Major General Yahya Rahim Safavi, Senior Military Adviser to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, Urges That Iran Expand Its "Strategic Defense Depth" as Far as the Mediterranean Sea

The Meetings Related to Iran in the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Ended Without Issuing a Resolution Against Iran's Nuclear Program, Despite All the False Claims, Machinations, Threats and Political Camp of the Western Countries

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#### IRGC Commander Highlights Steady Missile Advancements



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Aerospace Force Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh highlighted the ongoing advancements in missile technology, noting that technological barriers in the aerospace field have been overcome."Advancements in the aerospace and missile fields are continuous... as the barriers of technology have been broken, and advancements in this area will be made faster in the future," Hajizadeh said, speaking during a ceremony in Khuzestan province on Friday.He also emphasized the importance of young people as the future builders of the country and stated that the future belongs to them. The commander also stressed the importance of informing and educating future generations about the achievements of the country, expressing hope that by doing so, they will feel a sense of responsibility for these achievements and remain optimistic about the future.In February, Hajizadeh stated that Iran is among the top global defense powers. He noted advancements since the era of the Sacred Defense (the Iraqi-imposed war on Iran in the 1980s), citing US acknowledgment of Iran's defense capabilities.Iranian military experts and technicians have in recent years made great headways in manufacturing a broad range of indigenous equipment, making the armed forces self-sufficient in the arms sphere.Iranian officials have repeatedly underscored that the country will not hesitate to strengthen its military capabilities, including its missile power, which are entirely meant for defense, and that Iran's defense capabilities will be never subject to negotiations

Resistance Front Has Great Unexploited Potential



TEHRAN - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei said the Islamic Republic in Iran led to the formation of a new front based upon Islamic democracy that has jeopardized the interests of the Western liberal democracy front. Ayatollah Khamenei made the remark in a meeting with the members of the Assembly of Experts of the Leadership in Tehran on Thursday."Prior to the establishment of the Islamic Republic, the only existing global front was the front of democracies that were dependent on Western liberal democracy. However, with the victory of the Islamic Revolution, a new front was formed based on Islamic democracy, which has naturally stood in opposition to the Western front of democracy," the Leader said. Ayatollah Khamenei stated that the emergence of the model of Islamic democracy in Iran threatened the interests of the Western front of democracy, leading to its continual opposition to the Islamic system."The reason they felt endangered was that in the essence of Western democracy, there is imperialism, aggression, violation of the rights of nations, warmongering, and endless bloodshed in the pursuit of power. This may be seen in their colonization of many countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America during the 19th century, which was the peak of the period when they were shouting slogans and making claims regarding democracy, freedom, and human rights," he said. The Leader underlined the fact that the primary focus and strategy of the Islamic front of democracy is to confront oppression and aggression. In response to the question of why the Islamic Republic is opposed to the Front of Arrogance, he explained, "We are not opposed to other countries, governments, or nations as a rule. Rather, we are opposed to the oppression and aggression that exists in the front of Western

democracy." Ayatollah Khamenei considered the tragic events in Gaza to be a clear manifestation of the oppression and aggression of the Front of Arrogance against the people of a land and the merciless massacre of innocent civilians. He highlighted that the Islamic Republic opposes such atrocities and crimes, which are supported by the United States, Britain, and certain European countries despite the fact that they are denounced by rational, traditional, religious, and human moral standards. He stressed that it should be evident that the Arrogant Front is concealing oppression, aggression, and murder behind the facades of democracy, human rights, and liberalism, Khamenei.ir reported.Highlighting the importance of the Islamic Republic leading the way in opposing Arrogance, the Leader also emphasized the need to continually raise the battle flag against the Arrogant Powers, while ensuring that the flag remains in the hands of the Islamic Republic.Elsewhere in the speech, Ayatollah Khamenei considered the Assembly of Expert's duty, which is to select the Leader of the Islamic Republic and to oversee the maintenance of the leader's qualifications, to be the most important managerial duty in the Islamic Republic. "The members of the Assembly of Experts must ensure that the fixed principles of the Islamic Republic are upheld in their decisions," he stated.Referring to the recent Parliamentary elections in Iran, the Leader said the coming into office of each new parliament is a positive development that brings fresh opportunities for the country. "The presence of new representatives alongside representatives from previous periods brings a blend of innovation and experience. This is a valuable asset. It is like fresh blood in the veins of the political structure," he said.

#### World Demands Israel's Expulsion From UN Women's Commission



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry says the world demands the expulsion of Israel from the United Nations Comm the Status of Women due to the regime's crimes against civilians, particularly women and children."The expulsion of the usurping Zionist regime from the UN Commission on the Status of Women is a global demand due to the killing of thousands of women and committing crime against humanity as a result of organized starvation of the civilian population, especially women and children,' Nasser Kanaani wrote on his X account on Friday on the occasion of International Women's Day.He added that Israel must be excluded from the UN body for its measures which have caused acute mental and psychological suffering to mothers due to the gradual death of their children. This year's International Women's Day belongs to brave women and mothers and should turn into an opportunity for global condemnation of the brutal Israeli regime, the Iranian spokesman said.Kanaani emphasized that the event should not become an opportunity for the false claimants of women's rights to make "absurd" statements. These so-called defenders of women's rights, he maintained, have pursued an instrumental view of women and left behind a "black record" of violation of human, cultural and social rights. Turning a blind eye to the "brutal killing of thousands of innocent women and children in Palestine" and continuing to support a "terrorist regime" has revealed the "hypocritical" approach of these false rights claimants to the entire world, he added.Iran's Permanent Mission to the UN also on Thursday called for the ouster of Israel from the United Nations women's rights body, citing the regime's killing of thousands of Palestinian women in relentless strikes against the Gaza StripThe Health Ministry in Gaza announced in a Thursday statement, on the eve of International Women's Day, that the Israeli military has killed nearly 9,000 Palestinian women in the course of its devastating onslaught on the enclave

Iran Warns Against Israeli 'Military Adventurism' in Region



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The resistance front proved to be an integrated power following the Al-Aqsa Storm operation, although its capabilities have not been used to the maximum extent, IRGC Quds Force Commander Brigadier General Esmaeil Qaani said.Addressing a session of Iran's Assembly of Experts in Tehran, General Qaani said the Al-Aqsa Storm operation against the Zionist regime indicated that it is impossible to ignore the resistance front.Describing the resistance front as an integrated power, the commander said the front has massive capabilities, although it has not fully exploited its potential yet. He noted that the havoc on Gaza wreaked by the Israeli onslaught will be made up for, but the Zionist regime won't be able to save face and repair its credit. The Israeli regime's sole achievement in the war on Gaza has been the massacre of around 40,000 people, most of whom were women and children, while the Palestinian forces have maintained their lands and dignity and have frustrated Israel, he added."The resistance front, specifically the Hamas forces in the Al-Aqsa Storm operation, have taken up offensive position and have heroically inflicted fundamental challenges upon the Israeli army by relying on their faith and weapons," the general stated. In remarks in November 2023, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei said the Zionist regime had been "knocked out" in the Al-Aqsa Storm operation. The Leader stated that Hamas, a Palestinian group of resistance fighters and not a government or a country that is wellequipped, managed to knock out the usurping Zionist regime which is well-equipped with resources. The heavy defeat that the Zionist regime suffered will not be compensated by these crimes, Ayatollah Khamenei said, adding, "They should know that this oppression and these atrocities will not go unanswered and the bombings will shorten the life of the usurping regime."

### Iran Reiterates Need for Inclusive Government in Afghanistan

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The Iranian ambassador to the UN called on the Taliban to advance genuine ethnic and political inclusivity in Afghanistan, stressing the need for the establishment of a broad-based Afghan government that would safeguard the rights of all ethnic groups and combat terrorism. Addressing the UN Security Council briefing on "the situation in Afghanistan", held in New York, Saeed Iravani said the de facto authorities in Afghanistan have failed to advance genuine ethnic and political inclusivity."Instead, they have imposed stricter limitations on women and girls, restricting their educational opportunities. Additionally, attacks on minority people such as the Hazara Shiites continue, as confirmed by the UN report," he said."We stress the importance of prioritizing and carefully addressing the legitimate concerns of neighboring countries in all initiatives aimed at engaging with de facto authorities," Iravani said." These include the establishment of an inclusive government, safeguarding the rights of all ethnic groups, combating terrorist groups, preventing illegal immigration, and addressing drug production and trafficking. These concerns, to some extent accommodated in the independent assessment (S/2023/856), which underscores positive elements and recommends coherent engagement with de facto authorities," the Iranian envoy said."An inclusive government in Afghanistan can help tackle many problems, like stopping conflicts and reducing the number of Afghan refugees moving to neighboring countries. It sets a foundation for stability and security in Afghanistan and helps protect human rights, especially those of women. For Iran, a crucial sign of an inclusive government is improving the lives of Afghan people and bringing back refugees, which sadly has gotten worse in the last two years, causing us significant hardship," he underlined. "Challenges like terrorism, drug trafficking, and border control deficiencies continue and threaten the stability of Afghanistan and its neighbors," he noted, adding, "The threat of terrorist groups is causing concern to the neighbors. Regrettably, de facto authorities have yet to implement their obligations to combat terrorism.""Iran as an immediate neighbor still faces challenges with illegal immigration. The migration of millions of Afghans to Iran has brought a burden to our country under sanctions. Unfortunately, the international community and individual countries have shown little sensitivity to this issue, the envoy stated."Furthermore, Iran has been denied access to even the most basic border monitoring equipment under the pretext of sanctions. This underscores the differing priorities and concerns of neighboring countries and the global community regarding Afghanistan," he stated.





TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran's permanent ambassador to the United Nations Amir Saeid Iravani warned against Israel's "military adventurism" in the region, asserting Tehran's right to respond to threats and attacks from the regime.In a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the current president of the UN Security Council, Yamazaki Kazuyuki, Iran's UN envoy rejected Israeli allegations and threats."While strongly warning against any military adventurism or malicious activities by the Israeli regime in the region, the Islamic Republic of Iran reserves its legitimate and inherent right, in accordance with international law and the United Nations Charter, to take all necessary measures to respond to any threat or attack originating from the Israeli regime against its national security, interest, and its people," the ambassador wrote. The letter was in response to an earlier communication from Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz to the UN, claiming that Iran has increased weapons deliveries to the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement."The accusations in the letter are entirely baseless and are categorically rejected. This letter represents yet another cynical attempt by the Israeli regime to deflect the attention of the international community from the ongoing egregious atrocities and acts of genocide committed by this apartheid regime against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip," the Iranian ambassador stated."It is also a misleading effort aimed at covering up and legitimizing Israel's aggression against Lebanon and its continual breaches of international law, the United Nations Charter, and UNSC Resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006) by leveling unfounded allegations against Iran," he added.

#### DOMESTIC



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**Deputy FM Calls for Stopping Israeli Genocide in Gaza** TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs, Ali Bagheri Kani, has called for an end to the crimes committed by the Zionist regime in Gaza.In a Farsi post on the social media platform X, Bagheri Kani mentioned that he had a meeting with Minister of State in the Qatari Foreign Ministry, Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi, during which they discussed the latest inexplicable situation in Gaza. Bagheri Kani expressed gratitude to the Qatari side for their efforts to halt the genocide in Gaza. He asked which court has sentenced Gazan women and children, who are victims of Zionists' atrocities and American weapons, to such punishment. He emphasized that Gaza is not merely a workshop for policy and diplomacy for the self-styled advocates of human rights in the West, but it is a place where innocent and helpless human beings are being slaughtered. Stopping genocide is a fundamental human obligation, and waiting for the criminal's consent should not be an option, he added.

#### Iran Refutes Kuwait's Stance on Arash Field, **Trio Islands**



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The Iranian Foreign Ministry's spokesperson dismissed the "interfering" opinions of Kuwait about Iran's three islands in the Persian Gulf and about the Arash oil and gas field, reminding the Arab state that one-sided claims would not entitle it to any right.In a statement, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Nasser Kanaani brushed aside the communiqué issued at the conclusion of the Kuwaiti emir's visit to the United Arab Emirates regarding the three Iranian islands of the Lesser Tunb, the Greater Tunb and Abu Musa as well as Kuwait's claim to the Arash gas field.Kanaani rejected the interfering clauses of the Kuwaiti emir's statement, saying Iran has stressed times and again that the three islands -the Lesser Tunb, the Greater Tunb and Abu Musa- are integral and eternal parts of the Iranian soil.He added that referring to the islands in the statement or repeated statements at other meetings have no political and legal value and are considered interference in Iran's internal affairs, the Foreign Ministry's website reported. The Islamic Republic of Iran never regards its territorial integrity as negotiable, the spokesman underlined.As for the repetition of Kuwait's claim on the Arash field in that statement, Kanaani noted, "We have said many times that making unilateral claims in such statements does not create any rights for the claimant."He pointed to the previous talks between Iran and Kuwait, saying technical and legal negotiations are the best and most appropriate way to deal with the issue.Based on its historical rights and records of bilateral negotiations with Kuwait, Iran is ready to continue talks with the Kuwaiti government over a framework that would entail respect for mutual interests, he added



# First Fully Iranian Developed Oil Fields

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi inaugurated the Sephar and Jofeir oil fields on Friday, marking a significant milestone in the country's oil industry. These fields, located in Khuzestan province and the western Karun region, are notable for their fully Iranian development, with all studies, engineering, and implementation conducted by Iranian experts. The inauguration ceremony, part of Raisi's visit to Khuzestan province, showcased the importance of the Sephar and Jofeir oil fields, which are now contributing over 50,000 barrels per day to Iran's oil production. Managed by Pasargad Energy Development Company, the development of these fields under an IPC contract signifies a crucial step in Iran's exploration and production endeavors. The project has already achieved stable production, reaching a capacity of approximately 55,000 barrels per day. Mohsen Khojastehmehr, the Head of the National Iranian Oil Company, emphasized the project's national significance, highlighting a \$2.8 billion contract aimed at exporting 50,000 barrels per day of light crude oil.Despite challenges posed by the high pressure of the reservoir, the project prioritized domestic construction, utilizing specialized equipment to meet stringent operational requirements. This included the installation of a 51-kilometer oil flow pipeline and the construction of access roads spanning over 32 kilometers.Expressing

gratitude to the teams involved, Khojastehmehr underscored the project's role in promoting domestic production and technological advancement. According to a contract signed in March 2018 between the National Iranian Oil Company and Pasargad Energy Development Company, the project's first phase production rate must be 36,000 barrels per day, rising to 110,000 barrels per day by the end of the second. The goal is to extract 540 million barrels of oil from this field over a 20-year period, with an investment of more than \$2.8 billion. This 20-year contract, which aims to produce oil from one of Iran's deepest and most pressured oil layers, is the first of the new oil contracts to result in oil production.Meanwhile during the official opening ceremony of multiple projects by the Ministry of Energy and Oil of Khuzestan Province, President Raisi commended the workers, technicians, and engineers for their dedication. Despite the obstacles posed by Iran's enemies, Raisi emphasized that the country's growth was achieved through the unwavering determination of its people. The president highlighted that Iran's success in implementing a resistance economy was a direct result of the efforts made by its citizens. He noted that despite opposition from external forces, Iran managed to increase production and employment rates.

#### Iran After Sustainable Peace in Caucasus



TEHRAN - The Iranian defense minister reaffirmed Tehran's support for sustainable peace in the Caucasus and direct interaction between Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan.In a meeting with his Armenian counterpart in Tehran, Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani reiterated Iran's support for comprehensive and sustainable peace in the region, as in the Caucasus. Expressing Iran's support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the regional states and its opposition to any change in the internationally-recognized boundaries, Ashtiani said, "We back direct negotiations, sustainable peace, and direct contact between the two neighbors -the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia- and believe that it would prepare the ground for progress and development of the Caucasus region."He underlined that the "architecture of regional security" must be shaped by the regional countries alone. Any quest for security from outside the region will backfire, turn the region into a battlefield between the powers, and disrupt regional security and stability, the Iranian defense minister warned. "We should not allow the Caucasus region to become a ground for rivalry between the others, otherwise the stability and security of every single country will be jeopardized," Ashtiani said.For his part, Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan said his country shares views with Iran about the regional stability.Stressing the need for closer cooperation considering the regional developments, Papikyan said Yerevan agrees with Iran's stance on the improvement of relations between Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan.In a telephone conversation with Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan in September 2023, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi assured Armenia of Iran's opposition to any alteration to the regional boundaries, saying Iran is prepared to play "an effective role" as a "powerful neighbor" to prevent regional clashes or geopolitical changes.

## Iran Urges Islamic States to Turn **Stance Into Effect**

## Iran, Uzbekistan Call for Broadening Economic Ties

Mohammad-Ali Eskandari and Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Chamber of Uzbekistan and Chairman of the Iran-Uzbekistan Friendship Group Alisher Kadyrov urged bolstering economic ties between the two countries.Eskandari met and held talks with Kadyrov in Uzbekistan on Friday. Elaborating on the latest status of ties between Iran and Uzbekistan in the fields of politics, economics, and culture, Eskandari said that the existing common ground on cultural issues and good relations between the authorities of both countries, along with signed documents and memoranda of understanding (MoUs), have paved the way for a robust and unified partnership to take advantage of existing opportunities to achieve mutual benefits.

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian ambassador to Uzbekistan He added that the roadmap laid out and signed by the foreign ministers of Iran and Uzbekistan is under serious consideration, expressing hope that there would be a significant expansion of economic and trade exchanges between the two countries in the upcoming year.Kadyrov, on his part, referred to successful trips of members of parliament and the presidents of both countries, emphasizing the need for the implementation of signed documents. He mentioned that despite the brotherly relations between the two countries and their potential for collaboration, the current \$500 million volume of economic relations is insufficient. He highlighted the significance of historical, cultural, and religious ties in strengthening the relations between Iran and Uzbekistan.

#### Iran Indigenizes 80% of **Oil Equipment**

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Iran's deputy oil minister said the country has succeeded in manufacturing 80 percent of oil parts and equipment domestically despite being under sanctions. The Iranian Oil Ministry has focused on taking advantage of the expertise and technical know-how of knowledgebased companies, Jalil Salari said, emphasizing that more than 80 percent of the oil equipment is manufactured in the country.Speaking in a meeting held in Abadan on reviewing the quality plans of oil byproducts, he said that the oil ministry took effective steps in the past two years for the domestic production of oil parts and equipment. One of these measures is related to the launch of extraterritorial refining plans overseas and the export of technical and engineering services, he stated.So far, three- to four technical know-hows have fully been localized in refining companies in the field of producing catalysts, compressor manufacturing and streamlining the quality of fuel oil, the chief executive of the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) said. He put the oil production capacity at Abadan Oil Refinery (AOR) at 500,000 barrels of oil per day (bpd), Mehr news agency reported. With the increase in the capacity and quality of oil byproducts, the country's gasoline production capacity has reached 129 million liters/day, Salari highlighted.He went on to say that the export of oil and oil byproducts in first the nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21 to December 22, 2023) registered a 4.5 percent growth compared to the same period last year.





TEHRAN (IRNA) - An Iranian judiciary official has urged Islamic states to turn their verbal condemnations into practical acts against the Israeli regime.Iranian Judiciary's Deputy Chief for International Affairs and Secretary General of the Islamic Republic of Iran's High Council for Human Rights Kazem Gharibabadi made the remark in the international congress on the occupation of Palestine from the point of view of international law and violation of humanitarian rights in Gaza. We witnessed good stances taken by Islamic states, but there has not been any practical effort to stop the genocidal war in the besieged strip, he said. The United Nations Human Rights Council, which issues resolutions against independent countries, has not yet convened an urgent meeting on the situation in Palestine, he said, noting that despite inaction by international entities, public opinion throughout the globe showed support for the oppressed Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.Gharibabadi also underlined that inaction by those states who claim to be flag-bearers of human rights as well as the international community shows a double standard at the international level.

#### INTERNATIONA

#### Trump Wins North Dakota Caucus Ahead of Super Tuesday Vote

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Donald Trump won the North Dakota Republican presidential caucuses on Monday, according to a projection by Edison Research, ahead of a slew of contests known as Super Tuesday when he is expected to further strengthen his grip on the party's presidential nomination. In North Dakota former President Trump easily defeated Nikki Haley, his last remaining rival for the Republican presidential nomination. Trump is expected to dominate Tuesday's elections, when 15 states and one U.S. territory vote in the biggest day in the primary calendar.Former U.N. ambassador Haley won her first nominating contest on Sunday, the Washington, D.C., primary, but has no clear path to the nomination in a primary season where Trump has won the first eight contests and is expected to carry almost all the remaining races going forward. Trump is focused on a likely general election rematch in November with U.S. President Joe Biden, a Democrat.

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#### **Ukraine Conflict Could** Escalate Into Full-Scale War in Europe



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - A senior Russian military officer has warned that the conflict in Ukraine could escalate into a full-scale war in Europe and said the probability of Moscow's forces becoming involved in a new conflict is increasing "significantly,"Colonel-General Vladimir Zarudnitsky, head of the Russian army's Military Academy of the General Staff, made the comments in an article for "Military Thought", a defence ministry publication, the state RIA news agency reported on Thursday."The possibility of an escalation of the conflict in Ukraine - from the expansion of participants in 'proxy forces' used for military confrontation with Russia to a large-scale war in Europe - cannot be ruled out," RIA cited him as saying."The main source of military threats to our state is the anti-Russian policy of the United States and its allies, who are conducting a new type of hybrid warfare in order to weaken Russia in every possible way, limit its sovereignty and destroy its territorial integrity," he was quoted as saying."The likelihood of our state being purposefully drawn into new military conflicts is significantly increasing."The war in Ukraine has triggered the deepest crisis in Russia's relations with the West since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and President Vladimir Putin has warned that the West risks provoking a nuclear war if it sends troops to fight in Ukraine.Putin has cast his decision to send tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine in February 2022 as a special military operation designed to secure Russia's own security against an increasingly hostile U.S.backed Ukrainian leadership. Kyiv says it is defending itself against an imperialstyle war of conquest designed to erase its national identity.Zarudnitsky's comments come at a time when the West is scrambling to help Ukraine with more arms and financing after Kyiv's failed counteroffensive last summer and after Russian forces regained the initiative on the battlefield.Zarudnitsky advocated a number of changes in the way Russia organizes its military and security, RIA added, including placing greater emphasis on relying on what he called friendly countries to ensure Russia's own security and consolidating the whole of Russian society around its defense needs

## Armed Gangs Try to Take Control of Haiti's Main Airport After Jailbreak



## Gaza Geasefire Talks Show No Sign of Progress

CAIRO (Dispatches) - Hamas on Thursday left Gaza ceasefire talks in Cairo where there was no sign of progress just days before the start of Ramadan, while the U.S. said the onus was on the Palestinian militant group to strike a deal on Israeli hostages.Israel and Hamas blamed each other for the lack of agreement after four days of talks mediated by Qatar and Egypt about a 40-day ceasefire amid fears violence could escalate during the Muslim fasting month. Egyptian security sources said talks, taking place without an Israeli delegation in Cairo, would resume on Sunday, the expected start of Ramadan.Senior U.S. administration officials said the onus was on Hamas to complete a hostage deal and attributed the delay to what they described as Hamas so far not agreeing to release sick and elderly hostages. A Hamas official told Reuters the United States was in partnership with Israel and that such comments were misleading. Hamas has insisted that a ceasefire deal include a process toward ending the war altogether. Hamas said earlier in a statement the delegation left Cairo to speak to the movement's leaders, "with negotiations and efforts continuing to stop the aggression, return the displaced and bring in relief aid to our people."Senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri told Reuters Israel had been "thwarting" efforts to conclude a ceasefire deal.Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated his intention on Thursday of pressing on with the military campaign in Gaza, launched after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel, in which Israel said 1,200 people were killed and 253 abducted. Israel has previously said its aim is to destroy Hamas and that any ceasefire must be temporary. It has also pressed for a list of hostages still alive and held by Hamas in Gaza."Needless to say, Israel will do whatever it takes to release our hostages... unfortunately, it is Hamas who is the stumbling block right now by not telling us who is alive and who they have in their custody," Israeli government spokesman David Mencer said. The deal presented to Hamas for a ceasefire in Gaza would require it to free some of the hostages it still holds. Palestinian prisoners held in Israel would also

be released. Hamas officials have said a ceasefire must be in place before the hostages are freed, Israeli forces must leave Gaza and all Gazans must be able to return to homes they have fled. Hamas has said it can't provide a list of the hostages who are still alive without a ceasefire as the hostages are scattered across the war zone. News that the Hamas delegation had left Cairo without an accord was met with despair in Gaza, which is in the grip of a deep humanitarian crisis after five months of war."I feel great disappointment and despair, fear too," said Abir, who along with her 12-member family has taken refuge in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, where more than half of the enclave's 2.3 million people are now sheltering.Hamas media said one Palestinian was killed and several wounded on Thursday by Israeli gunfire as people waited for aid trucks at the Al-Nabulsi roundabout in western Gaza City. The Hamas-run Gaza health ministry reported that Israeli fire killed 118 people last week at the same site when desperate civilians swarmed an aid convoy. Israel said most of those killed were trampled or run over.U.S. officials said President Joe Biden would announce that the U.S. military will construct a port on Gaza's Mediterranean coast to receive humanitarian assistance by sea. While it would take weeks to set up, the port will make it possible to bring in the equivalent of hundreds of truckloads of aid, a White House official said. The U.S. Central Command and Royal Jordanian Air Force continued on Thursday with airdrops of food and other aid in the north of the enclave, where UN aid agencies say a large proportion of the population is on the brink of famine.Netanyahu vowed to press on with Israel's offensive, including into Rafah."Whoever tells us not to act in Rafah is telling us to lose the war and that will not happen," he said. Health officials in Gaza said the number of people confirmed killed in Israel's offensive had now passed 30,800. It reported 83 deaths in the past 24 hours and witnesses said the Israeli bombardments continued in Khan Younis. Rafah and areas in central Gaza.







Haiti's main international airport on Monday, exchanging gunfire with police and soldiers in the latest attack on key government sites in an explosion of violence that includes a mass escape from the country's two biggest prisons. The Toussaint Louverture International Airport was closed when the attack occurred, with no planes operating and no passengers on site. Associated Press journalists saw an armored truck on the tarmac shooting at gangs to try and prevent them from entering airport grounds as scores of employees and other workers fled from whizzing bullets. It wasn't immediately clear as of late Monday whether the attack, which was the biggest one in Haiti's history involving the airport, was successful.Last week, the airport was struck briefly by bullets amid ongoing gang attacks, but gangs did not enter the airport nor seize control of it. The attack occurred just hours after authorities in Haiti ordered a nighttime curfew following violence in which armed gang members overran the two biggest prisons and freed thousands of inmates over the weekend."The secretary-general is deeply concerned by the rapidly deteriorating security situation in Port-au-Prince, where armed gangs have intensified their attacks on critical infrastructure over the weekend," said UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric.A 72-hour state of emergency began Sunday night. The government said it would try to track down the escaped inmates, including from a penitentiary were the vast majority were in pre-trial detention, with some accused of slayings, kidnappings and other crimes."The police were ordered to use all legal means at their disposal to enforce the curfew and apprehend all offenders," said a statement from Finance Minister Patrick Boivert, the acting prime minister

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Joe Biden turned his State of the Union speech Thursday night into an animated argument for a second term as he laced into GOP front-runner Donald Trump for espousing "resentment, revenge and retribution" and jeopardising freedom at home and abroad. Over and over, Biden delivered broadsides at "my predecessor" without mentioning Trump by name, raising his voice as he tried to quell voter concerns about his age and job performance while sharpening the contrast with his all-but-certain November rival. It was a far different - and feistier tone - from Biden than in his previous State of the Union address, and it was designed to banish doubts about whether the 81-yearold is still up to the job he bids for a second term. Biden goaded Republicans over their policies, invited call-and-response banter with fellow Democrats and seemed to revel in the fight."Freedom and democracy are under attack both at home and overseas at the very same time," Biden said as he appealed for Congress to support Ukraine's efforts to defend itself against Russia's invasion. "History is watching."Biden quickly pivoted to the threats at home, referencing the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the Capitol by Trump supporters seeking to overturn the 2020 election, and calling for the threat to democracy to be countered."My predecessor - and some of you here - seek to bury the truth about Jan. 6 - I will not do that," Biden said. "This is a moment to speak the truth and to bury the lies. Here's a simple truth. You can't love your country only when you win.""My lifetime has taught me to embrace freedom and democracy," Biden said. "A future based on the core values that have defined America: honesty, decency, dignity, equality. To respect everyone. To give everyone a fair shot. To give hate no safe harbor. Now some other people my age see a different story: an American story of resentment, revenge, and retribution. That's not me."The president showcased his accomplishments on infrastructure and manufacturing, and pushed Congress to approve more aid to Ukraine, tougher migration rules and lower drug prices. He also sought to remind voters of the situation he inherited when he entered office in 2021 amid a raging pandemic and a contracting economy. The 81-year-old president was being closely watched not just for his message, but for whether he could deliver it with vigor and command. Taking a victory lap in selling his legislative accomplishments, such as one that bolsters manufacturing of computer chips nationwide, Biden veered from his prepared script to take a dig at Republicans who voted against such policies but are eager to take credit for them back home.

Macky Sall's term is set to end. The protesters gathered at a sandy lot in a working-class neighbourhood for the protest, called by the "Resistance Front", an alliance of opposition parties and campaigning groups. Many brandished Senegalese flags and portraits of the opposition leader Ousmane Sonko, jailed since July for "incitement to insurrection" and barred from running in the presidential vote. Sonko has endorsed Bassirou Diomaye Faye, who is also in jail but who was cleared to be on the ballot. The crowd shouted "Macky Sall dictator" and "Free Sonko", singing a song in his praise. Several speakers representing some of the election candidates addressed the crowd, including former prime minister Aminata Toure, a member of the "Bassirou President" coalition."What we are asking President Macky Sall is to organise these elections before April 2 and to give the keys to the palace to his successor face to face, so that we can begin to rebuild our country," he said. The West African country was thrown into a political crisis on February 3 when Sall postponed the presidential election planned for February 25. His announcement denounced as a "constitutional coup d'etat" by the opposition, sparked huge protests that resulted in four deaths. On February 15, the constitutional council overruled Sall, and ever since the country has been waiting for a new date."We want an election before the 2nd (of April) with the 19 candidates retained by the Constitutional Council and for Senegalese democracy to continue to shine," said one demonstrator, 27-year-old trader Assane Camara.

### **Sweden Joins NATO as War in Ukraine Prompts Security Rethink**

STOCKHOLM (Dispatches) - Sweden joined NATO in Washington on Thursday, two years after Russia's invasion of Ukraine forced it to rethink its national security policy and conclude that support for the alliance was the Scandinavian nation's best guarantee of safety. Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson handed over the final documentation to the U.S. government on Thursday, the last step in a drawn-out process to secure the backing of all members to join the military alliance."Good things come to those who wait," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said as he received Sweden's accession documents from Kristersson. Blinken said "everything changed" after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, citing polls showing a massive shift in Swedish public opinion on joining NATO."Swedes realized something very profound: that if Putin was willing to try to erase one neighbor from the map, then he might well not stop there."For NATO, the accessions of Sweden and Finland - which shares a 1,340-km (830-mile) border with Russia - are the most significant additions in decades. It is also a blow for Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has sought prevent any further strengthening of the alliance.Sweden will benefit from the alliance's common defence guarantee under which an attack on one member is regarded as an attack on all."Sweden is a safer country today than we were yesterday. We have allies. We have backing," Kristersson said in an address to the Swedish nation from Washington. "We have taken out an insurance in the Western defence alliance."Hakan Yucel, 54, an IT worker in the Swedish capital, said



of the accession: "Before, we were outside and felt a little bit alone. ... I think that the threat from Russia, it's going to be much less now."U.S. President Joe Biden, in a statement, said the addition of Sweden made NATO "more united, determined, and dynamic than ever," adding that the accession of Sweden and Finland to the alliance meant the addition of "two highly capable militaries." Sweden adds cutting-edge submarines and a sizable fleet of domestically produced Gripen fighter jets to NATO forces, and is a crucial link between the Atlantic and Baltic."Sweden's accession makes NATO stronger, Sweden safer and the whole Alliance more secure," NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said in a statement. Russia has threatened to take unspecified "political and military-technical counter-measures" in response to Sweden's move."Joining NATO is really like buying insurance, at least as long as the United States is actually willing to be the insurance provider," said Barbara Kunz, a researcher at defence think tank SIPRI. While Stockholm has been drawing ever closer to NATO over the last two decades, membership marks a clear break with the past, when for more than 200 years, Sweden avoided military alliances and adopted a neutral stance in times of war. After World War Two, it built an international reputation as a champion of human rights, and since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, successive governments have pared back military spending.



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SPORTS

#### SATURDAY MARCH 09, 2024

#### Rublev Calls on ATP to Review Rule That Led to Default in Dubai



LONDON (Dispatches) - Andrey Rublev has called on the ATP Tour to change the rule that led to him being defaulted at the Dubai Tennis Championships last week. Rublev was defaulted by the chair umpire after a Russian-speaking official said he had used an obscenity while yelling at a line judge over a call during his semi-final with Kazakhstan's Alexander Bublik on Friday.Rublev denied the accusation and urged the officials to review video of the incident, a request which was rejected. Bublik was ahead 6-7(4) 7-6(5) 6-5 when he was awarded the win but world number five Rublev later successfully appealed the decision and will retain the ranking points and prize money he earned, barring a fine of \$36,400 for a code violation. In a post on Instagram, Rublev thanked the appeals committee but said the rules needed a rethink."I hope that in the future, the ATP will take a closer look at this rule and make changes to it, so that an official can't force a match outcome without having clear evidence and not letting the player have a video review," Rublev said. Reuters has contacted the ATP for comment."While I'm disappointed that I wasn't able to finish my semi-final in Dubai, I am grateful for all the support I had from you the last two days, I received a lot of messages," Rublev added.

## Arsenal Hit Sheff Utd for Six to Set Record Scoring Streak

LONDON (Dispatches) - Arsenal entered the record books as a 6-0 demolition of Sheffield United on Monday kept the Gunners on Liverpool and Manchester City's tails in the Premier League title race. Martin Odegaard, Jayden Bogle's own goal, Gabriel Martinelli, Kai Havertz and Declan Rice put the visitors 5-0 at half-time before Ben White rounded off the scoring. Mikel Arteta's men become the first side to ever win three consecutive away games in the English top-flight by five or more goals."When we had the ball, we were in a good mood today," said Arsenal captain Odegaard."Created a lot, scored the goals early on - a nice performance."By contrast, Sheffield United also set a new record by becoming the first English top-flight side to concede five or more goals in three straight home matches." They were in a different league, a different planet to us. We couldn't lay a glove on them."Arsenal's stunning streak of 31 goals in seven consecutive Premier League wins since a winter break has at least built up a big advantage over their rivals should the title be decided on goal difference. They remain in third, just two points behind leaders Liverpool and one adrift of defending champions City. However, Arteta's men can go top with victory at home to Brentford on Saturday ahead of Sunday's showdown between Liverpool and City at Anfield."I love the way the team played. The quality and the aggression we showed from the beginning," said Arteta."We have to continue to do what we are doing."There appeared little doubt over the outcome from the first whistle at Bramall Lane.Bukayo Saka rattled the crossbar after just two minutes and what little resistence there was from the Blades ended just five minutes in.Rice's cross picked out the unmarked Odegaard to turn into the bottom corner.Saka's five-game scoring streak in the league came to an end but he did bag two assists before going off at half-time due to illness. The England international turned former Arsenal defender Austin Trusty with ease as he got to the by-line and his driven cross flicked off Bogle into his own net.Martinelli's deflected effort quickly made it 3-0 and forced Wilder to make a change after just 17 minutes.



Inter Beat Genoa to Take Further Step Towards Serie A Title



## Grizzzlies Edge Nets, Snap Five-Game Skid

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Luke Kennard scored a season-high 25 points as the Memphis Grizzlies held on in the final minute and snapped a five-game losing streak with a 106-102 victory over the Brooklyn Nets in New York. A week after absorbing a 111-86 loss to the Nets in Memphis, the Grizzlies won for just the third time in 17 games thanks to Kennard. He was one of six Memphis players who scored in double figures. Kennard made a season-high six 3-pointers, including one from top of the key that gave the Grizzlies a 99-90 lead with three minutes left. He shot 8-for-11 overall, 6-for-9 from long range, handed out seven assists and scored at least 20 points for the first time this season. After Kennard's final triple, the Nets pulled within 103-99 on two free throws by Cameron Johnson with 30 seconds left. Following a five-second violation by Memphis, Dennis Schroder split two free throws with 20.9 seconds to go to make it 103-100. Two free throws by Mikal Bridges got Brooklyn within 105-102 with 6.7 seconds left before Kennard hit a free throw on the next possession to ice it. Jake LaRavia added 14 points and 10 rebounds for the Grizzlies, who dominated the glass throughout the game and finished with a commanding 50-33 rebounding edge. Lamar Stevens added 13 points, Santi Aldama finished with 12, Vince Williams Jr. contributed 11 and Trey Jemison had 10 for the Grizzlies, who shot 46.3 percent overall.Nic Claxton scored 21 points, but Brooklyn fell 2 1/2 games behind the 10th-place Atlanta Hawks for the Eastern Conference's final play-in spot. Johnson added 18 points as the Nets dropped to 3-4 under

interim coach Kevin Ollie, shot 44.3 percent from the field and were a dreadful 17-for-30 (56.7 percent) at the foul line.Bridges was held to 14 points and shot 4-for-14 after getting 38 points in Brooklyn's win over Atlanta on Saturday. Schroder and Lonnie Walker IV added 13 points apiece for the Nets, who were denied their first three-game winning streak since early December. After the Grizzlies took a 53-52 lead into halftime following a basket by Stevens with 15.6 seconds remaining in the second quarter, Kennard's triple put the Grizzlies ahead 71-63 with 5:53 remaining in the third quarter. Claxton's baseline dunk snapped a 75-75 tie with 2:07 left in the third, but a 12-footer by Stevens with 73 seconds left put Memphis ahead 80-77 entering the fourth.Meanwhile Rudy Gobert scored 25 points and grabbed 16 rebounds for the Minnesota Timberwolves, who held on for a 119-114 win over the Portland Trail Blazers in Minneapolis. Mike Conley added 19 points and seven assists for Minnesota, which snapped a two-game skid. Karl-Anthony Towns finished with 14 points. Anfernee Simons led Portland with 34 points and 14 assists. Rookie Duop Reath tallied a career-high 26 points on 10-for-14 shooting for the Trail Blazers, who lost for the first time in three games.Portland played without Jerami Grant (quadriceps), Deandre Ayton (hand) and Matisse Thybulle (hip). Timberwolves top scorer Anthony Edwards finished with 13 points on 4-of-10 shooting. Edwards left the game because of a right elbow contusion but later returned to the court.

### Djokovic, Nadal Return at Indian Wells

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic returns to Indian Wells for the first time in five years seeking a recordsixth title while Coco Gauff looks to become the first U.S. woman to win the tournament since Serena Williams in 2001 when maindraw action begins on Wednesday. The Serbian winner of 24 Grand Slam titles hasn't competed at the BNP Paribas Open since 2019 due to U.S. travel restrictions related to COVID-19. But he has looked relaxed in Southern California the past few weeks, catching Lakers and LA Galaxy games and training at UCLA.Feeling no pressure could make Djokovic even more lethal, said Paul Annacone, who coached Roger Federer and Pete Sampras and is a commentator with Tennis Channel."With some people you can say relaxation can lead to complacency but not for him, not with his personality and his desire to compete," Annacone told Reuters."Relaxation for Novak should lead to more joy, which should mean more fun. And joy and fun with that great talent tends to equal winning." Also back after missing last year's event is Nadal, who has 22 Grand Slam titles and three Indian Wells crowns. The Spaniard has suggested that his career might be coming to a close and said he just wants to negotiate the desert event "unscathed" so he stays healthy for the clay court season.Nadal returned to competition in Brisbane in January after almost a year sidelined

with a hip flexor injury, but had to miss the Australian Open with another muscle tear. Meanwhile the next generation continues to make inroads.A successful title defense for Carlos Alcaraz would provide a huge boost in confidence for Nadal's 20-year-old compatriot."To go back-to-back would be spectacular," Annacone said.A title at the event sometimes nicknamed the "fifth Slam" would be confirmation that 22-year-old Italian Jannik Sinner's maiden Grand Slam title in Australia in January was no fluke. Russian hard-court specialist Daniil Medvedev, dangerous Dane Holger Rune and American 2022 champion Taylor Fritz are among the other men who should prove tough to beatOn the women's side, defending champion Elena Rybakina comes to the desert full of confidence after winning Abu Dhabi last month."It's going to be playing quick through the air, the courts tend to be gritty, which will work with her great serve and power tennis," Annacone said. There was something of a Big Three developing in the women's game with Rybakina, world number one and 2022 champion Iga Swiatek and reigning two-time Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka separating themselves from the pack.But U.S. Open champion Gauff and world number five Jessica Pegula would love to break up the party with a title to end a long drought for American women at Indian Wells.



MILAN (Dispatches) - Serie A leaders Inter Milan beat Genoa 2-1 to move 15 points clear of second-placed Juventus as they search for a 20th league title. Youngster Kristjan Asllani and veteran Alexis Sanchez scored within six minutes of each other in the San Siro as Inter move closer to going one better than local rivals AC Milan and their Scudetto tally, which would get them a second star above their club badge.Juve trail Inter with 11 games of the season remaining after losing 2-1 at Napoli on Sunday."15 points is a significant advantage," Asllani said."But we can't get carried away, there are still a lot of games to play and we have to stay focused," the 21-year-old added.Simone Inzaghi's Inter were looking to stretch their winning run in all competitions to 12 games, and last lost at home in the league in September.In an open first half an hour, Inter midfielder Nicolo Barella and Genoa attacker Mateo Retegui threatened to break the deadlock.After 31 minutes, Asllani did one better than them following a smooth Alexis assist.Albania's Asllani, who turns 22 on Saturday, fired home into the top corner, claiming his first senior goal since June 2022, which came against Inter when he was still at Empoli, to put the hosts 1-0 up."To be honest, I had waited a long time for this goal and hoped it would come at San Siro," Asllani said."It's a special emotion scoring here," he said.Inzaghi's outfit doubled their advantage six minutes later from a penalty checked by VAR, as Alexis converted Inter's 11th spot kick of the season, following Asllani in opening his account for the campaign.Inter kept up the pressure on Genoa after the break with attacker Henrikh Mkhitaryan troubling visiting goalkeeper Josep Martinez after 52 minutes before the away side surprisingly cut the deficit.Mexico centre-back Johan Vasquez volleyed low past Yannis Sommer two minutes later, as Inter conceded just their 13th goal in 27 league games this season. Alberto Gilardino's side thought they had equalised after 66 minutes but Portuguese striker Vitinha was denied his first goal for the club after drifting offside.Inter held on for three points, as France attacker Marcus Thuram came off the bench for Sanchez after two weeks out with injury, despite English defender Djed Spence's late chance for the visitors.Next up for Inter is Saturday's trip to fourth-placed Bologna before heading to Atletico Madrid for March 13's Champions League last 16 second leg with a 1-0 lead.