

China vows 'countermeasures' if Trump tariff threat materialises

AFP | Beijing, China

China vowed yesterday it would impose "countermeasures" if US President Donald Trump made good on his threat to impose new tariffs following reports Beijing has supplied or intends to supply weapons to Iran.

Trump -- who is scheduled to visit Beijing next month for talks with counterpart Xi Jinping -- said Sunday he would hit China's goods with a 50% tariff if it provided military assistance to Tehran.

His comments came the same day US outlet CNN reported that US intelligence indicated China was preparing to deliver new air defence systems to Iran within the next few weeks, citing three people familiar with the assessments.



A man fixes the United Arab Emirates' national flag to the roof of his house in Dubai, after a call by the UAE' Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai urging people across the country to hoist the flag as a symbol of unity and pride

Trump 'shocked' at Meloni's war stance

US President Donald Trump criticised Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, a political ally, in an interview published on Tuesday for her unwillingness to help in the Iran war. "I'm shocked at her. I thought she had courage, but I was wrong," he told Italian daily Corriere della Sera.



Red Cross sends aid

The international Red Cross and Red Crescent said a shipment of medical supplies and other aid crossed the border into Iran on Sunday, its first delivery since the start of the war.

Lebanon, Israel to meet

Israel said it was open to peace with Lebanon ahead of the first direct talks in decades between the neighbours, but that Hezbollah remained the "problem" blocking an agreement on ending fighting.

The United States is pressing for a halt to the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, fearing it could derail the two-week ceasefire in Washington's war with Iran.

The Washington meeting will be mediated by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and include the Israeli and Lebanese ambassadors to the United States.

French President Emmanuel Macron said he had urged US President Donald Trump and his Iranian counterpart Masoud Pezeshkian to restart talks.

Ships exit Gulf from Iran despite blockade

AFP | London, United Kingdom

At least two ships sailing from Iranian ports crossed the Hormuz Strait yesterday despite a US military blockade, maritime tracking data indicated.

They were among at least four Iran-linked vessels that used the route after Washington's blockade came into effect at 1400 GMT on Monday, according to maritime data provider Kpler.

The Liberia-flagged bulk carrier Christianna crossed after unloading 74,000 tonnes of corn at the Iranian port of Bandar Imam Khomeini, passing Iran's Larak Island in the strait around

US seeking 20-year pause of Iran uranium enrichment

AFP | Washington, United States

The United States sought a 20-year suspension of Iran's uranium enrichment programme as part of a deal to end the war, according to media reports Monday.

Media outlets reported that Washington asked Tehran to agree not to enrich uranium for 20 years, citing officials close to

the negotiations held in Islamabad on Saturday. The 20-year pause would be accompanied by sanctions relief, the Wall Street Journal reported. Iran in turn proposed to suspend its nuclear activity for five years, according to The New York Times. Vance said that Washington had made its red lines clear in talks with Tehran, and that the "ball is in the Iranian

court" now. Earlier on Monday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Vance had told him the removal of all of Iran's 60% enriched uranium is a "central issue" for Trump. The Washington n also wanted to ensure "that there is no further enrichment in the years ahead -- even decades ahead -- no enrichment within Iran," Netanyahu added.

island route. It was empty and heading to the Iraqi port of Khor al Zubair, according to its transponder signal, Kpler said.

It is sanctioned by the US for Iran-related trade and many of its past trips to the Gulf had been to Iran, picking up Iranian bitumen and asphalt to ship to Asia.

US says stopped six ships

The US military said yesterday that it successfully stopped six ships from sailing out of Iranian ports during the first 24 hours of a naval blockade against the Islamic republic.

Central Command (CENTCOM) -- which is responsible for American forces in the Middle East -- said more than 10,000 US troops, over a dozen warships, and dozens of aircraft are taking part in the mission.

"During the first 24 hours, no ships made it past the US blockade and six merchant vessels complied with direction from US forces to turn around to re-enter an Iranian port on the Gulf of Oman," CENTCOM said in a post on X. The blockade is being enforced impartially against vessels of all nations entering or departing Iranian ports and coastal areas, including all Iranian ports on the Arabian Gulf and Gulf of Oman," it added.



About one-fifth of the world's oil consumption passes through this narrow chokepoint every day, making it one of the most strategically vital shipping lanes on the planet.

1600 GMT on Monday, Kpler data showed. A second ship, the Comoros-flagged tanker Elpis, was near Larak Island around 1100 GMT and cleared the strait about 1600 GMT.

It was loaded with 31,000 tonnes of methanol, having left the Iranian port of Bushehr on March 31, Kpler data showed.

US Central Command had said the blockade would target "vessels of all nations entering or departing Iranian ports and coastal areas". A Chinese tanker, the Rich Starry, also crossed the

strait overnight from Monday to Tuesday via the Iranian-approved vetting route south of Larak Island.

Kpler said that vessel was carrying 31,500 tonnes of methanol and was bound for Sohar in Oman, according to data from its transponder.

Media including leading shipping journal Lloyd's List interpreted the Chinese ship's passage as a "test" of US President Donald Trump's blockade.

Sanctioned ships

The Rich Starry is listed by the United States' Office of Foreign Assets Control as being sanctioned for its ties to Iran.

The Elpis is also under US sanctions for ties to Iran, but the Christianna is not.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun on Tuesday called the US move "dangerous and irresponsible".

A fourth vessel, the Madagascar-flagged tanker Murlikishan, meanwhile crossed the strait westward into the Gulf on Tuesday morning through the Larak