

The Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami Praised Martyr President Ebrahim Raisi and His Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian for Their Diplomatic Successes

# IRAN NEWS

A Group of Venezuelan People Attended the Iranian Embassy in Caracas on Thursday to Express Their Sympathy and Condolences on the Occasion of the Martyrdom of the Iranian President, Foreign Minister and Their Entourage in the Helicopter Crash

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## Leader Urges Empathy, Solidarity among Regional Nations



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The only option facing the countries of the region is to stand together in solidarity and empathy, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei said. In a meeting with Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and his delegation in Tehran on Wednesday, Ayatollah Khamenei expressed his gratitude for Qatar's condolences and sympathy following the demise of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in a recent helicopter crash. The Leader also emphasized the importance of continuing to advance the path of cooperation between Tehran and Doha. Ayatollah Khamenei acknowledged that losing a well-rounded president like Raisi is difficult. "Despite this loss, the country's course will remain unchanged, and the same spirit of goodwill and trust that prevailed between Iran and Qatar during the late president's term will continue under Dr. Mokhber," he said. Pointing to the regional situation and the enemies' efforts to undermine stability and peace, the Leader remarked, "The countries of the region have only one option left, and that is to stand together in solidarity and empathy." For his part, the Qatari Emir expressed his condolences on the passing of the Iranian President Raisi and his entourage, while highlighting that, "Relations between Iran and Qatar have always been strong and this path will continue." He identified the importance of cooperation and solidarity among regional countries as the only way to counter the threats in the region, emphasizing, "We have set not set any limits for expanding relations with Iran."



## President Raisi Laid to Rest at Imam Reza (AS) Shrine

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi was laid to rest, concluding days of funeral attended by several millions of mourners after his "martyrdom-like passing" in a helicopter crash. At least three million mourners marched in his home town Mashhad Thursday to bid farewell to President Raisi, the mega city's mayor said, following processions in the cities of Tabriz, Qom, Tehran and Birjand. Later at dusk, the president's body was lowered into a tomb at the Imam Reza (AS) Shrine, where Shia Islam's eighth imam is buried and millions of pilgrims visit each year. The 63-year-old president lost his life on Sunday alongside his foreign minister and six others after their helicopter went down in the country's mountainous northwest while heading to inaugurate an upgraded oil refinery unit in Tabriz. The incident engulfed Iran in shock and grief and generated a groundswell of support and solidarity from Muslims and non-Muslims across the world. Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, expressing his deep sorrow over the "martyrdom-like passing", announced five days of national mourning on Monday. The cortege carrying the coffins of the "martyrs" attracted huge numbers of mourners who thronged main thoroughfares and adjoining streets for several kilometers,

wherever it went. In Tehran, Ayatollah Khamenei and representatives of the regional resistance groups prayed over the coffins Wednesday, before millions of people followed a procession down Tehran's main boulevard. "Oh Allah, we didn't see anything but good from him," Ayatollah Khamenei said in Arabic. Iran's acting president, Mohammad Mokhber, and other officials stood nearby and some openly cried. Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh attended the prayers and recounted President Raisi telling him that the Oct. 7 operation by Palestinian fighters against Israel was an "earthquake in the heart of the Zionist entity". Statesmen from West Asia and beyond from some 60 countries attended a later memorial service, including Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and Tunisian President Kais Saied. Tajikistan's President Inomali Rahmon, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan and Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, the UAE's minister of foreign affairs, were other foreign representatives who traveled to Tehran, meeting Iranian leaders to express their condolences.

## Resistance Front Officials Convene in Tehran



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The representatives of the region's anti-Israeli resistance groups held a meeting in Tehran, attended by senior commanders of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC). A number of officials representing the resistance groups assembled in Tehran on the sidelines of a formal ceremony held to pay tribute to late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his entourage, who died in a helicopter crash on May 19. The high-profile gathering of resistance groups was participated by IRGC Commander Major General Hossein Salami and Commander of the IRGC Quds Force Brigadier General Esmail Qaani. Tasnim has obtained information about the topics discussed in the meeting, which revolved around the latest political, social and military developments in Gaza, the Al-Aqsa Storm operation against the Israeli regime, and the role of the resistance front in the region. The attendees at the meeting emphasized the need for the continuation of the fight and struggle until the Palestinian resistance's complete and ultimate victory in the Gaza Strip with the participation of all resistance groups and fronts across the region. A host of foreign heads of state and authorities traveled to Iran on Wednesday to pay tribute to President Raisi and his entourage. Meanwhile Iran's acting foreign minister Ali Bagheri Kani said resistance groups in the region have severely weakened the Zionist regime. Bagheri Kani made the remark on Thursday in a meeting with Palestinian resistance leaders including Hamas Political Bureau Chief Ismail Haniyeh, Deputy Secretary General of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine Jamil Mazhar, and Deputy Secretary General of the Islamic Jihad Mohammad Al-Hindi. The meeting took place in Tehran on the sidelines of the funeral ceremony of martyred President Ebrahim Raisi and his companions who lost their lives in a copter crash on Sunday.

## Iran Views Pakistan as a Brotherly Country



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei described Pakistan as a brotherly neighbor of Iran, saying the relationship with Islamabad is very important for Tehran. Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his accompanying delegation met with Ayatollah Khamenei on the afternoon of May 22 in Tehran. In the meeting, the Leader expressed his heartfelt gratitude for the sympathy displayed by the Pakistani government and nation over the passing away of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in a recent helicopter crash. "Relations with Pakistan are very important for the Islamic Republic of Iran, and we completely view this country with a sense of brotherhood. However, the relations between the two countries have had their ups and downs in recent years. We believe that with the new government in Pakistan, there is the possibility of a renewed peak in these relations," the Leader stated, Khamenei reported. Referring to the emphasis of the late President Raisi on the importance of relations with Pakistan, the Leader added, "Mr. Raisi's recent visit to Pakistan can be a turning point in the relations between the two countries, and Dr. Mokhber will pursue the path of cooperation and agreements." Ayatollah Khamenei noted that "friendly relations between brotherly countries are not always a smooth process, and obstacles must be overcome and the progress of cooperation should be pursued diligently and put into action." For his part, Sharif commended Raisi's recent visit to Pakistan as very productive, and one that laid the groundwork for further expansion of relations and a roadmap for the future. He expressed optimism that relations will be improved in various fields.

## Iran Emphasizes Its Principled Position in Supporting Peace and Stability of Bosnia

NEW YORK (IRNA) - Amir Saeed Irvani, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Iran to the United Nations, said that the Islamic Republic of Iran emphasizes its principled position in supporting peace, stability and security in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Balkan region. Addressing the United Nations General Assembly, under the agenda of the 14th session entitled Culture of Peace on Thursday, he added that the Islamic Republic of Iran stands by its principled position in supporting peace, stability and security in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Balkan region. He underlined that the peaceful coexistence of all the people of the country and that of the region can be maintained and strengthened regardless of their ethnicity and religion. In his speech, Irvani said: "At the outset, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the numerous delegations, permanent missions, international organizations and regional groups; who at

various levels expressed their condolences and sympathy to the people and government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in mourning the loss of the President and Foreign Minister." He added: "H.E. Mr. Raisi and H.E. Mr. Amir-Abdollahian and their deceased companions were highly respected and loved by the Iranian people. This week, millions of Iranians across the country demonstrated their profound respect to these distinguished figures, including in the funeral ceremony. Their tireless efforts in serving the Iranian people were exemplary of their firm dedication to their beloved nation. Their contribution to development, human dignity, cooperation as well as to strengthening peace and security and friendly relations in the region and beyond, will be remembered. They will remain an everlasting source of inspiration for our people and anyone who aspires just causes and noble purposes in the world."

## First Report on President Raisi Copter Crash



TEHRAN (MNA) – The General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces has released its first report on the aspects to and reasons behind a recent helicopter crash that led to the martyrdom of President Ebrahim Raisi and his accompanying delegation. The report was released on Thursday, shedding more light on the Sunday incident, during which Raisi and his entourage, which included Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, ascended to martyrdom after the aircraft carrying them crashed in northwestern Iran, Press TV reported. An investigative team tasked with examining the incident was dispatched to the site of the crash on Monday, the report said. The team, it added, had managed to glean "a remarkable part" of the information it needed to investigate the elements that could have contributed to the incident. The helicopter carrying the dignitaries crashed while flying along its pre-planned route, the report said, noting that the aircraft did not deviate from the course. The helicopter caught fire after crashing into a mountainous area, the report said, and revealed that the remainder of the wreckage did not bear any bullet holes or signs of similar impact. According to the report, the crash site was located by Iranian unmanned aerial vehicles at 05:00 a.m. (local time) on Monday, and reached by search teams shortly afterwards. Communications that took place before the incident between the aircraft and the ground control contained no "suspicious" content, it said, and noted that the nation would be informed about any follow-up findings in due course.





# IRAN NEWS



## Iran Continues to Improve Its Relations With Islamic Countries

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran said: "The approach Iran's martyred president Ebrahim Raisi in pursuing the deepening and improving relations with major Islamic countries, especially Egypt. At the ceremony of welcoming 'Sameh Hassan Shoukry', the Foreign Minister of Egypt in Tehran, Iran's Acting Foreign Minister pointed to the cultural, historical, and religious commonalities between two great countries with ancient history and civilization, and said that the approach of late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in pursuing the deepening and promotion of relations with major Islamic countries, especially Egypt will continue. Bagheri Kani expressed hope that the negotiations that the ministers of foreign affairs of Iran and Egypt started with special attention to the interests of the two countries and the nation, to achieve the results desired by the leaders of the two countries, will be pursued seriously."

## Iran Sports Minister Calls for "Olympic Ceasefire"



TEHRAN (MNA) - The Iranian sports minister has called for the acceleration in the implementation of the "Olympic Ceasefire", condemning the Israel regime's genocidal war against the Palestinian people. Kiousmars Hashemi, the Iranian Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports made the remarks on Friday during his speech at the meeting of the ministers of sports of the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Kazakhstan. "Considering the close relationship between human rights and sports, in line with the inherent duties of sports organizations and institutions and their social responsibilities towards global events, I would like to suggest that the SCO member countries pass independent resolutions to support the oppressed people of Palestine. Also, in order to stop and prevent the continuation of the killing of the defenseless people of Gaza and the humanitarian catastrophe in Rafah, through an official letter to the International Olympic Committee, we need to demand the immediate and early implementation of the 'Olympic Ceasefire' plan," the Iranian minister said at the SCO meeting. Hashemi also lambasted double standards in the realm of sports after pointing to the banning of Russian and Belarusian athletes from the Paris Olympics. French president Macron has claimed that he would do all he could to achieve an "Olympic ceasefire", clarifying that he was referring to the war between Israel and Hamas, Russia and Ukraine war, and the war in Sudan. The 33rd Summer Olympic Games, the 2024 Olympics, will be held in Paris from 26 July to 11 August. The Olympic torch relay will start in April.



## Leader Urges Plans for Iran's Practical Cooperation With Tunisia

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei emphasized the need to turn the current solidarity between Iran and Tunisia into practical cooperation. In remarks at a meeting with the president of Tunisia and his accompanying delegation, held in Tehran on Wednesday, Ayatollah Khamenei expressed gratitude for the brotherly and sincere expression of sympathy from Kais Saied regarding the passing away of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in a recent helicopter crash. "The loss of the President and a number of officials, along with their entourage is significant. However, throughout the period of the Islamic Republic, we have always witnessed that through the patience and perseverance of the people, bitter incidents become opportunities for progress and movements, due to divine wisdom." The Leader also expressed his pleasure with the renewed formation of relations between Iran and Tunisia due to the visit of the president of this country. "The presence of a respected scholar and academic like Mr. Kais Saied at the helm of Tunisia presents an opportunity for the country to showcase a new and positive image of itself after years of authoritarian rule and disconnection with the Islamic world," he remarked. Referring to the movement of the Tunisian people a few years ago that laid the groundwork for a major movement in North Africa, Ayatollah Khamenei noted, "The Tunisian

people have a great deal of potential for progress and advancement. We hope that with the wisdom of President Kais Saied, the necessary unity between different factions in Tunisia will be established, paving the way for further progress." The Leader then referred to the anti-Zionist stances of the Tunisian president, adding, "Such stances should be developed in the Arab world because unfortunately, these issues are not given enough attention there. We believe that the only way to succeed is through perseverance and steadfastness." Ayatollah Khamenei also highlighted the positive potential for expanding relations between Iran and Tunisia. He acknowledged the previous government's dedication to work, energy, and communication under the late president and expressed confidence that Dr. Mokhber, with his current authority, will further enhance these relationships. He expressed hope that the current cooperation and understanding between the two countries would turn into field collaborations, Khamenei.ir reported. The president of Tunisia, for his part, expressed heartfelt condolences on behalf of the government and people of Tunisia for the recent tragic incident. "Our last meeting with the late President of Iran took place not long ago in Algeria, where we agreed that I would visit Tehran, but I never imagined that I would come to Tehran to offer my condolences for his passing," he stated.

## Raisi Was a Key Regional, Int'l Figure



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has held a phone conversation with Iran's Acting President Mohammad Mokhber to show his sympathy over the martyrdom of president Ebrahim Raisi whom Assad described as a key figure in regional and international arenas. The two spoke on the phone on Thursday, with the Syrian president also extending his condolences over the martyrdom of Iranian foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and several more officials, who along with Raisi, lost their lives in a helicopter crash in northwest Iran at the weekend. Assad said that the Syrian people will always remember Raisi and Amir-Abdollahian for their opposition to cruelty and unilateralism and support for the innocent people in the region and beyond. "Raisi was also a key figure in regional and international arenas, and the resistance front will always remember his support. Martyr Raisi stood against tyranny and always supported the Palestinian cause, which remains as his legacy", the Syrian president said. Assad added that his government announced three days of public mourning for Raisi and his companions to sympathize with the Iranian nation in this great sorrow. Mokhber, on his part, thanked the Syrian government for that measure and expressed gratitude for the Syrian delegation led by Prime Minister Hussein Amous who attended a memorial service for Raisi and other martyrs in Tehran on Wednesday.

## Iran's Progress Continues Without Any Interruption

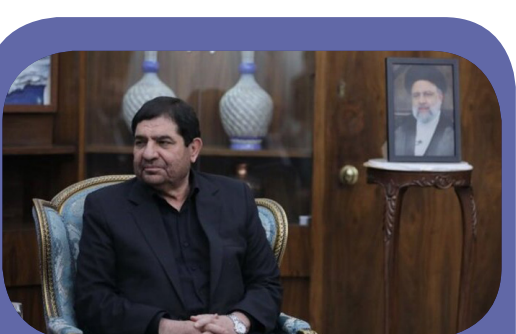


TEHRAN (IP) - Foreign Ministry Spokesman in a message on his X social platform said that there will be no interruption in the progress of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its constructive and effective role in regional and international interactions. Foreign Ministry Spokesman Naser Kanaani, referring to the glorious presence of people in the funeral ceremony of martyred Seyed Ebrahim Raisi and his companions, said: In the recent tragic incident, Iran lost its "people's, competent and hard-working president" and its "active foreign minister". However, under the guidance of wise leadership and a great, grateful nation, there will be no interruption in the progress movement of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its constructive and effective role in regional and international interactions, Kanaani reiterated. The helicopter carrying the Iranian president, Ebrahim Raisi, and his companions, headed to Tabriz, was involved in an accident in the forest area of Dizmar between the villages of Uzi and Pir Dawood.

## Owji Highlights Raisi Oil Industry Priorities

TEHRAN (Shana) - During a talk show on IRIB, Oil Minister Javad Owji explained how the late president, Ayatollah Ibrahim Raisi, was serious about developing oil industry projects. During the program, Owji said that since the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the country had witnessed desirable achievements in the oil sector but none on them was comparable with the great steps were taken during the ruling of the 13th administration; which took office in August 2021 under the leadership of Ayatollah Raisi. Before we come together in 13th administration, my knowledge of the late president Ayatollah Raisi was limited to his activities at holy shrine of Imam Reza but it culminated when he was elected as Iranian president and formed the cabinet in which I was appointed as the minister of petroleum, Owji said. The oil minister said in his televised interview that during the tenure of the 13th administration led by Ibrahim Raisi as the president "we witnessed great leaps forward in view of implementation of oil industry projects, developing upstream and downstream projects including developing oil and

gas fields, relying on domestic capabilities, rising oil exports and specifically paying attention to social responsibility." Raisi insisted on people's participation in the implementation of oil industry projects, he said adding "in the first months of the 13th administration taking office, we travelled to oil-rich regions, where by looking at flares the president got worried and ordered removing gas flares by collecting the associated gases." He continued: we followed the president demand seriously so that at the end of last Iranian calendar year, 1402, 20 March 2024, we succeeded in collecting 11.5 million cubic meters of associated gases per day which is going to rise to 30 million cubic meters a day at the end of current Iranian calendar year on 19 March 2025. Elsewhere in his remarks, he said: energy imbalances, optimizing energy use and joint oil and gas fields development were among the main concerns of the president so that in every meeting we had he was seeking briefing about the progress of the oil industry projects, insisting on rising production and exports, creating jobs as well as oil revenues situation.



## Raisi Taken Important Steps in Boosting Iran-China Relations

TEHRAN (MNA) - In a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping's special representative, Iran's acting president Mohammad Mokhber stated that President Raisi took important steps regarding the expansion of relations between Iran and China. The Deputy Prime Minister of China, in his meeting with the Acting Presidential Informer Mohammad Mokhbar, termed him as a person who played a fundamental role in ensuring the security and development of Iran. Mokhber stated that good conditions had been set for the two countries' cooperation, announcing that unilateralism in the world is over and global equations have found a new form which provided a good opportunity to expand bilateral relations. Expressing his gratitude for the presence of the high-level delegation from Beijing on behalf of Chinese President Xi Jinping at the commemoration ceremony of the martyr Ebrahim Raisi, Mokhber expressed his hope to host the Chinese delegation to follow up and conclude the agreements between the leaders of the two countries in upcoming months. Zhang Guoqing for his part stated that late President Raisi had taken important steps regarding the expansion of relations between Iran and China, adding that China is ready to fully implement the agreements reached by the leaders of the two countries.

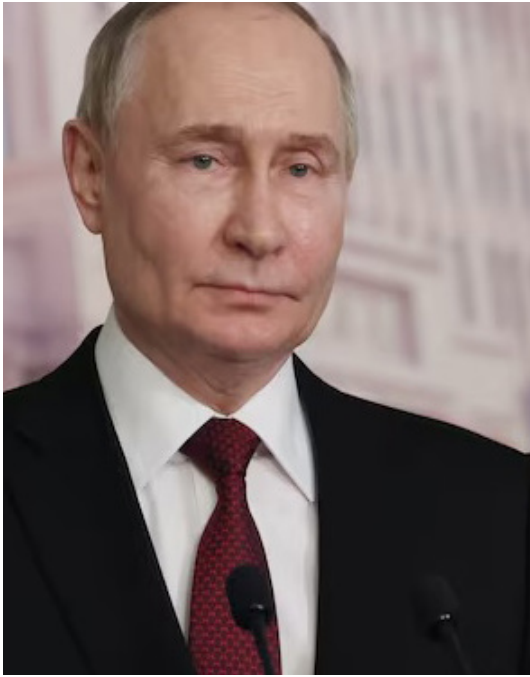


### Japan Inflation Slows to 2.2% in April

TOKYO (Dispatches) - The pace of Japanese inflation slowed in April to 2.2 percent as gas bills fell, government data showed Friday, with the figure remaining above the Bank of Japan's two percent target. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) excluding volatile fresh food prices eased from a 2.6 percent year-on-year rise in prices logged in March by the internal affairs ministry. Friday's figure was in line with market expectations and comes as the weak yen continues to inflate prices for imported goods in Japan. While the United States and other major economies have battled sky-high inflation in recent years, price rises in Japan have been less extreme. The Bank of Japan (BoJ) has continued its ultra-loose monetary stimulus policies - designed to banish stagnation and deflation from the world's number four economy, and targeting sustainable inflation of two percent.



### Putin Decree Outlines Russian Response to Any U.S. Seizure of Frozen Assets



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia will identify U.S. property, including securities, that could be used as compensation for losses sustained as a result of any seizure of frozen Russian assets in the United States, according to a decree signed by President Vladimir Putin on Thursday. G7 negotiators have been discussing for weeks how to best exploit some \$300 billion worth of Russian financial assets, such as major currencies and government bonds, which were frozen shortly after Moscow invaded Ukraine in February 2022. Russia's ability to mete out like-for-like retaliation if Western leaders seize its frozen assets has been eroded by dwindling foreign investment, but it may go after private investors' cash instead, officials and economists told Reuters this month. Thursday's decree stated that the Russian Federation or central bank can ask a Russian court to determine whether its property has been unjustifiably seized and seek compensation. The court would then order for compensation to be transferred in the form of U.S. assets or property in Russia from a list that would be drawn up by Russia's government commission on foreign asset sales.

### Yellen Urges More Ambitious G7 Plans for Russian Assets



STRESA (Dispatches) - U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen urged G7 ministers meeting in Italy to work on "more ambitious options" to use frozen Russian assets to help Ukraine. The ministers and central bankers from the Group of Seven world powers are meeting in Stresa, on the shores of northern Italy's Lake Maggiore, to prepare for a summit of G7 heads of state next month in Puglia. Separately, she said they would also discuss what she considers to be "over-capacity" of key green technologies such as electric vehicles, batteries and solar panels. Top of the agenda is a plan to finance crucial aid to Ukraine using the interest generated by the 300 billion euros (\$325 billion) of Russian central bank assets frozen by the G7 and Europe. The European Union earlier this month approved using the profits from the assets it froze to arm Ukraine, hoping to raise up to three billion euros (\$3.3 billion) a year. In a press conference ahead of the Stresa meeting, Yellen welcomed the plan but added that "we must also continue our collective work on more ambitious options, considering all relevant risks and acting together." She said she wanted "concrete options" to present to G7 leaders meeting from June 13-15: "Failure to take additional action is not an option - not for Ukraine's future and not for the stability of our own economies and the security of our peoples," she said. The United States has proposed granting Ukraine - which has been fighting a Russian invasion for more than two years - up to \$50 billion in loans secured by interest on the assets.

## Israeli Forces Kill Dozens of Palestinians in Gaza Strikes



CAIRO (Dispatches) - Israeli forces killed at least 60 Palestinians in aerial and ground bombardments across the Gaza Strip and battled in close combat with Hamas-led militants in areas of the southern city of Rafah, health officials and Hamas media said. Israeli tanks advanced in Rafah's southeast, edged towards the city's western district of Yibna and continued to operate in three eastern suburbs, residents said. "The occupation (Israeli forces) is trying to move further to the west, they are on the edge of Yibna, which is densely populated. They didn't invade it yet," one resident said, asking not to be named. "We hear explosions and we see black smoke coming up from the areas where the army has invaded. It was another very difficult night," he told Reuters via a chat app. Simultaneous Israeli assaults on the northern and southern edges of Gaza this month have caused a new exodus of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fleeing their homes, and have cut off the main access routes for aid, raising the risk of famine. Israel says it has no choice but to attack Rafah to root out the last battalions of Hamas fighters it believes are sheltering there. "Hamas is in Rafah, Hamas has been holding our hostages in Rafah, which is why our forces are maneuvering in Rafah. We're doing this in a targeted and precise way," Israeli chief military spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel

Hagari said in a statement on Thursday. "We're protecting Gazan civilians in Rafah from being a layer of protection for Hamas, by encouraging them to temporarily evacuate to humanitarian areas... So far we have eliminated dozens of Hamas terrorists, exposed dozens of terror tunnels and destroyed vast amounts of infrastructure." Israeli forces have killed around 180 militants in Rafah so far, Hagari said in a televised news conference. UNRWA, the main United Nations agency in Gaza, estimated as of Monday that more than 800,000 people had fled Rafah since Israel began targeting the city in early May, despite international pleas for restraint. Suze van Meegan, the Norwegian Refugee Council's Emergency Response Leader in Gaza, said many civilians were still stuck. "The city of Rafah is now comprised of three entirely different worlds: the east is an archetypal war zone, the middle is a ghost town, and the west is a congested mass of people living in deplorable conditions," she said in a statement. In parallel, Israeli forces stepped up a ground offensive in Jabalia, where the military has razed several residential areas, and struck nearby Beit Hanoun town, areas where Israel declared major operations over months ago. Israel says it has had to return to prevent Hamas from regrouping there.

## Seven Dead in Russian Strikes on Kharkiv



KHARKIV (Dispatches) - Russia pounded Kharkiv with missiles, killing seven people in a printing house, as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called out his western allies for not providing enough military support to rebuff Russian attacks. Moscow's forces have hammered the northeastern city for months and launched a ground assault into the north of the surrounding region on May 10, an offensive that Kyiv says has stalled on two lines of attack for now. Authorities said Russia fired about 15 missiles at the city and the nearby town of Liubotyln, targeting mostly transport infrastructure and a large printing house in Kharkiv where around 50 people were located at the time of the strike. Smoke poured out of a gaping hole torn in the roof of the structure. Exhausted rescue workers hauled out bodies in plastic bags from the building. Charred pages from books were scattered on the ground. "There are no military facilities either here or nearby," regional governor Oleh Syniehubov told reporters at the scene. Another 28 people were wounded in the attacks, officials said. The regional prosecutor's office said the missiles were launched from Russia's neighbouring Belgorod region, which Russian

forces used to launch their May 10 incursion. The state railway company said six of its workers had also been wounded after several of its facilities in Kharkiv and the region came under attack. Russia also dropped guided bombs on the regional town of Derhachi, damaging private houses and injuring at least another 13 people, officials said. Item 1 of 5 A firefighter washes up his face as he works at a compound of a printworks hit by Russian missile strikes, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kharkiv, Ukraine May 23, 2024. REUTERS/Valentyn Ogirenko In a social media post, Zelenskyy faulted Kyiv's international partners for not providing enough air defence systems or allowing Ukraine to use Western-provided weapons to strike missile launchers inside Russia. "This weakness is not our weakness, but that of the world's, which for the third year already has not dared to deal with the terrorists exactly as they deserve," he said. The Ukrainian leader's rhetoric has grown increasingly frustrated as Kyiv's outmanned and outgunned forces have struggled to fend off fierce Russian assaults along multiple parts of a more than 1,000-kilometre (620 mile) front line.



### In New Caledonia, France's Macron Delays Voting Reform

NOUMEA (Dispatches) - French President Emmanuel Macron said after a day of talks in New Caledonia that he would delay a voting reform that had triggered deadly riots on the French-ruled Pacific island, and try to seek a new political agreement. Speaking in the capital Noumea after meeting local political leaders, Macron said his ultimate aim was still to sign the measure into law, but only if peace returned and a broader pact on the island's future could be forged. "I am committed to ensuring that this reform will not be implemented by force," he said in front of the French High Commission building. At least six people have died in more than a week of riots over the plans that would allow thousands more French residents who have lived in New Caledonia for 10 years to vote. Paris says the measure is needed to improve democracy - almost a quarter of the 271,000 inhabitants identify as European, mainly French. Leaders of the indigenous Kanaks want the reform rescinded over fears it will dilute their vote and make it harder for any future referendum on independence to pass. Macron, who arrived on the island early on Thursday, said his immediate priority was to restore calm, reclaim areas hit by violence and disorder, and help bring about political dialogue. A state of emergency would be lifted if roadblocks were removed, he said.

## China's Military Surrounds Taiwan as Punishment

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China encircled Taiwan with naval vessels and military aircraft in war games aimed at punishing the self-ruled island after its new president vowed to defend democracy. The two days of drills are part of an escalating campaign of intimidation by China that has seen it carry out a series of large-scale military exercises around Taiwan in recent years. The latest show of force is a "strong punishment for the separatist acts of 'Taiwan independence' forces," China's military said as the drills got underway. China - governed by the Communist Party since 1949 - claims Taiwan as part of its territory and has vowed to bring the island under its rule, by force if necessary. Thursday and Friday's drills involve aircraft and ships surrounding the island to test their combat capabilities, China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) said. Taiwan responded by deploying air, ground and sea forces, with the island's defence ministry vowing to "defend freedom". Taiwan's presidential spokeswoman also condemned China's "provocative military behaviour". The drills come after Lai Ching-te was sworn in as Taiwan's new president this week and made an inauguration speech that China denounced as a "confession of independence". "In face of the many threats and attempts of infiltration



from China, we must demonstrate our resolution to defend our nation," Lai said in his speech, while hailing a "glorious" era of democracy. China warned of strong reprisals to Lai's speech, in which he also vowed to continue building Taiwan's defence capabilities. It had previously branded Lai a "dangerous separatist" who would bring "war and decline" to the island.



## Atalanta Stun Leverkusen in Europa League Final



DUBLIN (Dispatches) - Ademola Lookman scored a stunning hat-trick as Atalanta beat Bayer Leverkusen 3-0 in the Europa League final to win just the second major trophy in their 117-year history and end the German champions' remarkable unbeaten streak. Lookman, who struggled to establish himself in the English Premier League with Everton, Fulham and Leicester City before reviving his career in Italy under Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini, struck twice inside the first 26 minutes before sealing the win 15 minutes from fulltime. The victory ended Gasperini's own two-decade long pursuit of major silverware as his side totally outplayed Xabi Alonso's Leverkusen - or 'Neverlusen' as they had been dubbed after going an incredible 51 games unbeaten. But just as they did against Premier League heavyweights Liverpool and three-times finalists Olympique de Marseille in the previous two rounds, Atalanta didn't give their opponents a sniff to mark their first European final with a famous victory. "We needed to be attacking, it was not enough just to defend. We know these teams are great at attacking. Everyone was extraordinary," Gasperini told Sky Sports

Italia, referring to the teams his side beat to become the first Italian winners of the competition since Parma 25 years ago. "The way we did it was the most important thing, we deserved it without a shadow of a doubt against such a strong team. Winning the Europa League is an extraordinary achievement." Leverkusen started the game looking decidedly unsure of themselves and some uncharacteristically sloppy play handed the first chance of the game to Gianluca Scamacca, who didn't get enough on his header from a fine Matteo Ruggeri cross. It was an early warning shot and the purposeful Italians struck within minutes when Davide Zappacosta was allowed far too much space down the right before Lookman beat a flatfooted Exequiel Palacios to the cut back to stroke home the opener. Lookman was mobbed by his team mates and substitutes who were in dreamland 14 minutes later. Another Leverkusen error gifted possession to the Nigeria forward, who skipped past one defender and curled a beautiful right-footed shot into the bottom-right corner from just outside the box.

## Lewandowski Suggests He Will Stay at Barcelona Next Season



BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Barcelona forward Robert Lewandowski has suggested he will remain at the LaLiga club next season and said he hopes to contribute to his side's ambitions for silverware. Lewandowski joined Barca from Bayern Munich in 2022 for around 43 million euros (\$46.54 million) in a deal set to expire in June 2026 and has since helped them win the league title last season as well as the Spanish Super Cup. The 35-year-old ended his debut season as the league's top scorer with 23 goals and has scored 18 goals in Barcelona's current trophy-less campaign. Uncertainties about Lewandowski's future at the club have grown since manager Xavi initially announced his departure in January, only to backtrack in April. Barcelona are also dealing with economic challenges, with a bloated wage bill and a 1.6 billion euro (\$1.7 billion) renovation project at the Camp Nou stadium having increased the financial strain this term. "Of course, for me it is super clear. I want to win many titles with Barcelona and I am sure that next season we will be even stronger and we will also win titles," Lewandowski told Mundo Deportivo on Wednesday when asked about rumours of a potential exit. "I always want the best, not just for me, but for my teammates and I am sure that this team will win titles next season because I see what we do each day."

## Doncic and Irving Lead Mavs to Game One Win Over Minnesota

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Luka Doncic and Kyrie Irving combined for 63 points as the Dallas Mavericks won game one of the Western Conference finals with a 108-105 victory at the Minnesota Timberwolves. Doncic delivered his best when it mattered in the fourth quarter where he made 15 of his 33 points while Irving had set the tone early with 24 of his 30 points coming in the first half. Karly-Anthony Towns and Anthony Edwards, the main points threat for the Timberwolves, were limited by the Dallas defense. Edwards had 19 points and Towns had 16 and together they shot 12 for 36 from the field. Minnesota took a 102-98 lead with 3:37 left in the fourth after a 24-foot three-pointer from Edwards. Dallas responded with eight unanswered points, P.J. Washington made a three-pointer from the corner and then a step-back jump shot from Doncic made it 106-102. "We had to work really hard to get this one," said Doncic. "I think we're known for losing game ones, so we were trying to make a point. But it's only one and we have three more to go," added the Slovenian, who was quick to praise Irving for his contribution. "He got us going, without him we probably would be down 20 at half-time. I had to help him in the second half so we switched roles this time," he said with a grin. Irving conceded he had been fired up by the comments from Edwards after the Timberwolves' game

seven win over last year's champions, the Denver Nuggets. Edwards said during a television interview that "I got Kyrie", comments that were noted by the Mavericks star. "I used it as a motivation. When I was sitting at home and I saw that, it was like just a nod of respect. I knew what type of game it was going to be," Irving said.



## Verstappen Seeks Qualified Success at Monaco



MONTE CARLO (Dispatches) - A week after winning by less than a second at Imola, Max Verstappen will be keener than ever to extend his record-equalling run of eight pole positions at the Monaco Grand Prix. The three-time world champion and current series leader overcame two days of disappointing form in practice to snatch pole at the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix, equalling the record of Ayrton Senna in the process. That feat gave him an advantage that he turned into victory for Red Bull by just seven-tenths of a second ahead of Lando Norris of McLaren who followed his maiden win in Miami with a convincing late attack in Italy. Verstappen knows he is in a fight at every race now and that he will need to do it again on Saturday on the narrow and unforgiving barrier-lined streets of the Mediterranean principality where qualifying has more influence than anywhere else on the Formula One calendar. "It is so unique," he said. "Completely different. It was incredibly close in Imola and at Monaco it is always very hectic. You need to really nail it in qualifying to get a lap together, to get the tyres to work and it is always very tricky." Monaco is so very special and a special challenge. "Another pole would give Verstappen the outright record of nine consecutive poles, including one at Abu Dhabi last year, and eight at the start of a season. Verstappen will be bidding to repeat his victory in last year's race on a track where Red Bull have won the last three contests, the Dutchman twice and team-mate Sergio Perez in 2022. However, they start this weekend fearing their easy domination may be over. Both McLaren and Ferrari are hunting them down with Charles Leclerc claiming he is confident that the "scarlet scuderia" will be strong on his home town track where his school bus drove on the circuit with him on board. After a run of wretched luck, the 26-year-old Monegasque driver is still seeking his first podium finish in his home event, but he took pole in 2021 and believes his upgraded Ferrari can help him succeed this year. "Monaco is so specific that we need to start a little bit from a blank page," said Leclerc. "Free practice is super, super important to build the pace little by little, but I am confident we will be strong." "It's very special for me, of course, even though it hasn't been a successful place for me."

## Djokovic Eases past Hanfmann in Geneva Open

LONDON (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic celebrated his 37th birthday with a 6-3 6-3 win over German Yannick Hanfmann in the second round of the Geneva Open. The world number one, who accepted a late wildcard to compete at the ATP 250 tournament this week after a less than ideal run-up to next week's French Open, was stopped in his tracks by rain as he attempted to serve out the first set. The Serb returned to court following the hour-long break to claim the first set with two aces in a row. But showing that he was still unable to shake off his recent struggles, Djokovic, who saved seven break points during the opening set, dropped serve early in the second to trail 3-0. The 24-time Grand Slam champion eventually recovered to reel off six games in a row to seal his 1,100th tour-level match win. The Serb is only the third man to achieve this milestone behind Jimmy Connors' 1274 wins and Roger Federer's 1251. "The key to win was the birthday, it probably wouldn't be the same if I didn't win," said Djokovic after organizers gave him a birthday cake. "It's nice to be here in this tournament for the first time, with my family here coming to support. I'm getting some quality time on and off the court." "Grateful to all the people that came today and thank you for singing happy birthday that really touched me." Djokovic requested the Geneva wildcard after he was hammered in Rome in the last 32 by little-known journeyman Alejandro Tabilo two days after a freak accident in which he was hit on the head by a fan's water bottle while signing autographs.

