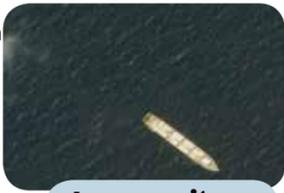


News in brief

◆ **Iran's Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday an Iranian ship, the Saviz, had been attacked in the Red Sea, a day after media reports that the vessel had been hit with limpet mines.** "The explosion occurred on Tuesday morning near the Djibouti coast and caused minor damage with no casualties. The vessel was a civilian ship stationed there to secure the region against pirates," ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said.



Iran says its ship Saviz was attacked in Red Sea

◆ **Cameras in Tesla cars are not activated outside of North America,** the U.S. automaker said on its Chinese social media page on Wednesday, seeking to assuage security concerns in the world's biggest car market. "Even in the United States, car owners can freely choose whether to turn on its (the camera system's) use. Tesla is equipped with a network security system with world-leading security levels to ensure user

Tesla tells China car cameras not activated outside North America



privacy protection," the electric carmaker wrote on Weibo, China's Twitter-like social media site. At a virtual forum in Beijing in March, held not

long after reports of the ban surfaced, Tesla founder Elon Musk emphasised the company's business motivations for protecting user privacy.

◆ **Britons spent 439 million pounds (\$608 million) on confectionaries ahead of Easter** in the four weeks to March 27, a 34% rise compared with the same period in 2020, industry data showed yesterday.

Ahead of a slight easing of lockdown restrictions in England on March

Sweet-toothed Britons spend 150 million pounds more on Easter treats



29 but with non essential retail remaining closed, consumers also turned to supermarkets to treat themselves on clothes as well as home and garden items, market researcher NielsenIQ said. It said sales of clothing doubled to 313 million pounds, while sales of home, up 61%, and garden items, up 92%, collectively increased to 175 million pounds.

◆ **Sony Pictures Entertainment has teamed up with Thailand's Amazon Falls** to set up an amusement park based on productions from its Columbia Pictures studio, in the Southeast Asian country, the companies said on Tuesday. The 14-acre Columbia Pictures' theme and water park, Aquaverse, will be open for public from October and feature rides and attractions based on the studio's popular movies including "Ghostbusters", "Jumanji", "Bad Boys", "Men in Black" and "Hotel Transylvania".

Sony Pictures to set up Columbia Pictures-themed amusement park in Thailand

Russian foreign minister visits Pakistan in search of Afghan peace

Russia's foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov, met his Pakistani counterpart in Islamabad yesterday for talks on a troubled peace process in Afghanistan, where both countries have long histories of involvement. It was the first time a Russian foreign minister had visited Pakistan in nine years.

Myanmar forces kill seven protesters



China sends more jets; Taiwan says it will fight to the end if there's war

Reuters | Taipei

China sent more fighter jets into Taiwan's air defence zone yesterday in a stepped up show of force around the island Beijing claims as its own, and Taiwan's foreign minister said it would fight to the end if China attacks.

The democratic self-governed island has complained of repeated military activities by Beijing in recent months, with China's air force making almost daily forays in Taiwan's air defence identification zone. On Monday, China said an aircraft carrier group was exercising close to the island.

Taiwan's Defence Ministry said 15 Chinese aircraft including 12 fighters entered its air defence identification zone, with an anti-submarine aircraft flying to the south through the Bashi Channel between Taiwan and the Philippines.



Taiwan Foreign Minister Joseph Wu

Taiwan's air force sent up aircraft to intercept and warn the Chinese away, the ministry added.

Speaking earlier in the day, Taiwan Foreign Minister Joseph Wu said the United States was concerned about the risk of conflict.

"From my limited understanding of American decision makers watching developments in this region, they clearly see the danger of the possibility

of China launching an attack against Taiwan," he told reporters at his ministry.

"We are willing to defend ourselves without any questions and we will fight the war if we need to fight the war. And if we need to defend ourselves to the very last day we will defend ourselves to the very last day."

China's Taiwan Affairs Office and the US State Department did not respond to requests for comment on Wu's remarks. China has said its activities around Taiwan are aimed at protecting China's sovereignty. The United States has expressed concern about China's movements, and said its commitment to Taiwan is "rock solid".

Adding to the stepped up military action near Taiwan, the US Navy said the guided missile destroyer USS John S. McCain conducted a "routine" transit of the Taiwan Strait on Wednesday.

Iran has pr enriched u



European External Action Service (EEAS) De Affairs Abbas Aragchi wait for the start of

● **Iran's hardline parliament passed a law last year that obliges the government to harden its nuclear stance**

Reuters | Dubai

Iran has made 55 kg of uranium enriched to up to 20% - the point at which it is highly enriched - indicating quicker production than the 10 kg a month rate required by an Iranian law that created the process in January, Iranian authorities said yesterday.

The disclosure comes a day after Tehran and Washington held what they described as "constructive" indirect talks in Vienna on Tuesday aimed at finding ways to revive a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers.

10 kg a month

Iran's hardline parliament passed a law last year that obliges the government to harden its nuclear stance, partly in reaction to former President Donald Trump's withdrawal from the nuclear deal in 2018.

Trump's withdrawal prompted Iran to steadily overstep the accord's limits on its nuclear programme designed to make it harder to develop an atomic bomb - an ambition Tehran denies.

COVID-19 Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths	Global tally
1 USA	31,564,041	570,306	133,270,274
2 Brazil	13,106,058	337,364	
3 India	12,847,674	166,426	
4 France	4,841,308	97,273	Deaths
5 Russia	4,606,162	101,480	2,890,973
6 UK	4,367,291	126,927	Recovered:
7 Italy	3,700,393	112,374	107,472,514
8 Turkey	3,579,185	32,667	New cases
9 Spain	3,317,948	75,911	+248,305
10 Germany	2,914,522	77,912	New deaths
11 Poland	2,471,617	55,703	+5,351
12 Colombia	2,468,236	64,524	
13 Argentina	2,428,029	56,634	
14 Mexico	2,256,380	205,002	

Figures as of closing

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	206,510		12,253		157,006	37,251
Saudi Arabia	394,952	+783	6,719	+8	381,189	7,044
UAE	476,019	+1,883	1,520	+4	460,841	13,658
Kuwait	239,952		1,373		224,701	13,878
Oman	166,685	+1,205	1,735	+7	149,049	15,901
Qatar	186,201	+940	320	+8	167,480	18,401



The Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS John S. McCain prepares to depart from dry dock at Fleet Activities Yokosuka after an extensive maintenance period in Yokosuka, Japan,

Philippine leader cancels address as coronavirus spreads among staff

Reuters | Manila

Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte cancelled a weekly televised address and meeting with his coronavirus task force on Wednesday, following dozens of COVID-19 cases among his staff and secu-

rity detail, government officials said.

The Philippines is battling one of the worst coronavirus outbreaks in Asia, with hospitals in the capital overwhelmed amid record daily infections, while authorities face delays in delivery of COVID-19 vaccines.

The country has seen new daily cases surge in recent weeks, surpassing 15,000 on April 2, most of those in the congested capital, Manila.

"The physical safety of the president remains our utmost concern," presidential spokesman Harry Roque said.