

Iran's Foreign Debt at the End of the Iranian Month of Tir (July 22, 2023) Decreased by \$1.576 Billion Compared to a Year Earlier, the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Announced on Sunday

# IRAN NEWS


TEDPIX, the Main Index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Gained 17,537 Points (0.88 Percent) to 2,016,746 on Sunday, Which Is the Second Day of the Iranian Calendar Week

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2 DOMESTIC



### FTZs Account for 70% of Iran's Transit

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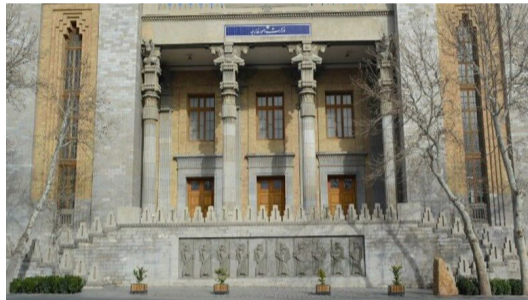
3 INTERNATIONAL



### Palestinian Media Says Israeli Strike Kills 51

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## Iran to Release Report on Violation of Human Rights by U.S., UK



TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Iranian Foreign Ministry will release an annual report on the violation of human rights by the United States and the United Kingdom in the coming days. The Iranian foreign ministry's Public Relations released a statement on Saturday, noting that separate reports of human rights violations by the U.S. and the UK have been drawn up in line with the implementation of the law passed by Iran's Parliament in 2012. According to the provisions of the statement, the report about the U.S. covers the most important human rights violations by the U.S. government over the past year in two categories within the U.S. and in the international arena. Also, the report on the UK is based on the official reports of numerous UN human rights organizations and bodies, as well as authentic and internationally available sources, that include human rights violations by the UK government in various areas, including women, migrants, and institutional racism in the British monarchy in 2023.

## Iraqi PM Due in Tehran With Gaza on Agenda



TEHRAN (MNA) - The Iraqi media sources reported on Sunday that the country's Prime Minister Mohammed S. Al-Sudani is set to travel to Tehran on Monday. According to the reports, Al-Sudani will visit Tehran first and then he will travel to the capitals of several Arab countries along the Persian Gulf. The reports said that discussing the latest development in Gaza is on the agenda of this trip. Earlier on Saturday, Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani said the "massacres" committed by Israel in Gaza prove that the international community had failed to perform its role. Iraq is a staunch supporter of the Palestinian cause and Sudan has several times condemned the lack of global support for justice for Palestinians. He said that the Palestinian cause "represents the most established and stable aspect of our positions because it is the permanent right to the occupied land and holy sites." Israel has been bombing Gaza since October 7, when the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas launched the surprise Operation Al-Aqsa Storm in the occupied territories in response to the Israeli regime's intensified crimes against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank.

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

## Iran Enjoys Unique Position in China's New Silk Road Project

TEHRAN - Vice President Mohammad Mokhber says the country has a "unique" position in China's giant New Silk Road project, also known as the Belt and Road Initiative. Speaking at the opening ceremony of the 6th China International Import Expo (CIIE) and the Hongqiao International Economic Forum in Shanghai on Sunday, Mokhber enumerated Iran's capacities in the fields of economy, oil and gas resources, minerals and human development index. "Iran's position and infrastructure is unique in the Silk Road," he said, referring to the giant project that involves a wave of Chinese funding for infrastructure projects around the world, in a bid to speed Chinese goods to markets further afield. Mokhber also noted that Iran is geographically situated "at the connection center of the Middle East, Asia and Europe" with land and maritime borders with 15 countries and a population of over 600 million. "It also has 2,700 kilometers of maritime borders, long beaches, Chabahar and Jask ocean ports, as well as a corridor route between the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman and the Caspian Sea, and transit infrastructure along the Silk Road," he added. "In terms of its geo-political situation, Iran connects East and Southeast Asia to Europe and vice versa as a historical and economic bridge." CIIE is a six-day multi-sector trade show for imported products from all over the world and is the largest event on China's international trade calendar. The annual event was launched by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2018 to promote the country's free trade credentials and tackle criticism of its trade surplus with many partners. The Iranian official further touched on Israel's ongoing war on the Gaza Strip, saying the Tel Aviv regime's "unprecedented acts amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity." "International bodies should put high on their agenda an immediate end to the killing of the oppressed people, as well as sending humanitarian aid to Gaza and lifting its blockade," he emphasized. Speaking before his trip, Mokhber said that Iran has a "significant" volume of exports to China and that the two countries enjoy a good trade balance. He also hailed strategic relations and proper cooperation between Tehran and Beijing in different sectors. President Ebrahim Raisi's visit to China led to good understandings and agreements that need to be followed up, he said, stressing the need to remove obstacles to fully implement the agreements. Meanwhile, Mehdi Safari, Iranian deputy foreign minister for economic affairs, said that CIIE can help expand Iran's exports to China between \$2 and \$3 billion. China is one of the target countries for Iran's exports and good agreements have been reached to boost trade, he told IRNA news agency. Iran's trade with China reached almost \$16 billion in 2022, up seven percent from 2021.

## War Against Hamas Amounts to War on Democracy

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raisi has highlighted the role played by Hamas in the Gaza Strip as the territory's legitimate government, saying the war against the Palestinian resistance movement is tantamount to waging war on democracy. During a telephone conversation with Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store on Saturday night, Raisi welcomed Oslo's position on the need for an immediate end to Israel's killing of civilians in Gaza as well as international efforts to lift the siege on the coastal enclave and deliver aid to its residents. He also expressed Iran's readiness to cooperate with the Norwegian Justice Ministry in an investigation into the atrocities committed by Israel in Gaza, stressing that the regime's war crimes and the US support for such criminal acts should not go unpunished. "Hamas is the legal, elected and legitimate government of Gaza," he said. "The war against Hamas is a war on democracy." Israel waged a bloody war on the blockaded Gaza Strip on October 7 after Hamas' Operation Al-Aqsa Storm against the occupying entity. Since the start of the aggression, the Tel Aviv regime has killed at least 9,572 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injured more than 26,000 others. It has also imposed a "complete siege" on the coastal sliver, cutting off fuel, electricity, food and water to the more than two million Palestinians



living there. Raisi noted that the killing of almost 10,000 Gazans, including 4,000 children, is the result of the massive shipment of weapons and equipment by the United States to the Zionist regime. "The fact that a child is killed in Gaza almost every 10 minutes is horrible and a clear example of crime against humanity and genocide. The disgusting silence of the US and some European countries along with their weaponry support for the Zionist regime prove the West's double standards and its obvious partnership in the Zionists' crimes," he said. The Iranian chief executive further censured the ineffectiveness of 180 UN resolutions to change Israel's behavior. The Islamic Republic, he added, has presented a UN-registered democratic and fair solution to the Palestinian issue based on the idea of one vote for every Palestinian. The Norwegian premier, for his part, said his country is aware of Iran's important and effective role in the region. He also appreciated Tehran's attempts to reduce regional tensions and called for interactions with the Islamic Republic toward resolving the Palestine issue. Iran and Norway, he emphasized, can consult and cooperate through diplomatic channels to find a solution that immediately ends the fighting, lifts the Gaza siege and provides relief aid to its people.

## Iran-EAEU Trade Value Exceeds \$4b in 7 Months



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The value of trade exchanges between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21 to October 22, 2023) reached \$4,258,053,000. In this timespan, Iran exported \$922 million worth of products to EAEU member states and imported \$3.3 billion of non-oil goods from those countries, according to the latest statistics. More than eight million tons of goods, valued at over \$4 billion, were exchanged between Iran and the five EAEU member states from March 21 to October 22, 2023. Iran exported 2,414,542 tons of products, valued at \$921,849,000, to the EAEU member states in the first seven months of the current Persian year, showing a 48 and 22 percent growth in weight and value respectively compared to last year's corresponding period. Iran imported 5,696,847 tons of non-oil goods, valued at \$3,336,204,000, from the EAEU countries, indicating a 37 and 31 percent hike in weight and value respectively compared to the same period of last year. Most of Iran's exports to the EAEU were sent to the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, registering a 30 and 20 percent growth respectively compared to the last year's corresponding period. In this period, Iran exported over \$532 million and more than \$40 million worth of goods to Russia and Kyrgyzstan respectively.

## Israeli Minister Says Nuking Gaza Is a Possibility



TEL AVIV (Dispatches) - An Israeli minister has claimed that dropping a nuclear bomb on the blockaded Gaza Strip is an option, saying that the remaining Palestinian population in the occupied lands could "go to Ireland or deserts." The Israeli heritage minister Amichai Eliyahu made the remarks in an interview with Radio Kol Berama when asked whether an atomic bomb should be dropped on the enclave. "This is one of the possibilities," Eliyahu, of the extremist Otzma Yehudit Party led by national security minister Itamar Ben Gvir, said. Eliyahu also insisted that allowing any humanitarian aid into Gaza was wrong, claiming "there is no such thing as uninvolved civilians in Gaza," calling the innocent civilian population in Gaza "Nazis." "Asked about the fate of the Palestinian families in Gaza after nuking the Strip, he said, "They can go to Ireland or deserts." He claimed the northern strip has no right to exist, adding that anyone waving a Palestinian or Hamas flag "shouldn't continue living on the face of the earth." Following the minister's remarks, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu suspended his membership in the regime's governing body. Hamas resistance movement, however, pointed out that Eliyahu's remarks were reflective of the Netanyahu regime's genocidal mindset. Also, the Israeli regime's minister of military affairs said on Saturday that the Zionist forces' attacks on the innocent Palestinian families living in the Gaza Strip would continue "even if victory takes a year." "We will remain in Gaza until we win, even if it takes a year," Yoav Galant said in a public address broadcast by the Israeli Broadcasting Authority. "After this war, no threat will remain in Gaza that will be able to terrorize Israel from the southern border. We'll have full operational freedom to act within the strip," Galant added. He claimed, "The fighting is going well for the Israeli forces ... and after the war, there will be no Hamas." Al-Qassam Brigades says destroyed 24 Israeli vehicles and tanks in the past 48 hours as the regime forces continue their month-long onslaught in Gaza. Israel unleashed a bombing campaign against the Gaza Strip on October 7 after Hamas launched a surprise, large-scale attack, dubbed Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, in reaction to decades of atrocities against Palestinians. The death toll of the Palestinians killed in the Israeli attacks had risen to 9,488, most of which are women, children, and the elderly. In addition, more than 24,160 Palestinians have been wounded, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. The Apartheid Israeli forces also cut off water, food, medicine, electricity, and fuel to Gaza, leaving some 2.3 million Palestinians at risk of a slow and painful death at the hands of the Israeli regime forces if help from the international community does not arrive soon.

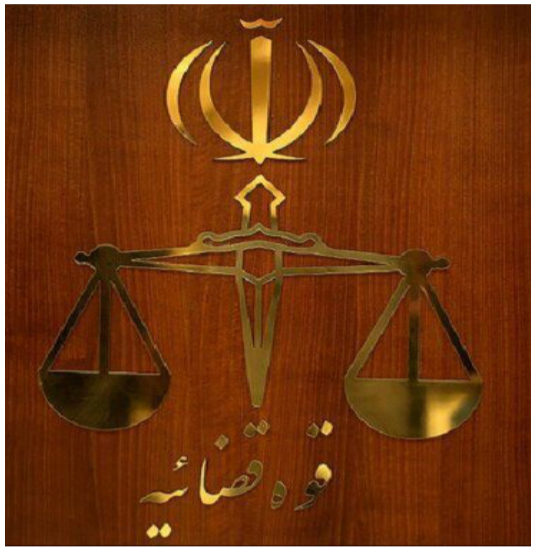
# IRAN NEWS



## Iran, Taliban Jointly Neutralize Mossad Drone Attack

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Intelligence Ministry in cooperation with Afghanistan's ruling Taliban group have neutralized a drone attack by the Israeli regime's spy agency Mossad in eastern Iran. Three Mossad agents with Iranian nationality were arrested in the mountainous areas between Iran and Afghanistan during the joint operation, said a Sunday report by the IRNA. The three agents had planned to launch suicide drones from the Afghanistan border areas towards targets in Iran, the report said. It added that the suspects will soon be handed over by Taliban authorities to Iran.

## Judiciary Tasked With Taking Measures Against Massacres in Other States



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Lawmakers of the Majlis (Iranian Parliament) have tasked the Judiciary with taking necessary measures against the anti-human crimes committed in other countries. According to the Majlis decision made during an open session in Tehran on Sunday, Iran's Judiciary is responsible for fulfilling such a task by giving due testimonies and documents to international sources. During the session, the lawmakers discussed some parts of Iran's seventh development plan. Annex 18 of the seventh development plan says that the Judiciary is responsible for cooperating with Iranian justice and foreign ministries in pursuing human rights crimes including massacre, crime against humanity, terrorism, war crimes, and aggression in other countries particularly in the Western states. The pursuance will include legal measures whose outcomes will be presented to the related sources inside the country and in the international community, according to Annex 18.



## Iranian Court Begins Hearing for Victims of U.S.-Sponsored Terror Groups

TEHRAN (IRNA) - An Iranian court has initiated the first hearing of a lawsuit filed by families of Iranians killed by U.S.-backed terror groups. The virtual hearing, which started on Sunday, is based on complaints from 646 individuals from 15 provinces across Iran. Demanding severe penalties for American officials implicated in the deaths of their relatives, the plaintiffs are seeking compensation from the United States for the material and spiritual damage caused by American commanders through the formation of terror groups such as Daesh (ISIS), Al-Nusra Front, and Jaysh al-Adl (formerly Jundallah). During the hearing, a lawyer representing the families presented a list of legal points in the procedure to address the complaints. Akhtar Taran, the wife of Kheirollah Samadi, who has been martyred in the fight against U.S.-backed terror groups, highlighted the atrocities committed by Takfiri terrorists and Daesh and stated that the U.S. utilized these terror groups to maintain its regional presence. Taran added that according to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the so-called emir of Daesh, the terrorist group was responsible for the deaths of 570,000 individuals during their operations in the West Asia region in recent years.

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



TEHRAN – Secretary of the Supreme Council of Free Trade and Special Economic Zones has said 70 percent of the country's transit is carried out through free trade and special economic zones. Speaking in a press conference in Kordestan Province on Saturday, Hojatollah Abdolmaleki said there are 94 approved free trade and special economic zones across the country of which 18 are free trade zones. According to the official, the country's free trade and special economic zones play a significant role in the country's economy, so that in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) one-third of Iran's total non-oil export was carried out through these zones. Over 2500 companies are currently active in the free trade and special economic zones in which more than 7,000 people are directly employed, Abdolmaleki said. The establishment of free trade zones (FTZs) in Iran dates back to the Iranian calendar year 1368 (March 1989 - March 1990) following the fall in the country's oil income in the preceding year which prompted the government to promote non-oil exports. The first two free trade zones of Iran were established in the south of the country. The first one was Kish Free Trade Zone established in 1368 on Kish Island in the Persian Gulf and the second one was Qeshm Free Trade Zone established the year after on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz. Some five other free trade zones have been also established in the country since then, including Chabahar in southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan Province, Arvand in

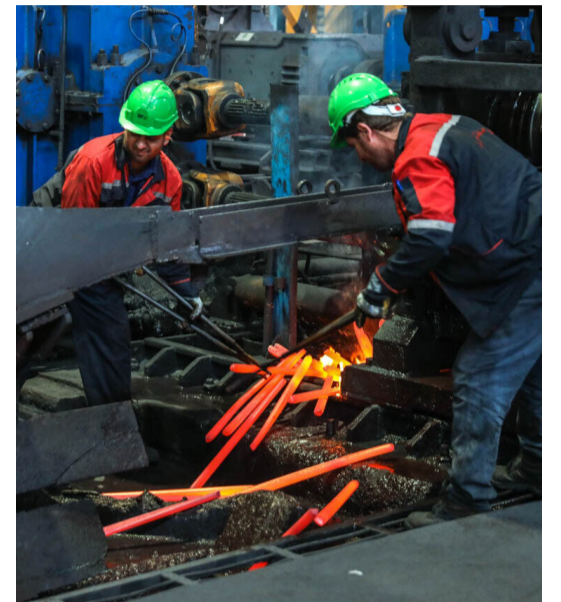
southwestern Khuzestan Province, Anzali in northern Gilan Province, Aras in East-Azərbayjan Province and Maku in West-Azərbayjan Province, both in the northwest of the country. The development of existing free trade zones and the establishment of new FTZs has become one of the major economic approaches of the Iranian government. Free Zones High Council has been taking new measures to improve the role of free trade and special economic zones in the country's economy. In this regard, the secretary of Free Zones High Council has been holding talks with senior officials from various government bodies to underline the importance of developing free zones for the country's economic improvement. In a meeting with Meisam Latifi, the Head of the Public Administration and Recruitment Organization in late September, the two sides discussed structural and executive issues related to free trade and special economic zones. Abdolmaleki also held a meeting with the Head of the Institute of Standards and Industrial Research of Iran (ISIRI) Mehdi Eslam-Panah in which he stressed the need to facilitate administrative affairs related to economic and business activities in free trade and special economic zones. In the meeting, Eslam-Panah said free and special economic zones are effective in the economic progress of the country and maximum facilitation should be done in the administrative affairs related to economic and business sectors in these zones.



TEHRAN – Tehran hosted an Iran-Afghanistan Joint Economic Committee meeting for the first time after the new government in Afghanistan took office, IRNA reported. The Iranian and Afghan representatives to Joint Economic Committee held the first day of their meeting on Saturday, with high-ranking economic officials of both countries being in attendance. The formation of joint working groups in fields such as trade, transit, transportation, customs and the environment were discussed on the first day of the two-day meeting. The two sides also agreed on the formation of several more working groups tasked with identifying problems in the way of economic cooperation between the two neighbors. Afghanistan's delegation arrived in Iran earlier on Saturday. The 30-member delegation was led by Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan Abdul Ghani Baradar. Iranian Agriculture Minister Mohammad-Ali Nikbakht and President Raisi's special envoy for Afghanistan Hassan Kazemi Qomi were among the senior

officials representing the Iranian side. According to the economic adviser of the Iranian president's special envoy in Afghanistan affairs, Iran has a 35 percent share in Afghanistan's import market, which is a considerable figure in bilateral trade ties. Mohammad-Mehdi Javanmard-Ghassab stated that Tehran and Kabul enjoy high capacities to expand bilateral trade relations, especially in the fields of technical engineering services, transportation, and transit. The economies of Iran and Afghanistan can complement each other, he said, adding that the two countries need a long-term strategic plan to take advantage of these conditions optimally. Turning to Iran's 35 percent share in Afghanistan's market, Javanmard-Ghassab stressed that the country is seeking to export technology, technical know-how as well as technical and engineering services to Afghanistan. Increasing the production of Iranian products in Afghanistan is also on the agenda, he emphasized.

## Iran Steel Products Export Up 21% in 7 Months



TEHRAN (IRNA) - The export of Iran's steel products has risen 21 percent during the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21–October 22, 2023), as compared to the same period of time in the past year. Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA) in its recent report has announced that the export of Iran's steel products during the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year has reached 7,089 million metric tons (mt), which was 5,842 million mt during the same period of time in the past year. According to the report by the ISPA, 7.1 million tons of steel and iron products, valued at \$4.2 billion, were exported during the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year. According to the World Steel Association, Iran has maintained its 10th place among world steel producers by producing some 2.4 million mt of steel in September 2023.

## Over 2.5 Tons of Commodities Traded on IME Last Week



TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) witnessed trade of 2,597,357 tons of commodities with a total trading value of more than \$632m on its physical market. According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor trade of 2,070,000 tonnes of commodities valued at more than \$368m. On this floor the IME sold 1,275,998 tons of cement, 362,000 tons of iron ore, 296,982 tons of steel, 118,000 tons of sponge iron, 12,759 tons of copper, 6,910 tons of aluminum, 885 tons of zinc, 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 175 tons of lead and 45 tons of precious metals concentrate. Based on this report, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 514,423 tons of commodities worth nearly \$252m. Commodities traded on this floor included 184,461 tons of bitumen, 123,800 tons of vacuum bottom, 103,620 tons of polymeric products, 63,000 tons of lube cut, 31,067 tons of chemicals, 7,437 tons of oil, 550 tons of sulfur, 450 tons of waterproofing materials and 280 tons of feedstocks. The IME also traded within the same week 12,933 tons of goods on its side market.

## Death toll in Nepal earthquake rises to 157

TEHRAN, Nov. 05 (MNA) – At least 157 people were killed in an overnight earthquake that struck a remote pocket of Nepal, officials said. The death toll included 105 people killed in Jajarkot and 52 in neighboring Rukum West district, both in Karnali province, Rama Acharya, an official in the disaster department of the federal home (interior) ministry, told Reuters on Saturday. The quake struck the Jajarkot region in the west of the Himalayan nation at 11:47 p.m. (1802 GMT) on Friday with a 6.4 magnitude, Nepal's National Seismological Centre said. Officials fear the death toll could rise as first responders had reached the hilly area near the epicenter, some 500 km (300 miles) west of the capital Kathmandu, only early on Saturday and began searching for survivors.



## Ukraine War Not in Stalemate



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy denied that the war with Russia had reached a "stalemate", and said more work with allies was needed to strengthen air defenses. His comments came days after Ukraine's Commander-in-chief, General Valery Zaluzhnyi, said in an article the conflict was moving towards a new stage of static and attritional fighting, a phase that could allow Moscow to rebuild its military power. "Today time has passed and people are tired. But this is not a stalemate," Zelenskyy said during a news conference with visiting European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. "Russia controls the skies. We care about our military." Zelenskyy acknowledged there had been difficulties in the war, now in its 21st month, and that Kyiv had yet to achieve any major successes in its counteroffensive. But he said Ukrainian troops had no other alternative but to keep fighting and required more support from Western allies, especially with air defenses. Ukrainian forces have made slow progress through vast Russian minefields in a counteroffensive that began in the east and south in early June, but Russia has hit back hard in the east. Russian troops were mounting numerous attacks near Avdiivka, Lyman and Mariinka in the eastern Donetsk region, the Ukrainian military said in its daily update. Ukrainian forces were continuing their advance in the southeast towards the sea of Azov, the report added.

## Turkey's Opposition Changes Leader After Election Defeat



ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Turkey's main opposition party on Sunday dumped its embattled leader in favor of an untested former pharmacist following a disappointing election defeat to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The staunchly secular Republican People's Party (CHP) has been riven by divisions since Kemal Kilicdaroglu lost a bitterly fought May runoff against Turkey's dominant but divisive president. At the party's annual congress, delegates voted to replace Kilicdaroglu with the relatively unknown Ozgur Ozel after squandering what many viewed as the opposition's best chance to end two decades of Erdogan's Islamic conservative rule. The May election came in the throes of a dire cost-of-living crisis that analysts blame squarely on Erdogan's unorthodox economic beliefs. Kilicdaroglu managed to pull together a multi-faceted alliance that included both right-wing nationalists and left-wing socialists and Kurds. But the six-party bloc nearly fractured months before the election and then underperformed in the polls. Erdogan managed to cement his control of parliament through support from Islamic and ultranationalist groups. Kilicdaroglu then riled many within his own party by refusing to concede defeat and quit. The 74-year-old lost his leadership post after two rounds of heated party congress voting to a candidate backed by Istanbul mayor Ekrem Imamoğlu. Ozel had spent a large part of his career working as a private pharmacist in the socially liberal Aegean resort city of Izmir. He eventually became head of Turkey's pharmacy association and was elected to parliament in 2011. The bespectacled 49-year-old German speaker won the final ballot by a 812-536 margin after promoting himself as the candidate for "change". But the vote was far more focused on personalities than any particular policies. Kilicdaroglu compared attempts to unseat him to a "stab in the back". Ozel countered that he wanted to "write a new story and reshape Turkish politics". The CHP congress came with much of the political attention turning to March municipal elections that Erdogan and his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) enter with a full head of steam. Erdogan had long prided himself on never losing a national election and keeping his conservative alliance in control of both parliament and Turkey's main cities. But his air of invincibility was punctured in landmark 2019 elections that saw the opposition win both Istanbul and Ankara for the first time during Erdogan's rule. Erdogan has been focused on seizing back both cities since his re-election to a final five-year term. Analysts believe Erdogan's chances are strongest in Istanbul – the city where the Turkish leader grew up and where he launched his political career as mayor. Current mayor Imamoğlu became a darling of the opposition after winning a hugely controversial re-run election against Erdogan's ally in 2019. But he has since lost some of his lustre and is currently facing the threat of being barred from politics by Turkish courts. Imamoğlu has been convicted of insulting a public official and could be forced to resign should the ruling be upheld. He decided against challenging Kilicdaroglu and instead backed Ozel's candidacy.

## Palestinian Media Says Israeli Strike Kills 51

GAZA (Dispatches) - Palestinian news agency Wafa said the Israeli military attacked a Gaza refugee camp on Saturday, killing 51 people, mostly women and children, as calls for a ceasefire by the Arab world were rejected by the United States and Israel. With the death toll in Gaza mounting, pro-Palestinian demonstrators staged protests in cities around the world on Saturday, calling for an end to the nearly month-old war. Wafa said the Maghazi refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip had been hit by an Israeli bombardment on Saturday night. Reuters could not independently verify the Wafa report. The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Israel says it is targeting Hamas, not civilians, and that the militant group is using residents as human shields. A spokesperson for the Hamas-run health ministry in Gaza, Ashraf al-Qidra, said a large number of people were killed in the attack, without giving a figure, and scores severely injured were taken to hospital. Gaza health officials said on Saturday more than 9,488 Palestinians have been killed in the war, which began when Hamas fighters launched a surprise attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing 1,400 people and taking more than 240 others hostage. Foreign ministers from Qatar, Saudi, Egypt, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates met U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Amman on Saturday and pushed for Washington to persuade Israel to agree to a ceasefire. "This war is just going to produce more pain for Palestinians, for Israelis, and this is going to push us all again into the abyss of hatred and dehumanisation," Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said in a press conference with Blinken. "So that needs to stop." However, the top U.S. diplomat dismissed the idea of a ceasefire, saying it would only benefit Hamas, allowing the Islamist Palestinian group to regroup and attack again. "Washington had proposed localised pauses in fighting to allow in humanitarian aid and for people to leave the densely populated Gaza Strip. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected this when he met Blinken on Friday in Tel Aviv. Blinken was to visit Turkey on Sunday for

talks on the conflict. It is his second trip to the region since the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict reignited. Israel has struck Gaza from the air, imposed a siege and launched a ground assault, stirring global alarm at humanitarian conditions in the narrow coastal enclave. Pro-Palestinian demonstrators staged protests on Saturday in cities including London, Berlin, Paris, Istanbul and Jakarta, demanding a ceasefire. Tens of thousands gathered in Washington to denounce President Joe Biden's war policy and demand a ceasefire. Some carried posters reading "Palestinian Lives Matter", "Let Gaza Live" and "Their blood is in on your hands". In Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country, Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi told tens of thousands gathered in Jakarta on Sunday that the government reaffirmed its support for the struggle of the Palestinian people and would send a second shipment of aid. Worsening violence in the Israeli-occupied West Bank has fuelled concerns that the flashpoint Palestinian territory could become a third front in a wider war - in addition to Israel's northern border, where clashes with Lebanese Hezbollah forces have mounted. "This has been a serious problem that's only worsened since the conflict," Blinken said, adding that he raised it on Friday in his meetings with Israeli officials. "Perpetrators must be held accountable." This year had already been the deadliest for West Bank residents in at least 15 years, with some 200 Palestinians and 26 Israelis killed, according to U.N. data. Since the war in Gaza began, 121 West Bank Palestinians have been killed. U.S. special envoy David Satterfield said in Amman on Saturday that between 800,000 and a million people had moved to the south of the Gaza Strip, while 350,000 to 400,000 remained in and around Gaza City. Gaza's living conditions, already dire before the fighting, have deteriorated further. Food is scarce, residents have resorted to drinking salty water and medical services are collapsing. The U.N. humanitarian office OCHA estimates that nearly 1.5 million of Gaza's 2.3 million people are internally displaced.



## Protesters Slam Biden at Pro-Palestinian March in Washington

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Thousands of protesters in the U.S. capital called for a ceasefire in Gaza amid Israel's relentless bombing campaign, with some slamming President Joe Biden's support for Washington's top ally in the Middle East. The rally, at which demonstrators waved Palestinian flags and wore the traditional keffiyeh scarf, was the largest protest in Washington since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas conflict on October 7. "Free, free Palestine," and "End the siege on Gaza now," the protesters shouted. Other slogans targeted the US president: "Biden, Biden you can't hide, you signed off on genocide" and "We say no, Genocide Joe." "It is unacceptable to allow for the loss of so many innocent lives and we cannot consider this a proportional conflict," said 24-year-old Amanda Eisenhour of Virginia. "This is a massacre, a genocide... a stain on our history, and I cannot accept as a citizen that my taxes are funding this." Jasmine Iman, 25, came from New York to attend the protest and said she will not vote for Biden in next year's presidential election because of his steadfast support for Israel. "We will not vote for the Democratic Party. We will make sure that everyone we know knows not to vote for the Democratic Party because of (Gaza)," she said. Biden, 80, is likely to face off against 77-year-old Republican former president Donald Trump a year from now, with polls showing a hypothetical matchup in a virtual dead heat. If the election ends up being a choice between Biden and Trump, "I'll sit it out," Iman said. Fighting raged in Gaza on Saturday for a 29th day since Hamas militants stormed across the Israeli border and, according to Israeli officials, killed more than 1,400 people, mostly civilians, and abducted over 240 others. Since then, Israel has relentlessly bombarded the Gaza Strip and sent in ground troops. The health ministry in the Hamas-run Palestinian territory says 9,488 people have been killed, around two-thirds of them women and children.



## Japan Cooperating With Philippines, U.S. to Protect South China Sea

MANILA (Dispatches) - Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said his country, the Philippines and the United States were cooperating to protect the freedom of the South China Sea as he committed to help enhance Manila's security capabilities. "In the South China Sea, trilateral cooperation to protect the freedom of the sea is under way," Kishida, on an official visit, said in an address before the Philippine congress in the capital Manila. Kishida and President Ferdinand Marcos Jr agreed on Friday to start negotiations on a reciprocal troop access deal to strengthen military cooperation as China becomes increasingly assertive in the region. The Philippines and Japan, two of the United States' closest Asian allies, have taken a strong line against what they see as aggressive behaviour by Chinese vessels amid decades-old disputes over maritime sovereignty. Last month China and the Philippines traded accusations over a collision in the disputed waters of the South China Sea as Chinese vessels blocked Philippine boats supplying forces there. China claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea, including parts of the exclusive economic zones of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam. The Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016 said China's claims had no legal basis. Japan does not have any claim to the South China Sea, but has a maritime dispute with China in the East China Sea. "Japan will continue to contribute to the enhancement of the Philippines' security capabilities, thereby contributing to regional peace and stability," Kishida said. Japan in March observed U.S.-Philippine military drills, and in June the Philippine and Japanese coast guards trained together for the first time. "Through these efforts, let us protect the maritime order, which is governed by laws and rules, not by force," said Kishida, who in December unveiled Japan's biggest military build-up as it looks to counter China's growing military might. Kishida said Japan agreed to provide the Philippines with coastal surveillance radars, the first cooperation project in the world under its Official Security Assistance (OSA) programme, aimed at helping boost deterrence capabilities of Tokyo's partner countries. The radars will be placed in five separate areas along the Philippines coast, Kyodo news reported on Saturday citing an unnamed Japanese senior government official.

## Afghanistan Opium Poppy Supply Plummets 95% After Taliban Ban

GENEVA (Dispatches) - Opium poppy production in Afghanistan, previously the world's top supplier, has plummeted since the Taliban administration banned the cultivation of narcotics last year, a United Nations report said on Sunday. The U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said opium cultivation fell throughout the country to just 10,800 hectares (26,700 acres) in 2023 from 233,000 hectares the previous year, slashing supply by 95% to 333 tons. This was putting pressure on farmers in the war-torn country, where most people depend on agriculture and the value of poppy exports had at times outstripped the value of all formal exported goods, UNODC said. The sharp decline could have major consequences for the economy in a country where around two-thirds of the population are already in need of humanitarian aid, the report said. "Over the coming months Afghanistan is in dire need of strong investment in sustainable livelihoods to provide Afghan farmers with opportunities away from opium," Ghada Waly, the executive director of UNODC, said in a statement. "This

presents a real opportunity to build towards long-term results against the illicit opium market and the damage it causes both locally and globally." The huge contraction in supply from Afghanistan - estimated to supply around 80% of the world's illegal opium - could eventually lead to a drop in opium use internationally, but it also risked escalating the global use of alternatives such as fentanyl or synthetic opioids, the UNODC said. The Taliban's supreme spiritual leader banned the cultivation of narcotics in April 2022, and the interior ministry said it would destroy any remaining crops. During their previous rule, the Taliban in 2000 banned poppy cultivation as they sought international legitimacy but faced popular backlash, according to experts. Many of the provinces where the Taliban has historically had high levels of support, such as southern Helmand, have a large concentration of opium poppy cultivation. The UNODC said many farmers had switched to growing wheat but that this earned significantly less than poppy.



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## Celtics Remain NBA's Last Unbeaten

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Jayson Tatum scored 32 points and grabbed 11 rebounds to power Boston to a 124-114 victory at Brooklyn, keeping the Celtics as the NBA's last unbeaten club. Jaylen Brown added 23 points and Latvian forward Kristaps Porzingis had 22 as the Celtics improved to 5-0 to stay atop the Eastern Conference. "They present different challenges. They play fast, get up a lot of threes, so this was a good test for us on the road to figure it out," Tatum said. "I like the way we closed out the game." Tatum, a 25-year-old forward, became the youngest player in Celtics history to reach 10,000 career points. "That's special. That's cool," Tatum said. "I've just been blessed to be at a great franchise... hopefully I've got a lot more to go and a lot more games to win." Former Milwaukee guard Jrue Holiday, who arrived in Boston after two trades, contributed 18 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds. "Everybody is shining," Tatum said. "I love this team. We're having fun. We're playing hard. We're competing." Keeping pace one game behind the Celtics were the Philadelphia 76ers as Joel Embiid scored 26 points and grabbed 11 rebounds to lead the Sixers over visiting Phoenix 112-100. Kelly Oubre added 25 points, Tobias Harris had 18 points and 10 rebounds and Tyrese Maxey contributed 22 points, and 10 assists on his 23rd birthday to spark the 76ers (4-1). "I was trying to be aggressive, whether I was making the right read, getting the assist or scoring the ball," Maxey said. "I'm trying to pick my spots when to be ultra aggressive and when to get to the paint to get Joel a shot, get Kelly a shot, get them in the right spots. I think I'm doing a solid job of it right now." Maxey has shown a spark in replacing veteran James Harden, who was traded to the Los Angeles Clippers. "Coach, Joel, Tobias, they trust me out there to see what I read out there on the court. Trust

has been great and I appreciate them for that," Maxey said. "I know what my role is so it has been great." Kevin Durant scored a game-high 31 points for the Suns with eight rebounds in a losing cause. Defending champion Denver seized the Western Conference lead, improving to 6-1 by defeating Chicago 123-101. Nikola Jokic had 28 points, 16 rebounds and nine assists to lead the hosts Nuggets while Michael Porter added 27 points and Aaron Gordon had 15 points and 12 rebounds for Denver. German forward Franz Wagner scored 26 points and Paolo Banchero added 25 points and a career-high 10 assists to spark host Orlando over the Los Angeles Lakers 120-101. "I'm feeling good," Banchero said. "I've put in a lot of work. It was a long summer. I can't be more happy than I am to be back." You can score the ball, make the plays but making others better is what I love to do," he said of his 10 assists. "I went out there and tried to keep the defense honest." Anthony Davis had 28 points, 13 rebounds and seven blocked shots and LeBron James added 24 points, nine rebounds, five assists and three steals for the Lakers, who began a four-game road trip. Anthony Edwards scored 31 points and Karl-Anthony Towns had 25 to spark the host Minnesota Timberwolves over Utah 123-95. Dillion Brooks scored 26 points while Fred VanVleet and Jabari Smith each added 21 for Houston in a 107-89 triumph over Sacramento. Charlotte's Mark Williams scored 27 points and Gordon Hayward added 23 to power the Hornets over host Indiana 125-124. Tyrese Haliburton scored 43 points, matching a career high, and added 12 assists for the Pacers. Trae Young had 22 points and 12 assists while Jalen Johnson added 21 points and 11 rebounds to lead Atlanta over New Orleans 123-105 despite Zion Williamson's game-high 25 points for the Pelicans.

## Real Madrid Deny Reported Mbappe Negotiations



MADRID (Dispatches) - Real Madrid denied they are in negotiations to sign Paris Saint-Germain striker Kylian Mbappe at the end of his contract in June 2024 after recent reports suggested they were in talks. "In view of the information issued and published recently by different media outlets, in which there is speculation about alleged negotiations between the player Kylian Mbappe and our club, Real Madrid wishes to state that this information is categorically false and that no such negotiations have taken place with a player who belongs to PSG," said Madrid in a statement. Spanish newspaper Marca said Thursday that Madrid envisage Mbappe joining the club next year, with the squad believing "he will land at the Santiago Bernabeu". Mbappe has been courted by Madrid for several years but turned Los Blancos down by signing a new contract with PSG in May 2022 despite reports he had agreed to join Real Madrid. In the summer, Mbappe was frozen out by PSG until August 13 after refusing to extend his contract. The 24-year-old was not invited to the pre-season tour in Japan and South Korea and missed the French champions' first Ligue 1 match during the dispute. Mbappe was eventually brought back into the fold after holding "constructive and positive discussions" with the club.

## Djokovic Resists Suffocating Rublev to Reach Final

PARIS (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic rallied to defeat Andrey Rublev 5-7, 7-6 (7/3), 7-5 in a gripping Paris Masters semi-final, earning a shot at a record-extending seventh title in the final against Grigor Dimitrov. The world number one relied on his unflinching powers of recovery to work his way back from a set down before sealing victory when fifth seed Rublev doubled-faulted on match point. "Rublev was suffocating me like a snake suffocates a frog for most of the match," said Djokovic. "He was playing an extremely high level that he possesses, but today he was off the charts, honestly. I don't think I've ever faced Rublev this good." Djokovic remains undefeated in nine semi-final appearances at Bercy and stretched his winning run to 17 matches -- a streak which includes his record-tying 24th Grand Slam title at the US Open. His only defeat in his last 31 matches was a five-set loss to Carlos Alcaraz in the Wimbledon final, which ruined his bid for a calendar Grand Slam. Djokovic broke to start the match only for Rublev to hit back the next game, drawing a loose backhand from the Serbian at the end of a lengthy rally. The top seed produced some clutch serving to escape a 0-40 hole to hold for 4-4, but Rublev took his next opportunity with Djokovic trying to stay in the set. Rublev punished a weak second serve to bring up set point, and he soon surged ahead as Djokovic botched a drop shot attempt. Djokovic fought off a



break point early in the second set but failed to convert any of his four opportunities against a resilient Rublev. The 36-year-old clung on to win a gruelling point dictated by Rublev to move 4-2 up in the tie-break, then ripped a return winner off his rival's serve to produce three set points. He only needed one, belting an ace out wide to send the match to a third set. Djokovic received treatment on his back between sets but did not appear to be hindered as he carved out two break points in the fourth game. Rublev resisted until Djokovic cranked up the pressure with the Russian serving to stay in the match. Djokovic cracked a sensational backhand winner to start the final game and imposed his will against a faltering Rublev, who hurled his racquet in disgust after a double fault sealed his fate. The Serbian, who has admitted to feeling under the weather this week, will look to add to his record haul of 39 Masters titles against an opponent who is appearing in just his second such final. "I was struggling with my fitness again a little bit at the beginning, but I kind of went through it," said Djokovic. Earlier in the day, Dimitrov kept up his late-season charge by squeezing past Stefanos Tsitsipas in three sets. The 17th-ranked Bulgarian edged a high-quality encounter 6-3, 6-7 (1/7), 7-6 (7/3) to advance to his second Masters final -- after winning the title in Cincinnati six years ago.

## Verstappen Powers to Sprint Victory



SAO PAULO (Dispatches) - Max Verstappen continued his winning habit with another well-measured victory for Red Bull when he triumphed in the sprint race at the Sao Paulo Grand Prix. The three-time world champion finished comfortably clear of McLaren's Lando Norris. Verstappen snatched the lead at the start and came home 4.287 seconds clear of pole-sitter Norris with Red Bull team-mate Sergio Perez taking third ahead of George Russell of Mercedes and Ferrari's Charles Leclerc. Yuki Tsunoda was sixth for Alpha Tauri, scoring their first points for the Italian team, ahead of seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton in the second Mercedes and Carlos Ferrari in the second Ferrari, taking the final point for eighth. It was Verstappen's fourth sprint win of the season. "Much better than last year," he reported to his team at the finish. "It was important to get ahead at the start, but the launch wasn't amazing. It's a good start and we learned a lot for tomorrow." Norris said: "I think I had the power, but I was too conservative. My initial start was good but not the second part of it and then I tried to go after Max, but I just didn't have enough..." "After a poor start, Perez fell to fifth but fought back to finish third. I had a terrible start and had to fight hard on my tyres," he said. "And I paid the price in the end. Without the start, I think I could have been a lot further up." Hamilton's race ended in disappointment as his tyres fell off in the closing laps and he lost positions and pace. "We got it wrong today and we have to improve," said Mercedes team chief Toto Wolff. On a hot day at Interlagos, Norris made a good start from his first sprint race pole position, but Verstappen powered past him on the inside in the second start phase to lead into the downhill turn to the Senna 'S'. Behind him, Russell surged forward from fourth on the grid to pass Perez and then take second from Norris on the opening lap with Hamilton following to take fourth as Perez fell to fifth. The Mexican began his recovery with a slipstream and Drag Reduction System-aided pass of Hamilton at Turn One on lap four, the Red Bull showing superior straight line power and speed as Verstappen pulled 1.5 seconds clear. Norris also recovered to regain second from Russell into Turn One and Perez took third at the start of lap eight at the same place before the Briton re-passed him at the end of the back straight. The champion was 1.8sec ahead of Norris with Perez seven seconds adrift in third and the two Mercedes, of Russell and Hamilton, in pursuit. Red Bull team chief Christian Horner was full of praise for both Verstappen's race management and Perez's resilience.

## Fluminense Down Boca to Win First Copa Libertadores

RIO DE JANEIRO (Dispatches) - John Kennedy struck a spectacular extra-time winner as Fluminense ended their long wait for a first ever Copa Libertadores crown on Saturday with a 2-1 victory over Argentina's Boca Juniors. Substitute Kennedy volleyed home from the edge of the area in the 99th minute of an ill-tempered final at Rio's Maracana Stadium after the match finished 1-1 after 90 minutes. Kennedy was promptly sent off for collecting a second yellow card for an over-exuberant celebration among Fluminense's delirious home fans following the goal. The 21-year-old Kennedy -- named by his history-loving father after the 35th President of the United States -- had been a decisive influence for Fluminense after being brought on as a substitute for playmaker Ganso 10 minutes from the end of normal time. At that point, Boca looked to be getting on top after equalising with a 72nd-minute shot from Peruvian international right back Luis Advincula which cancelled out Fluminense's 36th-minute opener from veteran forward German Cano. But the arrival of Kennedy breathed fresh life into the Fluminense attack and in the first half of extra-time, the young forward made the breakthrough. A deft touch by Keno teed up the ball for Kennedy in space, who crashed a thunderous right-foot volley beyond the dive of Boca's former Manchester United



and Argentina international goalkeeper Sergio Romero. Tempers flared near half-time of extra-time with an ugly multi-player melee after unsuccessful Boca appeals for a penalty. Boca's Frank Fabra was given his marching orders by Colombian referee Wilmar Roldan after a VAR review caught him aiming a slap at Fluminense defender Nino. With both teams down to 10 men, Fluminense could have wrapped up victory but Guga's effort after a sweeping counter-attack came back off the inside of the post and rolled across the face of goal.

for an equaliser, Fluminense dropped deeper and looked increasingly nervous. They paid the price for that approach on 72 minutes when right back Advincula advanced on goal, cutting in from the flank and unleashing a superb effort into the far corner beyond the dive of Fluminense goalkeeper Fabio. The goal silenced the Maracana as Fluminense's fans feared the worst against the Argentine giants. But Kennedy's arrival wrested momentum back in favor of the Rio club, setting up his extra-time winner.