

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Urged the U.S. to Reconsider Its Interventionist and Threatening Human Rights Policies in Reaction to Baseless Accusations Made by the U.S. Government Against Iranian Individuals and Companies Regarding Cyber Activity

IRAN NEWS

President Ebrahim Raisi Has Issued a Stern Warning Against Any Israeli Aggression on the Iranian Soil, Saying the Occupying Regime Will Face a Devastating Response in Case of Another Mistake

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North Korea Economic Delegation Visits Iran Tehran



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - A North Korean delegation led by the cabinet minister for international trade is visiting Iran, the North's official media said on Wednesday in a rare public report of an exchange between the two countries. The minister for external economic relations, Yun Jong Ho, left Pyongyang on Tuesday by air leading a ministry delegation to visit Iran, the North's KCNA news agency said. It gave no other details. Yun has previously worked on the country's ties with Syria, according to South Korean government database. Yun has been active in the country's increasing exchanges with Russia, earlier this month leading a delegation to visit Moscow, according to KCNA. In September 2020, former Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Hamid Zadboum met with the North Korean Ambassador in Tehran Han Sung-o to discuss the expansion of banking and trade ties. In this meeting, Zadboum emphasized the need to establish a suitable environment for the two countries' private sectors to be able to expand mutual trade activities. The North Korean ambassador for his part stressed the importance of solidarity between the two countries in the face of the U.S. sanctions and called for the development of economic, trade, and cultural cooperation with Iran. He also praised the Islamic Republic of Iran's successful efforts in tackling both the coronavirus pandemic and the U.S. sanctions. Referring to the long-standing relations between Iran and North Korea, Han called for more collaboration and meetings to develop the level of economic cooperation between the two countries and suggested that Iran's Trade Promotion Organization and the North Korean Trade Development Committee establish a Joint Trade Committee. "This committee will follow up on all trade cooperation requirements, and committee meetings will be held periodically in Tehran and Pyongyang," the official said.

Israel Deliberately Delaying Talks on Captives



GAZA (Dispatches) - A senior Hamas official has dismissed claims that the ongoing genocidal Israeli war against the Gaza Strip has led to "isolation" of the resistance movement's leader Yahya Sinwar. "Talk that Sinwar is isolated in the tunnels is nothing but an allegation," a senior official with the group told al-Araby al-Jadeed, the news outlet reported on Wednesday. Sinwar "is carrying out his work as a leader of the movement in the field," the official added. The source said such misleading information had been provided "by [Israeli prime minister Benjamin] Netanyahu and his agencies to cover up his failure to achieve the goals [of the war]." The Israeli regime launched the war in October, following al-Aqsa Storm, a retaliatory operation by Gaza's resistance groups against the occupied territories, during which hundreds were taken captive. The war has so far claimed the lives of 34,183 Palestinians and wounded a total of 77,143 others. Despite the unabated campaign of bloodletting, the regime has so far fallen short of realizing its "goals", namely defeating the resistance, releasing the captives, and causing forced displacement of the coastal sliver's entire population to neighboring Egypt. The Hamas official rejected Hebrew-language media reports that the Israeli war had resulted in the defeat of the resistance in the central and northern parts of Gaza. "The occupation's resumption of its military campaign in the north and center, after it had previously announced its annihilation of the resistance there, is due to its awareness of the inconceivable of what it previously claimed [about the resistance's defeat in those areas]," the Hamas figure noted. He, meanwhile, announced that the group was currently holding as many as 30 Israeli generals and officers, who were captured during the al-Aqsa storm operation. "The captured officers are in highly secured places far from the hands of the occupation," the official said. The Israeli regime, the source said "is practicing a systematic process of misleading" the Israeli public about the captives and their situation "in order to evade the duty of liberating these prisoners." In November, Hamas released 105 of the captives in exchange for 240 Palestinian prisoners as part of a four-day truce deal. The Hamas official said the only means of releasing the remaining captives was for the regime to engage in "serious negotiations followed by a full commitment to a ceasefire and [Gaza's] reconstruction."



Iran's Progress in Arms Sector Example of Turning Sanctions Into Opportunity

TEHRAN - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says the Islamic Republic's remarkable achievements in arms production attest to the fact that a "lively nation" can turn sanctions into opportunities. Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks on Wednesday as he received a group of workers from across the country on the occasion of Labor Week. The Leader said the anti-Iran sanctions aimed to put the Islamic Republic in a "tight spot" to force it to toe the line of imperialism and colonialism, asserting that, "It is self-evident that the Islamic Establishment, the Islamic zeal and a great nation with an Islamic history will by no means submit to such bullying." Ayatollah Khamenei added, "A lively nation creates opportunities for itself out of the enemy's hostilities, a clear example of which is in the [Islamic Republic's] arms sector. In other sectors, great progress has been achieved as well despite pressures." Underlining that the sanctions will fail to bring the Iranian nation to its knees as it has not pinned hopes on help from outside of the borders, the Leader said, "This spirit needs to be lifted." "The Iranian nation must showcase its strength through work, action and national unity," Ayatollah Khamenei noted. Stressing that the main goal of the US and the West in imposing sanctions on

Iran is the complete submission and subjugation of the Islamic Establishment and nation, the Leader said, "The great nation of Iran which has historical roots and the Islamic Republic will not yield to bullying and excessive demands, and will reach a bright horizon in the future by turning sanctions into opportunities for progress and prosperity." The Leader underlined that the enmity is due to Iran's independence which does not accept bullying and does not follow the arrogant's failed policies, the leader. Regarding the pro-Palestine march all over the world, the Leader noted that we witness today that not only Iran but people in the U.S. cities are supporting Gaza and Hezbollah. Elsewhere in his remarks, the Leader pointed to the Iranian labor community and stressed that the country's authorities are responsible for the job security of workers. "In a period, we were beset by the closure of large factories, [but] thanks to the efforts by the authorities, many closed workshops were reopened in the past two years, and this must continue," the Leader said, adding that power will increase in a society where there is work. Ayatollah Khamenei also expressed his sincere gratitude to Iranian workers for their efforts and decency, and wished for the promotion of the country's labor community.

Iran Security Chief in Russia



TEHRAN - Secretary General of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Akbar Ahmadian (R) is seen in this photo just after arriving in Pulkovo Airport in the Russian city of Saint Petersburg on Tuesday. Secretary General of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Akbar Ahmadian has started a key visit to Russia where he is expected to attend two major international security forums to raise public and global awareness about Israel's aggression against Palestine and its standoff with Iran. Ahmadian said upon arriving in the Russian city of Saint Petersburg on Tuesday that he will seek to support multilateralism and anti-Western discourses in the field of security during his presence in Russia where he will participate in an annual security forum and a meeting of top security officials of the BRICS grouping of developing nations. He said Iran views presence in the two events as an opportunity to shed light on the plight of the oppressed Palestinian nation as they are struggling against a brutal Israeli aggression in Gaza. The SNSC chief said he will also seek to raise awareness about an Israeli act of aggression that targeted the Iranian consulate in the Syrian capital of Damascus in early April as well as crimes the regime has committed against Iran in recent years. Iran carried out a wave of drone and missile attacks on Israel on April 14 to compensate the regime's bombardment of its Damascus consulate. Experts say the attacks raised Iran's profile as a major player in regional security issue and exposed vulnerabilities of an Israeli regime which has relied on all-out support from the US and other allies to commit numerous acts of genocide in Gaza in the past six months. On the first day of his presence in Saint Petersburg, Ahmadian met with his Iraqi counterpart Qasim al-Araji where the two reviewed ongoing efforts to implement a high-profile security agreement between Tehran and Baghdad.

IRCS Provides Relief to Over 600 People in a Day



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Over the past 24 hours, a total of 609 flood-hit people benefited from the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) rescue services. A total of 43 relief teams, consisting of 171 rescuers, helped affected people in Tehran, Qom, Golestan, Mazandaran, Yazd, Isfahan, and Kerman provinces where heavy rains triggered flood, ISNA quoted Babak Mahmoudi, an official with the IRCS, as saying. Through 28 rescue operations, affected people were transported to safe places. Also, relief teams removed water from 37 residential houses. According to the Metrological Organization, since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20), the country has experienced an increase of 16 percent in precipitation compared to the same period a year before. However, Tehran, Semnan, and Qazvin are among the provinces that have received severely low rainfall. From March 20 till April 22, precipitations amounted to 43 mm which shows an increase of 16 percent compared to 37 mm long-term average rainfall. Since the beginning of the current water year (September 23, 2023) till April 22, a total of 167 mm of rainfall has been recorded in the country. It represents a 16 percent decrease from the long-term average of 198 mm. According to statistics, Semnan (44 percent), Tehran (40 percent), Qazvin (39 percent), and Khorasan Razavi (37 percent) provinces have received lower amounts of rainfall compared to normal conditions. The central, southern, and southeastern parts of the country have also experienced notably low rainfall. Fars, with 30 percent, Homozgan, 28 percent, and Kerman, 25 percent, have had lower than normal precipitations. The average temperature has been 1.5 to 2 degrees cooler. Last week, in West Azarbaijan, East Azarbaijan, and Ardabil provinces, the temperature was 4 and 5 degrees Celsius above normal. However, in Kerman, South Khorasan, Sistan-Baluchestan, and Yazd provinces it has been 4 to 7 degrees Celsius colder than the long-term average.

President Inaugurates Iran-Built Mega Multipurpose Project in Sri Lanka

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi taken part in the inauguration ceremony of a mega multi-purpose project built by Iranian contractors in Sri Lanka, which was long delayed due to international sanctions against the Islamic Republic. The Uma Oya project includes two dams, a 28-kilometer water transmission tunnels and a 120-MW underground power plant. The multi-purpose super project is one of the largest in providing technical and engineering services of Iran to other countries in the fields of dam construction, water transfer, and electricity production. The project aims to generate 290 GWh of electricity annually and improve irrigation of 4,500 hectares of new land and 1,500 hectares of existing agricultural land. The hydropower and irrigation project, valued at \$514 million, was started in 2010 by Iran's FARAB engineering group and was scheduled for completion in 2015 but was delayed by the sanctions, technical issues and the COVID-19 pandemic. Iran initially provided \$50 million but in 2013, funding could not be continued due to international sanctions against Iran. The Sri Lankan government then decided to complete the project with its own funds using the same Iranian contractor. The process of construction, monitoring, and consulting of the project was completely done by the Iranian company, according to spokesman of Iran's Government, Ali Bahadori-Jahromi. The Iranian president arrived in Sri Lanka on Wednesday morning at the invitation of his Sri Lankan counterpart. Iran is ready to strengthen ties with Sri Lanka and other Asian countries, its president, Raisi, said on Wednesday, during a short visit to the island nation, the first by an Iranian president in 16 years. The two countries signed five pacts, or Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) on the visit, only the second since one in April 2008 by Iran's then president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Opening a \$514-million hydro power project, Raisi pledged to support development projects in the Indian Ocean island by providing technical and engineering services. "We stand fully ready to further expand bilateral relations with all Asian countries, our neighbouring countries, and sovereign and independent states," Raisi said. Sri Lanka is a sovereign, independent country that has aligned policies with Iran, enabling co-operation to create a shining future for both nations, he added. Iran agreed to build the project in 2010 but funds dried up after it released \$50 million, as U.S. sanctions imposed later that year on the Middle East nation made it hard to transfer money, forcing Sri Lanka to fund the rest. The project was also held up because of the COVID-19 pandemic, environmental concerns and protests from villagers. The project will add 120MW to the national grid, while supplying water to 6,000 hectares (15,000 acres) of farmland and drinking water to thousands of families in three districts, the office of Sri Lanka's president said in a statement. "What is common with us we should strengthen," President Ranil Wickremesinghe said at the event. "We are all countries that belong to the south at a time when the south wants to establish its own identity and its own independence." He was referring to the concept of the global south, which emerged to designate developing, emerging or lower-income countries, mostly in the southern hemisphere, and replace the term "Third World" after the Cold War ended. Iranian Foreign Minister Amir-Abdollahian met with his Sri Lankan counterpart Ali Sabry in Colombo on Tuesday. The latest visit comes as the two countries have agreed to boost relations and expand their cooperation in various fields, including economy, tourism, science and technology. Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Ali Sabry has already said his country is ready to implement economic projects undertaken by Iranian experts in the country in light of the Islamic Republic's industrial and economic capabilities.



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Afghanistan's 1st Rail Cargo Crosses Iran to Turkey

TEHRAN (MNA) – Afghanistan's first export shipment containing 1,100 metric tons of mineral ore was exported by train from Roznak Railway Station in Herat towards Turkey crossing Iran. In a statement, the Afghanistan Railway Department announced that this export included talc mineral exported to the city of Mersin, Turkey. This is the first shipment of Afghanistan's "talc" that has gone to Turkey through Iran, the report added. Spokesman for the Transportation and Aviation Authority of the Taliban government in Afghanistan Imamuddin Ahmadihad previously announced that import and export between Afghanistan and Turkey will be carried out by land route for the first time. Hand-woven carpets and rugs, dried fruits, and precious stones are among the goods exported from Afghanistan to Turkey and other countries.

Iran Releases Details of Confiscated Israeli Transit Cargo



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian police (FARAJA) have released more details of a cargo it seized earlier this month that was made in the Israeli-occupied lands and was bound to be delivered to customers in Uzbekistan via the Iranian territory. FARAJA's head of Enforcement and Protection Units said on Tuesday that the cargo seized on April 15 in the border crossing of Bazargan in Iran's northwest contained more than 22 metric tons of potassium nitrate, a chemical product used as fertilizer in agricultural projects. General Reza Baniasadifar said the product under the commercial name of Haifa Group had been manufactured by the "fake Zionist regime" and was confiscated based on the article 9 of Iran's Export-Import Regulations that prohibits any commercial dealings with the Israeli regime. The Iranian parliament adopted a law earlier this year to toughen restrictions on imports and transit of goods made by Israeli companies or by their partner and affiliate companies. The law was adopted in response to Israel's brutal aggression on Palestinians in Gaza. Baniasadifar said a domestic company responsible for the transit of the cargo to Uzbekistan had declared it to customs authorities as fertilizers, adding that judicial authorities will decide what would happen to the consignment and the truck that carried it. The cargo seized in Bazargan, a key trade gateway with Turkey, is a first of its kind to be seized on land border crossings in Iran. On April 13, commandos of Iran's elite military force the IRGC boarded an oil tanker owned by an Israeli company nearly two weeks after an Israeli attack on an Iranian consulate in Syria which killed senior IRGC military commanders. Authorities said the ship had been seized because it violated international maritime rules.



Tajikistan Keen to Invest at Iran's Chabahar Strategic Port

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The deputy transport minister of Tajikistan said her country is interested in investing at Iran's Chabahar Port in logistics affairs. In a meeting with Iran's Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development Ali Akbar Safaei, Shayesta Moradzadeh emphasized the interest of her country in making investments at the port in logistics affairs. She also hailed the good level of the bilateral trade and economic relations between Tehran and Dushanbe. Moradzadeh pointed to the common historical and cultural backgrounds between Iran and Tajikistan and added that the trade and economic relations between the two countries have been on the growth trajectory, especially over the past two years. Iran's deputy minister of roads and urban development, for his part, pointed to the resolve of the current

administration for the development of trade and economic cooperation with neighboring countries, especially with Persian-speaking states and emphasized that Iran attaches great importance to enhancing transit and transport cooperation with the neighbors, IRNA reported. The chief executive of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) further pointed out that very good trade awaits Chabahar Port in the future and presently, liner vessels take berth at its Shahid Beheshti Port from India and China directly. Safaei welcomed the investment of Tajik private sector companies at Chabahar Port and added that Tajik investors will be allowed to transit their goods to other countries via Chabahar Port with the construction of a logistics compound at this strategic port.

Iran, Pakistan Eye Boosting Trade Exchanges Fivefold



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – High-ranking officials from Iran and Pakistan stressed increasing bilateral trade fivefold. The trade exchanges between Iran and Pakistan exceeded \$2 billion in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended March 19, 2024), showing a 38-percent growth compared to a year before. Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazpash, who is the head of the Iran-Pakistan Joint Economic Cooperation Commission, in a joint meeting with Pakistani officials emphasized boosting annual trade between the two countries to \$10 billion. According to the existing statistics, the trade exchanges between Iran and Pakistan increased from \$1 billion in 2002 to more than \$2 billion in the last Iranian calendar year, registering a 38 and a 23 percent in terms of value and volume respectively, IRNA reported. Promoting the level of trade between the two countries, especially in the field of transportation, and also the development of infrastructures were put on the agenda as one of the fundamental principles of trade and economic activity during the bilateral meetings between Iran's roads minister and his Pakistani counterpart which promises a considerable growth in bilateral trade activities. Heading a high-ranking political and economic delegation, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi paid an official visit to Pakistan on Monday morning.

90,000 Iranians to Make Hajj Pilgrimage This Year



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – A total of 90,000 Iranians are estimated to go on Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia this year, Iran's ambassador to Riyadh said.

In an interview with Al Arabiya television channel, Alireza Enayati said a total of 90,000 Iranians will travel to Saudi Arabia for the Hajj pilgrimage this year.

He also referred to the resumption of sending Iranians to Umrah (minor Hajj) pilgrimage, saying the religious trips have restarted as a result of the rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia, reached in 2023.

The pilgrims are traveling between Iran and Saudi Arabia with direct flights, the envoy said.

The Umrah pilgrimage for the Iranian citizens resumed on March 22 after a nine-year hiatus.

After intensive negotiations hosted by China, Iran and Saudi Arabia clinched a deal on March 10, 2023, to restore diplomatic relations and reopen embassies and missions after seven years of estrangement.

The two regional heavyweights have underscored the need to respect each other's national sovereignty and refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of one another.

President Raisi's Visit to Pakistan Has Great Deal of Significance

ISLAMABAD (IP) - Pakistan Ambassador to Iran, Muddasir Tipu has expressed his welcoming views on the recent visit of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to Pakistan. While talking to correspondents of Iranian media in Islamabad, Mr. Tipu talked about the Pakistan-Iran Gas Pipeline Project and said, "Strategically this is a very important project, we have reconsideration, technicalities are also going to meet, there are financial, technical and administrative issues, so we are hopeful that we will have mutually acceptable solution of the matters." Expressing his views about the visit of President Raisi, the Pakistani Ambassador said: "The visit is happening on a very important moment of history and particularly when the new Government has been

inducted in Pakistan and this is President Raisi's 1st visit to Pakistan so in that sense it has a great deal of significance. It will deepen Pakistan's ties with Iran, it will promote regional peace and stability, and promote economic development. On trade we have some very good developments, MOUs have been signed, between the two countries." He added: "Iran and Pakistan share a porous 900-kilometer border and we are bound by history, culture, ideology and people to people ties. The visit is going to be critically significant and there are a lot of more opportunities to strengthen these relations and I am so hopeful that there will be very positive outcomes from the visit of President Raisi."



Iranian Firms Export Confectionery Production Equipment to 60 Countries

TABRIZ (IP) - The 17th International Exhibition of Confectionery, Chocolate, and Related Industries is currently underway at the Tabriz International Exhibition Center, showcasing the presence of manufacturing companies. As reported by Iran Press, companies engaged in the production of confectionery, chocolate, and related equipment from various provinces including East Azerbaijan, West Azerbaijan, Tehran, Alborz, Khorasan Razavi, Isfahan, Ardabil, Fars, Gilan, Qazvin, and Mazandaran are actively participating in the Tabriz International Confectionery Exhibition. Noteworthy is the attendance of representatives from countries such as Germany, Spain, Turkey, Oman, Italy, India, and the Republic of Azerbaijan. Maalek Rahmati, Governor of East Azerbaijan, highlighted the pivotal role of the private sector in global markets during an exclusive interview with Iran Press. He emphasized that the confectionery and chocolate industry is entirely dominated by the private sector, underscoring their success in both domestic and international markets.

Maduro Announces Return of UN Rights Office to Venezuela

CARACAS (Dispatches) - President Nicolas Maduro announced Tuesday that a United Nations human rights office would begin operating in Venezuela once again, after it was suspended and its staff ordered to leave in February. The change comes as Maduro is under fire at home and abroad over his leftist government's human rights record as he cracks down on dissent while seeking a third term in power. He has in particular drawn criticism for preventing a widely popular opposition leader from running against him in July elections he had pledged would be free and fair. Maduro made the announcement Tuesday alongside Karim Khan, head of the International Criminal Court, who is investigating Venezuela for possible crimes against humanity in a violent crackdown on protests back in 2017. "I have received the proposal to once again invite the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk, to be in our country, in Venezuela," Maduro said, standing next to Khan at the presidential palace in Caracas. "I agree. Let's overcome our differences, the conflict that we had," he added. "I am ready to receive the envoy Volker Turk."



Russia to Step Up Strikes on Western Weapons in Ukraine



MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia will intensify strikes on Ukrainian storage bases that house Western-supplied weapons, Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said, as the United States prepares to approve and deliver a long-delayed batch of new military aid. In remarks to defense officials, Shoigu said Russia had "dispelled the myth of the superiority of Western weapons" and its forces had gained the initiative along the 1,000 km (600-mile) battle front. He referenced the fact that Washington was poised to supply Ukraine with a new military aid package worth nearly \$61 billion following a vote by the House of Representatives on Saturday. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said Kyiv will soon receive more long-range ATACMS missile systems as part of the package. U.S. officials say the aid will include ammunition supplies and interceptors for air defense systems. "In proportion to the threats posed by the United States and its allies, we will continue to improve the composition and structure of the Armed Forces and increase the production of the most popular weapons and military equipment," Shoigu said. "We will increase the intensity of attacks on logistics centers and storage bases for Western weapons." Shoigu repeated Russia's assertion that it has captured the villages of Pervomaiske, Bohdanivka and Novomykhailivka this month. On Monday, a Ukrainian commander denied the fall of the latter, saying his troops held 15-20% of the village. The Russian defense ministry said Russian marines in the operation to take Novomykhailivka had captured Western-made weapons, including Swedish grenade launchers, American anti-tank Javelins and NATO electronic warfare systems. The ministry published a video of what it said was the operation to capture the village. Reuters could not verify when the video was filmed but was able to confirm the location as Novomykhailivka based on buildings, roads and a lake that matched file and satellite imagery of the area.



Head of UN Agency for Palestinians Urges Probe Into Staff Killings

UNITED NATIONS (Dispatches) - The director of the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees hit back at Israel Tuesday, calling for a Security Council probe into the "blatant disregard" for UN operations in Gaza after some 180 staffers were killed. Philippe Lazzarini also revealed that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) had been able to partly offset a funding shortfall by raising \$100 million from online donations since the Israel-Hamas conflict broke out in October. His comments came a day after the release of an independent review that said Israel had not yet provided evidence supporting its claim that hundreds of UNRWA staff were members of terrorist groups. The review did, however, identify "neutrality-related issues" within the agency, for example in employees' social media posts. While accepting the findings of the review, Lazzarini told reporters that attacks on UNRWA's neutrality "are primarily motivated by the objective to strip the Palestinians from the refugee status -- and this is a reason why there are pushes today for UNRWA not to be present" in Gaza, east Jerusalem and the West Bank. UNRWA was established in 1949 to serve Palestinians who lost their homes in the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as their descendants. There are now 5.9 million registered Palestinian refugees. Lazzarini said that he recently "called on the members of the Security Council for an independent investigation and accountability for the blatant disregard of UN premises, UN staff, and UN operations in the Gaza Strip." As of Tuesday, 180 UNRWA staff have been killed in the war, 160 premises have been damaged or destroyed, and

at least 400 people have been killed while seeking the protection of the UN flag, Lazzarini said. Vacated UNRWA premises have been used for military purposes by the Israeli army or Hamas and other militant groups, while UNRWA staffers have been arrested and even tortured, he added. Lazzarini stressed an investigation was necessary "to have accountability, in order not to set a new low standard in future conflict situations," Lazzarini said. Allegations by Israel in January that some UNRWA staff participated in the Hamas attacks led to many donors freezing some \$450 million in funding at a time when Gaza's 2.3 million people are in dire need of food, water, shelter and medicine. Many countries have since resumed their donations, while others, including the United States -- which passed a law blocking funding until at least March 2025 -- have not. "In terms of our funding of UNRWA, that is still suspended. We're gonna have to see real progress here before that gets changed," White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said Tuesday. Lazzarini said UNRWA was operating "hand to mouth for the time being" but said that online fundraising to the agency totaled \$100 million since October 7, in "an extraordinary indication of grassroots solidarity." Israel has repeatedly equated UNRWA with Hamas, the militant group responsible for the October 7 attack which resulted in the death of around 1,170 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of official Israeli figures. At least 34,183 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, have been killed in Israel's retaliatory bombardments and ground offensive, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

Argentina's Milei Faces Biggest Protest Yet as Students March Over Budget Cuts



BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - Hundreds of thousands of Argentines took to the streets of Buenos Aires in an anti-government march against budget cuts to public universities, the biggest protest yet against President Javier Milei's painful austerity measures. The demonstrations are the latest example of rising tension over spending cuts that are helping undo a deep fiscal deficit but causing hardship in the real economy. In the union-backed marches in the capital and beyond, banners were held aloft in the southern autumn sunshine reading "Defend the public universities," "Studying is a right," and "Up with the budget, down with Milei's plan." "I'm here to defend the public universities," said Pedro Palm, an 82-year-old architect who graduated from the prestigious University of Buenos Aires (UBA), which recently warned it might have to shut its doors after its budget was slashed. Milei, dealing with an inherited economic crisis after years of government over-spending, is employing "chainsaw" budget cuts that helped the state post three months of fiscal surpluses at the start of the year. But the cuts have squeezed the public sector badly. Argentina's public universities like UBA, which offer free undergraduate education, rely heavily on government funding. "Education is one of the fundamental pillars of our ideology. We have no desire to close the universities," said presidential spokesperson Manuel Admi, defending the government's stance and calling for a peaceful march. Ivan Massari, a biology and genetics teacher, said free education must be defended because it was the best way to level society and create access to opportunities for all. "Public education is a tool for social transformation," he said. "It is the opportunity for a person to be able to develop themselves, to be able to contribute to society, and to be able to build their future."

U.S. Senate Passes \$95b Aid Package for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The Senate has passed \$95 billion in war aid to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan, sending the legislation to President Joe Biden after months of delays and contentious debate over how involved the United States should be in foreign wars. The bill passed the Senate on an overwhelming 79-18 vote late Tuesday after the House had approved the package Saturday. Biden, who worked with congressional leaders to win support, said in a statement immediately after passage that he will sign it Wednesday and start the process of sending weapons to Ukraine, which has been struggling to hold its front lines against Russia. "Tonight, a bipartisan majority in the Senate joined the House to answer history's call at this critical inflection point," Biden said. The legislation would also send \$26 billion in wartime assistance to Israel and humanitarian relief to citizens of Gaza, and \$8 billion to counter Chinese threats in Taiwan and the Indo-Pacific. U.S. officials said about \$1 billion of the aid could be on its way shortly, with the bulk following in coming weeks. In an interview with The Associated Press shortly before the vote, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said that if Congress hadn't passed the aid, "America would have paid a price economically, politically, militarily." "Very few things we have done have risen to this level of historic importance," he said. On the Senate floor, Schumer said the Senate was

sending a message to U.S. allies: "We will stand with you." Schumer and Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell made passage of the legislation a top priority, agreeing to tie the Ukraine and Israel aid to help ensure passage and arguing there could be dire consequences for the United States and many of its global allies if Russian President Vladimir Putin's aggression is left unchecked. They worked with House Speaker Mike Johnson, a Republican, to overcome seemingly intractable Republican opposition to the Ukraine aid, in particular -- eventually winning large majorities in both chambers. McConnell said in a separate interview before the vote that it "is one of the biggest days in the time that I've been here." "At least on this episode, I think we turned the tables on the isolationists," McConnell said. In the end, 31 Republicans voted for the aid package -- nine more than when the Senate passed a similar version in February, and a majority of the Senate GOP conference. The House approved the package in a series of four votes on Saturday, with the Ukraine portion passing 311-112. The \$61 billion for Ukraine comes as the war-torn country desperately needs new firepower and as Russian President Vladimir Putin has stepped up his attacks. Ukrainian soldiers have struggled as Russia has seized the momentum on the battlefield and gained significant territory.



Haiti Police Bolster Security Around Palace Ahead of Transition

PORT-AU-PRINCE (Reuters) - Haitian police deployed tear gas to move people back from a security perimeter around the National Palace while soldiers gripping rifles patrolled the international airport's diplomatic entrance on Tuesday, ahead of a planned change of government. The palace has come under repeated fire from gangs that have paralyzed the capital Port-au-Prince. A nine-member presidential transition council is to be sworn in at the palace, and although no date has been announced, rumors circulated that it could happen this week. The council is expected to name an interim prime minister and help set up a government that will eventually organize elections in the Caribbean island nation. "Whether or not you're installed, this message is for you: Brace yourselves," gang leader Jimmy "Barbeque" Cherizier ominously warned in a Tuesday video shared on social media. Cherizier has called for toppling the government. The U.S. military said on Tuesday it bolstered defenses at its embassy. Outgoing Prime Minister Ariel Henry has for over a year called for international troops to help police fight the gangs. But plans moved slowly and were eventually paused when he announced in March his plan to step down, pending a new interim government. Since then, attacks have escalated and the transition has lagged. Port-au-Prince resident Jerry Louis expressed cautious optimism. "The presidential council will be able to stabilize the country, but the international community must accept it," he said in an interview. Motorcycle driver Paolo, who did not share his last name, pointed to lawlessness as a major obstacle. The presidential council "has to put in place a minimum of security so that the population can go about its business," he said.

Israel Steps Up Strikes Across Gaza, Orders New evacuations in North

GAZA (Dispatches) - Israeli strikes intensified across Gaza on Tuesday in some of the heaviest shelling in weeks, residents said, and the army ordered fresh evacuations in the north of the enclave, warning civilians they were in a "dangerous combat zone". Strikes by air and shelling from tanks on the ground were also reported in central and southern areas of the Gaza Strip in what residents said late on Tuesday were almost 24 hours of non-stop bombardments. In a post on social media platform X, Israeli army spokesperson Avichay Adraee urged residents of four zones in Beit Lahiya on Gaza's northern edge to move to two designated areas. He said the military "will work with extreme force against terrorist infrastructure and subversive elements" in the region. In a statement issued later on Tuesday, the military said it "follows international law and takes feasible precautions to mitigate civilian harm." The renewed shelling and bombing of northern Gaza comes almost four months after the Israeli army announced it was drawing down troops there, saying Hamas no longer controlled those areas. This month, Israel also drew down most of its forces in southern Gaza. But efforts to reach a ceasefire have failed, and Israeli bombardment and raids on territory where its troops have withdrawn are making it difficult for displaced Gazans to return to abandoned homes.

Tuesday's bombardment came after incoming rocket alerts sounded in two southern Israeli border towns, although no casualties were reported. The armed wing of Islamic Jihad, a group allied to Hamas, claimed responsibility for the attacks on Sderot and Nir Am, indicating fighters were still able to launch rockets almost 200 days into the war, which has flattened large swathes of the enclave and displaced almost all of its 2.3 million people. Hamas said Israel had achieved only "humiliation and defeat" with its offensive. Speaking in a video aired by Al Jazeera television, Abu Ubaida, the spokesperson for Hamas' armed wing, called for an escalation in conflict across all fronts and praised Iran for its first direct attack against Israel earlier this month. He also said Hamas was sticking to its demands in ceasefire talks for Israel to permanently end its war, pull all its troops from Gaza and allow the displaced to return to the north. Israel has resisted a permanent ceasefire, saying that would only allow Hamas to regroup. The U.S. special regional envoy for humanitarian issues, David Satterfield, told reporters in Washington that Gaza faces a high risk of famine, especially in the north. He urged Israel to get aid to those in need. Philippe Lazzarini, head of the U.N. aid agency UNRWA, said the number of aid trucks entering Gaza reached 310, the highest daily total since the war began.





Five-Star Arsenal Thrash Chelsea to Open Up Premier League Lead

LONDON (Dispatches) - Kai Havertz and Ben White scored twice as Arsenal thrashed Chelsea 5-0 to surge ahead in the Premier League title race and ramp up the pressure on Liverpool and Manchester City. Leandro Trossard was also on target in a record win over Chelsea for the Gunners, who move three points clear of Liverpool and four of Manchester City. The destiny of the title remains in City's hands as the defending champions have two games in hand. Liverpool have also played one fewer game than Arsenal and are in action at Everton in the Merseyside derby on Wednesday. However, Mikel Arteta's men's goal difference advantage now looks unassailable should it become decisive in the title race. "We have made our people very proud, it is a big derby for us and I know what it means," said Arteta. "We started the game really well but didn't convert all our chances - we were a bit sloppy in certain areas of the pitch." "In the second half we were much more disciplined and created chances and were ruthless in front of goal." Chelsea and Arsenal's title rivals were dealt a huge blow before kick-off as the Blues' danger man Cole Palmer was ruled out due to illness. Palmer has scored or assisted nearly 50 percent of Chelsea's Premier League goals this season and his presence was badly missed by the visitors. Despite enduring a disappointing first season under Mauricio Pochettino, Chelsea had been unbeaten in eight consecutive league games prior to their FA Cup semi-final defeat to Manchester City on Saturday. But they were blown away

by an Arsenal side keen to reaffirm their title credentials after losing their last home game to Aston Villa. "So difficult (a) result and performance (to accept) because it is not nice to see your team playing like this from the beginning of the game," said Pochettino. "Today we didn't compete against a team fighting for the Premier League. We need to be aware we need to compete in a different way." The hosts flew out of the blocks and were in front inside five minutes. Trossard only ended up at the Emirates after Arsenal were gazzumped by Chelsea in the battle to sign Mykhailo Mudryk in January 2023. The Belgian has proved to be a far more productive signing and smashed in his 15th goal of the season at Djordje Petrovic's near post. Petrovic redeemed himself for a mistake at the opening goal with two brilliant saves to turn away Havertz's low effort and a deflected shot by Trossard to keep his side in the game before half-time. The Serbian briefly held Arsenal at bay early in the second period with saves from Declan Rice and Havertz. However, the floodgates opened once White curled in Arsenal's second after Chelsea failed to clear a corner on 52 minutes. Havertz scored the winning goal in a Champions League final for Chelsea during his three years in west London, but he never performed consistently to the level he has found in recent months under Arteta. Martin Odegaard's stunning through ball was met with the finish it deserved as Havertz smashed high past Petrovic.

Al-Ain Seal Asian Champions League Final Berth Despite Al-Hilal Loss



RIYADH (Dispatches) - Al-Ain advanced to the Asian Champions League final despite losing 2-1 to Saudi Arabia's Al-Hilal in Riyadh on Tuesday, with the side from the United Arab Emirates completing a 5-4 aggregate victory to progress to next month's decider. Heman Crespo's outfit will take on either Ulsan Hyundai from South Korea or Japan's Yokohama F Marinos. Goals from Ruben Neves and Salem Al-Dawsari gave Al-Hilal victory on the night at the Kingdom Arena. Leading 4-2 from the first leg in Al-Ain last Wednesday, the visitors were rocked inside the opening two minutes as the Saudi Pro League side, watched from the stands by their injured playmaker Neymar, made a blistering start. The four-times winners reduced the deficit in the fourth minute as a rash challenge in the area saw Kouame Kouadio bring down Brazilian winger Michael and, after a VAR review, Neves smashed his spot-kick into the top corner. But Al-Ain remained resolute, with Kaku heading over the bar before the 2003 champions restored their two-goal aggregate advantage in the 12th minute. Erik Jorgens cut in from the left and fed the ball to Kaku, who found Yahia Nader on the right and he set up the unmarked Jorgens to stroke the ball past Yassine Bounou from 14 yards having continued his run across the box.

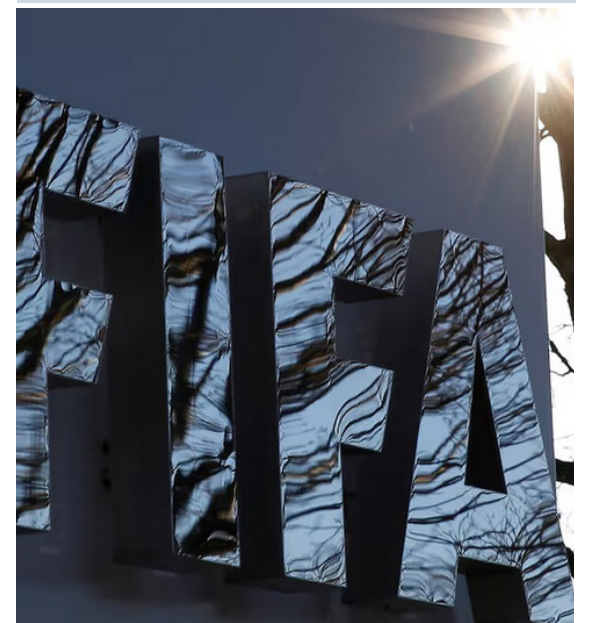
Wolves Overpower Suns to Lead Series 2-0

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Jaden McDaniels scored 25 points as the Minnesota Timberwolves dominated the Phoenix Suns 105-93 to take a 2-0 series lead in the NBA playoffs, while Indiana roared back to beat Milwaukee 125-108 and square their best-of-seven duel at 1-1. McDaniels led a balanced Minnesota offensive effort that saw all five starters finish in double digits as the Western Conference third seeds moved to within two wins of a series victory. But it was the Timberwolves defense who turned the game in the home side's favor, shutting down Phoenix in the second half to frustrate Suns stars Kevin Durant and Devin Booker. A torrid night for Phoenix ended with Booker fouling out in the fourth quarter while the Suns also were handed an injury scare, with Grayson Allen hobbling off in the third quarter after rolling an ankle. It means Suns coach Frank Vogel will have his work cut out for him when the series heads to Arizona for game three on Friday. The Timberwolves will go into that fixture brimming with confidence after restricting Phoenix's offense to 42 second-half points. Minnesota scored 31 points off 20 Phoenix turnovers while the Suns took just two points from the Wolves' 14 turnovers throughout the game. "We've had issues with that throughout the course of the year, taking care of the basketball and it reared its head again tonight," Vogel said. McDaniels led the home side's scoring with 25 points, eight rebounds and three assists while Rudy Gobert and Mike Conley added 18 apiece. Anthony Edwards finished with 15 points, eight assists and three rebounds and Karl-Anthony Towns finished with 12 points. "We got a lot of guys who can put the ball in the basket,"

Minnesota coach Chris Finch said. "We're really making the right plays right now." In Milwaukee, Pascal Siakam poured in 37 points to guide the Pacers to an impressive series-leveling win over the Bucks. Siakam finished with 11 rebounds and six assists while Myles Turner added 22 and Andrew Nembhard 20 as the Pacers claimed a deserved win. "He just doesn't get rattled," Pacers coach Rick Carlisle said of Siakam. "He plays the game at his pace. He was excellent tonight." He's a unique player. His experience shows and he had a lot of big, big plays for us tonight... his experience in the playoffs is invaluable. He's a guy that players look up to." Milwaukee started brightly, with Damian Lillard once again taking on the lion's share of the scoring duties in the absence of the injured Giannis Antetokounmpo. But Lillard's 34 points were not enough to keep the Pacers at arm's length. Indiana took the lead just before half-time and finally pulled away in the fourth quarter, leading by 23 points at one stage.



Milik Strike Sends Juventus Into Coppa Italia Final



ROME (Dispatches) - A late goal by striker Arkadiusz Milik sent Juventus into the final of Coppa Italia with a 3-2 aggregate win over Lazio despite a 2-1 defeat in the second leg of their semi-final. Juventus beat Lazio 2-0 at home in the first leg but forward Valentin Castellanos levelled the tie when he scored twice by the 48th minute, before substitute Milik netted the decider from close range seven minutes from time. Record 14-times winners Juventus, who lifted their last trophy when they won the Italian Cup in 2020-21, have reached their 22nd Coppa Italia final. "Lazio had to turn the game around, it was normal to expect aggression," Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri told a press conference. "After the 2-0 at the start of the second half we improved and we got the result against an excellent Lazio. (But) we should have scored first. "Today was an important match, our elimination would have led to a dangerous psychological repercussion given that we are not yet mathematically (qualified for) the Champions League." Lazio were quick to revive the fans' hopes for a turnaround from the first leg's deficit when Castellanos outjumped the Juve defence to give the hosts the lead on the night with a towering header in the 12th minute, nodding home a Luis Alberto corner. He could have scored the second just before halftime, when he broke into the area after latching on to another neat pass by Alberto, but Juve keeper Mattia Perin kept his low shot out.

Sinner Plays Down Djokovic, Alcaraz Comparisons

MADRID (Dispatches) - Jannik Sinner dismissed the idea that he is the best player in the world right now, saying he should not be compared to his fellow top-three rivals, Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz. The Italian world number two can come within touching distance of the top-ranked Djokovic in the standings should he triumph in Madrid this fortnight and he arrives in the Spanish capital brimming with confidence and carrying an impressive 25-2 win-loss record for the season. The reigning Australian Open champion, who owns a tour-leading three titles in 2024, is ranked number one in the ATP's Race to Turin, and is 1,650 points ahead of second-placed Daniil Medvedev. "I think it's a tough question to answer. We always see only this moment and I think that sometimes it's good but also not good," the 22-year-old Sinner told reporters in Madrid. "I still believe that you cannot compare myself with Novak with all that he has done. And the same goes for Carlos. Also Carlos won more than me. I have a lot of respect for both of them. I just try to play my game, trying to understand what works best for me and then we see what I can achieve." Sinner has never made it past the third round in either of his previous two appearances at the Caja Magica and will be looking to change that this time around. In the absence of Djokovic, who has pulled out of the tournament, Sinner is the top seed in Madrid, where he faces Richard Gasquet or Lorenzo Sonego in the second round. "I used to struggle quite a lot in the previous years, finding my level here, so it's going to be interesting to see how I'm going to play this year," he added. Meanwhile, Alcaraz had no qualms describing Sinner as the game's best and the Spanish world number three acknowledges it will be

tough trying to stop his good friend and rival from taking over the top spot in the rankings. "He's dangerous, he's really dangerous. He's the best player in the world right now," said Alcaraz, who is the two-time defending champion in Madrid. "Probably everybody thinks that his tennis doesn't suit very much clay but he makes good results on clay as well, he can win every tournament he goes to, and I'm fighting with him, with Novak, to be in the first spot and I'm trying not to let them stay there. "Honestly it's going to be difficult. They deserve to be there and let's see what's going to happen the next tournaments." The 20-year-old Alcaraz is coming off a right arm injury that forced him to skip the tournaments in Monte Carlo and Barcelona. He said he managed to increase the intensity of his training since his arrival in Madrid and is hoping to be 100 percent ready for his opener on Saturday against Arthur Rinderknech or Alexander Shevchenko.

