

# TOP NEWS

## Truce: Scale of damage to Iran’s nuclear sites unclear

From page 1

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said his country had gained a “great victory”, and many local residents were celebrating. He said the aggressors failed in their goals of destroying Iran’s infrastructure, obliterating its peaceful nuclear energy program and inciting social unrest.

In Teheran, Iranian lawmakers voted on Wednesday in favor of a plan for the government to suspend cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations’ nuclear watchdog, Iranian state TV said. To take effect, the plan would require final approval by the Supreme National Security Council. Iran has said its enrichment activities are for civilian purposes only.

“The IAEA, which refused even to appear to condemn the attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities, has put its international credibility up for sale,” Iran’s Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said.

Under the plan, IAEA inspectors would only be allowed to enter Iran with explicit approval from the Supreme National Security Council, and only if the agency guaranteed the security of the country’s nuclear facilities, Iran’s Nournews reported.

IAEA chief Rafael Grossi said on Wednesday that the UN watchdog’s top priority is returning to Iran’s nuclear facilities to assess the impact of recent military strikes on Teheran’s nuclear program.

Amid growing concerns over potential radiation leaks in Iran following the bombings of three nuclear facilities, the IAEA released a statement on Tuesday in which it said that “some localized radioactive as well as chemical release” has been detected at the damaged sites, although Grossi said that “there has been no report of increased off-site radiation levels”.

“During these attacks, we have seen extensive damage at several nuclear sites in Iran, including its uranium conversion and enrichment facilities,” Grossi said. However, “there has been no radiological impact to the population or the environment in neighboring countries”.

Mahdi Mohammadi, an adviser to Iran’s parliament speaker, said Iran had moved its nuclear infrastructure from Fordow. An adviser to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was quoted by Iranian media as saying on Tuesday that Iran still had stocks of enriched uranium and “the game is not over”.

Sina Azodi, director of the Middle East studies program at George Washington University, told Al Jazeera: “The Israelis have not been able to achieve their objectives in destroying the Iranian nuclear program or forcing Iran to capitulate. Netanyahu may have achieved and can claim some short-term victory, but in the long term, I don’t think his leadership serves Israel’s interests.”

Since June 13, at least 610 Iranian civilians have been killed and more than 4,700 injured, while Iran’s retaliatory attacks on Israel have claimed 28 lives, according to official figures.

Agencies contributed to this story.

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## Making the right choices



Students and parents gather in Handan, Hebei province, on Wednesday at a consultation fair for this year’s enrollment in key national universities. The fair, held at Handan No 1 High School, brought together representatives of more than 100 top-tier Chinese universities to provide face-to-face counseling and to assist candidates in making informed choices for their college applications. HAO QUNYING / FOR CHINA DAILY

# Private sector has key role in global connectivity

## AIIB partners urged to pursue deeper cooperation to address funding gaps

By ZHOU LANXU and YIN MINGYUE

Encouraging greater private sector investment in cross-border infrastructure connectivity lies at the heart of advancing inclusive, sustainable global development amid rising uncertainties and global challenges, officials and financial experts said on Wednesday.

Addressing the 10th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, Finance Minister Lan Fo’an said that many developing countries are facing funding gaps for cross-border connectivity investment, due to limited public resources amid slowing global economic growth and declining international development aid.

More effective mobilization of private sector capital can help address the bottleneck of insufficient public funding and play a vital role in supporting connectivity initiatives, Lan said on Wednesday.

“China is ready to work with all parties to continue supporting the AIIB in playing a proactive role and sharing best practices to strengthen support for private sector investment in cross-border connectivity projects — all to advance global sustainable development,” Lan said.

The minister said that there is room for the AIIB to further promote alignment of rules and standards among members, explore innovative financing mechanisms, improve multiple financing tools including local currency financing,

and leverage public capital to play a guiding role, in order to ease private investors’ concerns about risks such as geopolitical uncertainty and sovereign debt default.

Jin Liqun, president and chair of the board of directors of the AIIB, said that while much of the bank’s current portfolio focuses on transportation infrastructure like roads and railways, the multilateral development bank has increasingly turned its attention to less physical areas of connection, such as financial platforms that enable cross-border trade and transmission lines that link energy markets.

According to Jin, infrastructure today is not confined to its traditional, narrow definition, but is more broadly interpreted to align with the new, artificial intelligence era.

“Our presence gives private investors confidence that these funds (that they invest) will be well-governed and invested in high-quality assets,” Jin said, encouraging the bank’s private-sector partners to continue to engage with the AIIB for greater, deeper cooperation.

“There is a Chinese proverb — When everyone gathers firewood, the flames will go on,” said Jin.

Data from the bank shows that the AIIB’s cross-border connectivity projects accounted for 33 percent of its annual portfolio in 2024, contributing to the connectivity of the Asia-Pacific region and economic and trade cooperation with other regions.

Rodrigo Salvado, director-general of the AIIB’s Operational Partnership

Department, told China Daily on the sidelines of the conference that the bank will take a multipronged approach to bring in more financing from private sector partners, including leveraging financial instruments like insurance and warranties to ease financial risks for private capital.

The bank will also make more upstream investments, which refers to early-stage, preparatory activities that lay the groundwork for viable development projects, Salvado said, adding that private capital mobilization continues to be a key priority for the AIIB.

Lan, the finance minister, also said that through years of practice, China has developed experience in supporting private sector investment, with the law on promoting the private economy, which took effect last month, explicitly supporting private sector involvement in modern infrastructure investment and construction.

“On this basis, we will continue to improve the institutional environment to fully encourage private enterprises to participate in the construction and operation of infrastructure projects, including those related to cross-border connectivity,” he said.

Emphasizing infrastructure connectivity as a key area of collaboration in coping with global challenges, Hua Zhong, a senior official at the National Development and Reform Commission’s department of foreign capital and overseas investment, also noted China’s commitment to expanding the scope of cooperation on infrastructure connectivity.

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## SCO members called on to maintain world stability

By ZHAO LEI in Qingdao, Shandong  
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Defense Minister Dong Jun has urged defense officials from member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to strengthen cooperation, unite with progressive forces, safeguard international fairness and justice, and maintain global strategic stability.

He made the remarks on Wednesday in separate meetings in Qingdao, Shandong province, with his counterparts from Belarus, Iran, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia, who are attending the two-day SCO Defense Ministers’ Meeting.

**Inside** Dong welcomed the visiting ministers, emphasizing that global geopolitics continues to rapidly change, trends of unilateralism and protectionism keep growing, and acts of hegemony, power politics and bullying have severely jeopardized the international order and have become the primary source of instability and turmoil.

He called on SCO member states to enhance coordination within multilateral frameworks including the United Nations and the SCO, attract more like-minded progressive forces, defend international fairness and justice, and maintain global strategic stability.

He said SCO member states’ defense departments must stay true to the organization’s founding missions, carry forward the “Shanghai Spirit”, strengthen SCO solidarity, deepen practical cooperation, and make concrete measures to jointly preserve the environment for peaceful development.

The visiting ministers highly commended China’s efforts as the SCO’s rotating chair in improving the organization’s operational mechanisms and advancing cooperation across various fields. They

also expressed willingness to consolidate military collaboration.

Belarusian Defense Minister Viktor Khrenin told Dong that Belarus is honored to attend its first SCO Defense Ministers’ Meeting as a full member. He said Belarus looks forward to deepening practical military cooperation between the two nations to enrich the “all-weather comprehensive strategic partnership”.

In his meeting with Dong, Iranian Defense Minister Aziz Nasirzadeh thanked China for supporting Iran’s legitimate stance amid recent conflicts in the Middle East and urged China to “continue to back justice and play a greater role in maintaining the current ceasefire and easing regional tensions”.

Pakistani Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif said that China played a significant role in preventing recent tensions and conflicts in the region from further escalating. He added that Pakistan “cherishes the ironclad friendship” with China and will work with China to enhance defense cooperation and safeguard regional peace and stability.

Ruslan Mukambetov from Kyrgyzstan said his country will join hands with China to implement their leaders’ consensus and boost military cooperation to strengthen the “comprehensive strategic partnership for the new era”.

Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov told Dong that Russia is willing to deepen strategic military exchanges and cooperation to jointly uphold global strategic stability.

China’s Defense Ministry said on Tuesday that Dong will chair the ministers’ plenary meeting on Thursday and deliver a speech.

The SCO Defense Ministers’ Meeting, the 22nd of its kind, is one of the key events hosted by China during its rotating presidency of the SCO this year.

## Eco-agricultural landscape



A giant panda image created with rice plants stretches across fields at the Tianfu Granary National Modern Agricultural Industrial Park in Chongzhou, Sichuan province, on Wednesday. The living mural, which uses rice varieties in gradients of light to dark green, has transformed the plains into a vast eco-agricultural landscape.

ZHANG LANG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

## Forum: Business leaders bullish on Chinese market

From page 1

Brende said that the challenges the world faces today — from the development of artificial intelligence to supply chain stability, and from green transition to the skills for the future — require countries to “move from competition to cooperation, from fragmentation to collaboration”.

“China has long been a vital partner in this regard. Its entrepreneurial ecosystem, particularly in areas like artificial intelligence, the digital economy, advanced manufacturing, green innovation and others, continues to be a powerful driver of global growth,” he said.

On Wednesday afternoon, Li held a symposium with representatives of the global business community attending the Summer Davos in Tianjin.

Li assured the business executives that China is committed to providing a stable development environment and a predictable policy environment for enterprises, and encouraged foreign companies to develop technological cooperation and collaborative innovation in China.

Speaking at the meeting, Dave West, president for the Asia-Pacific, Japan and Greater China of Cisco, a worldwide technology leader in the United States, expressed his confidence about development prospects in China and his hope for a stable relationship between the US and China.

“We are confident that the Chinese market will continue to create significant and exciting opportunities as the country advances toward its high-quality development goals,” West said. “I believe the global economy will be stronger with the US and China working together. And the stable US-China relations will bring mutual benefit, not just to our two countries.”

Michael Gelchie, CEO of Louis Dreyfus Co, a leading merchant and processor of agricultural goods from the Netherlands, said that his company continues to be bullish about the Chinese market and looks forward to injecting fresh growth momentum into global agricultural trade.

“Amid the complex challenges facing the world, China’s role as a stabilizing force is more critical than ever,” he said.

# Lai’s ‘Taiwan independence’ rhetoric denounced

By ZHANG YI  
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A Chinese mainland spokeswoman criticized Taiwan’s leader Lai Ching-te on Wednesday for his recent speech, calling it a blatant push for “Taiwan independence” that deepens social divisions on the island and provokes confrontation across the Taiwan Strait.

Zhu Fenglian, a spokeswoman for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, made the remarks after Lai called on Taiwan’s political parties to stand united in “protecting Taiwan and resisting” the Chinese mainland. His comments were made on Tuesday night during a speech in Taoyuan, the second in a planned series of 10 speeches across the island.

Zhu accused Lai of rehashing “Taiwan independence” rhetoric and distorting history to fuel discontent and hatred. She said his

remarks once again promoted the “two-state” fallacy of “mutual non-subordination” between the mainland and Taiwan.

“Lai has recklessly slandered cross-strait exchanges and cooperation, labeling the public’s desire for peace and the mainland’s goodwill toward compatriots as “threats,” Zhu said. “The people of Taiwan do not agree with these views.”

Lai’s actions aim to stir anti-mainland sentiment, suppress opposition parties and promote a wide-scale recall of opposition “lawmakers,” she added.

A recall vote is scheduled for July 26, targeting 24 “lawmakers” from the Chinese Kuomintang and the mayor of Hsinchu. The outcome could significantly reshape the balance of power in the island’s legislature. The opposition currently holds a narrow majority, with the Kuomintang and “the smaller Taiwan People’s Party

holding a combined 62 seats. The ruling Democratic Progressive Party, led by Lai, has 51 seats.

The DPP has framed the recall campaign as part of a broader movement to “resist the mainland and protect Taiwan”.

The spokeswoman said that since taking office, the Lai administration has sought one-party dominance, ignoring public calls to focus on improving livelihoods and pursuing peace, development and cross-strait cooperation.

Zhu accused the DPP authorities of suppressing opposition voices and individuals who support closer ties with the mainland, sparking widespread concern and dissatisfaction among Taiwan residents.

On Tuesday, civil groups and individuals advocating peaceful cross-strait development rallied outside the island’s “legislature” to oppose the DPP’s recall push.