

President Ebrahim Raisi Said on Friday That the Time and Location of Reaction to the Recent Tragic Terrorist Attack in Iran's Kerman Will Be Determined by the Iranian Armed Forces

IRAN NEWS

The Lebanese Resistance Movement Hezbollah Says the Zionist Regime's Assassination of the Deputy Head of the Political Bureau of the Palestinian Hamas Resistance Movement Saleh al-Arouri Will Not Go Unanswered

2 DOMESTIC



Raisi Vows Comeuppance for Those Involved in Terror Blasts

> SEE PAGE 2

3 INTERNATIONAL

N. Korea Fires Artillery Shells Near S. Korean Islands

> SEE PAGE 3



Criminals Behind Kerman Attacks Must Await Fitting Punishment



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says those who ordered and carried out the twin terrorist attacks in the southeastern Iranian city of Kerman will definitely face a fitting punishment and a harsh response. "Once again, the evil and criminal enemies of the Iranian nation have created a catastrophe, bringing about the martyrdom of a large number of beloved people in Kerman," Ayatollah Khamenei said in a statement. The enemies should know that the soldiers of Soleimani's shining path will not tolerate their vile and crime and both the hands that shed the blood of the innocent people and the corrupt and mischievous minds that misled them would be tracked down as they would be target of a "fitting punishment" from now on. The message came hours after at least 103 people were killed and 211 injured in two explosions against mourners who were on their way to visit the tomb of Qassem Soleimani, a top Iranian general who was assassinated four years ago on this day in a US drone strike near the Iraqi capital Baghdad. "The callous criminals could not tolerate the people's love and enthusiasm for visiting the resting place of their great commander, martyr Qassem Soleimani," the Leader said. Ayatollah Khamenei vowed that those behind the terrorist attack will be hunted down and face a "fitting" and "definite" punishment.



Daesh Agent for U.S., Israeli Regime

TEHRAN - The commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has vowed revenge for the perpetrators behind Wednesday's deadly terrorist attack in Kerman, saying that ISIL (Daesh) is an agent that works for the U.S. and Zionist regime. Speaking at a funeral ceremony for Wednesday's terrorist attack in Kerman on Friday, Major General Hossein Salami hailed the achievements made by the Resistance Front in the West Asian region, saying "Almost Americans have evacuated the region and there is no safe place for them. It is impossible to dominate the Muslims." He added, "Today, the heroic Palestinians are standing firm against the Israelis. Today, this hated Zionist regime is on the verge of destruction and every day 20 Zionists are killed by the Palestinians." "Israelis no longer hope to live in the Occupied Territories. We will celebrate the victory of the Palestinians soon," he further said. "Today, ISIL does not control an iota of land. They have disappeared and hid themselves in their nests (sleeping cells)," the IRGC commander said. Salami further said that "the ISIL terrorists are only acting as agents for America and Israel." The IRGC commander further addressed the ISIL terrorist telling them, fight like a man and do not target innocent children and women. ISIL terrorists claimed responsibility for the Wednesday terrorist attacks in Iran's Kerman last night. He clarified more that the Resistance Front has already taken revenge for the shedding of these martyrs' bloods in the Kerman attack before their martyrdom by defeating them in the region and foiling their plots. "These martyrdoms reflect the hard defeats inflicted on the body of Arrogance (Western powers led by the US). We have heard the order of the Leader of the Revolution and we will continue to fulfill it," Major General Salami concluded. Daesh on Thursday claimed responsibility for two explosions that killed at least 84 people and wounded scores at a memorial for top anti-terror commander Gen. Qassem Soleimani in the southeastern Iranian city of Kerman. In a statement posted on its affiliate Telegram channels, the terrorist group said two members had detonated their explosive belts in the crowd which had gathered at a cemetery for the anniversary of the U.S. assassination of Gen. Soleimani. Earlier, an unnamed source told the official news agency IRNA that the first explosion at the cemetery in Kerman, Gen. Soleimani's hometown, "was the result of a suicide bomber's action". "The suicide bomber in the first incident was a man who was completely dismembered as a result of the explosion and the identification of the suicide bomber is under investigation," it said. "The cause of the second blast was most likely the same," the source told IRNA. The site of the explosions, the source said, was respectively 1.5 km and 2.7 km from the burial place of Gen. Soleimani, where it was not possible to pass through the inspection gates in the area. The United Nations Security Council in a statement condemned Wednesday's "cowardly terrorist attack" in Kerman and sent its condolences to the victims' families and the Iranian government. Iran observed a day of mourning Thursday for those killed in the terrorist blasts. People gathered at dozen cities across the country, chanting: "Death to Israel" and "Death to America". Meanwhile, Iranians prepared for mass protests after weekly prayers across the nation on Friday, when funerals will be held for the victims. Earlier Thursday, Iran's top security body tasked the country's intelligence, security and law enforcement organizations to promptly identify and punish those behind Wednesday's bombings. The Supreme National Security Council held an ad hoc session to hear and review the reports of the organizations, deciding that "the intelligence agencies should quickly track down the clues obtained from the terrorist operation and identify and introduce its mercenary perpetrators". "The role of the corrupt minds who always supported the terrorists in targeting innocent women, men and children in different parts of the world, should be accurately identified and reported in this incident," it said. "The relevant institutions should take action to predict and prevent and deal decisively with the perpetrators and justly punish the perpetrators or supporters of this crime," it added. Meanwhile Iran's foreign minister says the country has started taking "legal measures" through the United Nations after two terror blasts killed and injured hundreds of people in the southwestern city of Kerman. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian announced the information in a post on X, former Twitter, on Wednesday, hours after the explosions that took place near the burial site of Iran's former senior anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani. "Based on initial information obtained from official sources, the Foreign Ministry has begun [taking] its prompt legal and international measures through the United Nations," the top diplomat wrote. The explosions left 103 people dead and 211 more injured.

Iran to Use All Available Mechanisms to Ensure Accountability for Terror Attacks



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's UN envoy says the country is to use "all available mechanisms" to ensure accountability for the perpetrators of earlier hugely deadly terror attacks that targeted the southwestern Iranian city of Kerman. Amir Saeed Iravani, the Islamic Republic's permanent ambassador to the United Nations, made the remarks in a letter to the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the world body's Security Council on Wednesday. Hours earlier, at least 103 people were killed and 211 others injured in two explosions that took place near the burial site of Iran's former senior anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani. Iravani denounced the blasts as "a heinous terrorist act and an appalling crime." "This reprehensible act," the ambassador said, "deliberately targeted innocent people." The envoy asserted that comprehensive investigations were underway to identify and apprehend the perpetrators and organizers of this "premeditated crime." He reiterated that Iran remained "steadfast" in both the pursuit of justice for the victims and the country's ongoing fight against terrorism. The Palestinian resistance movement of Hamas condemned the attacks, which it considered to be "in the service of the Zionist regime's interests and its sinister plans against the security and safety of the people of the region." Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry also denounced the terror attacks, expressing condolences towards the Islamic Republic. Leaders from Russia, Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, and other countries from across the globe have also released statements in condemnation of the tragedy.

Raisi to Visit Ankara in Near Future



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran and Turkey have agreed that President Ebrahim Raisi will travel to Ankara soon after he cancelled his planned visit following terrorist bombings in Kerman. The visit, due to begin on Thursday, was delayed after a telephone call with President Raisi in which his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan condemned the attack and offered condolences and the two presidents called to act jointly in the "fight against terrorism". Turkey's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan called his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian Thursday night to "express condolences and solidarity of the government and people of Turkey with the government and people of the Islamic Republic of Iran" over the terrorist attack. Amir-Abdollahian thanked high-ranking Turkish officials, including the president and the minister of foreign affairs, and emphasized diligent efforts of the Iranian authorities to "accurately identify the perpetrators and orderers of this barbaric and terrorist act". The two foreign ministers also agreed that the official visit by President Raisi to the "friendly and brotherly neighbor Turkey" will go ahead in the near future. Erdogan had first announced in November that "Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi is coming to us on the 28th of the month" to focus on forging a joint response to the Israeli invasion of Gaza, but the visit did not take place due to conflicting schedules of their foreign ministers.

Iran's Oil Trade With China Reportedly Stalls

SINGAPORE (Reuters) - China's oil trade with Iran has stalled as Tehran withholds shipments and demands higher prices from its top client, tightening cheap supply for the world's biggest crude importer, refinery and trade sources said. The cutback in Iranian oil, which makes up some 10% of China's crude imports and hit a record in October, could support global prices and squeeze profits at Chinese refiners. The abrupt move, which one industry executive called a "default", could also represent the backfiring of an October U.S. waiver on sanctions of Venezuelan oil, which diverted shipments from the South American producer to the U.S. and India, elevating prices for China as dwindling dwindled. The National Iranian Oil Co, China's commerce ministry and the U.S. Treasury Department did not immediately respond to Reuters requests for comment. Early last month Iranian sellers told Chinese buyers they were narrowing discounts for December and January deliveries of Iranian Light crude to between \$5 and \$6 a barrel below dated Brent, five traders who handle the oil or are familiar with the transactions told Reuters. Those deals had been struck in November at discounts around \$10 a barrel, the traders said. "This is considered as an extensive default and the order to hike prices apparently came from the headquarters in Tehran, as they're holding back supplies also to the intermediaries," a China-based trading executive said. An executive at a Chinese middleman that procures direct from Iran said the OPEC producer was "holding back some shipments", leading to a "stalemate" between Chinese buyers and Iranian suppliers. "It's not clear how things would end," this executive said. "Let's wait a bit and see if refineries are willing to accept the new price." China has saved billions of dollars buying often deeply discounted oil from sanctioned producers Iran, Venezuela and, more recently, Russia - countries that supply almost 30% of China's crude imports. It is not clear how extensive Iran's cutbacks to

China are. At least one buyer has accepted higher prices: a Shandong-based refiner bought a cargo late last month at discounts between \$5.50 and \$6.50 on a delivered ex-ship basis, two traders said. The discounts could narrow further, as the latest offer heard was \$4.50, the traders said. Last year's average discount for Iranian Light, a key grade China buys with a high middle-distillates yield, was about \$13, traders say. "The buyers are still struggling to find a solution as the new prices are too high," said a Shandong-based buyer. "But since they have limited choices and the Iranian side is very tough, the room for price negotiations is difficult and is not favouring Chinese buyers." China's smaller independent refiners, called "teapots", have become Tehran's top clients since first buying Iranian oil in late 2019. They replaced state-run refiners, which stopped dealing with Iran over concerns about falling afoot of U.S. sanctions. Teapots absorb about 90% of Iran's total oil exports, usually passed off as oil originating in Malaysia or the United Arab Emirates, trade sources say. Amid the tussle over prices, Iran's overall exports and China's imports from Iran have fallen. China imported about 1.18 million barrels per day (bpd) of Iranian oil last month, down from 1.22 million bpd in November and 23% off October's record 1.53 million bpd, tanker tracker Vortexa Analytics reckons. That represents the bulk of Iran's global seaborne crude exports, which another tracker, Kpler, estimates at 1.23 million bpd for December, down from 1.52 million bpd in November. Floating storage off Iran and nearby waters rose by about 2 million barrels to 15.5 million barrels over the past week, Kpler says. "The Iranians want to play catch-up in prices with (Russia's) ESPO. But they don't fully realise the extent of sanctions on Iranian oil is different from that on Russian," said a trading manager at an independent refiner.



Argentina OKs Transfer of Venezuelan Plane to U.S.



BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - An Argentine court has given the green light for the transfer of a Venezuelan plane to US authorities amid legal wranglings with Iran. The Boeing 747 cargo plane, belonging to Venezuela's Emtrasur, has been detained in Argentina since June 2022. The plane was purchased by Emtrasur, a subsidiary of state airline Conviasa, from Iran's Mahan Air in October 2021, violating U.S. sanctions against both countries. Caracas and Tehran objected to U.S. efforts to seize the plane, seeking support from Argentina. On Wednesday, Judge Federico Villena directed its surrender to the United States, a decision denounced by Venezuela as "robbery," according to the justice ministry. In June 2022, Argentine lawmaker Gerardo Milman alleged that Iranians on the Venezuelan plane were plotting "attacks on human targets." Iran meanwhile claimed the plane wasn't owned by an Iranian company but Milman accused the pilot of being a "senior official of Qods (Quds) force." The 19-member crew, consisting of Venezuelans and Iranians, initially faced detention, with the U.S. suspecting one member's ties to the IRGC Quds Force. Although all crew members were initially detained, they were later released. In September 2022, the pilot claimed he was only a flight instructor and denied ties to the Iranian military, but had served as a volunteer in the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) with the Basij Popular Mobilization Forces.

IRAN NEWS



Iran's Biggest Seamless Steel Pipe Factory Opened in Abhar

ZANJAN (IRNA) - Iran's biggest seamless steel pipe factory has been inaugurated in Abhar County, Zanjan province, northern Iran, in the presence of Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade Abbas Aliabadi. The factory is located in a 20-hectare area in Hidad in the Central District of Abhar County. According to a provincial official, the factory is currently the biggest and most modern manufacturing unit of seamless steel pipe in the country and has created 1,000 jobs directly, and 3,000 jobs indirectly. Zanjan province is the first destination of the second round of the provincial trips of the president and the administration.

EU Foreign Policy Chief Denounces Terrorist Blasts in Kerman



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - European Union Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell condemned the Wednesday terrorist blasts in Iran's southern city of Kerman. Speaking in a telephone conversation with Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Borrell offered condolences to the families of the victims and the Iranian government and people. He also wished the injured will recover soon. Amir-Abdollahian for his part referred to the necessity of the international community to fight different forms of terrorism and thanked the EU's top diplomat for sympathizing with Iran over the Kerman attacks, the Foreign Ministry's website reported. During the phone conversation, Amir-Abdollahian and Borrell also discussed the latest regional developments including the situation in Gaza. Two terror blasts killed and injured hundreds of people in the southwestern city of Kerman on Wednesday. Iran's Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi has put the number of martyrs in the explosions at 84. The terrorist blasts happened near the burial site of Lt' General Qassem Soleimani during a ceremony marking his fourth martyrdom anniversary.



Raisi Vows Comeuppance for Those Involved in Terror Blasts

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raisi reiterates Iran's resolve to consign those behind the recent hugely deadly terror blasts in the country's southwest to justice. The chief executive made the remarks during a phone call with his Serbian counterpart Aleksandar Vučić on Thursday. "No degree of support or patronage from no power can provide a security margin to the agents that have been involved in this atrocity," Raisi said. The comments came a day after two back-to-back explosions killed at least 84 people and wounded scores of others at a memorial ceremony that was being held for Iran's former senior anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in the city of Kerman. The Daesh Takfiri terrorist group has claimed responsibility for the atrocity. Raisi asserted that

cowardly measures such as this would not hold the great Iranian nation back from pursuing its high goals of confronting oppression, tyranny, and injustice. The Serbian official, for his part, condemned the acts of terror, expressing condolence on the part of the Serbian government and people with the Iranian government and nation. Vučić expressed hope that the masterminds and perpetrators of the terror attacks be immediately consigned to justice and face the legal implications of the atrocity. The Serbian president finally noted that his country stood by Iran's side in the fight against terrorism. Earlier, the United Nations Security Council released a statement, condemning the "cowardly terrorist attack" and condoling with the victims' families and the Iranian government.

Uzbekistan Plans to Boost Cooperation With Iran in Tech Sector



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Tehran Nasriev Fariddin Badriddinovich has said that his country plans to double the value of its cooperation with Iran in the technology sector this year. The ambassador said on Thursday that Uzbekistan's cooperation with Iran in the tech sector was worth at \$500 million in 2023, adding that his country plans to increase that number to one billion dollars this year. He said that textile industry and agriculture are the two fields on which Kazakhstan prefers to have cooperation with Iran. Badriddinovich was speaking with reporters as he paid a visit to the Iran Lab Expo, the Laboratory Equipment and Chemicals Exhibition being held in Tehran from January 2 to 5. He said that an Uzbek delegation is now in Iran to visit the exhibition. The delegation, according to an official from the scientific and technological affairs department of Iran's Presidency Office, is set to hold a meeting with representatives from 20 Iranian knowledge-based companies. Mehdi Elyasi also said that Iranian knowledge-based companies are making efforts to boost their capabilities, with 10 percent of them already proved to be capable of exporting their products.



Gen. Soleimani Symbol of Islamic Ummah

TEHRAN (IP) - Majlis Speaker described the late Lt. Gen. Soleimani as a national-religious figure who was the symbol of the Islamic Ummah. Delivering a speech at Tehran's Cemetery of Martyrs on Thursday in commemoration of General Soleimani's 4th martyrdom anniversary, Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf said Martyr Soleimani never moved toward polarization of people either at national or at regional or at international levels. Qalibaf touched on one of General Soleimani's concerns which is the export of the Islamic Revolution and pointed to the resistance forces' anti-occupation operation in such a blockaded strip as Gaza the latest of which was Operation Al-Aqsa Flood. He described Operation Al-Aqsa Flood as a none-to-second operation that has ever been carried out against the Israeli regime during its 75 years of occupying Palestine. Still, he referred to the terrorist explosions that happened on Wednesday in Kerman, southeastern Iran, while people were commemorating the 4th martyrdom anniversary of late Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani where a number of the people got martyred and wounded.

About 10,000 Knowledge-Based Industrial Companies Active

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran's Deputy Industry Minister Mohammad-Majid Fouladgar has said about 10,000 knowledge-based industrial companies are currently active across the country, IRNA reported. Speaking to the press on the sideline a visit to a factory in Chahar Mahal-Bakhtiari Province, Fouladgar said the Industry Ministry is trying to increase this number even further. "Although the ministry's main approach in recent years has been to increase the number of knowledge-based industrial units in the country, it is also following a plan to benefit from the available capacities in the field of knowledge-based industries in order to improve the quality of such units," Fouladgar said. According to the official, the ministry is trying to create new markets for such companies to develop the activities of this sector even more. "Out of the total number of knowledge-based companies in the country, about 100 companies operate on a large economic scale, which indicates that more actions should be taken to support this field," he said. Fouladgar put the number of semi-finished production units in the country as 21,000 units and said: "Of the mentioned figure, 8,000 units have a physical progress of over 60 percent and 2,300 units have a progress of over 80 percent."

Iran Ready for Comprehensive Transportation Deal With Turkey

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The coordination meetings of Iran-Turkey Joint Economic Committee were held during the visit of the Iranian minister of transport and urban development as the head of this committee to Ankara. During his visit to Turkey on Wednesday, Mehrdad Bazrpash held separate meetings with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, the country's Minister of Youth and Sports Osman Ashkin Bak, who is also the head of the joint committee, and the minister of Transport and Infrastructure Abdulkadir Uraloglu to coordinate the approvals at the upcoming joint committee. At the meeting with Fidan, the Iranian minister stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran attaches great importance to the development of comprehensive relations with its neighbors. "The cooperation of the two great powers of the region, Iran and Turkey, can bring peace, stability, security and prosperity to the region," Bazrpash said. He further made suggestions regarding holding a tripartite meeting between the foreign ministries of Iran, Turkey and Azerbaijan in order to increase the role of transit corridors in the economy of the three countries. According to Bazrpash, the volume of trade between Iran and Turkey, as the third trading partner of the

Islamic Republic, has increased significantly after the Covid pandemic. Fidan for his part referred to the two countries' trade target of \$30 billion and said that this volume of trade can be achieved by increasing bilateral cooperation. He emphasized the cooperation between the two countries in various fields of energy, including oil, gas and electricity, as well as customs. Also, during the meeting with Uraloglu, the Iranian official reviewed some road transport problems between the two countries and announced Iran's readiness to develop cooperation in all sectors of transportation including road, rail, air and sea and to sign a comprehensive transport document with Turkey. In this meeting, the two sides, while examining the fields of transportation cooperation development, put the increase in the volume of road and rail transit on the agenda.

According to the latest figures released by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT), the trade exchanges between Iran and Turkey in the first 11 months of 2023 reached \$5.0 billion, showing a 13 percent decline compared to the same period of last year. Iran's trade with the neighboring country stood at \$5.8 billion in January-November 2022, Tasnim News Agency reported.



Over 53.5m Tons of Non-Oil Products Loaded, Unloaded in Ports in 9 Months



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - As reported by Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO), 53,582,107 tons of non-oil products were loaded and unloaded in the ports of country during the first nine months of the present Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2023). As reported, the loading and unloading of non-oil products in the mentioned nine-month period rose 21.3 percent, year on year. The PMO has also reported that the loading and unloading of goods in the ports of Iran increased by 6.1 percent in the first nine months of the present year, as compared to the same period of time in the past year. As the organization reported, 172,767,051 tons of commodities were loaded and unloaded in the ports during the nine-month period. During the said period, loading and unloading operations in the container sector reached 1,917,354 TEUs, which was 4.3 percent more than the figure of the same time span in the previous year. Based on the data previously released by the Transport and Urban Development Ministry, the loading and unloading of goods in the ports of Iran rose 17 percent during the previous Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20), as compared to the preceding year. The ministry's data show that the loading and unloading of goods in the country's ports reached 152.91 million tons in the previous Iranian calendar year, while the figure stood at 130.69 million tons in the preceding year. During the said year, loading and unloading operations in the container sector reached 2.1 million TEUs with a weight of 24.57 million tons, which was 13.5 percent more than the 1.85 million TEUs in the Iranian calendar year 1399, the report said. The loading and unloading of goods during the previous year also grew by 12.8 percent in the dry bulk sector, while in the liquid bulk sector, the figure increased by 12.6 percent, in the general cargo sector rose by 13.1 percent, and in the oil sector grew by 22.5 percent. While Iran is combating the U.S. unilateral sanctions on its economy, the country's ports as the major gates of exports and imports play a significant role in this battle. This role makes all-out support to ports and more development of them serious and vital.

Japan Quake Death Toll Rises to 92, Missing 242

ANAMIZU (Dispatches) - The death toll from a devastating earthquake in central Japan rose to 92 on Friday, regional authorities said, with the number of missing jumping to 242. Two elderly women were pulled from the rubble, but hopes of finding other survivors faded as thousands of rescuers raced against the clock four days after the 7.5-magnitude quake on New Year's Day. Thousands of rescuers from all over Japan have been battling aftershocks and roads littered with gaping holes and blocked by frequent landslides in the Ishikawa region to reach hundreds of people in stranded communities. On Thursday afternoon, 72 hours after the quake, the two older women were miraculously pulled alive from the remains of their homes in Wajima, one of them thanks to a sniffer dog called Jennifer.



Voters Aiming to Ban Trump From Colorado Ballot Urge U.S. Supreme Court Ruling



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Colorado voters seeking to bar Donald Trump from their state's ballot urged the U.S. Supreme Court to decide whether his role leading up to the Capitol attack disqualifies him from again holding the presidency, as a lower court found. The court filing, submitted by Republican and unaffiliated voters in Colorado, came the day after Trump asked the justices to reverse a politically explosive Dec. 19 ruling by Colorado's top court that Trump's role ahead of the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol disqualified him from the Republican primary ballot there. The Colorado court's historic decision marked the first time in history that Section 3 of the U.S. Constitution's Fourteenth Amendment - the so-called disqualification clause - had been used to deem a presidential candidate ineligible for the White House. The Jan. 6 attack was an attempt by Trump's supporters to overturn his 2020 election loss to Democratic President Joe Biden, which Trump falsely claims was the result of fraud. The Colorado court's ruling came in a lawsuit filed by the group of Colorado voters and backed by watchdog group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, or CREW, which filed the response brief on Thursday. The plaintiffs told the justices that Trump's intentional "mobilizing, inciting, and encouraging" of an armed mob to attack the Capitol meets the legal definition in Section 3. "This attack was an 'insurrection' against the Constitution by any standard," they said in the filing. The Colorado high court had already put its decision on hold, stating that Trump would remain on the ballot while appeals proceed. That decision has prompted separate U.S. Supreme Court appeals by Colorado Republicans and Trump, the frontrunner for the Republican 2024 presidential nomination. In Trump's filing on Wednesday, his lawyers asked the justices to "summarily reverse" the Colorado Supreme Court because the question of presidential eligibility is reserved for Congress.

German Inflation Rises in December Due to Base Effects



BERLIN (Dispatches) - German inflation rose in December due to base effects, putting a temporary halt on the downward trend seen in the last months and possibly offering the European Central Bank an argument in favor of keeping interest rates steady for some time. Inflation, harmonized to compare with other European Union countries, rose in December to 3.8% year-on-year, the federal statistics office said on Thursday, in line with the expectations of analysts polled by Reuters and up from 2.3% in November. "For the ECB, this re-acceleration of inflation strengthens the stance of keeping a very steady hand and not rushing into any rate cut decisions," said Carsten Brzeski, global head of macro at ING, who forecasts the first rate cut in June. Economists pay close attention to German inflation data, as Germany usually publishes its figures one day before the euro zone inflation data release. Euro zone inflation, due on Jan. 5, is expected to rise to 3.0% in December from 2.4% in November, according to economists polled by Reuters. In December, ECB President Christine Lagarde flagged upside inflation risks to push back on imminent rate cuts. The rise in German inflation reflects the impact of last December's energy relief measures for gas and district heating, the statistics office said. Measures planned by the German government to bring its 2024 budget in line with a constitutional court ruling will also drive up inflation in January, Commerzbank's senior economist Marco Wagner said. Even if inflation then tends to subside over the course of the year, wage pressures remain strong, meaning it is ultimately likely to stabilize at 3% rather than 2%, Wagner said. While energy prices fell 4.5% year-on-year in November, they jumped 4.1% last month compared with December 2022, when a government-support package lowered prices.



N. Korea Fires Artillery Shells Near S. Korean Islands

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korea fired an artillery barrage near two South Korean islands on Friday, Seoul's defense ministry said, warning the actions threatened peace and that it would respond. Residents of both islands were ordered to evacuate and ferries were suspended as South Korea planned a naval drill in response, in one of the most serious military escalations on the peninsula since the North fired shells at one of the same islands in 2010. Friday's live firing followed repeated warnings from Kim Jong Un's regime in Pyongyang that it was prepared for war against South Korea and the United States. Seoul's defense ministry said the North's military fired "over 200 rounds" of artillery shells on Friday morning near Yeonpyeong and Baengnyeong, two sparsely populated South Korean islands that are just south of a defacto maritime border between the two sides. "This is a provocative act that threatens the peace on the Korean Peninsula," the ministry said. "Our military closely tracks and monitors the situation in close coordination with the United States, and will take appropriate measures in response to North Korea's provocations." The ministry said there had been "no damage to the Korean people and the military", with the shells landing north of the defacto border that is known as the Northern Limit Line (NLL). Local officials on both islands told AFP that residents had been told to evacuate, describing the order as a "preventative measure" ahead of a planned South Korean military drill. "We have been told by the military that a drill is scheduled for this afternoon," a Yeonpyeong official said, adding that people were asked to evacuate "in case North Korea does anything in response". One resident of the island said they were "shaking in fear" at the barrage. "At first I thought it was the shells fired by our own military... but was told later it was by North Korea," Kim Jin-soo, a Baengnyeong island

resident told local broadcaster YTN. The shells splashed down into a so-called maritime buffer zone north of the NLL, the defense ministry said, which was set up in September 2018 in a bid to reduce tensions. But the North scrapped the accord after Seoul partially suspended it in November, to protest Pyongyang's spy satellite launch. "The nullification of the (accord) increases the possibility of military clashes in the border areas," Yang Moo-jin, president of the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, told AFP. He added that "the evacuation of our residents raises psychological and security concerns, which can ultimately destabilise the economy of South Korea". In 2010, in response to a South Korean live-fire drill near the sea border, the North bombarded Yeonpyeong island killing four South Koreans - two soldiers and two civilians. That was the first attack on a civilian area since the 1950-53 Korean War. The South returned fire, with the resulting exchange lasting more than an hour, as the two sides traded more than 200 shells, sparking brief fears of a full-fledged war. Relations between the two Koreas are at currently one of their lowest points in decades, after Kim enshrined the country's status as a nuclear power into the constitution while test-firing several advanced ICBMs. At Pyongyang's key year-end policy meetings, Kim warned of a nuclear attack on the South and called for a build-up of the country's military arsenal ahead of armed conflict that he warned could "break out any time". In an effort to deter Pyongyang, Washington deployed a nuclear-powered submarine in the South Korean port city of Busan late last year and flew its long-range bombers in drills with Seoul and Tokyo. The North has described the deployment of Washington's strategic weapons, such as B-52 bombers, in joint drills on the Korean peninsula as "intentional nuclear war provocative moves".



Israeli Defense Chief Lays Out Post-War Gaza Plan as Fighting Rages

GAZA STRIP (Dispatches) - Israel's defense minister has laid out for the first time preliminary plans for the post-war administration of Gaza, saying neither Israel nor Hamas will rule the Palestinian territory after hostilities there conclude. The plan for the "day after" the war was unveiled Thursday night on the eve of a trip to the region by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is heading back to the Middle East for the fourth time since a Hamas attack on October 7 triggered the war in Gaza. Questions over the future of the territory have been front of mind for many as calls mount for a ceasefire, with civilian deaths soaring and the UN warning of a humanitarian crisis that has left hundreds of thousands displaced and facing famine and disease. An outline of the post-war plan by Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, shared with the press ahead of its submission to the country's war cabinet, said "Hamas will not govern Gaza, (and) Israel will not govern Gaza's civilians." Gaza residents are Palestinian, therefore Palestinian bodies will be in charge, with the condition that there will be no hostile actions or threats against the State of Israel," it added. Under the plan, which has not yet been adopted, Israel's war in the territory will continue until it has secured the return of the hostages taken on October 7 and dismantled Hamas's "military and governing capabilities". After that, the outline says, a new phase will begin during which local Palestinian bodies will assume the territory's governance. On Thursday the army reported more strikes in and around Gaza City, now a largely devastated urban combat zone, and Khan Yunis, the biggest city in the territory's south. The army said it had killed Hamas fighters around Khan Yunis, struck "terrorist

infrastructure" in the area and hit militants attempting to "place an explosive device near soldiers". It also said that an air strike in northern Gaza had killed the chief of operational staff for Islamic Jihad, a Palestinian militant group fighting alongside Hamas. Displacements continued unabated, with AFP footage showing families arriving in the southern border city of Rafah in overloaded cars and on foot pushing handcarts stacked with bedding and other possessions. "We fled Jabalia camp to Maan (in Khan Yunis) and now we are fleeing from Maan to Rafah," said one woman who declined to give her name. "They were shooting at us. (We have) no water, no electricity and no food." During his visit, Blinken will hold what threaten to be tough talks with Israeli leaders on "immediate measures to increase substantially humanitarian assistance to Gaza", State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said. "We don't expect every conversation on this trip to be easy. There are obviously tough issues facing the region and difficult choices ahead." Miller said. UN human rights chief Volker Turk, meanwhile, said he was "very disturbed" by recent comments from two Israeli cabinet ministers who separately called for Palestinians to leave Gaza, raising fears of mass expulsions. National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir had also called for Israeli settlers to return to Gaza after the war, echoing similar comments by far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich. But the post-war plan presented by Gallant on Thursday said that while Israel would reserve the right to operate inside the territory, there would be "no Israeli civilian presence in the Gaza Strip after the goals of the war have been achieved".



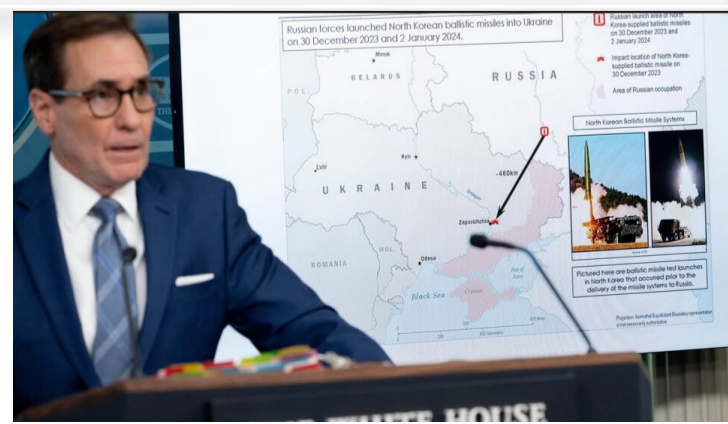
Senegal Court Deals Blow to Sonko's Presidential Hopes

DAKAR (Dispatches) - Senegal's Supreme Court ruled against opposition politician Ousmane Sonko in his appeal of a libel conviction, dealing another blow to his hopes of competing in next month's presidential election, lawyers said. Sonko, 49, has been battling various court cases since 2021. These have hampered his plans to vie for the presidency in the Feb. 25 vote and fuelled unrest that has damaged Senegal's reputation as one of West Africa's most stable democracies. After deliberations that extended from Thursday into the early hours of Friday, the court rejected Sonko's appeal against a May conviction that led to him receiving a six-month suspended sentence for libel, lawyers involved in the case said. According to Senegalese law, Sonko cannot compete in the presidential race while such a conviction is upheld. "We have just recorded a great victory. The... sentence is upheld, so Ousmane Sonko will not be able to participate in the election," the plaintiff's lawyer El Hadji Diouf said on the radio. Sonko's legal team said the setback was not final. "The fight will continue," his lawyer Cire Cleodor Ly told reporters outside the court building in the capital Dakar. There was no immediate sign of public protest in response to the ruling. Sonko's legal saga started when he was accused of rape in 2021, sparking deadly unrest across the country that has since flared up sporadically over various court decisions. He denies any wrongdoing and says all charges against him are politically motivated. The government rejects this and accuses Sonko of stoking violence. It dissolved his Pastef party in July. "No one doubts the political aspect of this affair which aims to eliminate the leader of the opposition," said Pastef spokesperson El Malick Ndiaye, commenting on the latest ruling. "Sonko still remains in the race," he said on national radio.

U.S. Claims Russia Used N. Korean Missiles for Ukraine Attacks

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - North Korea has provided Russia with ballistic missiles and missile launchers that were used in recent attacks on Ukraine in a major escalation of support for Moscow, the White House said. Russia is also looking to obtain missiles from its ally Iran as it runs short of arms nearly two years into President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, it said. The White House's comments came as North Korean leader Kim Jong Un called for boosting production of missile launchers in preparation for a "military showdown" with South Korea and the United States, the official Korean Central News Agency said. The Pyongyang-supplied missiles with ranges of around 900 kilometers (550 miles) were fired by Russia in two attacks on Ukraine within the past week, US National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said. "Our information indicates that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea recently provided Russia with ballistic missile launchers and several ballistic missiles," Kirby told reporters in a briefing at the White House. "This is a significant and concerning escalation of the DPRK's support for Russia." The development underscored the need for the US Congress to pass a package of vital military aid for Ukraine, without which the pipeline of support will soon run dry, Kirby added. Air defenses for Ukraine, which has come under a barrage of aerial attacks by Russia in recent days, were "absolutely" a priority, he said. "It's critical that Congress meets this

moment and responds by providing the Ukrainians what they need to defend themselves," Kirby said. Russian forces launched at least one of the North Korean-supplied missiles on December 30, which landed in an open field in the Zaporizhzhia region, according to the spokesman. Moscow's forces then fired "multiple" ballistic missiles into Ukraine as part of a mass aerial attack on January 2, he added. Choi Gi-il, professor of military studies at Sangji University, told AFP that the Moscow-Pyongyang arms transfers could be Russia's way of "expressing its annoyance" over Seoul's own role in the war. South Korea, which is a major arms exporter, "has been assisting Ukraine indirectly through an arms deal with NATO countries to make up for their arms supplies to Kyiv," he said. Seoul has signed deals worth billions of dollars to send tanks and howitzers to Poland, a key ally of Ukraine. "Russia's invasion of Ukraine triggered this arms race between the two Koreas," Choi added. The United States and its allies will raise the fresh arms transfers at the United Nations Security Council, as it represents a breach of UN sanctions against North Korea, said Kirby. Britain said it "strongly condemns" Russia's use of North Korean missiles. "Russia is turning to North Korea for its weapons in pursuit of its cynical and ill-conceived military aims in Ukraine. This is symptomatic of its isolation on the world stage and a sign of its desperation," a Foreign Office statement said.



Switchboard: (+98) (21) 44253448
Public Relations Tel: (+98)(21) 44253450
Editorial Board: 44253449
Public Relations Fax: (+98)(21) 44253395
Advertising Department:

Tel/Fax: (+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234
Website: <http://www.irannewsdaily.com>
E-Mail Address: info@irannewsdaily.com
ISSN 1024-6053 P.O. Box: 15875-8551
Address: No 13, Pajouhesh St., Golestan II St, Golestan

St.Marzadaran Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran Distributed by:
Cities of Iran Cultural and
Artistic Institute
Managing Director: *Fereydoon Taherpour Asl*



Antetokounmpo Leads Bucks over Wembanyama's Spurs

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - The Milwaukee Bucks, led by Giannis Antetokounmpo's 44 points, held off the San Antonio Spurs 125-121 despite another stellar performance from Victor Wembanyama on his 20th birthday. In the other match of a marquee double-header Thursday, Nikola Jokic drained a buzzer-beating three-pointer to give the reigning champion Denver Nuggets a 130-127 victory over the Golden State Warriors - who had led by 18 points midway through the fourth quarter. Wembanyama was restricted to 26 minutes on the floor in his highly anticipated first encounter with Antetokounmpo as he recovers from the ankle trouble that saw him miss the Spurs' December game in Milwaukee. The French rookie scored 27 points with nine rebounds and five blocked shots. Devin Vassell led the Spurs with 34 points, but the highlight-reel battle between Antetokounmpo and Wembanyama stole the show in San Antonio. "He's unbelievable, unbelievable talent," Antetokounmpo said of Wembanyama, whose combination of size and skill has drawn comparisons to the Greek superstar. Wembanyama thrilled fans with an array of jaw-dropping shots, including a first-half dunk off his own bounce off the backboard. "He can score at will, anytime he wants. Plays the right way, plays to win. It was good playing against him," said Antetokounmpo, who grabbed 14 rebounds as the Bucks improved to 25-10, the third best record in the league. The entertaining contest was tied 93-93 heading into a fourth quarter that featured eight lead changes, the Spurs battling for the upset in a season that has seen them win just five games. For Wembanyama it was also a chance to test himself against a player he "grew up watching" in Antetokounmpo - a two-time NBA Most Valuable Player who led the Bucks to the NBA title in 2021. "It's always extra motivation," Wembanyama said. "I want to go to everyone and be the bad guy on the court. So it was a great match-up." Antetokounmpo drained a

three-pointer to tie it up at 118-118 with three minutes to play. He then drew a charge call on Wembanyama and less than a minute later drilled another three-pointer to put the Bucks up 121-118. Wembanyama answered with a big block of a Damian Lillard layup and a three-pointer that tied it with 1:09 remaining. A dunk from Antetokounmpo put the Bucks back in front, but Wembanyama blocked another shot from a driving Antetokounmpo to keep the Spurs within reach. A heavily guarded Wembanyama found open teammate Tre Jones for a potential game-tying three-pointer with just over a second to play, but Jones's shot didn't fall. "Of course the outcome isn't what we wanted, but it was the widest open shot," Wembanyama said, adding that the Spurs' overall performance was encouraging. "Just the fact that we can compete with a championship level team like this is promising," he said. In San Francisco, Jokic sealed the Nuggets' comeback win with a shot from just inside halfcourt, finishing with 34 points on 13-of-16 shooting. The two-time NBA MVP added nine rebounds and 10 assists. Jokic's step-back basket had tied it at 127-127 with 26 seconds remaining. Teammate Jamal Murray then came up with a steal of an ill-judged Stephen Curry pass to set the stage for Jokic, who took an inbound pass and headed up the court, pulling up to bank in the game-winner over Kevon Looney. "Great players make great plays," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said. "Nikola catching the ball there and making something behind that, it's just incredible ... I'm very proud of our group for staying with it." Aaron Gordon added 30 points and Jamal Murray scored 25 for the Nuggets. Curry led Golden State with 30 points and six assists. Klay Thompson added 24 points for the Warriors, who outscored the Nuggets 44-24 in the third quarter to seize control of the contest and were up by 18 with 6:51 to play.

Nadal Reaches Brisbane Quarterfinals



BRISBANE (Dispatches) - Unseeded Rafael Nadal cruised into the Brisbane International quarterfinals with a 6-1, 6-2 win against home favorite Jason Kubler of Australia. In his first tournament in nearly 12 months, the Spanish star saved all four break points and finished with 20 winners and only eight unforced errors in the 83-minute victory. No. 2 seed Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria rolled over Germany's Daniel Altmaier 6-1, 6-2. Australia's Jordan Thompson advanced in a walkover against No. 4 seed Ugo Humbert of France, who withdrew due to illness. Thompson next faces Nadal. Dimitrov's quarterfinal opponent will be Australia's Rinky Hijikata, who rallied for a 5-7, 6-2, 7-6 (4) victory over Czech Tomas Machac. Top-seeded Andrey Rublev held off Britain's Liam Broady 6-4, 7-6 (8) and will meet No. 8 seed Arthur Fils of France in the quarterfinals. Fils advanced with a 7-5, 7-5 win over Switzerland's Marc-Andrea Huesler. Spain's Roberto Bautista-Agut and Austria's Sebastian Ofner will meet in another quarterfinal. Bautista-Agut took down fourth-seeded Francisco Cerundolo of Argentina 7-5, 6-3. Ofner needed nearly three hours to knock out No. 5 seed Jan-Lennard Struff in a tightly contested 6-7 (4), 7-6 (5), 7-6 (2) decision. They combined for 30 aces but Ofner posted a 56-38 edge in winners.

France Overcome Norway to Reach United Cup Semis

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Caroline Garcia helped France clinch a spot in the United Cup semi-finals as she beat Malene Helgo in singles and partnered with Edouard Roger-Vasselin to win the doubles decider in a 2-1 win over Norway in Sydney. Garcia and Roger-Vasselin beat the pair of Ulrikke Eikeri and Casper Ruud 7-5 6-4 in an entertaining mixed doubles decider. The first set was a tight affair until France broke serve to make it 6-5 before holding to win the opener, and then made the only break for a 2-1 lead in the second set. "Tomorrow is going to be a day off. We are not that young anymore, especially me," playing captain Roger-Vasselin, 40 said. "Tomorrow will just be a day off, try to rest, enjoy Sydney maybe and then come back strong for Saturday's semi-final." World number 20 Garcia earlier survived a second-set scare to give France the lead with a 6-2 6-7(6) 7-6(5) victory over Helgo. Garcia looked on course for a straightforward win after cruising through the first set and getting to match point in the second set's tiebreaker, but Helgo, ranked 544 in the world, rallied to make things difficult for the Frenchwoman. "It was a crazy match. Malene was a player I didn't know but she just hit the ball so well," Garcia said. "I went through all the emotions out there and I had to find a way through. Today it was almost too much, but in the end I got the point. Casper Ruud, who won his last two singles matches, brought Norway back into the tie with his 6-1 6-4 win over Adrian Mannarino. World number 22 Mannarino had simply no answer to Ruud's clinical game and the Frenchman only avoided a "babe" by holding his last service game of the first set, before improving in the second. France will face top-seeded Poland in the semi-final in Sydney. Greece and Germany meet to decide who will play Australia in the other semi-final. Meanwhile Alex de Minaur stunned Novak Djokovic 6-4, 6-4 in singles play to send 15th-seeded Australia to its first appearance in the United Cup semifinals. Playing in Perth, Djokovic lost in Australia for the first time since Hyeon Chung eliminated him in the quarterfinals at the 2018 Australian Open. Djokovic has been dealing with a right wrist injury but said after the match that he expected to be fine in time for the upcoming Australian Open. Ranked No. 12 in the world, de Minaur won 33 of the 34 points on his first serve to beat the world No. 1 in 94 minutes. Djokovic's Serbian teammate in the mixed event, Natalija Stevanovic, fell 6-1, 6-1 to Ajla Tomljanovic. Australia also claimed the mixed-doubles match for a 3-0 win. No. 1 seed Poland advanced to the semifinals with a sweep of No. 9 China in Perth. In singles play, the tandem of Hubert Hurkacz and Iga Swiatek led Poland to its second consecutive United Cup semis with wins over Zhizhen Zhang and Qinwen Zheng, respectively. Greece advanced to the quarterfinals with a 3-0 win against Canada in Sydney. Stefanos Tsitsipas topped Steven Diez 6-2, 6-3, and Maria Sakkari defeated Leylah Fernandez 7-6 (2), 6-3. The second-seeded Greeks also prevailed in mixed doubles as the seventh-seeded Canadians were ousted.



Calvert-Lewin Sent Off as Everton Hold Palace in FA Cup



LONDON (Dispatches) - Everton's Dominic Calvert-Lewin was controversially sent off as his side held on for a 0-0 draw against Crystal Palace in the FA Cup third round. Calvert-Lewin saw red after a VAR review of the England striker's studs-up foul on Nathaniel Clyne late in the second half at Selhurst Park. Calvert-Lewin made only slight contact with Clyne's leg while winning the ball and Everton boss Sean Dyche was furious with the decision by referee Chris Kavanagh after a long VAR check. The first red card of Calvert-Lewin's career could have been fatal to Everton's hopes of progressing in the competition. They also lost winger Dwight McNeil to a serious-looking injury in the closing stages, but Dyche's team held on through nine minutes of stoppage-time to force a replay at Goodison Park later in January. "The slow motion shows a different picture. If you want to slow mo everything, you have to slow mo everything," Dyche said of VAR being used to decide Calvert-Lewin's fate. "There's minor contact, in live time he doesn't give anything, then they slow it down and everything looks worse slow." Even down to 10 men, I thought the mentality was excellent. We showed that tonight with another good performance." Five-time FA Cup winners Everton last lifted the trophy in 1995 and have been searching in vain for another piece of major silverware ever since. Hit by a 10-point deduction for financial breaches earlier this season, fourth bottom Everton are mired in a Premier League relegation battle. An FA Cup run would be a welcome distraction from their league travails and they can still dream of the road to Wembley thanks to this gritty display. Everton won 3-2 at Selhurst Park in the Premier League in November, but after losing their previous three games they happily settled for avoiding defeat this time. Deputising for the rested Jordan Pickford, Everton keeper Joao Virginia had to make an early save to repel Jeffrey Schlupp's half-volley. Everton responded with an incisive raid as Calvert-Lewin teed up Armat Danjuma for a shot that deflected off Chris Richards into the side-netting. They went close again when Jack Harrison took Danjuma's flick and broke clear for a shot that forced a fine save from Dean Henderson. Henderson had to be alert moments later, saving with his foot after James Garner's corner nearly sneaked in at the near post. Schlupp's cross was cleared off the line by Vitaliy Mykolenko before Palace's Jefferson Lerma smashed narrowly over from the edge of the area. Eberechi Eze threatened to break the deadlock early in the second half, but the Palace winger's effort was turned behind by Virginia, who clutched Lerma's header from the resulting corner.

Late Gundogan Penalty Keeps Barca Title Defense Alive

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Ilayk Gundogan stroked home a stoppage time penalty to grab champions Barcelona a barely deserved 2-1 win at Las Palmas. Xavi Hernandez's side badly needed to win after leaders Real Madrid and Girona did so on Wednesday, with victory leaving the Catalans seven points behind the top two. Athletic Bilbao are fourth after a solid 2-0 win at Sevilla earlier Thursday, with Atletico Madrid fifth following their dramatic 4-3 defeat by Girona. Barca were at times outplayed by the mid-table Canary Islanders, who took the lead through former Blaugrana striker Munir El Haddadi in the 12th minute. Ferran Torres pulled Barcelona level in the second half and Gundogan netted the winner from the spot after he was shoved over in the box when poised to head into an empty net. "In the first half they had two or three chances but in the second half they only had a corner," Xavi told Movistar. "I think we made good substitutions and that told." Barcelona improved after the break and put the hosts on the back foot, with Torres striking quickly to level the game. The coach brought on attackers Joao Felix, Lamine Yamal and new arrival Vitor Roque in search of the winner, taking off veteran forward Robert Lewandowski. "Ferran always does well for us," continued Xavi. "There's a lot of competition up top and there will be minutes for all the players." Las Palmas coach Francisco Garcia Pimentia, formerly in charge of Barcelona's reserve side, and his team offered their illustrious visitors a largely frustrating night. Joao Cancelo hurt his left knee in a challenge in the opening stages and was forced off in an early blow for the Catalans, who struggled badly in the first half. Xavi said after the game that Cancelo's injury did not seem too serious and would be analysed on Friday. Munir tucked home the opener after being set up by a low cross from Sandro Ramirez, another former Blaugrana youth academy product. Inaki Pena tipped a low Sandro strike wide as the hosts had the better of the first half with Xavi's side looking

disconnected and even disinterested at times. The visitors' first chance came when Frenkie de Jong sent Sergi Roberto scuttling through on goal but his pass for Ferran Torres was cut out by another former Barca player, Mika Marmol. Raphinha lashed over after the break as Barcelona stepped up their game, as they have done on multiple occasions this season, while Pena did well to deny Munir at the other end. Barcelona levelled just over 10 minutes into the second half when a Las Palmas clearance bounced back into danger off the unwitting Robert Lewandowski. Sergi Roberto laid the ball off for Torres to roll a low effort past the reach of Alvaro Valles. Marmol could have sent Las Palmas ahead again but nodded wide

from a corner when well placed. Xavi sent on new Barca arrival Vitor Roque for the final 12 minutes, and the Brazilian striker, signed from Athletico Paranaense, looked sharp. The match was decided when Daley Sinkgraven shoved on Gundogan to concede a penalty, as the German midfielder tried to head home a parried strike. Sinkgraven was dismissed and Gundogan sent Valles the wrong way from the spot to keep Barcelona's title defense alive. Roque missed a golden opportunity to score his first Barcelona goal and wrap up the victory, but his team left both triumphant and relieved regardless.

