

# Britney Spears checks into rehab following DUI arrest

AFP | Los Angeles, United States

US pop superstar Britney Spears has checked herself into rehab following her arrest last month on suspicion of driving while intoxicated near Los Angeles, US media reported on Sunday.

The 44-year-old singer was arrested in early March and booked into custody by the Ventura County Sheriff's Department on suspicion of DUI.

She was released soon after, and a representative for Spears at the time described the incident as "completely inexcusable" and said Spears would "take

The cover of Britney Spears' book "The Woman in Me" from an online retailer in front of a picture of Britney Spears and Justin Timberlake at the American Music Awards



the right steps and comply with the law," according to the entertainment outlet Deadline.

On Sunday, multiple US news outlets reported that Spears had voluntarily checked herself into a treatment facility.

It was not immediately clear when Spears entered the facility. She is scheduled to appear in court for her DUI arrest on May 4, according to the Los Angeles Times. In her 2023 memoir "The Woman in Me," Spears insisted she never did hard drugs and that she did not have a drinking problem, but she admitted that she was taking Adderall, the ADHD medication.

Following a public breakdown in 2007, Spears was placed under the conservatorship of her father Jamie Spears, who controlled her money and her personal life,

even as she continued to perform high-profile concerts.

The conservatorship was dissolved by a Los Angeles court in 2021, after a groundswell of public support to "Free Britney."



Spears had phenomenal early music success in the late 1990s with hits like "...Baby One More Time" but has largely stepped back from music in recent years.

## Russian FM to visit China April 14-15: Beijing

AFP | Beijing, China

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will visit China this week, Beijing said on Monday, as the two sides hope to boost cooperation.

"Russia's foreign minister Lavrov will pay an official visit to China from April 14 to 15," foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun told a news conference.

Lavrov will hold talks with China's top diplomat Wang Yi in which the two will "exchange views and coordinate positions on the development of bilateral relations, cooperation in various fields, and international and regional issues of common concern", Guo said.

The Russian foreign ministry said in a statement that the



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov

pair would discuss the war in Ukraine and the situation in the Middle East.

Beijing and Moscow are close economic and political partners, and the relationship has deepened further since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Wang held a call with Lavrov on April 5, when the pair agreed Beijing and Moscow would work together to deescalate tensions in the Middle East.

## EU chief touts electric power strategy as energy crisis bites

Crisis has already cost the 27-nation bloc more than 22 billion euros

Oil and gas prices have surged since US-Israeli strikes on Iran began on February 28

Details are to be unveiled as part of a package to be presented next week

AFP | Brussels, Belgium

Brussels will present next week plans to tackle high energy costs caused by the Iran war and before the summer will unveil a broader package to boost Europe's electrification, EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said yesterday.

The energy crisis has already cost the 27-nation bloc more than 22 billion euros (\$26 billion) in higher fossil fuel bills, von der Leyen said after a meeting of the EU's top executive body dedicated to the issue.

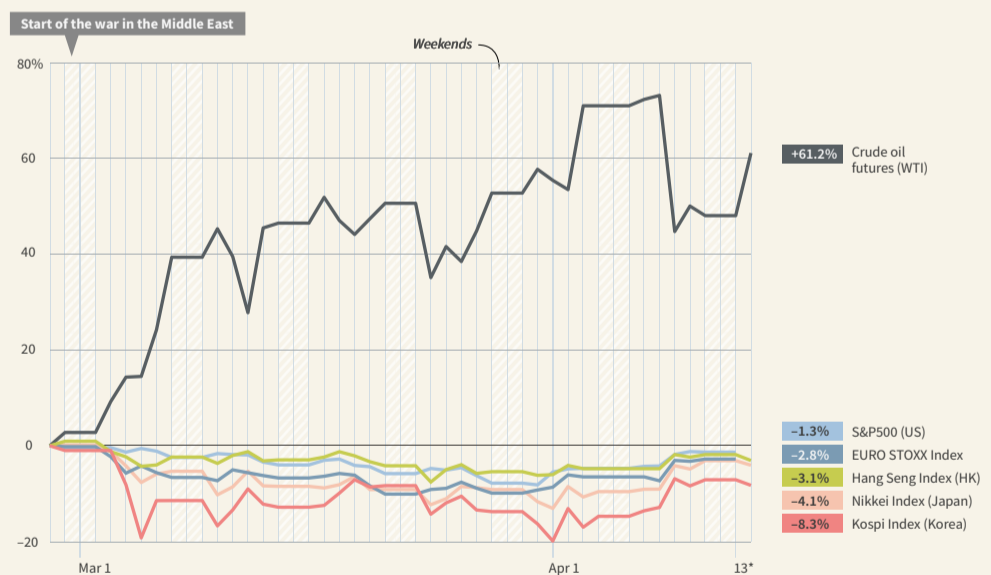
"These events make clear we are paying a very high price for our over dependency on fossil fuels," the European Commission chief told a press conference in Brussels, calling for a faster switch towards renewables and nuclear power.

"We need to scale up the homegrown, affordable, reliable energy," she said, adding the commission was hoping to get new rules aimed at accelerating grid connections across the bloc and present an "electrification strategy" before the summer.

Oil and gas prices have surged since US-Israeli strikes on Iran began on February 28, with Tehran retaliating by effectively blocking the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz and attacking Gulf energy infrastructure.

### Oil and selected markets since the start of the Middle East war

Percentage change since Feb 26



Source: Bloomberg \*As of 03:50 GMT

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# 22

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To address the cost crunch, the commission is considering relaxing its state aid rules to give member states more space to support the "most exposed sectors", von der Leyen said.

Details are to be unveiled as part of a package to be presented next week before an informal meeting of European Union leaders in Cyprus, she added.

The commission later said it

was consulting member states on a draft proposal that would allow governments to grant "calibrated temporary support" to affected sectors.

This would include enabling states to "cover part of the price increases for fuel or fertilisers", it said.

Upping the share of electricity costs that state aid could cover for energy-intensive industries was also on the table, the commission said.

Von der Leyen said the EU was looking to coordinate oil stock releases and the filling of gas storage across the bloc to avoid member

states competing against each other on the market, driving up prices.

Steps to support energy efficiency are also being considered, the commission president added, citing the "renovation of buildings" and "the renewal of equipment in industrial operations" without further elaborating.

"The least expensive energy is the energy that is not used," she said.

A proposal to reform electricity taxes and grid charges will follow in May, von der Leyen added.



## IMF chief warns global monetary system not ready for AI cyber threats

AFP | Washington, United States

The global monetary system is not prepared to address artificial intelligence's rapidly escalating risks, the IMF managing director warned Sunday, as a new Anthropic model raises urgent cybersecurity concerns.

Kristalina Georgieva's comments came a day before the International Monetary Fund and World Bank kick off their annual spring meetings in Washington, and after US regulators last week convened an emergency meeting with top bank chiefs over the new AI model.

"We don't have the ability to -- as a world -- to protect the international monetary system against massive cyber risks," she told CBS News' "Face the Nation" program.

"We are very keen to see more attention to the guardrails that are necessary to protect financial stability in a world of AI," she said, seeking global collaboration on the issue.

"Yes, this is an issue that has been addressed here in the United States, but it is an issue that easily can present itself in other parts of the world, and that is why we need people to cooperate."

Anthropic announced on April 7 that it was limiting the release of its new "Mythos" model over risks posed by its unprecedented ability to rapidly identify security vulnerabilities.

The company said it was working with a consortium of major US firms to test the model, raising concerns that foreign companies may miss out on vital safety preparations.