

## IRAN NUCLEAR NEGOTIATIONS

### Talks paused for 'political decisions'

AFP, Vienna

The latest round of talks to salvage the Iran nuclear deal have been put on pause, the European Union's coordinator said, calling for "political decisions" to break the deadlock.

Diplomats have been meeting in the Austrian capital for several weeks straight in the search for a breakthrough to revive the 2015 deal involving Iran, the United States, Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia.

The EU has played the role of mediator and the bloc's Enrique Mora tweeted, "Participants will go back to capital(s) for consultations and instructions to come back next week. "Political decisions are needed now."

The sentiment was shared by chief negotiators for Britain, France, Germany and Russia.

The 8th round is expected to resume next week.

Talks to rescue the faltering accord began in the Austrian capital in April and, after a five-month suspension, resumed in November.

There have been signs of progress in the latest round of talks. On Monday, Iran for the first time said it was open to direct negotiations with the US, which quickly declared itself ready to hold talks "urgently".

France on Friday saw signs the talks could now succeed.

Washington has remained cautious with Brett McGurk, the top White House official on the Middle East, warning Thursday the negotiations could still "collapse very soon".

"There's a chance for a deal and there's also a pretty good chance there's not going to be a deal - and I will tell you we are prepared for either scenario."



A helicopter flies overhead as workers clean up crude oil on Mae Ram Phueng beach following a spill caused by a leak in an undersea pipeline owned by Star Petroleum Refining Public Company Limited (SPRC) in Rayong, Thailand, yesterday. Oil washing up on a beach on Thailand's east coast could be the "nail in the coffin" for pandemic-hit hotels and restaurants, local hospitality businesses said yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



**There are no tanks in the streets. But media give the impression, if one is not here, that we have a war, that we have army in the streets... That's not the case. We don't need this panic. I don't consider the situation now more tense than before.**

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy slams war hysteria

## Taiwan issue can spark military conflict

Says Chinese ambassador to Washington

REUTERS, Washington

China and the United States could end up in a military conflict if the United States encourages Taiwan's independence, Beijing's ambassador to Washington said in a US radio interview broadcast on Friday.

China considers the neighboring, democratically ruled island of Taiwan its "sacred" territory and has never renounced the use of force to ensure eventual unification.

"Let me emphasize this. The Taiwan issue is the biggest tinder-box between China and the United States," Qin Gang told National Public Radio.

"If the Taiwanese authorities, emboldened by the United States, keep going down the road for independence, it most likely (will) involve China and the United States, the two big countries, in a military conflict," he said.

Asked to comment, the US Defense Department said the United States remained committed to its "one China" policy and its commitments under the US Taiwan Relations Act. Under the long-standing policy, Washington officially recognizes Beijing rather than Taipei,

while the act requires the United States to provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself.

"We will continue to assist Taiwan in maintaining a sufficient self-defense capability while also maintaining our own capacity to resist any use of force that would jeopardize the security of the people of Taiwan," a Pentagon spokesperson said.

While Chinese officials have warned of military action over Taiwan, it is unusual for them to link it directly to the United States.

US President Joe Biden has said that the United States was not encouraging independence for Taiwan, but he caused a stir in October when he said it would come to the island's defense if China attacked.

The latter remark appeared to depart from Washington's long-held policy of "strategic ambiguity" - not making clear how the United States would respond - though the White House quickly said Biden was not signaling a change in policy.

The chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley, told Congress last year China wants the ability to invade and hold Taiwan within the next six years but might not intend to do so in the near term.

## AFGHAN FUNDS White House gets more time to take decision

REUTERS, New York

A US judge on Friday gave the Biden administration more time to decide what should be done with about \$7 billion of frozen Afghan central bank funds, which some victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks want and which the Taliban claims is theirs.

US Magistrate Judge Sarah Netburn in Manhattan gave the Department of Justice until Feb 11 to recommend what to do with the funds, which are held at the Federal Reserve Bank in New York.

The funds have been frozen since the Taliban's military takeover in Afghanistan last August. A recommendation on what to do has been expected by Friday.

In a Thursday court filing, the Justice Department requested more time to address the "many complex and important issues" including Sept. 11 victims' claims, diplomacy, and the "still evolving" situation in Afghanistan.

Some Sept. 11 victims and their families are seeking to cover unsatisfied court judgments related to the attacks, which killed nearly 3,000 people.

The White House also faces pressure from the United Nations and humanitarian aid groups not to apply the funds toward court judgments. They would prefer money be used to shore up Afghanistan's central bank, ease the country's liquidity shortfalls, and help address poverty, hunger and other economic distress.

## FEAR OF POLITICAL CHAOS Italian parties to beg president to stay another term

AFP, Rome

Italy's warring parties were yesterday set to beg outgoing President Sergio Mattarella to stay for another term, fearing political chaos due to a possible failure to elect his successor.

The 80-year-old - who has repeatedly ruled out serving again - won nearly 400 votes at the seventh ballot, and the parties in the governing coalition said they had struck a deal to elect him at the next round.

Mattarella will need to get 505 or more votes at the eighth ballot, which starts at 16:30pm.

Italy's presidency is largely ceremonial, but the head of state wields serious power during political crises, from dissolving parliament to picking new prime ministers and denying mandates to fragile coalitions.

Prime Minister Mario Draghi, a former European Central Bank chief brought in to lead the government almost a year ago, had been touted for months as the most eligible head of state. But some parties have insisted he is too precious a resource to lose as prime minister and many experts have pointed to the popular and trusty Mattarella as the best choice after a string of failed ballots.

## Asean top diplomats to meet next month

REUTERS, Phnom Penh

Foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) will meet next month to discuss humanitarian aid for Myanmar, the current chair of the grouping, Cambodia, said yesterday. Cambodia's foreign minister, and Asean special envoy, Prak Sokhonn, is a preparing for his first visit to Myanmar, the foreign ministry said in a statement. "His priorities are to implement the five-point consensus which was agreed unanimously and will be discussed during the upcoming Asean foreign ministers' retreat," it said, adding that the event was scheduled for Feb. 16 and 17. Last year's military overthrow of Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government in Myanmar has been a setback for Asean and its efforts to present itself as a credible and integrated bloc.

## COUP IN MYANMAR

### China warns against more violence

AFP, United Nations

The world must work to avert more violence and even civil war in Myanmar, China's ambassador to the UN said Friday.

"That's the primary goal we should have in our mind," Zhang Jun told reporters after a two-hour, closed-door meeting of the Security Council.

He said the new UN special envoy for Myanmar, Noeleen Heyzer of Singapore, has asked the ruling junta in that country for permission to visit.

"We need to give her some more time. She's talking to all the relevant parties. She has also requested for that. There's hope that she can get it," Zhang said.

Myanmar's military seized power on February 1 last year, ousting the civilian government and arresting its de facto leader, Aung San Suu Kyi.

The UNHCR said that since the coup, at least 1,500 people had been killed by the military in a brutal effort to crush dissent, while thousands more would have been killed in the wider armed conflict and violence.

The deputy British ambassador, James Kariuki, said the special envoy expressed the desire during the council meeting to go to Myanmar soon. "She will try to go soon but the conditions have to be right," he said.



A person makes his way through the snow during a Nor'easter storm in Manhattan, New York City, US, yesterday. Thousands of flights in the US were canceled yesterday as parts of the East Coast braced for a shellacking by a powerful winter storm packing heavy snow and high winds.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## 'HARMFUL CONTENT'

### Erdogan threatens to punish Turkish media

AFP, Istanbul

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday threatened Turkish media with legal action over content "incompatible with national and moral values," in a move seen by critics as an attempt to stifle the dissent.

He also sacked his justice minister and the head of the state of the statistics agency after it published official data showing last year's inflation rate hit a 19-year high.

The Turkish leader said in a decree that "it has become requisite

to take necessary measures to protect (families, children and the youth) against harmful media content."

He urged authorities to take "legal action" against the "destructive effects" of some media content -- without revealing what that would entail.

Critics said it was another bid to crack down on freedom of speech in the run-up to elections next year.

Faruk Bildirici, veteran journalist and media ombudsman, on Twitter accused Erdogan of declaring a "state of emergency against the media".

ইউনিয়ন ইন্স্যুরেন্স কোঃ লিঃ এর মুখ্য নির্বাহী কর্মকর্তার এ্যাওয়ার্ড পাওয়ার্ডে অভিনন্দন

দি গ্লোবাল ইকোনোমিক্স লিমিটেড আয়োজিত ২০২১ সালের জেনারেল ইন্স্যুরেন্স খাতে "বেস্ট সিইও ইন জেনারেল ইন্স্যুরেন্স বাংলাদেশ" নামক সম্মাননায় ইউনিয়ন ইন্স্যুরেন্স কোঃ লিঃ এর মুখ্য নির্বাহী কর্মকর্তা তালুকদার মোঃ জাকারিয়া হোসেনকে পুরস্কৃত করা হয়। সম্প্রতি সংযুক্ত আরব আমিরাতের দুবাই শহরে অনুষ্ঠিত এই এ্যাওয়ার্ড গ্রহন অনুষ্ঠানে তালুকদার মোঃ জাকারিয়া হোসেন এর সাথে আরও উপস্থিত ছিলেন ইউনিয়ন ইন্স্যুরেন্স কোঃ লিঃ এর অতিরিক্ত ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক জনাব মোহাম্মদ মনির উদ্দিন। ইউনিয়ন ইন্স্যুরেন্স কোঃ লিঃ এর মুখ্য নির্বাহী কর্মকর্তার "বেস্ট সিইও ইন জেনারেল ইন্স্যুরেন্স বাংলাদেশ" এ্যাওয়ার্ড প্রাপ্তিতে কোম্পানির সর্বস্তরের কর্মকর্তা ও কর্মচারীদের পক্ষ থেকে প্রাণঢালা অভিনন্দন। সর্বস্তরের কর্মকর্তা ও কর্মচারীবৃন্দ।

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