

A Dutch Court Has Ruled That a Company Must Pay Compensation to Five Iranian Victims of Chemical Weapons Attacks by Iraq in the 1980s, According to the Office for Legal Affairs in the Iranian Presidency

# IRAN NEWS

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian Has Warned Against an "Unavoidable" Spillover of Israel's War on Gaza If the Zionist Regime Continues Its Genocide of Palestinians in the Besieged Territory

VOL. XXIX, No. 7862 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 19, 2023 ABAN 28, 1402

## 2 DOMESTIC



### Iran Hails Growing Exchanges With Turkmenistan

> SEE PAGE 2

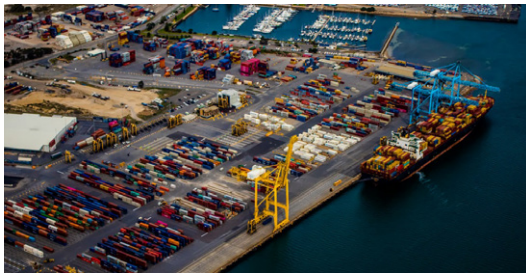
## 3 INTERNATIONAL

### Germany, Turkey Leaders Trade Barbs Over Israel-Hamas War

> SEE PAGE 3



### IPGL to Sign Agreement With Chabahar Port Authority



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) – India's state-owned India Ports Global Ltd (IPGL) -- formed to develop and run Chabahar port in Iran -- will soon sign an agreement with the Iranian Port Authority to start full-fledged operation, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Secretary TK Ramachandran said on Friday. Located in the Sistan-Baluchistan province on the energy-rich Iran's southern coast, the Chabahar port is being developed by India, Iran and Afghanistan to boost connectivity and trade ties. "To start full-fledged operation of the Chabahar Port...the agreement was to be signed between IPGL and Iranian port authority. That is under process. It will happen soon," Ramachandran told reporters here. Chabahar is an oceanic port. It is near to the Indian Ocean and closest to the route to Afghanistan. Replying to a question on the operation of India-financed Sittwe Port in Myanmar amid fighting between Myanmar's military and anti-junta groups, Ramachandran said, "In terms of infrastructure, the work will continue. As and when the geopolitical situation will be appropriate, the cargo movement will happen." There have been mounting hostilities between anti-junta groups and Myanmar government forces in several key towns and regions near the border with India in the last few weeks, fuelling concerns in the Indian military establishment about the possible spillover effect. The port in Rakhine state of the neighbouring country was built with assistance from India as part of the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project (KMTP).



### Iranians Stage Massive Rallies in Solidarity With Palestinians

TEHRAN - Iranians have held nationwide rallies in solidarity with Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip who have been under relentless Israeli attacks for weeks now. Thousands of people, from all walks of life, hit the streets of different cities and provinces on Saturday to express their outrage at the ongoing Israeli bloodshed in Gaza. They waved Palestinian flags and chanted slogans against the occupying Israeli regime and its western backers, the U.S. in particular. The protesters also condemned Israeli massacring of innocent civilians and called for the regime to be taken to task for its crimes. Iranians have held several rallies since Israel launched its brutal war on the impoverished Palestinian territory nearly one and a half months ago. On Saturday, 700 Iranian media outlets, including news agencies, newspapers, news bases and publications, condemned the unprecedented killing of people and journalists by the Israeli regime. "We, Iranian media, condemn with a heart full of sorrow the martyrdom of 50 journalists in Gaza and the intentional targeting of their homes by the Zionist occupation regime, which in many cases has led to the martyrdom of the families of these loved ones, along with the killing of more than 11,000 people of the oppressed people of Gaza, among them thousands of women and children who have been drawn to dust and blood," they said in a statement. "The media of the Islamic Republic of Iran honors the memory of the martyrs of the enlightenment path in Gaza in unison with all the free people of the world and considers these crimes as another confirmation of the autocratic nature of this fake regime and the brutality of its supporters," they added.

### Tehran, Islamabad Agree to Advance IP Gas Deal Project



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iranian and Pakistani energy ministers vowed to take effective steps in advancing the previously inked Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas project deal. Following his visit to Iran to participate in the 23rd edition of the Iran International Electricity Exhibition (IEE), Pakistan Minister of Energy Muhammad Ali promised to fulfill the commitment of his country to complete the construction of a joint gas project with Iran and expressed hope that the energy officials of the two countries will initiate a new round of talks for advancing Iran's gas pipeline transmission project to Pakistan. The two sides decided to draw up a comprehensive plan jointly in order to advance the construction of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline. The new round of talks will kick off between energy officials of the two countries within the next two or three weeks, Muhammad Ali underscored. He also said Iran has expressed its readiness to increase the export of electricity to Gwadar port of Pakistan and also supply the electricity needs of Chaman area in Pakistan's Balochistan province. After the national electricity grid in the port of Gwadar is installed, Pakistan can import more electricity from Iran for its domestic use, the minister added. Concurrent with the 23rd Iran International Electricity Exhibition (IEE) and Iran's Electricity Industry Tech Market Festival, Iran's Minister of Energy Ali Akbar Mehrabian held talks with the visiting Pakistani energy minister to discuss bilateral ties and increase cooperation, especially in the fields of electricity and energy. During the meeting, the Iranian minister of energy said the country is ready to embark on investing with Pakistan as a joint venture (JV) for the exchange of electricity. The outcome of these talks holds significant implications for the future of the Pak-Iran Gas Pipeline project, with both countries navigating complex geopolitical and economic considerations in pursuit of their energy objectives. Sources suggest that if Pakistan fails to meet this deadline, Iran may resort to legal action, potentially taking the matter to the International Court of Arbitration. In such a scenario, Pakistan could face a hefty fine of up to \$18 billion. The Pak-Iran Gas Pipeline project is a proposed 1,100-kilometer (684-mile) pipeline that would deliver massive quantities of natural gas from Iran to Pakistan. The project is estimated to cost \$2.5 billion and has been in the works for several years. Both countries are closely watching the outcome of these talks as they seek to overcome the challenges and move forward with the project, which has the potential to offer economic benefits for both countries. However, it remains to be seen whether the two sides will reach an agreement allowing the project to move forward.

### Anti-Iran Resolution in IAEA Board of Governors Unlikely



TEHRAN (MNA) – Four diplomats have said it is now unlikely for the IAEA Board of Governors to ratify a resolution against Iran in an upcoming meeting. They told Reuters that it was imperative to avoid a diplomatic and nuclear escalation with Iran while attention is focused on the war in Gaza. Western powers in September had threatened to pass a binding resolution against Tehran. The diplomats, who spoke to Reuters on condition of anonymity, said "a less inflammatory move", such as a firm non-binding statement was more likely for now. "We can't have a resolution," said a senior European diplomat. "If we were to pass a resolution... it risks pushing them (the Iranians) over the edge... to 90% enrichment." Two diplomats said all that could be done in coming months was to support IAEA chief Rafael Grossi's efforts to strengthen oversight of Iran's nuclear program. He has been seeking to re-designate his inspectors before the end of the year.

### Iran Oil Output Up 50% Despite Sanctions

TEHRAN - Iran's oil production has increased 50 percent since the 13th administration took office two years ago, said Oil Minister Javad Owji on Friday. The minister, who made the announcement in a meeting with some religious sources of imitation, including Ayatollah Seyyed Hashem Hosseini Bushehri and Ayatollah Abdollah Javadi Amoli, in the holy city of Qom, north-central Iran, added the country's oil production stood at 2.2 million barrels per day (bpd) when the incumbent government took over in August 2021 while the output has now soared to 3.3 m bpd and will hit 3.6 m bpd by the end of the upcoming winter. The country's oil production has witnessed a 50 percent hike and crude exports have increased 2.5 times under the 13th administration in spite of intensified sanctions, he pointed out. Iran's oil industry was controlled by foreign advisers before the Islamic Revolution and they plundered the country's products, said Owji, adding, "The oil industry has witnessed great events after the victory of the Islamic Revolution and over the past 44 years. No foreign advisers are now present in the country's oil and gas industry and Iranian oil experts are developing domestic industry." In the pre-revolution era, he continued, one gas refinery and one petrochemical plant had been built while 23 refineries and 65 petrochemical complexes are operating now, said the oil minister, adding \$14 billion revenues earned from petrochemical exports in the previous year were deposited into Iran's Integrated Forex Deals System (NIMA). A few cities and villages were supplied with gas before the revolution, recalled Owji, adding 98 percent of urban population and around 84 percent of rural population have been now connected to the gas grid as 5,700 villages and 40 towns, mainly underprivileged and cold areas, have been



provided with gas since two years ago. The country is currently making 80 percent of products and equipment needed by domestic oil industry, mentioned the minister, underlining that the 13th administration has accelerated the implementation of oil projects. "We have become self-sufficient oil and gas industry and are exporting technical and engineering services to countries sanctioned by the U.S.," said Owji, explaining Iran started exporting technical and engineering services to refineries in Venezuela and Latin America under the 13th administration and reactivated their oil industry, which had come to a standstill due to sanctions. The incumbent administration has given top priority to the completing of partly-finished projects and the launching of new projects such as the newly-inaugurated Phase 11 of the South Pars (SP) gas field, he pointed out. Qom Province's gas consumption in all sectors is between 4 and 5 million cubic meters per day (mcm/d), said Owji, adding SP Phase 11 produces some 14 mcm/d and its production will increase by drilling more wells. Under the 13th administration, he said, domestic gas output has jumped 50 mcm/d and the country faced no problem with gas supply during the severe winter last year. Shifting to projects for reducing air pollution, the oil minister referred to the collecting of associated petroleum gas (APG), stating 11.5 mcm of flare gas has been gathered a day since the 13th administration took office and the volume of APG to be captured by the end of the year (March 19, 2024) will be equal to the amount produced by one phase of the SP field. He also pointed to the impacts of the oil industry on the country's economic growth, concluding that the oil and gas sectors' economic growth stood at 10.5 percent in the year to March 20, 2023 and rose to 19.6 percent in spring 2023.

### Iran Begins Repatriation of Unauthorized Immigrants



TEHRAN - The National Migration Organization of Iran has commenced the repatriation of unauthorized immigrants since August, with 450,000 individuals lacking proper identification or legal documentation already deported. Javad Khani, the Director of the department dealing with unauthorized immigrants at the National Immigration Organization, revealed in an interview with IRNA that the repatriation process began in tandem with the initiation of the organization's activities in August. The individuals repatriated had entered Iran illegally, and the process is being carried out based on a comprehensive plan in eight provinces hosting the highest number of immigrants. Officials have identified Tehran, Sistan and Baluchestan, Razavi Khorasan, Qom, Kerman, Yazd, Fars, and Alborz as the provinces with the highest immigrant populations. These provinces accommodate 92% of the immigrant population, leading to an estimation that the country hosts around four million legal immigrants. The Islamic Republic has issued one million smart ID cards for migrants thus far, Khani said, adding that the authorities are pursuing a division of labor among provinces to expedite the organization of migrants throughout the country. Meanwhile Pakistan announced Friday that it had extended, after a delay of four months, the legal residence status of about 1.4 million Afghan refugees until year-end, though it again rejected calls to halt deportations of all undocumented Afghans and other foreign nationals. The announcement comes as a relief to the refugee community amid a nationwide crackdown on foreigners illegally residing in Pakistan, including an officially estimated 1.7 million Afghans.



# IRAN NEWS



## President Felicitates Oman on National Day

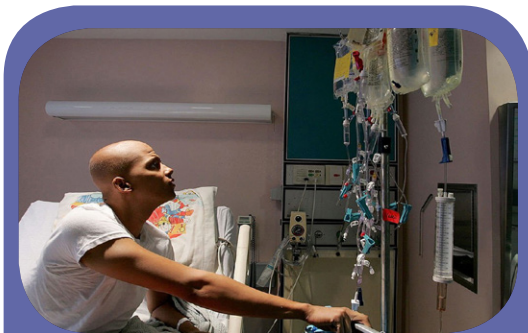
TEHRAN (IRNA) - In a message to the Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq Al-Said and the people of the country, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has congratulated the country's national day. President Raisi expressed hope that the existing good relations will expand more in the light of the joint efforts of the officials of the two countries and we will see the promotion of mutual cooperation in all fields. Raisi added that the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Sultanate of Oman have close and historical relations that will support the friendship of the two nations and strengthen the common ties on the way forward. "I hope that the existing good relations will expand more in the light of the joint efforts of the officials of the two countries and we will see the promotion of mutual cooperation in all fields," the Iranian President emphasized. National Day is an official holiday in the Sultanate of Oman and the main one in the country. The holiday marks the birthday of Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said, who reigned from 1970 to 2020.

## Iran Private Sector Stresses Promotion of Smart Transportation

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



TEHRAN - Behnam Faramarzian, the director of international transportation and TIR carnet department of Iran Chamber of Commerce, has said that in order to strengthen its international trade, Iran has to give a boost to smart transportation. Faramarzian made the remarks in a joint conference with the International Road Transport Union (IRU). He said that signing a trilateral agreement between Iran Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization, Iran Chamber of Commerce, and the IRU indicates the determination of the Iranian government and the private sector to upgrade the infrastructures needed for the international transportation. Faramarzian also hailed the IRU training courses held in Iran as a major step in the path of progress of the country's international transportation relying on the international standards. He said that these training courses would make the Iranian transportation managers and professional drivers more familiar with the international conventions. Faramarzian, the director of international transportation and TIR carnet department of Iran Chamber of Commerce, is seen addressing a joint conference with the International Road Transport Union (IRU). Also addressing the meeting, IRU Secretary General Umberto de Pretto said that the IRU intends to turn Iran Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization into a regional modal in terms of professional competence in road transportation and providing support for green transportation. He said that road transportation faced tough days over the past four years which began with the global outbreak of COVID-19 followed by destabilizing effects of political tensions and military conflicts. The official added that IRU is fully committed to UN measures for road safety and preventing 50% of the deaths and injuries caused by road accidents by 2030.



## Cancer Causes 55k Deaths in Iran Each Year

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Approximately 55,000 Iranians lose their lives to cancer each year. However, experts suggest that lifestyle changes could potentially reduce the risk of premature death from this disease. The report reveals that out of the total 122,000 premature deaths under the age of 70, cancer is responsible for 34,000. Similarly, cancer is the cause of 11,000 out of 85,000 premature deaths under the age of 50. Looking ahead, the situation appears to be worsening. The number of new cancer cases is predicted to rise to 160,000 in the Iranian calendar year 1404 (March 20, 2024, until March 20, 2025), marking a 42% increase. The most significant increases are expected in the following types of cancer compared to the Iranian calendar year 1395 (March 20, 2016, until March 20, 2017): Thyroid cancers (114%), prostate cancers (67%), breast cancers (63%), colon cancers (54%), ovarian cancer (51%), lung cancers (49%), non-Hodgkin lymphoma cancer (45%), brain and nervous system cancer (40%), stomach cancer (30%), bladder cancer (26%), and leukemia (24%). The report also suggests that Iranians can reduce the risk of premature death from cancer by making lifestyle changes.

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



## Iran Hails Growing Exchanges With Turkmenistan

TEHRAN - Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash has expressed satisfaction with the rising level of trade and transit exchanges between Iran and Turkmenistan. The minister made the remarks addressing the opening ceremony of a specialized exhibition of the achievements of the Iranian companies called "Iran Project" in Ashgabat. He noted that energy relations between Iran and Turkmenistan are also on an upward trajectory. Referring to last year's \$500 million level of trade between Iran and Turkmenistan, Bazrpash said that the sum shows a significant increase compared to figures reported a year earlier. Elsewhere in his remarks, he pointed to the transit activities of the country and said it has increased 25% in the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21 to October 22, 2023) due to the constructive talks held between Iran and neighboring countries. Bazrpash also said that increasing the number of flights between Iran and Turkmenistan is one of the fundamental prerequisites for the presence of Iranian companies and investors in Turkmenistan. Also, in a message to the exhibition, Turkmenistan's President Serdar Berdimuhamedov urged the need for more interactions and carrying out joint projects with Iran. He referred to an Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Economic Commission due to be held in Ashgabat on Saturday and said that economic relations between the two countries will play a key role in their future cooperation. Meanwhile emphasizing that Turkmenistan is Iran's strategic partner, Iran's roads and urban development minister said the

Islamic Republic has provided special facilities for the access of its neighbors to the high seas. Speaking in a meeting with President of Turkmenistan r Berdimuhamedov, Bazrpash stressed the need to take major steps for strengthening bilateral relations between Tehran and Ashgabat in all fields. The head of the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Economic Cooperation Commission also expounded on the initiative of "Iran Road" launched in the administration of President Ebrahim Raisi and said neighboring states can take advantage of the initiative for the expansion of trade and economic relations. Turkmenistan has a special place in the "Iran Road" initiative, he said. Bazrpash also reiterated that Turkmenistan is the strategic partner of Iran and a gateway to Central Asia and its access to east-west and no-south transport corridors. Since Turkmenistan has no access to the high seas, Iran has provided special facilities for easy access of its neighbors to the high seas, he added. Emphasizing the need for removing transit and transport duties between Iran and Turkmenistan, Bazrpash said technical and engineering services especially in the fields of transport and energy should be promoted between the two countries. The 17th edition of the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Economic Cooperation Commission kicked off in Ashgabat on Friday with the participation of Bazrpash and the president of Turkmenistan to enhance mutual ties. As many as 300 Iranian companies and businesses are said to have attended the Iran Project Exhibition where they have put their latest achievements on display.

## European Passenger Planes Overhauled in Iran

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) revealed the repair and maintenance of passenger planes of other countries, including Latin American, European and Asian countries, in Iran. Mohammad Mohammadbakhsh said countries from Latin America, Europe and Asia bring their planes to Iran for repair and maintenance services or send the engines of their planes to the country for overhaul operations. He added that planes sent to Iran for repair and maintenance operations are Boeing and Airbus. It has been for years that no Iranian planes have been sent to other countries for repair and maintenance services as Iran has turned into a destination for overhauling services of other countries' planes. This important national achievement has been made while Iran is

under the toughest sanctions imposed by Western countries including the United States, the CAO chief added. Elsewhere in his remarks, Mohammadbakhsh said that his organization is seeking more direct flights between Iran and Turkmenistan. The CAO has instructed Qeshm Air to launch two weekly flights to Ashgabat starting last week, he noted. Given the commonalities between Iran and Turkmenistan, it is hoped that preliminary steps will be taken to increase the number of flights between the two countries following a visit by Iran's minister of roads and urban development to the Central Asian country, he said. Talks are underway between officials of the two countries for increasing the number of flights, he said, adding that a memorandum of understanding will be inked between Iran and Turkmenistan in the near future.



## CBI Governor Sees Oil Industry Annual Economic Growth at 15.2%



TEHRAN (Shana) - The Iranian oil industry's economy is projected to grow 15.2 percent this Iranian calendar year (starting March 21, 2023), said the country's top banker. Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Mohammadreza Farzin giving a report at the weekly cabinet session pointed to a 24 percent growth in crude oil output and a 16,000-barrel-per-day (bpd) increase in gas condensate production in the first half of the current Iranian year, forecasting a 15.2 percent economic growth for the oil sector. Iran's gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to hit 4.3 percent by mid-March 2024, he continued. The industrial sector's growth will be mixed, said Farzin, adding some industries will post high growth and some will report decline. The estimates are based on growth in main domestic industries including oil and agriculture and balance of payments (BOP).

## Iranian Diplomat in Dublin Denies Iran Is Involved in Proxy War



TEHRAN - An Iranian official based in Dublin has denied that Iran had involvement in the 7 October attacks in Israel and rejected suggestions that it is engaged in a proxy war against the West. Dr. Kazem Sharif Kazemi is Charge d'Affaire of the Iranian Embassy in Dublin and he sat down with The Journal recently to discuss how his government views the crisis in the Middle East. In a wide-ranging interview, the diplomat also answered questions about different issues. Kazemi, a historian who has a background in academia in his home country, spoke extensively about the risk of a contagion effect in the region and the possibility of a wider conflict. Although he denied that Iran was involved in a proxy war in the region, he admitted that there was support from his government for what he terms "resistance groups". The diplomat did not mention the resistance groups by name but Hamas is the most active in the Palestinian territory. Although Iran's support for Hamas and Hezbollah in Lebanon is widely acknowledged in the West, U.S. officials have confirmed Iran's position that it did not have advance warning of the brutal 7 October attack by Hamas on Israel. Back in Dublin, Kazemi spoke at length about the dramatic escalation of hostilities in Palestine and said that the fighting between Israel and Hamas was a result of a failure of the international community. Kazemi made no condemnation of Hamas but stressed that the conflict should not just be looked at from the 7 October attacks but, he said, that the violence of Hamas was a response to the preceding 70 years of conflict in the region. The Iranian official was careful in his language when asked by The Journal if Iran would seek to escalate hostilities in the region. "Actually nobody knows if this war killing machine [Israel] will continue killing people. Many analysts believe, maybe an extension of the war will happen by resistance groups. 'Nobody knows at this time because there is no action by the international community to stop Israel bombing hospitals, refugee camps and schools.'" The officials have been clear from the beginning. We say that we don't intend to extend the war. We have many common areas with many countries, including Ireland, in demanding a ceasefire, humanitarian access, access to medicine for hospitals, as well as the releasing of hostages from both sides," he said. A similar message was transmitted to the U.S. - through back channels - by Iran's foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, according to the Financial Times on Friday. However, he also warned that continued Israeli action in Gaza could make escalation in the region inevitable. "Over the past 40 days, messages have been exchanged between Iran and the U.S., via the U.S. interests section at the Swiss embassy in Tehran," he said. "We said that Iran does not want the war to spread, but due to the approach adopted by the US and Israel in the region, if the crimes against the people of Gaza and the West Bank are not stopped, any possibility could be considered, and a wider conflict could prove inevitable."

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

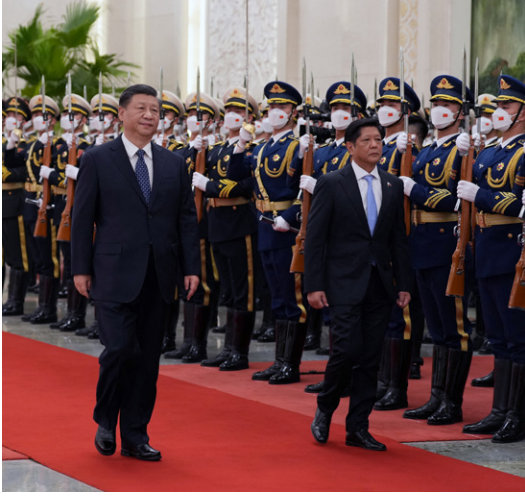


### U.S., China Commerce Ministers Pledge to Further Talks in 2024

SAN FRANCISCO (Dispatches) - The United States and China plan further talks on commercial issues next year, the U.S. Commerce Department said Friday in a commitment to continue high level engagement despite tensions. The announcement came after the US and Chinese presidents, Joe Biden and Xi Jinping, held a summit on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in San Francisco this week. U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo spoke with her Chinese counterpart Wang Wentao on Thursday, after the Biden-Xi talks, on the countries' commercial relationship. "During the meeting, the two discussed progress made under the commercial issues working group and planned to hold an in-person meeting in early 2024," the Commerce Department said in a statement.



### Philippines' Meets His Chinese Counterpart to Find Ways to Reduce Tensions



MANILA (Dispatches) - Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr met with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Saturday, seeking ways to come up with ways to reduce tensions in the South China Sea and restore Filipino fishermen's access to fishing grounds. The Philippines and China need to continue to communicate, with the meeting a key part of the process to maintain peace, and keep open sea lanes and airways over the South China Sea, Marcos told reporters on the sidelines of the APEC Summit in San Francisco. "We tried to come up with mechanisms to lower the tensions in the South China Sea," Marcos said, without elaborating. Marcos said he voiced concern over incidents between Chinese and Philippine vessels, including one collision. He said he also raised the plight of Filipino fishermen. "I asked that we go back to the situation where both Chinese and Filipino fishermen were fishing together in these waters," he said. Filipino fishermen have complained that Chinese coastguard and maritime militia ships are preventing them from fishing in parts of the Philippines' 200-mile exclusive economic zone. Marcos said he and Xi were in agreement that geopolitical problems should not be the defining element of the two countries' relationship. Since taking office in 2022, Marcos has pursued warmer ties with the United States, a treaty ally, in contrast with the pro-Beijing stance of his predecessor. Marcos granted the United States greater access to its military bases, including in provinces facing the South China Sea and democratically-ruled Taiwan, drawing the ire of Beijing. Tensions in the region, where China has built man-made islands with missiles and airstrips, have increased this year. "I do not think anybody wants to go to war," Marcos said. China claims almost the entire South China Sea, ignoring a 2016 ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration that invalidated Beijing's expansive claim. China's embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

### Liberia President Weah Concedes Election Defeat



MONROVIA (Dispatches) - Liberia President George Weah conceded election defeat to opposition leader Joseph Boakai after a tight race, ending a presidency marred by graft allegations but helping to ensure a smooth transition of power in the once volatile African nation. Boakai, 78, a former vice president who lost to Weah in the 2017 election, led with 50.9% of the vote over Weah's 49.1%, with nearly all the votes counted, the country's elections commission said on Friday. The result marks a stark turnaround from 2017, when global soccer legend Weah, buoyed by a wave of hope, trounced Boakai with 62 percent of the vote. Many have since grown disillusioned with the lack of progress: Poverty, unemployment, food insecurity and poor electricity supply persist. "A few moments ago, I spoke with president elect Joseph Boakai to congratulate him on his victory," Weah said on national radio. "I urge you to follow my example and accept the results of the elections." Weah's concession paves the way for Liberia's second democratic transfer of power in over seven decades - the first was when Weah swept to power six years ago. His comments stood out in West and Central Africa where there have been eight military coups in three years, eroding faith in democratic elections. When elections do go ahead in the region, accusations of fraud abound and results are frequently contested in court. Instead, Boakai supporters in the capital Monrovia danced, shouted and honked car horns in the rain after the near-final results were announced. "We have a job ahead of us to do and I'm excited that the citizens have given us approval," Boakai told Reuters shortly after the results were announced. "First and foremost, we want to have a message of peace and reconciliation." Boakai, a softly spoken career politician, emerged neck-and-neck with Weah in the first round of voting in October but below the 50% needed to secure an outright victory, leading to Tuesday's run-off. Liberia is struggling to recover from two civil wars that killed more than 250,000 people between 1989 and 2003, and from a 2013-16 Ebola epidemic that killed thousands. Many felt that Weah did not follow through on promises to alleviate poverty and improve the country's crumbling infrastructure. Arko Sarkor, 43, told Reuters she supported Boakai because she was not able to get a job during Weah's term. "I am very hopeful because I know Boakai is... a man of principles and I know when he gets in here, he is going to bring changes," she said. "Some things that were not done, that were not correct, he will put it in place, I am hopeful of that."

## Germany, Turkey Leaders Trade Barbs Over Israel-Hamas War



BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany and Turkey's leaders traded barbs over Israel's war on Hamas, with Chancellor Olaf Scholz stressing the country's right to self-defence while Recep Tayyip Erdogan demanded an end to Israel's military operation. Erdogan is on a highly controversial visit to staunch Israel defender Germany, made more tricky by his recent accusations directed at Israel. The Turkish leader has branded Israel a "terror state" and repeatedly defended the Hamas militants who rule Gaza as "liberators" fighting for their land. Erdogan did not repeat such statements in Berlin but nevertheless lashed out at Israel over its air and ground campaign in Gaza, triggered by the deadly October 7 attack by Hamas in Israel. "Shooting hospitals or killing children does not exist in the Torah, you can't do it," he said at a joint press conference ahead of dinner with Scholz. In talks with German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier earlier Friday, Erdogan had said that "Israel's attacks on Palestinian lands must end and that the reaction from the whole world against human rights violations is important", the Turkish presidency said in a statement. But Scholz voiced backing for Israel's war on Hamas, saying that long-term peace could not be forged in the region unless Hamas lost its ability to launch attacks. "There is a need to make Israel's self-defence possible and not to call it into question," he said. Erdogan has been increasingly critical of Israel's war against Hamas, triggered after the Islamist group's attack that Israel said killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, with around 240 hostages taken. While Scholz travelled to Israel to offer Germany's unconditional support, the Turkish leader has accused Israel of committing war crimes with its bombardment and ground incursion in Gaza. Ahead of his trip to Germany, Erdogan ramped up his verbal attacks against Israel, calling it a "terror state" and alleging the West was "trying to exonerate the murderers". In Berlin,

Erdogan denied that his attacks against Israel were anti-Semitic, saying that he had "fought against anti-Semitism". Instead, he suggested that Germany, where anti-Semitism is illegal because of Berlin's historic responsibilities over the Holocaust, was limited in its ability to speak freely about the Israel-Hamas war. "I speak freely because we do not owe Israel anything. We did not go through the Holocaust," Erdogan said, suggesting that Germany carried a "psychological debt". "If we were in debt, we could not talk so freely. But those who are in debt cannot talk freely," he said. Erdogan's stance had sparked questions over the decision to host him at this time, with the opposition conservatives and even the liberal FDP, a member of Scholz's coalition, urging the chancellor to scrap the invitation. The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung daily said Germany offered the "ideal stage" for Erdogan to position himself as a voice for the "global south". "As the loudest critic of Israel, he is underlining his demand for leadership of the Islamic world," it wrote. Standing next to Erdogan, Scholz acknowledged "it is no secret" that both sides viewed the conflict differently. "That's why in these difficult moments, we need direct talks with each other," he said. Described as an "uncomfortable partner" by Scholz's spokesman, Erdogan was on his first visit to Germany since 2020. While ties between the two countries have always been uneasy, Berlin recognises that getting regional power Turkey onside was necessary to tackle thorny issues. From mediating to get grain shipments out of Ukraine amid Russia's war to negotiating a key deal on alleviating the 2015-2016 migrant influx into Europe, NATO member Turkey remains a crucial player. Germany is also home to the biggest Turkish diaspora, and a majority of Turks in the country are supporters of Erdogan, including former German international footballer Mesut Ozil.

### Israeli Forces Found Nothing, Supplies Low at Gaza's Al Shifa Hospital



DUBAI (Dispatches) - A doctor at the Gaza Strip's Al Shifa hospital said Israeli forces had "found nothing" during searches of the hospital complex, and that food and water were running out. Doctor Ahmed El Mokhallalati told Reuters by telephone that despite the "difficult" conditions at the hospital, no babies had died there since Israeli troops entered it on Wednesday. Israel says Hamas has a command center underneath the hospital, an assertion the Palestinian militant group denies. Reuters has been unable to verify the situation at the hospital independently. "It's a totally terrifying situation, here the Israeli tanks and the Israeli troops have been moving within the hospital area, all over the hospital," said Mokhallalati, a surgeon born in Ireland who trained in Cairo and practiced in London. "The situation is totally difficult. They are shooting all the time, all the areas." The Israeli military said on Thursday it had uncovered a Hamas tunnel shaft and a vehicle with weapons at the Al Shifa hospital complex. It also made public videos and photographs to support its statement. Speaking in English, Mokhallalati said: "They have found nothing. They have found no single resistance. No single gunshot, against them within the hospital area." The hospital, packed with patients and displaced people and struggling to keep operating, has become a focus of global concern. Mokhallalati said the Israeli military had provided some supplies since entering the hospital but that it was insufficient. "What happened is that the people, we run out of food, we run out of drinking water," Mokhallalati said. "And then, yesterday, they arranged some, just some food and water, which is very, very minimal, which doesn't cover, maybe 40% of the number of people around here." Dr Mohamed Tabasha, head of the paediatric department at Al Shifa, said on Monday three newborn babies had died as problems mounted at the hospital, and that the 36 remaining newborns were at risk. "As of yesterday they were 36, luckily no one has lost their lives," he said on Friday.



### Venezuela Parliament Chief Rejects Ultimatums

CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuela's National Assembly President Jorge Rodriguez said the country would not accept "ultimatums from anyone," after the U.S. warned it would review plans to ease sanctions if progress is not made toward fair elections. Washington eased some oil sanctions last month after an electoral deal between President Nicolas Maduro's government and the political opposition was signed in October. The U.S. has said it would further ease sanctions from next April if the Venezuelan authorities lift political bans on opposition leaders, including a 15-year ban from public office on presidential candidate Maria Corina Machado. Opposition parties consider these bans illegal. The easing of U.S. sanctions is also conditional on release of political prisoners and "unjustly detained" U.S. citizens. U.S. officials have said they expect Venezuela to take action this month on concrete steps. But Rodriguez, who also heads the government delegation in the opposition negotiations, told a press conference on Friday that Venezuela would not accept ultimatums. "Venezuela does not accept ultimatums from anyone, by now everybody should know that, we don't care", he said. State oil firm PDVSA has been in talks with contractors on increasing production and analysts have said an easing of sanctions in view of the 2024 elections would allow the government to gradually increase its income.

## Azerbaijan Urged to Let Ethnic Armenians Return to Nagorno-Karabakh

THE HAGUE (Dispatches) - Judges at the World Court on Friday ordered Azerbaijan to let ethnic Armenians who fled Nagorno-Karabakh in September return, and to keep the Armenians remaining in the enclave safe, as part of a set of emergency measures. Azerbaijan in September recaptured the region, then controlled by its ethnic Armenian majority despite being internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan. The lightning offensive, after decades of enmity between Baku and Yerevan and a nine-month blockade of essential supplies by Baku, prompted the mass exodus of most of the region's 120,000 ethnic Armenians to neighbouring Armenia. Yerevan accused Azerbaijan of ethnic cleansing and asked the International Court of Justice, as the World Court is formally known, to issue emergency measures aimed at protecting the rights of ethnic Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh. "Azerbaijan must (...) ensure that persons who have left Nagorno-Karabakh after Sept. 19, 2023, and who wish to return to Nagorno-Karabakh are able to do so in a safe, unimpeded and expeditious manner," presiding judge Joan Donoghue said. The court said Azerbaijan must also make sure any ethnic Armenians still living in the enclave were "free from the use of force or intimidation that may cause them to flee" and ordered that Baku report to the court in two months to show what it was doing to comply with the order. Azerbaijan's foreign ministry said it had already pledged to ensure all residents' safety and security, regardless of national or ethnic origin, and that it had not forced the ethnic Armenians



to leave Karabakh. "Azerbaijan is committed to upholding the human rights of the Armenian residents of Karabakh on an equal basis with other citizens of Azerbaijan," it said in a statement. The measures are part of two competing legal disputes between

Armenia and Azerbaijan before the ICJ. Both states accuse each of violating a U.N. anti-discrimination treaty. No date has been set for the main case and a final ruling is not expected before well into next year.





## Alcaraz Dreaming of ATP Finals Triumph

TURIN (Dispatches) - Carlos Alcaraz is dreaming of victory at the ATP Finals after setting up a semi-final showdown with Novak Djokovic with the 6-4, 6-4 win over Daniil Medvedev. Alcaraz came into his debut Finals appearance struggling with form and injury but has warmed up as the tournament has progressed and is now a serious threat in the semis, which features the world's four top-ranked players. "Well, it's just two matches, but at the same time it's too far away. I have Novak in the semifinal. If I win that match, I have a really tough final," Alcaraz told reporters. "I'm dreaming about winning this tournament. Why not? But I have to play my best first in the semi-final." World number two Alcaraz needed to win to ensure a spot in the last four, and he did just that in impressive fashion, cruising to a victory against Medvedev who had looked hugely impressive in his previous two victories in Turin. Winning in straight-sets ensured him first place in the Red Group ahead of Medvedev, regardless of the result of the late match which was won 6-4, 6-4 by Alexander Zverev against Andrey Rublev. Alcaraz also gained a small measure of revenge for defeat in the US Open semi-finals against Medvedev, who finishes second in the group after having already qualified for the semis on Wednesday. Alcaraz has a burgeoning rivalry with Djokovic as the Spaniard is

already a two-time Grand Slam champion at the age of 20 and won an epic five-set Wimbledon final against the world number one. His semi-final with Djokovic, who beat Alcaraz on his way to triumph at Roland Garros and in the final at Cincinnati, on Saturday promises to be a blockbuster. "Novak is Novak, he is the best player in the world right now, he's just lost six matches this year so that means he is unbelievable. I'm going to bring my best tennis," said Alcaraz. Djokovic has already secured the year-end top spot in the world rankings and is gunning for a record-breaking seventh Finals triumph after qualifying second in the Green Group. Medvedev, the 2020 Finals champion, will now face home hope Jannik Sinner, who became the first Italian ever to reach the tournament's semis on Thursday. "First of all, at this moment he's in top form... He can do everything," said Medvedev. "Here he played unbelievable, but he still lost two sets. That's what I'm going to try to aim for: try to play like guys who won the set from him. I need to definitely be at my absolute best and better than today, tomorrow." The Russian has faced Sinner in four finals this season, sharing them with two wins each but prevailing in the most important, at the Miami Masters back in April.

## Bellingham Wins 2023 Golden Boy Award



LONDON (Dispatches) - England midfielder Jude Bellingham has been awarded the 2023 Golden Boy award after a stunning start to life at Real Madrid. The 20-year-old beat Bayern Munich winger Jamal Musiala and RB Leipzig's Xavi Simons to pick up the award that recognises players under the age of 21. Bellingham is the top scorer in La Liga with 10 goals in 11 matches and has netted another three in as many appearances in the Champions League, after moving to the Spanish capital from Borussia Dortmund in June for a reported initial fee of 103 million euros (\$112 million). "I'd like to thank everyone that has been part of my journey so far at Birmingham, Dortmund and now Madrid. It wouldn't be possible without them," Bellingham said on Friday. "Lastly and most importantly, my family, who give me the support, motivation and love every day to keep striving. Now I have this prestigious award I want to keep going. I want to keep pushing the limits of my potential and hopefully many more trophies to come." Madrid's Colombian forward Linda Caicedo, 18, won the Golden Girl award. The Golden Boy award has been won in the past by the likes of Wayne Rooney, Lionel Messi, Raheem Sterling, Kylian Mbappe, Erling Haaland and Barcelona duo Pedri and Gavi.

## Italy Overcome North Macedonia, Eye Euro 2024 Spot

ROME (Dispatches) - Federico Chiesa scored twice as Italy secured a 5-2 home victory against North Macedonia in their Euro 2024 qualifying clash on Friday, giving them an edge ahead of a deciding encounter with Ukraine on Monday for a place at the finals. The Group C victory means Italy only need a draw against Ukraine to secure second place in the group along with already-qualified England and reach next year's finals in Germany. Italy have encountered difficulties in their history with North Macedonia, suffering a 1-0 loss at home in the 2022 World Cup qualifiers and later playing a 1-1 Euro qualifying draw in manager Luciano Spalletti's debut as Azzurri coach in September. "With our quality, sooner or later we do score goals, but there was this danger of counter-attacks that we were never troubled by in the first half but were a couple of times after the break," Spalletti told RAI Sport. Giacomo Raspadori had a goal disallowed for offside, followed by Chiesa's attempt from a tight angle that was saved by North Macedonia's Stole Dimitrievski. Italy broke the deadlock after 17 minutes when an unmarked Matteo Darmian headed in a corner at the back post. After 40 minutes, Italy had a chance to extend their advantage from the penalty spot after Nikola Serafimov's handball but Jorginho's attempt was saved by Dimitrievski. Chiesa did double the lead four minutes before the break though with a curling shot from the edge of the box. In first-half stoppage time Italy got a third when Chiesa received a through ball inside the box, eluded a defender and scored with a deflected shot that looped into the top corner. North Macedonia got back into the match after 52 minutes when Jani Atanasov nodded in a close-range cross before scoring his second with a deflected long-range shot in the 74th. "The second goal was a big deflection, it was casual, so that changes the psychological aspects of the match," Spalletti said. "At that point, I think we saw the best of Italy in terms of character and quality as we showed strength to keep going and secure the victory with another two goals." Italy's Raspadori dashed the visitors' hopes nine minutes from time with a goal from a tricky angle inside the box, while Stephan El Shaarawy added Italy's fifth in stoppage time. Spalletti was asked if he planned to make changes for the Ukraine game in Leverkusen, Germany. "As for the next match, we have to see how everyone is doing, but I do not predict that many changes," he said.



## Lacklustre England Seal Top Spot With Win Over Malta



LONDON (Dispatches) - England moved closer to a top seeding at Euro 2024 with a labored 2-0 home victory against Group C makeweights Malta on Friday that will not live long in the memory of an underwhelmed Wembley Stadium crowd. Until the 75th minute all that separated Gareth Southgate's lackluster side from 171st-ranked Malta was an early own goal by Enrico Pepe and they endured some anxious moments in between. Captain Harry Kane doubled England's lead with his 62nd goal for his country after good work by Bukayo Saka before Declan Rice had an effort ruled out for offside. But there was precious little to get enthused about as several England fringe players failed to shine in Southgate's 90th match in charge. England had already qualified for the Germany showpiece and victory over Malta ensured they top Group C, regardless of what happens in their match away to North Macedonia on Monday. They have 19 points from seven games, with Italy and Ukraine on 13. A point in North Macedonia should ensure England are amongst the top six seeds for Euro 2024. "It was a game when we didn't start well and if you don't start well it's hard to pick the game up," Southgate said. "These players have played so many games and have done so well for us so I am not going to hammer them for it. We weren't where we should be but we got the win." The number of games these players are playing, it's almost a self-regulation, sub-consciously you do just enough to win. "Southgate, whose first game in charge in 2016 was against Malta, will say the hard work had already been done with impressive home and away wins over European champions Italy. He will also point to midfielder Jude Bellingham not being available because of injury. But there is no getting away from the fact his players should have found it much easier to overcome a gutsy Malta side who had no points and only two goals in the group. With several first-choice players on the bench, England were tepid in a first half in which Malta had more goal attempts, looked more energetic and were unfortunate to be behind. Right from the start the hosts were sloppy and a loose pass by Conor Gallagher gave Malta's Teddy Teuma a chance in the opening minute which he fired wide. England went ahead in the eighth minute thanks to a slice of fortune as Phil Foden's cut back cannoned off the covering Pepe and into the net despite a valiant effort by Malta keeper Henry Bonello to keep it out. Harry Maguire's awful pass soon afterwards offered Malta another chance but Paul Mbong blazed his shot over. Kane was then booked for diving despite contact from Bonello after nudging the ball past the keeper -- referee Luis Godinho deciding Kane had deliberately trailed his leg to buy a penalty.

## Kings Beat Spurs for 5th Straight Win

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - De'Aaron Fox scored a season-high 43 points to help the visiting Sacramento Kings do just enough to outlast the struggling San Antonio Spurs 129-120 on Friday in an in-season tournament game. Fox put up 14 of his points in the final quarter and Domantas Sabonis scored eight points in the final period as the Kings improved to 2-0 in the in-season tournament and eliminated the Spurs, who have dropped all three of their in-season tournament games. Sacramento led by five points with 1:07 remaining before Fox canned a layup and added a pair of free throws to close out the Spurs. The Kings have won five straight while San Antonio has dropped seven in row. Sabonis finished with 27 points and 14 rebounds and Malik Monk added 20 points off the bench for the Kings. Zach Collins scored a season-high 28 points for the Spurs, with Victor Wembanyama adding 27, Keldon Johnson hitting for 21 and Malaki Branham tallying 10. San Antonio was missing starting guard Devin Vassell (abductor) and backup guard Tre Jones (hamstring). The Spurs roared out of the gate, leading 23-5 after two 3-pointers by Johnson 23 seconds apart. But Sacramento quickly answered, forging a 14-4 run capped by a layup by Sabonis with 2:47 remaining in the period. Sabonis' floating jumper at the buzzer pulled the Kings to within 31-29 after 12 minutes of play. Late in the first half, a three-point play by Wembanyama was answered by a pair of 3-pointers by Fox, the second one with three seconds to play, and the teams went to the break tied at 62. Collins led all players with 17 points over halftime on 7-of-8 shooting from the floor. Wembanyama had 16 in the half for San Antonio and Johnson added 12. Fox paced the Kings with 16 points and Sabonis tallied 12 in the half. Sacramento ran to the lead with a 22-6 run over the first 5 1/2 minutes of the third quarter only to allow the Spurs to claw back into the game. Sandro Mamukelashvili's short jumper at the buzzer brought San Antonio to within 95-94 heading to the fourth period.

