commercial potentials of the two countries will definitely cause Iran and Pakistan's people to reap the benefits. "In a high-ranking meeting on Monday, we decided to promote our bilateral relations in a variety of areas including political, economic and cultural issues" Raisi told the conference. He continued: possibly some may not like deepening relations between the two countries but the important thing for us is the benefits of the two nations and that is why during a bilateral high-ranking official meeting, we decided, as the first step, to promote the level of economic

and trade cooperation to as much as 10 billion dollars per year. According to Raisi, the great Iranian nation has been able to change the threat of cruel sanctions to an opportunity for making progress, adding here I would like to express our nation's readiness to exchange experiences with the neighboring country Pakistan in areas like science, technology, transit and transportation. Elsewhere in his remarks he said: I would like to appreciate the hospitality of the government of Pakistan as the host of this visit. He added: on behalf of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khamenei, I salute the people of Pakistan who have always defended Islam, Islamic values, the oppressed peoples of Palestine, as well as truth and justice. The Iranian president expressed hope that the visit would be a turning point in expanding relations with Pakistan in all aspects.

Iran-China Trade Exchange at \$4b in Q1 2024



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Chinese customs announced on Monday that there was \$4 billion worth of trade exchange between Iran and China in the first quarter of this year. The trade with Iran between January and March this year grew by one percent compared to the same period in 2023 and reached \$4.2 billion, according to IRNA based on figure from the Chinese customs department. The exchanges between Iran and China in the first quarter in 2023 were announced to be \$3.9 billion. According to this report, in the first 3 months of this year, China imported more than \$1.2 billion of goods from Iran, up by 10% compared to the previous quarter. China's exports to Iran in the months of January to March 2024 were \$2.7 billion, down 3% compared to the same period last year.

Pakistan Willing IP Become Operational Very Early



TEHRAN (Shana) - Oil Minister Javad Owji says Islamabad is willing that Iran's gas export pipeline to Pakistan (IP) become operational as soon as possible. Speaking on the sidelines of the Iranian president's visit to Pakistan, Owji said: Pakistan awaits gas injection and has started negotiations with a number of companies to conclude a construction contract to bring the pipeline on stream. Given the initiatives taken by the Pakistani side, we hope the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline to become operational and gas export to the neighboring country to be started during the tenure of the 13th administration. Accompanying Iranian president in his two-day visit to Pakistan, Iranian minister of petroleum held a meeting with Petroleum Minister of Pakistan Musadik Malik, with reinforcing energy cooperation high on the agenda. In addition to oil and gas, exports of technical and engineering services was the other issue on the agenda. The Petroleum Minister of Pakistan, on the other hand, said the two countries have astonishing opportunities for deepening economic and trade relations. He continued: we held talks about a variety of relevant issues and we will continue these negotiations in the future. The two sides will continue their cooperation to the benefit of Iran and Pakistan nations and the region, he added. Iran's gas export pipeline to Pakistan was designed and implemented fifteen years ago in Iran territory but its construction in Pakistan soil lags far behind the schedule due to different reasons.



Iran, Kuwait to Expand Ties on Border Security

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The commander of the Border Guards of the Islamic Republic of Iran has highlighted the need to strengthen the cooperation between Iranian and Kuwaiti border guards. "Simultaneous patrols at sea, exchange of experiences, dealing with smuggling and illegal traffic should be specially put on the agenda," Brigadier General Ahmad Ali Goudarzi said. He made the remarks at the 10th border security meeting of Iran and Kuwait, headed by Brigadier General Mubarak Ali Al-Sabah, Director General of the Kuwait Coast Guard. He added that one of the important agendas of the Islamic Republic of Iran is to develop diplomacy with neighboring countries, and in this regard, the relations between two friendly and Muslim countries, Iran and Kuwait, are evaluated to be very good. He highlighted the necessity of such meetings to improve the border security of the two countries. The 10th border security meeting of Iran and Kuwait was hosted by Kuwait and lasted for 3 days.

Iran Preparing Financial Infrastructure to Accept Russian Credit Cards

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran is preparing the necessary financial infrastructure to accept a Russian alternative for major international credit card systems to build stronger economic ties between the two countries, media outlets have reported. Iran could start accepting Russian Mir debit and credit cards within the next few months, the trade attaché from Tehran's embassy in Moscow told the Izvestia newspaper on Monday quoted by RT. According to Mohsen Rahimi, work on preparing the necessary technical infrastructure is already underway; however, implementing the system will take time. The move comes as Russia and Iran continue to build stronger economic ties, Rahimi stressed. Moscow and Tehran have strengthened relations in the face of Western sanctions. Trade turnover between the two countries amounted to \$4 billion last year and has potential for further growth, particularly in

manufacturing, mechanical engineering, and transport, according to an associate professor at the Financial University in Moscow, Mikhail Khachatryan. Testing of the Mir system, the Russian alternative to Visa and Mastercard, may start in Iran as early as the end of summer or the beginning of autumn, he told the outlet. The move to launch Mir in Iran is a logical forward step in developing bilateral cooperation after Tehran joined the BRICS economic group this year, said Tatiana Monaghan, secretary general of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC). Last year, the two countries announced at the Kazan Forum that they had completed all preliminary settlements for the use of Mir cards. Iran and Russia have also agreed to integrate the system with its Iranian analog, Shetab, to facilitate mutual transactions.



Taiwan Hit by Dozens of Strong Aftershocks From Deadly Quake

TAIPEI (Dispatches) - Taiwan was shaken by dozens of earthquakes overnight and into Tuesday that left buildings swaying, with the government saying they were aftershocks from a huge deadly quake that hit the island more than two weeks ago. The strongest, which the US Geological Survey measured at magnitude 6.1, hit around 2:30 am (18:30 GMT) followed minutes later by a 6.0 tremor. Taipei's Central Weather Administration put them at 6.0 and 6.3, respectively. Authorities said there were no casualties reported so far, but the non-stop shaking meant a restless night even for those in the capital Taipei about 150 kilometres (90 miles) north, where walls and glass panels rattled in swaying homes. "I was too scared to move and stayed in bed," said office worker Kevin Lin, 53, in Taipei, who told AFP he was jolted awake by the intense quakes. Around 8:00 am, a 5.8-magnitude tremor shook the capital as commuters made their way to work. The series of quakes started Monday around 5:00 pm, originating from Hualien on the central east coast of Taiwan.



UK Parliament Approves Controversial Rwanda Deportation Bill



LONDON (Dispatches) - British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's latest effort to send some migrants to Rwanda finally won approval from Parliament early Tuesday, hours after he pledged deportation flights would begin in July. The parliamentary logjam that had stalled the legislation for two months was finally broken just after midnight when the unelected House of Lords "recognised the primacy" of the elected House of Commons and dropped the last of its proposed amendments, clearing the way for the bill to become law. Earlier in the day, Sunak held a rare morning press conference to demand that the Lords stop blocking his key proposal for ending the tide of migrants crossing the English Channel in small boats, promising that both houses of Parliament would remain in session until it was approved. The legislative stalemate was just the latest hurdle to delay implementation of a plan that has been repeatedly blocked by a series of court rulings and opposition from human rights activists who say it is illegal and inhumane. Migrant advocates have vowed to continue the fight against it. "For almost two years, our opponents have used every trick in the book to block fights and keep the boats coming," Sunak told reporters Monday morning in London. "But enough is enough. No more prevarication, no more delay." The government plans to deport to Rwanda some of those who enter the United Kingdom illegally as a deterrent to migrants who risk their lives in leaky, inflatable boats in hopes that they will be able to claim asylum once they reach Britain. Despite Parliament's approval of the legislation, further court challenges may still delay the deportation flights, said Tim Bale, a politics professor at Queen Mary University of London. "I don't think it is necessarily home and dry," he said. "We will see some attempts to block deportations legally." Sunak has staked his political future to the deportation flights, making a pledge to "stop the boats" a key part of his pitch to voters as opinion polls show that his Conservative Party trails far behind the Labour Party ahead of a general election later this year. Next week's local elections are seen as a barometer for how the parties will fare in the general election. The debate in Britain comes as countries throughout Western Europe and North America look for ways to slow the rising number of migrants as war, climate change and political oppression force people from their homes.

Ukraine Controls Village That Russia Said It Had Captured



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia said its forces had taken control of Novomykhailivka in eastern Ukraine - the second advance Moscow has announced in two days - but Ukraine's military fighting there said it was still in control of the village. Reuters could not independently verify whether Novomykhailivka, some 40 km (25 miles) southwest of the Ukrainian city of Donetsk, is in Ukrainian or Russian hands. Heavy battles in the area have been going on for weeks. Russia's defense ministry said in a statement that its Southern group of forces had fully taken Novomykhailivka "and improved the tactical situation along the front line." But Yevhen Shymatuk, commander of Ukraine's 79th amphibious assault brigade, which has been fighting on the Donetsk frontline, said his troops hold 15% to 20% of the village, while the rest of it is under Ukraine's "fire control." "We are not going to move anywhere but forward," Shymatuk said in an interview with Ukraine's public broadcaster and published on the brigade's Facebook page. On Sunday, Russia said it had taken control of the settlement of Bohodnivka, further to the north. Bohodnivka lies northeast of Chasiv Yar, a strategic town located on high ground which, if captured, could open up the way for Russia to advance on several "fortress cities" in eastern Ukraine. The Russian gains, if confirmed, underline the urgency for Ukraine of taking delivery of more than \$60 billion in new U.S. military aid that the House of Representatives approved on Saturday. It is expected to be approved this week by the Senate and signed into law by President Joe Biden. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged Washington on Sunday to quickly turn the bill into law and proceed with the actual transfer of weapons, saying long-range arms and air defence systems were top priorities. The Kremlin said on Monday that the new U.S. aid would not change the situation on the front lines. The influx of weapons should improve Kyiv's chances of averting a major Russian breakthrough in the east, military analysts say, but Kyiv still faces manpower shortages on the battlefield.

N. Korea's Kim Oversees Drill Simulating Nuclear Counterattack



SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has overseen a drill simulating a "nuclear counterattack," state-run KCNA news agency said Tuesday, the latest in a volley of tests by Pyongyang this year. The drill took place on Monday, according to the report. Seoul's military had earlier announced that the North had fired several short-range ballistic missiles on Monday, with Tokyo confirming the launch. Kim "guided a combined tactical drill simulating a nuclear counterattack involving super-large multiple rocket artillerymen," the report said. The rockets "hit their island target" some 352 kilometres (219 miles) away, it continued, describing Kim as "expressing great satisfaction." South Korea's military said Monday that missiles flew from the Pyongyang area for about 300 kilometres before splashing down in the waters east of the Korean peninsula. It branded the launch a "blatant provocation." Tokyo also confirmed the launch, with a government spokesman saying one missile had a maximum altitude of 50 kilometres and landed outside of the country's EEZ. The launch is the second in less than a week by Pyongyang, which on Friday tested a "super-large warhead" designed for a strategic cruise missile, state media said. Seoul's military confirmed it had detected cruise missile launches at the time. The launch comes after Pyongyang's ally Moscow in March used its United Nations

Security Council veto to effectively end UN monitoring of sanctions violations on Kim's government for its nuclear and weapons programme. Analysts have warned that North Korea could be testing cruise missiles ahead of sending them to Russia for use in Ukraine, with Washington and Seoul claiming Kim has already shipped weapons to Moscow, despite UN sanctions banning any such moves. Seoul claims Pyongyang has sent around 7,000 containers of weapons to Moscow for use in Ukraine. The largely isolated country has recently bolstered military ties with Moscow, and this month it thanked Russia for its UN veto. It has also ramped up testing, claiming in early April to have tested a new medium-to-long-range solid-fuel hypersonic missile. Pyongyang's recent track record on launches indicates the North is trying to push its technical abilities, said Hong Min, a senior analyst at the Korea Institute for National Unification. Monday's launch "appears to be a part of its weapons development programme that needs testing rather than ones that are fully developed," he told AFP. Last year, the North conducted a record number of missile tests in defiance of UN sanctions in place since 2006 and despite warnings from Washington and Seoul. Pyongyang declared itself an "irreversible" nuclear weapons state in 2022.



Dozens Arrested on U.S. College Campuses as Tensions Flare Over Gaza War

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Tensions flared between pro-Palestinian student protesters and school administrators at several US universities Monday, as in-person classes were cancelled and demonstrators arrested. The protests, which began last week at Columbia University with a large group of demonstrators establishing a so-called "Gaza Solidarity Encampment" on school grounds, have spread to other campuses, including Yale, MIT and others. Some Jewish students at Columbia have reported intimidation and anti-Semitism amid the days-long protest, which is calling for the prestigious New York institution to divest from companies with ties to Israel. Classes were moved online Monday, with university president Nemat Shafik calling for a "reset" in an open letter to the school community. "Over the past days, there have been too many examples of intimidating and harassing behavior on our campus," she said. "Anti-Semitic language, like any other language that is used to hurt and frighten people, is unacceptable and appropriate action will be taken." To deescalate the rancor and give us all a chance to consider next steps, I am announcing that all classes will be held virtually on Monday," she added. Last week, more than 100 protesters were arrested after university authorities called the police onto the private campus Thursday, a move that seemingly escalated tensions and sparked a greater turnout over the weekend. Mimi Elias, a social work student who was arrested, told AFP on Monday: "We are going to stay until they talk to us and listen to our demands." "We don't want anti-Semitism or Islamophobia. We are here for the liberation of all," Elias said. Joseph Howley, an associate professor of classics at Columbia, said the

university had reached for the "wrong tool" by involving police, which had attracted "more radical elements that are not part of our student protests." "You can't discipline and punish your way out of prejudice and community disagreement," Howley told AFP. As the holiday of Passover began Monday night, social media images appeared to show pro-Palestinian Jewish students holding traditional seder meals inside the protest areas on multiple campuses, including at Columbia. Further downtown, police began detaining protesters who had set up their own encampment at New York University at around 8:30 pm, the New York Times reported, after the school called the students' behavior "disorderly, disruptive, and antagonising." There were also demonstrations at MIT, the University of Michigan and Yale, where at least 47 people had been arrested on Monday after refusing requests to disperse. "The university made the decision to arrest those individuals who would not leave the plaza with the safety and security of the entire Yale community in mind," the Ivy League university said in a statement. At Harvard, university officials on Monday suspended the Palestinian Solidarity Committee, the student group said on Instagram. They were ordered to "cease all organizational activities" for the rest of the term, or risk permanent expulsion after holding an unregistered demonstration last week, student newspaper the Harvard Crimson reported, citing an email to the group. Universities have become the focus of intense cultural debate in the United States since Hamas's October 7 attack and Israel's overwhelming military response, as a humanitarian crisis grips the Palestinian territory of Gaza.



India's Congress Seeks Action Against Modi for Comments About Muslims

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India's main opposition Congress party petitioned the Election Commission on Monday to act against Prime Minister Narendra Modi for making what it said were "deeply objectionable" comments about Muslims that violated election laws. Modi, who is seeking a rare third consecutive term, referred to Muslims as "infiltrators" during a campaign speech on Sunday, drawing widespread criticism from opposition groups. In his speech, Modi said the Congress election manifesto promised to confiscate and redistribute the wealth of Indians, which it denies. Modi said if the party adhered to remarks in 2006 of then Congress Prime Minister Manmohan Singh that minority Muslims should have the "first claim on resources" to share in the fruits of development, then wealth would be distributed to "infiltrators" and those who have "more children". Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its affiliates often refer to Muslim militants illegally crossing the border from Pakistan as infiltrators. They have also criticised Muslims for their higher birth rates and invoked fears that India's Muslim population would overtake that of its majority Hindus. India's estimated 200 million Muslims make up the world's third-largest Muslim population. India has a population of 1.42 billion people. Congress leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi said Modi's "deeply objectionable" statement violated sections of the law that prohibit candidates from asking people to vote or refrain from voting for anyone on the grounds of "religion", "community" or "religious symbols".

Neutrality Issues Found at UN Agency for Palestinians

UNITED NATIONS (Dispatches) - An independent review group on the UN agency for Palestinians found some "neutrality-related issues," its much-anticipated report said Monday, but noted Israel had yet to provide evidence for incendiary allegations that staff were members of terrorist organizations. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) remains "irreplaceable and indispensable to Palestinians' human and economic development" added the 54-page report, which was led by French diplomat Catherine Colonna. The review group was created following allegations made by Israel in January that some UNRWA staff may have participated in the October 7, 2023 Hamas attacks. In the weeks that followed, numerous donor states suspended or paused some \$450 million in funding. Many have since resumed funding, including Sweden, Canada, Japan, the EU and France -- while others, including the United States and Britain -- have not. Congress passed a bill signed into law by President Joe Biden last month that blocks US funding until March 2025. The freezes to the main aid agency in Gaza come as months of Israeli military operations have turned the territory into a "humanitarian hellcape," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said recently, with its 2.3 million people in desperate need of food, water, shelter and medicine. Colonna's team was tasked with assessing whether UNRWA was "doing everything within its power to ensure neutrality," while Guterres activated a second investigation to probe Israel's allegations. Despite a framework

for ensuring it upheld the humanitarian principle of neutrality, the review found that "neutrality-related issues persist," including staff sharing biased political posts on social media and the use of a small number of textbooks with "problematic content" in some UNRWA schools. But it added "Israel has yet to provide supporting evidence" for its claim that UNRWA employs more than 400 "terrorists." Israel responded by saying that "the Colonna report ignores the severity of the problem, and offers cosmetic solutions that do not deal with the enormous scope of Hamas' infiltration of UNRWA." UNRWA itself welcomed the findings and Guterres said he accepted its recommendations. The review found that the majority of neutrality breaches related to social media posts, often following incidents of violence affecting colleagues or relatives. "One preventive action could be to ensure that personnel are given space to discuss these traumatic incidents," said the report, which was co-authored with three Nordic rights groups. It praised the progress made by UNRWA in preventing biased texts from being used in its schools, which are critical to educating hundreds of thousands of Palestinian children. But it cited a recent assessment that found 3.85 percent of textbook pages contained content of concern. These included "the use of historical maps in a non-historical context, e.g. without labeling Israel" referring to Israel as the "Zionist occupation" and "naming Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine."





Knicks Rally Late to Stun Sixers, Take 2-0 NBA Playoff Series Lead

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - The New York Knicks scored eight points in the final 27.4 seconds to stun the Philadelphia 76ers 104-101 on Monday and take a 2-0 lead in their NBA Eastern Conference playoff series. Jalen Brunson's three-pointer pulled the Knicks within two points and after Josh Hart came up with a steal, Donte DiVincenzo capped a chaotic possession with a three-pointer -- after missing his first attempt -- to put New York up 102-101. OG Anunoby sealed it at an ecstatic Madison Square Garden with a pair of free throws as the Knicks joined the Cleveland Cavaliers in taking a 2-0 lead in their first-round series. The Cavs led wire-to-wire in a 96-86 victory over the Orlando Magic. It was a crushing defeat for the 76ers, who didn't trail until late in the third quarter, when a Brunson layup gave the Knicks a 68-67 lead. Philadelphia's NBA Most Valuable Player Joel Embiid was clearly hindered late by pain in his surgically repaired left knee, but the Sixers appeared to have regained control when Tyrese Maxey, fed by Embiid, made a three-pointer with 1:09 to play that put the Sixers up 100-96. Kyle Lowry added a free throw to give the Sixers a five-point lead with less than a minute to play, but the Knicks responded. The 76ers were furious that officials failed to respond to their calls for a time-out in the critical seconds, Embiid adding a jab over missed foul calls. "That's unacceptable to put us in that situation," Embiid said. "Everybody on the floor was trying to call time-out... but they didn't give it to us. "But forget

about the time-out, there's a bunch of fouls that's unacceptable." Embiid was dejected but defiant, telling reporters: "We should be 2-0." "We're going to win this series," he added. "We're the better team and we're going to keep fighting." Brunson finished with 24 points despite connecting on just eight of 29 shots from the field. He added eight rebounds and six assists and Hart added 21 points and 15 rebounds for New York. They will try to keep the pressure on when the series shifts to Philadelphia on Thursday. Maxey, who skipped the Sixers' morning shoot-around because of illness, finished with 35 points, nine rebounds and 10 assists. Embiid added 34 points and 10 rebounds but missed a three-pointer at the final buzzer. In Cleveland, Donovan Mitchell scored 23 points and Jarrett Allen added 16 points and 20 rebounds for the Cavaliers in another dominant win over the Magic. The Cavs, eager to expunge the memory of their first-round loss to the Knicks last season, have posted two straight wire-to-wire victories. Paolo Banchero led Orlando's scoring with 21 points and Franz Wagner added 18. The youthful Magic will be hoping to turn things around when the series shifts to Orlando. In Monday's final game, the defending champion Denver Nuggets will seek to extend their dominance over LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers when they host game two of their Western Conference series. Nikola Jokic scored 32 points to power the Nuggets in a 114-103 game one victory on Saturday.

Cannavaro Named Udinese Boss After Cioffi Sacked



MILAN (Dispatches) - Italy legend Fabio Cannavaro was named new Udinese coach on Monday after Gabriele Cioffi was sacked in an attempt to avoid relegation from Serie A. In a statement Udinese said that Cannavaro "has signed a contract until June 30, 2024"; the 2006 World Cup winner also bringing in his brother Paolo on his coaching staff. Cioffi was dismissed after Udinese fell to a 1-0 defeat at fellow strugglers Verona on Saturday, a loss which left them locked on 28 points with Frosinone who are just inside the relegation zone. Former Ballon d'Or winner Cannavaro, 50, will be in charge on Thursday when Udinese play the final 18 minutes of their home clash with Roma. Play in that match just over a week ago was suspended with the teams level at 1-1 after Roma defender Evan Ndicka collapsed on the pitch with what was initially feared to be a heart problem. However tests later revealed that the Ivory Coast international had suffered "a thoracic trauma with minimal left pneumothorax (trapped air between the lung and chest wall)". Cannavaro has had a mixed coaching career, working in the Gulf and China -- where he won the Super League in 2019 -- before a short-lived spell at lower league outfit Benevento last season. Udinese have a tough run-in after finishing the Roma match, with matches against Bologna, Napoli and in-form Lecce before relegation six-pointers against Empoli and Frosinone in the final days of the campaign.

Bonmati and Djokovic Win Top Laureus Awards

MADRID (Dispatches) - Spain's World Cup winning midfielder Aitana Bonmati was named the Sportsman of the Year, while Serbia's Novak Djokovic captured the top men's honour at the Laureus awards ceremony on Monday. Bonmati, who has cemented her place at the top of women's football by winning FIFA's The Best, Ballon d'Or and World Cup MVP among other accomplishments, made her way on to the stage for a second time on Monday as the Spanish women's football team were named Team of the Year, the first female squad to win the award. Seven-time Super Bowl champion Tom Brady handed Djokovic his fifth Laureus award after the top ranked tennis player enjoyed a remarkable 2023. The Serb equalled Margaret Court's all time record haul of 24 Grand Slam titles after winning U.S. Open last September. Djokovic contested all four major finals in 2023, also winning the Australian and French Opens. He was the runner-up at Wimbledon. England midfielder Jude Bellingham, who has taken LaLiga by storm in his first season with Real Madrid, was named the Breakthrough Player of the Year, the first footballer to win this award. Gymnast Simone Biles won Comeback of the Year award after winning four gold medals at last year's world championships, her first international event since competing at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021. Biles headed to the Tokyo Games eyeing a record haul of six gold medals but returned home with just a silver and a bronze after suffering a crisis of confidence that saw the American drop out of multiple events due to "the twisties", a type of mental block where gymnasts are disoriented. Biles, who is the most decorated gymnast with

37 world and Olympic medals, then took a two-year break from the sport to protect her mental health before making her triumphant comeback last year. The Laureus World Sports Awards nominees are selected by the global media, while the winners are determined by the 69 members of the Laureus World Sports Academy. The awards have been presented annually since 2000.



Inter Secure Serie A Title in Heated Win Over Milan



MILAN (Dispatches) - Inter Milan won their 20th Serie A title yesterday after a 2-1 win at AC Milan gave Simone Inzaghi's side an unassailable lead in the standings. A goal from Francesco Acerbi and Marcus Thuram in each half proved sufficient to secure Inter's victory, with Fikayo Tomori scoring a late goal to reduce the deficit. The match also witnessed three red cards in stoppage time, with Milan being reduced to nine men as tensions flared, with Theo Hernandez and Davide Calabria getting their marching orders along with Inter's Denzel Dumfries. Inter, who have lost only once in the league this season, hold a 17-point advantage over second-placed Milan with five matches remaining. For Inzaghi, this was the first Serie A title of his managerial career and sixth trophy with Inter: "There are so many protagonists of this success, first and foremost the players, but also the directors and chairman Steven Zhang, as anything we needed during this journey was provided for us," Inzaghi said to DAZN. "It's an incredible sensation, we did something incredible and it's only right to share it with as many people as possible." The San Siro was packed with supporters from both clubs, with Inter fans displaying two stars to symbolise their impending 20th Scudetto, spelling out a message to their rivals: "Our destiny, your nightmare." The match heated up in the opening minutes as both sides engaged in pushing and shouting following a late challenge on Inter's Nicolò Barella. However, play resumed a few minutes later without any bookings. After 18 minutes, the away fans erupted after Benjamin Pavard flicked a corner to a completely unmarked Acerbi, who had little trouble heading in the lead for Inter. Just before the break Inter keeper Yann Sommer made a superb reflex save on a Calabria effort, while at the other end Milan keeper Mike Maignan blocked Henrikh Mkhitaryan's shot moments later. Four minutes after the break, Thuram doubled Inter's lead by sending a low shot from the edge of the box into the bottom-left corner. As the minutes ticked closer to the end, fans set off flares in the stands, casting a foggy veil over the pitch. Milan reignited the match 10 minutes before the time when a save from Sommer rebounded off the post and fell into the path of Fikayo Tomori, who headed it home. In stoppage time, tempers flared as a scuffle broke out between the players which resulted in Dumfries and Hernandez being shown red cards.

WADA Reject Cover-Up Charge, China Labels Reports Fake News

MIAMI (Dispatches) - The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) rejected accusations of a cover-up during their investigation into Chinese swimmers testing positive for a prescription heart drug and said they would take "whatever action necessary" in response to the allegations. Reports at the weekend that 23 Chinese swimmers tested positive for trimetazidine (TMZ) -- which can enhance performance -- ahead of the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 led to a strong attack from the head of the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA), Travis Tygart. Tygart said that WADA and the Chinese anti-doping body had "secretly, until now, swept these positives under the carpet" and called the situation a "potential cover-up". The swimmers were allowed to compete after world governing bodies accepted China's findings that they had ingested it unwittingly from food during a meet in late 2020 and early 2021. Several went on to win medals, including gold, and many are in line to compete at the Paris Olympics this summer. "What I can say right now is that at every stage, WADA followed the whole due process and diligently investigated every line of inquiry in this matter," WADA president Witold Banka told an online news conference. "If we had to do it over again now, we would do exactly the same thing." Banka said "no credible evidence of wrongdoing was provided by any source who came forward on this file, so the threshold for WADA intelligence and investigations to open an investigation was not met." One of the options that WADA had would have been to take the case to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) and challenge the Chinese anti-doping body (CHINADA) decision. WADA has made such moves in the past but Banka said that was not an option in this case. He said the body had "no credible way to disprove the contamination theory that was accepted by CHINADA, a position that was also accepted by World Aquatics." In short, if we had

taken such an appeal and challenged the contamination explanation, we would certainly have lost," he said. WADA's general counsel, Ross Wenzel, said such an appeal's chances of success at CAS would have been "close to zero". Banka questioned Tygart's motives for his criticism of WADA. "I have to say that from our perspective, look(ing) at the comments on social media and the official statements from USADA, it is obvious that most of the comments are politically motivated and without any evidence that there was something, on our side, wrong," he said. The WADA president said there was no question of his body being overly lenient on Chinese athletes. "It is worth pointing out that at the same time as our experts were reviewing this case in 2021, we are also vigorously pursuing justice in the case of another swimmer from China, Sun Yang," he said. Three-time Olympic champion Sun is about to finish a second doping ban. His first, in 2014, was for taking TMZ. Wenzel said WADA was going through comments made by USADA and others in media reports and a documentary by German broadcaster ARD with a "fine tooth comb" and that the body would "take whatever action is necessary". Beijing on Monday called reports about the case "fake news". "The relevant reports are fake news and not factual," said foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin. "I believe you will also have noted that the World Anti-Doping Agency has put out a very clear response," Wang said. Wang said China's anti-doping center conducted an "in-depth and detailed" probe into the incident, which found the athletes had ingested the drug via contamination "without their knowledge." The Chinese swimmers involved were neither at fault nor guilty of negligence, and their behavior did not constitute a doping violation," he told a regular press conference in Beijing. "After an investigation, WADA affirmed the findings of the China anti-doping

center." Wang said the Chinese government "consistently upholds a resolutely zero-tolerance position when it comes to doping," adding China upholds "fair competition" in sport. Dr. Rahul Gupta, US National Drug Control Policy director, told The New York Times on Monday that an independent investigation into the Chinese swim doping tests and WADA's handling of the matter was needed. "There must be rigorous, independent investigations to look into any incident of potential wrongdoing," he said.

