

The UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in Its Latest Report Revealed a Considerable Growth in the Arrival of Foreign Tourists in Iran Last Year, Saying That About Six Million Foreign Tourists Visited the Country in 2023

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Iran's Judiciary Spokesman Announced That Iran Declared Readiness to Host the 20th Meeting of Chief Justices of the Supreme Courts of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Member States for 2026

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Qalibaf Re-Elected as Majlis Speaker



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's parliament has re-elected Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf as its speaker for a one-year period. He was reinstated with 197 votes out of 287. The election came a day after the parliament's inaugural session and oath taking ceremony of the 290 newly-elected members. Qalibaf's reinstatement comes ahead of early presidential vote as a snap election has been set for June 28 following the martyrdom of President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash on May 19. The new parliament started its four-year term on Monday with a message from the Leader of the Islamic Revolution. In his message, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei called the parliament, known as Majlis, manifestation of religious democracy continuity in Iran, and told the lawmakers to preserve the country's national interests. Iran's parliamentary elections were held in March. 245 candidates won the race in the first round of balloting. The final make-up of the legislative body was determined after a run-off held on May 10th. A trained pilot, Qalibaf was a commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) during the Iraqi imposed war in the 1980s. He also served as the head of the IRGC's construction arm, Khatam al-Anbia, the commander of the IRGC's air force, the police chief and the mayor of Tehran. Qalibaf also ran presidential campaigns in 2005, 2013 and 2017.

Iran Witnesses Sustainable Economic Growth



TEHRAN - The Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance said that Iran's economic growth has reached the stage of sustainable economic growth in the last 4 years. Ehsan Khandouzi, at the beginning of his weekly press conference said: "Last month, the World Bank confirmed in a report published that Iran's economic growth in the last 4 years has reached the stage of sustainable economic growth." He then added: "In the same report of the World Bank, it was confirmed that the poverty rate of Iran has decreased by 7.4% in the last 2 years, from 29.3% to 21.9%." Approximately 6.5 million people have moved out of the poverty threshold, he said. "This means that approximately 6.5 million people have moved out of the poverty line. The economic spokesman of the government added: "The change in the direction of economic growth from the unstable conditions of the 1390s (in the Iranian calendar) to stable and stable conditions has been emphasized and confirmed in the World Bank report." He went on to say that at least 6.5 million Iranians have climbed above poverty line thanks to the administration's successful policies, the economy minister said. Khandouzi said the administration's initiatives

have lifted up 6.5 million Iranians out of poverty in the past few years. Citing a recent report from the World Bank, he said Iran's economic growth during the past four years has reached a stable stage and has become "resilient." In a report released in April, the World Bank said Iran's economic growth has proven resilient over the past four years, despite the ongoing economic sanctions. While Iran's economy has benefited from improved oil sector growth, the non-oil sector, notably services and manufacturing, has been the main driver of growth, it said. According to the World Bank, poverty in Iran has declined as the economy has recovered between 2020/21 and 2022/23. "Over two years, poverty as measured at the US \$6.85 poverty line, declined by a cumulative 7.4 percentage points to 21.9 percent in 2022/23, meaning an estimated 6.5 million (Iranian) people were lifted out of poverty," the World Bank said. "A combination of increased wages, an increase in self-employed earnings, and a top-up to the national cash-transfer program contributed to the growth in consumption and the corresponding reduction in poverty," the report said about Iran.

Acting FM Urges Muslim Elite's Pressure on Israel to End Gaza Brutalities



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's acting Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani has called upon scholars in the Muslim world to explore all available avenues and exert more pressure on the Israeli regime in order to stop its onslaught against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Bagheri Kani made the appeal during a meeting with former Iraqi prime minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi in Tehran on Monday evening. During the meeting, the Iranian diplomat pointed to the strategic changes and developments that have taken shape at regional and international levels following Operation al-Aqsa Storm launched by Gaza-based Palestinian resistance groups on October 7 last year, and Operation True Promise, through which Iran made Israel pay the cost of the criminal attack against its embassy in the Syrian capital. On April 1, the Israeli regime carried out terrorist airstrikes on the consular section of Iran's embassy in the Syrian capital Damascus, which killed two IRGC generals, Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Zahedi and General Mohammad Hadi Haji Rahimi, as well as five of their accompanying officers. In retaliation, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) targeted the occupied territories on April 13 with a barrage of missiles and drones. The retaliatory strikes, dubbed Operation True Promise, inflicted damage on Israeli military bases across the occupied Palestinian territories. Bagheri Kani underlined that prominent thinkers and elites of the Muslim world must play much greater role, and heap pressure on Israel and its sponsors, above all the United States, so that the occupying regime would stop its crimes and genocide in Palestinian territories. The acting Iranian foreign minister also emphasized the outstanding and undeniable role that late top Iranian anti-terror commander General Qassem Soleimani, late President Ebrahim Raisi and late Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian played in supporting the Axis Of Resistance, and reiterated that the Islamic Republic of Iran will unwaveringly continue the principled approach.

Commander Unveils Plan to Modernize Iranian Arms



TEHRAN (MNA) - The Iranian Army Ground Force has devised plans to update and renovate its weapons with modern and homegrown technologies, a senior commander said. During a visit to the base of a mechanized brigade in southeastern Iran on Tuesday, Army Ground Force Commander Brigadier General Kiomars Heidari highlighted the Army's "serious and effective" cooperation with the scientific and academic centers to keep pace with advanced technologies. It is inevitable for the Army Ground Force to employ modern technologies, the general said, noting that his forces are pushing to design and manufacture weapons at the cutting edge of technology. He said the Army Ground Force's strategy entails the acquisition of weapons and equipment that can hit targets in long ranges with precision strikes, are smart, and can be automated and integrated into networks. The modern weapons are designed to enable the Army Ground Force to respond to any threat or act of aggression against the Iranian borders within the shortest time and in the most effective and decisive manner possible, the general stated. In a meeting with a group of top military commanders in 2023, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei called on the Iranian Armed Forces to keep enhancing their preparedness in all areas and not cease making progress because the threats of the enemies will never fade away. Ayatollah Khamenei, the commander-in-chief of the Iranian Armed Forces, stressed that military preparedness will act as deterrence against the enemies, calling for vigilance in the face of the elements masterminding plots.

OIC Urges UNSC to Assume Responsibilities After Rafah Massacre

JEDDAH (Dispatches) - The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has denounced the Israeli military's recent airstrike on tents housing displaced people in the city of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip as a "heinous massacre," calling on the UN Security Council to assume its responsibilities to force the regime into stopping its acts of aggression. The 57-member OIC said in a statement on Tuesday that those responsible for the war crime attack on the camp in Rafah must be held to account and face international criminal law. "The Secretary-General held the Israeli occupation accountable for the consequences of its crimes, terrorist practices, and brutal attacks against the Palestinian people, which are inconsistent with all human values," the intergovernmental body noted. "The OIC renewed its call on the international community, especially the UN Security Council, to assume its responsibilities in compelling Israel, to implement the orders of the International Court of Justice to stop this Israeli aggression immediately," it added. Rafah, situated on Gaza's southern border with Egypt, is home to about a million displaced Palestinians who have fled from the rest of the besieged territory amid a genocidal Israeli war. The Rafah carnage came two days after the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordered Israel to "immediately" halt its military offensive in the area. Meanwhile, the United Nations humanitarian chief has hit out at Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu for claiming that the recent deadly aerial assault in Rafah was a "mistake," saying the carnage was possibly the "most cruel

abomination." UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths made the remarks on Monday, one day after the Israeli strike hit a camp for displaced Palestinians in the southern Gaza city and killed at least 50 people and wounded 200 others. Terrifying scenes of tents in flames and burned victims, many of whom were women and children, sparked an international outcry. However, Netanyahu called the air raid a "tragic mistake" and claimed that Israel was investigating the incident. "Whether the attack was a war crime or a 'tragic mistake,' for the people of Gaza, there is no debate. What happened last night was the latest - and possibly most cruel - abomination," Griffiths said in a statement. "To call it 'a mistake' is a message that means nothing for those killed, those grieving, and those trying to save lives," he added. The UN relief chief also pointed to the widespread warnings of a slaughter ahead of Israel's incursion into Rafah, saying, "We've seen the consequences in last night's utterly unacceptable attack." Israel launched the war on Gaza on October 7 after Palestinian resistance groups carried out a surprise retaliatory operation into the occupied territories. Concomitantly with the war, the regime has been enforcing a near-total siege on the coastal territory, which has reduced the flow of foodstuffs, medicine, electricity, and water into the Palestinian territory into a trickle. So far during the military onslaught, the regime has killed at least 36,050 Gazans, most of them women, children, and adolescents. Another 81,026 Palestinians have sustained injuries as well.



U.S. to Suspend Gaza Aid Deliveries by Sea After Pier Suffers Damage



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The U.S. military has suspended aid deliveries by sea to Gaza after bad weather damaged the temporary pier it had set up on the besieged territory's coast, U.S. media reports say. NBC said in its report, which cited a United Nations official, that the U.S. military was expected to make the announcement later on Tuesday. Bad weather and high tides caused significant damage to the frecky structure. The U.S. military earlier said four army vessels supporting the Gaza pier mission were affected by heavy sea states. The U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) said two of the vessels were anchored on the beach near the pier and the other two were beached near Ashkelon in the 1948 Israeli-occupied territories. Videos have gone viral showing parts of US vessels and the pier itself floating in different areas. Last week, three US service members were injured during pier operations with two suffering minor injuries. The third trooper was medically evacuated to an Israeli hospital for further treatment and is in critical condition. President Joe Biden ordered the construction of a temporary pier in what U.S. officials said was a bid to "surge" assistance to the Palestinians. The construction of the \$320-million floating pier was completed in mid-May to provide aid to the Gaza Strip. The structure had failed to have any meaningful impact on the Palestinian population in Gaza. The aid delivered had fallen significantly short of the requirements outlined by the United Nations. This has raised concerns among US lawmakers and critics, who question the project's effectiveness. The construction of the pier was criticized as an attempt to distract attention from Israel's deliberate blockade of land crossings to Gaza and its using starvation as a weapon against 2.3 million Palestinians trapped in the area.

IRAN NEWS



Chinese Investors Invited to Build Hotels in Isfahan

ISFAHAN (IRNA) - A government official in Iran's Isfahan Province has invited Chinese investors to build hotels there as part of efforts to develop tourism in the historical province. Amir Karamzadeh, head of Isfahan's Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, was speaking on Monday as he hosted a Chinese delegation from Gansu province. He said that Isfahan, as the seventh largest province located in central Iran, is already a tourist hub as it hosts more than 22,000 historical sites. Our province needs 200 new hotels as part of measures to develop tourism, Karamzadeh said, adding that provincial officials are ready to give guarantees to the Chinese investors helping in the construction of those hotels. The Iranian official also proposed the establishment of direct flights between Isfahan and Gansu in a bid to develop tourism in both provinces.

Workgroup for Depicting Teacher-Student System Starts at SCCR



TEHRAN - At the order of Hojatoleslam Dr. Khosrow Panah, Secretary of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution (SCCR), the workgroup for elaborating the teacher-student system started its activities with the management of the head of University of Islamic-Iranian Arts, Master Mahmoud Farshchian. According to the public relations of the SCCR, study, approval and announcing the teacher-student system is one of the important achievements of the 13th government in the field of reinforcing the education system, boost in developing higher education with focus on increasing the skill and training the committed specialists and artists that bore fruit due to efforts of the secretary of the council, the Azad University, Science Ministry and elites of Master Farshchian University. However, in line with materializing the policies of the SCCR, institutionalizing increasing the skill and reinforcing education system of the country, Dr. Khosrow Panah in a letter to the related ministries and organs of the government emphasized using and deployment of this education system. Meanwhile in the session, Dr. Mohammad Yazdaneh was appointed as the deputy head of the workgroup, Dr. Mehdi Khanke as scientific secretary and Majid Talimi as the executive secretary for setting up the workinggroup and pursuing the tasked affairs.



Tehran, Muscat Have Potential to Multiply Trade

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran and Oman have untapped economic potential which they can use to multiply their economic and trade relations, Acting President Mohammad Mokhber has said. The two countries enjoy brotherly and historical ties, but there is still unused potential that both sides can use to further strengthen their cooperation, especially in the economy sector, he added. Mokhber made the remarks on Monday as he hosted talks with Oman's Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad al-Busaidi and his accompanying delegation, who visited Tehran to pay respect to martyred president Ebrahim Raisi and his entourage killed in a recent copter crash. He also expressed gratitude to Oman for its sympathy with the Iranian people and government over the martyrdom of President Raisi and his companions, including Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian. Badr bin Hamad al-Busaidi said that he had conveyed Omani King Haitham bin Tariq's message of sympathy to Iran's Supreme Leader, as well as officials and people, over the tragic incident in which Oman lost its close friends. He also said that relations between the two countries are strategic and important, adding that Muscat is willing to expand

ties with Tehran further. Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Abbas Ali-Abadi has said the value of trade between Iran and Oman is targeted to become \$5 billion. Saying that signing a preferential trade agreement with Oman is being followed up, the minister said: "Our trade with Oman is targeted to be \$3.5 billion first and then \$5 billion." Iran and Oman have signed two memorandums of understanding (MOU) to boost bilateral cooperation and emphasize the importance of using their national currencies in mutual trade instead of the dollar. The mentioned MOUs were signed during the two countries' 20th Joint Economic Committee meeting in Tehran on December 6, 2023. In May 2023, the two countries signed four cooperation documents in various areas including energy, investment, and free zones during the official visit of Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq al-Said to Tehran. The document on the energy sector was signed by Iran's Oil Minister Javad Oji and Omani Minister of Energy and Minerals Salim bin Nasser al-Aufi.

The two countries also signed three other documents to cooperate in the economic, investment, and free zones sectors.

Russia Emphasizes Need for Enhanced Trade With Iran

TEHRAN (dispatches) - Russian Consul General in Isfahan Andrey Zhiltsov has highlighted the need to increase the trade volume between Iran and Russia, saying the current trade volume does not live up to the capacities. Zhiltsov said in an exclusive interview with IRNA that the trade volume between Iran and Russia is a little over four billion dollars, which is insignificant considering the existing capacity. He said the joint Iran-Russia economic commission emphasized the need to expand bilateral cooperation in space, aviation, shipbuilding, peaceful nuclear energy, oil and gas production and refining, transportation, science, medicine, agriculture, finance, education, culture, and tourism sectors. He also pointed out that some 6.5 million Russian tourists visited Turkiye in 2023, but only 10,000 Russians toured Iran in the same year, calling for joint efforts to increase the figure. The consul general also noted that the two friendly states could play a key role in creating a new world order free from unilateralism to guarantee a just world. In the current situation, Iran and Russia's support for each other at the international level is of great importance, he said, adding that holding different

economic, political, scientific, and sports events is a strategic endeavor to this end. Zhiltsov also referred to the articulation of a roadmap to pave the way for improving cooperation between Iran's Isfahan and Russia's Tatarstan cities, adding that the Russian consulate general in Isfahan plans to expand collaborations with Iran's chamber of commerce, higher education, and religious centers. He also noted that the two sides intend to develop relations among different Russian regions with Iranian provinces such as Yazd and Kerman. The Russian official noted that Isfahan is a wonderful, cultural, authentic, clean, cozy, and comfortable city, and called for more cooperation between Isfahan and Saint Petersburg. The value of Iran's exports to Russia rose 26 percent in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), as compared to the preceding year, an official with Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) said. Akbar Godari said that 2.185 million tons of products worth \$946 million were exported to Russia in the previous Iranian year, while a year earlier the Islamic Republic had exported only 1.436 million tons of goods valued at \$751 million to the country.



IRGC Quds Force Commander Pays Tribute to Martyred FM Amir-Abdollahian



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Brigadier General Ismail Qa'ani visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to honor the memory of the martyred Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian. Brigadier General Qa'ani held talks with Iran's Acting Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani in his visit to the Foreign Ministry on Tuesday. IRGC Quds Force commander hailed Martyr Amir-Abdollahian's efforts in supporting the diplomacy of the resistance movement and the oppressed people of Palestine. Iran's Acting Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani expressed gratitude for the presence of IRGC Quds Force commander at the Foreign Ministry. He emphasized the strength and efforts of the IRGC Quds as an integral part of Iran's power. Bagheri Kani also highlighted the importance of cooperation and synergy between the field and diplomacy as essential components of the country's authority. Ebrahim Raisi, the eighth president of Iran, was martyred after the helicopter carrying him and his companions, including Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, crashed in the Varzaqan region in the northwestern Iranian province of East Azarbaijan on May 19.

Iran, Russia Stress Boosting Cooperation on Security Issues



TEHRAN (IP) - In a phone conversation, the heads of the National Security Councils of Russia and Iran conferred on boosting bilateral security cooperation. The heads of the Iranian and Russian security councils held phone talks to stress boosting security cooperation between the two sides. Ali Akbar Ahmadian, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) of Iran held a phone conversation with Sergei Shoigu, head of the National Security Council of Russia on Tuesday. Shoigu expressed his condolences to the government and people of Iran over the tragic martyrdom of the late president and his companions and expressed his sympathy on the part of the Russian government to the Iranian government. The Russian official emphasized the continuation of high-level cooperation between the two countries in various fields. Ahmadian wished Sergei Shoigu success in his new post. The Iranian official announced readiness for the two National Security Councils to materialize the goals set by the leaders of the two countries in further improving relations. The SNSC secretary also invited his Russian counterpart to visit Tehran.



Islamic Countries Need to Unify to Benefit From Common Trade Interests

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - President of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Samad Hassanzadeh has stressed the need for Islamic countries to unify in line with common trade interests. Hassanzadeh made the remarks addressing the 36th Board of Directors meeting of the Islamic Chamber for Commerce and Development (ICCD) in Amman, Jordan, on Monday. He said that further dialogue and cooperation within the framework of ICCD will boost peace and stability in the Muslim world and strengthen trade mechanisms among OIC countries. Noting that Iran is scheduled to host the 40th edition of the ICCD General Assembly and the 5th Conference on Health Tourism of Islamic Countries, Hassanzadeh invited all the member states to attend these events. He hailed the mission of the ongoing event which he said aims to gather together the private sectors of the Muslim countries to help intensify cooperation in the areas of trade, commerce, information technology, banking, investment opportunities and joint cooperation.

Romanian Ruling Coalition Ahead in European Election Poll

BUCHAREST (Dispatches) - Romania's ruling coalition of leftist Social Democrats (PSD) and centre-right Liberals (PNL) are tipped to get 43.7% of votes in the June 9 European Parliament election, an opinion poll showed on Tuesday, with the opposition hard right AUR in second place. The survey by pollster INSCOP showed that 17.5% of Romanians would vote for the Alliance for Uniting Romanians (AUR), a hard right group founded five years ago which opposes migration and military aid for Ukraine. European Union member Romania holds local and European elections on June 9, with parliamentary and presidential polls later this year. The two ruling parties are running on joint lists in the European election in a bid to stem gains for AUR, which swept into parliament for the first time in the last national election in 2020 with 9% of votes and has seen its support continue to rise as multiple crises have eroded trust in state institutions. "AUR positions itself against the political establishment, capitalising on voters' frustration, which has been acute in recent years," said political commentator Radu Magdin. "However, we must also take into account the high numbers of undecided voters, which may influence results last-minute."



Countries at Odds Over How to Reignite Pandemic Agreement



GENEVA (Dispatches) - Countries aired stark differences Tuesday on where to go next in trying to strike a global agreement for handling future pandemics, after missing a deadline to finalize a deal. While nations are keen to build on progress made towards an accord on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, fault lines emerged on charting the course to an eventual agreement. Africa and the United States were notably far apart on how long the process should take, as countries took stock of the situation at the annual World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva. African nations spoke as one to say they wanted to seize the growing momentum and get the agreement finished in the coming months, while Washington urged countries to take their time to work out the best possible deal, suggesting the process could take up to two years. Rattled by the devastation caused by Covid-19 - which killed millions of people, shredded economies and crippled health systems - countries have spent two years trying to reach binding commitments for tackling future pandemics. But the negotiations ended last Friday without finalising a deal. The deadline was this week's WHA, a gathering of the World Health Organization's 194 member states and its supreme decision-making body. The assembly commissioned the drafting of a pandemic accord in December 2021. Roland Driessche of the Netherlands and Precious Matsoso of South Africa co-chaired the nine rounds of pandemic agreement talks. On Tuesday, they delivered the latest draft to the assembly, showing 17 of its 34 articles fully approved by countries. "Today we had hoped that we could say we're done, we're finishing this and we delivered on our mandate, but we are not there yet," Driessche said. "Let's finish this as soon as we can... because we owe that to all the people who suffered during the Covid pandemic."

South Africa's representative, speaking for 47 African countries, said the continent demanded equity in the agreement.

Georgian Parliament Votes to Override Presidential Veto of Foreign Agent Bill



TBILISI (Dispatches) - Georgia's parliament voted on Tuesday to override a presidential veto of a bill on "foreign agents" that has plunged the South Caucasus country into crisis, ignoring criticism from the West which says the legislation is authoritarian and Russian-inspired. The vote to ignore the objections of Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili, whose powers are mostly ceremonial, sets the stage for the speaker of parliament to sign the bill into law in the coming days. In an address after the vote, Zourabichvili, who is trying to broker an alliance of opposition parties to contest parliamentary elections on Oct 26, said ruling party lawmakers had chosen "Russian slavery", and encouraged people to vote them out at the polls. The dispute about the draft law has come to be seen as a key test of whether Georgia, for three decades among the most pro-Western of the Soviet Union's successor states, would maintain its Western orientation, or pivot instead to Russia. The bill would require organisations receiving more than 20% of their funding from overseas to register as "agents of foreign influence", while also introducing punitive fines for violations, as well as onerous disclosure requirements. The Georgian government says the bill is necessary to promote transparency and to stop what it describes as a plot by Western countries to drag Georgia into a war with Russia. Thousands of opponents of the bill gathered outside the fortress-like parliament building during voting on Tuesday for the latest in a series of demonstrations that are among the largest in Georgia since it won independence from Moscow in 1991 as the Soviet Union crumbled.

Israeli Tanks Hit Evacuation Zone West of Rafah

CAIRO (Dispatches) - Israel's military denied striking a tent camp west of the city of Rafah on Tuesday after Gaza health authorities said Israeli tank shelling had killed at least 21 people there, in what Israel has designated a civilian evacuation zone. Earlier, defying an appeal from the International Court of Justice (ICJ), Israeli tanks advanced to the heart of Rafah for the first time after a night of heavy bombardment, while Spain, Ireland and Norway officially recognised a Palestinian state, a move that further deepened Israel's international isolation. The United States, Israel's closest ally, reiterated its opposition to a major Israeli ground offensive in Rafah but said it did not believe such an operation was underway. Two days after an Israeli airstrike on another camp stirred global condemnation, Gaza emergency services said four tank shells hit a cluster of tents in Al-Mawasi, a coastal strip that Israel had advised civilians in Rafah to move to for safety. At least 12 of the dead were women, according to medical officials in the Hamas militant-run Palestinian enclave. But Israel's military later said in a statement: "Contrary to the reports from the last few hours, the IDF (Israel Defence Forces) did not strike in the Humanitarian Area in Al-Mawasi." Tuesday's incident in Al-Mawasi occurred in an area designated by Israel as an expanded humanitarian zone. Israel had urged Palestinian civilians in Rafah, including around one million displaced by the almost eight-month-old war, to evacuate there when it launched its incursion in early May. In central Rafah, tanks and armoured vehicles mounted with machine guns were spotted near Al-Awda mosque, a city landmark, witnesses told Reuters. The Israeli military said its forces continued to operate in the Rafah area, without commenting on reported advances into the city centre. International unease over Israel's three-week-old Rafah offensive has turned to outrage after an attack on Sunday set off a blaze in a tent camp in a western district of the city, killing at least 45 people. Israel said it had targeted two senior Hamas operatives and had not intended to cause civilian casualties. Global leaders voiced horror at the fire in a designated "humanitarian zone" of Rafah

where families uprooted by fighting elsewhere had sought shelter, and urged the implementation of a World Court order last week for a halt to Israel's assault. The Israeli military said it was investigating the possibility that munitions stored near a compound targeted by Sunday's airstrike may have ignited and touched off the blaze. Residents said Rafah's Tel Al-Sultan neighbourhood, the scene of Sunday's night-time strike in which tents and shelters were set ablaze as families settled down to sleep, was still being bombed. "Tank shells are falling everywhere in Tel Al-Sultan. Many families have fled their houses in western Rafah under fire throughout the night," one resident told Reuters via a chat app. The Biden administration said on Tuesday it was closely monitoring the probe into Sunday's air strike. U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris said: "The word tragic doesn't even begin to describe" what happened on Sunday. But White House spokesman John Kirby said there was nothing in the incidents on Sunday or on Tuesday that would prompt the United States to halt its military aid to Israel. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres added his voice to the chorus of condemnation of Sunday's strike and again urged Israel to allow "the immediate, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need". In a further blow to aid efforts, a part of the U.S. military's pier off Gaza's coast has broken off, probably due to bad weather, rendering it temporarily inoperable, two U.S. officials said. The United Nations has transported 137 trucks of aid from the pier since it began operations two weeks ago. Spain, Norway and Ireland said they hoped their decision to recognise a Palestinian state would speed up efforts towards securing a ceasefire in Israel's war against Hamas militants, which has reduced much of the densely populated territory to rubble. Egypt is again trying in tandem with Qatar and the U.S. to revive talks on a ceasefire and the release of hostages held by Hamas, but efforts have been hampered by Israel's assault on Rafah, Cairo's state-affiliated Al-Qahera News TV channel said on Tuesday, citing a senior official.

OIC Holds the 12th ICTM in Khiva



TASHKENT - The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) will hold the 12th Session of the Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers (ICTM) on 2nd June 2024, in the Republic of Uzbekistan, specifically in Khiva City, designated as the OIC City of Tourism. The theme for this session is: "Development of the Tourism Industry in a Sustainable and Resilient Way". H.E. the Secretary-General of the OIC, Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, is to address the Opening Session of the 12th ICTM. Meanwhile, the preparatory meetings for the 12th ICTM will commence on 31st May 2024. These meetings will start with the 9th Coordination Committee Meeting on Tourism, followed by the Senior Officials Meeting that will focus on developing decisions

through 3 working Sessions concluding with a Closing Session on 1st June 2024. The draft resolutions of the meeting will then be submitted to the 12th ICTM on 2 June 2024. The 12th ICTM will feature two working Sessions in addition to the Closing Session. The Conference will implement the OIC Framework for Development and Cooperation in the Domain of Tourism. Furthermore, the 12th ICTM will also select the winners of the OIC City of Tourism Award for the years 2025 and 2026. The conference will also discuss the implementation of the Strategic Roadmap for the development of Islamic tourism and will review progress in this industry, as well as, discuss achievements in the tourism infrastructure projects.



Thousands Protest as Taiwan's Parliament Passes Contested Reforms

TAIPEI (Dispatches) - Thousands of people protested outside Taiwan's parliament on Tuesday after it passed a reform package to increase oversight of the government pushed by the opposition but opposed by the ruling party, which did not have the numbers to block it. The peaceful protests, and sometimes violent confrontations in parliament over the reforms, have been taking place against a backdrop of broader concern about efforts by China, which views Taiwan as its own territory, to influence the island's politics. The Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) Lai Ching-te won the presidency in January elections, but the party lost its majority in parliament. Taiwan's main opposition party, the Kuomintang (KMT), along with the small Taiwan People's Party, together have the most seats. The parliament reforms give lawmakers the power to ask the military, private companies or individuals to disclose information deemed relevant by parliamentarians. They also criminalise contempt of parliament by government officials, and require the president to give regular reports to parliament and answer lawmakers' questions, which would be a first for Taiwan. The DPP says the reforms were forced through without proper consultation and their content either vague or an over-reach of power, and on Tuesday its lawmakers threw garbage bags and paper planes at their opposition counterparts. "You can seize parliament but you cannot seize public opinion," DPP parliament leader Ker Chien-ming said in an address to the chamber, adding that Beijing had influenced Taiwanese politics. Opposition lawmakers, holding sun-shaped balloons, shouted "let sunlight into parliament". Both parties covered the chamber with banners. The KMT has denounced the DPP for trying to "paint them red", the colour of China's Communist Party, and says the DPP is trying to stymie efforts to investigate corruption cases and sow unfounded fears about the reforms.

Macron Says Kyiv Should Be Allowed to Neutralize Russian Military Bases

PARIS (Dispatches) - President Vladimir Putin said Tuesday that there would be "serious consequences" if Western countries allowed Ukraine to use their weapons to strike targets in Russia, as sought by Kyiv. The warning came as French President Emmanuel Macron said Kyiv should be allowed to "neutralise" Russian military bases from where Kremlin troops are firing missiles into Ukraine, and as President Volodymyr Zelensky urged the world not to tire of the war. Putin's comments came after some NATO members as well as the alliance's chief Jens Stoltenberg have called to allow Ukraine to use their arms to step up attacks on Russian soil, after more than two years of war. "This constant escalation can lead to serious consequences," Putin said during a visit to Uzbekistan. "In Europe, especially in small countries, they should be aware of what they are playing with," he said, noting that many European countries had "small territory" and a "dense population". "And this factor, which they should keep in mind before they talk about striking deep into Russian territory, is a serious thing," he said. He added that even if Ukraine's forces carried out the strikes, responsibility for them would lie with Western suppliers of the weapons. Putin also said that while he believed Western military instructors were already in Ukraine operating undercover



as mercenaries, any move by countries to send them officially would be another "escalation" and "another step towards a serious conflict in Europe, towards a global conflict". Ukraine's top commander announced Monday that talks were being held with France on sending military instructors to the country. Putin warned that "we will do what we think is necessary regardless of who is on the territory of Ukraine". EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell said after a meeting of EU defence ministers in Brussels that European countries remained split on sending military instructors to Ukraine. Countries including Germany oppose taking a step they fear could potentially drag them closer to direct conflict with a nuclear-armed Russia. EU countries have trained 50,000 Ukrainian troops outside the war-torn country under a bloc-wide mission set up in 2022. Zelensky has been pressing Western allies to provide longer-range missiles and other material for striking deeper into Russia in a bid to cripple its military and industrial capacity. With the Russian assault now in its third year, Ukraine is also pleading for more weapons for its outgunned and outnumbered troops, notably seeking help to address its lack of air defence systems. So far Kyiv's partners have demanded that their arms not be used to attack Russian soil, which Kyiv forces have instead been doing with local-made explosive drones.



Djokovic Ruud Into Next Round as Sabalenka Eases Through

PARIS (Dispatches) - Aryna Sabalenka eased into the French Open second round at a rainswept Roland Garros on Tuesday as Novak Djokovic prepared to begin his title defence, confident his Grand Slam pedigree will help turn around his lacklustre season. Australian Open champion Sabalenka, a semi-finalist in Paris in 2023, overpowered Russian teenager Erika Andreeva 6-1, 6-2 in just 68 minutes under the roof on Court Philippe Chatrier. World number two Sabalenka fired 27 winners past the 100th-ranked Andreeva and broke serve five times in a dominant display. "I'm trying to do well on clay, it is tough conditions here but I enjoy playing here and I'm just trying to bring my best tennis every time -- whatever the surface," said Sabalenka. The Belarusian has made at least the last four at her past six Grand Slams and is expected to be Iga Swiatek's toughest rival in the Pole's bid for a fourth French Open title. Heavy rain caused play on the outside, uncovered courts to be delayed by five hours

and by 6 pm local time only nine of the scheduled 40 matches had been completed. World number one Djokovic, seeking a fourth Roland Garros title and record-extending 25th major, is enduring his worst run since 2018. Djokovic, 37, has not won a title in 2024 and has yet to make a final with semi-final spots at the Australian Open and Monte Carlo Masters his best performances. He also suffered the indignity of being accidentally hit on the head by a metal water bottle in Rome which caused nausea and dizziness. In Geneva last week, where he was knocked out by Tomas Machac of the Czech Republic, Djokovic said he had been suffering from a stomach problem. "They are rather bumps on the road," said Djokovic, who watched his long-time rival and 14-time champion Rafael Nadal bow out of the tournament against Alexander Zverev on Monday. When asked to elaborate further on his difficulties so far this season, Djokovic opted for discretion.

Kompany on Verge of Joining Bayern Munich



MUNICH (Dispatches) - Vincent Kompany has been chosen as next Bayern Munich coach but details on a contract still need to be ironed out, club supervisory board member Karl-Heinz Rummenigge said Tuesday. According to German tabloid Bild and English newspaper The Guardian, the 38-year-old Belgian has reached an agreement in principle with Bayern despite overseeing Burnley's relegation from the Premier League last term. Rummenigge told Sky Italia there are just a few details to be resolved before Kompany can join. "Our sports director has chosen Kompany, it's not official yet, there are just some final details to settle," the 68-year-old former striker told Sky. Rummenigge said Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola had helped them in their choice. "He gave us a big helping hand. He had him as captain at City and he also followed him when he was at Burnley," Rummenigge said. Bayern agreed to part ways with coach Thomas Tuchel in February after falling behind eventual champions Bayer Leverkusen in the title race. Kompany has Bundesliga experience, having played at Hamburg before joining Manchester City. He took the reins of Burnley in July 2022, taking them to the Premier League as second-division champions that season. Kompany is the latest candidate in a long list linked to Bayern.

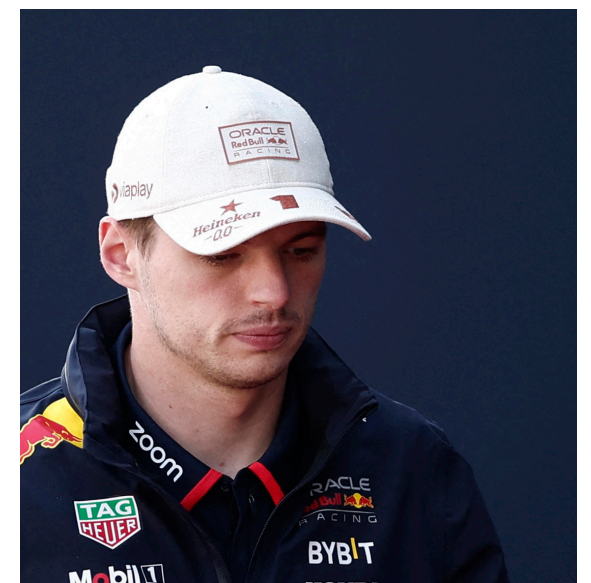
Dortmund Ready to Snap Real's perfect Champions League Final Run

DORTMUND (Dispatches) - Borussia Dortmund can break Real Madrid's winning run in Champions League finals when they meet in the showcase in Wembley on Saturday, coach Edin Terzic said. Real have won all eight finals they have contested since the Champions League replaced the European Cup in 1992. They have also won five Champions League titles in the past 10 seasons for a total of 14 European crowns. Terzic said records were there to be broken, but Dortmund would need to perform at the highest level. "We have to have the belief that we can achieve big things," Terzic told a press conference. "We have to invest everything to bring the trophy back to Dortmund. It has been a long time." Dortmund won the title in 1997 and reached the final again in 2013, losing to Bayern Munich in an all-German showdown. "The most important thing is if you want to win the Champions League you have to beat the champions," the coach said. "We now face the absolute champions." "They have had this experience



14 times, won it five times in the past 10 years. But our aim is always to break it down to one game." "Eight Champions League finals and they never lost. But what matters is not what happened in the previous eight. What matters is only the next one. It is time to break that run." Dortmund finished fifth in the Bundesliga this season, narrowly securing their Champions League spot for next season. They had been title contenders after missing out on the league trophy on the final matchday in 2023. Terzic said that bitter experience a year ago, however, contributed to their success this season. "I had said it at the time that I would have done without this chapter of my life, but this day was from that point part of our road to success," he said. "Now we travel to London with the same fans who a year ago after that bitter match (on the final Bundesliga matchday) kept supporting us and singing for hours. It is time to give something back, and we will have the chance to hopefully celebrate together."

Verstappen Says Monaco Was Cool, Race Less So



MONACO (Dispatches) - Red Bull's triple world champion Max Verstappen dismissed Sunday's Monaco Grand Prix as "a bit boring" after starting and finishing sixth. Winner of five of the previous seven races this season, and all from pole position, the Dutch driver saw his championship lead over Ferrari's race winner Charles Leclerc trimmed from 48 points to 31. The race was the first time Verstappen has finished without being on the podium this season. In Australia he retired after just three laps due to a brake problem. "Overall the weekend is really cool, just the Sunday is a little bit boring unfortunately, but the scenery is still great," he told reporters. "If we can find a way to race a bit better, why not? That would be my preferred solution." The top 10 finishers followed grid positions, with no overtaking and an immediate red flag allowing teams to change tyres and thereby avoid further pitstops that might have shaken up the strategy. "No one really wanted to stress their tyres too much, because you know you can't pass around here, so not really exciting. It's a bit of a shame," said Verstappen. The Red Bull driver's words were supported by Mercedes' seven times world champion Lewis Hamilton, who was seventh, as well as McLaren's fourth-placed Lando Norris. "It was non-eventful. Everyone drove so slow. So it didn't matter what tyre you were on. We were driving seconds off the pace," said Hamilton. "I don't know what it was like watching, but I am sure people were falling asleep." Norris said the race being halted and re-started had "thrown any fun or any action out of the window". "You are just driving round in no-man's land doing nothing. You don't feel like there is a lot of things to target and aim for but that is how it has always been here," said the Briton.

Tyson Feels 100% After Plane Health Scare

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Mike Tyson insisted on Tuesday he felt "100%" despite a recent health scare as he prepares for his July bout against Youtuber Jake Paul. The 57-year-old former world heavyweight champion reportedly needed medical treatment on Sunday after complaining of nausea and dizziness during a flight from Miami to Los Angeles. Paramedics boarded the plane at Los Angeles International Airport to treat the boxing legend before other passengers were allowed to exit the American Airlines flight. The incident came as Tyson prepares to make a controversial return to the ring against Paul in Texas on July 20, which has raised fears that the fighter once known as the "baddest man on the planet" could be hurt due to his advanced years. Tyson however insisted on Tuesday he felt fine despite Sunday's scare. "Now feeling 100% even though I don't need to be to beat Jake Paul," Tyson wrote in a brief post on X, formerly Twitter. Tyson, who turns 58 in June, takes on the 27-year-old Paul in a professional bout which will comprise eight two-minute rounds. The fight has been sanctioned by boxing authorities in Texas. Tyson has not fought a professional bout since 2005, although he did take on Roy Jones Jr. in an exhibition contest in 2020.

