

Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian Plans to Visit Egypt in the Coming Days Amid the Israeli Regime's Concern Over the Strengthening of Ties Between Tehran and Cairo, Arab and Israeli Media Have Reported

IRAN NEWS

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Ali Bagheri Kani and China's Executive Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Ma Zhaoxu Held a Telephone Conversation to Discuss Key Developing Issues in Bilateral and International Relations

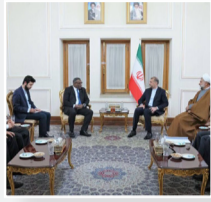
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DOMESTIC



Iran-Algeria Relations on the Right Track

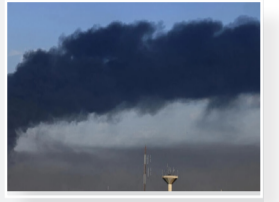
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INTERNATIONAL

Israel Continues Genocide in Gaza's South

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TATF Removes Iran from Recommendation 7



TEHRAN - The Minister of Economy has provided details on the removal of Iran's name from FATF Recommendation 7, expressing hope that this decision will lead to increased economic interactions and reduced risk for Iran. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has agreed to remove Iran from the list of Recommendation 7, reversing its previous decision. This change comes after Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Ehsan Khandouzi sent a letter of protest to the president of FATF, prompting reforms and changes in standards related to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231. Recommendation 7 pertains to targeted sanctions related to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, requiring countries to take specific measures in line with UN Security Council resolutions. Resolution 2231, which implements the Iran nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), introduced restrictive measures including targeted financial sanctions. Iran's compliance with Resolution 2231 is based on specific conditions, including verification by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The Minister of Economy emphasized that Iran's protest letter to FATF was successful in highlighting the violation of Iranian rights, leading to the removal of Iran's name from Recommendation 7. In conclusion, the Minister stated that all countries have been informed about Iran's withdrawal from Recommendation 7, signaling a positive development for Iran's economic prospects.

Iran-Uzbekistan Trade Rise to \$1bn Within Reach



TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi has said that Iran and Uzbekistan can increase their annual trade to \$1 billion, stressing that the goal is within reach thanks to the numerous capacities the two countries have. He made the remarks on Sunday in a meeting with Uzbekistan's new ambassador to Tehran Fariddin Nasriyev who submitted his credentials to the Iranian president. Raisi said that the leaders of both Iran and Uzbekistan are determined to boost bilateral relations. The Ambassador of Uzbekistan also called the Islamic Republic of Iran a reliable partner of his country in the region and noted, "Uzbekistan is interested in the comprehensive development of relations with Iran, and I have a mission to carefully and seriously follow all the axes of the road map for the development of relations between the two countries".



Attack on Mossad Aimed at Punishing Iran Security Disruptors

TEHRAN - Foreign Ministry Spokesman said Iran's recent attack on the Mossad center in Erbil was a punishment against the aggressors against Iran's national security and not against Iraq. Nasser Kanaani made the remarks while speaking at his weekly press conference on Monday morning. The IRGC said on January 16 that it had fired barrages of ballistic missiles at Syrian bases of terrorists involved in recent terrorist attacks in Iran, as well as an Israeli espionage center in the Iraqi Kurdistan region. Referring to the IRGC attack on the Mossad espionage center in Erbil and the level of Iran-Iraq security agreement implementation, Kanaani stated that Iran's relations with the Iraqi government are strong and stable and the two countries have comprehensive cooperation in various fields of interest. Kanaani noted that despite Iran's good relations and cooperation with the Kurdistan region of Iraq, unfortunately, there have been objective threats to the national security and the security of Iranian citizens from this region for so many years. Iran's government and armed forces will not be indifferent to providing security and defending the security of their citizens as they have always acted in this regard, he said, emphasizing that national and border security and the security of Iranian citizens is Iran's red line. Foreign Ministry Spokesperson noted that Iran has been the biggest defender and supporter of Iraq's security, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity, stressing that Iran has proven its commitment to Iraq's security and support for the Iraqi government and its citizens. Iran's action against the Mossad terrorist organization affiliated with the Zionist regime is aimed at punishing the aggressors of Iran's security, and not an action against Iraq, the Iraqi government, and the Kurdistan Region or an attack on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of this country, he stated. Kanaani added that Iran has a clear position regarding Iraq and Iran repeatedly has given the necessary warnings to the authorities of the friendly and brotherly country of Iraq in the framework of security and intelligence cooperation between the two sides. Regarding Iran and Pakistan relations and the return of the two countries' ambassadors, he stated that the military and security officials of the two countries discussed terrorist groups on both sides of the Iran-Pakistan border have been between the military and security officials of the two countries. Countering terrorist groups and creating security on the two borders will be the long-term goal of the two countries to promote cooperation, he said. He continued that Iran and Pakistan's relationship is strong, and action against a terrorist group with numerous records of terrorist and criminal activities against the Iranian nation and armed forces and law enforcement has been carried out in the framework of protecting the security of Iran's citizens and security facilities, adding that it was due to an immediate necessity to prevent another anti-security action by this terrorist movement. Kanaani went on to say that the two countries emphasize respecting each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, stressing that the security of the two countries depends on each other and terrorism is a common danger. The two countries agree on the common fight against terrorism and the threat of terrorism, and the recent incident will not diminish the strength of the relations between the two countries, he said. Both sides emphasized their determination to resume the activities of the ambassadors and the two foreign ministers had a telephone conversation regarding this matter. Kanaani added. In response to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's threat to attack Iran, Kanaani said: "This threat is a fantasy by a criminal prime minister trapped in the Gaza swamp." He added that the threat of the Israeli regime against the Islamic Republic shows the aggressive and criminal nature of this regime and its level of threat to global security. He emphasized that this regime is against international peace and security and always seeks to create insecurity in the region. He also stated that while Iran views these threats and rhetoric as useless, it expects the world and the Security Council to react and take action against any war-mongering.

Iran Holds Mass Funeral for IRGC Military Advisors Assassinated in Israeli Strike

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Huge crowds have turned out in the Iranian capital for the funeral of three military advisors of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), who were assassinated in an Israeli attack on the Syrian capital Damascus. People gathered in a northeastern neighborhood in Tehran on Monday to pay tribute to the victims of the Israeli strike that took place near Damascus on Saturday. Another funeral ceremony for the other two martyrs will be held in the holy city of Qom. The participants chanted slogans against the United States and Israel. In a statement on Saturday, the IRGC said that five of its members serving on a military advisory mission in Syria were assassinated in an Israeli airstrike on a residential building in the tightly guarded Mezzeh neighborhood, west of Damascus. It said later that a fifth advisor had succumbed to his injuries. Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi said Israel's terrorist act is an indicative of the regime's failure to achieve its malicious goals and the depth of its frustration

with the fighters of the resistance front, warning that the targeted killing will not go unanswered. Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani also said the Islamic Republic reserves the right to respond to the organized terrorism of the occupying entity at an appropriate time and place. In a post on his X account late Saturday, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said Iranian military advisors will continue their anti-terror mission in the region in defiance of Israel's "cowardly" assassination operations. Iran has maintained an advisory mission in Syria at the request of Damascus with the aim of helping the war-torn country vanquish the foreign-backed militants, who have been fighting against the Syrian government since 2011. Iran's advisory assistance helped Syria defeat Daesh and win back control of almost all regions from terrorists. The Israeli Saturday strike came just days after the IRGC targeted a building in Erbil in Iraq's Kurdistan region, killing a key Israeli intelligence officer.



FM to Visit Pakistan Following Tensions Over Missile Strikes



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian plans to make an official visit to Pakistan next week. The Iranian foreign minister and his Pakistani counterpart, Jilil Abbas Jilani, issued a joint statement on Monday following an earlier phone conversation. At the invitation of the Pakistani foreign minister, Amir-Abdollahian "will travel to Pakistan on January 29, 2024," the statement said. It added that the top Iranian and Pakistani diplomats also agreed that ambassadors of both countries would return to their posts by January 26. The two neighboring countries witnessed an escalation of cross-border tensions over Iran's counter-terrorism operations. On January 16, Iran launched simultaneous drone and missile attacks on two bases of Jaish ul-Adl, a terror outfit that was formed in 2012 and has conducted several attacks on Iranian soil in recent years. The group claimed responsibility for an attack in December 2023 on a police station in the southeastern city of Rask that killed at least 11 Iranian police officers. On January 10, another attack by the group on a police station in the city killed one officer. Pakistan carried out strikes on Thursday against what it called bases of the separatist Baloch Liberation Front and Baloch Liberation Army in regions close to Iran's border. Meanwhile Iran and Pakistan's foreign ministries vowed in a joint statement on Monday that they will send their ambassadors to their premises before January 26th. After the telephone conversation between the Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and caretaker Foreign Minister Jilil Abbas Jilani, both sides agreed to return their ambassadors to their missions by January 26, 2024, a Farsi translation of a joint statement appeared on the Iranian foreign ministry's website said. At the invitation of Abbas Jilani, his Iranian counterpart Amir-Abdollahian will visit Pakistan on January 29, 2024.

Iran to Extradite Eligible Prisoners to Afghanistan



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights Kazem Gharibabadi says that Tehran will repatriate eligible Afghan prisoners to their country based on laws and regulations of Iran and considering agreements with Afghanistan's ruling Taliban government. Gharibabadi made the comments in a meeting in the Afghan capital of Kabul with with Sheikh Abdul Karim Haqqani, who serves as Head of Taliban's Supreme Judicial Council. Members of Taliban's Supreme Judicial Council and the Taliban government's attorney general, as well as head and members of the Committee on Afghanistan Convicts Transfer were present in the meeting with the Iranian judicial delegation led by Gharibabadi. Iranian and Taliban judicial officials discussed various issues in the meeting, including the extradition of eligible Afghan convicts to their country based on the terms of an agreement on repatriation of convicts signed between Iran and Afghanistan. The two sides also discussed the transfer of experiences in the field of prison management from Iran to the Afghan party and to establish a joint judicial committee to deal with terrorism. Afghan officials agreed as part of the meetings that they would provide the Iranian authorities with quarterly reports on the latest status of the convicts repatriated to the country. They also decided to prepare conditions for immediate transfer of a few number of Iranian prisoners held in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Gharibabadi also held a meeting on Sunday with deputy Taliban minister of justice Abdul Ghani Faiq where he emphasized strengthening judicial cooperation and providing more facilities for extradition of prisoners between Iran and Afghanistan. The official, who also serves a deputy Iranian judiciary chief for international affairs, said problems may arise in the handling of issues related to Afghans in Iran mainly because of the fact that a large population of Afghan nationals are living in Iran as refugees.

IRAN NEWS



Iran Oil Refineries Produce 300 mcf of Hydrogen Per Day

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Head of National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) Jalil Salari said the country's oil refineries produce 300 million cubic feet (mcf) of hydrogen every day which is consumed inside the country, Shana reported. Stressing the need for using more clean fuels in the country, Salari said: "The introduction of hydrogen into the country's fuel basket depends on the pricing of energy carriers and the competition it can have as a green and clean fuel in the fuel basket." Emphasizing that the highest production of hydrogen in the country is carried out by the NIORDC, Salari added: "Hydrogen production is expensive considering the available resources. However, it can have a place in the country's fuel basket, provided that we have a long-term look at energy carriers." "In order for Hydrogen to be included in the fuel basket, the production sources, consumption method, and consumption amount must be specified," he noted. Hydrogen can be deployed as a fuel in two distinct ways: in fuel cells which produce electricity, and via combustion to generate heat. When hydrogen is consumed in fuel cells, the only emission at the point of use is water vapor. Combustion of hydrogen can lead to the thermal formation of harmful nitrogen oxide emissions.

Iran After Closer Ties with Europe



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Iran is resolved to broaden relations with European states on the basis of mutual respect, President Ebrahim Raisi said. In a meeting with Belgium's new ambassador to Tehran on Sunday, Raisi said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to expand relations with the European countries on the basis of mutual respect and interests unless a country seeks antagonism towards Iran." He advised European states to pursue their interest and regulate their relations independently of the US, which he said has been totally disgraced in the world because of the history of its policies, particularly the full support for and complicity in the Israeli crimes in Gaza. For his part, the new ambassador expressed Belgium's willingness to broaden ties with Iran. He also expressed hope he would be able to resolve the challenges and help strengthen ties with Iran in various areas during his tenure.



Iran-Algeria Relations on the Right Track

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in a meeting with a visiting delegation of lawmakers from Algeria on Sunday said that the relations between the two countries are at their best and satisfactory. Amir-Abdollahian hosted Moussa Kharfi, the Deputy Speaker of the Algerian Parliament and the head of the Algerian-Iranian Parliamentary Friendship Group and exchanged views on bilateral and international issues as well as discussed ways to expand cooperation between the two countries. Amir-Abdollahian told the Algerian delegation that the two sides should work to enhance the cooperation to a higher level. "In our foreign policy, we attach great importance and priority to developing relations with African nations, especially Algeria, and the Islamic Republic of Iran considers the upcoming OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) summit in Algeria an important event and will actively participate in it", he said. While hailing the Algerian nation in their fight against the French colonialism and achieving independence, the top Iranian diplomat also praised the North African country,

its parliament and the government for their "honest support" for the people of Palestine and Gaza, calling it (Algeria) a model for other Islamic countries. For his part, the Algerian deputy speaker expressed his gratitude for Iran's hospitality and also expressed grief over recent terrorist attacks in the Iranian city of Kerman. "I express my condolences on behalf of the National Assembly and the people of Algeria over the heinous terrorist attacks in Kerman that led to the loss of innocent lives." On Palestine, Kharfi said that the issue is of strategic importance for Algeria without a doubt. "The Algerian nation sacrificed more than one and a half million people to achieve independence and freedom from French colonialism. We are confident that Palestine will be victorious and the blood of martyrs is the price of freedom", he said. Kharfi also referred to a meeting between Iranian and Algerian presidents at the United Nations and said the two countries pursue more seriously to expand relations in all political, legislative and economic fields, especially energy, health and agriculture.

U.S. Associated With Tensions, Iran Warns Japan



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The U.S. is involved in every case of war, clash and unrest, no matter where they arise in the world, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi told Japan's ambassador to Tehran. In a meeting in Tehran on Sunday, the Iranian president received the credentials of Japan's new ambassador to Iran, Tamaki Tsukada. Hailing the age-old and deep-rooted ties between Iran and Japan, Raisi said Tehran has plans to broaden relations with Tokyo in various fields. He underlined that the "cruel sanctions" imposed by the US on Iran would not obstruct the expansion of relations between Iran and Japan, as those sanctions have gone nowhere so far. "Wherever there is unrest, clash and war, there is a footprint of the US. From using atomic bombs against the people of Japan to the current crimes against the people of Gaza, the US has had a pivotal and basic role," the Iranian president added. For his part, the incoming Japanese envoy conveyed warm greetings from his country's emperor and prime minister, lauding the close ties between the two Asian states. Japan respects the Iranian government's efforts to enhance regional relations, Tamaki Tsukada stated, saying he is tasked with putting efforts into the promotion of cooperation with Iran.

Iran Exports Extract of Medicinal Herbs to Europe, Americas

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - A member of the Union of Manufacturers and Exporters of Medicinal Plants said the extract of medicinal herbs produced according to the world's latest standards is exported from Iran to American and European countries. Pointing to the establishment of the refining centers for extracting medicinal herbs in the country, Qassem Shakeri said the desire for a healthy lifestyle has spread among people in the world and for this reason, the demand for medicinal plants has also increased significantly. Iran is one of the countries with a high advantage in the export of medicinal plants, he stated. He went on to say that Iran's export of medicinal herbs to other countries has considerably

increased since the launch of the refining centers in the country and producing the extract of medicinal herbs based on international standards. Currently, the extract of medicinal herbs is exported from Iran to European countries, including the Netherlands, Germany, France, and Spain as well as India, China, which is a hub of medicinal herbs, and the United States, Shakeri added. Today, the extracting operation of medicinal herbs is done via an advanced method after the establishment of the refining centers in the country. According to the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), more than \$8 million worth of the extract of medicinal plants was exported overseas in 2023.



Iranian Companies Ready to Be Present in Cuban Market



TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Iranian minister of communications and information technology has announced the readiness of the country's companies to be present in the markets in Cuba. Iran is ready to share its technological experiences with Cuba and to set up data centers in the Latin American country, Issa Zarepour said in a meeting held in Tehran on Monday with Cuba's First Deputy Minister of Communications Wilfredo González Vida. Referring to the US unjust sanctions on the Iranian companies, Zarepour said such bans have led to creating opportunities for the country to upgrade its knowledge and technology. For his part, the Cuban official said in the meeting that Havana attaches great importance to its relations with Tehran in all fields. Cuba is eagerly waiting for seeing the presence of the Iranian companies to develop technological area in the country, he added. It was in June 2023 that the Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi travelled to Havana at the head of a delegation to strengthen bilateral ties between the two countries which are both under the sanctions.

Iran Lauds South Africa's Genocide Case against Israel

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Iran Lauds South Africa's Genocide Case Against Israel
TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The Iranian president applauded South Africa's "historic" move to file a genocide case against the Israeli regime at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). "South Africa's move to lodge a complaint against the Zionist regime for its crimes is a historic, indelible and commendable measure," President Ebrahim Raisi said after receiving the credentials of South Africa's new ambassador to Tehran Francis Molloy. The president also expressed Iran's support for South Africa's "smart and wise" action against Israel. Lauding the close and growing ties between Iran and South Africa, Raisi said there is no obstacle to the expansion of relations. In its application submitted on December 29, Pretoria accused Israel of committing genocide in contravention of the 1948 UN Genocide Convention, which both South Africa and Israel are party to. The ICJ held two days of public hearings in the genocide case against Israel in January. The case sets a precedent as the first at the ICJ relating to the siege on the Gaza Strip, where more than 25,100 people have been killed since October 7, nearly 10,000 of them children.

Dozens Missing After Landslide Hits Yunnan in China

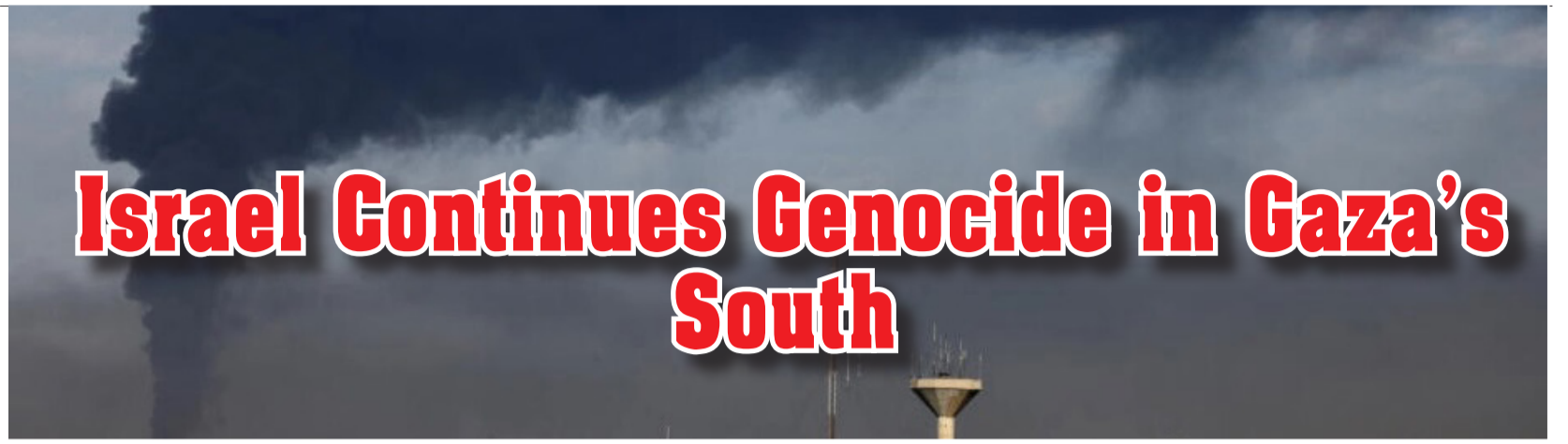
BEIJING (Dispatches) - Forty-seven people were buried when a landslide struck a remote and mountainous part of southwestern China on Monday, state media reported. The landslide took place at 5:51 am (2151 GMT Sunday) in Zhenxiang County, Yunnan province, state news agency Xinhua reported, citing local authorities. State broadcaster CCTV said around 18 households were buried in the landslide, and that more than 200 people were "urgently evacuated" from the area. Authorities have launched an emergency response involving over 200 rescue workers as well as dozens of fire engines and other equipment, according to CCTV. Footage shared on social media by a local broadcaster showed emergency workers in orange jumpsuits and helmets forming ranks outside a fire station as snowflakes whirled through the air. Other images showed rescuers picking through towering piles of collapsed masonry in which a few personal belongings could be seen.



Hundreds of Thousands Demonstrate Against Right-Wing Extremism in Germany



FRANKFURT (Dispatches) - Hundreds of thousands of people have taken to the streets across towns and cities in Germany this weekend as the country enters a second week of nationwide protests against the right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD) party. Demonstrations have gained momentum after reports emerged from investigative news website Correctiv of a meeting of right-wing extremists in Potsdam at which migration policies including mass deportations of people of foreign origin were discussed. The AfD, which is polling second in nationwide surveys, has denied the reported migration plans are party policy. On Sunday, rallies were held in Berlin, Munich and Cologne, as well as in more traditional AfD voting strongholds in eastern Germany such as Leipzig and Dresden, with turnout in many places far higher than expected. Organizers in Munich ended the demonstration early due to overcrowding with around 100,000 participants, according to police. Protest organizers said 200,000 people attended. At the start of the event in Berlin, there were 30,000 people and the number was growing, police said. Several tens of thousands also took to the streets in Cologne and Bremen on Sunday. Event organizers estimated around 300,000 people demonstrated nationwide on Saturday. "It's a signal to the world that we won't let this happen without commenting on it," said protestor Steffi Kirschenmann, a social counsellor based in Frankfurt, one of tens of thousands that gathered peacefully in sub-zero temperatures in Frankfurt's center on Saturday. Lord Mayor of Frankfurt, Mike Josef, addressed crowds on Roemer Square, which he reminded protesters was the same spot where the Nazi regime had burnt books. The AfD declined to comment on the demonstrations against it. Business leaders have voiced their concerns, with Siemens Energy, opens new tab supervisory board chairman Joe Kaeser telling Reuters the reports trigger "bitter memories". President Frank-Walter Steinmeier has seen the rallies across Germany against right-wing extremism as a sign of strength. In a video message distributed on Sunday, Steinmeier said: "You are standing up against misanthropy and right-wing extremism, these people encourage us all." He called for an alliance of all democrats, saying "Let's show that we are stronger together." German Vice-Chancellor Robert Habeck told a local newspaper he saw the demonstrations as an encouraging sign for democracy. "It is impressive to see that many people are now taking to the streets and flying the flag for our democracy", the Green party politician told the Augsburg Allgemeine. The Central Council of Jews in Germany also welcomed the demonstrations. For Jews, this is an image "that can restore confidence in the democratic conditions" of the country, Central Council President Josef Schuster told Welt-TV. Germany's Boersen-Zeitung on Saturday published a series of statements from companies listed in Germany's DAX stock market index in which the companies spoke out against xenophobia, anti-semitism and political extremism on the right-wing fringe.



GAZA (Dispatches) - The Israeli army bombarded Khan Yunis, the new epicenter of the war in Gaza, on Monday as the families of hostages held by Hamas urged Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to reach a deal to secure their release. Witnesses reported deadly strikes overnight in Khan Yunis, the largest city in southern Gaza, and fierce fighting between Israeli soldiers and Hamas militants. Netanyahu has vowed "complete victory" over Hamas after attacks by the Islamist movement's fighters on October 7 that resulted in the deaths of about 1,140 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official Israeli figures. Hamas militants also seized about 250 hostages and Israel says around 132 remain in besieged Gaza. The war has spurred fears of a wider escalation, and sirens were heard again overnight in northern Israel near the border with Lebanon, according to the Israeli military. There have been almost daily exchanges of fire between Israeli forces and the Hezbollah movement in Lebanon, and several areas of southern Lebanon were hit overnight. One such Israeli strike killed a Lebanese Hezbollah fighter, according to a source in the Hamas-aligned group. Violence has also surged in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Houthi rebels in Yemen have also attacked what they deem to be Israeli-linked shipping in the vital Red Sea shipping lanes, prompting retaliatory US and UK strikes, while attacks in Syria and Iraq have mostly been claimed by Iran-linked militants opposing US support for Israel. Hamas said in its first public report on the events that triggered the war there had been "some faults" on its part but also called for an end to "Israeli aggression" in Gaza. The October 7 attacks were a "necessary step" against Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and a way to secure the release of Palestinian prisoners, it said in its 16-page report. Israel vowed to "annihilate" Hamas after the attacks and launched a relentless offensive that has killed at least 25,105 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the Hamas-run health ministry in Gaza. The Israeli campaign has killed "around 20 percent to 30 percent" of Hamas fighters and is still far from its goal of destroying the Islamist movement, according to estimates by US intelligence agencies, the Wall Street Journal reported on Sunday. It said the United States, Qatar and Egypt, the countries that mediated a truce in November, were trying to convince Israel and Hamas to approve a plan that would free all the hostages in exchange

for an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. Netanyahu has maintained that Israel must retain security control after the war and has rejected the possibility of "Palestinian sovereignty". Major ally the United States and others have recommended that a so-called two-state solution was the only way to guarantee Israel's long-term security. Netanyahu is also under intense pressure to secure the return of the hostages and account for security failings surrounding the October 7 attacks. Relatives and supporters of the hostages again rallied near Netanyahu's Jerusalem residence in Jerusalem on Sunday night for their return. "We are asking our government to listen, to sit down at the negotiating table and decide whether to accept this agreement or any other that would suit Israel," said Gilad Korenbloom, whose son is a hostage in Gaza. John Polin, also the father of a hostage, said Israelis serve their country and in return "we expect the government to ensure our safety". "We are asking the government to play its part, to propose an agreement, to bring it to a successful conclusion and to bring the remaining hostages back alive," Polin said. Netanyahu said in a video statement released after the Hamas report that, in exchange for the release of Israeli hostages, Hamas was demanding an end to the war, the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, the release of Palestinian prisoners and guarantees that Hamas would stay in power. "If we accept this, our soldiers have fallen in vain," and security would not be guaranteed, he said. French Defence Minister Sebastien Lecomte was to meet families of Hamas hostages on Monday, before holding talks with Netanyahu and his Israeli counterpart Yoav Gallant. The 27 foreign ministers of the EU, which supports a two-state solution, will also hold separate talks with their Israeli and Palestinian counterparts in Brussels on Monday, although top Israeli diplomat Israel Katz and the Palestinian Authority's Riyad al-Maliki were not expected to sit down together. UN agencies have warned of famine and disease as Gazans, 1.7 million of whom are displaced, struggle with shortages of water, medical care and other essentials during daily bombardment. On Sunday, 260 humanitarian aid trucks were transferred to Gaza, according to COGAT, the Israeli defence ministry body responsible for Palestinian civilian affairs, well below pre-war levels. Hamas's Qatar-based chief Ismail Haniyeh had met Turkey's foreign minister to discuss the conflict and humanitarian aid, diplomatic sources said on Sunday.



DeSantis Ends 2024 Campaign, Endorses Trump Over Haley

SEABROOK (Dispatches) - Florida Governor Ron DeSantis ended his fading presidential campaign on Sunday and endorsed Donald Trump just two days before the pivotal New Hampshire primary, leaving former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley as Trump's last long-shot challenger for the Republican nomination. DeSantis' decision, less than a week after his deflating loss to Trump in Iowa despite an enormous investment there, caps a stunning fall from grace after DeSantis had been widely seen as Republicans' most promising alternative to Trump ahead of the general election in November. His departure sets up the one-on-one battle that Haley has coveted against Trump, the former president who has maintained an iron grip on the Republican electorate despite facing four criminal prosecutions. Trump has pleaded not guilty in all the cases. But DeSantis' supporters appear more likely to switch allegiance to Trump than to the more moderate Haley. In New Hampshire, about two-thirds of DeSantis backers cite Trump as their second choice, said Andrew Smith, director of the University of New Hampshire Survey Center. In a video posted on X, DeSantis endorsed Trump while delivering a parting shot at Haley. "He has my endorsement because we can't go back to the old Republican guard of yesteryear: a re-packaged form of warmed-over corporatism that Nikki Haley represents," DeSantis said. At a Sunday evening rally in Rochester, New Hampshire, Trump - who spent much of last year attacking DeSantis - praised the governor and said he was looking forward

to working together to defeat President Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic nominee. Trump accused Haley of forming an "unholy alliance" with liberals, never-Trumpers and RINOs, or Republicans in Name Only, to try and win the New Hampshire primary, and repeated a false claim that registered Democrats were allowed to vote in the Republican primary. Trump holds a double-digit lead over Haley in New Hampshire, according to polls, and his campaign hopes a second consecutive win will make his eventual nomination all but inevitable. He also has a commanding lead in South Carolina, which votes on Feb. 24. A Haley loss in her home state - where she served as governor from 2011 to 2017 - would likely doom her campaign. At a campaign event in Seabrook, New Hampshire, Haley drew cheers when she announced that DeSantis had dropped out. "For now, I'll leave you with this: May the best woman win," she said. David Kochel, a Republican strategist who has worked on five presidential campaigns, said DeSantis' exit was unlikely to change the basic contours of the campaign, given that his support had cratered. "The race needs a big dynamic shift, and I don't feel that DeSantis dropping out is that big a deal as he didn't have that much going on in New Hampshire, and he didn't even have that much going on in South Carolina," he said. Another Republican consultant, Ford O'Connell, who has ties to both the Trump and DeSantis camps, said he expected most DeSantis voters to "come home" to Trump.



Taiwan Says It Spots Six More Chinese Balloons, One Crossed Island

TAIPEI (Dispatches) - Taiwan's defense ministry said it had detected six more Chinese balloons flying over the Taiwan Strait on Sunday, one of which crossed the island, the latest in a spate of such balloons the ministry says it has seen over the past month-and-a-half. The ministry earlier this month, in a strongly worded statement, accused China of threatening aviation safety and waging psychological warfare on the island's people with the balloons, days before Taiwan's Jan. 13 elections. China's defense ministry, which last month declined to comment on the balloons, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. China claims Taiwan as its own territory, despite the strong objections of the government in Taipei. The potential for China to use balloons for spying became a global issue last February when the United States shot down what it said was a Chinese surveillance balloon. China said the balloon was a civilian craft that accidentally drifted astray. In the latest incident, revealed by the ministry on Monday in its daily report on Chinese military activities over the past 24 hours, it said six balloons had flown over the strait's sensitive median line on Sunday. However, only one crossed Taiwan island, at its southern tip, according to a map the ministry provided. The other five balloons flew to the north of Taiwan but did not fly over land, the ministry said. The balloons all headed east before vanishing, it added. The Taiwan Strait's median line previously served as an unofficial barrier between Taiwan and China, but Chinese fighter jets, drones and now balloons regularly fly over it. China says it does not recognise the existence of the median line.

Russia Suspends Operations at Fuel Export Terminal

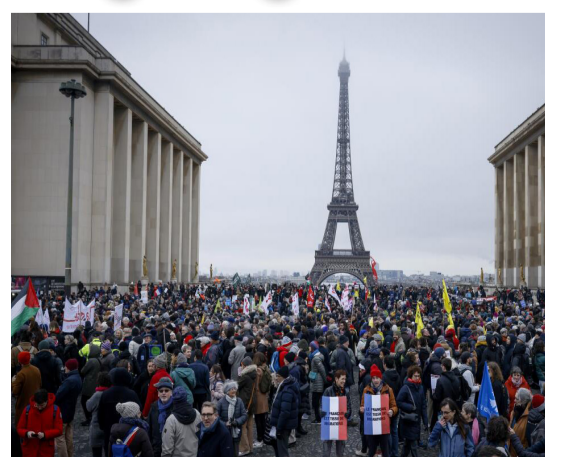


MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian energy company Novatek, opens new tab said it had been forced to suspend some operations at a huge Baltic Sea fuel export terminal due to a fire started by what Ukrainian media said was a drone attack. The giant Ust-Luga complex, located on the Gulf of Finland about 170 km (110 miles) west of St. Petersburg, is used to ship oil and gas products to international markets. It processes stable gas condensate - a type of light oil - into light and heavy naphtha, kerosene and diesel to be shipped by sea. It was not clear how long the disruption would last, how many tankers would have to idle outside the port, and what the knock-on effect would be on international energy markets. Critical infrastructure facilities in the surrounding Leningrad region were placed on high alert, with security units and law enforcement agencies ordered to destroy any drones detected, the regional administration said on Telegram. The Interfax-Ukraine news agency, citing unnamed sources, said the fire was the result of a special operation carried out by Ukraine's security services. "The Ust-Luga Oil terminal ... is an important facility for the enemy. Fuel is refined there, which, among other things, is also supplied to Russian troops," it cited one source as saying. "A successful attack on such a terminal not only causes economic damage to the enemy ... but also significantly complicates the logistics of fuel for the Russian military." Reuters could not confirm that the fire resulted from a Ukrainian drone attack. If it did, such an attack would demonstrate Kyiv's ability to conduct strikes deeper into Russia than usual using what are believed to be domestically produced drones at a time when it is on the defensive on the battlefield and struggling to secure as much Western financing as it wants. Such an attack, the latest in a spate of apparent strikes in recent days targeting Russian energy facilities, would also raise awkward questions about the quality of Russian air defence systems around key infrastructure facilities. The incident, along with what Russia says was a Ukrainian artillery strike on civilians in a Russian-held city in eastern Ukraine that left at least 25 dead, could prompt wider Russian retaliation in a war which shows no sign of ending. Alexander Drozdenko, the Leningrad region's governor, said on the Telegram messaging app, that there had been no casualties at the Ust-Luga terminal and all workers had been safely evacuated. Russian news agencies reported that two storage tanks and a pumping station had been damaged, but that the fire had been brought under control.

Thousands of Protesters Across France Call on Macron Not to Sign Immigration Law

PARIS (Dispatches) - Tens of thousands of people marched in the streets of cities across France on Sunday to call on President Emmanuel Macron not to sign into law tough new legislation on immigration that they say bears the footprint of the far right and betrays French values. According to the Interior Ministry, 75,000 people took part across the country, with 16,000 protesters turning out in Paris. The hard-left CGT union put the number of protesters nationwide at 150,000. The timing of the protests was critical, coming four days before the Constitutional Council decides on Thursday whether all articles in the law - passed in December - conform with the French Constitution. The bill strengthens France's ability to deport foreigners considered undesirable and makes it tougher for foreigners to take advantage of social welfare, among other measures. The protest was called by 200 figures from various sectors, including the arts and unions. The law "was written under the dictate of the merchants of hate who dream of imposing on France their project of 'national preference,'" the signatories of the call to march wrote. National preference, under which the French, not foreigners, should profit from the riches of the land, has long been the

rallying cry of the far-right National Rally party. Macron backed the law in its tortuous course through parliament, but, in an unusual twist, has said that some articles appear unconstitutional. Le Monde newspaper recently quoted an unnamed Interior Ministry official as saying that "a good dozen" of articles could be struck down by the Constitutional Council. Some articles of the law make it more difficult to bring family members to France, for instance, an applicant trying to join their spouse will have to show knowledge of the French language. The court is also likely to scrutinize tougher standards for receiving social services and housing or re-establishing a law done away with in 2012 that makes it illegal for a foreigner to be in France without residence papers. The immigration law reflects what appears to be centrist Macron's most recent effort to tilt the government to the right, notably ahead of European elections in June with the far right bounding forward in popularity, according to polls. Also on the horizon is the possibility of a victory in 2027 presidential elections by National Rally leader Marine Le Pen. After two presidential mandates, Macron will not be in the running.





Tsitsipas Sees Australian Open Exit as Another Chance to Evolve

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Stefanos Tsitsipas said he hoped to emerge stronger from his fourth-round defeat by Taylor Fritz at the Australian Open after the Greek world number seven suffered his earliest exit in four years at the Melbourne Park Grand Slam. The 25-year-old reached the last four in 2019 and lost in the third round the following year, but embarked on two more semi-final runs before losing to 10-times champion Novak Djokovic in last year's title clash. Tsitsipas said he would need a few days to reflect and recover from his 7-6(3) 5-7 6-3 6-3 defeat. "It's not a negative feeling," he told reporters. "It's a feeling of evolution, of change, which is constant. Change is always constant. One day you're in the top 10, the other day you're not there anymore. So you have to keep on working and allowing yourself to flourish through these experiences, allow yourself to seek for all these moments that have been working for you over the last few years, give it another shot time after time." Tsitsipas, who is yet to win a Grand Slam, said dealing with setbacks was part of the job. "There's way more moments in your career that are painful and tough to deal with, suffering and all that, than moments of glory and success and opening champagne bottles," he added. "These are a small percentage of what a tennis player lives on a yearly basis." Meanwhile Alex de Minaur's belief that he could beat Andrey Rublev and finally reach the Australian Open quarter-finals made the defeat all the more devastating for the local favourite. On a day when Australia Open defending champions Novak Djokovic and Aryna

Sabalenka were both in action, all eyes in Melbourne were on 10th seed Alex de Minaur as he aimed to keep home interest in the competition alive. De Minaur was the last Australian left in the singles, but his 6-4 6-7(5) 6-7(4) 6-3 6-0 loss to the fifth seed was certainly a world away from last year's exit at the same stage, when he was demolished in straight sets by Djokovic. "Maybe a couple of years ago or even last year, I would be sitting here, maybe even happy with the result, saying, I probably shouldn't have won, he's ranked higher than I am, I took him to five sets, pretty decent effort," De Minaur said. "But it's completely changed because now I'm sitting here and I'm absolutely devastated because I saw it as a great opportunity and a match that I strongly believed I could have won. But it just slipped away." De Minaur won the second and third sets on a tiebreak, and just when it seemed like he had Rublev on the ropes, the Russian came back swinging. Meanwhile Ukrainian qualifier Dayana Yastremska upset former champion Victoria Azarenka to surge into the Australian Open quarter-finals on Monday as Carlos Alcaraz sought to match the feat and make the last eight for the first time. The 23-year-old Yastremska fought off two set points in the first set and came from a break down in the second against the former world number one to win 7-6 (8/6), 6-4 on Rod Laver Court. Her reward is a clash with unseeded Czech Linda Noskova, who progressed to the last eight when Ukraine's Elina Svitolina retired with a bad back while trailing 3-0 in the first set.

Delight for Mahomes, Anguish for Allen as Chiefs foil Bills Again



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes said his team had shown they could handle any NFL environment after winning at Buffalo to clinch their sixth straight place in the AFC Championship game. The Chiefs won 27-24 after the Bills missed a late 44-yard field goal that would have tied the game with 1:43 on the clock. It was the first time the Mahomes-era Chiefs have had to play a post-season game on the road but the two-time Super Bowl winner said they had answered any doubters. "We did hear it all week, man, about playing a road game and we were here to prove a point and to show that we can play anywhere," Mahomes said. The Chiefs travel to Baltimore on Sunday to face the top-seeded Ravens for a chance to defend their Super Bowl title next month in Las Vegas. "We know we're going to have a heck of a challenge this next week but our guys are going to get ready to go and go out there and see what we can do," Mahomes said. "There's no weakness there. It's going to take our best effort. Defense, offense, best teams, they do it all. It's going to be a great challenge and that stadium is going to be rocking." The Bills suffered their third consecutive loss in the divisional round after defeats to the Cincinnati Bengals last year and the Chiefs in 2021. The Chiefs have ended Buffalo's playoff dreams three times in the past four years, having also beaten them in the 2020 AFC Championship game. Quarterback Josh Allen, who ran in two touchdowns and threw another, was bitterly disappointed. "It sucks, losing sucks, losing to them, losing to anybody, it just sucks," said Allen, who said he didn't believe the team needed a complete re-think. "I don't think it (needs) a big change. I think it's just we had to find a way to score one more point than they do. Every season, if you don't win, it's a failed season. That's just the nature of the business." There is one happy team at the end of the season really and when it's not you, when you're so close, it just sucks," Bills head coach Sean McDermott said he would examine every way to give his team the extra needed to go all the way. "Obviously the season just got over but we'll turn over every leaf this off-season. I'm fully confident in this football team, fully confident in our staff," he said.

Rampant Girona Keep Liga Lead

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Artem Dovbyk struck a hat-trick inside seven minutes as minnows Girona powered back to the top of La Liga with a thumping 5-1 win over Sevilla. After Real Madrid scraped a controversial 3-2 win over bottom side Almeria and a treble by Ferran Torres helped Barca win 4-2 at Real Betis, Girona demonstrated their title credentials. The Catalan club, in the top flight for only the fourth season in their history, are shock challengers for the Spanish title and lead second-place Madrid by a point, having played one extra game. Madrid's victory over winless Almeria, which took them temporarily top before Girona played, was steeped in drama and controversy. Dani Carvajal rammed home the winner in the 99th minute to settle a wild and hugely entertaining clash at the Santiago Bernabeu where Madrid had trailed 2-0. Almeria took a two-goal lead through Largie Ramazani's 38th minute strike and a screamer from Edgar Gonzalez. Madrid battled back to triumph as Jude Bellingham converted a penalty and Vinicius Junior used his upper arm to divert home an equaliser, before Carvajal's last-gasp winner. Madrid had three key VAR adjudications go in their favour, including Vinicius' goal which Almeria considered handball, a goal of their own ruled out and a penalty given to Madrid. "We leave with the feeling we've been robbed," complained Almeria midfielder Gonzalo Melero. Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti disagreed: "I understand Almeria's anger with the VAR decisions, but I think they were well judged," Ancelotti told reporters. Madrid won the Spanish Super Cup last Sunday by thrashing Barcelona in Saudi Arabia and then lost 4-2 against Atletico Madrid in the Copa del Rey in midweek. "It was a tired team," explained Ancelotti, who said the first-half display was one to forget. Madrid came roaring back after that, with Bellingham at the heart of it. La Liga's joint top scorer with Dovbyk firing home from the spot for his 14th goal of the campaign. After Vinicius nudged in to level, Bellingham had a goal ruled out for offside and sent a superb overhead kick narrowly wide. The England international helped create the winner by nodding the ball to the back post for Carvajal to smash home and spark jubilant celebrations after another epic Madrid comeback. Barcelona, third, let a two-goal lead slip against Betis but recovered to stay in the title race. Torres scored twice to put Barca two ahead but they surrendered their lead as former Real Madrid playmaker Isco struck a brace of his own. Joao Felix finished deftly in the 90th minute and Torres netted again to secure victory for the Catalans, who trail neighbours Girona by eight points. Torres, reaching a century of appearances for Barcelona since joining from Manchester City two years ago, was decisive and said he had worked hard for his moment. "It's the fruit of hard work, discipline, consistency, of believing in yourself," Torres told Movistar.



Bremen End 16-Year Wait for Bayern Victory



MUNICH (Dispatches) - Mitchell Weiser stunned his former club with the only goal as Werder Bremen beat Bayern Munich 1-0 on Sunday, keeping Bayer Leverkusen seven points clear at the top of the Bundesliga. Bayern were last held scoreless in the league in February 2020, when former coach Julian Nagelsmann's RB Leipzig drew 0-0 at Munich's Allianz Arena. Bremen's victory, their first over Bayern in any competition since 2008, broke a 27-game winless run against the German champions, which included 26 losses. Leverkusen's 3-2 win at Leipzig on Saturday, with Xabi Alonso's men coming from behind twice and scoring the winner in injury time, put the pressure back on Bayern, who went into Sunday's game with two games in hand. "You have to ask the players," Bayern manager Thomas Tuchel told DAZN when asked about the performance. "We played today like it didn't matter, as if we were 10 points ahead and had a Champions League match to play on Tuesday." After the Leverkusen result, we wanted to start aggressively and send a signal, but we didn't succeed at all. Bremen were unlucky to have a goal struck off by VAR in the first-half for a foul on Jamal Musiala, but after 59 minutes, Weiser glided down the right wing and blasted into the net. "We showed everything you need to show to win here. Today we had a perfect day -- and with that you can beat Bayern," said Weiser. Bayern pinned Bremen back after the opener but failed to break through. Bayern veteran Thomas Mueller told DAZN his side were "sluggish and lifeless", calling the result "a hard slap in the face." In Werder's last victory over Bayern in 2008, a teenage Mesut Ozil ran riot, scoring one goal and assisting on two more as the four-time Bundesliga champions won 5-2. On Sunday, Bremen started strongly, Weiser forcing a fingertip save from Manuel Neuer midway through the first-half. Justin Njinnmah had the ball in the net after a lightning counter attack, but VAR revealed a foul on Musiala at the other end. At half time, Bayern exited the pitch to a sprinkling of boos and whistles, but the break failed to revive the home side, with Bremen continuing to impress.

Jokic Nets Season-High 42 to Lead NBA Nuggets Over Wizards

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Nikola Jokic scored a season-high 42 points and grabbed 12 rebounds to power the reigning NBA champion Denver Nuggets over Washington 113-104. The Serbian superstar center, a two-time NBA Most Valuable Player, made 15-of-20 shots from the floor and 12-of-14 free throws while adding eight assists, three blocks and a steal against the host Wizards. "It's never easy. Not 42," Jokic said. "It's just a mindset. We needed this win. For us, every game is a must-win game." Jamal Murray and Michael Porter Jr. each added 19 points for the Nuggets (30-14), who rose within a game of the Western Conference lead, while Kyle Kuzma's 17 points led Washington (7-35). Jokic's wife and daughter attended the game, bringing special joy to his performance. "It's amazing. My family means everything to me. It's something that I'm really proud of," he said. "Wherever they go, whatever they do, I know they're on my side." NBA overall leader Boston, paced by 32 points from Latvian forward Kristaps Porzingis plus Derrick White's 21 points and 12 rebounds, won 116-107 at Houston. "Early on I just got a lot of open looks," said Porzingis, who scored 15 points in the first quarter. "Missed the first two but stayed aggressive. I knew they were going to fall sooner or later." The victory came two nights after Denver edged Boston 102-100, delivering the Celtics' first home defeat of the season. "We know if we want to be a championship-calibre team we cannot lose multiple games in a row," Porzingis said. "We had a tough one the other night against Denver at home, another championship-calibre team. We came up a little bit short and took some lessons from that one and wanted to bounce back tonight." The Celtics improved the NBA's best record to 33-10, stretching their lead atop the Eastern Conference to 3.5 games over Milwaukee. Boston's Jayson Tatum added 18 points and Jaylen Brown had a triple double for the Celtics with 13 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists. Turkish center Alperen Sengun had a triple double for the Rockets with 24 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists. Phoenix's Kevin Durant scored 40 points on 18-of-25 shooting to spark the Suns over visiting Indiana 117-110, the Pacers playing without star guard Tyrese Haliburton over sore hamstring concerns. Devin Booker added 26 points for the Suns and Bradley Beal had 25 points as Phoenix improved to 24-18, level with Dallas for sixth in the West. James Harden had 24 points and a game-high 10 assists while Russell Westbrook added 23 points and nine rebounds off the bench to spark an incredible fightback 125-114 victory for the Los Angeles Clippers over visiting Brooklyn. The Nets opened a 16-0 lead at the start only to surrender the final 22 points and lose, LA outscoring Brooklyn 41-15 in the

fourth quarter. "We came out and competed all night long. We never gave up," Westbrook said. "We fought adversity and came out with a win so I'm really proud of our guys." Kawhi Leonard added 21 points for the Clippers, who won for the eighth time in 10 games, improving to 27-14 and fourth in the West. Paolo Banchero scored 20 points and pulled down 10 rebounds while German forward Franz Wagner added 19 points to lead the Orlando Magic over visiting Miami 105-87. At 23-20, the Magic

pulled within a game of the Heat for seventh in the East. Atlanta Hawks guard Trae Young has been diagnosed with a concussion and entered the league's concussion protocols. It happened on Saturday in the fourth quarter of a loss to Cleveland when he drew a charging foul but took an elbow to the face. There's no timetable for his return, which depends on him completing the NBA return-to-play recovery process.

