

The World Bank, in Its Latest Report on the Economic Situation in Iran, Has Examined the Performance of the Administration of Late President Ebrahim Raisi, Indicating Its Successful Track Record in the Economic Sphere

IRAN NEWS

Some 50 High-Ranking Delegations, Including Heads of State and About 20 Others at Ministerial Level, Attended the Funeral of the Late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on Wednesday

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2 DOMESTIC

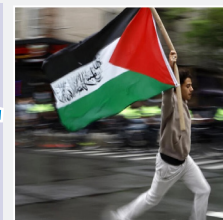


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Leader Stresses Expansion of Iran-Armenia Relations



TEHRAN - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says that the expansion of the relations between Tehran and Yerevan will continue. Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei made the remarks in a meeting with Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan on Wednesday. The meeting took place after a glorious farewell ceremony was held for the helicopter crash martyrs in the capital city of Tehran. Thanking the Armenian officials for expressing sympathy with Iran over the helicopter crash incident, the Leader stressed that the Islamic Republic of Iran's policy of expanding relations with Armenia will continue under the guidance of the current acting president of Iran Mohammad Mokhber. Ayatollah Khamenei also told the Armenian Prime Minister that the issues related to the borders of Armenia were important for the late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi. The issues related to the Armenia border should be taken care of, he said, adding, "We must be able to secure our interests on our own." Pashinyan, for his part, said that Armenia was shocked after hearing the news of the death of the President and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran and his companions. He added that he is sure that under the Leader's guidance and leadership, there will be no disturbance in Iran's affairs.

Earlier on Wednesday, Ayatollah Khamenei met prime minister of Iraq. In the meeting, Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani expressed his condolences on behalf of the government and nation of Iraq.

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



Millions of Mourners Gather for Martyr Raisi Funeral

TEHRAN - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei led prayers over the bodies of President Ebrahim Raisi and his companions in Tehran as millions of people gathered to hold funeral procession. The martyred lost their lives in a tragic helicopter crash in the northwestern province of East Azarbaijan. The mass public received the coffins of the eight victims of the crash at the University of Tehran on Wednesday morning before Ayatollah Khamenei led prayers on the bodies. World leaders, presidents, ambassadors and international personalities as well as high-profile figures of the Axis of Resistance, including Ismail Haniyeh, the political bureau chief of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas, and Sheikh Naim Qassem, deputy secretary-general of Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement, attended the ceremony. The millions-strong procession started from the University of Tehran to the iconic Azadi Square. Iranians attended a ceremony at Imam Khomeini Mosalla of Tehran as part of mourning ceremonies in the late hours of Tuesday to pay homage to President Raisi and his late associates. The northwestern Iranian city of Tabriz and the holy city of Qom were on Tuesday

morning and evening the scene of millions of people who had gathered to pay tribute to Raisi. The Leader said on Monday that he received the bitter news of the martyrdom of the popular, competent and hardworking president and his companions with great sorrow. Ayatollah Khamenei noted that the tragic incident happened when Raisi and his team were making an attempt to serve the Iranian people. The entire period of responsibility of this noble and devoted man, both during the short term of the presidency and before that, was completely spent in non-stop efforts to serve the people, the country and Islam, Ayatollah Khamenei emphasized. "Dear Raisi did not know fatigue," the Leader said, adding that the Iranian nation lost a sincere and valuable servant in this tragic incident. Speaking at the ceremony in Tabriz, Iranian Interior Minister Ahmad Vahdidi said that Iran is mourning the loss of a beloved, popular, and humble president. The Iranian nation is also saddened by the death of a foreign minister who left active diplomacy in the critical moments of the resistance as his legacy, Vahdidi added. He also praised the constructive efforts of the late governor of East Azarbaijan province and the province's Friday prayers leader.

SNSC Addresses Iranians After Martyrdom of President



TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Secretariat of Iran's Supreme National Security Council has issued a notice, which not only connotes the martyrdom of Ebrahim Raisi, the country's president and the head of the Supreme National Security Council, but presents some points addressing to the nation. The notice issued on Tuesday night states: "The Secretariat of the Supreme National Security Council expresses condolences to Imam Zaman (AS), his eminent representative Imam Ayatollah Khamenei and the Iranian nation for the bitter and painful martyrdom of the servant of Imam Reza (AS), Ayatollah Raisi, the honorable President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the head of the Supreme National Security Council and his companions in the accident of the helicopter crash." "Martyred Ayatollah Raisi, with his honest and selfless service from the beginning of the Islamic Revolution to the last moment of his life, proved that serving the people and accompanying them is the most important and noble asset to expand and deepen national security", the statement mentioned. The notice from the Secretariat of the Supreme National Security Council also draws the people's attention to the following points: 1- All national security personnel will continue their tireless efforts in accordance with the model of martyred president for sincere, revolutionary, diligent and honest as well as people-oriented national security.

Azeri PM, FM to attend pres. Raisi funeral in Tehran



TEHRAN, May 22 (MNA) - Ali Hidayat oglu Asadov, the Prime Minister of Azerbaijan and the Azeri Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov will attend the funeral ceremony of president Raisi and Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on Wednesday. More than 40 high-ranking foreign delegations will participate in the funeral ceremony on Wednesday to commemorate the martyrdom of the Iranian President and Foreign Minister in Tehran. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian have martyred in a helicopter crash in the northwestern province of East Azarbaijan. The helicopter carrying President Raisi and his accompanying delegation crashed on Sunday in the Dizmar forest, nestled between the cities of Varzaqan and Jolfa in East Azarbaijan Province. It was transporting Raisi, Amir-Abdollahian, East Azarbaijan Governor Malek Rahmati, Friday Prayers leader of the city of Tabriz Seyyed Mohammad Ali Al-e Hashem, and a member of the president's bodyguard team Mahdi Mousavi. The helicopter's pilot, co-pilot, and crew were also among others on board the chopper. President Raisi and his accompanying delegation were returning from a ceremony to inaugurate a dam on the Aras River with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev. Following the tragic martyrdom of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei declared a 5-day mourning in Iran.

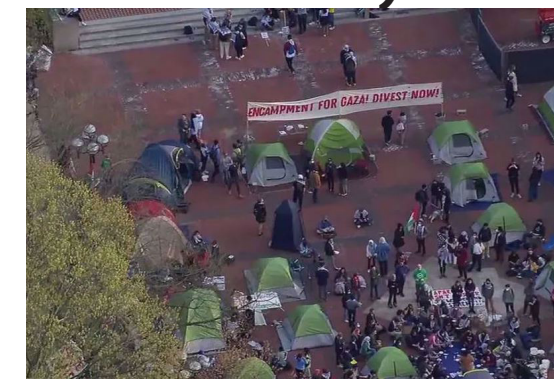
Iran Caretaker FM Avows Commitment to Amir-Abdollahian's Policies

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The caretaker foreign minister of Iran pledged his loyalty towards the pure principles of the Islamic Revolution advocated by late Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, whom he praised for backing the resistance axis and promoting relations with the Muslims and neighbors. In a message released on Tuesday night, caretaker foreign minister, Ali Baqeri Kani, paid tribute to Foreign Minister Amir-Abdollahian who died in a helicopter crash along with President Ebrahim Raisi on May 19. Here is the full text of his message, published in the Foreign Ministry's website: My colleagues and I in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs offer condolences to the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Imam Khamenei (may his life be long), the honorable families, and the noble nation of Iran, over the martyrdom of Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi, the beloved and valiant president, Mr. Amir-Abdollahian, the honorable and

revolutionary Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ayatollah Al-e-Hashem, the honorable Friday Prayers Leader of Tabriz, and their companions, on the path of rendering another service to the people as well as deepening peace and friendship among the nations of the region. Ayatollah Raisi and Mr. Amir-Abdollahian had the honor of serving the sacred Establishment of the Islamic Republic and the noble nation of Iran in their blessed lives, and their departure while on duty is the best divine reward for the chosen warriors of God. During my collaboration with Ayatollah Raisi, a servant of Imam Reza, in both his positions as the Chief of the Judiciary and the head of the executive branch of power, and during my cooperation with Mr. Amir-Abdollahian, I have closely witnessed their lasting and impactful services to the sacred Islamic Establishment and their deep love for the honorable nation of Islamic Iran.



U.S. Police Dismantle Pro-Palestine Encampment at Michigan University



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - U.S. police in Ann Arbor have dismantled an encampment at the University of Michigan, removing students from a pro-Palestine protest set up to support the people of the besieged Gaza Strip. Videos posted online by local TV stations on Tuesday showed police moving people away from the camp on the Diag, a common site for campus protests. The footage showed police using what appeared to be an irritant to spray people, who were forced to retreat. At least four people were arrested, which caused protesters to shift to the Washtenaw County jail where they marched outside in support of their allies. After the camp was cleared, nearby buildings including the undergraduate and graduate libraries were closed and police turned away students who showed up to study. Protesters have demanded that the school's endowment stop investing in companies with ties to Israel. The encampment had been set up after six months of student protests for the University's divestment, which began with a sit-in at the President's house in October. Since then, students have continuously organized protests across campus demanding the University divest from Israel's military campaign in Gaza. The university claims it has no direct investments and less than \$15mn placed with funds that might include companies in Israel. Students and others have set up similar tent encampments on campuses around the country, including at Yale University and at Columbia University, to press college boards to divest Israeli-linked funding. Tensions over Israel's war on Gaza have been high on U.S. campuses since the fall, but demonstrations spread quickly following an April 18 police crackdown on an encampment at Columbia University. Arrests at campuses have surpassed the 3,000 mark nationwide with many students facing suspension, among other disciplinary actions, for their participation in the pro-Palestinian campus protests.

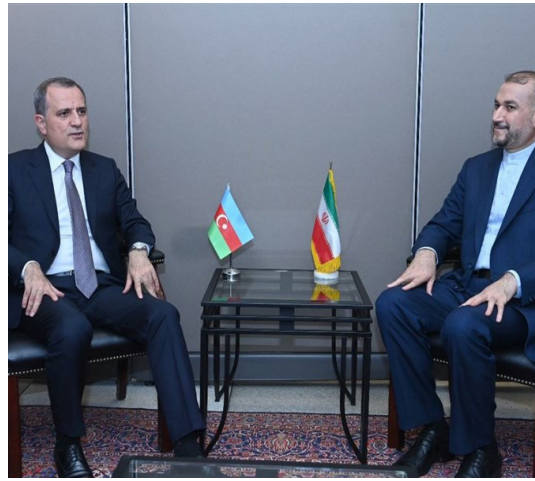
IRAN NEWS



Iran Armed Forces Issues Statement on Turkish Drone

TEHRAN (MNA) – General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran issued a statement about the presence of Turkish drones at the scene where the copter carrying president Raisi and his companions crashed. Following the helicopter crash, advanced Iranian drones equipped with “SAR” radar as well as rescue teams were immediately sent to the area, reads the statement. However, due to the harsh weather and geographical conditions, this operation was extended until night. In such circumstances, Iran agreed the neighboring and friendly country of Turkey to cooperate Iran in this search and rescue operation. This country sent a UAV equipped with night vision and thermal cameras, but despite continuous efforts, due to lack of the equipment to detect and control the underwater points, it was not possible to accurately announce the location of the helicopter crash, so they returned to Turkey. In the early hours of Monday morning, the exact spot of the helicopter crash was discovered by ground rescue forces and Iranian drones of the armed forces, returned from the northern Indian Ocean.

Late Iranian FM Praised for Normalizing, Promoting Ties With Azerbaijan



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The foreign minister of Azerbaijan Republic admired his late Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian for his role in the normalization and expansion of relations between Tehran and Baku. In a telephone conversation with the caretaker foreign minister of Iran on Tuesday, Jeyhun Bayramov paid tribute to Amir-Abdollahian for his significant role in normalizing and broadening friendly ties between the two neighbors at a complicated juncture. Bayramov described the visit that Azeri President Ilham Aliyev paid to the embassy of Iran in Baku on Tuesday morning as a sign of the deep sympathy his country feels for the loss of the Iranian president and foreign minister in a recent helicopter crash. The Azeri foreign minister also expressed his country's readiness to expedite the implementation of the bilateral agreements concluded recently by the heads of the two states. For his part, the Iranian caretaker foreign minister said the relations between Tehran and Baku are inseparable. Ali Baqeri also hailed the efforts by the late Iranian president and foreign minister as a valuable asset to the promotion of Iran's relations with the regional states, including the Republic of Azerbaijan.



Movahedi Kermani Elected as Chairman of Iran's Assembly of Experts

TEHRAN - Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Movahedi Kermani has been elected as the new chairman of Iran's Assembly of Experts, a legislative body responsible for appointing Iran's Supreme Leader and supervising his activities. Members of the Assembly of Experts elected Movahedi Kermani as the new chairman of the body in a session in Tehran on Tuesday. He replaces Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati and will hold the position for two years. The 93-year-old Movahedi Kermani, a long-serving member of the Assembly, has held various legislative and political positions in Iran since the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979. The Assembly of Experts, a panel of clerics electing leader of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, convened its first session in Tehran on Tuesday morning. The 88-member Assembly of Experts officially started the first session of its new term on Tuesday morning by electing its new chairman. The 6th term of the assembly kicked off in the presence of high-ranking governmental and military officials. A message from Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali

Khamenei was read at the opening of the assembly. Ayatollah Kermani was elected as the chairman of the assembly with 55 votes for two years. The Assembly of Experts elects and oversees the activities of the leader of the Islamic Revolution. Members of the assembly are directly elected to office by people for an eight-year term. It holds biannual meetings to appoint a new chairman. Countrywide Assembly of Experts elections and the parliamentary polls were held in Iran simultaneously on March 1. Around 61 million Iranian people were eligible to vote, including 3.5 million first-time voters. Meanwhile Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei described the initiation of the new term of the Assembly of Experts as the manifestation of Islamic democracy. In a message on the occasion of the beginning of the sixth term of the Assembly of Experts, the Supreme Leader invited the entire world to ponder the comprehensive, steadfast, problem-solving, attractive and amazing system of Islamic governance.

Russia, Iran Turn U.S. Sanctions Into New Opportunities



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran's deputy foreign minister for the political affairs emphasized that Tehran and Moscow have managed to turn the threat of the U.S. sanctions into new opportunities not only for themselves but also for the whole region. “The United States is threatening countries of the region, especially Iran and Russia, keeps on imposing illegal sanctions on both countries in a bid to exert pressure on Iran and Russia, but thanks to the wisdom of the Iranian and Russian leaders, the sanctions have turned into possibilities not only for our countries but for other states in the entire region,” Ali Baqeri said at a plenary session of the Russia-Islamic World: KazanForum. “It is impossible to build peace in the region without close economic ties,” he stressed, adding that Moscow and Tehran will continue strengthening their ties. This year's keynote is “Trust and Cooperation.” The main goal of the forum is to strengthen trade and economic, scientific and technical, social and cultural ties between Russian regions and the countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), as well as to promote the development of the Islamic financial system institutions in Russia, TASS reported.

NIOPDC Accelerating Online Monitoring



TEHRAN (Shana) - The National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) has launched a monitoring center to oversee all the processes pertaining to production, transfer and distribution of oil products. The manager of information technology and communications at NIORDC, Abbas Basafa, made the remarks in an interview with Shana, adding the center will spread transparency and online monitoring. He further said that NIOPDC's department of information technology and communications took part at Shahid Rajaei Festival last year and managed to acquire the first rank in oil industry by realizing 95.6 percent of the smart government development indicators. According to him, online monitoring will play a noticeable role in preventing fuel smuggling and transparent distribution of oil products. “As the second phase of this project, we will establish management dashboards and in the third phase artificial intelligence technology will be deployed for analyzing data,” he concluded.

Iran Exporting Rail Equipment to Europe

TEHRAN (dispatches) - The chief executive of the Iranian Rail Equipment Manufacturing Company said the country exports rail parts and equipment to Europe. Highlighting the capacity to manufacture locomotives in the country, Morteza Mollanejad described it as a matter of regret to see some domestic companies purchasing secondhand locomotives from China and Brazil. Mollanejad said his company has held negotiations with Iraq, Turkey, Cuba, Poland, and Afghanistan in the previous year for exporting rail parts and equipment to these countries. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) has been inked with Afghanistan for exporting the rail equipment to this neighboring country, Mollanejad added. In addition, Iran Rail Equipment Manufacturing Company is offering quality repair and maintenance services to Iraqi companies, the official noted. The 11th International Exhibition of Rail Transportations & Related Industries Equipment dubbed “IRAN RAILEXPO 2024” was inaugurated at the Tehran Permanent International

Fairgrounds on Saturday, May 18. The inaugural ceremony was attended by Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash and the head of Railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran Miad Salehi. More than 100 domestic companies and five foreign companies from China, Russia, India, and the Republic of Azerbaijan have participated in this exhibition to showcase their latest achievements and technologies in the railway industry. Concurrent with organizing this exhibition, the 15th Meeting of the Heads of Railway Authorities of the ECO Member States and the 9th Rail Committee Meeting of the ECO Transit Transport Coordinating Council will be held with the participation of Iran, Turkey, the Republic of Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The domestically-manufactured GM locomotive engine, Model GT26, and Locomotive Microprocessor Control System (LCS) will also be unveiled in the exhibition.



IOOC Suspends Production from Salman Oil Field Temporarily

TEHRAN (Shana) - The Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC) has halted oil production from the Salman oil field for a short time to carry out necessary repairs. The manager of operations at Lavan Operational Zone at ICCO, Mahmoudreza Haghighi, said that repairs cover replacement a part of the burner's pipeline with severe cracks, repairing several parts of the pipeline network and a number of important valves on the line of process of oil and gas production and water injection, which cannot be done while the platform is operational. According to him, the repairs are necessary to improve safety in the process of oil production. All stages of this major repair operation include taking the entire platform process out of line, emptying the contents of the pipe network, washing, securing, cutting, disassembling, assembling, welding, grinding, returning the tracks to the original state, resuming production and restarting the platform operation process are done by the executive branch of the company. Lavan Operational Zone's manager anticipated duration of these repairs for about one month, noting after that the production process of the platform will be resumed in much safer conditions than before.

Macron Flies to Riot-Struck Territory of New Caledonia

PARIS (Dispatches) - President Emmanuel Macron flew to France's Pacific territory of New Caledonia on Wednesday, where nine days of riots have killed six, injured hundreds and incinerated cars, shops and public buildings. Macron's plane was en route from France to the troubled islands, a holiday destination now strewn with hundreds of charred vehicles and scared by burned-out stores, businesses and schools. The deadliest unrest in four decades has been blamed on French plans to give voting rights to thousands of non-indigenous residents, which Indigenous Kanaks say will dilute their votes. French authorities said the violence, which erupted May 13, had eased since 1,050 troops, tactical police and national security reinforcements from Paris were deployed, including to "highly sensitive" areas. Nevertheless, two primary schools and 300 cars in a dealership were torched in the territory's capital Noumea during the night, the mayor's office told AFP. Police have arrested more than 280 "rioters" in the unrest gripping the French territory of 270,000, authorities said. Local prosecutors say around 400 shops and businesses have been damaged. The toll stands at six dead and hundreds more injured.



Ukraine Says Russian Shelling Targets Civilians in Kharkiv Region



KHARKIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine said Russian shelling targeted civilians in two cities in the northeastern region of Kharkiv on Saturday while President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reported successes by troops fighting a renewed Russian assault there. Ukrainian prosecutors said they were investigating as a potential war crime a Russian air strike on a residential area of the regional capital Kharkiv in which six civilians were wounded, including a 13-year-old girl, 16-year-old male and an eight-year-old. Moscow denies deliberately targeting civilians but thousands have been killed and injured since its February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. About 70 km (45 miles) to the northeast in Vovchansk, a city just 5 km (three miles) from the Russian border, prosecutors said Russian shelling killed a 60-year-old woman and injured three other civilians. A 59-year-old man was also injured in the village of Ukrainke, they said. Across the border in Russia's Belgorod region, Moscow's defence ministry said its forces shot down a Tochka-U missile fired by Ukraine. A similar missile caused a Belgorod apartment building to collapse last week, killing at least 15 people, Russia said. Late on Saturday Belgorod regional governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said a Ukrainian drone attack injured a woman and a man in the village of Petrovka. They were treated for shrapnel injuries in Belgorod, he wrote on the Telegram messaging app. Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address that Ukrainian forces were on surer footing, particularly in Kharkiv region.

Japan's Exports Pick Up on Weak Yen But Business Mood Stalls



TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan's exports rose for a fifth straight month in April, helped by a boost in value from the weak yen, government data showed on Wednesday, but shipment volumes struggled as soft demand weighed on growth. The trade data clouds policymakers' hopes for exports to offset weak domestic consumption. Export volumes remain soft with Japan's biggest trading partner China struggling to stage a convincing recovery and the U.S. economy losing momentum. Ministry of Finance data out on Wednesday showed Japan's exports rose 8.3% in April from a year earlier, undershooting an 11.1% gain expected by analysts in a Reuters poll. The graphic has three line charts showing Japan's overall trade value, exports of transport equipment and import of mineral fuels, and trade growth with China. In volume terms, however, Japanese shipments fell 3.2% year-on-year in April, down for the third straight month. "The weak yen and global inflation appear to push up exports in value, but export volumes underline weakening global demand," said Takeshi Minami, chief economist at Norinchukin Research Institute. "Exports remain soft for the time being as pent-up demand for automobiles runs its course." The trade data comes as Japan seeks to drive sustainable growth underpinned by higher wages and durable inflation, which are seen as prerequisites for the central bank to shift away from near-zero interest rates.



European States to Move on Palestine Recognition as Gaza War Rages

RAFAH (Dispatches) - At least three European countries announced steps towards recognising a Palestinian state on Wednesday, after more than seven months of devastating fighting between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Irish media reported that the government announced its formal recognition of a Palestinian state at a press conference by premier Simon Harris, deputy premier Micheal Martin and minister Eamon Ryan. Norway made a similar announcement around the same time, according to two Norwegian newspapers. And in Spain, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez was scheduled to address parliament about setting a date for recognising a Palestinian state. Sanchez said in March that Spain and Ireland, along with Slovenia and Malta, had agreed to take their first steps towards Palestinian recognition, seeing a two-state solution as essential for lasting peace. Israel's foreign ministry posted a video addressed to Ireland on X on Tuesday warning that "recognising a Palestinian state risks turning you into a pawn in the hands of Iran and Hamas". And Israeli Diaspora Affairs Minister Amichai Chikli previously accused Sanchez's government of believing "that the Palestinians should be rewarded for the massacre" perpetrated by Hamas and its allies in southern Israel on October 7. Hamas's October 7 attack resulted in the deaths of more than 1,170 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of Israeli official figures. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed at least 35,647 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry. Fighting has raged around the far southern city of Rafah, the last part of Gaza to face a ground invasion -- but a resumption of fighting has also been reported in the northern Jabalia area, where Hamas forces have regrouped. An AFP team in Rafah reported air and artillery strikes in and around the city early Wednesday. Israeli troops began their ground assault on parts of Rafah early this month, defying international opposition including from top ally the United States, which voiced fears for the more than one million civilians trapped in the city. Israel has ordered mass evacuations

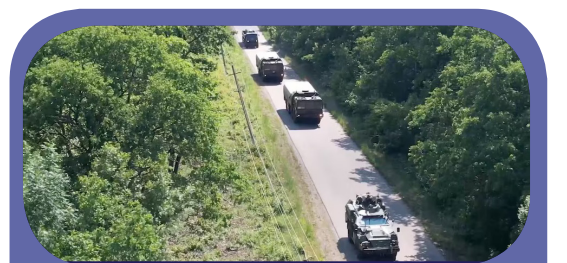
from the city, where it has vowed to eliminate Hamas's tunnel network and its remaining fighters. The UN says more than 800,000 people have fled Rafah, with Edem Wosornu of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs saying most of the displaced had gone to camps in Khan Yunis and Deir al-Balah where "they lack adequate latrines, water points, drainage and shelter". The World Health Organization has said northern Gaza's last two functioning hospitals, Al-Awda and Kamal Adwan, were besieged by Israeli forces, with more than 200 patients trapped inside. The UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, on Tuesday said aid distribution had been suspended in Rafah "due to lack of supplies and insecurity". Starvation was among the allegations made against Israel by International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor Karim Khan when he announced on Monday that he had applied for arrest warrants for leaders on both sides, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. In an interview with CNN, the prime minister described Khan as a "rogue prosecutor who has put false charges", adding that "he didn't check the facts". The warrant request also targeted Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, as well as Hamas's Qatar-based leader Ismail Haniyeh and its Gaza military and political chiefs, Mohammed Deif and Yahya Sinwar. US President Joe Biden has backed Netanyahu in condemning the warrant request as "outrageous". If granted by the ICC judges, the warrants would mean that any of the 124 ICC member states would be required to arrest Netanyahu and the others if they travelled there. However, the court has no mechanism to enforce its orders. Israel on Tuesday shut down an Associated Press live video feed from war-torn Gaza and confiscated its equipment, before reversing the move hours later after the White House intervened. The US news agency said Israel had accused it of violating a ban on Al Jazeera, which was ordered shut two weeks ago based on a new Israeli law governing foreign broadcasters.

Ukrainian Gunners Finally Get Shells to Stop Russians Near Kharkiv



NEAR VOVCHANSK (Dispatches) - Ukrainian servicemen operating a howitzer in Kharkiv region near the Russian border work around the clock to stop an incursion by Moscow's troops, and they are finally getting the shells to do it. Ukraine's defenders were hamstrung for months by shortages of artillery shells and other weapons as U.S. Congress held up billions of dollars worth of military aid. As the lawmakers in Washington argued, Russia's forces pressed their advantage on the frontlines, pushing forward on the eastern front. With a \$61 billion aid package belatedly approved by Congress last month, Ukraine's gunners say the crippling shortages are starting to ease. Those in the northern districts of Kharkiv region say the fighting is more intense than their previous assignment in Bakhmut, the town in eastern Ukraine seized by Russia last year and reduced to rubble by months of fighting. "It's 24/7, their infantry keeps coming, we keep fighting their attacks. At least we are trying to. Whenever possible, we take them down," said Pavlo, a gunner of Ukraine's 92nd Separate Assault brigade

operating a howitzer. "We were positioned in the Bakhmut area before, now we have been transferred here. It's much 'hotter' here. We didn't have shells there. Here, at least we have shells, they started delivering them. We have something to work with, to fight." Russian forces pushed across the border earlier this month and say they have captured about a dozen villages. The town of Vovchansk, 5 km (three miles) inside the border, remains the focal point of the incursion. Ukrainian forces control about 60% of the town and are fighting house-to-house to fend off Russian attacks. The stakes are high - capturing Vovchansk would be Russia's most significant gain since launching the assault. Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city, lies 70 km away. "We see them walking down the road, 5 km away all the way from Shebekino," said Vitalii, commander of the brigade's artillery unit, referring to a town on the Russian side of the border. "We see them walking on foot to their positions. As they move, we of course try to hit them, to inflict maximum casualties."



Russia Starts Exercise to Simulate Launch of Tactical Nuclear Weapons

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian forces have started the first stage of exercises ordered by President Vladimir Putin to simulate preparation for the launch of tactical nuclear weapons, the Defence Ministry said on Tuesday. Moscow has linked the exercises to what it calls "militant statements" by Western officials, including French President Emmanuel Macron, which it said created security threats for Russia. Nuclear analysts say the exercises are designed as a warning signal by Putin to "deter the West from wading more deeply into the war in Ukraine. Western countries have provided weapons and intelligence to Kyiv but have refrained from sending troops. The Defence Ministry said the first stage of the exercise involved Iskander and Kinzhal missiles. It is aimed at ensuring that units and equipment are ready for "the combat use of non-strategic nuclear weapons to respond and unconditionally ensure the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Russian state in response to provocative statements and threats of individual Western officials against the Russian Federation", the ministry said. The drills involve missile forces in Russia's Southern Military District, which lies adjacent to Ukraine and also includes parts of Ukraine that Russia now controls. Belarus, where Russia said last year it was deploying tactical nuclear weapons, will also be involved, the two countries have said.

Vietnam Top Security Official To Lam Voted New President

HANOI (Dispatches) - Vietnam's top security official To Lam was confirmed Wednesday as the nation's new president. He oversaw police and intelligence operations over a period when rights groups say basic liberties have been systematically suppressed, and its secret service was accused of violating international law. Lam was confirmed by Vietnam's National Assembly after his predecessor resigned amid an ongoing anti-corruption campaign that has shaken the country's political establishment and business elites and has resulted in multiple top-level changes in government. Vietnam's presidency is largely ceremonial, but his new role as head of state puts the 66-year-old in a "very strong position" to become the next Communist Party general secretary, the most important political position in the country, said Nguyen Khac Giang, an analyst at Singapore's ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute. Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong was elected to a third term in 2021, but at age 80, he may not seek another term after 2026. Trong is an ideologue who views corruption as the gravest threat facing the party. As Vietnam's top security official, Lam has led Trong's sweeping anti-graft campaign. Lam spent more than four decades in the Ministry of Public Security before becoming the



minister in 2016. His rise took place while Vietnam's politburo lost six of its 18 members amid the expanding anti-graft campaign, including two former presidents and Vietnam's parliamentary head. Lam was behind many of the investigations into high-profile politicians, said Giang. Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh is seen as the other major contender to possibly succeed Trong, Giang said. The current vice-speaker of Vietnam's parliament was confirmed Monday as the National Assembly speaker after his predecessor, Vuong Dinh Hue, resigned amid the anti-graft campaign. Until his resignation, Hue was also widely seen as a potential successor to Trong. This unprecedented instability in Vietnam's political system has spooked investors as the country tries to position itself as an alternative for companies looking to shift their supply chains away from China. A flood of foreign investment, especially in manufacturing of high-tech products like smartphones and computers, raised expectations it could join the "Four Asian Tigers" — Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan, whose economies underwent rapid industrialization and posted high growth rates. But the scandals and uncertainty — including the death sentence for a real estate tycoon accused of embezzling nearly 3% of the country's 2022 GDP — have brought with them uncertainty and bureaucratic reticence to make decisions. Economic growth slipped to 5.1% last year from 8% in 2022 as exports slowed.



Celtics Grind to Overtime Pacers Win in East Finals Opener

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - The Boston Celtics needed a late rally to force overtime against the Indiana Pacers before emerging with a 133-128 win in game one of the Eastern Conference Finals on Tuesday. Boston's Jaylen Brown sank a three-pointer from the corner with 6.1 seconds remaining to tie the scores at 117-117 and take it to overtime. Then Jayson Tatum made a crucial late three-pointer to push the Celtics to victory and a 1-0 lead in the best-of-seven series. Tatum top scored for Boston with 36 points, 10 of them in overtime, collecting 12 rebounds and four assists with Brown putting up 26 and Jrue Holiday 28. Indiana, who fought back from large deficits several times in the game, were led by Tyrese Haliburton's 25 points, 10 assists and three rebounds with Pascal Siakam making 24 points, seven assists and 12 rebounds. Brown was far from happy with the performance from Boston, who had almost a week off after their 4-1 series win over

Cleveland. "A lot of ups and downs, I don't think we played our best," said three-time All Star Brown. "We almost dropped the game on our own floor. So we have got to come out and be better," he added. The Pacers came into the game on the back of a gruelling game seven win against the New York Knicks on Sunday and Boston were the fastest out of the traps. With the loud home crowd sensing Indiana were struggling, Al Horford's 26-foot three pointer made it 12-0. The Pacers got back into the game and levelled it 64-64 at half-time. A 13-point run in the third put Boston 87-77 up but again Indiana came back and with less than two minutes to go they led 115-100. Indiana turned the ball over twice in the final 30 seconds of regulation before Brown's crucial three pointer, over the top of Siakam. When Haliburton was unable to get off a last-gasp shot the game went to overtime.

Nadal Ready for Emotional French Open Farewell



PARIS (Dispatches) - Rafael Nadal will bring down the curtain on his 19-year French Open career with the likelihood of adding to his 14 titles greatly diminished before he leaves behind a record and reputation unlikely ever to be matched. The great Spaniard, a 22-time Grand Slam champion, won his first title at Roland Garros as a teenager in 2005. A week on Monday, he will celebrate his 38th birthday. A former world number one, who is now at 276 in the world, Nadal has only played 15 matches since January last year as a hip injury and then a muscle tear were added to a depressing history of physical ailments which have forced him to miss 12 Grand Slam tournaments in his career. Whether or not the 2024 French Open becomes number 13 will soon become apparent as the draw for the event takes place on Thursday afternoon. "I'm going to play the tournament thinking that I can give my all, 100 per cent," explained Nadal after a second round exit in Rome last week. "And if 100 per cent is not enough to win a match, I'll accept that. But I don't want to step onto court knowing that I have no chance. If there's a 0.01% chance, I want to explore that and give it a go." As well as 14 titles in Paris, Nadal can boast a record of 112 wins and just three losses, two of which came against career-long rival Novak Djokovic.

Ronaldo to Play in Sixth European Championship

LONDON (Dispatches) - Portugal's 39-year-old forward Cristiano Ronaldo will play in his sixth European Championship and veteran defender Pepe also made the cut as coach Roberto Martinez named his 26-man squad on Tuesday. Ronaldo, who has scored in every Euros since his first appearance in 2004, has netted 14 goals in the finals. He also scored 10 times in European qualifying matches last year. Ronaldo now plays for Saudi Pro League side Al-Nassr where he has scored 42 goals and provided 13 assists in all competitions. "Cristiano? It's better to talk about the data. He's a player who's scored 42 goals in 41 games for his club," Martinez said. "That shows his continuity and physical ability to always be fit, as well as the quality he has in front of goal, which we really like and need." However, Ronaldo will not be the oldest member of the squad with Martinez also calling up Porto defender Pepe who turned 41 this year. Pepe was an integral part of Porto's team this year, making 38 appearances as they reached the Champions League last 16 and finished third in the league behind Sporting and Benfica. They are also in the Cup final. "Pepe's role in the dressing room is important, the way he represents the national team shirt. I think that during the training camp, football is a constant struggle," Martinez added. "And it was interesting to see Pepe play two games in March and

keep a clean sheet for the 90 minutes he played. His communication, his positioning mean that, when he's fit, he's a very important player." Nine players from the Premier League have been called up including Ruben Dias, Diogo Dalot, Bruno Fernandes, Bernardo Silva and Diogo Jota. Goncalo Inacio is the only Sporting player in the squad.



Guardiola Named Premier League Manager of the Year

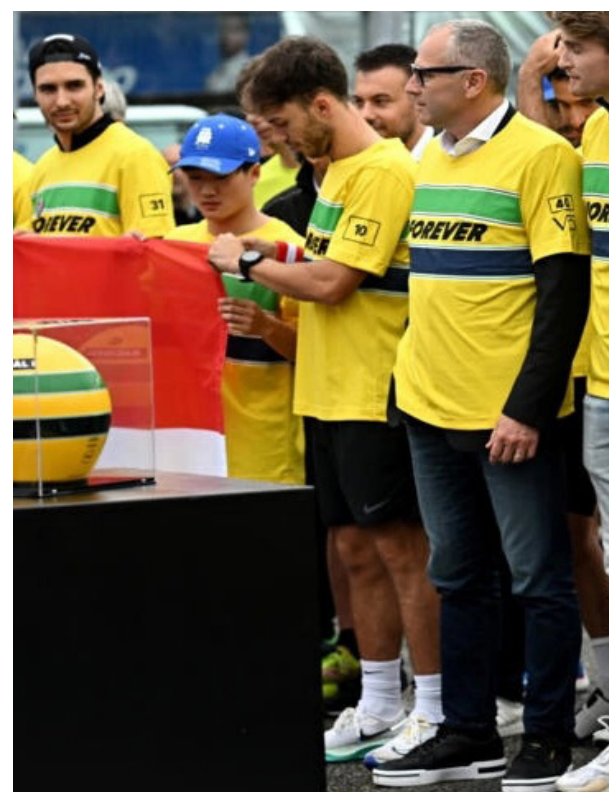


LONDON (Dispatches) - Pep Guardiola was named Premier League Manager of the Year on Tuesday after guiding Manchester City to an unprecedented fourth successive title. The Spanish coach has previously won the award four times since he joined the club in 2016. With six league titles, he is now the joint second-most successful coach in the history of English football. "This award reflects the hard work and excellence of the people at the Club in all departments," Guardiola said. "I am so proud to be manager of this group of players and work alongside the brilliant coaches and support staff every day. "Winning four titles in a row is one of the proudest achievements of my career. This is the toughest league in the world and our competitors have played some incredible football." Guardiola saw off competition from Arsenal's Mikel Arteta, Aston Villa's Unai Emery, Bournemouth's Andoni Iraola and Liverpool's Jurgen Klopp. Meanwhile Phil Foden was named the 2023/24 Premier League Player of the Season. The Manchester City midfielder has been recognised with the prestigious prize after enjoying an outstanding campaign in which he has played a key role in our bid to win what would be an historic fourth title consecutive Premier League men's title. supreme quality supreme quality 11 assists. April's brace of goals in our 4-0 win at Brighton also saw Foden pass the 50 goal Premier League landmark for the Club.

F1 Pays Tribute to Senna, 30 Years After Tragic Death

IMOLA (Dispatches) - Thirty years after he perished during the opening laps of the 1994 San Marino Grand Prix, Ayrton Senna's name, reputation and legacy continued to reverberate at the beautiful Autodromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari on Saturday. Remembered for his bold aggressive racing and reflective humanity, Senna continued to stand as an inspirational example for the current grid of Formula One drivers and the many fans of the sport who flocked to the circuit for the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix. Most of those who still revere him were not born when he died including three-time world champion Max Verstappen of Red Bull and both McLaren drivers Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri, the trio who topped Saturday's qualifying times in Imola. Yet they and many others turned out in the rain on Thursday evening to run a lap of the tragic track, where popular Austrian rookie Roland Ratzenberger also died, just 24 hours before the three-time champion Brazilian speared into the wall at Tamburello. A special event to pay tribute to both Senna and Ratzenberger had been organised this weekend by four-time champion Sebastian Vettel, now retired, but still seen by many as a leading figure of consciousness in the sport. His invitation to the drivers to join him in marking the occasion was accepted unanimously. The lore of the tragedy of Imola '94, of its shock, the reaction and the legacy of improved safety conditions was known and understood. The modern drivers stood respectfully by the two helmets of their predecessors, mingled with members of the Senna family and posed with the flags of Austria and Brazil. For some, it prompted bleak memories of that black day, May 1, 1994, when seasoned

veterans of the newsroom, reporters of long years of experience, were unable to hold back their tears or file their



stories. It was a weekend of horrors with spectacular collisions on every afternoon, each more shocking than the one before. For F1, it was the end of one era that accepted the sport's dangers and fatalities as part of the job and the start of a new time for safety-consciousness. Senna, who had always campaigned for driver, car and circuit safety, paid for the progress with his own life. A man with an infinite eye for detail, who remembered the first name of a reporter's son after being requested to dedicate an autograph to him at a prize-giving 12 months previously, Senna had a rare sense of care and humanity. And this was why Vettel and his organising team gave out t-shirts and wristbands to remember him and Ratzenberger - and why fans packed into see the statue of Senna inside the track at a dedicated area of memorial where flags and messages from all over the world were on display. Vettel made a speech, gave padlocks to the drivers so each one could think of an appropriate Senna memorial image and then put it in place in the nearby catch-fencing. Further round the lap from Tamburello, Vettel led another ceremony to remember Ratzenberger, who died in his car at the Variante Villeneuve. Even after 30 years, the emotions rise again. When Ratzenberger died, the paddock was stunned and many drivers were conflicted about racing on in that Saturday's qualifying session. One was Damon Hill who, having lost a close friend on Saturday, lost his Williams team-mate Senna on Sunday. He had the mental strength to survive and thrive, winning the drivers world championship for Williams in 1996. This weekend, he was back as a commentator for television