

Amir Lajevardi, The Head of Iran's Communications Regulatory Authority, Says That the Country Is Planned to Launch 4,000 Sites to Provide the 5G-Internet Services for the Users by the End of the Next Iranian Calendar Year in March

IRAN NEWS

Iranian Health Minister Bahram Eynollahi in a Letter Expressed His Dissatisfaction with the World Health Organization's (WHO) Lack of Response to the Crimes Committed by Israel in Gaza

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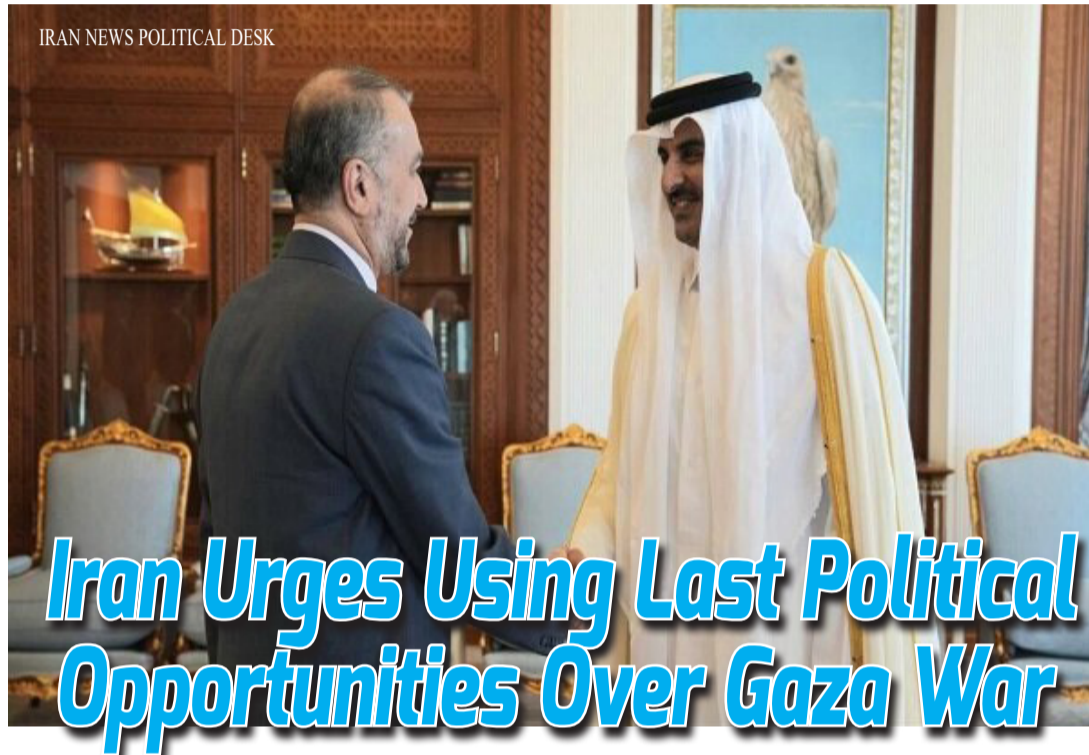
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Iran to Give Decisive Response to Any Threat to Its Security, National Interests



TEHRAN - Iran's permanent ambassador to the United Nations says the Islamic Republic will give a decisive response if any threat is posed to its security and national interests. Amir Saeed Iravani was addressing a UN Security Council session on Monday. The ambassador was responding to allegations raised against Iran by the United States' representative to the UN during the meeting. Rejecting Washington's claims as "baseless," Iravani said Iran has consistently upheld its commitments to promoting peace and security in the region, adding, "The effectiveness of Iran's anti-terrorism efforts, particularly against terrorist groups like Daesh, is evident to all. Accusing the United States of 'seeking to increase escalation' in the region, Iran's ambassador emphasized, 'Should it face any threat, attack, or aggression endangering its security, national interests, or people, Iran will not hesitate to use its inherent rights under international law and the UN Charter to respond decisively.' Iravani then condemned the United States' illegal presence in Syria, saying, 'The unlawful presence of the United States in Syria -- purportedly for counterterrorism purposes but actually to support terrorist organizations -- flagrantly violates the principles of the UN Charter, international law, and Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity.' He added that on the opposite, 'Iran's presence in Syria is fully legal and in response to an official request from the Syrian government to combat terrorism.' 'The United States must rectify its transgressions of international law and the UN Charter by discontinuing its support for terrorist groups and withdrawing from Syria,' Iran's ambassador said. He also touched on the US role in the ongoing Israeli aggression against the blockaded Gaza Strip, which has so far killed more than 8,300 Gazans, most of them women and children. Iravani said the US seeks to increase escalation in the occupied territories "by overtly aligning itself with the aggressor at the expense of the innocent Palestinian people." "The United States and some Western countries have attempted to equate the Palestinian resistance and Palestinian people's right to self-defense and self-determination with terrorism, attempting to grant the occupying regime of Israel an unjust right to self-defense," Iran's ambassador said.



Iran Urges Using Last Political Opportunities Over Gaza War

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian says that the last political opportunities should be used to stop the Gaza war, and if the situation gets out of control, no party will be safe from its consequences. Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks in a meeting with the Emir of Qatar Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani on Tuesday in Doha. Hailing Qatar's stance in supporting the oppressed Palestinian nation, Amir-Abdollahian warned about the unpredictable consequences of the Zionist war crimes in Gaza that are carried out with the support of the United States and several European governments. He also called on Islamic states to take practical and united measures to end the Israeli regime's crimes and lift the Gaza siege. "As a result of the continuation of the Zionist regime's crimes against the defenseless people and the complete blockade of Gaza, we are gradually witnessing an increase in reactions and the escalation and expansion of the scope of conflicts in the region, and it is natural that the Resistance groups and movements will not remain silent in the face of all these crimes and the full support of the US to the Zionist regime," he stressed. Saying that the Resistance groups would not wait for anyone's advice, the top Iranian diplomat added, "So we need to use the last political opportunities to stop the war, and if the situation gets out of control, no party will be safe from its consequences." Al Thani, for his part, asked Amir-Abdollahian to convey his warm greetings to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution and the Iranian president. Considering the ongoing crimes of the Zionist regime against the Palestinian citizens in Gaza as unacceptable and intolerable, he dubbed the widespread anti-Israeli regime demonstrations in various countries of the world as a sign of global disgust for these crimes. He added that Qatar will continue its efforts in order to end the current attacks of the Israeli regime against Gaza. Earlier Amir-Abdollahian exchanged views with his Qatari counterpart about ways to end the genocidal Israeli war against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Amir-Abdollahian met with Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani in Doha on Tuesday. During the meeting, the two sides discussed some important bilateral issues, developments in Palestine and initiatives aimed at ending Israeli war crimes against the oppressed people of the besieged Gaza. Heading a political delegation, Amir-Abdollahian traveled to Doha as part of diplomatic efforts related to the Palestine issue. The top Iranian diplomat departed for Doha on Tuesday morning in order to discuss the Palestine issue with the high-ranking officials of Qatar. This is the second visit made by Amir-Abdollahian to the region, which is due to the worsening humanitarian situation in Palestine. Negotiation and the exchange of views about the Israeli regime's crimes and the developments in Palestine with Qatari authorities is on the agenda of the Iranian top diplomat in this trip.

Israel to Be Annihilated If War on Gaza Expands



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's deputy foreign minister for political affairs has warned that if Israel's ongoing war against the Palestinian resistance in the besieged Gaza Strip expands any further it will lead to total annihilation of the regime. Ali Bagheri-Kani made the remark in a televised interview on Monday, commenting on the war that the Israeli regime has been waging against the blockaded coastal territory since October 7. The regime launched the war after Gaza's resistance groups conducted Operation al-Aqsa Storm, their biggest operation against the occupying entity in years, killing at least 1,500 Israeli forces and settlers, and taking hundreds of others captive. Israel's aggression against Gaza has so far killed more than 8,300 civilians, most of them women and children. Bagheri-Kani described the Palestinian resistance's operation against Israel as "an irreparable earthquake in the Zionist regime's military and security system." "If the war expands [any further] we cannot say that Israel would lose, because nothing will remain of Israel to be described as loser or winner," Iran's deputy foreign minister said. His remarks came after earlier on Monday, the Gaza-based Palestinian resistance movement of Hamas said Israeli tanks that had advanced near the territory were forced to retreat after heavy clashes. Elsewhere in his remarks, the Iranian official said Operation al-Aqsa Storm also caused "an earthquake in the intellectual and strategic system of the United States-led Western world and in US unilateralism." "The Americans are [now] plagued by a strategic confusion and cannot guess the resistance's next move to make a decision accordingly," he noted. The deputy foreign minister also touched on the messages that American officials have been relaying to Iran, adding that Americans allege through the messages that they seek to prevent further expansion of the conflict. "However, [Americans] themselves are the main party responsible for continuation and expansion of the conflict through their unbridled support for the Zionists," he stated. "Therefore, the main party responsible for the Zionists' crimes, after Zionists themselves, is Americans. They have said time and again that they stand by Israel without any limitations," Iran's deputy foreign minister noted. Since the onset of the Israeli war of aggression against the besieged Gaza Strip, the US has provided the regime with thousands of weapons consignments.

Israel Has Dropped Over 18,000 Tons of Explosives on Gaza



GAZA (Dispatches) - Palestinian officials in the Gaza Strip say Israel has dropped more than 18,000 tons of explosives on the besieged territory in its ongoing war of aggression. "The Israeli occupation army has dropped more than 18,000 tons of explosives on the Gaza Strip since its aggression started 24 days ago," the Government Media Office in Gaza said in a Monday statement. It added that 10,000 people have been either killed or are still missing as a result of the intensive bombardment by the regime, which has caused large-scale devastation as well. The office noted 50 tons of explosives have been dropped on every kilometer in Gaza Strip so far. Israel waged its bloody war on the Gaza Strip on October 7 after Palestinian resistance movements based there launched a surprise attack, dubbed Operation al-Aqsa Storm, against the occupying entity. Since the start of the war, the Israeli regime has been committing war crimes in Gaza, killing more than 8,300 Palestinians, most of them women and children. It has also imposed a complete siege on the territory, cutting off fuel, electricity, food and water to more than two million Palestinians living there. Meanwhile the Israeli military says it attacked about 300 targets in the Gaza Strip over the past 24 hours, as the regime's brutal aggression against the besieged enclave rages on. In a statement released on Tuesday, the Israeli army claimed that the targets included anti-tank guided missile and rocket launch positions, as well as tunnel entrances and military compounds belonging to the Palestinian Hams resistance movement. It said that the occupation troops clashed with the Palestinian fighter cells that fired missiles and heavy machine gun fire at them. The Israeli soldiers, it added, killed members of the fighter cells and directed air forces to carry out strikes. The regime's military further claimed that "numerous" Hamas fighters were "eliminated" during the assaults, without providing information on potential Israeli casualties. Calls have grown for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire to allow aid to reach trapped civilians in Gaza, where the Israeli offensive has created a bloodbath and displaced more than 1.4 million people. The head of the United Nations agency for Palestine refugees (UNRWA) told a UN emergency meeting on Monday that an urgent truce ceasefire has become "a matter of life and death for millions" of Palestinians. Philippe Lazzarini warned that basic services are crumbling in Gaza and that medicine, food, water and fuel are running out. However, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Tel Aviv would not agree to a truce, declaring "this is a time for war." "Calls for a ceasefire are calls for Israel to surrender to Hamas.... That will not happen," he said in televised remarks.

Oil Soars to Record High of \$150 If Gaza War Escalates Further

LONDON (Dispatches) - Oil prices could soar to a record high of more than \$150 a barrel if the war between Israel and Hamas leads to a repeat of the full-scale conflict in the Middle East witnessed 50 years ago, the World Bank has warned. The World Bank warns said there is a potential risk of the cost of crude entering uncharted waters due to the economic risks of escalation of war beyond Gaza's borders. The war in Gaza started on October 7 after Hamas's surprise attack on Israeli settlements. More than 8,300 Palestinians have been martyred in this war so far, 3,000 of them are children. A "large disruption" scenario comparable to the Arab oil boycott of the West in 1973 would create supply shortages that would lead to the price of a barrel of oil increasing from about \$90 to between \$140 and \$157. The previous record - unadjusted for inflation - was \$147 a barrel in 2008. "The latest conflict in the Middle East comes on the heels of the biggest shock to commodity markets since the 1970s - the Russia-Ukraine war," said Indermit Gill, the World Bank's chief economist. "That had disruptive effects on the global economy that persist to this day." "Policymakers will need to be vigilant. If the conflict were to escalate, the global economy would face a dual energy shock for the first time in decades - not just from the Russia-Ukraine war, but also from the Middle East." The bank said in its latest commodity markets outlook that the shock to the global economy would not be confined to energy costs but would also result in hundreds of millions going hungry as a result of higher food prices. In its assessment, the bank said the Israel-Hamas war had had little impact on commodity prices so far. Oil prices had risen by about 6%, but agricultural commodities, industrial metals and other commodities had "barely budged". It added: "The outlook for commodity prices would darken quickly if the conflict were to escalate." Under the World Bank's baseline forecast, oil prices will average \$90 a barrel in the current quarter before declining to an average of \$81 a barrel next year as global economic growth slows. But it also sketched out three alternative paths for oil prices: * A "small disruption" scenario, in which the global oil supply would be reduced by 500,000 to 2m



barrels a day - roughly equivalent to the reduction seen during the Libyan civil war in 2011. The oil price would rise to a range of \$93 to \$102 a barrel. * A "medium disruption" scenario - roughly equivalent to the Iraq war in 2003 - where the global oil supply would be reduced by 3m to 5m barrels a day. Oil prices would rise by 21% to 35% initially, taking them to between \$109 and \$121 a barrel. * A "large disruption" scenario - comparable to the action taken during the Yom Kippur War of 1973 - in which the global oil supply would shrink by 6m to 8m barrels a day, resulting in a 56% to 75% increase in prices to between \$140 and \$157 a barrel. The oil embargo of 1973 led to a sudden fourfold increase in the cost of crude, ushering in higher inflation and rising unemployment that brought the long postwar boom in the global economy to an end. "Higher oil prices, if sustained, inevitably mean higher food prices," said Ayhan Kose, the World Bank's deputy chief economist. "If a severe oil-price shock materializes, it would push up food price inflation that has already been elevated in many developing countries. At the end of 2022, more than 700 million people - nearly a tenth of the global population - were undernourished. An escalation of the latest conflict would intensify food insecurity, not only within the region but also across the world." 219

Iran Calls for Faster ICC Legal Process Over Gaza Situation



TEHRAN - The Islamic Republic of Iran has called on the International Criminal Court (ICC) to accelerate a legal process dealing with the situation in Palestine, especially the catastrophic conditions in the Gaza Strip. The call was made through Iran's representative attending the 21st plenary meeting of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly in New York on Monday. The Iranian representative said that the crimes being committed in Gaza are undoubtedly examples of international crimes under the jurisdiction of the ICC. The diplomat said that the gross violation of international humanitarian law, bloodshed, the forced transfer of the civilian population, destruction of civilian infrastructure, bombings of densely populated areas as well as hospitals and schools, and use of hunger as a weapon of war have caused concerns across the world. Those concerns have already been reflected in a resolution that the General Assembly approved on Friday (October 27), the Iranian representative said, calling on the ICC to facilitate investigations into the situation in Palestine. The October 27 resolution, drafted by Arab countries, has called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza and demanded all parties to exercise maximum restraint, among other issues.

IRAN NEWS



Israel's Genocide in Gaza Not to Last Even a Single Day Without U.S., Europe Support

TEHRAN - A senior advisor to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says Israel's genocide in Gaza will not last even a single day without support of the United States and European countries. Ali Akbar Velayati, who is also the secretary general of the World Assembly of Islamic Awakening, made the remarks in an address to a conference -- dubbed Gaza, the symbol of resistance and awakening -- in Tehran on Monday. He described the United States as the "main accomplice" to the crimes committed by the Zionists in Gaza and said Washington offers considerable encouragement to the Israeli regime.

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

Only 2% of Iran's Former Lawmakers to Run For Next Elections



TEHRAN - In the upcoming Iranian Parliamentary elections in March, a mere 2 percent of the 24,000 registered candidates are former lawmakers, while just 13 percent are women. As per the latest figures, over 24,000 Iranians have registered their candidacy for the Majlis election, down from the initial 50,000 who registered unofficially in August. This decline in interest may be attributed to the Majlis' unpopularity and the government's perceived failure in economic and foreign policy. Concurrently, former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's political rivals have shown sensitivity towards his silence both on the domestic front and on the unfolding conflict in the Middle East.

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

Iran, Armenia Initiate Joint Cooperation in 'Skill Diplomacy'



TEHRAN - Officials from Iran and Armenia launched joint cooperation in the field of "Skill Diplomacy". In a joint meeting held between Minister of Labor and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia Narek Mkrtychyan and Iran's Deputy Minister of Labor, Cooperatives and Social Welfare Mehrdad Azimi in Karaj on Tuesday, the two sides emphasized the need for strengthening cooperation in the field of 'skill diplomacy'. Presently, many developed countries are seeking to acquire and present training and internship courses aimed at training skilled workers and meeting the demand for the required manpower in their market, the head of Iran Technical and Vocational Training Organization (TVTO) said. In recent years, Iran has tried to provide efficient and competent manpower by relying on skill training, he said, adding, "In this regard, job seekers and the graduates have been hired within the framework of skill training courses." However, implementation of the National Skill Movement has been put on the agenda of the ministry, Azimi stated.

During the meeting, the two sides emphasized the need for developing bilateral cooperation in the field of presenting skill training commensurate with the requirements of the country's labor market. In addition, they stressed the need to establish a specialized technical and vocational training center and use the capacity of the public sector to hold a bilateral festival to introduce the skills of trainees to the economic enterprises, etc. Iran's deputy labor minister further termed the visit of the Armenian labor minister to Iran as a turning point in developing and expanding relations between the two countries. Armenia's labor minister, for his part, said that the diversity of Iran's services and skill capacities is the main reason for his country's keenness to expand cooperation with Iran. Armenia is seeking to launch a technical and vocational training center in Syunik province, located in southern part of Armenia, Mkrtychyan said, adding that Iran's TVTO is equipped with the valuable experiences that can help Armenia to settle problems in the field of skill training.

Iran, Russia Call for Stopping Brutality in Gaza



MOSCOW (DIRNA) - The parliamentary delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran and officials of the Russian Federation Council have urged the necessity for reaching a consensus among the friendly states of Palestine to end the Zionist's crimes and establish a ceasefire in Gaza. Vahid Jalalzadeh, the head of the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, who has traveled to Moscow at the head of a delegation, held a meeting with the deputy speaker of the Russian Federation Council, Konstantin Kosachev, on Monday. Jalalzadeh said that investigating the latest developments in the region, especially the crime that the Zionist regime committed in the Gaza Strip, and finding new ways to stop the brutal killing of the Palestinian people are the purposes of the trip to Russia. Describing the US as the main role player in the current event in the region, he underlined that the Tel Aviv War Room is now being led by Washington. Kosachev, for his part, said that Tehran and Moscow have similar positions on condemning the Zionist regime's crimes in Gaza and cooperating to stop this brutality.

Iran Ready to Resume JCPOA



TEHRAN - Iran is ready to restore the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on its nuclear program based on its national interest, a member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Iranian Parliament Fada Hossein Maleki said. Within the framework of national interests, Iran is trying to develop the country's nuclear program in the form specified in the JCPOA, develop its economy, freely export crude oil and bring the earnings from exports to the country, freely carry out banking transactions with the countries of the world, and so on. According to Maleki, Iran hopes to lift the sanctions against the country by resuming the JCPOA. He added that the US has not made a definite decision about the discussions regarding the restoration of the JCPOA. The MP also noted that the Omani side takes the initiative in the implementation of indirect nuclear talks between Iran and the US. Matters between Iran and the US are channeled through Oman. Oman is also trying to start nuclear talks and reach an agreement.

Iran Interested in Import of Bean From Kyrgyzstan



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Minister of Agriculture of Iran Mohammad Ali Nikbakht expressed interest in import of bean from Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyz Agriculture Minister Askarbek Janybekov said. Minister Janybekov said the works are carried out in each region to identify the most profitable crops for cultivation and domestic and foreign trade. Bean is one of such products. "We are always ready for cooperation. Kyrgyzstan is ready to provide land in Talas region for construction of elevators for Iran," the Minister said. There are 3 bean varieties in Kyrgyzstan now, the Minister said. The bean price varies between 80 and 100 soms for a kilo. Kyrgyzstan also actively cooperates with Turkey in breeding and cultivation of new varieties of bean and raspberry. This is more profitable than export of potato and other root crops.



Iran, Malta Push for Efforts for Political Solution for Palestine

TEHRAN (IranPress) - Iranian Foreign Minister held talks on the phone with his Maltese counterpart on Monday and exchanged views on the need to expedite the adoption of a political solution to prevent the spillover of war in Gaza. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian held talks with the Foreign Minister of Malta Ian Borgon the phone on Monday and exchanged views on the need to expedite the adoption of a political solution to prevent the spillover of war in Gaza. The Iranian foreign minister stated, "We are against the carnage of women, children, and civilians anywhere in the world." He reiterated, "Unfortunately, there is no proportionality between the Hamas liberation movement's actions and the repeated raids and war crimes by the regime that has occupied Al-Quds." The Iranian foreign minister also referred to the framework of an initiative proposed by Brazil to adopt a resolution on following up on a political solution to stop the attacks on civilians and deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza.



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian says holding a referendum in Palestine can serve as the "fundamental and political" solution to the Palestinian issue. In a phone conversation on Monday, Amir-Abdollahian and Vatican's Secretary for Relations with States Paul Archbishop Richard Gallagher discussed Israel's relentless attacks against the defenseless Palestinian people, which have been going on over the past 24 days, as well as ways to find a political solution to the critical situation. "We believe that the Palestinian crisis should be resolved basically and a political solution to it is to hold a referendum with [the participation of] all the original inhabitants of Palestine, including the Christians, the Jews and the Muslims, in cooperation with the United Nations," the top Iranian diplomat said. Israel waged the bloody war on the Gaza Strip on October 7 after the Palestinian Hamas resistance movement launched the surprise Operation Al-Aqsa Storm

against the occupying entity. Since the start of the war, the Israeli regime has been committing war crimes in Gaza, killing at least 8,306 Palestinians, including 3,457 children, and injuring over 22,000 others. Pointing to his October 22 letter to Gallagher on the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza, Amir-Abdollahian hailed the stance adopted by the Vatican official and Pope Francis. In his letter, Amir-Abdollahian said the crimes committed by the Israeli regime, including bombardment of al-Mamdani Hospital and a historical church in the Gaza Strip, where women and children had sheltered, "reveal another facet of the Zionist regime's savage and brutal nature." The Iranian foreign minister also warned against the consequences of a possible expansion of war. Gallagher, for his part, stressed the importance of delivering humanitarian aid to the war-stricken people in Gaza and finding a political solution to the conflicts with Israel in a bid to prevent the expansion of war.

U.S. Commanders in Tel Aviv to Direct Gaza Onslaught



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Intelligence obtained by Iran indicates that American military commanders have gone to Tel Aviv to aid and abet the Zionist regime in its brutal atrocities against the people of Gaza, an Iranian general said. Addressing a conference of Police officials on Tuesday, Commander of Khatam al-Anbia Headquarters Major General Gholam Ali Rashid condemned the Israeli regime's barbaric crimes against the defenseless Palestinians in Gaza. He said the Iranian Armed Forces' intelligence demonstrates that the commanders of the CENTCOM (the United States Central Command) as well as the US Army and Navy commanders are in an underground base in Tel Aviv in the company of Israeli commanders to supervise and direct the Zionist regime's brutal onslaught against the Palestinian people. "This reveals that the US' measures contradict its claims on restricting the war in the region, considering the dispatch of thousands of destructive bombs and missiles to the occupied Palestine and the directions and support (for Israel) on the field," the Iranian general added, denouncing the US government's hypocrisy and duplicity. General Rashid also expressed confidence that the Palestinian resistance will inflict defeat on the Zionist regime and the US. UN officials have appealed to the Security Council for a ceasefire, as the head of UNICEF warns that more than 420 children are being killed or injured in Gaza every day.

Over 40,000 illegal Afghan nationals arrested at Iranian borders

Zahedan, IRNA – The commander of the border guard police of Iran's southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan has announced the arrest of 40,509 illegal Afghan nationals at the Iranian borders with Pakistan and Afghanistan. Brigadier General Reza Shojajei told IRNA on Saturday that these foreign nationals were attempting to enter Iran illegally via the shared borders. Shojajei emphasized that maintaining border security is a top priority for his border guard forces.



Ukraine Ready to Repel Russia's Offensive actions in Bakhmut



KYIV (Dispatches) - Oct 30 (Reuters) - Kyiv military officials said that Russia has bulked up its forces around the devastated city of Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine and has switched its troops from defence to offence, but Ukraine has been preparing to repel the attacks. Russia captured Bakhmut, theatre of some of the bloodiest fighting of the 20-month-old war, in May. Ukraine launched a counteroffensive in June aimed at retaking occupied land in the country's south and east, including Bakhmut. "In the Bakhmut area, the enemy has significantly strengthened its grouping and switched from defence to active actions," General Oleksandr Syrskyi, Ukraine's commander of ground forces, wrote on Telegram. Volodymyr Fityo, head of communications for Ukraine's ground forces command, said Russian forces had been preparing since early this month to retake positions around Bakhmut lost during the Ukrainian counteroffensive. "We saw this, the intelligence reported everything. We had been preparing, strengthening our defensive positions, engineering fortifications and pulling up reserves," Fityo told Reuters by telephone. "This does not come as a surprise for us." Both men said Russian forces were particularly active near the Ukrainian-held town of Kupiansk in the northeast, where Fityo said Russia had numerical superiority. Reuters could not independently verify accounts on the battlefield. In its nightly report, the Ukrainian General Staff said Kyiv's forces remained on the offensive near Bakhmut. "The enemy unsuccessfully tried to restore lost positions near Klischchiivka", it said, referring to a village south of Bakhmut recaptured by Ukraine in September. Russian troops also tried to advance in Synkivka, north of Kupiansk, but made no headway, it added. Russia has also been concentrating much of its efforts in recent weeks on a bid to encircle and capture Avdiivka, a strategic town southwest of Bakhmut.

Venezuelan Court Suspends Outcome of Opposition Primary



CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuela's Supreme Court on Monday suspended the outcome of an opposition primary vote, prompting Washington to warn it would "take action" if President Nicolas Maduro's government did not meet its commitments ahead of a 2024 election. The United States agreed to ease oil and gas sanctions against Maduro's government after it struck a deal with the opposition to hold an election the international community hopes will restore democracy in the crisis-wracked country. However, the government subsequently rejected the outcome of an opposition primary to choose a presidential candidate. That vote earlier this month was won by Maria Corina Machado, 56, who is banned from holding office for 15 years. Maduro's administration has launched a probe into the primary, claiming it was tainted by fraud. And Jose Brito, a dissident opposition lawmaker accused by some of being in cahoots with the Maduro government, filed an appeal against the primary to the Supreme Court. "All the outcomes of the different phases of the electoral process... are suspended," read Monday's ruling. The top court also reiterated its ban of Machado, for alleged corruption and backing international sanctions against Caracas. Venezuelan officials are demanding the opposition hand over all documents relating to the primary election, including logs that could identify voters. Washington urged Maduro's government to "uphold the commitments they made at the signing of the political roadmap agreement in Barbados," where Caracas and the opposition agreed to hold presidential elections in the second half of 2024, a State Department spokesperson said. "The US government will take action if Maduro and his representatives do not meet their commitments under the electoral roadmap," added the spokesperson. After the United States agreed to ease some oil and gas sanctions, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Venezuela had to "define a specific timeline and process for the expedited reinstatement of all candidates" by the end of November. "All who want to run for president should be allowed the opportunity," he said. Venezuela, which has the world's largest proven oil reserves, is dealing with a crippling political and economic crisis, marked by hyperinflation and a shortage of basic goods, which has pushed millions to flee the country.

Hamas Says It Fires on Israeli Forces Pressing Ground Assault

GAZA (Dispatches) - Hamas said its militants in Gaza fired anti-tank missiles at Israel's invading forces early on Tuesday and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu dismissed calls for a halt to fighting that has deepened the Palestinian enclave's humanitarian crisis. Israel has expanded ground operations in Gaza as it seeks to punish the Strip's ruling Hamas movement for a deadly gun rampage three weeks ago that Israeli authorities say killed over 1,400 people. Witnesses said Israeli forces targeted Gaza's main north-south road on Monday and attacked Gaza City from two directions. Israel said its troops freed a soldier from Hamas captivity, one of 239 hostages who Israel says were captured on Oct. 7. The al-Qassam brigades, Hamas' armed wing, said militants clashed early on Tuesday with Israeli forces "invading the southern Gaza axis, (including) with machine guns, and targeted four vehicles with al-Yassin 105 missiles," referring to locally produced anti-tank missiles. The militants also targeted two Israeli tanks and bulldozers in northwest Gaza with the missiles, al-Qassam said. Reuters was not able to confirm the reports of fighting. Israel's military had no immediate comment. Gaza health authorities say that 8,306 people, including 3,457 minors, have been killed in Israeli attacks since Oct. 7. U.N. officials say more than 1.4 million of Gaza's civilian population of about 2.3 million have been made homeless. The mounting death toll has drawn calls from the U.S., Israel's top ally, other countries and the U.N. for a pause in fighting to allow more humanitarian aid to reach the enclave. Netanyahu said late on Monday that Israel would not agree to a cessation of hostilities with Hamas in Gaza and would press ahead with its plans to wipe out the group. Military specialists said Israeli forces are moving slowly in their ground offensive in part to keep open the possibility that Hamas

militants will negotiate the release of the hostages. The relative caution with which Israeli troops have taken and secured slices of territory in the first days of sustained ground operations in Gaza stands in contrast to the past three weeks of unrelenting air strikes on the Mediterranean enclave, as well as to Israel's previous land offensives there. Israel's military said it struck more than 600 militant targets in recent days in Gaza, where Palestinian civilians are in dire need of fuel, food and clean water. The U.N. humanitarian office (OCHA) said that water supply through a pipeline from Israel to southern Gaza was cut off on Monday "for unknown reasons", and that an announced repair of another pipeline to central Gaza did not take place. "At the time of writing, no water is provided to Gaza from Israel," OCHA said on its website. Significantly fewer humanitarian aid trucks have reached the besieged enclave than are required, U.N. officials said, and civil order has broken down with people storming U.N. warehouses in search of food. That has put four U.N. aid distribution centres and a storage facility out of action, the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) said on Monday. "It's a disaster on top of a disaster. Health needs are soaring and our ability to meet those needs is rapidly declining," World Health Organization regional emergencies chief Rick Brennan said, reiterating international calls for a ceasefire to enable a larger humanitarian operation. Aid trucks have been trickling into Gaza from Egypt over the past week via Rafah, the main crossing that does not border Israel. It has become the main point of aid delivery since Israel imposed a "total siege" of Gaza after Oct. 7. The White House said it was working to get more aid trucks into Gaza.

Putin Blames the West, Ukraine After Mob Storms Airport



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - President Vladimir Putin accused the West and Ukraine of stirring up unrest inside Russia after rioters in the predominantly Muslim Dagestan region stormed an airport to "catch" Jewish passengers on a flight from Tel Aviv. The United States condemned the events, which a State Department spokesperson said had "looked like a pogrom." Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak told Reuters that Kyiv had "nothing to do" with the violence, while a senior Russian Rabbi said there had to be a harsh response against those who took part. Videos obtained by Reuters from the airport at Makhachkala, the regional capital of Dagestan, showed the rioters, mostly young men, waving Palestinian flags, breaking down glass doors and running through the airport on Sunday evening shouting "Allahu Akbar" or "God is Greatest". One group was seen trying to overturn a police patrol truck, while another video showed rioters on the tarmac surrounding a Red Wings aircraft which had arrived from Tel Aviv. One placard brandished by rioters in an unverified social media post said: "There is no place for child killers in Dagestan." Another said: "We are against Jewish refugees." The unrest in Dagestan, where Russian security forces once fought an Islamist insurgency, is a headache for Putin, who is waging a war in Ukraine and is keen to maintain stability at home ahead of an expected presidential election next year. Putin accused the West and Ukraine of helping whip up the unrest via social media, part of what he said was Washington's agenda of creating global chaos to ensure its continued dominance and prevent rivals like Russia from taking their place in a new multipolar world. Speaking at a meeting with security chiefs Putin said shadowy U.S.-backed forces were trying to destabilise and split Russia's multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society. "For this purpose, they use a variety of means, as we can see - lies, provocations and sophisticated technologies of psychological and information aggression." The events in Makhachkala last night were inspired also through social networks, not least from the territory of Ukraine, by the hands of agents of Western special services. Maria Zakharova, a spokeswoman for the Russian foreign ministry, had earlier accused Ukraine of a "direct and key role" in preparing the "provocation." Zakharova referred to online resources linked to former Russian lawmaker Ilya Ponomarev, who is based in Ukraine as a self-styled anti-Kremlin partisan. Ponomarev said that he used to be an investor in a Telegram channel which had called on people to go to the airport but no longer had any connection to it. The mob converged on the airport after the message on the channel, "Utro Dagestan", urged Dagestanis to meet the "uninvited guests" in "adult fashion" and to get the plane and its passengers to turn around and fly somewhere else. The channel, which was later banned by Telegram, did not use the word "Jew" but referred to the plane's passengers as being "unclean." "We need to wait for them on the street outside the airport and catch them before they go their separate ways," a message on the channel said. Police said they had arrested 60 people in connection with the unrest. It was unclear in what circumstances that questioning took place with another passenger telling the Mediazona news website that a small group of locals had been shown the passengers' documents in an airport building where the passengers were being held at the time.

Italy Drafts Plan for Direct Election of PM

ROME (Dispatches) - Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and top ministers on Monday backed a constitutional reform proposal introducing the direct election of the prime minister, in an effort to end the country's chronic political instability. Meloni made constitutional reform a key policy plank of her right-wing coalition after winning power in September last year. Italy has had almost 70 governments since World War Two, more than twice the number in Britain and Germany. Repeated attempts to produce a more robust system, the last in 2016, have always floundered amid myriad, competing visions. Government officials said that under the proposed reform coalitions will have to put forward premier candidates at the election, in a bid to enhance stability by forging a stronger bond between the government and voters. The government also intends to change the electoral law to ensure that elections produce workable majorities, avoiding the kind of hung parliaments that emerged from ballots in 2013 and 2018, two sources with knowledge of the matter said. "We have taken a big step towards the 'reform of reforms', which will give stability

to the country and restore centrality to the popular vote," Reforms Minister Maria Elisabetta Alberti Casellati said in a statement. The cabinet meeting will be held on Friday, sources said. The main left-leaning opposition forces, the 5-Star Movement and the Democratic Party (PD), said they would fight the reform plans because they endanger the checks and balances of the 1948 constitution drawn up after Benito Mussolini's dictatorship. Other opposition groups appeared more willing to cooperate. Matteo Renzi, who stepped down as premier after his failed reform in 2016, said his small centrist Italia Viva party would be ready to back the direct election of the prime minister. In the current system parties from the left and the right hold talks to form a government whenever no side can claim a majority in both houses of parliament. The prime minister need not necessarily be an elected politician. Any change to the constitution needs to secure a two-thirds majority in both houses of parliament - something that is hard to envisage given the splintered nature of Italian politics. Failing that, it can be passed by a referendum.



South Korea Economic Growth to Exceed Potential Rate in 2024

SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said the economy in 2024 would exceed the potential growth rate after picking up pace in the second half of 2023, and pledged closer ties with the United States to bolster crisis management capabilities. The government is closely monitoring the economic and security situations and prepared to take response measures in a timely manner, Yoon said in a speech to parliament on next year's proposed budget. "The pace of economic growth will continue to expand in the second half of the year as forecast earlier... and by next year it will recover beyond the level of the potential growth rate and record a higher rate than major countries," he said. South Korea's potential growth rate - the maximum economic growth that can be achieved without triggering inflationary pressure - is estimated to be around 2%, policymakers have said. Gross domestic product (GDP) grew 0.6% in the July-September quarter from three months earlier, Bank of Korea data showed last week, the same pace as the prior quarter and beating a median 0.5% increase forecast in a Reuters survey. In a Reuters survey conducted early this month, economic growth was forecast to slow to 1.2% in 2023 from 2.6% in 2022, followed by a recovery to 2.1% in 2024. The forecasts compare with the government's projection of 1.4% growth this year and 2.4% next year. The government in August unveiled its 2024 budget plan that included the smallest increase in two decades amid weakening tax revenue due to slower economic growth. The 656.9 trillion won (\$487 billion) government expenditure plan for 2024 was 2.8% higher than 2023. Yoon again stressed the importance of fiscal discipline to help stabilise domestic inflation and sustain the country's credit ratings. Yoon highlighted his priority on maintaining security ties with the United States and other allies and said economic security cooperation with Washington could bolster the country's crisis management capabilities. He also pledged South Korea would maintain mutually beneficial cooperation with China, South Korea's largest trading partner.



Messi Wins Eighth Ballon d'Or as Bonmati Claims Women's Award



PARIS (Dispatches) - Lionel Messi won the eighth Ballon d'Or of his remarkable career at a glittering ceremony in Paris on Monday, while Spain's World Cup-winning star Aitana Bonmati took the women's prize. For Messi, the trophy rewards, above all else, his inspirational performances at last year's World Cup in Qatar, when he dragged Argentina to victory, scoring seven goals and being named the tournament's best player. It was the crowning moment of his astonishing career, and it allowed him to see off stiff competition, in particular from Erling Haaland and Kylian Mbappe, to take the award on the stage of the Chatelet Theatre in Paris. It was a return to the French capital after his departure from Paris Saint-Germain in June and his subsequent move to Inter Miami in Major League Soccer. "This is a gift to the whole Argentina team for what we achieved," said Messi on stage after receiving his award from David Beckham, the co-owner of Inter Miami. Messi dedicated the trophy to late Argentina legend Diego Maradona, who would have celebrated his 63rd birthday on Monday. "Happy birthday Diego. This is for you too," he said. Messi benefits from a recent change which means the award is based on a player's record over the last season, rather than over the calendar year. He won despite an underwhelming final season at PSG, even if he was a Ligue 1 title winner. Mbappe was the star player in that team, scoring 41 goals, and was also the World Cup's top scorer with eight goals, including a hat-trick in the final which France lost to Argentina on penalties. Yet he fell just short for the Ballon d'Or, finishing third, while Norway striker Haaland came second after scoring 52 goals in 53 games for the Manchester City team that won the treble of English Premier League, FA Cup and Champions League. Messi is 36 and won his first Ballon d'Or in 2009. With eight, he is now three ahead of his old rival Cristiano Ronaldo, the next most decorated player in the history of the award. It remains to be seen if Messi will again feature in the running for the

prize, which is voted for by one journalist in each of the top 100 nations in the FIFA ranking. "I am not thinking about the long-term future. I am just enjoying the day to day at the moment," he said. Messi will struggle to hold off the next wave of superstars, led by Mbappe, Haaland and Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham, but his World Cup performances made his victory this time feel inevitable. The women's prize seemed even more clear cut, as Bonmati was rewarded for starring as Spain won the World Cup in Australia in August. The 25-year-old midfielder was named the best player at the World Cup as the Spanish team overcame off-field turbulence, including protests against their national federation and coach Jorge Vilda, to lift the trophy. Bonmati also starred as Barcelona won the Champions League last season and was recently named as the UEFA Women's Player of the Year. "It is difficult to improve on this. It has been a unique year," she told various media including AFP. "If anyone said to me when I was little that I would play at the Camp Nou, win the World Cup, two Champions Leagues, a Ballon d'Or, a UEFA award, these are extraordinary things." She was one of four members of the triumphant Spain team to feature among the 30 nominees, with Alba Redondo, Salma Paralluelo and full-back Olga Carmona, who netted the winner in the final, all shortlisted. Last year's Ballon d'Or winner Alexia Putellas, also part of that Spain side, was not nominated after missing almost all of last season with a knee injury. Australia's Sam Kerr came second with Paralluelo in third place. Putellas had won the Ballon d'Or in each of the previous two campaigns. Norway's Ada Hegerberg won the inaugural award in 2018 and USA star Megan Rapinoe succeeded her a year later. Bellingham won the Kopa Trophy for the best player of last season aged under 21. Messi's Argentina colleague Emiliano Martinez won the Yashin Trophy for the best goalkeeper of the season.

Vinicius Vows to Continue Fight Against Racism



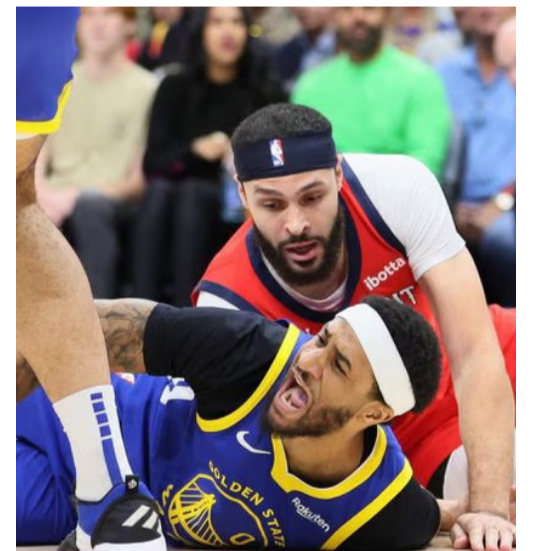
PARIS (Dispatches) - Real Madrid winger Vinicius Jr will keep speaking out against racism in world soccer after receiving the Socrates Award on Monday at the Ballon d'Or ceremony for his contribution off the field. Vinicius, who has been racially abused regularly in La Liga games for the last two seasons, was recognized for starting a foundation that is building schools in impoverished areas and investing in education in Brazil. "I will remain strong in the fight against racism," said the Brazilian, who received the award from the Prince of Monaco. "It is a very sad thing to talk about racism nowadays, but we have to continue in the fight so that people suffer less. Very happy to receive this award and to help many children in Brazil. I had little chance of getting where I have come from where I came so it is a pleasure for me to help as many kids as I can so they can have a chance." The 23-year-old was the only Brazilian in the top 10 of the ranking for this year's Ballon d'Or after scoring 23 goals in all competitions for Real last season. The forward was also part of an emotional tribute to Pele, the Brazil great who died in December last year at the age of 82. "Pele is a god for me and if I am here today, it is thanks to him. He put Brazil on a different level and people respect Brazilian players thanks to the great legacy he left," Vinicius said. The Vini Jr. Institute, created in 2020, aims to use the popularity of football to help innovations in teaching and learning in Brazilian public schools. The project claims up to 15 schools and 10,000 students will benefit by the end of 2023, with more than 500 teachers employed.

Murray Misses Match Point as De Minaur Jinx Continues

PARIS (Dispatches) - Andy Murray missed a match point and blew a 5-2 lead in the final set to suffer his sixth straight defeat to Alex de Minaur in the Paris Masters first round on Monday. The three-time Grand Slam champion appeared poised to finally clinch a first win over Australian De Minaur after a double-break in the deciding set, but slumped to a 7-6 (7/5), 4-6, 7-5 loss. Murray has still not won a match at Bercy Arena since lifting the title in 2016 en route to finishing as the year-end world number one. The Briton saw three set points come and go before losing the first set in a tie-break, but bounced back to level the match and then take control. But he twice failed to serve out the match, missing a match point in the 10th game. De Minaur instead secured victory to set up a second-round tie with either Serbian lucky loser Dusan Lajovic or French wildcard Benjamin Bonzi. Murray let slip two game points in the 12th and final game before being broken again, smashing his racket in frustration when his exit was confirmed after three hours on court. It was De Minaur's fourth win over Murray this year. Elsewhere on the first day of the tournament, American ninth seed Taylor Fritz swept aside Argentina's Sebastian Baez 6-1, 6-4 to boost his hopes of reaching next month's ATP Finals in Turin. Fritz is 10th in the standings for the season-ending event, with the top eight to qualify. US Open semi-finalist Ben Shelton lost 7-6 (7/4), 5-7, 6-3 to Alejandro Davidovich Fokina. American 14th seed Frances Tiafoe lost 6-3, 6-4 to Alexander Bublik. The defeat ended Tiafoe's slim hopes of reaching Turin. Karen Khachanov, the 2018 champion, progressed with a 6-4, 6-4 win over Australia's Max Purcell.



Curry Pours in 42 as Warriors Roll Over Pelicans



LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Steph Curry scored 42 points and the visiting Golden State Warriors routed the New Orleans Pelicans 130-102 on Monday night. Chris Paul, who came off the bench for the first time in his 19-year career a night earlier, added 13 points off the bench, Trayce Jackson-Davis had 13 points and nine rebounds, Moses Moody added 13 points and Gary Payton II scored 10 for the Warriors. CJ McCollum and Zion Williamson scored 19 each, rookie Jordan Hawkins scored 14, Matt Ryan had 12, and Jonas Valanciunas and Kira Lewis Jr. added 11 each for the Pelicans. The Warriors played without Klay Thompson (knee soreness) and Jonathan Kuminga (knee contusion). Curry made two 3-pointers and Andrew Wiggins made one as Golden State began the third quarter with a 13-4 run that produced an 11-point lead. The margin grew to 79-65 on a 3-pointer by Moody. New Orleans pulled within eight points on a three-point play by Lewis but Paul had two baskets and an assist during a 6-0 run by the Warriors that made it 91-78 with 2:27 to play in the quarter. Paul made another field goal during a 7-0 run that gave Golden State a 98-78 lead at the end of the third quarter. Curry, who made 4 of 7 3-pointers in the fourth quarter to trigger a 106-95 win at Houston the night before, made 3 of 5 and scored 16 points in the first quarter against the Pelicans. He finished 15 of 22 from the floor, including 7 of 13 on 3-pointers. The first period featured six ties and six lead changes. Williamson made back-to-back baskets to give the Pelicans their final lead of the quarter before Paul's 3-pointer gave the Warriors a 29-27 edge at the end of the period. New Orleans took a 34-33 lead on a 3-pointer by Ryan, but Keon Looney answered with a put-back with 8:45 left in the second that started an 8-0 Golden State run. The Warriors led by eight on three more occasions before consecutive 3-pointers by McCollum and Hawkins helped the Pelicans get within 59-57 at halftime.

Colombian Army Searches for Liverpool Winger Diaz's Kidnapped Father



BARRANCAS (Dispatches) - More than 120 Colombian soldiers backed by police searched Sunday for the father of Liverpool winger Luis Diaz, kidnapped with his wife, who has since been rescued. The army said in a statement it had set up roadblocks and deployed two motorized platoons, unmanned aircraft, helicopters and a plane with radar in the search for Luis Manuel Diaz. Colombian authorities did not provide details about the kidnapping, but media reported the footballer's father and mother Cilenis Marulanda were taken Saturday by armed men on motorcycles at a gas station in their home town of Barrancas in the northern La Guajira department. President Gustavo Petro said Marulanda was rescued in Barrancas hours after the couple was taken. Attorney General Francisco Barbosa told a press conference Sunday that Diaz "could be" in Venezuela, without elaborating. The motive for the kidnapping has not been divulged. "We are desperate, we are distressed, we know nothing about him," Olmer Diaz, the kidnapped man's brother, told AFP in Barrancas, urging his "prompt release." Colombia is a country just emerging from decades of civil conflict between rival armed groups that has seen more than 38,000 people kidnapped over the years, mostly for ransom. Petro, at an event to mark the start of local elections in Bogota, said "all the public forces have been deployed" to find Diaz's father. Luis Manuel Diaz was an amateur coach at the only football school in Barrancas, a town of about 38,000 inhabitants near the Venezuelan border, where his son showed promise from a very young age. His father is credited with aiding the meteoric rise of the Liverpool and Colombia striker known as "Lucho." Diaz, a 26-year-old Wayuu Indigenous man, has not spoken out about the events.

Alcaraz Not at 100% Ahead of Paris Masters

PARIS (Dispatches) - Carlos Alcaraz said on Monday he was not yet at "100 percent" as he prepares to return from injury this week at the Paris Masters, despite enjoying a practice session with rival Novak Djokovic. The Spanish star has not played since the Shanghai Masters earlier this month due to lower back and left foot injuries. But the Wimbledon champion is fit enough for a tilt at a first Bercy title, ahead of next month's ATP Finals in Turin. "I'm not going to say that I'm 100 percent because it could be a lie," Alcaraz told reporters. "At this time of the year, after a long year, I think almost every player has a little bit of problems in their bodies. I'm feeling in that way. I'm feeling a little bit of pain, but I had a really good recovery these weeks. I'm coming here feeling well enough to do a good result here." Second seed Alcaraz will be among the favorites in the French capital, despite failing to get past the quarter-finals in his two previous appearances. World number one Djokovic and in-form pair Jannik Sinner and Daniil Medvedev are expected to be his main rivals. The 20-year-old Spaniard retired injured from his last-eight match with Holger Rune 12 months ago, after a third-round loss to home player Hugo Gaston in 2021. "I'm really excited to play this tournament. I just said I have not great memories, but I am trying to forget everything that happen the years before," Alcaraz said. "I'm not thinking about what happened last year and 2021. I'm just focusing on this one." Djokovic is chasing a seventh Paris Masters title after losing to Rune in last year's final. The only Grand Slam trophy the Serbian star failed to win this year was at Wimbledon where he suffered an epic five-set defeat in the final against Alcaraz. "I think it was the best way to get ready for this tournament, practice with the best one," said Alcaraz of his session with Djokovic. "We spoke before coming here to Paris and we talk about if we can practise one day. It happened yesterday (Sunday). He won... Hopefully just for practice." Alcaraz will face Roman Safiullin in his opening match after the Russian beat France's Alexandre Muller 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 in the first round.

