

Deputy Roads and Rural Development Minister Shahriar Afandizadeh Announced That Iran's Collaboration With Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan Will Have a Significant Impact on Transit Through the North-South and East-West Corridors

# IRAN NEWS

The Head of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) Mehdi Zeyghami Said That a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) Will Be Signed Between Iran and Oman in the Near Future to Spur Trade and Economic Activities

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### Iran Export to EAEU Members Up by 20%

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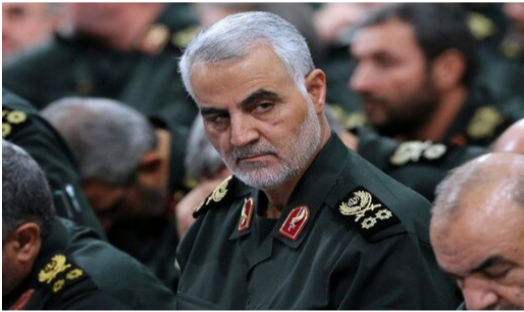
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### U.S. Unlikely to Rethink Weapons Supplies to Israel

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### Iranian Court Orders U.S. Gov't to Pay \$49.77b for Gen. Soleimani Assassination



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The Islamic Republic of Iran's Judiciary ordered the US government and 41 individuals and businesses to pay a sum of \$49.77 billion for their roles in the assassination of revered military commander Lt. General Qasem Soleimani. After a thorough examination prompted by the complaints of 3,318 Iranian citizens, Tehran's Public Court diligently reviewed the case seeking financial, moral, and punitive damages linked to the assassination of General Soleimani, culminating after three public hearings. The U.S. Department of Defense, Donald Trump, Mike Pompeo, the National Security Agency, the CIA, and many other members of the US government and defense-related businesses were among the 42 people and organizations that the court found responsible for General Soleimani's assassination. The court ordered the defendants to pay \$49.77 billion in total—that is, \$16.59 billion for each defendant—to make up for the moral and monetary losses brought about by the assassination. Additionally, the defendants were ordered to pay double the damages, totaling \$33.18 billion, in order to deter future violations and ensure accountability for their actions. This equates to 16,523,660 billion Iranian Rials for each plaintiff in the case. In addition to the financial penalties, the court ordered the defendants, including the US government, to issue an official apology to the plaintiffs and have it published in a widely published newspaper. The ruling, which was issued in absentia, allows for an appeal within a period of two months. This historic decision marks a watershed moment in international legal proceedings, emphasizing the pursuit of justice for General Soleimani's assassination and emphasizing accountability for state actions that violate human rights. On January 3, 2020, the United States assassinated General Soleimani, the former commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC)'s Quds Force, as well as Abu Mahdi Al Muhandis, deputy commander of Iraq's anti-terror Popular Mobilization Units, and their companions, in a drone strike near Baghdad International Airport.

### Foreign Ministry Slams PGCC Summit's Stance on Iran's Trio Islands



TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Nasser Kanaani, denounced the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council's (PGCC) summit statement regarding Iran's trio islands in the Persian Gulf. "Iran views any claims over these islands as interference in its internal territory, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, strongly condemning it," Kanaani said, expressing regret over parts of the final statement from the 44th PGCC session involving the Islamic Republic of Iran, denouncing it as unacceptable and rejected. Reaffirming Iran's unyielding stance, the spokesperson underlined that Abu Musa, Greater Tunb, and Lesser Tunb are integral and perpetual parts of Iranian territory. He emphasized, "Iran strongly condemns any claims made over these islands as interference in its domestic territory, sovereignty, and territorial integrity." Highlighting Iran's missile capabilities within a transparent military framework for deterrence and national security, Kanaani identified the non-regional actors' military presence and the Zionist regime as genuine threats to regional stability. "The real threat to regional security is the illegal military presence of non-regional actors and the Zionist regime, which is the primary source of insecurity and threats to Islamic countries and regional stability." Kanaani also accentuated Iran's role in combating terrorism and enhancing maritime security. "The Islamic Republic of Iran has consistently adhered to its international obligations and laws within the framework of rights and duties and continues its constructive cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) based on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)," he said. "The Islamic Republic of Iran has always emphasized friendly and constructive cooperation in the energy sector, including in the Arash energy field within the region, based on bilateral negotiations with the Kuwaiti government and past negotiation records. Without a doubt, behaviors based on mutual interests and commonalities can provide appropriate grounds for regional cooperation," Kanaani added.



### Iran Sends Into Space Biological Capsule Aboard Indigenous Launcher

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has successfully put into orbit its newest bio-space capsule with the domestically-built Salman launcher. The 500-kilogram capsule, developed by the Aerospace Research Institute of Iran, affiliated to the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, was launched to an altitude of 130 kilometers from the Earth's surface on Wednesday. The launch is a step to send humans into space in line with the Iranian government's plan to revive various sectors of the space industry and consolidate bio-space knowledge. It was a test for space technologies in the areas of launch, recovery and speed control systems, as well as impact shields, capsule aerodynamic design, and the systems related to control and monitoring of biological conditions. Salman launcher is manufactured by the Aerospace Industries Organization, a subsidiary of the Iranian Defense Ministry. It is capable of launching bio-capsules weighing 500 kilograms. Spokesman for the Aerospace Research Institute said the 13th government of the Islamic Republic has practically revived the bio-space. Hossein Dalirian said several bio-capsules systems were tested for the first time, and that the launcher, which was the first version "performed very well" the first launch. He said Salman launcher is the first version, which achieved great success in its first launch and launched the 500-kilogram capsule in very good condition. "This capsule is the result of relying on domestic power and the efforts of space industry experts in the Ministry of Defense." Despite sanctions imposed by Western countries in recent years, Iran has managed to take giant strides in its civilian space program. Iran sent its first bio-capsule containing living creatures into space in February 2010, using a Kavoshgar (Explorer) carrier. Speaking to Fars news agency, Iran's telecoms minister Issa Zarepour said Tehran will soon conduct suborbital tests of the new generation of bio-capsules, hoping that they will bring the country closer to its space goals. The capsule launched on Wednesday "is about half a ton and has the ability to carry a human, but its suborbital tests are underway," he added. "It should be taken into account that we are still 5 to 6 years away from reaching the point where we can send humans into space." Zarepour also noted that the Islamic Republic is trying to revitalize works in the field of launching biological capsules after a 10-year closure. Iran is among the top 10 countries leading the space industry and among the 7 leading the bio-space.

### Tehran Calls for More Maritime Cooperation Between Caspian Sea States

TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has called for an urgent halt to Israel's ongoing aggression on the Gaza Strip, demanding active role by international organizations to bring the occupying regime to justice for its genocidal war on the besieged territory. Amir-Abdollahian made the call during the 12th annual summit of foreign ministers of the five Caspian Sea littoral states, Caspian Five, which is hosted by Russia, in the country's capital of Moscow on Tuesday. "The Zionist regime's war criminals must be punished in the international court," Amir-Abdollahian said as he pointed to the more than 16,000 innocent Palestinians, including women and children, killed by the Israeli regime in Gaza since the start of Operation al-Aqsa Storm in early October. Calling for international pressure on Israel to lift the blockade on the Strip, the top Iranian diplomat said, "Stop the export of goods to the occupied Palestinian territories and boycott the goods made in Israel; this is the least [we can do] to show our sympathy for the people of Gaza." Amir-Abdollahian also said the Islamic Republic recognizes the right of the Palestinian people to resist the Israeli occupation within the framework of international law and United Nations resolutions, underlining the necessity of restoring their right to self-determination as well as the formation of the Palestinian State with al-Quds as its capital and the return of Palestinian refugees to their homeland. Speaking at the summit in Moscow, Iran's foreign minister called for more maritime cooperation between the five countries bordering the Caspian Sea while stressing the significance of security and stability in the region. Amir-Abdollahian said all decisions regarding the issues on the Caspian Sea must be made with the "consensus and agreement" of the five littoral states of Iran, Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and



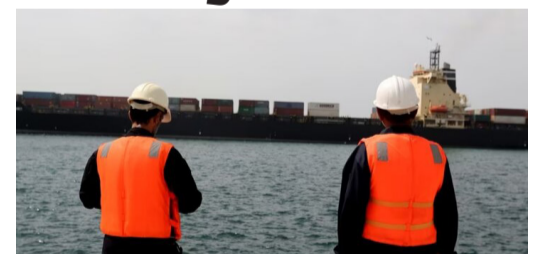
Turkmenistan. "To make the Caspian Sea a real symbol of friendship, progress and development, we need to strengthen collective interaction and cooperation as much as possible," he added. Amir-Abdollahian also touched upon environmental challenges facing the Caspian Sea and its littoral states such as the alarming decrease in its water level. Stressing the need to preserve the environment and resources of the Caspian Sea for future generations, the top Iranian diplomat added, "The Caspian Sea is considered a strategic region due to the fact that it is the connecting link of the North-South and East-West corridors." Amir-Abdollahian said security in the Caspian Sea is a collective interest of all coastal countries, saying they shoulder the responsibility to maintain stability, security and sustainable development in the strategic sea. The Iranian foreign minister also called for the establishment of a secretariat or an organization that can manage and monitor various fields of cooperation among the Caspian Five member states. "The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes the development of a blue economy and joint investment in the fields of maritime transport, ports, fisheries, maritime tourism, the creation of free-trade zones and reasonable and sustainable exploitation of the living resources of the Caspian Sea," Amir-Abdollahian underlined. Iran's foreign minister departed Tehran for Moscow on Monday to participate in the Caspian Five summit, which focuses on the important issues related to the Caspian Sea, such as security, trade, energy, environment and legal issues. Over the past decade, Iran has attached high priority to the consolidation of relations with neighboring countries in the region, clinching landmark agreements and entering international economic coalitions as part of the Islamic Republic's policy of confronting Western unilateralism.

### Iran Urges Coastal States to Cooperate in Protecting Persian Gulf Ecosystem



TEHRAN - Iran called on the coastal states in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman to cooperate in protecting the ecosystems of these bodies of water. "Given the increasing damage and destruction of essential and economically important coastal ecosystems such as mangrove forests, coral reefs and fisheries livelihoods in the Persian Gulf and Oman Sea, we strongly encourage the coastal States in the region to work together to protect such ecosystems," said Zahra Ershadi, Iran's deputy permanent representative to the United Nations. "We reiterate the call for all relevant States to work together to protect the environment of this shared body of water and to refrain from unilateral actions that could jeopardize its marine environment," she added, addressing the UN General Assembly meeting on "Oceans and the law of the sea (Agenda Item 75)", held in New York on Tuesday. In some part of her speech, Ershadi said: "As a signatory State to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Islamic Republic of Iran recognizes the significance of this international legal framework in governing activities related to oceans and seas. However, Iran maintains that UNCLOS should not be regarded as the exclusive and sole legal framework within which all activities pertaining to oceans and seas must be carried out." She added: "We assert that any reference to UNCLOS should be made in conjunction with other relevant legal instruments and frameworks, rather than in isolation." Ershadi reiterated the Islamic Republic of Iran, as a coastal state in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, is committed to achieving the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 14 as well as ocean sustainability. In this regard, Iran is looking forward to convening the Third United Nations Ocean Conference to support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, co-hosted by the French Republic and the Republic of Costa Rica in 2024 and 2025. She noted: "The Islamic Republic of Iran highly values the efforts made in sustainable fisheries management, which play an important role in supporting the economic activities of some developing countries, conserving marine resources, maintaining healthy marine ecosystems and ensuring food security for all."

### Iran, India Promote New Trade Route Through Armenia



TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran's and India's ambassadors in Yerevan on Tuesday stressed the importance of Armenia's involvement in a new transnational transport corridor planned by their countries. "We believe that the communication corridor from India to the Iranian port of Chabahar and on to Armenia and further north, the Black Sea, is a reliable route for transporting goods to the north and to Europe," the Iranian envoy, Mehdi Sobhani, said during an international conference in Yerevan. "The development of this path will protect our countries against external harm." India has built and operates two terminals at Chabahar to bypass Pakistan in cargo traffic with Iran, Afghanistan, and central Asian countries, Azatutun reports. It has proposed the Gulf of Oman port's inclusion in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) project initiated by Russia, Iran, and India in 2000. The project calls for a 7,200-kilometer-long network of maritime and terrestrial routes stretching from Mumbai to Moscow. The Armenian government suggested in 2021 that Indian companies use Chabahar for cargo shipments to not only Armenia but also neighboring Georgia, Russia, and even Europe. Senior Armenian, Indian, and Iranian diplomats explored the possibility of creating such a trade route during first-ever trilateral talks held in Yerevan in April this year. Speaking at the conference organized by the Armenian government, the Indian ambassador to Armenia, Nilakshi Saha Sinha, welcomed the South Caucasus nation's interest in the INSTC. "We are ready to work with Armenia to understand how the country can benefit from the opportunities of this corridor," she said, adding that the Indian side will make it easier for Armenian firms to ship cargo to and from Chabahar.

# IRAN NEWS



## IRGC Forces Seize Fuel-Smuggling Vessels near Abu Musa Island

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) naval forces apprehended two fuel-smuggling vessels carrying an estimated 4.5 million liters of fuel in the waters near Abu Musa Island in the Persian Gulf in a rapid reaction operation. The ships and their 24 crew members have been turned over to judicial authorities for legal proceedings. As part of their efforts to combat organized fuel smuggling in the Persian Gulf waters, the IRGC's fifth naval region conducted a three-day surveillance operation and seized the two vessels during a rapid reaction operation in the southern waters of Abu Musa Island, estimated to be carrying approximately 4.5 million liters of fuel. Commander of the fifth naval region of the IRGC, Rear Admiral Ali Ozmaei, remarked on the operation, noting that one vessel, carrying 2,280,000 liters of smuggled fuel, was apprehended in the southern waters of Abu Musa Island, with a crew of 13 foreign personnel. Another vessel, nearly carrying 2,300,000 liters of smuggled fuel and manned by 21 foreign crew members, was also seized by the IRGC's Imam Mohammad Baqer naval region.

### IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

## Iran, Oman. Discuss Bolstering Industrial, Investment Ties



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Officials from Iran and Sultanate of Oman explored avenues for the development of relations in the fields of industry and investment. During their meeting in Tehran, Chief Executive of Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) Babak Ahmadi and Oman's Deputy Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Saleh bin Said Masan emphasized expanding industrial relations and joint investment. Iran's deputy minister of industry pointed to the common fields of cooperation between Tehran and Muscat and the high capability of Iranian industries and stressed the participation of Iranian contractors and companies in Oman's projects within the framework of joint venture (JV) projects. Ahmadi pointed out that the IDRO is ready to cooperate and participate in biofuel, climatic change and maritime industrial projects with Omani investors as joint ventures. The Omani deputy industry minister, who is in Iran to participate in the 20th Iran-Oman Joint Economic Commission, expressed the readiness of his country to expand industrial and investment cooperation with Iran, adding that Oman invites Iranian companies and investors to invest in the Arab country. Saleh bin Said Masan also invited Iran's deputy industry minister to visit Oman for further enhancement of bilateral relations in the fields of trade and economy.

## Iran Export to EAEU Members Up by 20%

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TEHRAN – The value of Iran's exports to the members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) increased by 20 percent in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-November 21) as compared to the same period last year, the spokesman of the International Relations and Trade Development Committee of Iran's House of Industry, Mining and Trade said. According to Ruhollah Latifi, the Islamic Republic exported 2.778 million tons of commodities worth \$1.074 to the members of the Eurasian Economic Union in the mentioned eight months, IRIB reported. Exports to the EAEU also increased by 45 percent in terms of weight, according to Latifi. Iran and five EAEU members traded 5.168 million tons of goods worth \$2.344 billion in the first eight months of the current Iranian year, registering a 33.5 percent rise in weight, and a 14 percent increase in value, year on year, the official said. Meanwhile, the Islamic Republic imported 2.39 million tons of non-oil goods, valued at \$1.27 billion from the EAEU countries, indicating a 22 and 10 percent hike in weight and value, respectively, compared to the same period of last year, he added. The Russian Federation, Armenia,

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Belarus were the top destinations for Iranian goods in the mentioned period, respectively. According to Latifi, more than 84 percent of the weight and 71 percent of the value of Iran's imports from Eurasia and 20 percent of the weight and 39 percent of the value of Iran's exports to this union were related to agricultural, food and livestock products. Iran and EAEU reached a preferential trade agreement in 2018 based on which about 862 commodity items are currently subject to preferential tariffs. The agreement came into effect on October 27, 2019. Back in July, the minister in charge of trade of the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) said that the EAEU's cooperation with Iran is actively expanding in various fields, and trade between the two sides has doubled over the past four years. Andrey Slepnev also said that trade between the union and the Islamic Republic of Iran rose 22 percent in 2022. The important thing is that bilateral trade exchanges are balanced, that is, almost as much as the Eurasian Economic Union supplies goods to Iran, Iran also exports goods to the member countries of this union, the official noted.

## Iran, Russia Sign Deal to Counter UCMs



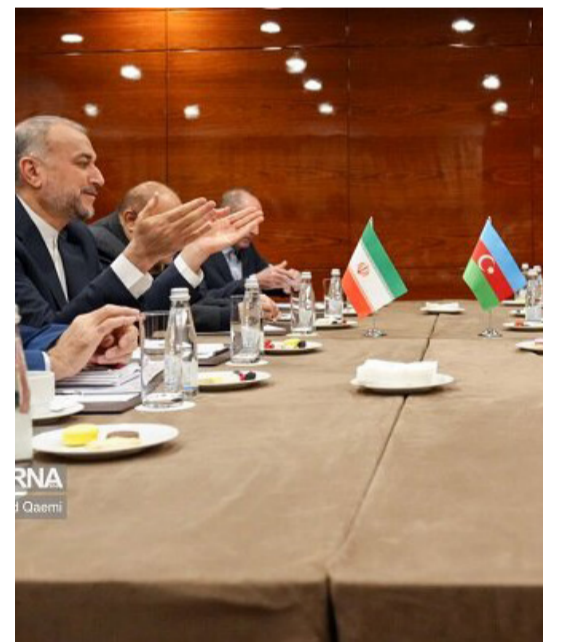
TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran and Russia signed an agreement on countermeasures against unilateral coercive measures (UCMs). Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov signed the agreement on the sidelines of a meeting of the foreign ministers of the five Caspian countries, held in Moscow on Tuesday. In the gathering, the two senior diplomats also talked about the relations between Iran and Russia and the latest regional developments. Lavrov described the bilateral agreement on countermeasures against unilateral coercive measures as a step in standing against the illegal sanctions imposed by the US and its allies which he criticized for replacing diplomacy with UCMs. He also hailed Iran's membership in BRICS, expressing Russia's support for cooperation within the framework of the economic grouping. Russia stresses the need for the increased activities of the North-South Corridor, Lavrov added. For his part, Amir-Abdollahian said the meeting has provided an opportunity to review the past agreements signed by the presidents of the two countries. He also praised the fruitful results of diplomatic interaction between the two states.

## Iran Exports Non-Oil Goods Worth \$89.5m to South Africa

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran exported non-oil commodities valued at \$89.5 million to South Africa during the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-October 22), the spokesman of Trade Development Committee of Iran's House of Industry, Mining and Trade announced. Ruhollah Latifi also announced that the Islamic Republic imported products valued at \$11.5 million from South Africa in the seven-month period. Among the African trade partners of Iran in the first seven months of this year, South Africa was the second export destination of the Iranian products, and the first source of import to the country, he added. As the official has announced, Iran exported 1.205 million tons of non-oil commodities valued at \$434 million to

Africa during the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year. Latifi said that the country's seven-month export to Africa fell 53 percent in value, and 33 percent in weight, year on year. The official also announced that Iran imported 38,122 tons of goods valued at \$47.434 million from Africa in the first seven months of the present year, with 21 percent drop in worth and 42 percent fall in weight, as compared to the same period of time in the past year. Over the past 40 years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has never given up on its principled policy towards Africa due to political and cultural commonalities, despite the sanctions, pressure and disruptions of the West, and has always maintained itself alongside the people and countries of Africa.

## Tehran, Baku Eye Balanced Relations in All Fields



TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said Tuesday that the Tehran-Baku ties are on the right track and the two sides are seeking to develop balanced relations in all fields. Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks after a meeting with his Azerbaijani counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov in Moscow, where the foreign ministers of Caspian Sea littoral states convened to discuss issues of mutual interest. "Tehran and Baku are seeking to have balanced relations in the economic, cultural, political, security, and tourism sectors, and in the sectors where the speed of progress has been slower, work will be pursued more quickly," he said. Pointing to President Ebrahim Raisi's recent meeting with his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev, the top Iranian diplomat said the authorities of the two countries have reached a good agreement for the comprehensive development of relations in the economic sector, the opening of corridors, trade cooperation, and implementation of incomplete joint projects. He further stressed that the two countries are seeking to activate their relations in the economic, cultural, political, security, and tourism sectors so as to accelerate the pace of bilateral cooperation.



## Armenia Interested in Activity in Iran's Chabahar Port

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (MPO) Ali-Akbar Safaei has said Armenia is eager to take part in maritime activities in the Islamic Republic's southeastern Chabahar Port, the TPO portal reported. Safaei who met with Armenia's Deputy Economy Minister Narek Teryan and the country's commercial attaché to Iran Vardan Kostanyan in Tehran on Tuesday, said: "Considering the interest of the Armenian government to cooperate in the maritime and port sector with Iran, the Ports and Maritime Organization will do its best to facilitate such cooperation." Speaking in this meeting, Safaei emphasized that the PMO welcomes any bilateral agreement between Iran and Armenia in the maritime and port sector, adding that Iran supports any tripartite cooperation with India and Armenia in Chabahar Port, and the proposed packages in this regard are being reviewed by the PMO. The official said the Iranian government has been following new strategies to expand economic cooperation with neighboring countries and in line with these strategies the country's maritime trade has increased by nine percent in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21) in comparison to the previous year.



## Indonesia's Marapi Volcano Eruption Leaves 22 Dead

JAKARTA (Dispatches) - The death toll from Indonesia's Marapi volcano eruption jumped to 22 on Tuesday as rescuers found more climbers who had perished near the crater, the head of the West Sumatra rescue agency said on Tuesday, up from 13 earlier in the day. About 200 rescuers will resume search operations on Wednesday for one further missing climber. The 2,891-metre high volcano in West Sumatra erupted on Sunday, spewing gray clouds of ash as high as 3 kilometres (1.9 miles) into the sky. "We are now evacuating the dead bodies from the peak of the volcano," said the head of the search and rescue team, Abdul Malik. Marapi is one of the most active volcanoes on Sumatra island and last erupted in January and February this year. Since 2011, Indonesia's volcanology agency has urged a local conservation agency and the environment ministry in monthly letters to close an area within 3 kilometres' radius of the summit to climbers, agency head Hendra Gunawan told Reuters.



## U.S. Senators Square Off at Ukraine Briefing After Zelensky Pulls Out



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Several Republican senators walked out of a classified briefing on Ukraine Tuesday as it descended into a row over the border crisis, after President Volodymyr Zelensky unexpectedly canceled a video link appearance to appeal for continued U.S. funding. Zelensky had been due to update the senators on the latest developments in the conflict with Russia and press for them to support a procedural vote expected Wednesday on an emergency aid package that includes more than \$60 billion for Kyiv. The cash has been held up for weeks by a dispute in Congress, as the White House has warned that existing funds will run out by the end of the year and that Russia's President Vladimir Putin could win the war if lawmakers fail to act. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer announced that Zelensky had been prevented from taking part by a "last minute" hiccup, but he pressed ahead with the briefing anyway -- only for the proceedings to turn into a war of words. Utah's Mitt Romney left early, confirming that "a number" of his Republican colleagues had followed suit, angry that they heard nothing on their demand that Ukraine aid be coupled with action on the migrant crisis at the US-Mexico border. "The briefers were saying things we've all known, we can read about in any newspaper, had been said publicly," Romney told reporters. "There's nothing new in what they're describing, and Republicans are saying that there's support for Ukraine, but there has to be security of our border." Congress is more divided over backing for Ukraine than it has been at any time during the nearly two-year conflict, with the country fast exhausting the military aid provided by the United States so far. Senate Republicans are making their support for extra Ukraine funding contingent on President Joe Biden's Democrats accepting reforms of the asylum system and tightened border security -- measures the Democrats have already rejected. "Republicans are just walking out of the briefing because the people there are not willing to actually discuss what it takes to get a deal done," Romney said. As day turned to evening, Biden voiced deepening frustration. "The failure to support Ukraine is just absolutely crazy. It's against US interests," Biden said. "It's just wrong." Schumer was quoted by Fox News as saying the briefing had been "immediately hijacked" by Republicans choosing to make a speech on border security rather than asking questions about Ukraine. One member was "screaming" an admonishment at briefers about not having visited the border, Schumer reportedly said. The Democrat has teed up a vote Wednesday on clearing the first procedural hurdle for addressing Biden's \$106 billion aid request for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan. But it needs 60 votes in the 100-member Senate, and the 49-strong Republican minority looks likely to defeat the package as it leaves out their immigration reforms. "The number one most immediate threat to our national security is an open border," Kansas Republican Roger Marshall said outside the briefing room. "Look, everything has been said about Ukraine that can be said. And what's not being said is what's so critical here." Even if the two sides manage to hammer out a deal in the Senate, it will be a much tougher sell for the Republican-led House, where conservatives have been more skeptical about funding Ukraine, and just as keen to leverage the issue to secure border reforms.

## India to Be World's Third-Largest Economy by 2030



BENGALURU (Dispatches) - India will remain the fastest-growing major economy for at least the next three years, setting it on course to become the world's third-largest economy by 2030, S&P Global Ratings said in a report. S&P expects India, currently the world's fifth-largest economy, to grow at 6.4% this fiscal and estimates growth will pick up to 7% by fiscal 2027. In contrast, it expects China's growth to slow to 4.6% by 2026 from an estimated 5.4% this year. India's gross domestic product (GDP) grew a bigger-than-expected 7.6% in the second quarter of fiscal 2024, data showed last week, which prompted several brokerages to raise their full-year estimate. However, S&P, which had raised its forecast even before the latest data, said India's growth will depend on its successful transition to a manufacturing-dominated economy from a services-dominated one. "A paramount test will be whether India can become the next big global manufacturing hub, an immense opportunity," S&P said in its Global Credit Outlook 2024 report, dated Dec. 4. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has been driving domestic manufacturing through the "Make in India" campaign and production-linked incentives (PLIs), the share of manufacturing is still roughly 18% of GDP. In contrast, services account for over half of India's GDP. S&P said that developing a strong logistics framework is key to becoming a manufacturing hub and that India also needs to "upskill" its workers and increase female participation in the workforce to realize its "demographic dividend." India has one of the youngest working populations in the world, with nearly 53% of its citizens under the age of 30.

## U.S. Unlikely to Rethink Weapons Supplies to Israel



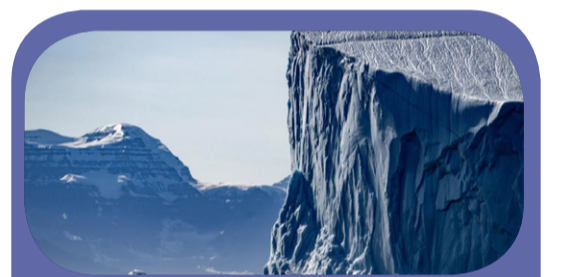
WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Facing a soaring death toll from Israel's renewed offensive in southern Gaza, the Biden administration is trying to pressure its ally to minimize civilian deaths while stopping well short of the kind of measures that might force it to listen, such as threatening to restrict military aid. Top U.S. officials, including Vice President Kamala Harris and Secretary of State Antony Blinken, have urged Israel publicly to conduct a more surgical offensive in the south to avoid the heavy civilian casualties inflicted by its attacks in the north. About 900 people in Gaza were killed in Israeli airstrikes between Friday when a truce ended and Monday, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, about the same number killed in strikes in Gaza over the four days following the Hamas cross-border raid on Israel on Oct. 7, though fewer than the 1,199 who died in the four days following the start of Israel's ground offensive on northern Gaza Oct. 28. Washington is for now ruling out withholding delivery of weapons or harshly criticizing Israel as a means of changing its tactics because the U.S. believes the existing strategy of privately negotiating is effective, according to two U.S. officials. "We think what we're doing is moving them," a senior U.S. official said, citing how Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu shifted from refusing to allow aid into Gaza to allowing nearly 200 trucks of assistance a day, saying those improvements were the result of intense diplomacy, not threats. The U.S. official spoke after three days of resumed aerial bombardments of southern Gaza left residents pulling the bodies of children and adults from the rubble. But the U.S. official said reducing military support to Israel would carry major risks. "You start lessening aid to Israel, you start encouraging other parties to come into the conflict, you weaken the deterrence effect and you encourage Israel's other enemies," the official said. The United States has called its support unwavering. The Israeli government appears unmoved by international demands to change its strategy. "I must admit I sense that the prime minister feels zero pressure, and that we will do whatever it takes to achieve our military goals," Netanyahu's foreign policy adviser Ophir Falk told Reuters last week when asked about the international pressure on Israel. The United States gives Israel \$3.8 billion in military aid annually, ranging from fighter jets to powerful bombs that could destroy Hamas tunnels, and the Biden administration has asked Congress to approve an additional \$14 billion. Such support gives Washington "significant leverage" over how the war against Hamas is conducted, said Seth Binder, director of advocacy at The Project on Middle East Democracy. "Withholding certain types of equipment or delaying refilling stockpiles of various arms would force the Israeli

government to adjust strategies and tactics because they would not be guaranteed to have more in the pipeline," said Binder. "To do so, the administration has demonstrated an unwillingness to use that leverage." Weighing on Biden is the 2024 presidential election, even as senior aides have stepped up calls for Israeli restraint. Any attempt to cut aid could hurt the Democratic president with pro-Israel independent voters as he seeks re-election. Biden also faces pressure from a faction of progressive Democrats who want the U.S. to set conditions on military aid to its closest Middle East ally, and for the president to support calls for an immediate ceasefire. A senior Israeli security source said that so far there has been no change in U.S. support for Israel. "At the moment there is an understanding and there is continued coordination," said the source. "If the U.S. shifts course, Israel will have to speed up its operations and wrap things up quickly." Fighting between Israel and Hamas resumed on Friday after a seven-day pause to exchange hostages and prisoners and deliver humanitarian aid. Israel is retaliating for an Oct. 7 attack by Hamas militants that it says killed 1,200 people and took about 240 hostages. Gaza's health ministry, whose data the U.N. has deemed broadly reliable, said on Monday that at least 15,899 Palestinians, 70% of them women or people under 18 whom it defines as children, have been killed in Israeli bombardments over eight weeks of warfare. The Israeli military's offensive in northern Gaza began with intense aerial bombardment, then a large-scale ground incursion that ultimately saw Israeli forces surround and enter Gaza City, the largest settlement in the enclave. Israeli officials say they are conducting operations in the south differently, allowing more time for non-combatants in combat areas to evacuate, but can't promise to eliminate civilian casualties. "We are going to continue with our campaign to destroy Hamas, a campaign that the United States sees eye to eye with us about," Israeli government spokesperson Eylon Levy said on Tuesday. He repeated Israeli accusations that Hamas uses women and children as human shields. U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Monday that Washington expects the Israelis to follow through on not attacking those areas. A second U.S. official said the fact that Israel was being more deliberate in saying what areas civilians should avoid was a sign U.S. pressure was working. The official said the U.S. wants Israel to be more precise with its strikes in southern Gaza, but it was too early to tell whether Israel had taken this advice on board. Residents and journalists on the ground said intense Israeli airstrikes hit southern Gaza on Monday, killing and wounding dozens of Palestinians.



CARACAS (Dispatches) - Tensions rose between Venezuela and Guyana Tuesday as Caracas proposed a bill to declare a Venezuelan province in a disputed oil-rich region and ordered the state oil company to issue licenses for extracting crude there. Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro proposed at a government meeting that a bill be sent to the National Assembly for the creation of a "Guyana Esequiba" province in the region Guyana has administered for over a century. He also said oil, gas and mining licenses must be issued immediately. Venezuela held a controversial non-binding referendum on the region's fate Sunday that yielded an overwhelming 95-percent "yes" vote for Caracas' designs on Essequibo, or Esequiba as it is known in Venezuela. Maduro gave an ultimatum to oil companies working under concessions given by Guyana to withdraw their operations within three months. He also said a town bordering the disputed area, Tumeremo, would become headquarters of Venezuelan efforts to defend its interests there, saying authorities would conduct a census and begin issuing identity cards without giving details of how that would occur. Earlier Tuesday, Guyana said it would approach the UN Security Council for help if Venezuela makes any moves following the referendum, which Guyana had sought to stop with an urgent application to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague. Guyana's Attorney General Anil Nandlall told AFP

"any action or any attempt to take any action pursuant to the referendum will necessitate a resort to the UN Security Council as an injured party." He said Guyana would invoke Articles 41 and 42 of the UN Charter which can authorize sanctions or military action to maintain or restore international peace and security. "In terms of military, it (the UNSC) can authorize the use of armed forces by member states to assist in the enforcement" of ICJ orders, Nandlall said. Guyana has administered Essequibo for over a century. The region makes up more than two-thirds of its territory and is home to 125,000 of Guyana's 800,000 citizens. Litigation is pending before the ICJ over where the borders should lie. Guyana, a former British and Dutch colony, insists the frontiers were determined by an arbitration panel in 1899. But Venezuela -- which does not accept the ICJ's jurisdiction in the matter -- claims the Essequibo River to the region's east forms a natural border and had historically been recognised as such. The dispute has intensified since ExxonMobil discovered oil in Essequibo in 2015. Caracas called Sunday's referendum after Georgetown started auctioning off oil blocks in Essequibo in August. Guyana had asked the ICJ to block the vote, which it considered an existential threat. On Friday, the court urged Caracas to take no action that might affect the disputed territory, but did not grant Georgetown's request for urgent intervention.



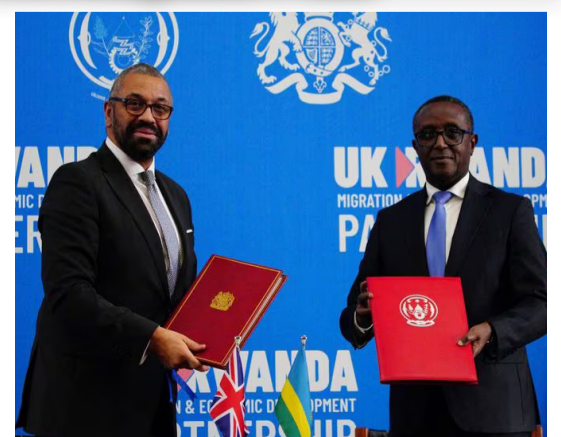
## Planet Tipping Points Pose Unprecedented Threat to Humanity

PARIS (Dispatches) - Humanity faces an "unprecedented" risk from tipping points that could unleash a domino effect of irreversible catastrophes across the planet, researchers warned Wednesday. The most comprehensive assessment ever conducted of Earth's invisible tripwires was released as leaders meet for UN climate talks in Dubai with 2023 set to smash all heat records. While many of the 26 tipping points laid out in the report -- such as melting ice sheets -- are linked to global warming, other human activities like razing swathes of the Amazon rainforest could also push Earth's ecosystems to the brink. Five of these are showing signs of tipping -- from melting ice sheets threatening catastrophic sea level rise, to mass die-off of tropical coral reefs -- the report warned. Some may have already begun to irreversibly transform. Once the world crosses the threshold for just one tipping point, dealing with the immediate humanitarian disaster could distract attention away from stopping the others, creating a "vicious cycle" of mass hunger, displacement and conflict, the report warned. Tim Lenton, an Earth system scientist at the University of Exeter and lead author of the report, told AFP that these tipping points pose a "threat of a magnitude that is unprecedented for humanity". The report also highlighted a range of positive tipping points -- such as electric vehicles, renewable energy and changing to plant-based diets -- that have the potential to swiftly build momentum and tip things back the other way. "Imagine leaning back on a chair to that balance point where a small nudge can make a big difference," Lenton said. "You could end up sprawled on your back on the floor -- or if you're lucky, back upright." A key concern is if the melting West Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets collapse. That could raise sea levels two metres by 2100, exposing nearly half a billion people to frequent coastal flooding, the report said. The Greenland ice sheet has been shrinking at such a rate that it might already be too late. "Is it past the tipping point or could it stop shrinking? No one's quite sure," Lenton said.

## UK Signs New Rwanda Treaty to Resurrect Asylum Plan

LONDON (Dispatches) - Britain signed a new treaty with Rwanda on Tuesday which it said would overcome a court decision blocking its plan to deport asylum seekers to the East African country, a ruling that dealt a huge blow to the government's immigration policy. The Rwanda scheme is at the centre of the government's strategy to stop illegal migration and is being watched closely by other countries considering similar policies. But last month, the United Kingdom's Supreme Court ruled that the plan would violate international human rights laws enshrined in domestic legislation. Under the new treaty, signed by British Home Secretary (interior minister) James Cleverly and which replaces a non-binding memorandum of understanding, Britain said Rwanda would not expel asylum seekers to a country where their life or freedom would be threatened -- one of the court's major concerns. There will also be a monitoring committee to enable individuals to lodge confidential complaints directly to them, and a new appeal body made up of judges from around the world. Cleverly said he expected migrants to be heading to Rwanda in the coming months because the treaty addressed all the issues raised by the Supreme Court. "I really hope that we can now move quickly," Cleverly told reporters in Rwanda's capital Kigali. However, many lawyers and charities said it was unlikely that deportation flights could start before an election expected next year. The opposition Labour Party, which has a double-digit lead in the polls, plans to ditch the Rwanda policy if it wins. Under the plan agreed last year, Britain intends to send thousands of asylum seekers who arrived on its shores without permission to Rwanda to deter migrants making the dangerous journey across the Channel from Europe in small

boats. In return, Rwanda has received an initial payment of 140 million pounds (\$180 million) with the promise of more money to fund the accommodation and care of any deported individuals. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, now in power for just over a year, is under intense pressure from both his own lawmakers and many voters to cut net migration, which hit a record 745,000 last year, with the vast majority coming through legal routes. "Stop the boats" is one of five goals Sunak set for his government to end the flow of asylum seekers who pay people smugglers for their crossings, often in overcrowded boats that are not seaworthy. The Supreme Court ruled against the Rwanda plan -- first brought in by then prime minister Boris Johnson in April last year -- because there was a risk that deported refugees would have their claims wrongly assessed or returned to their country of origin to face persecution. The new treaty is expected to be followed later this week by the publication of legislation declaring Rwanda a so-called safe country, designed to stop legal challenges against the planned deportation flights. However, this is likely to trigger a new round of political and legal wrangling. The first flight was scheduled to go last summer but was cancelled at the last moment because of legal challenges. Sarah Gogan, an immigration lawyer at Harbottle & Lewis, said Rwanda's human rights record meant the government's "highly contentious" policy would be challenged in the courts and parliament. "You cannot in a matter of weeks or months reform a country and turn it into one with an impartial judiciary and administrative culture," she said. "The treaty appears to be yet more fairytale politics and completely unworkable."





## Rice Caps Arsenal Fightback in Seven-Goal Thriller at Luton

LONDON (Dispatches) - Arsenal moved five points clear at the top of the Premier League after Declan Rice's last-gasp goal capped the leaders' thrilling fightback in their 4-3 win against Luton. Rocked by a pair of costly blunders from keeper David Raya, Mikel Arteta's side trailed 3-2 in the second half of a pulsating clash at Kenilworth Road. But Arsenal roared back to consolidate their lead at the top of the table thanks to Kai Havertz's equaliser and Rice's header deep into stoppage-time. The wild celebrations from Arteta and his players underlined the significance of a gritty escape that will fuel the belief Arsenal can finally win their first title since 2004. "I'm so happy. We knew it would be a big battle here, we made it hard for ourselves the way we conceded the goals," Arteta said. "The spirit of the team, how we fought, showed our quality in the right moments and never gave up. We went for it and got our rewards today. Big compliments to Luton, it was a tough night. I've spoken with the team, and they are all jumping." Gabriel Martinelli had opened the scoring for Arsenal, with Luton's Gabriel Osho equalising and Gabriel Jesus restoring the visitors' advantage just before half-time. Elijah Adebayo scored Luton's second equaliser soon after half-time thanks to the first of Raya's mistakes and Ross Barkley benefitted from another error from the Spaniard. But England midfielder Rice had the last word to give Arsenal six successive wins in all competitions since their controversial VAR-aided defeat at Newcastle. Arteta's men have been road warriors since the start of last season - winning 17 away games in that period - and the Gunners' first trip to Kenilworth Road for 32 years

brought their first victory at the venue since 1984. They struck first in the 20th minute when Bukayo Saka weaved his way down the right flank for a low cross that Martinelli met with a scuffed finish into the bottom corner from 12 yards. Undone by a well-worked corner routine, Arsenal were left flat-footed five minutes later as Osho found space to thump his header past Raya from 10 yards for his first Premier League goal. Jesus put Arsenal back ahead on the stroke of half-time with a close-range header from Ben White's looping cross. Luton's set-piece prowess provided another plot twist in the 49th minute when Adebayo rose highest to head home from close-range after Raya flapped at Alfie Doughty's corner. Rob Edwards' side lead the Premier League in set-piece goals this season, with over 50 percent coming from free-kicks, corners and penalties. The Hatters had no need to unleash their dead-ball excellence as they grabbed a third goal thanks to another Raya blunder in the 57th minute. Former Chelsea midfielder Barkley glided away from White inside the area for a low shot that squirmed under Raya's weak attempted save. But Arsenal were level again just three minutes later through Havertz, who poked home from close-range after Jesus showed impressive strength to hold off his marker before picking out the German's run. Showing the fortitude of potential champions, Arsenal kept pushing for the winner and completed their spirited fightback in the seventh minute of stoppage-time. Rice met Martin Odegaard's cross with a glancing header that nestled in the far corner as Arteta danced a jig of delight on the touchline.

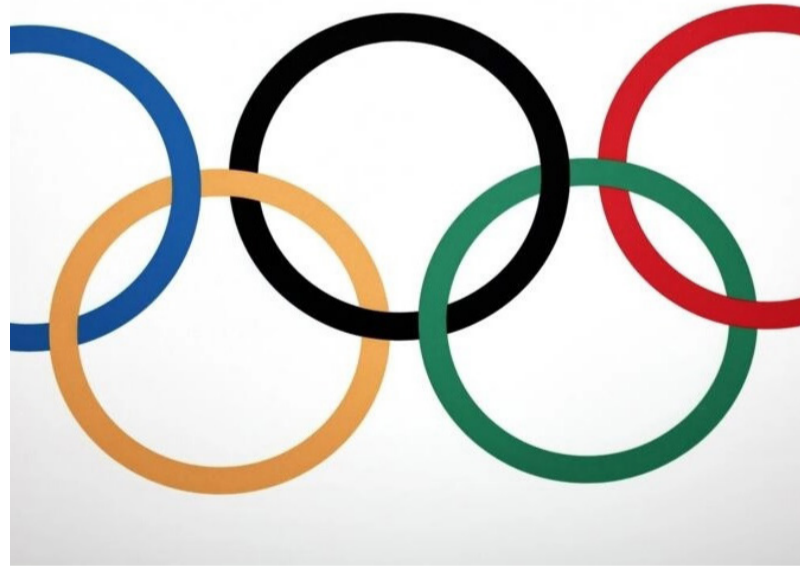
## Messi Named Time's "Athlete of the Year"



LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Lionel Messi has been named Time magazine's "Athlete of the Year" for 2023 after a trailblazing season marked by an eighth Ballon d'Or award and his ground-breaking move to Major League Soccer's Inter Miami. Time said the Argentine superstar had already had a transformative impact on the American sporting landscape, which has been historically slow to embrace football. "Lionel Messi this year managed to do what once seemed impossible, when he signed with Inter Miami: turning the US into a soccer country," Time commented. The 36-year-old Messi made his debut for Miami in July following an acrimonious departure from Paris Saint-Germain. The World Cup-winner also rebuffed a lucrative move to Saudi Arabia in favor of a new chapter in MLS. The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner made an instant impact on Miami's fortunes, playing a pivotal role in helping the team win the expanded Leagues Cup, a cross-border competition for teams from MLS and Mexico's top flight. Messi finished the campaign with 11 goals in 14 appearances across all competitions, but an injury towards the end of the season meant he was unable to help Miami force their way into the playoffs. Messi was quoted by Time as saying that his first preference after PSG had been a fairy-tale return to Barcelona, but that move stalled over the club's finances. "I tried to return, and it did not happen," Messi said, adding that he was also "thinking a lot" about joining the wave of overseas players who have headed to the Saudi Pro League. "It was Saudi Arabia or MLS, and both options seemed very interesting to me," Messi told the magazine. Time said Messi's arrival had driven a surge in attendances, ticket prices, merchandise sales and viewership, revealing that on the day of his debut, subscriptions to Apple TV -- which retains exclusive rights to MLS -- had jumped by 110,000, a 1,700% increase over the previous day.

## Sports Bodies Ask IOC to Allow Russians as Neutrals for 2024 Olympics

LAUSANNE (Dispatches) - Representatives of international sports federations and national Olympic committees on Tuesday called for Russian and Belarusian athletes to be admitted under a neutral flag for the 2024 Games in Paris "as soon as possible". During the Olympic summit in Lausanne, athlete representatives also asked for "clarity" on the issue, according to a statement published after the meeting. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) still has to make a final ruling on whether athletes from Russia and Belarus, a key ally for Moscow in its offensive on Ukraine, will be permitted to compete next summer. The IOC has repeated its stance that a decision will be taken "at the appropriate time". Athletes from the two countries have faced sanctions from a multitude of sports since Russia launched its assault on Ukraine in February of 2022. However, over the past year a number of Olympic sports have eased restrictions, allowing them to return to competition under certain conditions. In March, the IOC lifted an outright ban on Russian and Belarusian athletes, allowing them to compete as neutral athletes provided they did not support the Ukraine conflict and had no ties to the military. The IOC on Tuesday "confirmed that the participation of such AINs (individual neutral athletes) in the Olympic Games could happen only under the existing strict conditions": "Neither the qualification system developed by the respective International Federations nor the number of allocated quota places to a sport will be changed for AINs with a Russian or Belarusian passport," it added. The IOC suspended the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) on October 12 for violating the territorial integrity of the membership of Ukraine by recognizing illegally annexed territories. ROC has recognized regional organizations from four Ukrainian territories annexed since Russia's invasion began in 2022. Russia's Olympic body last month launched an appeal against its suspension by the IOC at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). In September, officials voted to allow Russian and Belarusian athletes to compete at next year's Paralympics under a neutral flag after deciding against an outright ban.



## Guardiola Predicts Man City Will Win Premier League



LONDON (Dispatches) - A bullish Pep Guardiola says he believes Manchester City will win a record fourth consecutive Premier League title despite a three-match winless run. The defending champions have drawn their past three league games, against Chelsea, Liverpool and Tottenham, and are three points behind leaders Arsenal ahead of Wednesday's match at Aston Villa. City have been unusually leaky in defense, conceding eight goals over those three matches as they prepare for a tough test against Unai Emery's men, who have won their past 13 home league games in a row. Guardiola admitted that last season's treble winners need tighten up at the back but said they were still not losing many games. The City boss said despite their stumbles he was confident his men were on track to become the first team in English top-flight history to win four league titles in a row. "The motivation is to do it better," he said at his pre-match press conference on Tuesday. "I learned from where I come from that if you want to win you have to do it better than the opponent. We have to do much better. We have to try and not concede chances, or goals. My feeling today is we will win the Premier League, if you ask me. If we play at the level of Liverpool or Tottenham we are going to win it again." The people don't believe it after three draws but we are going to do it again, knowing it is not easy because no team have done it yet. That's why the difficulty is there." Guardiola defended his team after the club were charged by the Football Association over their players' behaviour in the final moments of their 3-3 draw against Tottenham at the weekend. Several City stars, including an irate Erling Haaland, surrounded referee Simon Hooper after he failed to play advantage, with the Norwegian criticising Hooper in a social media post. Guardiola said he did not know how the club would react to the FA charge. But he added: "We have behaved incredibly in these years, especially this season, how we behaved in our not-good results. The decisions sometimes are in favour, sometimes against (us), but we behaved even after the game." The comments from my players (were) about accepting that we can do better -- and me first. It's what I want to see of my club, of my team. After that, we will accept all the decisions of the Premier League or whatever."

## Bucks Rout Knicks, Will Play for Tournament Title

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Giannis Antetokounmpo collected 35 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds to fuel the host Milwaukee Bucks to a 146-122 victory over the New York Knicks on Tuesday in the quarterfinals of the NBA in-season tournament. Antetokounmpo, who turns 29 on Wednesday, made 15 of 22 shots from the floor, and Damian Lillard recorded 28 points and seven assists. Malik Beasley drained six 3-pointers for all 18 of his points for the Bucks, who set a season high in points to advance to the semifinals against the Indiana Pacers on Thursday in Las Vegas. Milwaukee shot a robust 60.4 percent from the floor (55 of 91) and 60.5 percent from 3-point range (23 of 38) en route to notching its 10th win in 12 games overall and ninth in a row at home. The Bucks also posted a 110-105 win over the Knicks to begin the in-season tournament on Nov. 3. New York's Julius Randle scored a season-high 41 points after making 14 of 19 shots from the floor, including all nine shots he attempted in the first half. He eclipsed his previous season-high point total of 29. Jalen Brunson scored 24 points and RJ Barrett collected 23 points and eight rebounds for the Knicks. New York's loss in this quarterfinal game means it will travel

to Boston to play the Celtics on Friday. Lillard scored Milwaukee's last 13 points to give his team a 75-72 lead at halftime. He capped that surge by sinking a 3-pointer with 3.1 seconds remaining. The Bucks scored 18 of the first 24 points of the third quarter to push their advantage to 93-78. Antetokounmpo scored eight points in that stretch, highlighted by converting an alley-oop inbounds pass from Khris

Middleton. Milwaukee outscored New York by a 37-24 margin in the third quarter to push its lead to 112-96. Josh Hart sank a 3-pointer to ignite a 7-0 run by the Knicks to start the fourth quarter, but the Bucks bounced back by scoring 13 of the game's next 15 points. Cameron Payne's 3-pointer capped the surge to extend Milwaukee's advantage to 125-105 with 6:42 remaining.

