

Quotes of the day



“These days we are looking with great concern at the security situation on the Russian-Ukrainian border. Any violation of territorial integrity will have a price, a high price.”

GERMAN CHANCELLOR OLAF SCHOLZ WARNS RUSSIA



“Iran has to choose between the collapse of the JCPOA and a fair and comprehensive deal...Iran's continued nuclear escalation means that we are rapidly reaching the end of the road.”

NICOLAS DE RIVIERE, FRANCE'S AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS

# Defying West, Putin, Xi cement ties

REUTERS, Moscow

Russia and China should stand firm in rejecting Western interference and defending each other's security interests, presidents Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping agreed in a video call yesterday.

Their conversation, eight days after Putin spoke to US President Joe Biden in a similar format, underscored how shared hostility to the West is bringing Moscow and Beijing closer together.

“At present, certain international forces under the guise of ‘democracy’ and ‘human rights’ are interfering in the internal affairs of China and Russia, and brutally trampling on international law and recognized norms of international relations,” China's state-run Xinhua news agency quoted Xi as saying.

“China and Russia should increase their joint efforts to more effectively safeguard the security interests of both parties.”

Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov told reporters that Xi had offered support to Putin for his push to obtain binding security guarantees for Russia from the West, saying he understood Moscow's concerns.

He said the pair also expressed their “negative view” of the creation of new military alliances such as the AUKUS partnership between Australia, Britain and the United States and the Indo-Pacific “Quad” of Australia, India, Japan and the United States.

The call highlighted the ways in which Russia and China are drawing on each other for mutual support at a time of high tension in their relations with the West. China is under pressure over human rights and Russia is accused of threatening behaviour towards Ukraine.

The Kremlin said Putin briefed Xi on his conversation with Biden, in which the US president warned Russia against invading



- » Xi accuses West of meddling in Chinese affairs
- » Kremlin says Xi backs Putin push for security guarantees
- » Putin, Xi expected to meet at Beijing Winter Olympics in Feb
- » Trade between Russia and China rising sharply

Ukraine - which Moscow denies it is planning - and Putin set out his demand for security pledges.

“A new model of cooperation has been formed between our countries, based, among other things, on such principles as non-interference in internal affairs and respect for each other's interests,” Putin told Xi.

He said he looked forward to meeting Xi at the Winter Olympics in Beijing in February - an event that the White House last week said US government officials would boycott because of China's human rights “atrocities” against Muslims in its western region of Xinjiang.

Putin has used Russia's partnership with China as a way of balancing US influence while striking lucrative deals, especially on energy. He and Xi this year agreed to extend a 20-year friendship and cooperation treaty.

## US to add more China firms to blacklists: FT

REUTERS

Shares in Chinese healthcare and technology firms tumbled yesterday after a report that the United States would add more Chinese firms, including the largest commercial drone maker and biotech firms, to investment and export blacklists this week.

Citing two sources briefed on the plans, the Financial Times said the United States would add eight Chinese firms, including the drone maker, DJI Technology Co Ltd, to an investment blacklist today.

The US commerce department is also set to place more than two dozen Chinese firms, some of them involved in biotechnology, on an “entity list” restricting exports to them by US firms, the newspaper cited the sources as saying.

The Financial Times said the US treasury department would put eight companies including DJI on its “Chinese military-industrial complex companies” blacklist because of their alleged involvement in surveillance of the Uyghur Muslim minority.

US investors are barred from taking stakes in companies on the list, which now comprises about 60 firms.

## NEW COVID CURBS AMID OMICRON FEARS

# UK PM defends actions after surviving party revolt

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson yesterday defended his record on tackling the coronavirus pandemic, after nearly 100 of his own MPs broke ranks and rebelled against new restrictions.

The rebellion was the second biggest by Conservative lawmakers since they voted against his predecessor Theresa May's Brexit deal in 2019.

The new rules - which kick in yesterday - require proof of double-vaccination, or a recent negative test, to enter certain venues like nightclubs and sports. Despite the revolt by Tory MPs, the plans passed thanks to Labour support.

Even though the measures to combat the spread of the Omicron variant passed, the scale of the resistance surprised many and gave a clear message about Johnson's leadership and authority.

In parliament, main opposition Labour leader Keir Starmer said Johnson was “the worst possible prime minister at the worst possible time” and “too weak to lead”.

“His own MPs have had enough. They won't defend him. They won't turn up to

support him. They won't vote for basic public health measures,” he said.

Johnson, who has warned of a “tidal wave” of Omicron that could overwhelm health services, said he understood the “legitimate anxieties” of colleagues.

But he added: “I believe the approach we are taking is balanced and proportionate and right for this country.”

Johnson will be well aware of the implications for such a haemorrhaging of support: Tory MPs forced an internal vote of no confidence in Theresa May and she had to quit.

Conservative MP Geoffrey Clifton-Brown said Johnson, who secured the Tories an 80-seat majority at the last general election, needed to listen.

If he failed to do so, he could face a leadership challenge in the new year, he added.

The Tory rebellion could not have come at a worse time, with the party having taken a battering in recent weeks by a series of scandals.

But it could get worse if they lose a by-election in the safe seat of North Shropshire, in central England, on Thursday.



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## Half of Brits can't cook traditional Xmas dinner

AFP, London

Nearly half of adults in Britain cannot cook a full Christmas dinner that includes all the traditional trimmings, according to a survey unveiled yesterday.

Around 47 percent of respondents admitted they would be unable to cook a December 25 meal featuring roast turkey, cranberry sauce, bread sauce, Christmas pudding, mince pies and other storied elements.

The poll of 2,001 adults conducted earlier this month by researchers Censuwide on behalf of food and grocery chain Co-op found that around one in three do not plan to cook a Christmas dinner.

Around a third blamed never having been taught the cookery skills needed, while a third said they did not have the space or equipment to pull off making the dinner.

Cranberry sauce was the most challenging part to cook, with around four out of five people saying they could not make the sweet turkey accompaniment from scratch. Bread sauce -- another festive staple made from milk thickened with breadcrumbs -- and Christmas pudding were next on the list of insurmountable dinner elements.

Nearly three-quarters of respondents conceded they would not be able to cook them.

## EU unveils part two of climate plan

REUTERS, Brussels

European Union policymakers yesterday set out a second set of proposals to cut emissions across its economy this decade and to put it on track for net zero greenhouse gas output by 2050.

In July, the 27-country bloc became the first of the world's major emitters to map out a detailed plan to meet its climate targets with legislative proposals including bigger carbon markets and a phase-out of combustion engine car sales.

The European Commission proposed a second, smaller set of regulations yesterday, which is focussed on buildings, methane emissions and fossil gas.

The measures proposed yesterday include a reform of EU gas markets, which aims to integrate low-carbon gases such as hydrogen into the network, but did not offer the firm phase-out plan for fossil gas that campaigners have called for.

And Brussels unveiled its first legislation to tackle emissions of methane, a potent planet-warming gas.

This proposal would force oil and gas operators in the EU to find and fix leaks of methane in their infrastructure, though it did not extend the rules to cover the companies abroad that supply most of Europe's gas.

A third proposal aimed at buildings would require EU countries to renovate millions this decade to save energy.

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