



SIX killed and seven injured in a house fire in Abu Dhabi on Monday, officials said



Weather table with columns for location, temperature, and weather conditions.

EU freezes assets of Iran Revolutionary Guard's wing

TEHRAN

THE European Union on Monday imposed an asset freeze on the investment arm of Iran's Revolutionary Guard...

The latest round of sanctions — the eighth imposed by the bloc over the repression — came after Iran hanged three more men convicted in relation to the demonstrations.

The 27-nation bloc added the IRGC Cooperative Foundation, which handles the Guards' investments, to an EU asset freeze and visa ban blacklist...

The economic conglomerate, accused of serving as a slush fund for the paramilitary armed wing of Tehran's Islamic revolution, was sanctioned by the United States in January.

The EU also blacklisted the Student Basij Organisation, which it said acts as an enforcer for the Revolutionary Guards on university campuses.

Five regime figures, including three senior police commanders, a top cyber official, and a regional prosecutor were also added to the list.

The Iranian authorities brutally cracked down on protests that sprang up after the death in custody on September 16 of Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd who was arrested in Tehran for allegedly breaching the Islamic Republic's strict dress rules for women.

Wagner group decides to leave Bakhmut for good

Mercenaries will exit Ukrainian city by June 1, hand it over to Russia

KYIV

UKRAINE on Monday said it continued to fight for Bakhmut and still controlled a corner of the eastern city, as Russia's Wagner said it would transfer control of the ruined hotspot to the Russian army by June 1.

Ukraine has denied that Bakhmut has fallen to Russian forces, saying it is hanging on to one area of the city and that battles are ongoing.

Both Wagner and the regular Russian army said over the weekend that Bakhmut has fallen to them.

"The fighting continues," Ukraine's deputy defence minister Ganna Malyar said, a day after President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Bakhmut was "not occupied" by Russia.

Malyar said Kyiv's troops retained control of the "Airplane" district of Bakhmut.

"The battle for the dominant heights on the flanks—north and south of the suburbs—continues," she added.

The head of Russia's mercenary group Wagner, whose fighters have spearheaded Moscow's storming of Bakhmut, announced on Saturday that the city had fully fallen to his fighters.

On Monday, he said the mercenaries would leave Bakhmut by June 1 and hand over control to regular Russian troops.

"Wagner will leave Artemovsk (Bakhmut) from May 25 to June 1," Yevgeny Prigozhin said in an audio recording on Telegram.

Prigozhin said the mercenar-



A destroyed residential house following a strike in the village of Tsirkuny, Kharkiv region on Monday | AFP

Anti-terror regime in Russia's Belgorod region

Russia on Monday introduced an "anti-terror regime" in Belgorod after Moscow accused a sabotage group of crossing over from Ukraine. "In order to ensure the safety of citizens in Belgorod, the legal counter-terror regime has been introduced today," governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said.

ies had set up "defence lines" on the western outskirts of the city before a planned transfer of control to the Russian army.

"If the ministry of defence does not have enough personnel, we have thousands of generals," said Prigozhin, who has been embroiled in an increas-

ingly public spat with the Russian military leadership.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, Europe's largest atomic power station, spent hours operating on emergency diesel generators Monday after losing its external power supply for the seventh time since Russia's full-scale invasion of its neighbor, the head of the UN nuclear watchdog said.

"The nuclear safety situation at the plant (is) extremely vulnerable," Rafael Grossi, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said.

Hours later, national energy company Ukrenergo said on Telegram that it had restored the power line that feeds the plant.

Ukraine, North Korea figure in EU talks with South Korea

SEOUL

LEADERS of South Korea and the European Union agreed on Monday to increase pressure on Russia over its war against Ukraine and condemn North Korea's ballistic missile tests.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol met with European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in Seoul, after the three leaders attended the weekend summit of the Group of Seven leading industrialised nations in Hiroshima, Japan.

"We agree to maintain and increase the collective pressure on Russia, particularly through effective implementation of the respective restrictive measures," they said in a joint statement. "We are committed to support Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction and remain resolved to support Ukraine for as long as it takes."



South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol (C), with European Council President Charles Michel (L), and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in Seoul | AP

The leaders agreed to increase cooperation in the face of global threats that include the war in Ukraine and North Korea's banned weapons programmes, according to a joint statement.

They condemned North Korea's "repeated illegal ballistic missile launches as well as its ongoing nuclear development and references to the possible use of nuclear weapons" and expressed support for Seoul's

efforts to persuade Pyongyang to give up such weapons.

"We shared the understanding that North Korea's nuclear and missile development poses a serious threat to global security beyond the Korean Peninsula, and agreed to closely cooperate for the international community's united response to North Korea's provocations," Yoon said.

The trio of leaders also agreed to boost trade ties with more talks on issues "including supply chain resilience and... export controls and economic coercion."

North Korea has launched about 100 missiles since the start of 2022, many of them nuclear-capable weapons that place the US mainland and South Korea within striking distance. Experts say North Korea believes its expanded weapons arsenal will help it wrest concessions from its rivals.

Iran sacks security chief linked to spying scandal

TEHRAN

IRAN'S president on Monday appointed a new official to take over the post of secretary of the country's Supreme National Security Council, the highest-level body to deal with security matters, replacing the longtime powerful official Ali Shamkhani after he was implicated in a recent spy scandal.

President Ebrahim Raisi issued a decree replacing Shamkhani who has faced persistent corruption allegations "which he denied" as well as scrutiny because of close ties with a British-Iranian man hanged on



Ali Akbar Ahmadian | AFP

Trump's 2018 decision to unilaterally withdraw America from the accord.

Shamkhani's replacement will be Ali Akbar Ahmadian, the former chief of the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard's strategic center. The decree, reported by the state-run IRNA news agency, offered no explanation for the change.

In a message on Twitter on Sunday night, as rumours about his position circulated, Shamkhani cryptically posted a verse by the 14th-century Persian poet Mohtasham Kashani. In January, Iran hanged British-Iranian Ali Reza Akbari, a

close ally of top security official Shamkhani, on spying charges.

Ahmadian will take over as Iran faces continued economic pressure from Western sanctions, challenges following months-long protests over the death of Mahsa Amini who died while in the custody of Iran's morality police, and a recent de-escalation with Iran's Gulf Arab neighbours, including Saudi Arabia.

Shamkhani had served in the position for just under a decade less than former president Hassan Rouhani's tenure of 15 years.

EXPRESS READ

Imran Khan receives luxury tax notice

Lahore: Pakistan's former premier Imran Khan received on Monday a luxury tax notice of PKR 14 lakh for his Lahore residence. The challan issued by the Department of Excise and Taxation to Imran for his Zaman Park residence, where he currently resides, is to be paid by Monday.

PIO jailed for drugs supply conspiracy in UK

London: A 41-year-old Indian-origin woman has been sentenced to four years and eight months imprisonment by a UK court for her role in a large-scale conspiracy to supply drugs in the country. Mandeep Kaur was found guilty to supply Class A or banned drugs and possess criminal property.

Militants blow up empty Pakistan girls' schools

Peshawar: Militants detonated explosives inside two empty girls' schools in northwestern Pakistan overnight, destroying nine classrooms. The twin attacks on the girls' schools took place on Sunday night in the Hassu Khel and Gul Mosaki areas of North Waziristan.

Belgian unions protest for worker protection

Brussels: Almost 20,000 Belgian trade union members mounted a demonstration on Monday to protest what they see as increasingly bad working conditions. The trade unions are irked by companies that seek to impose new contracts on workers that impact their social rights.

LONG-TERM DEAL

Chinese firm Sinopec to sell fuel in Sri Lanka in competition with IOC

COLOMBO

CASH-strapped Sri Lanka has signed a long-term agreement with Chinese oil and gas giant Sinopec on important storage, distribution and sale of petroleum products in the island nation, President Ranil Wickremesinghe's office said on Monday.

The deal with Sinopec—a state-owned Chinese company—was reached months after the two sides commenced their negotiations and Sri Lanka approved a proposal in March to liberalise the fuel retail market in the country with more players from China, Australia and the US.

The island nation's fuel retail market was a state monopoly under the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) till 2003 when the Indian Oil Company (IOC) was allowed to operate.

"Negotiations have been completed with Sinopec Fuel Oil Lanka Ltd and its parent company in China and Singapore for a long-term contract on important storage, distribution and sale of petroleum products in the island nation," the statement issued by the president's office said.

The Cabinet had granted approval to award licenses to Sino-

Lanka to complete debt reworking by Sept: Prez

President Ranil Wickremesinghe has said that Sri Lanka's debt restructuring programme will be completed by September this year. "A country becoming bankrupt means that it is a beggar nation. None of us wants to become a beggar nation. We approached the IMF, as we have nowhere else to go," he said. He also assured that discussions on the reworking of both domestic and external debt would be completed by July or August 2023, NewsFirst Lanka reported.

nopec, United Petroleum Australia and RM Parks of USA in collaboration with Shell Plc to enter the fuel retail market in Sri Lanka.

However, as of now, the deal has been reached with China's Sinopec only. The energy and procurement committees had approved a recommendation to award the three companies the licenses to operate. They will be allocated 150 dealer-operated fuel stations currently run by the CPC, a state fuel entity.

The parties will be granted a license to operate for 20 years to import, store, distribute and sell petroleum products in Sri Lanka.

Canara Bank advertisement for power inverter systems tender. Includes details on ratings, quantities, and application process.

Tungabhadra Board: TB Dam advertisement for e-procurement tender. Includes details on bid submission, dates, and contact information.

PRIDHVI ASSET RECONSTRUCTION AND SECURITISATION COMPANY LIMITED advertisement for sealed tenders. Includes details on property, terms, and contact information.