

News in brief

◆ **Beijing has declined a US invitation** for a meeting in Singapore between Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and his Chinese counterpart Li Shangfu, the Pentagon said. "Overnight, the PRC informed the US that they have declined our early May invitation for Secretary Austin to meet with PRC Minister of National Defense Li Shangfu in Singapore this week," Pentagon spokesman Brigadier General Pat Ryder said Monday in a statement, referring to the People's Republic of China. "The PRC's concerning unwillingness to engage in meaningful military-to-military discussions will not diminish (the Defense Department's) commitment to seeking open lines of communication with the People's Liberation Army," he said. When asked about the meeting, the Chinese foreign ministry would not confirm that Beijing had declined the invitation. "The US knows clearly why there are currently difficulties in military communication between China and the US," spokeswoman Mao Ning told a regular press conference on Tuesday.



China declines meeting with US defense chief: Pentagon

◆ **Indigenous locals** attacked a military outpost in the Amazon with bows and arrows, Venezuela's military reported Sunday.

Indigenous attack army post in Venezuela with bows and arrows

The incident occurred on Friday, a source linked to indigenous rights defenders told AFP. No injuries were reported. The attack with traditional weapons was in retaliation for the armed forces confiscating "contraband materials" meant to be used in illegal mining, regional General Domingo Hernandez Larez posted on Twitter. The materials were being sent to illegal mining camps in the Yapacana National Park, in Amazonas state, on the border with Colombia and Brazil, he added. Some five tons of food and various supplies were seized by the armed forces in the previous days during military operations against illegal mining, he added.

NATO said on Tuesday it was deploying extra forces to Kosovo after clashes in the north of the country in which 30 soldiers from a NATO-led peacekeeping force were injured. The deployment of additional NATO forces to Kosovo is a prudent measure to ensure that KFOR (the Kosovo Force) has the capabilities it needs to maintain security in accordance with our UN Security Council mandate," said Admiral Stuart B. Munsch, commander of Allied Joint Force Command Naples. "I want to commend KFOR for taking swift, restrained and professional action to intervene to stop the unrest and to save lives. "The violence must stop and all sides must stop taking actions to undermine the peace in any and all communities of Kosovo." NATO said it was deploying the Operational Reserve Forces (ORF) for the Western Balkans, who would be ready to move within seven days.

NATO deploys additional forces to Kosovo

CURIOSER & CURIOSER

Titanic gives up its forgotten treasures

Lost gold necklace made from the tooth of a megalodon shark is discovered in the shipwreck - 111 years after the doomed liner sank



Teeth of the extinct megalodon - one of the largest fish ever to exist - are known to reach over seven inches in length. The necklace is circled here in red

Daily Mail

A necklace 'made from the tooth of a megalodon shark' has been revealed in new images from the wreckage of the Titanic.

The stunning artefact was identified in footage taken last summer by Guernsey-based firm Magellan Ltd.

The footage was shot during efforts to capture the first digital scans of the shipwreck, which present it in detail - almost as if it's been retrieved

from the water.

Other objects surrounding the necklace have not been identified, although it appears to be near a collection of small ring-shaped beads.

Magellan Ltd, which is working with Atlantic Productions on a documentary about last year's expedition, is prohibited from retrieving them from the sea floor, however.

An estimated 1,517 of the 2,224 people on board Titanic were killed when the luxury ocean liner sank on April 15, 1912.

Russia says issued 1.5 million passports in occupied Ukraine

Moscow

Russia has handed out 1.5 million passports in territories it occupies in Ukraine, Moscow's Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said yesterday.

Kyiv has likened the passport handouts to efforts to suppress Ukrainian identity.

"From October last year, almost 1.5 million people received a Russian passport in the new regions," Mishustin told a government meeting.

He referred to the parts of Ukraine's Donetsk, Lugansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions that are under Russian control.

"It is important that all their residents feel real changes taking place in cities and towns, see that streets and houses are gradually being restored," he said.

The EU has said it will not recognise Russian passports issued by Moscow in the "illegally-occupied" regions of Ukraine.

Elon Musk meets Chinese FM in Beijing



Beijing

Elon Musk met Foreign Minister Qin Gang in Beijing yesterday, the ministry said, as the Tesla CEO embarks on his first trip to China in more than three years.

China is the world's biggest electric vehicle market and Tesla announced in April it would build a second massive factory in Shanghai.

Qin told Musk China was "committed to creating a better market-oriented, rule-of-law-based and internationalised business environment" for foreign enterprises, his ministry said on its website.

Musk said in response "Tesla opposes 'decoupling and breaking chains', and is willing to continue to expand its business in China", according to the ministry's readout.

Musk's ties to China have raised eyebrows in Washington, with US President Joe Biden saying in November the executive's links to foreign countries were "worthy" of scrutiny.

On Tuesday, Qin and Musk discussed relations between China and the United States, according to Beijing, with the Chinese foreign minister saying the two countries should "apply the brakes in a timely manner to avoid dangerous driving".

New truce, no battles in Sudan

Burhan and Daglo again accused each other of violating truce

AFP | Khartoum

Fighting flared again in Sudan yesterday despite the latest ceasefire pledges of the two warring generals that are meant to allow desperately needed aid to reach besieged civilians.

Both the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces formally agreed late on Monday to extend by five days a US and Saudi-brokered humanitarian truce that was frequently violated over the past week.

Since the extension was announced, more fighting was reported by residents, including "clashes with various kinds of weapons in southern Khartoum" and fighting in Nyala in the state of South Darfur.

The army leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy, paramilitary RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, again accused each other of violating the truce and claimed to only be responding to enemy aggression.

The war has killed at least 1,800 people, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project. More than a million have been displaced and nearly 350,000 have fled



Tuk-tuks (motorised rickshaws) wait for passengers along al-Sittin (sixty) road in the s

to other countries, the UN says.

Residents have been hiding from street combat and roaming looters in the capital city of more than five million, nearly 700,000 of whom have fled, according to the United Nations.

Since the fighting broke out on April 15, both generals have

committed to a series of truces. Although some Sudanese have used relative lulls in the fighting to escape, aid has only been allowed to trickle in.

The United Nations warned on Monday that Sudan has become one of the highest alert areas for food insecurity

and water

Chinese mission with first civilian reaches space station



Crew of the Shenzhou-15 spaceflight mission Fei Junlong (front L), Zhang Lu (back L) and Deng Qingming (back 2nd L) take photos with crew of the Shenzhou-16 spaceflight mission Jing Haipeng (front R), Gui Haichao (back R) and Zhu Yangzhu (back 2nd R) inside the Chinese space station core module Tianhe

Jiuquan

China sent three astronauts to its Tiangong space station yesterday, putting a civilian into orbit for the first time as it pursues plans to send a crewed mission to the Moon by 2030.

The Shenzhou-16 crew took off atop a Long March 2F rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in northwest China at 9:31 am (0131 GMT), AFP journalists saw.

They docked at the space station's Tianhe core module on Tuesday afternoon, more

than six hours after taking off, state broadcaster CCTV said.

The launch was a "complete success" and the "astronauts are in good condition", said Zou Lipeng, director of the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center.

Leading its crew is commander Jing Haipeng on his fourth mission, as well as engineer Zhu Yangzhu and Beijing University professor Gui Haichao, the first Chinese civilian in space.

China was the third country to put humans in orbit and Tiangong is the crown jewel of its space programme.

Iran 'resolves' one watchdog's concern

● Iran said the enrichment of the sample to 83% was likely due to "unintended fluctuations" in the enrichment process as it had never set out to enrich uranium to more than 60%

Tehran

Iran has "resolved" one of three cases raised by the UN watchdog as possible evidence it had not declared all its past nuclear activities, Iranian media reported yesterday.

The reports came just days before the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency is due to meet to review progress.

The IAEA had reported the discovery of traces of radioactive material at three sites not declared by Iran as having hosted past nuclear activity in a blow to efforts to restore a landmark 2015 deal between Tehran and major powers.

"With the improvement of interactions between Iran and

the on-site solution cycle of raising the production of uranium in Iran's facilities, the enrichment level was maintained at a low level, which is in line with the requirements of the 2015 deal.