

Hamas Has Categorically Rejected the Accuracy of a Reuters Report Regarding the Meeting Between Ismail Haniyeh, the Head of Its Political Bureau, and Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution

IRAN NEWS

A Large Gathering to Support the Oppressed Children of Gaza Will Be Held in Tehran on Saturday, November 18, and the Keynote Speaker of the Ceremony is Major General Hossein Salami, Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps

2 DOMESTIC



"Italian Cuisine Week in the World" Marked in Tehran in Style

> SEE PAGE 2

3 INTERNATIONAL

UN Urges Int'l Probe Into Israel-Hamas War Violations

> SEE PAGE 3



Supreme Leader Urges Plans for High Turnout in Elections



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei stressed the need for collective efforts to hold warm and enthusiastic parliamentary elections in Iran on March 1, 2024. The jurists and juriconsults of Iran's Guardian Council met with Ayatollah Khamenei in Tehran. In the gathering, Ayatollah Khamenei thanked and appreciated the work and efforts of this Council. The Leader also emphasized some important points regarding the legal duties of the Constitutional Council and said, "It is everyone's duty to prepare the environment for holding enthusiastic elections in the month of Esfand (March) this year." The parliamentary and Assembly of Experts elections in Iran will be held on March 1, 2024. There are currently 290 seats in the Iranian Parliament, known as Majlis, elected by direct vote of people in nationwide elections for four years. The Assembly of Experts is a high-ranking body that elects and oversees the activities of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution. Members of the assembly are directly elected to office by people for an eight-year term. It holds biannual meetings to appoint a new chairman.



Divine Vengeance Shall Destroy Zionist Regime

TEHRAN – President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi says that the international community is saddened for Gaza and stressed that the hand of divine vengeance will destroy the Zionist regime. Speaking at his public meeting with the people of the province of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari in the different walks of life on Thursday morning as a part of his provincial tour and stating that the human society is grieving for Gaza and the children of Gaza today, the president said: "The international community is shouting its hatred and disgust for the Zionist regime these days." The president added: "This child killing causes public hatred in the world towards America and the Zionists, and we believe that the hand of divine vengeance will destroy the Zionist regime and the oppressed and powerful people of Palestine will restore their rights." He added: "Today there is a row between right and wrong, honor and wickedness, and honor is victorious in this fight." 15 centralized water supply and electricity projects were inaugurated and put into operation with the presence of the president in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari provinces. In the presence of President Raisi, President, Energy Minister Ali Akbar Mehrabian, and Governor of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Gholamali Heydari, a total of 15 water supply and electricity projects were inaugurated in this province. In this ceremony, Heydari said: Today, despite the fact that the working season in this province is limited, with the efforts and work around the clock, sustainable drinking water supply is made for 65% of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province. He continued: Although Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province is the source of three big rivers and supplies 11% of Iran's water resources, it had water stress and 200 villages were supplied with water by tankers. The governor of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari pointed out: With the projects that were started a long time ago and were given a new life by the injection of the credit of the first visit of the president, today we are witnessing that the province's water supply projects will be opened by the hand of the honorable president. Upon arriving in the province on Thursday, President Raisi called for solving the problems of this province including unemployment and incomplete water supply system so that there would be no impoverished area in this province. Raisi in his provincial tour format at first referred to the different capacities and the potentials of the Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province which he described them as natural and cultural including fertile lands, the abundant water resources and so many graze lands. He further stressed that all these resources should be put in to use in a suitable way. President Raisi also stressed making efforts to solve the problems of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province including unemployment and incomplete water supply system so that there would be no impoverished area in this province.

Iran Not Behind Resistance Front's Decision to Attack U.S. Bases



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's foreign minister says the country has had no role in the recent attacks by resistance groups in Iraq and Syria on U.S.-run bases. "These groups in Iraq and Syria, that are attacking U.S. interests, have made their own decisions," Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian told CBS News in an interview published on Wednesday. Pointing to Israel's genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip over the past 41 days, he expressed Iran's strong opposition to the spillover of the war to other parts of the region. "We really didn't want this crisis to expand. But the US has been intensifying the war in Gaza by throwing its support behind Israel," the top Iranian diplomat emphasized. Amir-Abdollahian dismissed allegations that Iran was responsible for a drone attack in the Red Sea that appeared to be targeting a U.S. missile destroyer. A statement from the Pentagon claimed that the guided-missile destroyer USS Thomas Hudner shot down the drone early Wednesday morning, which originated from Yemen, as it was "heading in the direction of the ship." The Pentagon, however, did not say who it believes fired the drone. "Yemen makes its own decisions and acts independently," Amir-Abdollahian said. In a statement on November 8, Yemen's Armed Forces announced the shooting down of an advanced American drone as the aircraft was operating in support of the Israeli regime. The MQ-9 Reaper drone was brought down using a surface-to-air missile as the aircraft was flying in the airspace over Yemen's territorial waters. In his interview, Amir-Abdollahian said the resistance fighters' attacks were a response to 75 years of Israeli occupation. "What Hamas did was based on its legitimate right to defend itself," the Iranian foreign minister argued. He also reiterated Iran's opposition to the killing of women and children everywhere.

"Axis of Resistance" Stays United With Gaza Fighters

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The head of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has assured the military wing of Hamas in the Gaza Strip of the solidarity of the "Axis of Resistance" with Palestinian fighters. "Your brothers in the axis of al-Quds and the resistance are united with you, and they will not allow the enemy to reach its dirty goals in Gaza and Palestine," Brig. Gen. Ismail Qaani said in a message Thursday. The Axis of



Resistance refers to an alliance among Iran, Syria and anti-Israeli groups in Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere which have hit Israeli and US targets in recent weeks in solidarity with Gaza. Gen. Qaani hailed Operation al-Aqsa Storm by Palestinian resistance fighters on Oct. 7 which caught Israel off guard and shattered the regime's myth of superiority in everything from military to intelligence power. "You created a great epic called the al-Aqsa Storm, which was accomplished with the help of God and by the holy fighters of the al-Qassam Brigades and the resistance in Gaza," he said. "Palestine and the region after the al-Aqsa Storm will not be the same as before," Gen. Qaani stated. "You clearly showed the weakness and fragility of the usurping Zionist regime and you showed in a practical and decisive way that the regime is weaker than a spider's web," he said in another part of his message. The message came after Western media claimed that Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh had got a dressing-down from Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei in Tehran. On Thursday, senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan dismissed claims to this effect as "pure lies and slander", saying the British news agency Reuters "has published worthless lies instead of news." "Everyone knows the nature of the relationship between the Hamas movement and the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as the position of the country in supporting the Palestinian cause and nation and its resistance, and especially the Hamas movement, and they know the view of Ayatollah Khamenei in supporting the Palestinian resistance." "Therefore, due to the necessity and nature of the relationship between the two sides, it is impossible to believe such content," Hamdan told Iran's official news agency IRNA. Reuters had claimed that Haniyeh had been told that since TEHRAN was not given prior notice of the October 7 operation, it would offer political support to Hamas, but would not "intervene directly" in the fight.

Israel, U.S. Facing a Quagmire in Gaza



TEHRAN - Chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami says Palestinian youths are adapting to new reality in Gaza, where Israel and the U.S. are facing a "quagmire". "Palestinian youth are adapting to the new conditions and have just learned the rules of the war. They have created a quagmire for America and Israel not only on the battlefield but also in politics, intelligence and security," he said in the central Iranian city of Isfahan on Thursday. "Gaza will become a burial ground for the Zionists. They used to fight inside fortifications and behind walls and thought that those walls would protect them from God's wrath, but God's punishment will reach them from where they don't think," he added. "Today, they have crossed the walls and exposed their tanks to Palestinian youths who hunt the tanks and bulldozers from close range, so that 180 of their 1,600 tanks have been destroyed to date, which means more than 10% of them have been wiped out." Gen. Salami said Israel must expect more surprises like Operation al-Aqsa Storm which saw Palestinian resistance fighters overrun occupied territories in the single worst event in the history of Israel. "Just as the al-Aqsa Storm came from a place the enemy did not calculate, they must wait for other storms that will reach them from where they do not figure out," he said. "The Muslims of the world today are more empathetic than ever, and even in the non-Muslim world a world stands against America and its partners," Gen. Salami added. The IRGC chief said arrogant powers have joined hands in "a disgusting and very humiliating show", waging war on children in Gaza which is a sign of the end of their empire. "The Zionist regime, the United States and some European countries have gone to war with babies inside the operating rooms of hospitals in Gaza, and they want to show that they are powerful by occupying the ICUs and CCUs." "Isn't it humiliating that the world's largest apparent empires take pride in killing children and babies and consider the capture of hospital operating rooms as their field of victory?" "Isn't it a shame that the world powers have surrounded people in a strip so that they could not get water, fuel and food? They hit fuel tanks and kill patients and revel in their firepower." This is a sign of the end of their empire because whenever they act frenziedly it is a sign of their inner collapse because some animals make a lot of noise when they die." Gen. Salami said the fear of an early collapse as predicted by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has "robbed the enemy of strategic logic and even tactical and operational logic." "What do the enemies want to vanquish? Can the will of a country be broken by bombing? - those who hold the body of their martyred children in their hands and thank God and praise the perseverance that the Prophet of Islam (Peace be upon Him) and the verses of the Qur'an emphasize." Gen. Salami said the Palestinians "have learned from the Qur'an that ... the path to happiness passes through the field of defense and patience in the face of adversity, and the promise of God's dawn, conquest, and victory will be fulfilled on this path." "The oppression of the honorable people of Gaza will finally do its job and we think about the days of victory and conquest and see it near and God's victory is high," he said. As for Israeli settlers, he added, "confusion, anxiety and fear of the future of a land that is no longer inhabited" has gripped "those who have come from all over the world with the promise of life, but a reverse migration has begun and this story will continue".

Iran, Iraq Discuss Expansion of Energy Ties



TEHRAN (Shana) - Iran's Oil Minister Javad Owji and visiting Iraqi Minister of Electricity Ziyad Ali Fazel explored all avenues to develop the two neighboring states' relations in the energy sector on Wednesday night. Owji exchanged views with Fazel and his deputy Adel Karim on exports of Iran's gas and technical and engineering services to Iraq. Joint investments and projects were also among the topics the two sides discussed. Fazel arrived in Tehran on Wednesday to take part in the 23rd Iran International Electricity Exhibition (IEE 2023) and hold talks with Iranian officials. In May, Owji and his Iraqi counterpart Hayan Abdel-Ghani signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in Baghdad. Based on the MoU inked in the presence of Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, the two sides agreed to cooperate in oil, gas, and petrochemical projects. Owji and Sudani put emphasis on the expansion of bilateral cooperation in the energy sector, urging Iran-Iraq Joint Working Group to follow up the implementation of the recent memorandum through holding regular sessions. The Iraqi prime minister brought forward proposals to develop joint fields, train human resources, and implement petrochemical projects, which were welcomed by the visiting Iranian oil minister.

IRAN NEWS



Tehran, Moscow Discuss Latest Developments in Region

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Ali Bagheri Kani and his Russian counterpart Sergei Ryabkov have conferred on the latest developments in the region. Bagheri Kani met and held talks with Ryabkov in the Iranian capital city of Tehran on Thursday. During the meeting, the two sides discussed and exchanged views on the latest regional and international developments, including sanctions relief talks. They also emphasized the continuation of strategic consultations between Tehran and Moscow.

Inflation Soars to Two-Year High Amid Failed Policies



TEHRAN - The inflation rate in the past Iranian month was its highest in two years as the government grappling with large budget deficits continues to print money. According to the latest data released by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), the inflation rate in the country has surged to its highest level in the past 22 months, hitting 54.8% for the month of Mehr (ended October 22), economic website Ecolran reported, after analyzing data released by the CBI. The central bank rejected the report as false, insisting that the inflation is about 45 percent. It claimed that there were discrepancies in calculations. Ecolran says the number is based on the Central Bank's tables, which are presented periodically to the judiciary to calculate overdue debts, fines, and dowries. The CBI rejected Ecolran's figure as "wrong" but did not elaborate on the table presented in its document. The Statistics Center of Iran (SCI) and the CBI claim that the rate of annual inflation has dropped to 45.5 percent, nearly the same level as a year ago, but some things cannot be denied via changing technical definitions. Food prices have risen much faster than the official inflation rate, in some instances hitting 100-percent in 2022. ILNA news agency reported this week that the decline in people's purchasing power is so steep that some workers are surviving the second half of the month with just eating "one egg a day."



Iran, Turkmenistan to Hold 17th Intergovernmental Committee Session

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mehdi Safari has said that Iran and Turkmenistan will hold the 17th intergovernmental committee session in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. Safari said that the 17th intergovernmental committee session between Iran and Turkmenistan will be held in Ashgabat on November 17-19 to develop and strengthen economic relations between the two countries. Emphasizing the strategy of developing comprehensive relations with neighbors, he described strengthening relations with Turkmenistan as very important. He added that discussing various fields of cooperation such as transit and transport, energy, gas, trade and investment, customs, banking and finance, standards, tourism, health, and agriculture are on the agenda of the meeting. It is agreed that a specialized exhibition of Iranian goods, Iran Project, will be held in Turkmenistan at the same time as the 17th intergovernmental committee session, he further noted.



"Italian Cuisine Week in the World" Marked in Tehran in Style

By: F. Taherpoor

TEHRAN - The 8th Edition of Week of the Italian Cuisine in the World was marked in style at Hotel Espinas Palace of Tehran on Thursday, November 16, in the presence of distinguished guests and diplomats and the event was a move for presenting the candidacy of the Italian cuisine for UNESCO intangible cultural heritage list. The event in Tehran was organized by the Italian Trade Agency (ITA) in collaboration with the Embassy of Italy with the presence of two prominent Italian chefs Giuseppe Di Bella and Master of Pizza Mario Belcastro who are members of the Italian Federation of Chefs. Italian Ambassador Giuseppe Perrone, First Secretary and Head of Economic and Commercial Section Giulia Flore, Cultural and Press Attache Yara Romanova, the Second Secretary Roberta Tiscione and Director of the ITA Giancarlo Albano were present in the event as the hosts. Addressing the participants, Ms. Flore welcomed them and talked about the event which is marked in the world while a film on the Italian cuisine was being screened. The Ambassador Perrone welcomed the guests in the event and said that two prominent Italian chefs are in Tehran and in the hotel for cooking and serving some example dishes of the Italian cuisine. He added that cuisine for Italians is a part of their civilization and culture and many intellectuals and personalities through the history have talked about Italian cuisine and Italian dishes. He then welcomed and introduced the new staff of the Italian embassy who have joined him in Tehran. Ms. Flore and Ms. Tiscione are the new staff of the embassy who were presented to the participants. Then Chef Di Bella while preparing some Italian dishes in the kitchen gave more details about what he was serving for the guests to mark the Italian Cuisine Week in Tehran. He started his menu with a cup of Sole di Sorrento as an appetizer but before its serving, he talked about the ingredients used in his appetizer. Then after a while he served the participants with a dish special from Reggio



Calabria with a great taste. After this delicious dish, Chef Di Bella explained more about his offering dish to the guests and its ingredients which was a scialatelli cooked in the ways people in Naples cook and it was a short and thick pasta with a rectangular cross section and almost straight but slightly irregular curvy shape. This dish is originated in Naples and on the Amalfi coast. Later Di Bella gave more details on his next dish serving and it was a dish from the Amalfi coast and it was some sort of veal fillet meat mixed with vegetables and Amalfi lemon. The chefs ended the event and serving the guests with preparing a special Capri tart (flourless Italian chocolate cake) which completed the day. The event ended with have some group photos and on the sidelines interviews and talks. The Week of Italian Cuisine in the World, now at its 8th edition, is a promotional initiative aimed at showcasing the unique and top-quality features of the Italian wine and food sector, encouraging export, internationalization, and inbound tourism, through dedicated and targeted events in Italian Embassies, Consulates, Cultural Institutes, and ICE agencies. It is being held from November, 13th to 19th worldwide through over 10,000 initiatives in more than a hundred countries, ranging from seminars on food to talks with chefs and business partners, classes, and demonstrative lessons. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy in cooperation with its Italian Embassies, Consulates, Cultural Institutes, and ICE agencies holds the event worldwide to promote the Italian cuisine and agri-food products. The week was launched first in 2016 aimed at promoting the Italian cuisine especially promoting and boosting Italian dishes and cuisine in the country. The 8th edition is being held with the theme of "Dining with the Italian cuisine: well-being with taste" and its objectives for this year's edition were "We want to enhance the Mediterranean Diet as a healthy lifestyle and a model of balanced nutrition accessible

Iran, Kazakhstan Cooperation Strengthens Multilateral Mechanisms

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs emphasized that Tehran-Astana cooperation can bolster multilateral mechanisms at the international level. In a meeting with his Tajik counterpart, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Ali Bagheri Kani discussed various topics, including the expansion of bilateral ties, and regional, and international issues. Insisting on the importance of regional cooperation, the Iranian senior diplomat highlighted the role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in stability and security. Referring to the will of the two countries to hold a new round of the Joint Economic Commission in the next few



weeks, Bagheri Kani stated that Complementary economic capacities pave the way for sustainable and stable economic cooperation between the two countries. Kani pointed to the Israeli war crimes and the ongoing massacre in the enclave, saying all Muslim countries should try to stop the continuation of war since halting the massacre of the oppressed Palestinians is of top priority. Deputy Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Alibek Bakayev, for his part, stressed the will of his country to cement ties with Iran at regional and international levels. During the meeting, the two sides discussed economic relations, trade partnerships, cultural and scientific collaborations, and tourism. 219

Group Exhibition of Industrial Designs of Students at Tehran Gallery

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



TEHRAN - Tehran Gallery of Fine Arts College of University of Tehran is to hold the Group Exhibition on the Works of Industrial Design Projects of Tehran University 1400-1402, supported by the Embassy of Poland, on November 18-22. According to the reports, the exhibition is organized by the Institute of Industrial Project, Embassy of Warsaw and College of Fine Arts of Tehran University. Enthusiasts have been invited to visit this event which will put on display the works of students on the industrial design projects. In recent years Embassy of Poland has cooperated in holding several exhibitions in galleries of Tehran University for displaying the works and talents of Iranian students in different fields.

Iran Ready to Supply Pakistan with 2,000 MW of Electricity



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Iran's minister of energy said that the country is ready to supply neighboring Pakistan with 2,000 megawatts of electricity. Speaking in a meeting with Pakistan's Minister of Energy Muhammad Ali in Tehran on Thursday, Ali Akbar Mehrabian stated, "The development projects in the Gwadar area of Pakistan need at least 2,000 megawatts of electricity." He added that Iran is prepared to supply Pakistan with the needed electricity. Tehran and Islamabad enjoy high potentials in different fields to develop their relations, Mehrabian stated. He went on to say that Iran is ready to embark on investing as a joint venture for the exchange of electricity with Pakistan. During the meeting, which was held on the sidelines of the 23rd edition of the Iran International Electricity Exhibition (IEE), the two sides emphasized the need for enhancing bilateral relations in the energy sector in particular. The visiting Pakistani minister of energy proposed the necessity of setting up a joint technical working group in the field of energy in line with the acceleration of the projects. Iran is one of the best options for supplying the energy needed in Pakistan, Muhammad Ali said, putting the electricity capacity installed in Pakistan at about 40,000 megawatts. The 23 Iran International Electricity Exhibition (IEE) and 1st Iran Electricity Industry Tech Market Festival kicked off at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds on November 14 with the participation of competent domestic and foreign companies.

Finland to Close Border Crossings With Russia

HELSINKI (Dispatches) - Finland will close four of its eight eastern border crossings with Russia early Saturday, the government said, accusing Moscow of deliberately turning a blind eye to illegal migrants. The Nordic country, which shares a 1,340-kilometre (830-mile) border with Russia, has since August seen a surge in people being allowed to cross into Finland despite not having proper documentation, primarily nationals from the Middle East and Africa without visas, according to Finland's border guard. "Today the government has made the decision to close the Vaalimaa, Nuujamaa, Imatra and Niirala border crossing points on the land border between Finland and Russia," Interior Minister Mari Rantanen told reporters. Prime Minister Petteri Orpo accused Russia of acting deliberately to destabilise Finland in response to its NATO accession earlier this year.



Spanish PM Sanchez Secures Another Term



MADRID (Dispatches) - Pedro Sanchez won the backing of Spain's parliament on Thursday for another term as prime minister, with the country divided over his decision to grant Catalan separatists an amnesty in exchange for their crucial support in a vote of confidence. Sanchez, in office since 2018, won the backing of 179 lawmakers, three more than the absolute majority of 176 in the 350-seat parliament after an often tense two-day debate. His Socialist party finished second in an inconclusive July general election but he reached deals with several smaller parties to back re-establishing his minority coalition government with hard-left party Sumar. To win the support of two Catalan separatist parties, he agreed to grant amnesty to hundreds of people facing legal action for their role in Catalonia's separatist movement over the past decade. Among the beneficiaries is Carles Puigdemont, who headed the regional government of Catalonia when it staged a failed secession bid in 2017. Puigdemont organised referendum that was banned by the central government, followed by a short-lived declaration of independence that sparked Spain's worst political crisis in decades. Puigdemont fled to Belgium to avoid prosecution. An amnesty would allow him to return to Spain, while many Spaniards consider him an enemy of the state. Sanchez, who has made a career out of making political gambles, defended the amnesty during the parliamentary debate, arguing it was constitutional and needed to "heal the wounds" opened by the wealthy northeastern region's independence push. "We will guarantee the unity of Spain through dialogue and forgiveness," the 51-year-old added. Critics argue the amnesty is a self-serving measure to allow Sanchez to remain in power and accuse him of trampling on the rule of law. "Adopting measures that go against the general interest in exchange of personal benefit is political corruption," the leader of the conservative Popular Party (PP), Alberto Nunez Feijoo, said during the debate. The PP won most seats in the July election but fell short of a majority and Feijoo was unable to get support from other parties to win his investiture vote in September. The leader of the far-right Vox party, Santiago Abascal has called the amnesty deal a "coup d'etat". Several polls show over half of all Spaniards oppose the amnesty, that has prompted a wave of nationwide protests. Hundreds of thousands of people took part Sunday in different protests, answering a PP call to take to the streets. Thousands have congregated each night for over a week outside the Socialist party's headquarters in Madrid in rallies organised by the far-right. Some protests have turned violent. Fifteen people were arrested at the protest on Wednesday night following scuffles with police. In a sign of the tensions, over 1,600 police were deployed on Wednesday and Thursday for the parliamentary debate, according to the interior ministry. Sanchez - one of Europe's longest serving Socialist leaders - also outlined some of his economic plans for his new term on Wednesday.

Sweden's NATO Bid Delayed in Turkish Parliament



ANKARA (Dispatches) - The Turkish parliament's foreign affairs commission delayed a vote on Sweden's NATO membership bid on Thursday in a further setback to the Nordic country's hopes of joining the Western alliance after 18 months of waiting. Chairman Fuat Oktay said the commission, which is controlled by President Tayyip Erdogan's ruling party, will hold further talks and may bring the bill back on its agenda next week - but he did not set a clear timeline. "For all of our lawmakers to approve Sweden's NATO membership, they need to be fully convinced. We will discuss all of these in our (next) commission meeting (on the issue)," Oktay told reporters after hours of debate. The commission can pass bills by a simple majority. It may invite the Swedish ambassador to brief lawmakers if needed and if parliament's regulations allow, Oktay added. Erdogan said this month he would try to facilitate the ratification process, but added Sweden had not taken enough action on Kurdish militants. For ratification, the bill needs to be approved by the commission before being put to a full parliament vote, which could come days or weeks later. Erdogan would then sign it into law to conclude the process, the length of which has frustrated Ankara's allies and tested its Western ties. Sweden and Finland requested to join NATO in May last year following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Erdogan raised objections at the time to both requests over what he said was the Nordic nations' protection of those Turkey deems terrorists, as well as their defence trade embargoes. Turkey endorsed Finland's bid in April but has kept Sweden waiting. Turkey has demanded that Sweden take more steps to rein in local members of the Kurdistan Workers' party (PKK), considered a terrorist group by the European Union and United States. In response, Stockholm introduced a new anti-terrorism bill that makes membership of a terrorist organization illegal, while also lifting arms export restrictions on Turkey. It says that it has upheld its part of a deal signed last year. Despite comments by Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Burak Akcapar outlining the measures taken by Sweden, lawmakers from both the ruling AK Party and opposition voiced reservations and, in a rare move, delayed the vote. "I value NATO's enlargement. However, we must remove some of the controversies in our minds. Sweden has become a safe haven, or a heaven, for some terrorist organizations," said Ali Sahin, a lawmaker from the AK Party. "We find the steps Sweden has taken until now valuable, but we don't find them sufficient," he added. NATO members Finland, Canada and Netherlands also took steps to relax arms-export policies towards Turkey during the process, while the White House said it would move ahead with the transfer of F-16 fighter jets to Turkey in consultation with the U.S. Congress. While there is no clear timeframe on approving the purchase request for the F-16s, Ankara has linked the issue to Sweden's bid. On Thursday, Oktay repeated Erdogan's view that "if they have a Congress, we have a parliament". Some analysts say Turkey's parliament could fully ratify the bid by a NATO foreign ministers meeting in Brussels on Nov. 28-29.



UN Urges Int'l Probe Into Israel-Hamas War Violations

GENEVA (Dispatches) - The UN human rights chief on Thursday highlighted allegations of serious rights violations in the Israel-Hamas war that he said needed "full accountability". Volker Turk said "extremely serious allegations of multiple and profound breaches of international humanitarian law, whoever commits them, demand rigorous investigation and full accountability". The UN high commissioner for human rights did not name Israel or Hamas, but he spoke after a visit last week to the Middle East, where he warned that both sides were committing war crimes in a conflict that has left thousands dead. "Where national authorities prove unwilling or unable to carry out such investigations, and where there are contested narratives on particularly significant incidents, international investigation is called for," he said in a briefing to UN member states in Geneva. Israel has vowed to eradicate Hamas in retaliation for the attacks of October 7, which it says killed 1,200 people, most of them civilians. Hamas also took 239 people hostage, among them elderly people and young children, according to authorities. Israel's relentless bombardment and ground offensive in Gaza has killed more than 11,500 people, also mainly civilians and including thousands of children, according to the Hamas-run health ministry. Turk decried the "conflagration of violence (that) has been unleashed". He said he had spoken to people crossing out of Gaza during a visit to the Egyptian border, and "rarely have I heard such disturbing testimony about the catastrophic harm that ordinary people have endured". He was unable to access Israel or the Palestinian territories, but stressed Thursday the urgent need for his department to go there, "to ensure full and independent monitoring and documentation, and to coordinate protection work". He told reporters he had "asked Israel to give me access both to Israel, but also to the occupied Palestinian territory. I have not yet received a response", he said.

The Israeli mission to the UN in Geneva later dismissed his request to visit Israel, telling AFP it "did not see any added benefit of the high commissioner's visit at this time". During his visit to the region last week, the Israeli mission said Turk had "made it clear that his mind had already been made up, and therefore dialogue with (his office) would contribute little". During Thursday's briefing, Turk voiced concern about the "intensification of violence and severe discrimination against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem". "This creates a potentially explosive situation," he said. "I am ringing the loudest possible alarm bell about the occupied West Bank." He urged an immediate ceasefire. "It is apparent that on both sides, some view the killing of civilians as either acceptable collateral damage, or a deliberate and useful weapon of war," he said. He also insisted that "the Israeli occupation must end". "Israelis' freedom is inextricably bound up with Palestinians' freedom. Palestinians and Israelis are each others' only hope for peace." Israel harshly criticised UN attempts to balance criticism about violations, insisting that international law was "not a suicide pact". If a state cannot defend itself "or is criticised for doing so in line with international law, inevitably terrorist organisations will become more and more emboldened," Israeli ambassador Meirav Eilon Shazar told the gathering. "There is no moral equivalence between Israel and Hamas. We will not let Israel be delegitimised by misrepresentation of reality," she said. Palestinian ambassador Ibrahim Khraishi flatly rejected that view. "You should wake up in this room. This is a massacre, this is genocide," he said, accusing Israel of acting "above the law". "The problem didn't start on October 7 - It started 75 years ago," he said. He received support from other countries, including from Jordan's representative who insisted that "Israel must halt its aggression".



Gaza Communications Down as Israel Searches Main Hospital

GAZA STRIP (Dispatches) - Israeli troops carried out building-by-building searches at Gaza's main hospital, as a new communications blackout in the territory on Friday compounded fears for Palestinian civilians trapped inside the facility. Al-Shifa hospital has become a focal point for Israeli operations in northern Gaza since soldiers raided the complex on Wednesday, hunting for a command center they say militant group Hamas operates there. Hamas and hospital managers deny that charge, and there has been international concern about several thousand people - including wounded patients and premature babies - believed to be trapped inside. Israel has vowed to eradicate Hamas in response to the group's October 7 attack, which killed 1,200 people, most of them civilians, and saw about 240 taken hostage, according to Israeli officials. Israel's air bombardment and ground operation has killed 11,500 people, including thousands of children, according to Hamas-run local authorities in Gaza. Israeli authorities have defended their operation, and the military said Thursday it found rifles, ammunition, explosives and the entrance to a tunnel shaft at Al-Shifa. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu alleged hostages may even have been held at the medical facility. "We had strong indications that they were held in the Shifa Hospital, which is one of the reasons we entered the hospital," he told "CBS Evening News". "If they were [there], they were taken out," he said. Allegations about the hospital have not been verified, and on Friday communications with the Gaza Strip were severed once again. The UN warned that the blackout would compound the misery of civilians, complicating efforts to distribute aid and possibly triggering looting of its supplies. "When you have a blackout and you cannot communicate with anyone anymore... that triggers and fuels even more the anxiety and the panic," said Philippe Lazzarini, head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees UNRWA. Negotiations are ongoing for the release of the hostages, some of them just infants, in exchange for a pause in fighting. Qatar, where Hamas has political offices, and Egypt have been mediating what Egypt's foreign minister described Thursday as "very delicate" discussions. "We are hopeful that our efforts and the efforts of others will bring about the speedy release," Sameh Shoukry said. On the ground, conditions are rapidly deteriorating for Palestinian civilians, UN agencies have warned. Over 1.5 million people have been internally displaced, and Israel's blockade of the territory means "civilians are facing the immediate possibility of starvation." World Food Programme executive director Cindy McCain said. Food and water have become "practically non-existent," the agency added, with Lazzarini describing children sheltering at a UN school "pleading for a sip of water, or for a loaf of bread". Hospitals have become a particular target, with Israel saying it has found tunnels or military equipment at the Al-Shifa, Rantisi and Al-Quds facilities. Palestinian health officials said Thursday that the Al-Ahli hospital was under attack, with the Palestinian Red Crescent saying casualties in the courtyard could not be reached by medical staff because of explosions and gunfire. Washington has backed Israel's allegations that Hamas is using hospitals as command centres, while urging operations be "incredibly careful". More than half of Gaza's hospitals are no longer functional, due to either combat, damage, or shortages, and Israel's raid on Al-Shifa left extensive damage to the radiology, burns and dialysis unit, the Hamas-run health ministry said. With international concern about the conflict growing, the UN Security Council on Wednesday passed a resolution urging "urgent and extended humanitarian pauses" in fighting. But the resolution - passed with abstentions from the United States, Britain and Russia - was rejected by Israel as "disconnected from reality."



Azerbaijan Rejects Armenia Peace Talks in U.S.

BAKU (Dispatches) - Azerbaijan refused to participate in normalization talks with arch-enemy Armenia that were planned in the United States this month over what it said was Washington's "biased" position. Baku and Yerevan have been locked in a decades-long territorial conflict over Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region, which Baku reclaimed in September after a lightning offensive against Armenian separatists. Internationally mediated peace talks between the ex-Soviet republics have seen little progress but both countries' leaders have said a comprehensive peace agreement could be signed by the end of the year. "We do not consider it possible to hold the proposed meeting on the level of the Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia in Washington on November 20, 2023," Baku's foreign ministry said in a statement. The move followed a hearing in the US House Foreign Affairs Committee on Wednesday, where, the ministry said, Assistant Secretary of State James O'Brien made "one-sided and biased remarks" about Azerbaijan. O'Brien told the House Committee that "nothing will be normal with Azerbaijan after the events of September 19 until we see progress on the peace track." "We've cancelled a number of high-level visits, condemned (Baku's) actions," he added. The Azerbaijani foreign ministry said: "Such a unilateral approach by the United States could lead to the loss of the United States' mediation role." Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on Thursday that Yerevan's "political will to sign, in the coming months, a peace agreement with Azerbaijan remains unwavering." Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev have held several rounds of talks under EU mediation. But last month, Aliyev refused to attend a round of negotiations with Pashinyan in Spain, citing France's "biased position." French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz had been scheduled to join EU chief Charles Michel as mediators at those talks. So far, there has been no visible progress in EU efforts to organise a fresh round of negotiations.

Biden Tells Asia-Pacific Leaders U.S. Not Going Anywhere

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Joe Biden made America's case to national leaders and CEOs attending the Asia-Pacific summit that the United States is committed to high standards in trade and to partnerships that will benefit economies across the Pacific. "We're not going anywhere," he declared. Fresh off his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Biden also told business leaders that the US was "de-risking and diversifying" but not "decoupling" from Beijing. But he did not mince words in suggesting the US and friends in the Pacific could offer businesses a better option than China. He also noted that U.S. economies had invested some \$50 billion in fellow Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation economies in 2023, including in clean energy technologies, aviation and cybersecurity. "This is not all kumbaya but it's straightforward," Biden said. "We have real differences with Beijing when it comes to maintaining a fair and level economic playing field and protecting your intellectual property." Biden sought to send a clear message about American leadership as business leaders grapple with the risks of doing businesses in the midst of wars in the Middle East and Europe and a still shaky post-pandemic economy. He was also spending time on Thursday letting Indo-Pacific leaders know that the US is committed to nurturing economic ties throughout the region. Biden later posed for the traditional "family photo" with other leaders of APEC, the group that includes 21 economies. Biden in his remarks to the CEOs sought to highlight his administration's

efforts to strengthen ties with the region. APEC members have invested \$1.7 trillion in the US economy, supporting some 2.3 million American jobs. U.S. companies, in turn, have invested about \$1.4 trillion in APEC economies. Later, during talks with APEC leaders at a working lunch, Biden spoke about efforts funded by his Inflation Reduction Act to improve sustainability, climate change and clean energy infrastructure in the U.S. "I encourage everyone around this table to also take strong national actions," Biden said. "It will take all of us to meet this moment." The U.S. hasn't hosted the annual leaders' summit - started in 1993 by President Bill Clinton - since 2011. The group met virtually in 2020 and 2021 because of the coronavirus pandemic. Leaders did gather in Bangkok last year, but Biden skipped the summit because his granddaughter was getting married, and he sent Vice President Kamala Harris in his place. The annual leaders' conference brings together heads of nations and other top economic and diplomatic leaders. Biden told those who gathered Wednesday evening at a welcome party - including Russia's representative, Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk - that today's challenges were unlike those faced by previous APEC leaders. Biden also sought to underscore that he was seeking to responsibly manage the United States' strained relationship with China one day after he and Xi sat down for more than four hours of talks at bucolic Filoli Estate outside of San Francisco. In aren't rivals seeking conflict.





IRAN NEWS SPORTS DESK

Iran Hammer Hong Kong With 4 Goals

TEHRAN – Iran beat Hong Kong 4-0 in their opening World Cup qualifier, although two late goals flattered a home team that was frustrated for long periods by Jom Andersen's cussed side. Hongkongers of a pessimistic disposition would have feared the worst when Sardar Azmoun struck a quickfire double to leave their national team staring at a two-goal deficit after only 15 minutes. But Hong Kong's coach Andersen's disciplined side, missing a host of key figures, stemmed the bleeding, albeit the hosts' backline was able to operate in second gear, ahead of a difficult assignment in Uzbekistan next week. Iran passed up a handful of second-half chances, but Mehdi Taremi scored with three minutes remaining, and, somewhat cruelly, Ramin Rezaeian added a fourth two minutes into stoppage time. Azmoun is on loan at Roma from Bayer Leverkusen, and swept low past Tse after 12 minutes, following a precise cross from Mohammad Mohebi. The forward was at it again soon after, converting after being teed up by prolific Porto striker Taremi. With the floodgates threatening to open, Hong Kong battered down the hatches, closing and hassling and generally frustrating Iran. Yue Tze-nam's tackle to halt Mohebi in the penalty box, late in the opening half, epitomised the visitors' tenacity. Andersen's side did not remotely trouble Alireza Beiranvand in Iran's goal, however, despite the head coach slinging on Chan, Law Tsz-chun and Philip Chan Siu-kwan after 64 minutes. Alireza Jahanbakhsh lashed over from a good position, and Azmoun inexplicably steered wide with the goal at his mercy, either side of the away team's changes. Hong Kong were resisting Iran, nevertheless, and a two-goal margin would have fairly reflected the contest, given the West Asians' inability

to build up a head of steam against their well-drilled opponents. But, with three minutes remaining, Azmoun returned Taremi's favour, inviting the 31-year-old to score his 40th international goal. Right-back Rezaeian added a fourth shortly before full-time. In the other Group E fixture, Uzbekistan recovered from conceding after 44 minutes, to score three unanswered second-half goals and beat Turkmenistan 3-1 in Ashgabat. Meanwhile Japan, South Korea, and Australia notched up comfortable wins on Thursday as the second phase of Asia's preliminaries for the 2026 World Cup kicked off for the region's dominant nations with few surprises and a flurry of goals. Japan's Ayase Ueda scored a hat-trick as a largely second-string side defeated Myanmar 5-0 after Hajime Moriyasu chose to leave many of his leading performers on the bench ahead of their more exacting Group B clash with Syria in Jeddah on Tuesday. Ueda put the Japanese ahead in the 11th minute at Suita Stadium outside Osaka when he headed in Takumi Minamino's lofted pass and Daichi Kamada doubled the advantage 17 minutes later from distance. Australia were also untroubled as they completed a 7-0 demolition of Bangladesh in Group I with Jamie Maclaren stepping off the bench to score a second half hat-trick. Goals from Harry Souttar and Brandon Borrello gave the hosts a two-goal lead inside the first 20 minutes before Mitchell Duke hit a brace late in the first half as Australia trampled over the south Asians at Melbourne Rectangular Stadium. The win put the Australians top of the early standings after Lebanon and Palestine shared a 0-0 draw in Sharjah. South Korea scored four times in the second half to hand Singapore a 5-0 defeat in Group C at Seoul World Cup Stadium.

Rohit the Genuine Hero of India's Run to World Cup Final



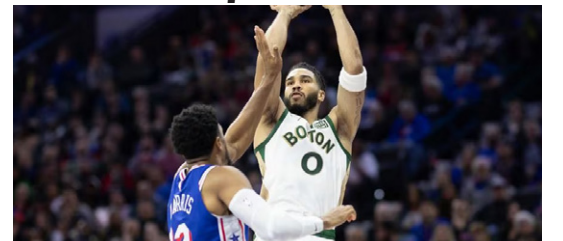
MUMBAI (Dispatches) - Virat Kohli and Mohammed Shami starred as India beat New Zealand to reach the World Cup final but Nasser Hussain believes captain Rohit Sharma has been their "real hero" of the tournament. Unbeaten hosts India defeated New Zealand by 70 runs in Mumbai on Wednesday to make it 10 wins out of 10 this World Cup as they booked a place in Sunday's final in Ahmedabad. Kohli scored a record 50th one-day international hundred in an imposing total of 397-4 that also featured Shreyas Iyer's rapid 105 off 70 balls before Mohammed Shami cleaned up with a stunning seven-wicket haul. But it was 36-year opener Rohit, on his Wankhede Stadium home ground, who set the tone with a 29-ball 47 after winning the toss. Hussain said Rohit, appointed India's white-ball captain in December 2021, deserved plenty of credit for India's run to the final. "The headlines will be about Kohli, about Shreyas, about Shami. But the genuine hero of this Indian side, the man who has changed the culture, is Rohit Sharma," Hussain told Sky Sports. The former England captain, himself born in Madras (now Chennai), added: "It's one thing coming in the group stage, but can you do it again, can you play fearless cricket in a semi-final? Their skipper went out there and showed everyone, showed his dressing room that they're going to carry on in exactly the same way." Kohli may be the tournament's leading batsman with 711 runs, but Michael Atherton - another ex-England captain - said the manner in which Rohit, who has now scored 550 in this World Cup himself, batted on Wednesday was telling. "For a team who have occasionally blinked when the critical moment has arrived in recent ICC events, often tip-toeing through an innings, Rohit led brilliantly, as he has throughout a campaign where he has eschewed personal milestones and batted selflessly against the new ball," Atherton wrote in The Times. "It was not the number of runs that he scored, but the message he sent in getting India off to a flyer, making 47 in only 29 balls, that was vital. Don't go into your shells, he was saying." Yet in a match where 724 runs in all were scored, despite concerns about a used pitch, it was pacesman Shami who had the final say with an extraordinary return of 7-57 - the best by any bowler in a World Cup semi-final. Shami was out of the India team for the first four matches of the tournament and might not have featured at all but for an injury to Hardik Pandya. Yet heading into Thursday's second semi-final between Australia and South Africa, he was the leading bowler at the World Cup with 23 wickets from six games at astonishingly low average of under 10 apiece. England's 2019 World Cup-winning captain Eoin Morgan, who faced Shami during his career, said: "The level of control he has shown throughout this tournament to move the ball off the seam and in the air has been great to admire." Seven for 57 in a one-day international is unheard of, particularly in a World Cup knock-out game where there is a huge amount of pressure on him. To have someone like that at your disposal for Rohit Sharma adds more value to the strength of India."

Uruguay Stun Argentina; Colombia Defeat Brazil

MONTEVIDEO (Dispatches) - Uruguay ended Argentina's 14-match unbeaten streak with a 2-0 victory over the world champions in World Cup qualifiers on Thursday as Luis Diaz scored twice to fire Colombia to an emotional 2-1 win over Brazil. Defender Ronald Araujo fired Uruguay ahead on 41 minutes before Liverpool forward Darwin Nunez made the game safe with an 87th-minute goal on the counterattack to settle a hard-fought clash at the Bombonera Stadium in Buenos Aires. It was Lionel Messi and Argentina's first defeat of the 2026 World Cup qualifying campaign, and their first loss since they were stunned 2-1 by Saudi Arabia at the 2022 finals in Qatar. "We never felt comfortable," Messi said after the defeat. "They're a physical team that works well and on the counterattack they were very dangerous," added Messi, praising the work of Uruguay's revered Argentine coach Marcelo Bielsa. "You can see his hand in the team. In all the teams or clubs he's been involved in, including Argentina, you can see his hand," said Messi. Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni meanwhile backed his team to recover in time for next week's showdown with Brazil. "There is a very difficult game coming up and we will try to do our best; I think this team has shown plenty of times that it can get out of difficult situations," Scaloni said. "We lose and win as a team, and there are times when you have to give credit to the opponent," Scaloni added. "We can't think that because we're world champions, we can't lose. We are not unbeatable - I've said it before and will continue to say it." Argentina, who had won all four of their opening qualifiers, remain on top of the standings with 12 points from five matches. Uruguay's win leaves them in second place on 10 points. In other South American qualifiers, Nunez's Liverpool team-mate Diaz scored two goals in five minutes as Colombia came from behind to stun Brazil 2-1 in Barranquilla. Diaz's dramatic double capped a roller-coaster month for the forward, whose father was taken hostage by Colombian guerrillas at the end of October before being released last week. Diaz's father, Luis Manuel Diaz, was watching from the stands in tears as his son scored in the 75th and 79th minutes to fire Colombia to a crucial win. Diaz's second-half double cancelled out Brazil's opener, which came from Arsenal forward Gabriel Martinelli after only four minutes. A disappointing result for Brazil was compounded by an injury to Real Madrid star Vinicius Jr., who limped off clutching his left thigh after 27 minutes. Diaz meanwhile said he had experienced "hard moments" after learning of his father's kidnapping in late October.



Down 2 Starters, Celtics Still top 76ers



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Jayson Tatum scored 29 points, including a 3-pointer with 1:11 remaining for an eight-point cushion, as the short-handed Boston Celtics defeated the host Philadelphia 76ers 117-107. Derrick White added 27 points and Jrue Holiday contributed 18 points and 10 rebounds for the Celtics, who have won four games in a row. The Celtics played without Jaylen Brown (non-COVID illness) and Kristaps Porzingis (knee). Joel Embiid and Tyrese Maxey led the Sixers with 20 points apiece while Robert Covington, De'Anthony Melton and Tobias Harris each netted 16. The Sixers have dropped two games in a row after an eight-game winning streak. Devin Booker and Kevin Durant scored 31 points apiece as Phoenix Suns ended visiting Minnesota Timberwolves' seven-game winning streak with a 133-115 win. Booker was back in action after missing the previous five games due to a right calf strain. Eric Gordon had 15 points, Grayson Allen scored 14, Drew Eubanks added 13 and Josh Okogie chipped in 12 for Phoenix, which led by as many as 28 in the third quarter. The Suns shot 60 percent from the field, including 17-for-31 (54.8 percent) from 3-point range. Karl-Anthony Towns led Minnesota with 25 points. Mike Conley scored 14 points, while Anthony Edwards, Jaden McDaniels and Naz Reid each scored 13. Rudy Gobert recorded a game-high eight rebounds for the Wolves, whose seven-game win streak was their longest since 2004. Tim Hardaway Jr. scored a season-high 31 points off the bench while Luka Doncic added 26 points and 10 assists to help visiting Dallas Mavericks breeze to a 130-117 victory over Washington Wizards. Hardaway scored 22 points over the first two quarters, accounting for his highest-scoring half of the season. He finished the game, making 11 of 20 shots from the floor and 7 of 11 from 3-point range. Doncic converted four times from beyond the arc and added seven rebounds as the Mavericks coasted to victory despite playing without star guard Kyrie Irving. Damian Lillard had 37 points and 13 assists and visiting Milwaukee Bucks defeated Toronto Raptors 128-112 for the Bucks' second straight win. Malik Beasley added a season-best 30 points and made eight 3-pointers for Milwaukee, which played without Giannis Antetokounmpo because of a right calf strain. Scottie Barnes scored 29 points for the Raptors, who are 1-1 on their four-game homestand. Jakob Poeltl had 13 points and 11 rebounds. Domantas Sabonis scored a season-high 29 points and grabbed 16 rebounds as visiting Sacramento Kings beat Los Angeles Lakers 125-110 to extend its winning streak to four games. De'Aaron Fox scored 28 points and Kevin Huerter matched his season high with 28 points while making six 3-pointers for the Kings in the opener of a six-game road swing. LeBron James produced 28 points, 10 rebounds and 11 assists for his first triple-double of the season as the Lakers saw their three-game winning streak come to an end. D'Angelo Russell added 28 points.

Djokovic Reaches Semis With Sinner Win

TURIN (dispatches) - World number one Novak Djokovic beat ATP Finals alternate Hubert Hurkacz 7-6(1) 4-6 6-1 in their Green Group clash and advanced to the semi-finals after Jannik Sinner edged Holger Rune 6-2 5-7 6-4 in the evening match. Djokovic's dropped set against Hurkacz, who replaced the injured Stefanos Tsitsipas in Turin, confirmed Jannik Sinner's spot in the semi-finals - making him the first Italian in the tournament's 54-year history to reach that stage. Home favorite Sinner also clinched top spot in the group with a 3-0 record after his big win over defending champion Djokovic 7-5 6-7(5) 7-6(2) on Tuesday. Playing with nothing to lose, Poland's Hurkacz was a force to reckon with on serve - firing 24 aces in the match - but he ran out of steam in the final set as Djokovic converted break points for the first time in the contest. Despite Djokovic notching his 15th victory over a top-10 player this year, equalling his best record since 2018, the Serbian was clearly frustrated after the win when asked why he looked upset when things went awry during the second set. "Why was I upset? For what? I lost the set, so it's normal ... Good win, good win," he said in an interview that lasted less than 20 seconds before he walked off the court. Break points were in short supply in an absorbing first set as Hurkacz made things difficult for world number one Djokovic when he opted to serve first and began with a series of unreturned serves in the opening games. Hurkacz is the only player on the ATP Tour with over 1,000 aces in 2023 and the 26-year-old was aggressive with his approach on a lightning-quick surface. But at 6-5 down, Djokovic switched gears and won 10 points in a row to take the contest into a tiebreak, setting up six set points in the blink of an eye. Although Hurkacz saved one set point, the Serbian closed out the set to take the upper hand. However, the Pole stormed back into the match in the second set with the crowd firmly behind the underdog while Djokovic seemed distracted, handing Hurkacz the first break when he made a double fault. Hurkacz nearly handed back the advantage on serve when



leading 4-3 with Djokovic going 40-15 up, but his powerful serve came to the rescue once again to deny the Serbian a break before he served out the set to force a decider. However, that was all Hurkacz had to offer as his unforced error count continued to climb. Although the Pole hit more winners than Djokovic, he also made 41 unforced errors which proved to be the difference. Sinner, enjoying the best season of his career, reached 60 victories in 2023 after a fierce battle against world number eight Rune.

The Italian needed only 32 minutes to clinch the first set courtesy of a strong serve and two early breaks, looking on course for a smooth victory. But the feisty Dane rallied to hold his serve and take the second set by capitalising the fourth of his break chances against a diminished Sinner, who constantly grabbed his lower back in apparent pain. Down 4-3 in the decider, Sinner saved a crucial break point thanks to an ace, then struck in the next game to break serve and seal his first win over Rune.