

Iran's Embassy in Sweden On Friday Issued a Statement Which Says the Swedish Media Are Expected Not to Trust Anti-Iranian Claims by the Zionist Regime Which Are Aimed at Helping the Zionist regime's crimes in Palestine

IRAN NEWS

Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN Said That the Sympathy the Countries Expressed With Iran Over the Martyrdom of President Ebrahim Raisi and His Entourage Shows Their Love and Respect for the Iranian People

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Supreme Leader Lauds U.S. Students



TEHRAN (PressTV) – Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has written a letter addressed to students in U.S. universities who have been protesting against the Israeli-American genocidal war. These on-campus protests calling for divestment of U.S. universities from the Israeli regime and companies affiliated with it have continued despite indiscriminate and unwarranted force used by the U.S. authorities at the behest of many pro-Israel lobby groups in the United States. Hundreds of students and professors have been suspended or fired for taking part in these popular demonstrations but they have refused to be cowed down or bullied into submission. Leader's letter, timely and significant, comes at a time when the Israeli genocidal war has claimed more than 36,100 Palestinian lives, most of them children and women. In recent days, the occupying regime has carried out a series of massacres in the city of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, drawing anger and outrage worldwide and fuelling anti-Israel protests. Here are the key snippets from the letter released early on Thursday, which addresses students in the US "whose awakened conscience has moved them to defend the oppressed women and children of Gaza": "This message is an expression of our empathy and solidarity with you (students in American universities). As the page of history is turning, you are standing on the right side of it. You (students) have now formed a branch of the Resistance Front and have begun an honorable struggle in the face of your (US) government's ruthless pressure. The greater Resistance Front, which shares the same understanding and feelings as you today, has been engaged in the same struggle for many years in a place far from you. The goal of this struggle is to put an end to the blatant oppression that the brutal Zionist terrorist network has inflicted on the Palestinian nation for many years. The apartheid Zionist regime's genocide today is the continuation of extremely oppressive behavior (of the regime) that has been going on for decades. Palestine is an independent land with a long history. It is a nation comprised of Muslims, Christians and Jews. After the World Wars, the capitalist Zionist network imported several thousand terrorists into this land with the help of the British government. They attacked cities and villages, murdered tens of thousands of people and expelled multitudes of Palestinians. They seized their homes, businesses and farmlands, and formed a regime and called it Israel.

Iran Reiterates Political Solution to Situation in Syria



NEW YORK (IRNA) - Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN Amir Sa'ed Irvani has stressed that Iran remains committed to a political resolution of the situation in Syria and will continue supporting a truly Syrian-led, Syrian-owned, UN-facilitated political process. Reading a statement before the UN Security Council on Thursday, the ambassador also voiced Tehran's readiness to assist the people and Government of Syria to restore the unity and territorial integrity of their country. In his statement Irvani congratulated on assuming the Security Council presidency for Mozambique this month and successfully managing the Council. He added: "We thank Mr. Pederson, the Special Envoy, and Mr. Griffiths, the Under-Secretary-General for their briefings. As this is the final briefing of Mr. Griffiths, we join others in expressing our sincere gratitude for his efforts." He went on to say: "The humanitarian and economic situation in the Syrian Arab Republic remains dire and the Syrian people suffer from profound economic challenges. After 13 years of conflict, as the UN report indicates, the humanitarian community faces its most challenging funding landscape. The Humanitarian Response Plan for 2024 is only 8 percent funded significantly less at this time than last year." He noted: "The continuance of the destructive policy of unilateral sanctions exacerbates the plight of the most vulnerable segments of society and serves only to prolong the crisis and worsen the suffering endured by the Syrian population. Unfortunately, Western countries have ignored the dire situation on the ground and continue to pursue their political agenda at all costs. They utilize sanctions as a tool to achieve their objectives, even at the expense of ordinary people who suffer as a result. Due to the complex and extensive nature of unilateral sanctions, the alleged humanitarian exemptions often prove ineffective and pointless."



Supreme Leader Meets Assad, Hails Syria's Resistance

TEHRAN (PressTV) – Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has received President Bashar al-Assad who has traveled to Tehran to offer condolences over the loss of President Ebrahim Raisi and his companions in a helicopter crash. Ayatollah Khamenei on Thursday hailed Syria's "distinguished identity" in the region, saying it is owed to the Syrian nation's resistance. "Syria's special position in the region is distinguished because of this identity, and this important feature must be preserved," he told the Syrian president. The distinguished identity of Syria, the Leader said, was formed during the late Hafez Assad's era with the founding of the resistance front and standing against the West. "This identity has always contributed to the national unity of Syria," he added. Ayatollah Khamenei also lauded President Assad for his firm stand, saying "everyone should see the special privilege of the Syrian government, that is, resistance, in front of their eyes." Ayatollah Khamenei said the Westerners and their acolytes in the region tried to overthrow Syria's political system and remove it from the regional equations through the war they waged against the country, but they did not succeed. "Now they want to use other methods, including promises that they never fulfill, in order to take Syria out of the regional equations," he added. The Leader stressed the need for Syria and Iran to

strengthen relations given that the two countries are "the pillars of the axis of resistance". Ayatollah Khamenei touched on the political and economic pressures of the US and the Europeans on Iran and Syria, saying the two nations must overcome the situation by increasing their cooperation and regularizing it. He also touched on the efforts of "dear late Mr. Raisi" to increase cooperation between Iran and Syria in various fields. "Now Mr. Mokhbar, having the powers of the president, continues the same approach and we hope that all affairs will proceed in the best possible way," he added, referring to acting President Mohammad Mokhbar. Elsewhere in his remarks, Ayatollah Khamenei criticized the inaction of the regional countries in the face of Israeli atrocities in Gaza, citing the recent Arab League summit in Manama where "many mistakes were made towards Palestine and Gaza, but some countries also acted well". President Assad took part in the summit, the second time he has done so since the league suspended Syria's membership in 2011 as part of the destructive war on the country. In his meeting with Ayatollah Khamenei, President Assad expressed his condolences to the Leader, the government and the Iranian nation over the recent loss. "Iran-Syria relations are a strategic relationship that is progressing under the guidance of Your Excellency," he told Ayatollah Khamenei.

World Countries Pay Tribute to Iran's Late President, FM

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has held a plenary meeting to extend condolences to the Iranian government and people over the martyrdom of President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian. Thursday's session began with a moment of silence and continued with an address by UNGA President Dennis Francis in memory of the Iranian officials, who lost their lives in a tragic helicopter accident earlier this month. President Raisi "led his country's contribution to shape the tenets of our multilateral system and international cooperation," Francis said, also hailing Amir-Abdollahian as "a consummate diplomat". UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres observed that Raisi "led Iran at a challenging time for the country, the region and globally". Additionally, Burundi's UN Ambassador Zephyrin Maniratanga, who spoke on behalf of African nations, praised the Iranian president as a "distinguished leader who devoted his life to serving his nation and fostering international cooperation particularly with African countries." "Raisi was a visionary leader whose dedication to the principles of equity, brotherhood, solidarity and multilateralism was evident throughout his tenure," he said. Meanwhile, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN Munir Akram spoke on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) during the meeting. "We

take solace in the historical contributions of the former Iranian President to the vision and mission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, notably its central cause of the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinians and the protection of the sanctity of holy mosque of Al-Quds Sharif," he said. "Thanks to the leadership, wisdom and consensus politics of the late President, and with the consistent support of other OIC leaders, the Organization has become stronger, more cohesive and an effective force for the promotion of global peace, security and prosperity." Speaking for the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the representative of Uganda emphasized that Raisi and Amir-Abdollahian were "instrumental" in strengthening cooperation among members of the bloc. Under their guidance, Iran played "a crucial role in enhancing cooperation among developing countries," the envoy added. For his part, Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Amir Sa'ed Irvani said that the messages of sympathy show the world countries' love and respect for the Iranian people. He also described President Raisi as a "dedicated leader," who was widely respected for his tireless efforts to foster good neighborliness, build confidence, and promote dialogue both within the region and beyond.



Israel Put Hundreds of Warplanes on Alert to Confront Iran Operation



TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says the Israeli regime put hundreds of warplanes on alert to confront Iran's retaliatory strikes last month. "Around 221 warplanes were put on alert to prevent Iran's strikes," Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the IRGC's Aerospace Division, said in the north-central Iranian city of Qom on Thursday. The multi-pronged strikes saw the Iranian Armed Forces launching dozens of drones and missiles towards the occupied territories late on April 13. The retaliation, dubbed Operation True Promise, inflicted heavy damage on Israeli military bases across those territories. The operation came in response to the regime's aggression against the Iranian diplomatic premises in the Syrian capital Damascus on April 1. The aggression had led to the martyrdom of two generals of the IRGC's Quds Force, Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Zahedi and General Mohammad Hadi Haji Rahimi, as well as five of their accompanying officers. "The usurping [Israeli] regime's recourse to the atrocity was a miscalculation," Hajizadeh said, adding, "They [had] presumed that Iran would not respond to their atrocity, and that the [regional] resistance force would take action instead of Iran." The commander noted that the Islamic Republic deployed only "20 percent" of its military might during the operation. "The Israeli regime and the United States (Israel's biggest ally) equipped the regional countries to defend Israel [in the face of the Iranian operation] as means of preventing the damage that the Iranian response could cause," he said. The commander, meanwhile, noted that the history of the region had now been "divided into before and after Operation True Promise," adding that the Iranian retaliation had served to "hearten the [regional] resistance axis" in its struggle against the occupying regime.

Tehran Reacts to U.S.-UK Strikes on Yemen



TEHRAN (MNA) – The spokesman of Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Nasser Kanaani reacted to overnight airstrikes by US-British forces against targets across Yemen which killed at least 14 people and left several others injured. The aggressive attack of the United States and the United Kingdom on Yemen, along with their continued unlimited support for the Zionist regime's war crimes and genocide against the Gaza Strip and the Rafah region is being carried out to spread insecurity in the region and hinder the honorable support of the people and the government of Yemen for oppressed Palestinian nation, Kanaani said. The aggressor governments of the U.S. and UK are responsible for the consequences of these crimes against the Yemeni people, he said, adding that the continued violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Yemen and the attack on the citizens of this country is a clear example of the violation of international laws and regulations as well as violation of human rights. Kanaani called on the world community and international assemblies as well as Islamic countries to fulfill their legal and humanitarian duties to support the oppressed people of Yemen and oppose the provocative and adventurous actions of US and UK in the region.

IRAN NEWS



Iran Annual Exports to Iraq Hit \$12b

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran exports some 2,200 products, valued at \$12 billion, to neighboring Iraq annually, the head of the Department of Spatial Planning and Regional Planning of the Iranian Plan and Budget Organization said. Speaking in a meeting entitled “Reviewing opportunities and challenges of attracting Iraqi investors and strengthening trade relations between the two countries in line with demarcating Iran in the regional value chain”, Jafar Hosseini said that Iraq, benefiting from \$85 billion foreign exchange reserves, 130 tons of gold reserves, and 147 billion barrels of proven reserves of crude oil, is among the richest countries in the Middle East. He went on to say that Iran’s exports to Iraq have increased 15-fold over the past 20 years, rising from about \$600 million in 2003 to more than \$10 billion last year (ended March 19, 2024). Currently, Iran exports over 2,200 various types of goods and products to Iraq, he said, adding that more than half of the active Iranian traders are present in the Iraqi market, IRNA reported

Iranian, Armenian Officials Pledge Continued Collaboration



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Armenian Foreign Minister Anarat Mirzoyan underscored the importance of continued collaboration with Iran to achieve mutual strategic goals during a phone conversation with Iran’s Acting Foreign Minister Ali Baqeri. In a phone conversation, Mirzoyan conveyed his condolences to the government and the people of Iran over the loss of President Ebrahim Raisi and his accompanying officials who were martyred in the tragic helicopter crash in Iran’s northwestern province of East Azarbaijan. Mirzoyan emphasized the continuation of cooperation between Armenia and the Islamic Republic of Iran to achieve the objectives set by the leaders of both nations. Baqeri expressed gratitude to Armenia’s high-ranking officials, including the president, prime minister, and foreign minister. He acknowledged the visit of Armenia’s prime minister and foreign minister to Tehran to pay respects to the martyred Iranian President and Foreign Minister and their companions. Baqeri highlighted the significance of implementing the statements made by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei during his meeting with the Armenian prime minister, which focus on achieving strategic goals between the two countries. Emphasizing endogenous security as Iran’s regional security doctrine, Baqeri stated that Iran is committed to playing an effective role in maintaining security and stability in the Caucasus. Baqeri also reiterated Iran’s readiness to implement the agreements reached during the tenure of the martyred President and Foreign Minister. He expressed sympathy for the recent flood victims in Armenia and offered Iran’s assistance to those affected. Mirzoyan described Iran’s role in strengthening peace in the South Caucasus region as significant. He also expressed satisfaction with Iran’s cooperation in implementing Armenia’s infrastructure projects, including the Agarak-Kajaran road.

Inaction on Israeli War Crimes to Sink Mankind Into an Era of Barbarism



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran’s Parliament speaker warned against the world’s inaction in the face of Israeli crimes in the Gaza Strip, especially in the city of Rafah. “Inaction against such war crimes will sink mankind into the era of barbarism, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said while addressing an open parliamentary session on Thursday after the Israeli regime’s deadly attack on a tent camp in the southern Gaza city of Rafah. He called on Muslim governments to set aside diplomatic considerations and vigorously stand up for the rights of Palestinians against Israel’s months-long atrocities in the besieged Gaza Strip. The Gaza Health Ministry reported on Sunday that at least 50 people were killed and more than 200 others injured in the wake of a huge fire that broke out following the Israeli military’s strike on a tented area for displaced people in Rafah. “Today, the eyes of the world are on Rafah. The homeless refugees, who have no other shelter than canvas tents, are shelled by the most ruthless creatures on earth, the Zionist criminals. The images of burnt tents and burnt children in Rafah have hurt the feelings of the people of the world and caused their patience to run out,” Qalibaf said, Press TV reported. “The world’s governments, particularly the Islamic governments, should put aside diplomatic ... considerations and

defend the dignity of humanity with all their might,” he added. “Inaction against such war crimes will sink mankind into the era of barbarism. Today, not only Palestine, Gaza and Rafah, but also the achievements of human civilization are threatened. The voices of burnt children in Rafah are a testament to humanity’s failure to protect the obvious rights of people and a symbol of the governments’ indifference to the most humane emotions of their nations.” Qalibaf said the Israeli regime’s confrontation with the defenseless Palestinian people is not a political one but a confrontation between the 21st century savagery and defenseless humanity. “The Zionist regime has set on fire not only the Palestinian children, but the souls and lives of all the people across the world,” he said, adding that governments should join hands and stop the occupying regime’s killing machine. Underlining that the US administration is the biggest supporter of the Israeli regime, Qalibaf said, “The spiral of the Zionist brutality must be stopped at any cost, and the nation and the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran will do their best to this end, and will invariably and proudly stand by the oppressed people and the homeless Palestinian children.”

Iran Urges Afghanistan to Adhere to Vienna Convention in Consular Staff Changes



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanaani called on Afghan officials to adhere to the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations when making changes to their consular staff. In response to media inquiries regarding recent reports about changes at the Afghan Consulate General in Mashhad, Kanaani emphasized that changes to the consular staff of Afghanistan in Mashhad must comply with the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. He stated that any changes in the consular staff must adhere to the regulations outlined in the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. Kanaani said that during a meeting on May 18, 2024, between the acting Afghan ambassador in Tehran and the Director General of South Asia at Iran’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it was explained that appointing and changing consular staff are prerogatives of the sending state. However, he noted that these changes must be introduced to the receiving state through defined procedures. Upon receiving the consent of the receiving state and obtaining the necessary visas, the staff can enter the receiving state and begin their designated missions, he said. Kanaani stressed that this requirement has been communicated to other Afghan foreign ministry officials through various channels. He reiterated that Afghan foreign ministry officials are expected to act in accordance with the 1963 Vienna Convention and internationally recognized methods for any changes and transformations in their consular staff.

23 Mega Projects Ready to Come Online

TEHRAN (Shana) – Oil Minister Javad Owji says that 23 mega oil and gas projects, worth 4.6 billion dollars, are ready to come online. Speaking with reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting, he further said that the projects, upstream and downstream, were among the demands that late president, Ibrahim Raisi, insisted on their implementation. The oil minister said gathering associated gases, dismantling gas flares, raising petrochemical complexes’ production capacity, especially complementary industries, oil products conveyance pipelines construction and enforcing clean air law were among the main demands of Ayatollah Raisi from the oil ministry. “When these projects come online, it could be said that the 13th administration has managed to achieve great successes in implementing not only rising production of oil, gas and oil products projects, but implementation of downstream projects amid building petro-refineries and prevention of selling raw materials.”, Owji told the reporters. As a person who has been involved in oil industry activities for 35 years, I can tell that we have managed to achieve desirable results in

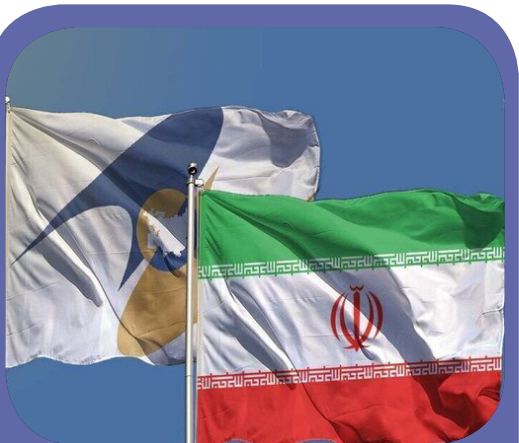
those issues that the late president was insisting on, the minister added. Elsewhere in his remarks, Owji said: we are just a few weeks away from opening 23 macro projects including petrochemical projects that will increase the production capacity of petrochemical products by 3 million tons, Owji said. While right now oil products conveyance is carried out by tanker trucks, by exploitation of a 460-kilometer pipeline in coming weeks, oil products transfer through pipeline will replace tanker trucks with huge advantages, according to the minister. During the late president visit to Northeast Azerbaijan province, he was set to inaugurate a number of oil products boosting qualification projects at Tabriz oil refinery as well as an oil product transfer pipeline, length of 222 kilometers, from Tabriz to Khoi and Oromyeh which can remove between 5 to 6 thousand tanker trucks from roads, reducing air pollution and road accidents as well, Owji said. A natural gas transfer pipeline, boosting gas pressure stations and collecting 4 million cubic meters of gas flares are the other projects that will come online in near future, he concluded.

ICC, ICTA Sign MOU on developing human capabilities



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Islamic Chamber Research and Information Center (ICRIC) and the Islamic Chamber Training Academy (ICTA) have signed a memorandum of understanding on developing human capabilities. The document was signed by ICCIMA President Samad Hassanzadeh and Secretary General of Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture (ICCIA) Yousef Khalawi on Monday on the sidelines of the 36th Board of Directors meeting of the Islamic Chamber for Commerce and Development (ICCD) in Amman, Jordan. Under the terms of this MOU, the parties will establish effective communication between their members and affiliates to encourage, promote and facilitate an effective cooperation in the areas of education and research, and training. The document also requires the parties to support each other for organizing activities such as seminars, workshops, training programs, courses and conferences to be launched in the ICTA and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The parties are also expected to prepare both virtual and non-virtual training programs and studies for their respective members which would benefit them for increasing “ICCD” member states economic cooperation, partnership in various sectors for Iranian and “ICCD” private sectors particularly for the SMEs. TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Islamic Chamber Research and Information Center (ICRIC) and the Islamic Chamber Training Academy (ICTA) have signed a memorandum of understanding on developing human capabilities. The document was signed by ICCIMA President Samad Hassanzadeh and Secretary General of Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture (ICCIA) Yousef Khalawi on Monday on the sidelines of the 36th Board of Directors meeting of the Islamic Chamber for Commerce and Development (ICCD) in Amman, Jordan.

Russian State Duma Ratifies FTA Between EAEU, Iran



TEHRAN (MNA) – Russia’s State Duma (lower house of the parliament) has ratified the free trade agreement between Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) members and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The agreement lays down major guidelines in trade between the Eurasian Economic Union and its member states, on the one hand, and the Islamic Republic of Iran, on the other hand, in line with guidelines from the World Trade Organization, TASS reported. Among those rules are the most favored nation treatment and national treatment, application of protective measures and customs administration, refusal to apply quantitative bans and restrictions on inflow of goods, as well as provisions fixing the WTO basic standards regarding veterinary, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, as well as technical regulations. In addition to standard World Trade Organization practices, the agreement stipulates obligations outside their framework but those applied in the EAEU. Regarding technical regulation, obligations are fixed to ensure a 180-day transition period between publication and entry into force of technical regulations. Regarding sanitary and phytosanitary measures, the possibility is suggested to provide commentaries at the stage of development of measures (provided they differ from international standards), holding of consultations and their scheduling. The agreement stipulates working together in various areas, including mining, processing and use of mineral resources, energy efficiency, research and innovations, education, medicine, transport, including development of multimodal (mixed) freight, telecommunications, transport and logistics infrastructure and transport corridors.



Slovak PM Fico Taken Home From Hospital

BRATISLAVA (Dispatches) - Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico was transported to the capital Bratislava on Thursday to continue recovering after being shot multiple times two weeks ago, a spokeswoman said. Fico was shot multiple times on May 15 while greeting supporters after a cabinet meeting in the central Slovak town of Handlova in what officials said was an assassination attempt. He immediately underwent five-hour surgery in a hospital in the nearby city of Banská Bystrica, followed by another two-hour surgery two days later. The alleged gunman, identified by local media as 71-year-old poet Juraj Cintula, has been charged with premeditated attempted murder and was remanded in custody. "Robert Fico was transported from our hospital to Bratislava in the evening hours," Banská Bystrica hospital spokeswoman Ruzena Mataseje told AFP. It was not immediately clear to which hospital in the capital he was moved. Banská Bystrica hospital director Mária Lapuníková had said earlier on Thursday that Fico wanted to "continue his recovery in home care". The hospital said Fico's progress was "satisfactory", but his ally Robert Kalinak, a deputy prime minister, said his recovery would be "extremely long".

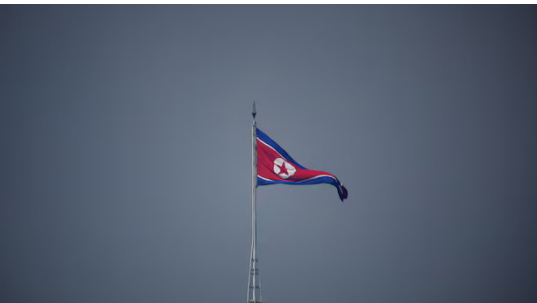


Biden Allows Ukraine Limited Use of U.S. Arms to Strike Inside Russia



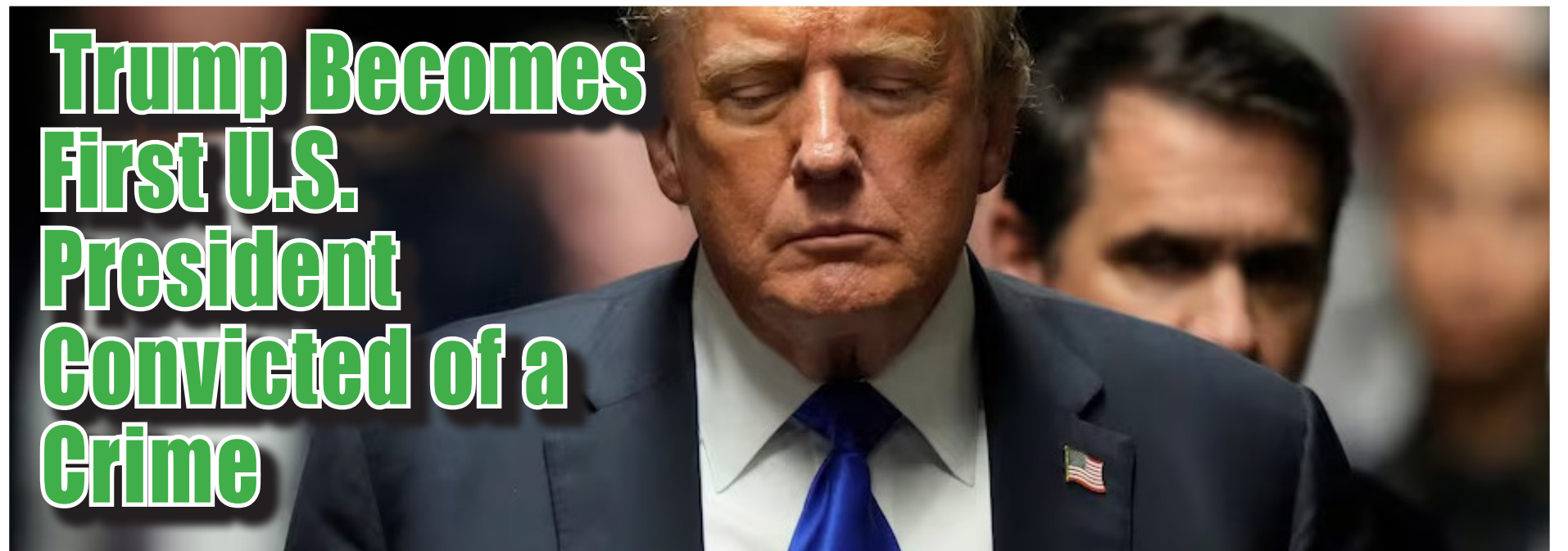
WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Joe Biden quietly has authorized Kyiv to launch U.S.-supplied weapons at military targets inside Russia that are supporting an offensive against the northeastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, four U.S. officials said on Thursday. The decision marks a policy shift by Biden, who had steadfastly refused to allow Ukraine to use American weaponry for strikes inside Russia. Russia's embassy in Washington and Russia's mission to the United Nations in New York did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Biden's decision applies only to targets inside Russia near the border with the Kharkiv region, where an offensive launched by Moscow on May 10 has overrun some villages. "The President recently directed his team to ensure that Ukraine is able to use U.S.-supplied weapons for counter-fire purposes in the Kharkiv region so Ukraine can hit back against Russian forces that are attacking them or preparing to attack them," said one U.S. official. Russia is building up forces near the northern part of the region, but it lacks the troop numbers to stage a major push, Ukraine's top commander said on Thursday. Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city, is 19 miles (30 km) from the border with Russia. It is the second time this year that Biden has quietly relaxed his policy on weapons supplies for Ukraine, bending to calls to send long-range missiles known as ATACMS to Kyiv. "The Biden administration has come a long way from their hypersensitivity to and misunderstanding of the risk of escalation," said Alexander Vindman, a retired Army lieutenant colonel and former director for European affairs at the White House National Security Council under the Trump administration. He applauded the shift in Biden's policy, which he said "unties Ukraine's hands." "Of course it's the right move," Vindman said.

China, North Korea Still at Odds on Nuclear Weapons



SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korea's rare swipe at China this week underscored how Beijing and Pyongyang do not entirely see eye-to-eye on the latter's illicit nuclear weapons arsenal, despite warming ties in other areas, analysts and officials in South Korea said. The North condemned China, Japan and South Korea on Monday for discussing denuclearization of the peninsula, calling their joint declaration after a summit in Seoul a "grave political provocation" that violates its sovereignty. Even though Beijing helped tone down the statement by advocating mention of the peninsula rather than the North specifically, that was enough to raise its neighbor's hackles, one analyst said. "It is notable that North Korea criticized a joint statement that China had signed onto, even after Beijing helped water down the statement," added Patricia Kim, of the Brookings Institution in the United States. In their remarks, the three nations "reiterated positions on regional peace and stability, denuclearization of the Korean peninsula" but unlike the last such statements in 2019 and earlier, did not commit to pursue denuclearization. Since international talks with the United States and other countries stalled in 2019, North Korea has moved to reject the concept of ever giving up its nuclear weapons. "This is about North Korea emphasizing its stance that any diplomatic rhetoric suggesting Pyongyang should eventually denuclearize is unacceptable," said Tong Zhao, a nuclear expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Trump Becomes First U.S. President Convicted of a Crime



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Donald Trump became the first U.S. president to be convicted of a crime on Thursday when a New York jury found him guilty of falsifying documents to cover up a payment to silence a porn star ahead of the 2016 election. After two days of deliberation, the 12-member jury pronounced Trump guilty on all 34 felony counts he faced. Trump watched the jurors dispassionately as they were polled to confirm the unanimous verdict. Justice Juan Merchan set sentencing for July 11, just days before the Republican Party is scheduled to formally nominate Trump for president ahead of the Nov. 5 election. The crime of falsifying business documents carries a maximum sentence of four years in prison, though those convicted often receive shorter sentences, fines or probation. Incarceration would not legally prevent him from campaigning, or taking office if he were to win. He will not be jailed ahead of sentencing. The verdict plunges the United States into unexplored territory ahead of the November vote, when Trump will try to win back the White House from Democratic President Joe Biden. Trump, 77, has denied wrongdoing and an attorney representing him said they would appeal as quickly as possible. "This was a disgrace," Trump told reporters afterwards as he proclaimed his innocence and repeated his complaints that the trial had been rigged against him. "The real verdict is going to be Nov. 5 by the people," he said. Trump gave a thumbs-up sign through the tinted window of his SUV as his motorcade left the courthouse. Trump supporters stood in a park opposite the courthouse along with journalists, police and onlookers. Opinion polls show Trump and Biden, 81, locked in a tight race, and Reuters/Ipsos polling has found that a guilty verdict could cost Trump some support among independent and Republican voters. The case had been widely regarded as the least consequential of the four criminal prosecutions Trump faces. But the verdict looms

large now as it is likely to be the only one before the election with the others delayed by procedural challenges. The jury found Trump guilty of falsifying business documents after sitting through a five-week courtroom presentation that featured explicit testimony from porn star Stormy Daniels about a sexual encounter she says she had with Trump in 2006 while he was married to his current wife Melania. Trump denies ever having sex with Daniels. Trump's former fixer Michael Cohen testified that Trump approved a \$130,000 hush money payment to Daniels in the final weeks of the 2016 election, when Trump faced multiple accusations of sexual misbehavior. Cohen testified that he handled the payment, and that Trump approved a plan to reimburse him through monthly payments disguised as legal work. Trump's lawyers hammered Cohen's credibility, highlighting his criminal record and imprisonment and his history of lying. Merchan also cautioned jurors to examine his testimony carefully. The relatively short amount of time jurors needed to reach a verdict was a sign that they thought there was enough evidence to back up Cohen's testimony, said George Grasso, a retired New York judge who attended the trial. A source familiar with the Trump campaign's inner workings said the verdict was expected to prompt him to intensify deliberations on picking a woman as his vice presidential running mate. His campaign website labeled him a "political prisoner" and urged supporters to donate. Biden's campaign said the verdict showed that no one was above the law and urged voters to reject Trump in the election. "There is still only one way to keep Donald Trump out of the Oval Office: at the ballot box," the campaign said in a statement. The White House declined to comment.

Israel Reopens Gaza Food Sales as Rafah Raid Chokes Aid



RAMALLAH (Dispatches) - The Israeli military has lifted a ban on the sale of food to Gaza from Israel and the occupied West Bank as its battlefield offensive chokes international aid, according to Palestinian officials, businessmen and international aid workers. Army authorities gave Gaza traders the green light to resume their purchases from Israeli and Palestinian suppliers of food such as fresh fruit, vegetables and dairy goods this month, days after Israeli forces launched an assault on the enclave's southernmost city of Rafah, the people said. The offensive against Rafah, a key gateway into Gaza from Egypt, has effectively halted the flow of U.N. aid to the devastated Palestinian territory. Israel is coming under mounting global pressure to ease the crisis as humanitarian agencies warn of looming famine. "Israel phoned Gaza distributors who had been purchasing goods from the West Bank and Israel before the war," said Ayed Abu Ramadan, chair of the Gaza Chamber of Commerce. "It told them it was ready to coordinate the pick-up of goods." Reuters, which interviewed more than a dozen people familiar with the development, is the first news outlet to report on the details and impact of this resumption of commercial food deliveries bound for sale in Gazan markets and stores. The shift marks the first time any goods produced inside Israel or the West Bank, an Israeli-occupied Palestinian territory,

have been allowed into Gaza since war erupted in October last year, according to the Palestinian officials, traders and residents. Asked by Reuters about the resumption of deliveries, COGAT, the branch of the Israeli military responsible for aid transfers, said it was looking at ways to boost humanitarian aid and increase the amount of food for sale in Gaza. "Allowing for the private sector to bring some food into the Gaza Strip is part of those efforts to increase the amount of food that's coming in," spokesperson Shimon Freedman added. Aid workers have urged Israel for months to allow more commercial deliveries to enter Gaza so fresh food can supplement international aid, which mostly contains non-perishables like flour and tinned food. The reopening is no panacea, though. The flow of deliveries, conducted via the Kerem Shalom border crossing between southern Gaza and Israel, has been erratic, according to Palestinian officials who said anywhere between 20 and 150 trucks - each carrying up to 20 tons of food - have entered per day depending on how many Israel allows in. That is well short of the 600 trucks a day that the U.S. Agency for International Development, says is required to address the threat of famine, even when adding the roughly 4,200 trucks of food aid - about 190 a day - that Israeli officials say, have entered Gaza since the beginning of the Rafah assault on May 7.



India's Gruelling, Acrimonious Election Campaign Comes to an End

MUMBAI (Dispatches) - More than two months of gruelling and acrimonious campaigning in India's general election that played out in sweltering heat ended on Thursday, two days before the final phase of polling, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi's constituency will cast its votes. India began voting in seven phases in the world's largest election on April 19 and it is set to conclude on June 1. Votes will be counted on June 4 although television channels conduct exit polls and project results after voting ends. Modi, who is seeking a record-equalling third straight term and is widely expected to win, began his re-election campaign by focusing on his achievements over the last 10 years but soon switched to mostly targeting the opposition by accusing them of favouring India's minority Muslims. This change of tack, analysts said, was likely aimed at firing up his Hindu nationalist base after a low turnout in the first phase sparked concerns that supporters of his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) were not voting. India's election rules stop campaigning about 36 hours before voting begins. Modi addressed one rally in the northern state of Punjab on Thursday, while his main opponent, the Congress party's Rahul Gandhi, spoke at rallies in the states of Odisha and Punjab. "It is clear from the overwhelming support of people ... that there is going to be an unprecedented victory" for BJP and the alliance it leads, Modi posted on X minutes before campaigning ended. Modi will spend the next two days meditating at the southernmost tip of India at an island memorial for Hindu philosopher Swami Vivekananda, located at where the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean converge. Opposition parties criticised his decision, saying it was a form of campaigning as his meditation would be shown on TV and so was in breach of the rules, with the Congress complaining to the Election Commission.

Humanity in Race Against Time on AI

GENEVA (Dispatches) - Humanity is in a race against time to harness the colossal emerging power of artificial intelligence for the good of all, while averting dire risks, a top UN official said Thursday. "We've let the genie out of the bottle," said Doreen Bogdan-Martin, head of the United Nations' International Telecommunications Union (ITU). "We are in a race against time," she told the opening of a two-day AI for Good Global Summit in Geneva. "Recent developments in AI have been nothing short of extraordinary." The thousands gathered at the conference heard how advances in generative AI are already speeding up efforts to solve some of the world's most pressing problems, such as climate change, hunger and social care. "I believe we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to guide AI to benefit all the world's people," Bogdan-Martin told AFP ahead of the summit. But she lamented Thursday that one-third of humanity still remains completely offline, and is "excluded from the AI revolution without a voice." "This digital and technological divide is no longer acceptable." Bogdan-Martin highlighted that AI holds "immense potential for both good and bad", stressing that it was vital to "make AI systems safe". She said that was especially important given that "2024 is the biggest election year in history", with votes in dozens of countries,



including in the United States. She flagged the "rise of sophisticated deep fakes disinformation campaigns" and warned that the "misuse of AI threaten democracy (and) also endangers young people's mental health and compromises cyber-security." Other experts at Thursday's conference agreed. "We have to understand what we're steering towards," said Tristan Harris, a technology ethicist who co-founded the Center for Humane Technology. He pointed to lessons from social media -- initially touted as a way to connect people and give everyone a voice, but which also brought addiction, viral misinformation, online harassment and ballooning mental health issues. Harris warned the incentive driving the companies rolling out the technology risked dramatically swelling such negative impacts. "The number one thing that is driving Open AI or Google behaviour is the race to actually achieve market dominance," he said. In such a world, he said, "governance that moves at the speed of technology" is vital. OpenAI chief Sam Altman, who rose to global prominence after OpenAI released ChatGPT in 2022, acknowledged the dangers. Speaking via video-link, he told the gathering that "cyber-security" was currently the biggest concern when it came to negative impacts of the technology. Further down the road, he said there would likely "be some change required to the social contract, given how powerful we expect this technology to be".



PARIS (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic reached the French Open last 32 for the 19th successive year on Thursday as Roland Garros organisers banned alcohol from the stands in an effort to counter disruption from rowdy fans. Defending champion Djokovic cracked 43 winners past Spain's 63rd-ranked Roberto Carballes Baena to canter to a 6-4, 6-1, 6-2 win. The three-time champion, seeking a record 25th Grand Slam title, goes on to face 30th seed Lorenzo Musetti. Djokovic has defeated Musetti four times in five meetings. However the Italian gave the Serb a major scare at the French Open in 2021 when he won the first two sets of their last 16 clash before retiring injured in the decider. "It was a difficult match against Roberto. He hit a lot of very good and precise shots," said Djokovic. "The last game of the first set I played really well and started to play at a higher level. At the end of the match I was then playing very well." Also easing through to the third round on another rain-hit day in

the French capital were women's title contenders Aryna Sabalenka and Elena Rybakina. The behaviour of fans at the tournament, which was brought into focus by Belgium's David Goffin's claim that he had chewing gum spat at him, prompted a series of measures to clamp down on loutish behaviour. "Alcohol has been allowed in the stadiums until now but that's over," tournament director Amelie Mauresmo told reporters. However, alcohol including beer from mobile vendors, will still be sold around the grounds. Mauresmo said fans will be ejected if they throw something at a player and that "umpires have tighter, even more precise instructions on keeping the crowd under control". Fourth seed Alexander Zverev, who effectively ended Rafael Nadal's French Open career in the first round, defeated Goffin 7-6 (7/4), 6-2, 6-2. Zverev arrived in Paris on the back of winning the Rome Open title and is the only player to reach the semi-finals at the last three French Open tournaments.

Norwegian Delight as Ingebrigtsen Thrills at Oslo Diamond League



OSLO (Dispatches) - Jakob Ingebrigtsen ensured a raucous end to a thrilling Diamond League meeting in front of his home fans in Oslo by hurling himself over the line to snatch victory in the men's 1500m. A more dramatic finish to the thrilling schedule could not have been better scripted on a night of shocks that saw five other reigning Olympic champions -- including Ingebrigtsen's Norwegian teammate Karsten Warholm -- upstaged. For Ingebrigtsen, beaten over a mile last week by world 1500m champion Josh Kerr, the victory was the perfect tonic with the Paris Olympics now just two months away. "That was a sprint-off," said the Norwegian who will target the 1500/5,000m double in the French capital. "Every day I feel better and better. And defending the titles at the Europeans and Olympics? I think yes." While Ingebrigtsen's dive for the line, bounce back to his feet and his subsequent crouch into a boxer's pose throwing punches might grab the headlines, the performance of the night undoubtedly went to Ethiopia's Hagos Gebrhiwet, who clocked the second fastest time ever in the men's 5,000m. Total Norwegian delight was denied by the 2022 world champion Alison Dos Santos, who timed 46.63sec to win the men's 400m hurdles. He seized his opportunity as Warholm clipped the final hurdle, a slight stumble handing the Brazilian just enough track to scramble to the line 0.07sec ahead.

Wolves Stay Alive With Game 4 Road Win Over Mavericks

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - That one was about pride. The next three are about history. The Minnesota Timberwolves stayed alive in the Western Conference finals Tuesday night, riding Anthony Edwards' game-high 29 points and Karl-Anthony Towns' recalibrated long-range shooting form to a 105-100 victory over the host Dallas Mavericks in Game 4. With their first win in the best-of-seven series, the Timberwolves earned a Game 5 at home, hoping to blaze a trail to become the first team in NBA history to rally and advance after trailing 3-0 in a playoff series. Winning the series wasn't on the team's radar in Game 4, Edwards insisted afterward. "We just wanted to get one game and extend the series," he said. "I've never been swept in my career. I didn't want to get swept. Not on their home court, hearing their fans talk trash all day." Luka Doncic posted a 28-point, 15-rebound, 10-assist triple-double for the fifth-seeded Mavericks, who won the first two games of the series in a previous trip to Minneapolis. After Minnesota



led by 12 early on, the teams battled on even terms for the first 18-plus minutes of the second half, with Towns' 3-pointer with 5:41 remaining giving the Timberwolves a 92-90 lead. The visitors never trailed again, thanks in large part to Towns, whose 3-pointer on Minnesota's next possession made it a five-point game. Dallas' best chance to draw even down the stretch came when Doncic misfired on a 3-pointer with the hosts trailing 95-92 with 3:18 to go. When Towns connected again from beyond the arc with 2:54 to go, and Edwards followed with a bank shot in the lane 67 seconds later, the Timberwolves had broken things open at 100-92. "That was on me," Doncic said. "(I) didn't give enough energy." A desperation 3-pointer by Doncic as he was being fouled with 13.2 seconds left kept the Mavericks alive at 103-100, but Doncic missed the subsequent free throw. After a timeout, Naz Reid got behind the Dallas defense for a game-clinching layup with 11.3 seconds remaining.

Chelsea Appoint Enzo Maresca as New Manager



LONDON (Dispatches) - Chelsea have appointed Leicester's Enzo Maresca as their new head coach, according to British media reports late Thursday. The Daily Telegraph said the Italian would be joining the Blues on a five-year contract, plus an option of a further year, designed to give the club stability after two years of upheaval under the new regime led by US investors Behdad Eghbali and Todd Boehly. Maresca, who until last year was Pep Guardiola's assistant at English champions Manchester City, oversaw an immediate return to the Premier League for Leicester following their relegation 12 months ago. The 44-year-old Italian's style of football is also said to have impressed Chelsea chiefs. London club Chelsea were looking for a new manager after parting company with Mauricio Pochettino. He spent just one season in charge at Stamford Bridge, with Brentford's Thomas Frank and Kieran McKenna, who led Ipswich to top-flight promotion behind Leicester, also linked with the vacancy. Pochettino left after a late surge resulted in Chelsea finishing sixth in the Premier League -- qualifying for the Europa Conference League -- but missed out on Champions League qualification and a trophy. Chelsea lost the League Cup final 1-0 to Liverpool after extra-time and pushed Manchester City all the way before losing in the FA Cup semi-finals by the same score. But there had been signs former Tottenham manager Pochettino's project was coming together during a run of five consecutive wins to end the campaign that ensured Chelsea will be involved in European competition next season.

Football Players Ready to Strike Over Packed Calendar

LONDON (Dispatches) - Players have warned world soccer's governing body FIFA that they are ready to go on strike over concerns the playing calendar is overloaded, the chief executive of the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) said. Maheta Molango, who has been calling for change since February, believes players have reached a breaking point. He says football's packed schedule endangers players' health and diminishes the quality of the sport. "I can tell you a situation not 10 days ago where I went into a dressing room that was directly affected and said: 'I'm happy to be here and bark a bit, but ultimately it's up to you. How far do you want to go?'" Molango told the BBC. "Some of them said: 'I'm not having it, we might as well go on strike. Some said: 'What's the point? Yes, I'm a millionaire, but I don't even have time to spend the money'. Demands on players have increased in recent years, as tournaments expanded and new competitions emerged, with players and managers criticising that the calendar



demanding too many matches. "It was not even the union that said it, it was Jurgen Klopp and Pep Guardiola. We have reached a point where we cannot rule out any action," Molango said. Global players' union FIFPRO, along with the

PFA and the World Leagues Association (WLA), have threatened to take legal action if FIFA continues in this direction. In a letter addressed to FIFA President Gianni Infantino and General Secretary Mattias Grafstrom, they expressed their concerns over the expansion of the new 32-team Club World Cup. In response, FIFA denied their claims it had taken unilateral decisions to favour its competitions in the international calendar and would not consider rescheduling the tournament. "Some of the changes in England with the domestic calendar have been forced by what FIFA and UEFA have done. What has happened is further confirmation that something needs to be done," Molango said.

"We will always try to exhaust all diplomatic avenues, we have sent a letter, we have received a reply, but unfortunately time is against us. Sometimes between grown-up people, despite trying very hard to find solutions you need a third party to decide, maybe an arbitrator or a tribunal," he said.