

Deputy Director of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization Ali Akbar Marzban Announced That the Crew of the Seized Portuguese-Flagged Container Ship MSC Aries Is "in Perfect Health"

IRAN NEWS

Iran's Minister of Information and Communications Technology and Tanzanian Minister of Trade and Industrial Development in a Meeting Have Reviewed Ways to Broaden Technological Ties

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DOMESTIC



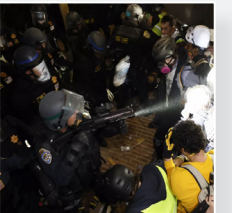
Iran-China Trade Could Hit \$50b

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INTERNATIONAL

Student Protests Against Israel's Offensive in Gaza Spread



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UN Nuclear Chief Due in Iran in Coming Days



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency Rafael Grossi will be attending an international nuclear conference that Iran is going to hold within the next few days, a spokesman said. The spokesperson for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) announced on Tuesday that the UN nuclear agency's chief will visit the central city of Isfahan to take part in Iran's 1st Conference on Nuclear Science and Technologies. Behrouz Karahvandi noted that Grossi will also hold consultations with a number of Iranian officials on the sidelines of the event. The nuclear conference in Isfahan will be held on May 6-8 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran. In comments in February, Head of the AEOI Mohammad Eslami hailed the growing coordination between Iran and the IAEA, expressing hope that the course of cooperation would continue to enable Iran to shatter the atmosphere the enemies seek to create against its nuclear industry. Meanwhile on Wednesday while highlighting the continuous process of cooperation between Iran and the UN nuclear agency in accordance with the Safeguards, Eslami said more than 130 IAEA inspectors are permitted to work in the country. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet session, M Eslami said Iran has not barred any IAEA inspector from entering the country. Currently, more than 130 IAEA inspectors are permitted to conduct inspections in Iran, he added, noting that the International Atomic Energy Agency is regularly carrying out its inspection activities at Iran's nuclear sites within the framework of the Safeguards - the activities by which the IAEA can verify that a state is living up to its international commitments not to use nuclear technology for development of atomic weapons. Highlighting the constant interaction and dialogue between Iran and the UN nuclear agency under the Safeguards, Eslami said discussions about two of the four so-called undeclared locations in Iran have been concluded, while talks on the other two alleged undeclared locations are in progress.

Irrational Violence Against Pro-Palestine Demos Will Be of No Avail



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Members of Iranian Parliament (Majlis) have vehemently condemned the heavy-handed crackdown on pro-Palestine academic demonstrations in the United States and Europe, saying the use of "irrational violence" against student protesters will be of no avail. In a statement on Tuesday, as many as 150 members of the legislative body threw their weight behind American and European university students supporting Palestinians in the months-long Israeli war on the besieged Gaza Strip. "Today, Gaza is the scene of confrontation between an oppressed, afflicted and resistant nation and a ruthless and usurping entity. In this battle, sympathizing with the oppressed and protesting against the oppressors is the least of human duties," the Iranian lawmakers said. Stressing that the Israeli regime's record of aggression and usurpation amounts to seven decades, the statement said what is nowadays coming to pass in the form of bravery and resistance by Palestinians in Gaza is the "volcano of pent-up anger and pain" of a nation. "The expression of solidarity with Palestine by academics of the world, especially in Western countries, is a movement that stems from a justice-seeking, altruistic and human nature." Playing victim and distorting the facts in the West's mainstream media have not been able to completely cover up the bloody scenes in Gaza, the lawmakers stated. Expressing their gratitude to the American and European university students for supporting Palestinians in Gaza, the statement said, "Irrational violence against this rights-seeking call will not cure the pain of oppressors."

Leader Says Gaza Is First Issue of the World



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has called for piling up pressure on the Israeli regime so that the issue of Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip cannot be undermined. Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in an address to a group of teachers and academics on Wednesday on the occasion of the National Teachers' Day, which marks the martyrdom anniversary of Ayatollah Morteza Motahhari. "Today, the issue of Gaza tops the world's issues. At the international scene, the Zionists and their American and European supporters are doing whatever they can to cross out the issue of Gaza from the agenda of the world's public opinion, but all in vain," Ayatollah Khamenei said. The Leader pointed to the pro-Palestine protest by students in American and European universities, and said, "Nations have become sensitive to the Gaza issue as it is the world's top one. We should not allow this issue to be removed from the world's public opinion, and pressure must increase on the Zionist regime day by day." Touching on the US police violence and excessive force against student protesters, the Leader said the harsh treatment attested to the Islamic Republic's rightful stance regarding its mistrust of America. "Look at how

the Americans and the relevant bodies in the country are dealing with verbal opposition to Israel. The students of US universities did not vandalize anything, did not shout destructive slogans, did not kill anyone, did not set fire to any place, did not break any glass; [but] this is how they are being treated," the Leader said. "What people see in practice shows America's partnership and complicity in this horrific crime, in this unforgivable sin, with the Zionist regime. They are accomplices. How can one be optimistic about such a system, about such a regime? How is it possible? Or how can one trust their words?" he added. Ayatollah Khamenei underlined that Palestine belongs to its "original owners" and normalization attempts will not calm the situation in the West Asia region. "Palestine must return to its original owners. Palestine belongs to the Palestinian people, including Muslims, Christians and Jews; Palestine is for them and should return to them ... this is how the problem of the West Asia region will be solved," the Leader said. "Some imagine that forcing neighboring countries to normalize their ties with the Zionist regime will iron out the problem. No, they are mistaken," he added.

OPEC Oil Output Falls in April, Led by Iran and Iraq

LONDON (Dispatches) - OPEC oil output has fallen in April, a Reuters survey found on Tuesday, reflecting lower exports from Iran, Iraq and Nigeria against a backdrop of ongoing voluntary supply cuts by some members agreed with the wider OPEC+ alliance. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries pumped 26.49 million barrels per day (bpd) this month, down 100,000 bpd from March's revised total, the survey, based on shipping data and information from industry sources, found. Several members of OPEC+, which includes OPEC, Russia and other allies, made new cuts in January to counter economic weakness and increased supply outside the group. Producers agreed in March to keep the cuts in place until the end of June. OPEC+ is scheduled to meet on June 1 to decide its next output policy steps. The biggest output reductions in April came from Iran, Nigeria and Iraq, the survey found. Output in Iran, exempt from quotas, slipped from an upwardly revised March figure that equalled a five-year high reached in November, the survey found. Iran posted one of OPEC's biggest output increases in 2023 despite U.S. sanctions still in place. Iraq in March promised to lower exports to make up for pumping above its OPEC target, but data on Monday showed it missed the pledge last month. April output is down slightly from March, according to the survey. Nigerian production declined, with exports falling more sharply according to some ship trackers as the Dangote refinery took in more cargoes. An outage briefly affected the Bonny production stream, a source said. OPEC fell about 140,000 bpd short of its targeted cuts in April, largely because of Iraq and Gabon pumping more than they had aimed for, the survey found. Nigeria is pumping below its target, unlike earlier in the year. Saudi production edged up and there were small increases from Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, the survey found. The Reuters survey aims to track supply to the market and is based on shipping data provided by external sources, LSEG flows data, information from companies that track flows - such as Petro-Logistics and Kpler - and information provided by sources at oil companies, OPEC and consultants.



Phase one of Chabahar Space Base to Be Completed in 2015



TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Iranian ICT minister said that the first phase of the National Chabahar Space Launch Base in southeastern Iran will be finished in next year. The base's site is around 5x5 hectares. It is run by the Iranian Space Agency. Zarepour told reporters on Wednesday at the sideline of the cabinet weekly meeting that Chabahar Space Launch Base will become a very strategic base in the country's space industry and the first phase of its construction will be finished in next year. The base's site is around 5x5 hectares. It is run by the Iranian Space Agency. Zarepour told reporters on Wednesday that Chabahar Space Launch Base will become a very strategic base in the country's space industry. Iranian ICT minister said that the space base will have experienced its first launch by the end of the current Persian year. In Phase 2, the launch site is planned to be open for space launches of foreign countries' satellites too. Phase 3 will enable the launch of rockets with solid-fuel launch vehicles. The National Chabahar Space Center is scheduled to be fully operational and capable of carrying out international space launches by the end of March 2031. The Imam Khomeini National Space Center, Iran's inaugural fixed launch site, has played a pivotal role in the country's space endeavors since its inauguration in 2012. This facility encompasses all stages of space missions, from satellite preparation to launch, control, and guidance. Situated 80 kilometers southeast of Semnan province, the Imam Khomeini National Space Center effectively fulfills Iran's requirements in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) during its final phase.

Iran Criticizes Silence Over U.S. Campus Crackdowns



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's top human rights official has criticized the United Nations human rights office for leveling trumped-up rights charges against Iran while turning a blind eye to US violent crackdown on anti-war students and academics in university campuses. Kazem Gharibabadi, secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights, said the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) ignores what is unfolding in university campuses across the U.S., but did issue statements about so-called rights violations in Iran over the same period. "The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has taken no notice of what is happening in the U.S. but at the same time issued three statements accusing Iran of human rights violations, which is proof of contradictions and double standards in the UN body's mechanisms," Gharibabadi said on Monday. From California to New York, Illinois to Texas, the U.S. police have raided university campuses carrying and dragging students away or shockingly slapping them. They have even arrested professors, like Caroline Fohlin, an Emory University professor, in Georgia, during protests over Israel's genocidal military campaign in Gaza, which has killed nearly 34,500 Palestinians and left over a million displaced and starving. So far, more than 900 people have been arrested on US campuses, the Washington Post reported on Monday, highlighting that demonstrations were "peaceful and nonviolent until law enforcement showed up." On Monday, riot police used pepper spray and arrested about 50 students at the University of Texas pro-Gaza protest encampment. Monday's clashes between police and students marked the second time in less than a week that state police were called to campus.

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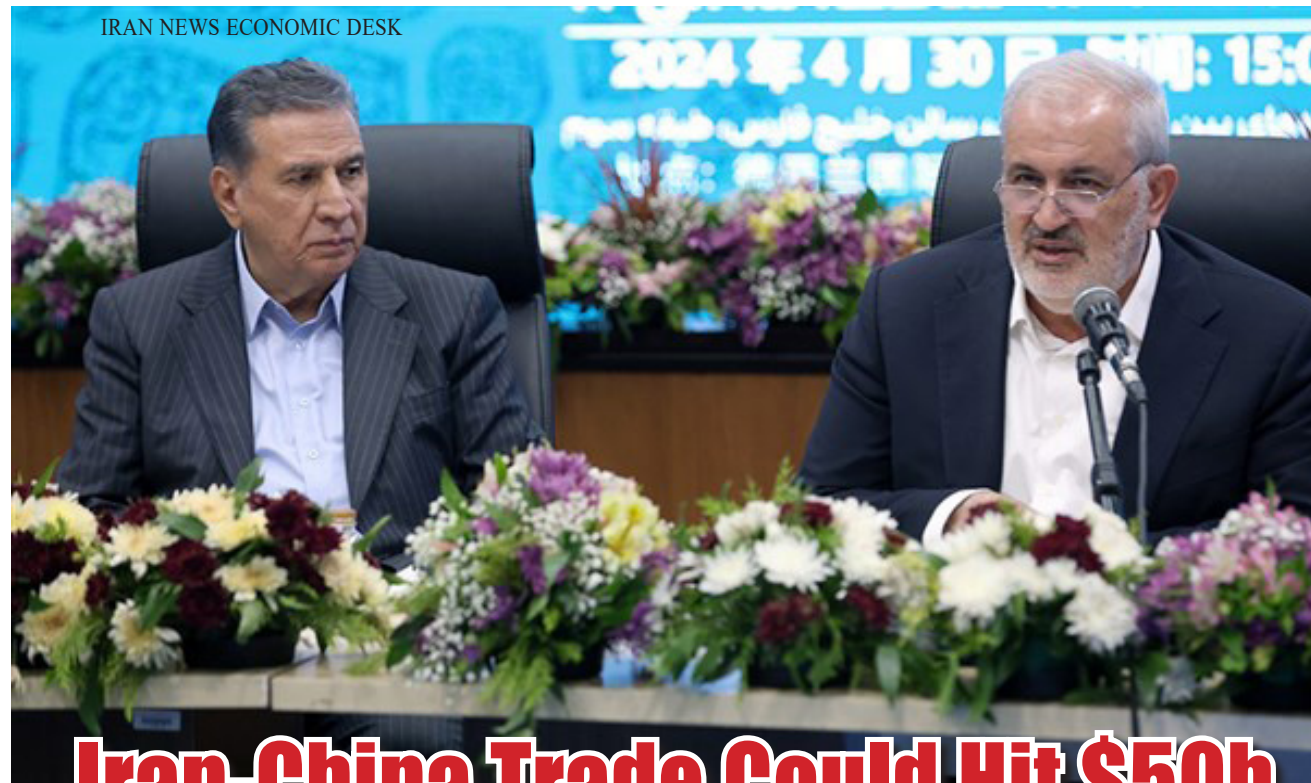
Afghanistan Calls for More Investment of Iranian Private Sector

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Businesspeople from Afghanistan have stressed the need for Iranian private sector to make more investment in the country. An Iran-Afghanistan Business Forum was held in the headquarters of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) in Tehran on Monday as a major Afghan trade delegation is in the Iranian capital to attend Iran Expo 2024. Addressing the business forum, ICCIMA Vice President Qadir Qiafeh welcomed the peace in Afghanistan after years of insecurity and said that the Iran Chamber of Commerce is ready to help the promotion of trade ties with the neighboring country. Noting that the volume of trade between Iran and Afghanistan has reached \$2 billion, he said that Afghanistan is now one of the top five destinations for Iranian products. He urged the need for the chambers of commerce of the two countries to prepare plans for strategic measures so as to witness a growth in bilateral relations.

Iranian Workers to Slap Enemies Hard in Economic Field



TEHRAN (MNA) - Even now that the country is struggling with the economic war, the Iranian workers will slap the enemies hard in the economic field despite threats and sanctions. Addressing the commemoration ceremony of workers on Tuesday, Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi said, "The products of our dear workers play a role for the country despite all the threats and sanctions." During the Imposed War, the factories made the country needless from foreign countries, Raisi noted elsewhere in his remarks. Even now that the country is struggling with the economic war, the Iranian workers will slap the enemies hard in the economic field despite threats and sanctions. About 10,000 factories and workshops that were out of production have resumed their activities, Raisi also said. Referring to his provincial trips, he said, "During these trips, we witnessed that thousands of workers have been employed again and closed factories have been revived."



Iran-China Trade Could Hit \$50b

TEHRAN - Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Samad Hassanzadeh says there is a potential for Iran-China trade to reach \$50b. Hassanzadeh made the remarks addressing an Iran-China Business Forum which was held on the sidelines of Iran Expo 2024 in Tehran on Tuesday. He voiced the readiness of Iranian businesspeople for more enhanced trade with China, expressing hope that the Expo will help the promotion of ties between Tehran and Beijing. Noting that China is presently Iran's main trade partner, he said that the volume of trade between the two countries stands at \$30 billion which can even be increased to \$50 billion. The Iran Chamber of Commerce president further stressed that the private sectors of Iran and China can cooperate on different areas, including industry, agriculture, mining, pharmaceuticals, knowledge-based products, steel, techno-engineering services and tourism. Iran's Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade Abbas Aliabadi (right) and

President of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Samad Hassanzadeh are seen in an Iran-China Business Forum in Tehran, Iran, April 30, 2024. Also addressing the forum, Iran's Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade Abbas Aliabadi referred to Iran's different potentials, noting that with 15 neighboring countries and having signed preferential and free trade agreements with many of these neighbors, Iran has a good access to regional trade markets. Standing together, Iran and China can help the economies of each other, the minister said. He also referred to the export potentials and large populations of Iran and China and stressed that cooperation between the two countries can benefit both nations. Noting that some 100 Chinese businesspeople are present in this edition of Iran Expo, Aliabadi added that China has got to know that there are good potentials for cooperation with Iran in the areas of energy, transportation and pharmaceuticals.

Iran-Turkey Trade Reaches \$1.3b in Q1 2024



TEHRAN (IRNA) - The trade exchanges between Iran and Turkey in the first three months of 2024 have reached \$1.364 billion, according to a latest update by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT). Trade exchanges between Iran and Turkey have reached \$1.364 billion in the first three months of 2024, according to the latest update by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT). According to TURKSTAT, Turkey's exports to Iran in the mentioned period reached \$817 million, recording a 16 percent increase compared to last year's corresponding period. Turkey exported over \$701 million worth of products to the Islamic Republic in the first three months of 2023. Turkey's imports from Iran, however, registered a 41 percent decline and fell from \$547 million in January-March 2023 to \$934 million in the first three months of 2024.

Tehran Hosts Meeting of ECO Heads of Railway Authorities



TEHRAN (MNA) - The 15th Meeting of the Heads of Railway Authorities of ECO Member States and the 11th International Exhibition of Rail Transportations & Related Industries Equipment will be held in Tehran, CEO of Iran Railways informed. Also, during the 15th meeting of heads of railways of ECO member countries, the meeting of the Road Committee of Transit Transport Coordination Council (TTCC) will be held. According to Miad Salehi, Deputy Minister and CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways, the event is in line with the development of transport diplomacy in Iran. The 11th international exhibition of rail transport, industries, equipment, and related services will be held on May 18-21, 2024 with the presence of domestic and foreign companies at the Tehran International Exhibition Center. Presenting the capabilities of Iranian companies, localizing the rail industry, and familiarizing Iran's rail industry manufacturers with the latest developments in this industry in the world are among the goals of this exhibition. It should be noted that the 10th International Exhibition of Rail Transportation & Related Industries took place on 26-29 September 2023 in Tehran with the presence of Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development in the opening ceremony, and more than 100 manufacturing, knowledge-based, and rail transport companies participated in last year's exhibition.

Over 1,000 Iranian Companies Operating in Uzbekistan

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - More than 1,000 Iranian companies are presently operating in Uzbekistan, it was noted in an Iran-Uzbekistan Business Forum in Tehran. The business forum was held as an 80-member Uzbek trade delegation is in the Iranian capital to attend Iran Expo 2024. During the forum, both sides underlined the need for increasing the volume of trade between Iran and Uzbekistan from the current \$500 million to \$1 billion. Addressing the forum, Niloofar Assadi, an official with the international affairs of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA), referred to different obstacles on the way of trade and joint investments between the two countries, urging the need for forming a council with presence of representatives from both Tehran and Tashkent. She believed that the economies of Iran and Uzbekistan complement each other and can meet the needs of each other. Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Tehran Fariddin Nasriyev also addressed the forum, noting that the presence of

a big Uzbek delegation in Iran Expo indicates the high willingness of the country's business actors for more engagement in trade exchanges with Iran. He said that the officials from both Tehran and Tashkent are focused on joint investments which requires the private sectors of the two countries to make efforts in this regard. Noting that the Uzbekistan's government supports any kind of investment in the country, the ambassador said that security of investment in his country is guaranteed. He further added that the ground is prepared for exports of Iranian pharmaceuticals to Uzbekistan and even establishment of a medical production line in the country. In the meantime, Mousa Aghaei, the chairman of Iran-Uzbekistan Joint Chamber of Commerce, said that Tehran and Tashkent have to do their best to facilitate tourism between the two countries. Referring to obstacles hindering trade between Iran and Uzbekistan, he said that a great part of these problems have been caused by US sanctions on Tehran.



Iran, UN Discuss Syria's Problems

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - A senior adviser to the Iranian foreign minister for special political affairs and the UN Special Envoy for Syria held talks on the latest developments in the Arab country and the collective efforts for the settlement of Syria's problems. In a videoconference on Tuesday, Ali Asghar Khaji and Geir O. Pedersen talked about the latest developments in Syria. They weighed plans to improve the humanitarian situation in Syria, fight against terrorism, and continue the political processes in the Arab country. Expressing concern about the humanitarian crisis in Syria, Khaji said the crimes committed by the Zionist regime against the oppressed people of Palestine as well as the continuous Israeli aggression against Syria and Lebanon have plunged all regional equations into crisis and damaged the progress of developments in Syria. Addressing a UN Security Council meeting on April 25, Pedersen called for a new and comprehensive approach to address Syria's political and humanitarian challenges. The new approach "would need to fully engage all critical stakeholders - this includes the Syrian parties and the international actors in the Astana format, the Arab Contact Group, the Western Quad and this Council," Pedersen said. Presenting monthly updates to the 15-member body, he pointed out that Syria is becoming "a sort of free-for-all space for settling scores", citing the "dangerous and escalatory spiral" of recent events, such as the Israeli airstrike on Iran's diplomatic mission in Damascus. Calling for regional de-escalation starting with an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza, he urged all players to exercise maximum restraint and respect international law.



Sadiq Khan Easily Wins Record Third Term as Mayor of London

LONDON (Dispatches) - London's Labour mayor Sadiq Khan on Saturday secured a record third term, dealing the Conservatives another damaging defeat in their worst local election results in recent memory months before an expected general election. Khan, 53, easily beat Tory challenger Susan Hall to scupper largely forlorn Tory hopes that they could prise the UK capital away from Labour for the first time since 2016. The first Muslim mayor of a Western capital when first elected then, he had been widely expected to win as Labour surge nationally and the Conservatives suffer in the polls. In the end, he saw his margin of victory increase compared to the last contest in 2021. It adds to a dismal set of results for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, as his Tories finished a humiliating third in local council tallies after losing nearly 500 seats in voting Thursday across England.



UN Agencies Prepare for Rafah Incursion, Warn of Slaughter



GENEVA (Dispatches) - An Israeli incursion in Rafah would put the lives of hundreds of thousands of Gazans at risk and be a huge blow to the aid operations of the entire enclave, the U.N. humanitarian office said, as the World Health Organization announced contingency plans for an incursion. Israel has repeatedly warned of an operation against Hamas in the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where around a million displaced people are crowded together, having fled months of Israeli bombardments triggered by Hamas fighters' deadly cross-border attack on Oct. 7. "It could be a slaughter of civilians and an incredible blow to the humanitarian operation in the entire strip because it is run primarily out of Rafah," said Jens Laerke, spokesperson for the U.N. humanitarian office (OCHA), at a Geneva press briefing. Israel has said it will work to ensure the safe evacuation of civilians from Rafah. The United States has long said it cannot support an assault on Rafah by its ally Israel unless there is a comprehensive plan to protect civilians. Israel has given Washington some preliminary information, said a U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity, but "we haven't seen a full plan, nothing that would give us the confidence we're looking for." A second U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Israeli proposal outlining the provision of shelter, food and evacuation routes "needs more work." Aid operations in Rafah include medical clinics, warehouses stocked with humanitarian supplies, food distribution points and 50 centers for acutely malnourished children, Laerke said. OCHA would do everything possible to ensure aid operations continued, even in the event of an incursion, and was studying how to do that, he added.

North Korea Says New Sanctions Monitoring Groups Will Fail



SEOUL (Dispatches) - Efforts led by the U.S. and other Western countries to form new groups to monitor sanctions on North Korea will fail, the country's U.N. envoy said on Sunday, according to state media KCNA. Ambassador Kim Song made the comment in response to a joint statement the U.S. and its allies issued this week calling to continue the work of a U.N. panel of experts monitoring longstanding sanctions against Pyongyang for its nuclear weapons and missile programs. Earlier this year, Russia vetoed the annual renewal of the panel amid U.S.-led accusations that North Korea has transferred weapons to Russia for use in its war in Ukraine. "The hostile forces may set up the second and third expert panels in the future but they are all bound to meet self-destruction with the passage of time," KCNA quotes Kim as saying in a statement. Last month, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield visited the Demilitarized Zone, a heavily fortified border between the two Koreas, which remain technically at war and urged Russia and China to stop rewarding North Korea for its bad behaviour. Her trip came after Russia rejected the annual renewal of the multinational panel of experts that has over the past 15 years monitored the implementation of U.N. sanctions aimed at curbing North Korea's nuclear and missile programs.



Hamas Delegation Heads to Cairo for Truce Talks

GAZA STRIP (Dispatches) - Hamas said its delegation was heading to Cairo on Saturday to resume Gaza truce talks, as the United Nations warned that Israel's threatened assault on the city of Rafah could produce a "bloodbath." Foreign mediators have been waiting for the Palestinian militant group to respond to a proposal to halt fighting for 40 days and exchange hostages for Palestinian prisoners. "The only thing standing between the people of Gaza and a ceasefire is Hamas," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Friday. Months of negotiations have stalled in part on Hamas's demand for a lasting ceasefire and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's repeated vows to crush the group's remaining fighters in Rafah. Blinken on Friday also reiterated Washington's objections to the long-threatened Rafah offensive, saying Israel has not presented a plan to protect the civilians sheltering there. "Absent such a plan, we can't support a major military operation going into Rafah because the damage it would do is beyond what's acceptable," he said. Humanitarian groups and the United Nations have also begged Israel to call off an attack on Rafah, where 1.2 million people have sought refuge. WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned Friday that an incursion into the far-southern city could have dire implications. "WHO is deeply concerned that a full-scale military operation in Rafah, Gaza, could lead to a bloodbath, and further weaken an already broken health system," Tedros said on X, formerly Twitter. The UN's health agency announced it was nevertheless making contingency plans,

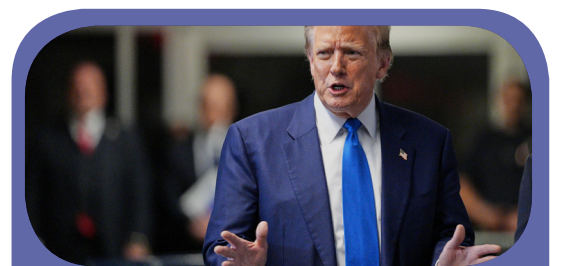
restoring health facilities and pre-positioning supplies. "This contingency plan is Band-Aids," said Rik Peeterkorn, the WHO representative in the Palestinian territories. "The ailing health system will not be able to withstand the potential scale of devastation that the incursion will cause." A senior Hamas official confirmed to AFP that a delegation led by Khalil al-Hayya, deputy head of the group's political arm in Gaza, would arrive in Cairo on Saturday morning. The Palestinian militant group, which has been in power in the Gaza Strip since 2007, maintains it is considering the latest truce proposal with a "positive spirit". But a top Hamas official accused Netanyahu of trying to derail the latest proposed Gaza truce with his threats to keep fighting with or without a deal. "Netanyahu was the obstructionist of all previous rounds of dialogue... and it is clear that he still is," senior Hamas official Hossam Badran told AFP by telephone. Badran said Netanyahu's insistence on attacking Rafah was calculated to "thwart any possibility of concluding an agreement" in the negotiations. US news site Axios reported that CIA director William Burns arrived in Egypt on Friday night. The United States, along with Egypt and Qatar, has been trying to seal a ceasefire deal in the nearly seven-month-old war. During the last truce, over one week in November, 80 Israeli hostages were exchanged for 240 Palestinian prisoners. Egyptian sources told the Wall Street Journal that Israel would give the truce talks another week, failing which it would launch its long-threatened Rafah offensive.

Fake Videos of Modi Aides Trigger Political Showdown in India Election



BENGALURU (Dispatches) - Manipulated videos are taking center stage as campaigning heats up in India's election, with fake clips involving two top aides of Prime Minister Narendra Modi triggering police investigations and the arrest of some workers of his rival Congress party. In what has been dubbed as India's first AI election, Modi said last week fake voices were being used to purportedly show leaders making "statements that we have never even thought of", calling it a conspiracy "to create tension in society." Indian police -- already investigating the spread of fake videos showing Bollywood actors criticizing Modi -- are now investigating a doctored online clip that showed federal home minister Amit Shah saying the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party will stop certain social guarantees for minorities, a subject sensitive for millions of voters. Shah retorted on X, posting his "original" and the edited "fake" speech and alleging -- without providing any evidence -- that the main opposition Congress was behind the video it created to mislead the public. The minister said "directions have been issued to the police to address this issue." Indian police arrested at least nine people, including six members of Congress' social media teams, in the states of Assam, Gujarat, Telangana and New Delhi last week for circulating the fake video, according to police statements. Five of the Congress workers were released on bail, but the most high-profile arrest made by the cyber crime unit of New Delhi police came on Friday, when they detained a Congress national social media coordinator, Arun Reddy, for sharing the video. New Delhi is one region where Shah's ministry directly controls police. Reddy has been sent into three-day custody. The arrest has sparked

protests from Congress workers with many posting on X using the #ReleaseArunReddy tag. Congress lawmaker Manickam Tagore said the arrest was an example of "authoritarian misuse of power by the regime." Congress' head of social media, Supriya Shrinete, did not respond to messages and an email seeking comment. India's election from April 19 to June 1 will be the world's largest democratic event. With nearly a billion voters and more than 800 million internet users, tackling the spread of misinformation is a high stakes job. It involves round-the-clock monitoring by police and election officials who often issue take down orders to Facebook and X as investigations start. In India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh, more than 500 people keep tabs on online content, flagging controversial posts and coordinating with social media companies for their removal when needed, police chief Prashant Kumar told Reuters on Saturday. Another fake video that sparked a storm last week showed Yogi Adityanath, the state's chief minister, criticizing Modi for not doing enough for families of those who died in a 2019 militant attack. Though fact checkers said the video was created using different parts of an original clip, state police called it an "AI generated, deepfake". Using internet address tracking, state police arrested a man named Shyam Gupta on May 2 who had shared the fake video post on X a day earlier, receiving over 3,000 views and 11 likes. The police have accused Gupta of forgery and promoting enmity under Indian law provisions that can carry a jail term of up to seven years if convicted. Reuters could not reach him as he is currently serving a 14-day custody period.



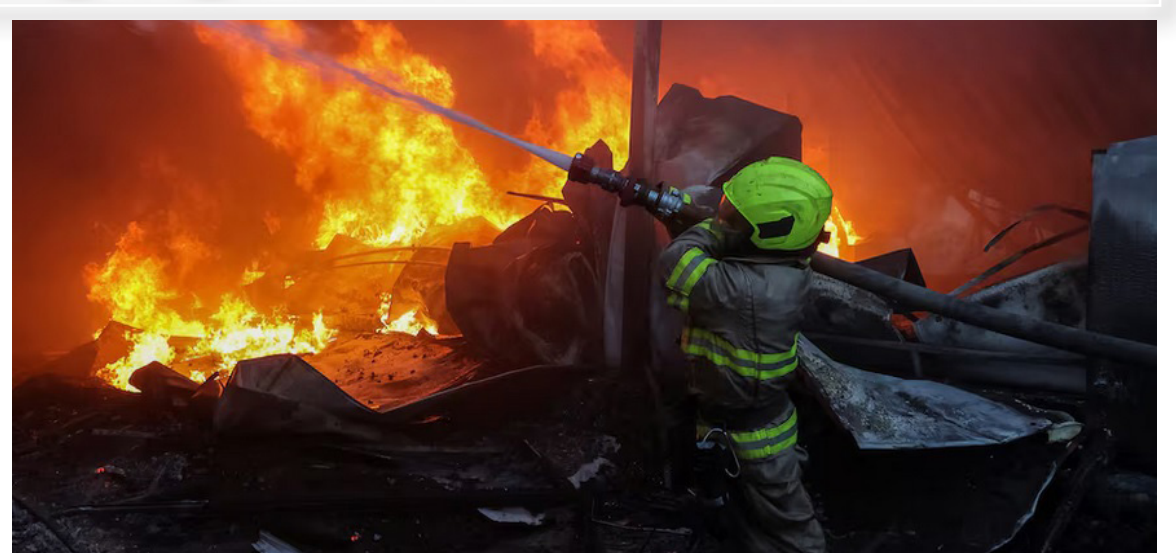
Taiwan Will Have Trump's Support If He Wins

TAIPEI (Dispatches) - A former U.S. ambassador appointed by Donald Trump said on Saturday he believed the former president would again support Taiwan if he wins back the White House. Taiwan, claimed by China as its own territory despite Taipei's objections, received strong backing from Trump's 2017-2021 administration, including arms sales, which have continued under the government of President Joe Biden. Trump spoke to Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen in 2016 shortly after he won the election, prompting anger in Beijing - as the United States does not officially recognise Taiwan's government - and glee in Taipei. James Gilmore, Trump's ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, told reporters in Taipei that Trump was not an isolationist but was trying to get U.S. allies to take their own defence more seriously. "I believe that President Trump will be supportive of Taiwan when he becomes president. He was in his first term," said Gilmore, visiting Taipei to speak at the Taiwanese think tank the Center for Asia-Pacific Resilience and Innovation. Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee, is set to face Biden, a Democrat, in a rematch in November's presidential election. Gilmore will meet Tsai on his trip though not President-elect Lai Ching-te, who takes office on May 20, due to scheduling issues. He said he would report back to Trump on his visit, and pass on any messages from Taiwan if given them. "I fully expect to write a memorandum and submit it to President Trump. What he does with these memos people send him we do not know," he said. "But I have made up my mind that I can be helpful." Gilmore, the Republican governor of Virginia from 1998 to 2002, added he thought lines of communication between Taiwan and the United States were already strong and he did not think he needed to serve as a messenger.

Russia Hits Ukraine Regions, Zelenskiy Says Su-25 Bomber Downed

KYIV (Dispatches) - Russian attacks on Ukraine's Kharkiv and Dnipro regions and the Black Sea port city of Odesa killed at least two civilians, set a food factory ablaze and damaged other infrastructure, homes and commercial buildings on Saturday, regional officials said. President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Russia had used eight missiles of various kinds and nearly 70 guided aerial bombs against communities and frontline positions during the day, after Ukraine's air force downed 13 Shahed drones that targeted the Kharkiv and Dnipro regions overnight. Zelenskiy said Moscow had no desire for peace. "Russia can only be forced to leave Ukraine alone," he said in his nightly video address. A world peace summit taking place in Switzerland in June - without Russia - "must succeed", he said. He said Ukraine's 110th mechanized brigade brought down a Russian Su-25 fighter-bomber over the eastern Donetsk region, one of four areas of Ukraine Moscow says it has annexed. Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said on Friday Moscow had taken control of 547 sq km (211 sq miles) of the territories this year. Oleh Syniehubov, governor of Kharkiv region, said Russian shelling killed a 49-year-old man on the street near his home in the village of Slobozhanske. An 82-year-old woman was killed and two men were injured in overnight shelling in Kharkiv city, he wrote on the Telegram app. A Russian

missile attack set fire to a business premises in an industrial district of Kharkiv city, injuring six employees, he added. Local prosecutors identified it as a food factory. In the south, Odesa regional governor Oleh Kiper said three people had been injured in the city by a missile strike. Reuters could not immediately verify the reports of casualties and damage. An air force commander said air defenses brought down all 13 of the attack drones overnight, but Syniehubov said falling debris injured four people and sparked a fire in an office building. In the industrial Dnipropetrovsk region, shelling injured a 57-year-old woman and damaged infrastructure in Nikopol, near the Russian-held Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, and two were wounded in another overnight attack, regional governor Serhiy Lysak said.





Edwards Hits 43 to Spark T-Wolves Over Denver in NBA Playoffs

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Anthony Edwards scored a playoff career-high 43 points and the Minnesota Timberwolves dominated defending champion Denver in the final minutes for a 106-99 victory in Saturday's NBA playoff series opener. Edwards made 17-of-29 shots from the floor, 3-of-7 from 3-point range, and all six free throws for his third career 40-point playoff game. "My teammates trust me in every position in critical moments in the game. I try to come through for them," Edwards said after Minnesota took a 1-0 lead in the best-of-seven Western Conference second round series, which continues on Monday in Denver. "It's tough here," Edwards said. "The altitude, their team, the crowd. I'm proud of my teammates. They came out and fought super-hard." None delivered more in the clutch than NBA Sixth Man of the Year Naz Reid, who scored the first 10 Minnesota points in an 18-7 run to break an 84-84 deadlock. Reid scored 14 of his 16 points in the last quarter. Anthony and his teammates kept the Nuggets at bay to the finish, with "Ant-Man" crediting his time with the 2023 US Basketball World Cup team with improving him this season. "I put in work this summer," said Edwards. "Shout out to USA team. They got me ready for this season. I appreciate that." Karl-Anthony Towns, whose foul trouble late led to Reid entering the game, scored 20 points while Mike Conley added 14 points, all in the second half, plus 10 assists and Rudy Gobert grabbed 13 rebounds. "He has done a good job of finding us late in games and giving us confidence," Conley said of Edwards. The Nuggets, who hadn't

trailed in a playoff series in two years, were led by 32 points, nine assists and eight rebounds from two-time NBA Most Valuable Player Nikola Jokic. But the Serbian center was pressured into a game-high seven turnovers and rushed into shots by an aggressive T-Wolves defensive effort. "There's a lot we can clean up and get better at and we're going to have to," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said. "Played no defense in the third and you can't just trade baskets with that team. There's a lot that we'll look at in the film and try and clean up." Michael Porter Jr. added 20 points for Denver while Jamal Murray had 17, all in the second half after his first scoreless playoff half in 59 post-season contests. "I think we'll be all right," said Porter. Edwards scored 25 of Minnesota's 40 first-half points on 10-of-17 shooting, keeping the T-Wolves within 44-40 at halftime. Edwards netted 16 first-quarter points, 11 of them in a 14-2 Minnesota run to start the contest. "I just felt good," Edwards said. "My teammates found me on some easy layups. I've never gotten that many easy buckets so that was pretty fun." But the Nuggets answered with a 21-3 spurt that put them ahead 25-23 after the first quarter, in which Jokic and Porter each scored nine points. Timberwolves coach Chris Finch, who underwent surgery Wednesday to repair a ruptured patellar tendon in his right knee, was seated a row behind the players in order to guide his club, even though assistant Micah Nori passed along most of his instructions. "It went well in a not-ideal situation," Nori said. "It went as smooth as it possibly could have."

Haaland Back to Business With Four-Goal Haul



MANCHESTER (Dispatches) - Erling Haaland scored four as Manchester City closed to within three games of an unprecedented fourth consecutive Premier League title by thrashing Wolves 5-1 at the Etihad. Arsenal's 3-0 win over Bournemouth earlier on Saturday had opened up a four-point lead for the Gunners. But City showed no signs of feeling the pressure as they cut the gap back to one point and have three matches remaining to Arsenal's two. Haaland has faced criticism for not matching the standards of his stunning first season in Manchester, when he scored 52 goals as City won the treble. However, the Norwegian took his tally for this season to 36 goals in 41 appearances with a devastating display of finishing. "Erling is back to business," said City boss Pep Guardiola. "Penalties are a guarantee but the second and fourth (goals) were unbelievable." Haaland was restored to Pep Guardiola's starting line-up after coming off the bench to score against Nottingham Forest last weekend on his return from injury. However, Guardiola pointed to an earlier injury problem this season that kept him out for two months as the reason behind Haaland failing to hit the same heights as last year. "He was injured, an important one, and he's so tall to get back to your best form you need time," added Guardiola. Even if City collectively are also not at the same level as a year ago, the remain well on course for a Premier League and FA Cup double. The defending champions travel to Fulham and Tottenham in their next two games before hosting West Ham on the final day of the season. And Guardiola insisted they will need to win all three matches, despite Arsenal facing a tricky trip away to Manchester United next weekend. "One week, three games. Nine points we will be champions, six or seven points, Arsenal will be champions." Wolves had inflicted one of City's just three Premier League defeats this season. But the visitors were blown away as Guardiola's men extended their unbeaten home streak to 43 games.

Real Madrid Claim 36th Spanish Title After Girona Stun Barca

MADRID (Dispatches) - Real Madrid earned what coach Carlo Ancelotti said was a "deserved" La Liga title on Saturday after beating Cadiz 3-0 and Girona sealed it with a stunning 4-2 victory over Barcelona. Ancelotti's side did their homework by beating Cadiz and after last season's champions stumbled against Girona, Los Blancos were crowned champions for a record-extending 36th time. Girona's dramatic victory saw the Catalan minnows qualify for the Champions League for the first time in their history, in only their fourth season in Spain's top flight. Ancelotti rotated heavily ahead of the Champions League semifinal second leg clash with Bayern Munich next week, but his players still got the job done. Brahim Diaz netted in the 51st minute to put Madrid ahead and then set up Jude Bellingham, with Joselu tapping home a third. "We've had a spectacular Liga campaign," Ancelotti told reporters. "We've made few errors and the advantage is deserved." Madrid's comfortable win over Cadiz sent them 14 points clear of last season's champions Barcelona, in third, with only 12 left to play for Girona, second after their second 4-2 win over Barcelona this season, trail



Madrid by 13 points. "We leave our skins out there on the pitch to live moments like today's," Madrid striker Joselu told Real Madrid TV. "There are young players who are very hungry for titles, veterans who are delighted to be here... and these are special moments." With the Bayern second leg in mind, Ancelotti only selected captain Nacho Fernandez from the starting line-up that earned a 2-2 draw in Bavaria this week. Belgian goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois started for the first time after a nine-month lay off after a knee injury and kept a clean sheet. Madrid midfielder Luka Modric became the oldest player to appear for the club in La Liga, at 38 years and 238 days, breaking late Hungarian great Ferenc Puskas' record from 1965 by five days. The visitors, 18th and still battling to stay up, shaded the first half but Madrid's goals came in the second. Courtois made a superb save to deny Chris Ramos early in the second half and Madrid took the lead immediately afterwards. Diaz received from the evergreen Modric on the edge of the area, turned slickly and curled an effort into the top corner.

Messi, Suarez Shine as Miami Hit Six



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Luis Suarez scored a hat-trick and Lionel Messi had an incredible five assists and a goal in the second half as a rampant Inter Miami crushed the New York Red Bulls 6-2 in Major League Soccer on Saturday. Two-goal substitute Matias Rojas sparked the second half rout from Eastern Conference leaders Inter after New York had led 1-0 at the break. Without Messi, Miami had fallen to a 4-0 defeat to the Red Bulls in New York in March, but they more than avenged that loss with a merciless second-half demolition job. Messi's five assists, which all came in the second half, are a new record for an MLS game and he now has 10 goals and 12 assists in eight league appearances so far this season. Operating behind Suarez, Messi's passing through the slightest of gaps, taking advantage of his former Barcelona teammate's telepathic understanding of his intentions, was simply too much for the Red Bulls, who came into the game third in the East. "Obviously what we have seen today surprises people, because you don't see that in football," said Suarez of Messi's five assists. "But as a teammate and someone who knows him, nothing surprises me about him," added the Uruguayan. The 37-year-old Suarez's triples takes his own tally to 10 in 11 league games for Miami and despite no longer being blessed with pace, his deadly finishing clearly remains intact. While it was the kind of attacking display that Miami owners Jorge Mas and David Beckham surely dreamed of when they brought in the star pairing, there was no sign of the explosiveness in the opening half.

Verstappen Takes Pole in Miami After Sprint Race Win

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Red Bull's Max Verstappen continued his domination of Formula One, taking pole position for the Miami Grand Prix after clinching the sprint race earlier Saturday. The reigning world champion and championship leader, who has won four out of five Grand Prix races this season, secured his seventh straight pole position with another dominant drive. Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, whose fastest lap was 0.141 seconds behind Verstappen, will start second with his teammate Carlos Sainz in third place and Verstappen's Red Bull partner Sergio Perez fourth. Three-time world champion Verstappen has won both the previous Miami Grand Prix races but never from pole and he said he still found qualifying tricky. "Every single year that we come here, I find it extremely difficult to be very consistent with the car feeling, the tyre feeling over one lap," he said. "It's not the single most enjoyable lap of my career just because of how slippery it is. You are not very confident on the lap but we are on pole and of course that is the most important thing." Leclerc said it had been hard to manage the tyres, with overheating a problem, but said his performance in the sprint race gave him encouragement. "That's where we lost a little bit of time, however the race is long tomorrow, we showed good pace this morning (in the sprint race) and I hope we can put Max under a bit more pressure," he said. Sainz underscored just how tricky it had been for drivers to deliver their fastest lap on the course around Hard Rock

Stadium, home of the NFL's Miami Dolphins. "It's really tricky around here with a new soft. Every lap is a bit of adventure," he said. "With the wind you don't know what will happen. Keeping all that in mind, the laps were not too bad. "You always finish the lap and think you could have gone so much faster, but it's almost impossible to put a perfect clean lap around here." Lando Norris will start in P5, just ahead of the Mercedes pair George Russell and

Lewis Hamilton. Earlier, Verstappen cruised to victory in the sprint race, finishing 3.3 seconds ahead of Leclerc. The Dutchman led from pole and was never challenged after a chaotic opening lap. Verstappen's teammate Perez was third as the world champions gave themselves a points boost. The Red Bull driver held off Leclerc's strong start to secure his place at the front but there was plenty of action and incident in the middle of the pack.

