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Strait of Hormuz opened amid two-week ceasefire



Iran announced on April 17 that the Strait of Hormuz is opened to commercial vessels following a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Lebanon. REUTERS FILE

Trump says naval blockade to continue

Christopher Cann, Andrea Riquier and Michael Loria
USA TODAY

Iran declared the Strait of Hormuz “completely open” to all commercial vessels, the country’s foreign minister said, meeting a central demand of the United States as the two countries teased another round of peace talks and the clock wound down on a delicate two-week ceasefire.

In his April 17 announcement, Seyed Abbas Araghchi said the declaration

was made possible by a separate 10-day ceasefire between Lebanon and Israel implemented the day before, which appeared to be holding.

“In line with the ceasefire in Lebanon, the passage for all commercial vessels through Strait of Hormuz is declared completely open for the remaining period of ceasefire,” Araghchi wrote on X.

Iran had maintained that Israel must stop attacking Lebanon before Iranian leaders would continue peace talks with the United States.

President Donald Trump said shortly after the April 16 announcement that he may travel to Pakistan to approve a peace deal with Iran. Both Iranian and U.S. officials said another round of nego-

tiations could soon occur, though no timetable has been set.

Despite the reopening of the strait, Trump said the naval blockade on Iran would continue until a deal is reached.

“THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ IS COMPLETELY OPEN AND READY FOR BUSINESS AND FULL PASSAGE, BUT THE NAVAL BLOCKADE WILL REMAIN IN FULL FORCE AND EFFECT AS IT PERTAINS TO IRAN, ONLY, UNTIL SUCH TIME AS OUR TRANSACTION WITH IRAN IS 100% COMPLETE.” Trump said on social media.

“THIS PROCESS SHOULD GO VERY

See STRAIT, Page 2A

Democrat Mejia wins NJ special election

Another primary looms in June for full term

Nicole Fallert
USA TODAY

A progressive Democrat is headed to Congress.

Analia Mejia won a special election in New Jersey’s 11th Congressional District on April 16, beating moderate Republican Joe Hathaway 59.5% to 40%, respectively, according to the Associated Press and CNN. The special election was called to fill a House seat opened by Democrat Mikie Sherrill, now the New Jersey governor, who resigned in November to run in the gubernatorial election.



Mejia

Mejia will head to Congress right away, adding a progressive voice to the U.S. House of Representatives at a time when the GOP manages a narrow majority in the chamber.

Her victory in the Democratic stronghold isn’t shocking, but it does signal a progressive ticket can win, according to Amy Funck, a postdoctoral fellow in philosophy, politics and economics at the University of Pennsylvania.

“Progressives have demonstrated effectiveness in mobilizing primary voters,” Funck said.

However, the party attempting to curb President Donald Trump’s power in 2026 elections will need to work to tune its message going forward, she said.

“More broadly, Democrats have

See MEJIA, Page 2A

Study examines fluoride’s cognitive impact

Mary Walrath-Holdridge
USA TODAY

People who drink fluoridated community water long-term are just as smart as those who don’t, a first-of-its-kind study found.

Published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences on April 13, the study is the first to test the impact of fluoridated water on cognition into late adulthood – long beyond childhood and adolescence, the usual

targets of fluoride research. It expands upon research published in November, also unique for being the first to analyze population-representative data from the United States up to the age of 60.

Community water fluoridation, or the act of adding the mineral to community water supplies to enhance dental health, has historically been considered a revolutionary accomplishment in public health, as noted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The practice has become a battleground in

recent years, however, with Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr. saying in 2025, without evidence, that fluoride exposure makes children “stupider.” Oft-cited studies to this point have been questioned for their validity, especially those using data from outside the United States.

“Like everybody else, I was intrigued by claims that there was a relationship between fluoride and IQ,” said study

See STUDY, Page 2A



Naturally occurring in water, soil, plants, rocks and the air, fluoride was found to be a useful tool for preventing tooth decay by the 1930s.

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