

CUFINEWS

Malaysia stripped of hosting swimming championships after banning Israelis

The International Paralympic Committee has stripped Malaysia of hosting the 2019 World Para Swimming Championships for refusing to back down in its decision to ban Israeli participants.

Earlier in January it was revealed that Malaysia, which is a majority Muslim country, had banned Israeli para swimmers from competing at the July event, one of the required competitions for qualification to the 2020 Paralympic Games in Tokyo.

Despite receiving a backlash, including condemnation by the UK government, Malaysia went even further by announcing it will not host any sporting events involving Israeli competitors.



First-ever joint exercise between Israel and Britain's air forces to take place this year

Britain's RAF (Royal Air Force) and Israel's IAF (Israeli Air Force) will take part in a joint exercise over Lincolnshire this September, the first time the two countries have held such an event. The invitation is expected to be reciprocated with the RAF joining a joint exercise over Israel in 2020.

Record 4.1 million tourists visited Israel in 2018, mostly Christians

The Israel Ministry of Tourism has announced a record-breaking 4.1 million visitors arrived in Israel last year, with 56% being Christian.

The figure represents a 14 percent increase on 2017 and a 42 percent increase on 2016, with tourism chiefs hailing a "revolution" in the way Israel is now seen as a top destination.



Israel becomes FIRST country to finalise post-Brexit trade deal with UK

The UK has agreed in principle to a post-Brexit free trade agreement with Israel.

Britain's Secretary for International Trade, Dr Liam Fox announced the decision on 23 January together with Israel's Economy Minister Eli Cohen at the World Economic Forum in Davos.

It means that Israel becomes the first country to make a trade agreement ahead of the UK leaving the European Union.

Cohen commented that Israel's trade with Britain was valued at more than £10 billion in 2018, and expressed his hopes that the

trade agreement "will accelerate, increase and strengthen our economic relationship."

Fox said, "I'm delighted that as Britain prepares to leave the European Union and to ensure continuity for our businesses in both directions, we've reached agreement in principle today with our colleagues in Israel!"

"Israel has been one of the most cooperative and productive partners in this relationship where our trade is already strong and set to go further," he added. "For us, the continuity as we leave the European Union will be a precursor to an even more ambitious agreement in the future."

"Palestine" takes reins of largest UN voting bloc representing 80% of world's population

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has assumed the chairmanship of the largest bloc of countries at the United Nations on behalf of "the State of Palestine".

The UN announced it as a "Historic Moment" in their headline. UN General-Secretary Guterres lauded the Palestinians, saying, "You are well-placed to take up the chairmanship of

this important group of countries"

The Group of 77 is a consortium of 134 developing countries that often work together in the UN General Assembly. "Palestine" will be able co-sponsor proposals and amendments, make statements, and raise procedural motions. They will have these extra rights for the duration of its chairmanship which will last the full year.

Remains of five adults and one child buried in first ever UK funeral for Holocaust victims

The remains of six unidentified Holocaust victims were laid to rest on Sunday 20 January at a Jewish cemetery in Bushey, Hertfordshire.

The remains were discovered by a survivor at Auschwitz, and according to tests, come from five adults and a child, were given to the Imperial War Museum by an unnamed individual – thought to be a survivor – in 1997 as part of a collection of Holocaust-related items said to have originated at Auschwitz.

Skiers witness Iranian missile fly above their heads in northern Israel

An Iranian rocket caught on the headcams of skiers, was intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome system over Mt Hermon, Israel's highest mountain and a popular tourist destination.

In response, Israeli fighter jets targeted Iranian weapons storehouses, intelligence facilities and a training camp near Damascus on 21 January.

Iran's Air Force reacted saying Iran's military is "well-prepared" for destroying Israel after the Israeli airstrikes dealt a major blow to Iran's infrastructure in Syria.



Brazilian president signs new law allowing days off to observe the Sabbath

A new law in Brazil will allow Jewish students to take time off for the Sabbath and Jewish festivals.

The law was signed by newly elected Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro just two days after taking office and allows Jewish and non-Jewish students to miss school exams and classes for

religious reasons. The Brazilian leader had just held talks with Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who visited to attend the presidential inauguration.

Earlier in January, President Bolsonaro confirmed that he plans to proceed with moving Brazil's embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

UN sides with Hamas as vote fails to gain 2/3 majority

The United Nations rejected a resolution on 6 December in what would have been the first time condemning terror group Hamas.

In the historic vote, 87 countries, including the UK, voted in favour of the US-drafted res-

olution condemning Hamas; 57 voted against and there were 33 abstentions. However the votes in favour did not reach the two-thirds threshold, something that was decided by a separate Arab-led motion only moments prior to the main vote.

NEWS IN BRIEF

- The IDF has announced the end of **Operation Northern Shield** launched in December with the aim of locating and destroying tunnels dug by Hezbollah into towns in northern Israel. The announcement was made following the discovery of a sixth attack tunnel dug by Lebanon-based terror group, Hezbollah.
- A **French-Jewish woman** was physically attacked and received anti-Semitic abuse in the north-Parisian suburb of Sarcelles, which has a large Jewish population.
- A Jewish cemetery in the French city of **Strasbourg** was vandalised with anti-Semitic graffiti defacing 37 gravestones only hours before an Islamist terrorist went on a gunfire rampage near the Christmas market of Strasbourg, killing three people.
- The **European Union** gave £140,000 to the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC), which organises the annual anti-Israel Al Quds march on the streets of London. The news came as the European Court of Auditors found the European Union is "not sufficiently transparent" in how it funds charities.
- Low-cost airline **Ryanair** is eyeing Israel for major expansion plans. CEO Michael praised the Jewish state as a top tourist destination during a visit in January promising he can bring "millions more to Israel". He said, "If we can offer reasonable prices then Israel with its weather and beautiful beaches can become a preferred destination. We can bring millions more to Israel. We can grow as fast as the authorities allow us to."
- A **survey of Dutch Jews** reveals 43 percent of respondents say they take active steps to hide their Jewish identity, such as wear a hat over their kippah or hide Star of David pendants.
- **Honduras** has "agreed to pursue a plan of action" towards moving its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The announcement came after talks between the Honduran president, Juan Orlando Hernandez, Prime Minister Netanyahu and US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo.