

DAILY TRACKER

NUCLEAR ISSUES

1. Germany plans to decommission all of its nuclear reactors by the end of next year, while Belgium has set a deadline of 2025 to decommission all of its existing reactors. The move, which comes amid Europe's persistent energy crisis and the EU's ambitions to acknowledge nuclear power as a low-carbon energy source, is projected to increase the usage of fossil fuels, at least in the short term.

Source: <https://balkangreenenergynews.com/germany-belgium-to-close-nuclear-reactors-despite-europe-energy-crisis/>

2. Nuclear fusion is gaining traction as a zero-emission energy source that is deemed safer than current nuclear fission technology, as world leaders pledge to speed up climate action to avoid catastrophic changes to the globe. When light atomic nuclei combine to form a heavier nucleus, fusion energy is produced. The resulting nucleus has a lower mass than the original two, and the remaining mass is converted to energy.

Source: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/12/27/business/nuclear-fusion-spotlight/>

MISSILES/ BIO WEAPONS

1. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is gearing up for the launch of the new Rudram next-generation anti-radiation missile. It's an air-launched tactical missile that detects enemy radar sites before seeking and destroying them.

Source: <https://www.timesnownews.com/india/article/safer-skies-drdo-to-launch-next-gen-anti-radiation-missile-soon/844258>

2. Top US defence firms are bidding for billions of dollars in work related to hypersonic weapons, the next big technology focus in national-security circles. The military's growing interest in ultra-high-speed missiles, sparked by concerns that the US is falling behind Russia and China, could lead to lucrative contracts lasting decades. The military is working on a variety of super-high-speed weapons that can be launched from planes, submarines, and trucks.

Source: https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/mach-5-missiles-spur-new-arms-race-as-us-seeks-to-match-china-121122801465_1.html



3. President Vladimir Putin has stated that Russia has lately sent weapons and equipment to Tajikistan in order to bolster its defence capability. The shipments were intended to assist Tajikistan in efficiently countering external threats, Putin said at a meeting with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon in Russia's St. Petersburg on Monday.

Source: https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/russia-supplies-weapons-to-tajikistan-amid-concern-over-afghanistan-121122800075_1.html

4. According to Open Source Intelligence (OSINT), a Chinese Navy (PLAN) warship caught fire on December 27. Sentinel-2 satellite picture of Qingdao, where one of China's aircraft carriers is located, shows the vessel and smoke. The warship has yet to be identified, although it appears to be a destroyer in size.

Source: <http://www.hisutton.com/OSINT-Fire-Chinese-Warship.html>

5. In 2022, Turkey will continue to build new air defence systems, which might eventually replace the Russian S-400 and US Patriot air defence complexes, according to national media.

<https://eurasianimes.com/turkey-looks-to-replace-s-400-missiles-air-defense-system/>

6. President Joe Biden signed a defence spending bill on Monday (Dec. 27), which includes provisions urging Taiwan to participate in the 2022 Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC) and for Taiwan's asymmetric defensive capabilities to be developed.

Source: <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4390602>

7. Los Alamos National Laboratory has appointed a new associate director of weapons production who will work to help the lab accomplish its 2026 objective of producing 30 plutonium pits for warheads. Dave Eyler, who retired from the position in the fall, will be replaced by John Benner, a longtime nuclear weapons technician and manager.

Source: https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/lanl-hires-new-manager-for-nuclear-weapons-production/article_28b3b41e-674c-11ec-ad02-8ffb1a6f4fb5.html

8. The Islamic Republic is adding a new anti-missile system on the turrets of its Soviet-designed T-72M tanks to protect them from attack, the Fars news agency reported on Wednesday.

Source: <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/middle-east-watch/iran-adding-new-anti-missile-system-its-t-72m-tanks-198578>

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

1. On Tuesday, Iran and Russia both expressed optimism about discussions that began this week to salvage Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, despite Western governments' criticism that the talks are moving too slowly.

Source: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iranian-russian-officials-strike-positive-tone-nuclear-talks-2021-12-28/>

2. The day after world powers started negotiations in Vienna, European negotiators emphasised that efforts to save the historic Iran nuclear deal are "urgent." Negotiations to reinstate the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) began earlier this year, but were halted in June when Iran's new ultraconservative government was elected. The goal is to re-establish the accord after Washington pulled out in 2018, as well as to limit Tehran's nuclear programmes.

Source: https://www.timesofisrael.com/as-talks-with-iran-resume-europeans-stress-urgency-of-reaching-new-deal/?utm_source=dvr.it&utm_medium=twitter

3. Defense Minister Benny Gantz warned Iran on Tuesday that Israel will not allow it to transfer "game-changing" equipment to its regional proxies, just hours after the Israeli military reportedly attacked Iranian-made arms in Syria's Latakia port.

Source: https://www.timesofisrael.com/after-reported-syria-strike-israel-says-wont-let-iran-bring-game-changing-arms/?utm_source=dvr.it&utm_medium=twitter

4. According to The Times of Israel, the Israel Defense Forces think they have significantly curtailed Iran's capacity to transit weapons and equipment through Syria over the past year, and expect to continue doing so in 2022. Simultaneously, the military is moving forward with its preparations for a possible strike on Iran's nuclear facilities, despite current talks in Vienna between Tehran and World powers on a return to the 2015 nuclear deal in exchange for sanctions relief.

Source: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-2022-idf-focused-on-curbing-iran-in-syria-preparing-strike-on-its-nuke-program/>

5. Iran and the US started indirect negotiations on Monday to salvage the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement, with Tehran focusing on one side of the original deal, eliminating sanctions against it, despite little progress on reining in its nuclear operations.

Source: <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/irans-oil-exports-are-focus-vienna-nuclear-talks-top-diplomat-says-2021-12-27/>

6. North Korea's state-backed "malicious cyberactivities" target banks around the world, steal defence secrets, extort money through ransomware, hijack digitally mined currency, and launder ill-gotten gains through cryptocurrency exchanges, according to the US Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency. According to US and UN investigators, Kim's dictatorship has already made \$2.3 billion from cybercrime and is planning to make even more. Cybercrime has given a lifeline to North Korea's ailing economy, which has been hampered by sanctions. Kim has showed little interest in returning to talks that could result in sanctions being lifted if North Korea abandons its nuclear weapons programme.

Source: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-12-21/north-korean-army-of-cybercriminals-props-up-kim-s-nuclear-program-and-economy>

7. Fumio Kishida, Japan's prime minister, said on Monday that he is considering giving a video presentation to the United Nations' nuclear nonproliferation meeting in January. Kishida, a member of the House of Representatives from Hiroshima, had previously stated that he hoped to attend the NPT Review Conference in person. It is rare for a national leader to address the review conference, even by video, because leaders usually do not take part in the event. Every five years, Japan sends a foreign minister or a senior vice foreign minister to the United Nations Conference on Disarmament and Nonproliferation to monitor progress on nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation.

Source: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/12/27/national/kishida-npt-meeting/>

8. According to a top Israeli defence officer, there is now no deterrence to Iran's nuclear development. "The problem with Iran's nuclear program is that, for the time being, there is no diplomatic mechanism to make them stop," said Zohar Palti, the former intelligence director in the Mossad who now heads the Defense Ministry's political-military bureau, in an interview with the New Yorker magazine. "There is no deterrent," he added. "Iran is no longer afraid." US special envoy Rob Malley, in same article, says Tehran 'playing with fire,' efforts to revive 2015 deal could fail

Source: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/iran-is-playing-with-fire-says-us-special-envoy-as-nuclear-talks-restart/>

9. North Korea has begun a policy conference to respond to Vice President Joe Biden's request to resume nuclear disarmament discussions that have been delayed for nearly two years. According to the official Korean Central News Agency, Kim Jong Un attended the opening session of a Workers' Party Central Committee meeting on Monday. According to a brief broadcast issued early Tuesday, Kim and his closest aides were to "discuss and decide on the strategic and tactical policies"

Source: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-12-28/kim-jong-un-starts-meeting-to-chart-nuclear-strategy-toward-u-s>

UN REFORMS

1. Reporters Without Borders calls on China to free Zhang Zhan, one of the country's first "citizen journalists" imprisoned for covering the COVID-19 outbreak.

Source: <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/reporters-without-borders-urges-china-to-release-ailing-chinese-covid-19-journalist-zhang-zhan20211228100015/>

2. Ma Xingrui, the new Party Secretary of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, was just installed. "The Uyghurs are currently undergoing a genocide," UHRP Executive Director Omer Kanat warned. "We fear this change in leadership will not bring any relief to the suffering of Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and other Turkic peoples in our homeland." Extensive top-secret Chinese government documents leaked to the Uyghur Tribunal in early December show conclusively that East Turkistan policies are directed from the top.

Source: <https://uhrp.org/statement/change-in-leadership-in-uyghur-region-will-offer-more-of-the-same/>

3. The United States has led a group of democratic countries in proclaiming a "diplomatic boycott," in which they will boycott the competition by refusing to send representatives. "We will not be contributing to the fanfare of the Games," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said. Sen. Tom Cotton, an Arkansas Republican, went a step further in dubbing Beijing "the Genocide Games."

Source: <https://www.latimes.com/sports/olympics/story/2021-12-26/human-rights-china-ioc-2022-beijing-olympics-peng-shuai>

4. Almost a month after Pakistan announced it would allow humanitarian aid to be transported to Afghans via the Wagah land border crossing, New Delhi has been unable to export any wheat due to a lack of modalities from Islamabad.

Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/pakistan-said-will-allow-indian-wheat-for-afghanistan-still-blocks-it-101640705520924.html>

5. As Afghans endure one of the worst humanitarian crises in history, the Taliban find it easy to win Kabul but difficult to rule. As winter approaches, food, medication, and drinking water are in short supply in Afghanistan.

Source: <https://www.firstpost.com/world/taliban-find-it-easy-to-win-kabul-but-difficult-to-rule-as-afghans-face-one-of-the-worst-humanitarian-crises-ever-10241251.html>

6. The Houthi movement in Yemen has held two UNESCO and UN Human Rights staff members since early November, according to a joint statement released by the UN bodies on Tuesday, calling for their immediate release.

Source: https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/un-bodies-urge-yemens-houthis-release-two-staff-members-2021-12-28/?taid=61cb610c92a8110001a635a6&utm_campaign=trueAnthem:+Trending+Content&utm_medium=trueAnthem&utm_source=twitter

7. A charity boat carrying hundreds of migrants rescued at sea was allowed to dock in the Sicilian city of Augusta on Tuesday, as another vessel waited offshore for permission to bring 440 more to land.

Source: https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/italy-gives-safe-port-558-migrants-rescued-sea-2021-12-28/?taid=61cb5d8992a8110001a634eb&utm_campaign=trueAnthem:+Trending+Content&utm_medium=trueAnthem&utm_source=twitter

8. A crowd of women marched through Kabul, demanding that women's rights be honoured and accused Taliban authorities of executing soldiers serving the former US-backed government in secret. An AFP correspondent reported that some 30 women gathered near a mosque in central Kabul on Tuesday and marched a few hundred metres while chanting "justice, justice" before being halted by Talibanis.

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/28/afghan-women-call-for-rights-protest-alleged-taliban-killings>

9. Since the chaotic seizure of Kabul by the Taliban on August 15, an already war-devastated Afghanistan economy that had been kept afloat by international aid has been on the edge of collapsing. Hospitals do not have enough funding.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/photos/world-news/afghans-desperate-taliban-face-economic-ruin-7693423/>

10. Save the Children has verified that two of its employees were slain in a Christmas Eve atrocity in eastern Myanmar that was blamed on the military and left more than 30 people dead. More than 30 charred dead, including women and children, were discovered on a highway in Kayah state, where pro-democracy rebels have been fighting the military, according to anti-military fighters.

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/28/save-the-children-confirms-staff-killed-in-myanmar-massacre>

11. Following reports that at least 35 people were killed by Myanmar's military on Christmas Eve in Kayah state, the UN has asked for an investigation. Martin Griffiths, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, said reports of people being killed, including at least one child, were credible. He expressed his horror at news of an attack on people, and he condemned the heinous event, as well as any attacks against civilians across the country, which are illegal under international humanitarian law. Griffiths demanded a thorough and transparent investigation in order to bring the offenders to justice.

Source: <https://newsonair.com/2021/12/28/un-calls-for-investigation-after-report-of-35-massacred-by-myanmars-military-on-christmas-eve/>