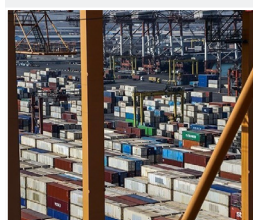


Deputy Culture Minister for Cultural Affairs Yaser Ahmadvand Says as Many as 60 Publishers Are Scheduled to Participate in the 35th Tehran International Book Fair May 8-18 Where Over 50,000 Books Are to Be Showcased

IRAN NEWS

Guardian Council Spokesman Hadi Tahan-Nazif Says the Run-Off Parliamentary Elections Are Going to Be Held Entirely Electronically on May 10 in 15 Provinces to Determine the Remaining 45 Seats

2 DOMESTIC

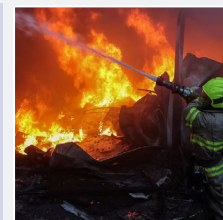


Iran-EU Trade Witnesses 30% Growth

> SEE PAGE 2

3 INTERNATIONAL

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



> SEE PAGE 3

Israel Assisted by 240 U.S., NATO Warplanes Amid Iran's Retaliatory Operation



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - An Iranian general said one division of the IRGC Aerospace Force employed only 20% of its offensive power during the retaliatory operation against Israeli military targets on April 14, while 240 fighter jets provided by the US and NATO were available to protect the Zionists. Commander of Khatam al-Anbia Headquarters Major General Gholam Ali Rashid gave details about the "True Promise Operation" that the Iranian armed forces carried out against Israeli military targets last month. In the early hours of April 14, the IRGC Aerospace Force launched tens of missiles and drones against military targets in the occupied territories in retaliation for the Israeli regime's April 1 airstrike on the consular section of Iran's embassy in Damascus that killed seven Iranian military commanders and advisers. General Rashid said only one division of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Aerospace Force was tasked with carrying out the operation, while even that single unit employed only 20 percent of its offensive power in the operation. On the other side, the US, NATO, CENTCOM and the Zionist regime had prepared 240 fighter jets, while various anti-missile air defense systems of the US warships in the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea, as well as the Zionist regime's anti-missile systems, were on the alert, he said. The general said that the single division of the IRGC Aerospace Force was prepared to unleash the remaining 80 percent of its offensive power and launch another wave of strikes under orders. However, the Iranian commanders concluded that the operation sufficed for the punishment of the Zionist regime, the general noted. The support that the US, the UK, France and the European governments provided for the Israeli regime was reminiscent of the Crusades, he added. In a meeting with top Iranian military commanders on April 21, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei admired the Iranian Armed Forces for manifesting the country's power and determination in the international arena by conducting the retaliatory operation against the Israeli regime.

Hamas Says No Truce Without a Complete End to war



GAZA (Dispatches) - The Palestinian resistance movement Hamas has said it would not accept a truce deal that did not completely end the Israeli regime's nearly seven-month-long genocidal war against the Gaza Strip. The comments were made on Saturday by a senior official with the movement, who asked not to be named, AFP reported. At least 34,654 people have died in Gaza since October 7, when the Israeli regime began the war in response to al-Aqsa Storm, a retaliatory operation by the coastal sliver's resistance groups. The official said the group would "not agree under any circumstances" to a truce that did not explicitly include a complete end to the war, including the regime's withdrawal from Gaza. He said the regime was trying to secure a deal that would enable the release of those who were taken captive during al-Aqsa Storm "without linking it to ending the aggression on Gaza." The official, meanwhile, said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was "personally hindering" efforts to reach a truce due to "personal interests." The comments echoed those made by Hossam Badran, a member of Hamas' Political Bureau, to the agency a day earlier. Badran had condemned Netanyahu for stonewalling a deal, saying the Israeli premier's insistence on carrying out a ground invasion against the southern Gaza city of Rafah was a key stumbling block in negotiations aimed at potential arrival at an agreement. Around 1.5 million Palestinians have sought refuge in the city from the ravages of the war. The Israeli official has said the regime would go ahead with invading the city "with or without" a truce.

Iran Urges Muslim Countries to Cut All Ties With Israeli Regime



TEHRAN - Iran has urged Muslim countries to cut all relations with the Israeli regime as means of pressuring Tel Aviv to end its ongoing genocidal war on the Gaza Strip. Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks on Saturday, addressing the 15th Heads of State and Government Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Gambia's capital Banjul. "Beyond doubt, this time period will also pass by, despite all its hardships and adversities for the Palestinian nation," he said. "However, the manner and quality of the role that is played by us, Muslim states, in the face of this crisis will go down in history," the top diplomat added. "Undoubtedly, severance of diplomatic and economic ties and [imposition of] practical arms and trade embargo [on Israel] serves as an important means of cessation of its genocide in Gaza and atrocities in the West Bank and the Noble al-Quds." At least 34,654 people have died in Gaza since October 7, when the Israeli regime began the war in response to al-Aqsa Storm, a retaliatory operation by the coastal sliver's resistance groups. Despite the unabated campaign of bloodshed and destruction, the regime has so far fallen short of realizing its goals, including defeating Gaza's resistance, causing forced displacement of the territory's entire population to neighboring Egypt, and enabling the release of those who were taken captive during al-Aqsa Storm. Amir-Abdollahian said Gaza's developments proved that elimination of the Palestinian resistance "was nothing

but an illusion." "Because the Israeli regime is not a legitimate government. It is only an occupying apartheid power," he said, adding, "Passage of time is not going to lend legitimacy to an occupying power." The foreign minister asserted that realization of sustainable peace and security in the region was only possible through cessation of the regime's occupation of Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon, return of the Palestinian refugees to their homeland, and manifestation of Palestinians' right to self-determination. Meanwhile on the sidelines of the event, Iran's foreign minister said mounting international pressure on Israel to end its genocidal war on the Gaza Strip has increased the chance of a ceasefire in the Palestinian territory. "We are in a situation where the possibility of a ceasefire in Gaza has increased slightly compared to the past. It is because of the consultations, efforts, and intensifying public pressure on regional and international scales against Israel," he told reporters. Amir-Abdollahian also expressed hope that the rights of Palestinians would be upheld and that the Israeli genocide in the besieged Gaza would stop. Conditions should be properly provided for the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip and the return of its residents to their homes, he added. The Israeli war crimes have awakened the world's public opinion to the Palestinian issue and led to mass rallies in solidarity with Gaza, intensifying pressure on the usurping regime to end its bloody war as part of a deal with Hamas.

Iraqi Resistance Strikes Israeli Target in Haifa Port With Advanced Cruise Missile

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Fighters from the Iraqi anti-terror resistance groups have launched a missile strike against a strategic target in the northern part of the 1948 Israeli-occupied territories in response to the Tel Aviv regime's devastating war on Gaza. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, an umbrella group of anti-terror fighters, in a statement published on its Telegram channel on Sunday morning, claimed responsibility for the attack on the Port of Haifa, stressing that the strike was carried out with a sophisticated Arqab cruise missile. It said the missile strike was carried out in continuation of the struggle against the occupying Israeli regime, in support of Palestinians in Gaza, and in retaliation for the massacres that the usurping Zionist entity is perpetrating against women, children, and elderly people in the besieged territory. The group noted that it will continue to target and destroy important installations across the occupied lands. This comes after the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for three operations, two of which were against Israeli targets within the occupied lands and one against an Israeli interest in the Dead Sea. On Thursday evening, the coalition of Iraqi anti-terror resistance groups announced a strike against a key position in Beersheba, using advanced Arqab cruise missiles. On Friday, the Iraqi Resistance announced a strike against a strategic location in Tel Aviv and a vital target in the Dead Sea. Iraqi anti-terror fighters targeted the Abraham intelligence headquarters in Beersheba, and the Gilot intelligence center linked to the Israeli Mossad spy agency in Tel Aviv. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq has also struck major American military bases in Syria and Iraq amid anger over the US support for Israel's onslaught on Gaza.



Iranian, Egyptian FMs Discuss Promotion of Ties



TEHRAN (pressTV) - The foreign ministers of Iran and Egypt discuss possible ways to promote mutual relations and put an end to Israel's crimes against the people of Palestine, particularly in the Gaza Strip. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukry met in Gambia's capital Banjul on Saturday on the sidelines of the 15th annual Islamic Summit Conference of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Amir-Abdollahian and Shoukry said the Iranian and Egyptian authorities are resolute on enhancing mutual relations. They exchanged views about the latest developments regarding Israel's genocidal war in Gaza and expressed hope that the OIC summit would consolidate solidarity and unity in the Muslim world to support the Palestinian people and solve regional problems. The Iranian foreign minister hailed Egypt's bids to stop Israel's genocide in Gaza and called on Cairo to help Tehran dispatch humanitarian aid to the war-stricken people in the Strip. Amir-Abdollahian said the exchange of delegations among religious institutes of Iran and Egypt can have a constructive impact on religious proximity and dialogue. For his part, the Egyptian foreign minister said his country always attaches importance to increasing talks and relations with Iran. Shoukry warned against the consequences of the continuation of Israel's war in Gaza, particularly the massacre of civilians, and expressed hope that the ongoing political bids would cease the war and restore Palestinians' rights. He once again condemned Israel's airstrikes on Iran's diplomatic premises in Syria last month and outlined Egypt's stance on the need to prevent the escalation of tensions in the region. Under the slogan "Enhancing Unity and Solidarity through Dialogue for Sustainable Development", the OIC session opened in Banjul on Saturday. The participants plan to discuss a variety of issues about the Muslim world, including the developments in Palestine, particularly Israel's war on the Gaza Strip.

OPEC Not Happy to See Sanctions Against Iran



RIYADH (Dispatches) - OPEC Secretary General, Haitham Al Ghais, has said that sanctions against Iran distorts the way that oil usually flows. Speaking with CNBC reporter on the sidelines of World Economic Forum in Riyadh, he said: We are not happy to see sanctions on our member countries whether it is Iran or another member country Venezuela. "Generally speaking, sanctions or any intervention in the normal market flows are a kind of distortion to the way that oil usually flows and get produced, transported and sold around the world." He said. According to the Secretary General, the oil market is a normal market-oriented measure and distortion of this nature is not helpful. Replying to the CNBC reporter's remarks on Iran's rising oil production and ineffectiveness of sanctions as well as the question that "perhaps the sanctions we have seen being placed on Iran actually does not work", OPEC Secretary General said: there are a lot of people who say that sanctions do not really work. There are always ways of getting the oil to move around. We don't get involved in these details and how that happens and why that happens. We look at overall global balances. "We don't get involved in the mechanics of how sanctions are enforced", he said. When the OPEC Secretary General was asked about the geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and how OPEC closely monitors the escalation, Haitham Al Ghais said that geopolitical tensions are global and not just happens in the Middle East region. "In September we are celebrating our 64-year anniversary, so it is not uncommon for us to go through periods of heightened geopolitical tensions and turmoil." According to the OPEC Secretary General. He continued: we always keep politics aside from our business and very focus on fundamental aspects of the global markets, we look at numbers, look at economic growth, look at supply and demand but there is not much we can do to control what happens geopolitically.

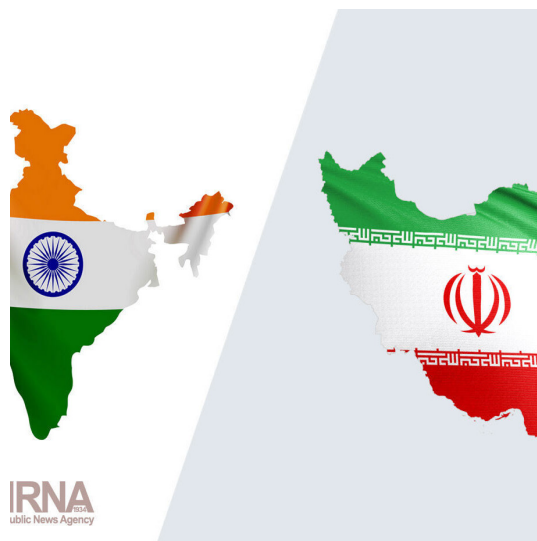
IRAN NEWS



Official Stresses Iran's Capacity to Export Medicines, Medical Equipment to Africa

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran has the potential to export medicines and medical equipment to 20 African countries, the director of the Iranian Food and Drug Administration (IFDA) for international affairs said. Hamid Reza Inanloo stated that more than 20 African countries participated in the 2nd Iran-Africa Trade Summit, earlier this week, which can lay the ground for strengthening more cooperation with African states in the field of exporting health-based products. He went on to say that 200 merchants from Africa took part in the summit and the industrial capacities of the country were introduced to the businesspersons in the field of producing medicines and medical equipment. Inanloo pointed to Iran's capabilities in the health sector and emphasized that the country can share its fruitful experience with other countries in this field.

Iran-India Trade Up 5% in Jan-Feb y/y



TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Ministry of Commerce and Industry of India has announced a 5% growth in trade between Iran and India in the first two months of 2024 compared to the same period last year, with the total trade reaching \$377 million. The value of trade between Iran and India was reported to have been around \$358 million in the first two months of 2023. India's exports to Iran saw a 20% jump in January and February 2024 compared to the same period last year, reaching \$269 million. India had exported \$224 million worth of commodities to Iran in the same period 2023. But India's imports from Iran saw a 19% decline in January and February 2024 compared to the same period 2023, reaching \$108 million. India had imported \$134 million worth of goods from the Islamic Republic in the first two months of the last year. Iran's main import items from India were rice, fruits, and oil seeds press cake in the first two months of the current year. India chiefly imported fruits, raw materials for paint production, and petroleum products from Iran in the first two months of 2024.



Iran-EU Trade Witnesses 30% Growth

TEHRAN - In February, trade exchanges between Iran and the European Union increased by 30%. Germany's exports to Iran increased by 46% and Italy's imports from Iran increased by 96%. The latest statistics published by Eurostat show that trade between Iran and 27 European Union members reached 847 million euros in the first two months of 2024. The exchanges between Iran and the European Union increased by 8% in the first two months of 2024 compared to the same period last year. In January and February last year, 780 million euros of goods were exchanged between the two sides. EU imports from Iran in the first two months of 2024 increased by 3% compared to the same period last year and reached 144 million euros. In January and February last year, 139 million euros of goods were imported from Iran by European countries. EU exports to Iran in January and February 2024 also increased by 9% compared to the same period last year, reaching 703 million euros. The European Union had exported 641 million euros of goods to Iran in the first two months of the previous year. The trade between Iran and Europe has grown significantly by 30% in February, moving from 358 million euros in February 2023 to 468 million euros in

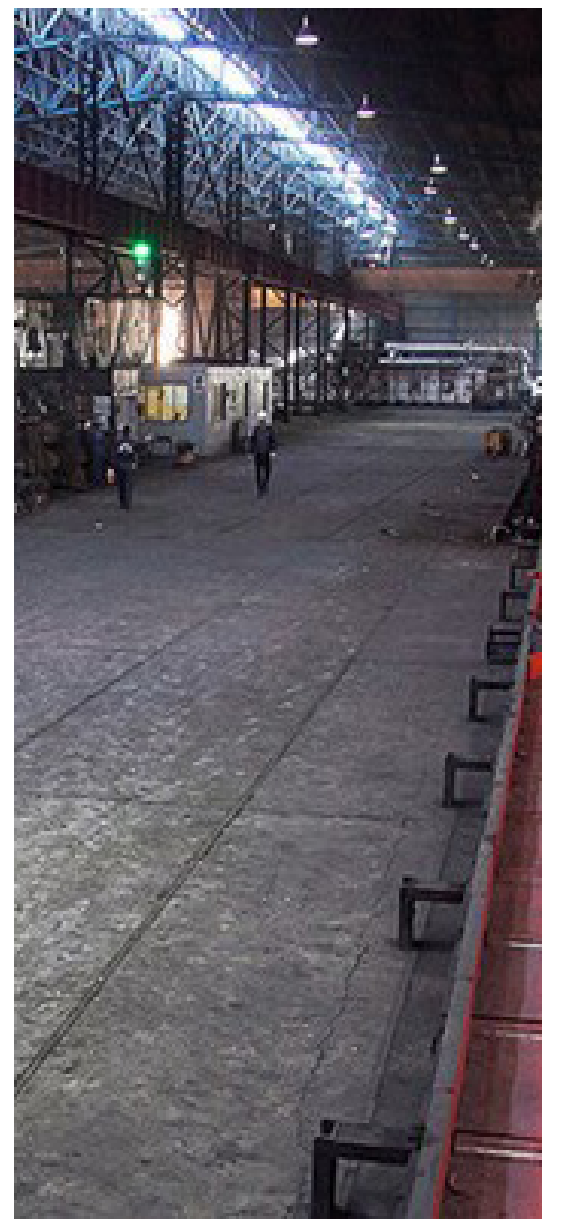
February 2024. Europe's exports to Iran this February increased by 32% compared to the same period last year and reached 392 million euros. European exports to Iran were reported to be 297 million euros in February last year. German exports to Iran in February this year grew by 46% and reached 141 million euros. France's exports to Iran have also increased by 37% to 33 million euros, and Italy's exports have decreased by 6% to 42 million euros. By the way, Romania's exports to Iran in February 2024 increased 22 times compared to the same period last year and increased from 2.5 million euros in February last year to 57 million euros in February 2024. EU imports from Iran also reached 76 million euros in February 2024 with a 24% growth compared to the same period last year. This figure for February 2023 was announced as 61 million euros. German imports from Iran in February this year did not change significantly and remained at the level of 19 million dollars. But Spain's imports from Iran have grown by 66%, reaching 9.3 million euros. Italy's imports from Iran also grew by 96% and increased to 26.1 million euros. In February last year, Italy imported 13.3 million euros of goods from Iran.

Iran Backs Any Deal in Favor of Palestine



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Any agreement which would uphold the rights of the Palestinian people will get support from Iran, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said. In a meeting on the sidelines of a summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in the Gambia on Saturday, Amir-Abdollahian and his Saudi counterpart Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud talked about regional issues, including the Gaza crisis. Amir-Abdollahian said Iran supports any agreement that guarantees the restoration of the Palestinian people's rights, stating, "We believe that the Palestinians themselves should decide the fate of Palestine." Joint efforts should be made to stop the war in Gaza which serves the interests of the Palestinian people and the regional countries, he stressed. He also shed light on Iran's principled stance in meeting out a punishment for the aggressor Zionist regime after it struck the Iranian embassy in Damascus in a terrorist move, which triggered a strong response by the Iranian armed forces by targeting the Zionist regime's military and intelligence bases that were used to launch the missile attack on the Iranian diplomatic site. The top Iranian diplomat then touched on the recent US activities in the region, saying, "The historical records and our experiences show that the US continues to renege on its promises and it does not abide by any deal or promise."

Iran's Q1 Steel Production Grows by 16%



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The World Steel Association (WSA) announced in its latest report that steel production in Iran during the first quarter of 2024 has registered a 16.3 percent growth compared to the same period last year. The report added that the volume of steel production in the world in the 3-month period has risen by 0.5 percent. More than 469 million tons of steel was produced across the world in January-March 2024, 161.2 million tons of which was produced in March 2024. Iran has produced 7.6 million tons of steel from January to March 2024, showing a 16.3 percent growth compared to the same period last year, according to Mehr news agency. China, India, Japan, the US, Russia, South Korea, Germany, Turkey, Brazil and Iran were the world's top 10 steel producers in the first quarter of 2024.

Iran Hails Turkey Action in Halting Trade Ties With Israel

TEHRAN (MNA) – Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian lauded the action of Turkey to halt trade ties with the Israeli regime. Amir-Abdollahian met and held talks with his Turkish counterpart Hakan Fidan on the sidelines of the 15th OIC summit in Gambia on Saturday night. During the meeting, the two Iranian and Turkish top diplomats conferred on the latest regional developments and the bilateral relations between Tehran and Ankara. Referring to the recent decision of the Turkish government to halt trade ties with the Tel Aviv regime, Amir-Abdollahian described the anti-Zionist step as an important move. On Saturday, Turkish Trade Ministry announced that Ankara has completely stopped trade with Israel. "Export-import operations with Israel have been stopped for all groups of goods," the ministry said in a statement. Turkey's trade sanctions will remain in force until Israel declares a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and ensures the

delivery of humanitarian aid to the region, the ministry said. Amir-Abdollahian also touched upon Iran's retaliatory attack on Israel, saying that the military action was in line with Iran's legitimate right to self-defense. Elsewhere in their conversation, Amir-Abdollahian and Fidan stressed the need to pursue the agreements reached between the two countries during the visit of the Iranian president to Turkey and activate the joint cooperation committees in different fields. Fidan, for his part, said that developing relations with Tehran in all fields is one of Ankara's priorities, and welcomed the strengthening of cooperation between the two countries in regional and international forums. Saying that Turkey considers the issue of Palestine as the most important issue of the Islamic world, Fidan stressed the need for the Islamic states to play a more active role in this regard.



Iran Exports Fresh Dates to over 82 Countries in One Year

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran exported high-quality dates to 82 countries in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended March 19, 2024), according to the spokesman of the trade promotion and international relations commission of Iran's House of Industry, Mine and Trade. More than 389,000 tons of fresh dates, valued at over \$345 million, were exported from the country between March 21, 2023, and March 19, 2024. Rouhollah Latifi noted Iran's export of dates in the previous Iranian calendar year registered a 4 and a 6.7 percent hike in weight and value respectively compared to the previous year, he maintained. In this period, India was the first destination of Iran's exported dates, importing more than 90,000 tons of dates, valued at over \$84 million, followed by Pakistan, Turkey, Kazakhstan, China, Iraq, and Russia, he said. He pointed out that Mazafati dates were the most popular dates imported by these countries among Iranian date species, IRNA reported. Austria, Jordan, Argentina, Armenia, Uzbekistan, Spain, Australia, South Africa, Albania, Germany, the UAE and Indonesia were the other countries that imported dates from Iran in this timespan, Latifi added. Earlier, Mohsen Rashid, the chairman of the Iranian National Date Association, said Iran is the third-largest producer of fresh dates in the world.

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.



Fake Videos of Modi Aides Trigger Political Showdown in India Election



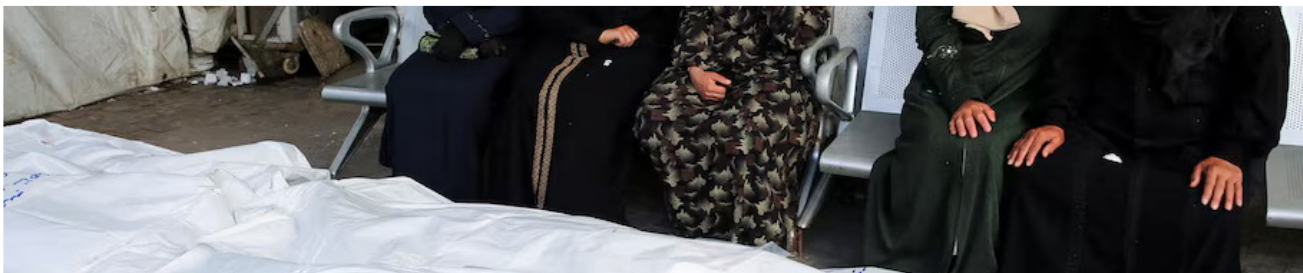
BENGALURU (Dispatches) - Manipulated videos are taking center stage as campaigning heats up in India's election, with fake clips involving two top aides of Prime Minister Narendra Modi triggering police investigations and the arrest of some workers of his rival Congress party. In what has been dubbed 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."



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.

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. A World Health Organization official said at the same briefing that a contingency plan for Rafah had been prepared, which included a new field hospital, but said it would not be enough to prevent a substantial rise in the death toll. Already, more than 34,000 Palestinians have been killed in nearly seven months of conflict, according to Gaza's health ministry. "I want to really say that this contingency plan is a band-aid," said Rik Peepkorn, WHO representative for the occupied Palestinian territory via video link. "It will absolutely not prevent the expected substantial additional mortality and morbidity caused by a military operation." Other preparations include pre-positioning medical supplies at hospitals further north in case Rafah's three hospitals become non-functional, as has happened multiple times in the seven-month conflict due to Israeli raids and bombings. WHO data shows that just a third of the strip's 36 pre-war hospitals are partially operational. Israel accuses Hamas of using hospitals for military purposes and says its operations against them have been justified by the presence of fighters. Hamas and medical staff deny the allegations. Peepkorn added that he was "extremely concerned" that any incursion would close the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt which is currently being used to import medical supplies. "We are pushing and lobbying that, whatever happens, that it remains open," he added, saying WHO had raised this issue with Israeli authorities.



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.

Taiwan Will Have Trump's Support If He Wins

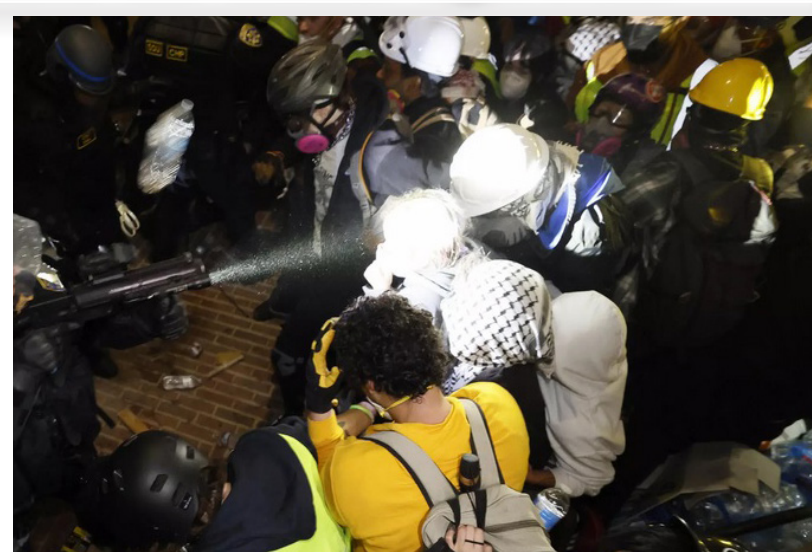


TAIPEI (Dispatches) - A former U.S. ambassador appointed by Donald Trump said on Saturday he believed the former president would again support Taiwan if he wins back the White House. Taiwan, claimed by China as its own territory despite Taipei's objections, received strong backing from Trump's 2017-2021 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."

Student Protests Against Israel's Offensive in Gaza Spread

PARIS (Dispatches) - Student protests against the Israeli military assault on Gaza following the unprecedented October 7 attack by Hamas on Israel have spread to several countries. Demonstrators have gathered on at least 40 US university campuses since April 17, often erecting tent camps to protest against the soaring death toll in the Gaza Strip. Nearly 2,000 people have been detained, according to US media, in demonstrations reminiscent of protests against the Vietnam War. In recent days, police have forcibly dismantled several student sit-ins, including one at New York University at the request of its administrators. Demonstrators barricaded inside Columbia University, the epicentre in New York of the student protests, complained of police brutality when officers cleared the faculty. At the University of California, Los Angeles, hundreds of police emptied a camp, tearing down barriers and detaining more than 200 protesters. Dozens of police in riot gear used chemical sprays to break up a pro-Palestinian encampment at the University of Virginia, student paper The Cavalier Daily reported. Officers ripped away umbrellas some of the protesters wielded as shields, scuffled with a few, and tore down tents, according to a video posted by the newspaper. Brown University in Rhode Island reached an agreement with students to remove their camp from the grounds in exchange for it considering divesting from "companies

enabling and profiting from the genocide in Gaza". President Joe Biden broke his silence on the protests on Thursday, insisting "order must prevail". In France, police on Friday forcibly evacuated protesters from a pro-Gaza sit-in at Sciences Po in Paris, the country's top political science school. Officials said 91 people were arrested. Sciences Po interim administrator Jean Basseres rejected a student demand to examine the institution's links with Israeli universities. Outside the nearby Sorbonne University, the Union of Jewish Students in France set up a "dialogue table" on Friday. "Jewish students have their place in this dialogue," said Joann Star, a comic-book artist invited as a guest speaker. He said he understood why students were "outraged by what's going on in the Middle East". At Paris-Dauphine University, administrators banned a conference involving Rima Hassan, a Franco-Palestinian expert in international law who has been vocal in condemning "genocide" in Gaza. The ban, introduced on the grounds there was a risk of public disorder, has been overturned by the judicial authorities. French President Emmanuel Macron on Saturday condemned the university blockades at Sciences Po and other French universities that "prevented debate". In Germany, police intervened on Friday to evacuate protesters outside Humboldt University in central Berlin.





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 semi-final 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. Bellingham, on as a substitute for Turkish teenager Arda Guler, added the second soon after entering the fray at the end of a fine team move. It was the England international's 18th league goal of the season, keeping him in contention to finish as the top scorer. Madrid put the cherry on their cake after a superb run by Nacho. Poised to depart at the end of the season, the Spaniard was hailed by the Bernabeu after setting up Joselu for a simple finish in stoppage time. Los Blancos were able to celebrate after Girona came from behind twice to defeat Barcelona in a wild clash, moving second.

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."

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.

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.

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. Haaland's four-goal haul looks to have settled the race for the Golden Boot as his 25 Premier League goals are now five more than Alexander Isak and Cole Palmer. "Twenty-five goals (is) not bad," said Haaland. "We've got a not so bad manager who pushes me. I try to develop every day. I had some problems (this season) but let's not focus on them. We've got four finals left for our season."

