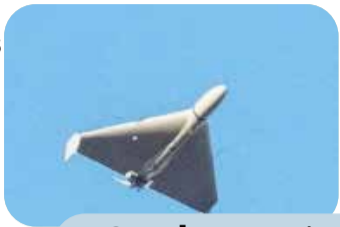


News in brief

◆ **The United States**

yesterday added seven Iranian entities to its trade blacklist for producing drones that Russia has used to attack Ukraine, according to a posting by the US Department of Commerce. The Iranian entities added to the blacklist are Design and Manufacturing of Aircraft Engines, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Aerospace Force, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Research and Self-Sufficiency Jihad Organization, Oje Parvaz Mado Nafar Company, Paravar Pars Company, Qods Aviation Industry, and Shahed Aviation Industries. The Commerce Department posting said the Iranian unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) produced are being transferred to Russia for use in Ukraine, activity that is contrary to US national security and foreign policy interests.



US curbs exports to Iranian firms for producing drones for Russia

◆ **China's new foreign minister**

Qin Gang wants to build stronger ties with Saudi Arabia and set up a China-Gulf free trade zone "as soon as possible", according to a ministry statement published late on Monday. Qin, who was just recently named to the position, made the suggestion in a telephone conversation with his Saudi Arabian counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, adding that China highly appreciates Saudi Arabia's consistent firm support on issues involving China's core interests. He said the sides should further expand cooperation on economy, trade, energy, infrastructure, investment, finance, and high technology. In addition, Qin pressed for continuously strengthening the China-Gulf strategic partnership and building "the China-Gulf Free Trade Zone as soon as possible".

China foreign minister seeks stronger economic ties with Saudi Arabia

◆ **President Joe Biden's administration**

said it will end COVID-19 emergency declarations on May 11, nearly three years after the United States imposed sweeping pandemic measures to curb the spread of the illness. The COVID-19 national emergency and public health emergency (PHE) were put in place in 2020 by then-President Donald Trump. Biden has repeatedly extended the measures, which allow millions of Americans to receive free tests, vaccines and treatments. The White House's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) said in a statement the declarations, which were set to expire in the coming months, would be extended again until May 11 and then terminated.



US to end COVID-19 emergency declarations on May 11

◆ **The United States**

and its allies imposed further sanctions on Myanmar yesterday, marking the two-year anniversary of the coup with curbs on energy officials and members of the junta, among others. Washington imposed sanctions on the Union Election Commission, mining enterprises, energy officials and current and former military officials, according to a Treasury Department statement. Details of the U.S. move were first reported by Reuters. It marks the first time the United States has targeted Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) officials under the current Myanmar sanctions program, a Treasury spokesperson said. Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom also announced sanctions on Tuesday. Tuesday's U.S. move targets the managing director and deputy managing director of the state-owned MOGE, which is the junta's single largest revenue generating state-owned enterprise, according to the Treasury statement.

US, allies mark anniversary of Myanmar coup with fresh sanctions

CURIOSER & CURIOSER

Hunter Biden threatened to withhold cash-strapped assistant's pay if she didn't FaceTime him naked
Daily Mail

Hunter Biden threatened one of his cash-strapped young female staffers with withholding her pay if she didn't FaceTime him for sex.

Shocking texts between the President's son, 52, and his young assistant, who was 29 at the time, show Hunter asking for video sex sessions and sending her cash via Apple Pay after she pleaded that she was struggling to make rent.

The woman, who DailyMail.com has chosen not to identify, worked as an assistant at Hunter's law firm, Owasco, in 2018 and 2019. She is the fourth employee he is known to have had a sexual relationship with.

Documents on his abandoned laptop show Hunter put his lover and brother's widow Hallie Biden on his company payroll, as well as her sister Liz Secundy, with whom he also had an affair, texts reveal.

He also hired his daughter's basketball coach, according to former stripper Lunden Rob-



Hunter had also put his one-time lover and brother's widow Hallie Biden (left) on his company payroll, as well as her sister Liz Secundy (right) with whom he had an affair, texts reveal



Lunden Roberts eventually had to sue Hunter for child support

erts, but ended her employment and stopped responding to her messages after she told him she was pregnant with his child. Roberts eventually had to sue him for child support.

Messages and emails involving his now 33-year-old assistant first appear on Hunter's laptop in June 2018, when he flew her from Los Angeles to Washington DC.

Russia claims village of Bakhmut in big push

● **Russia says captures Blahodatne, days after Wagner claimed it**

● **Biden says 'no' when asked about F-16s for Ukraine**

● **Zelenskiy says Moscow seeks 'revenge'**

● **UK says Russia assaults Vuhledar with at least a brigade**

● **Russia's gains this month biggest since mid-2022**



A convoy of Ukraine-bound Bradley Fighting Vehicles load onto the carrier ARC Integrity at the Transportation Core Dock in North Charleston, South Carolina



Ukrainian servicemen set up a mortar for troops, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in region, Ukraine



Military experts say Moscow appears determined to push forward in the coming months before Kyiv receives hundreds of newly pledged Western tanks and armoured vehicles for a counter-attack to recapture occupied territory this year.

Reuters | Kyiv

Russia claimed yesterday to have captured a village on the northern outskirts of the city of Bakhmut, which it is attempting to surround in a big push for what would be its biggest prize in Ukraine since last summer.

There was no immediate response from Kyiv to Moscow's claim about the village of Blahodatne, and Reuters was not immediately able to verify the

situation there. It came three days after the head of Russia's Wagner Group said the mercenary force had seized the village in an attack Kyiv said it had repelled.

The village, which sits on one of the main roads into Bakhmut, about 5 km (3 miles) north, was captured with the help of aerial support, Moscow's defence ministry said in a statement.

Moscow has made clear, if gradual, advances in the area in recent weeks, notably capturing the salt-mining town of Soledar to Bakhmut's north.

Were it to force Ukraine to withdraw from the city that once

held 75,000 people, it would be Moscow's first big prize since it took the similarly-sized cities of Sievierodonetsk and Lysychansk in July.

During the fighting for Bakhmut, two civilians, a boy and a 70 year-old-man, were killed in a Russian artillery attack on Tuesday, regional governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said. Four others were wounded in the attack, he said.

Separately, a large Russian force has launched an assault against the Ukrainian-held bastion of Vuhledar this week, further south along the same eastern front. Russian officials have claimed to have

Families seek loved ones after Pakistan mosque blast

● **All but three of 100 dead are police**

● **At least 170 people were wounded**

● **Rescue work continues to clear mosque rubble**

● **No group has officially owned the attack**

● **Peshawar sits on the edge of the Pashtun tribal lands, a region mired in violence for the past two decades**

● **Attack happens amid political, economic crisis**

Reuters | Peshawar, Pakistan



Chief of Army Staff (COAS) of Pakistan Asim Munir and Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visit an injured, after a suicide blast in a mosque, at a hospital in Peshawar, Pakistan



People and rescue workers gather amid the hall when he struck.

"My son, my child," cried an elderly woman walking alongside an ambulance carrying coffins, as rescue workers stretchered wounded people to a hospital emergency unit.

At least 170 people were wounded in the blast, which demolished the upper storey of the mosque as hundreds of worshippers performed noon prayers.

Riaz Mahsud, a senior local government official, said the casualty toll was likely to rise as workers searched through the debris.

"So far, 100 bodies have been brought to Lady Reading Hospital," a spokesman for the largest medical facility in the city, Mo-

hammad Asim, said in a statement.

Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah told parliament that 97 of the 100 were police officials.

Authorities say they do not know how the bomber managed to breach the military and police checkpoints leading into the Police Lines district, a colonial-era, self-contained encampment in the city centre that is home to middle- and lower-ranking police personnel and their families.

Given the security concerns in Peshawar, the mosque was built to allow police to pray without leaving the area. Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said the bomber was in the first row in the prayer

The attack is the deadliest in Peshawar since twin suicide bombings at All Saints Church killed scores of worshippers in September 2013, in what is the deadliest attack on Pakistan's Christian minority.

Peshawar sits on the edge of the Pashtun tribal lands, a region mired in violence for the past two decades. The most active militant group in the area is the Pakistani Taliban, also called Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), an umbrella group for Sunni and sectarian Islamist factions opposed to the government in Islamabad.

No group has officially owned