

Minister of Justice Amin Hossein Rahimi Announced the Transfer of 291 Foreign Nationals convicted in Iranian Prisons and 150 Iranian Nationals Convicted Abroad during the Iranian Calendar Year 1402 (2023-2024)

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Iran's Secretary of the Human Rights Council Stated That the Inhumane and Brutal Behaviors Against Students and Professors in America Are Evident to the Whole World, and the Crimes That America Has Committed Against Iranian People Should Not Be Forgotten Either

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Israel Pleaded Iran Not to Respond to Consulate Bombing



TEHRAN (PressTV) - A high-ranking commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says Iran's retaliatory operation against Israel sent shivers down the occupying regime's spine, prompting its authorities to cry out for no further action from the Islamic Republic.

Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, the commander of the IRGC's Aerospace Division, said on Saturday that Israeli officials made a grave miscalculation by launching attacks against the consular section of Iran's embassy in the Syrian capital Damascus in early April.

"Iranian officials are not seeking a war. Nevertheless, they honor certain red lines which Israelis had not taken into consideration. They (Israeli authorities) did not expect Iran to respond," Hajizadeh stated.

The IRGC general noted that Israeli officials came to know about Iran's definite decision for the punitive strike following Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei's speech on April 10, when he said the Tel Aviv regime "must be punished and will be punished" for its deadly strike on the Iranian diplomatic mission.

"They (Israeli officials) conveyed their threats through intermediaries. But they realized days later that Iran would not take heed of the threats and was considering delivering a response from its own territories rather than from allied groups in the region," Hajizadeh said.

The senior IRGC commander further noted that Israeli officials reached out to their counterparts in some neighboring countries, begging them to convince Iranian armed forces to lower the intensity of their response.

"If it were not because of the Leader's willpower, no one would have dared to take such a measure. This operation was a strategic victory for us, and added a failure to Israel's long list of humiliations," Hajizadeh stated.

The IRGC launched extensive missile and drone strikes against the Israeli-occupied territories on April 13. The retaliatory strikes, dubbed Operation True Promise, inflicted damage on Israeli military bases across the occupied lands.

Iran to Launch Two Major Satellites in Coming Weeks



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian Space Agency (ISA) chief says the country will carry out two major satellite launches in the coming weeks.

Hassan Salariyeh told the official IRNA news agency on Saturday that the launches are scheduled to take place in the calendar month to July 21.

Salariyeh said the ISA is carrying out compatibility tests between the satellites and launch rockets.

"The compatibility and joint tests between launches and carrying rockets are among important and sensitive issues which sometimes can face delays because of certain technical problems," he said.

The official said, however, that Iran will carry out the satellite launches after it is ensured of 100% success in the compatibility tests.

Iran has carried out successful satellite launches in recent years despite West's pressure and sanctions on the country's space sector.

Tehran has rejected accusations its satellite launches are a cover for its missile program with authorities stating that the satellites are used for various scientific and development purposes in the country.

Iran has also stated repeatedly that peaceful technological advancement in the aerospace field is the country's legitimate right.

In January, Iran simultaneously launched three satellites for the first time using a modern satellite carrier developed by the Iranian Defense Ministry.

The ISA-built Mahda satellite was unveiled during the launches.

It came more than a week after Iran launched its Sorayya satellite into orbit with a rocket designed and developed by the country's elite military force the IRGC.

Also in late February, an Iranian satellite was placed for a first time into an orbit of 500 kilometers. The Pars 1 research-sensing satellite was launched from Russia's Vostochny spacecraft using the Soyuz rocket.

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

ASIA COOPERATION DIALOGUE

Synergy Among Asian States Main Goal of ACD Ministers' Meeting in Tehran

TEHRAN - The two-day the Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) Foreign Ministers' Meeting kicked off in Tehran yesterday and it will wrap up on Monday.

Earlier and in a press conference, the Deputy Minister for Economic Diplomacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated: Synergy among Asian countries in various dimensions is one of the goals of this meeting, which is also the largest organization formed in Asia.

Mehdi Safari said in his press conference with the media this afternoon (Saturday) regarding the "holding of the Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Tehran": Tomorrow and the day after, we will have the 19th ACD Foreign Ministers' Meeting, which we have chaired since October last year.

He stated: The first session was held by Martyr Amir-Abdollahian in New York, and this is the second session. Four days before the elections, that is, on the 25th of June, it will be held. The number of member countries in this dialogue is 35 Asian countries, all powerful Asian countries are also members of this forum.

The Deputy Minister for Economic Diplomacy emphasized that on Sunday and in the first day of event, it will start at the level of deputy foreign ministers, and the agenda is a declaration that needs to be prepared for the meeting, adding that one of the agendas of this

meeting is the review of Iran's proposal of six committees.

Safari added: Synergy among Asian countries in various dimensions is one of the goals of this meeting, which is the largest organization formed in Asia. Gathering this number of countries in Iran is considered an achievement.

He stated: The six committees proposed by Iran are the Transit and Communications Committee, the Science, Technology, and Trade Committee, the Tourism and Cultural Committee, the Education and Human Resources Committee, and finally, the Inclusive and Sustainable Development Committee.

The Deputy Minister for Economic Diplomacy expressed: This meeting is a good platform and opportunity for these 35 countries to have good cooperation with members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization or BRICS. With the six committees I mentioned, we can have suitable synergy with the member countries of this dialogue.

Safari emphasized: About 41 foreign delegations will enter the country for the meeting, 25 of which are at the level of foreign ministers, deputy foreign ministers, or vice ministers. A good initiative that Iran has taken in this meeting is that we invited the secretaries-general of other economic organizations in Asia, including the Secretary-General of ECO.

Hezbollah Drone Strike Hits Israeli Military Base, Leaves Casualties

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement has conducted a drone strike on an Israeli military base, leaving casualties among the occupation forces.

In a statement released on Sunday, Hezbollah said that its fighters had targeted the command headquarters of the "Sahel" brigade in the "Beit Hillel" barracks north of the occupied territories using an attack drone.

It added that the raid had killed and wounded an unspecified number of Israeli officers and soldiers.

Hezbollah also emphasized that the strike came in support of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and their resistance, as well as in response to an Israeli assassination operation in Lebanon.

On Saturday, an Israeli drone strike targeted a car in the town of Khiara in the Western Bekaa area and killed its driver, who was later identified as Aymen Hashem Ghattma, a leader of the Islamic Group political party in Lebanon.

In a statement, the Islamic Group called the targeted killing "a new crime" committed by the Zionist regime against the Lebanese and Palestinian people.

The party further noted that Ghattma's assassination will not deter it from carrying out its duty in defending the Lebanese in the country's south and the Palestinians in the occupied lands.

Hezbollah and Israel have been exchanging deadly fire since early October, shortly after the regime launched a genocidal war on Gaza following a surprise operation by the Palestinian Hamas resistance group.



Hezbollah has vowed to keep up its retaliatory attacks as long as the Tel Aviv regime continues its Gaza onslaught, which has so far killed at least 37,551 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injured 85,911 others.

Meanwhile Hezbollah has released a video showing an array of sensitive sites across the occupied territories as the Israeli regime tempts war with the Lebanese resistance movement.

The movement's Military Media released the footage on Sunday.

Reporting on the video, Lebanon's al-Mayadeen television network identified the sites as "vital Israeli targets only known to the occupation's security apparatus."

The sites depicted in the footage included the Research Center at the Israeli regime's Dimona nuclear reactor in the Negev Desert, the Ben Gurion International Airport in Tel Aviv, and Nevatim Airbase -- one of the regime's largest such outposts.

Some other important targets were listed as the HaKirya complex in Tel Aviv -- which houses the regime's Ministry of Security besides accommodating its General Staff and many senior military officials -- as well as the Ramat David Airbase -- the regime's northernmost such outpost -- and the Karish Gas Field off Lebanon's coast. The footage's release followed only a few days after Hezbollah's releasing of a video of its surveillance aircraft flying over swaths of occupied territories. The movement described the video as only the first episode of what was yet to come.

60,000 Polling Stations to Be Ready for Upcoming Presidential Elections



TEHRAN - Some of these polling stations are mobile, and people can cast their ballot at a total of 90,000 stations, Mohammad Taghi Shahcheraghi said on Sunday.

He added that equipment and facilities have been dispatched to the country's provinces and election maneuvers in 3,500 stations.

Iran will hold presidential elections on June 28, following the martyrdom of President Ebrahim Raisi and his entourage in a helicopter crash in May.

The election's winner will replace Ebrahim Raisi, who embraced martyrdom during a helicopter crash in Iran's northwestern mountainous region on May 19.

Six men running for the Iranian presidency have faced off in three rounds of nationally televised debates to discuss economic and cultural issues, defend their plans, and criticize those of the rivals.

Known as the most-watched programs in the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting history, the three previous debates revolved around the economic problems, fair administrative services, and cultural affairs.

The candidates are going to make last-ditch efforts in the two remaining debates on June 24 and 25 to attract voters.

Allotted equal minutes of speaking time each, the candidates explicate their plans to deal with the country's major economic, political and cultural problems after taking the office.

The candidates have been singled out by the Constitutional Council from 80 applicants seeking the presidency.

The six candidates are Saeed Jalili, Alireza Zakani, Amir Hossein Qazizadeh Hashemi, Mostafa Pourmohammadi, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, and Masoud Pezeshkian.

According to some predictions, the election will go to the run-off stage as the competition is tough among the top three candidates Jalili, Qalibaf and Pezeshkian.

Inauguration of 26 Industrial and Production Projects in 10 Provinces



TEHRAN - Twenty-six major industrial and production projects, under the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade, were officially inaugurated in 10 provinces of the country with a budget exceeding 607.06 trillion rials, in the presence of the acting President. Acting President Mohammad Mokhber, on Sunday morning, continued the inauguration of the 13th government's projects by attending the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade and officially issued the order to start operations for 26 major industrial and production projects in 10 provinces. These projects have been executed with a budget exceeding 607.06 trillion rials and have created 5,563 direct and sustainable job opportunities. In the 13th government, the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade has taken a significant step in facilitating industrial activities by implementing projects worth 8,500 trillion rials to address imbalances in water and electricity sectors. Additionally, through efforts to revive inactive production units, 4,627 industrial units in industrial parks have returned to operation and production. The Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade, by defining leading industrial projects in areas such as electric vehicle production, aircraft engine manufacturing, and a special focus on knowledge-based industries and marine economy, has managed to increase the average seasonal industrial growth from -1.26% in the 12th government to 4.37%. Moreover, with the 13th government's plan to separate industrial electricity from residential electricity, over 1,144 megawatts of electricity generation capacity have been created by the industrial sector in 2023.

IRAN NEWS



Iran's \$95m Investment in Azerbaijan Over 3 Months

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Azarnews reported on Saturday that Iran's foreign direct investment (FDI) in Azerbaijan reached \$94.8 million during the first quarter of 2024. This figure, calculated based on data from the Central Bank of Azerbaijan, shows a 5.69% (or \$5.7 billion) increase from the same period last year. The report states that Iran's share of total foreign direct investment in Azerbaijan is 6.3%. It's worth noting that Iran's direct investment in Azerbaijan amounted to \$395.9 million in 2023. Foreign direct investment in Azerbaijan's economy last year totaled \$6.6 billion, marking a 6.1% growth.

Achieving \$5.5b in Foreign Investment in 2023



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Seyed Ehsan Khandouzi, in the open session of Majlis, during the reading of the performance report on the financial resources of Note "18" of the Budget Bill, concerning support for sustainable production and employment and national production growth, stated: "In September of last year, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution mentioned that significant work had been done in the economic sector under the thirteenth government, and several economic indicators show this growth." He added, "Not only domestic economic analysts but also international institutions have officially acknowledged the emergence of the macroeconomic effects of the policies of the past three years. For instance, in its May report, the Central Bank explicitly stated that 'Iran's economy has become resilient and sustainable in terms of growth,' despite all the geopolitical developments in the region." The Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance emphasized: "When the enemies of the Iranian government and nation admit that the paths to reforming growth and investment in Iran's economy have diverged from their previous course, it indicates that we have succeeded in revitalizing the economy that had been held hostage." Khandouzi, referring to the Central Bank's statistics over the past 30 years, said: "These statistics show that economic growth only surpassed the average growth of the Martyr Raisi administration during the eighth government; the average growth in the ninth government was 3.7%, in the tenth government 1%, in the eleventh government 2.6%, in the twelfth government 0.3%, and in the thirteenth government, over three years, economic growth has been 4.5%." Referring to the growth of foreign investment under the thirteenth government, he stated: "According to statistics from 2005 to 2008 until today, over the past 17 years, the highest amount of realized investment belonged to 2017, with less than \$2.8 billion in foreign investment. However, this record was broken in 2022, reaching \$4.1 billion, and in 2023, it transformed into \$5.5 billion in foreign investment."



\$100b Petrochemical Projects Underway

TEHRAN - Morteza Shahmirzaei, the CEO of National Petrochemical Company in a symposium on pricing challenges for various petrochemical feedstocks held at Imam Sadegh University, stated that all available capacities must be utilized to achieve a production leap in the petrochemical industry.

He mentioned that around 130 petrochemical projects worth approximately \$100 billion are currently underway in the country. Out of these, about 70 projects have shown satisfactory physical progress. However, efforts must continually be made to remove development obstacles and accelerate the execution of petrochemical projects.

The CEO of the National Petrochemical Company added that hubs in Asaluyeh, Mahshahr, the Parsian Energy-Intensive Region, and the Lamerd region, as well as the regions of Deyr, Kangan, and Siraf, are ready to attract new investments to complete the value chain. Based on special measures, investors will benefit from legal support and incentives.

Shahmirzaei honored the memory of martyr Ibrahim Raeesi and other martyrs of the government, emphasizing that the petrochemical industry is more determined than ever to strengthen the deep foundations of the Islamic Republic of Iran, adhering to the principles and ideals of the Islamic Revolution.

He outlined the challenges of feedstock pricing in the petrochemical industry and suggested revising the pricing formulas. He also proposed the formation of a specialized task force to update the feedstock pricing formulas periodically based on conditions.

The CEO pointed out that using renewable and new energies could revolutionize energy supply in the petrochemical industry. Employing modern methods and technologies in all areas can lead to balanced development.



Bangladeshis in Tehran Mark the 53rd Independence and National Day

By: F. Taherpoor

TEHRAN - Bangladesh Embassy in Tehran on Saturday, June 22, launched a reception at Parsian Azadi Hotel to mark Bangladesh's 53rd Independence and National Day.

Bangladesh Ambassador H.E. Manjurul Karim Khan Chowdhury and his wife Farzana Nasrin hosted the event where some special guests like Iran's Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade and the Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Mr. Mehdi Zeyghami, Bangladesh's member of parliament Mohammad Shahriar Alam and his wife as well as diplomats and distinguished persons were present.

The Bangladesh Independence Day is marked every year on March 26 and because of Holy Month of Ramadan as well as New Year holiday in Tehran and the shock martyrdom of Iranian President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi, the reception in Tehran postponed to June 22.

Addressing the event, Bangladesh Ambassador Mr. Chowdhury welcomed the participants for marking the national day.

He then briefed the participants about the history of Bangladesh's independence day and said Bangladeshis every year on March 26 celebrate the Independence Day, adding that March 26, 1971 was the day when Father of Bangladesh Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared the independence of the country.

He then paid homage to martyred Iranian President Raisi and Foreign Minister Amir-Abdollahian who were very serious in deepening bilateral ties between Iran and Bangladesh. Mr. Chowdhury then highlighted some major events in the history of Bangladesh in the past 53 years and said: "In the last 53 years our national income increased more than 30 times from where it was in 1972. Life expectancy at birth in 1971 was 46, now it is 72. We have achieved significant progress in the socio-economic sectors, in many cases better than some regional countries. Women empowerment could be a befitting example."

He then said: "Our agricultural production increased four times. Bangladesh is now the 3rd largest vegetables produce, 2nd largest sweet-water fish producer and 3rd largest ricier producer in the world. The country is also now one of the leading producers of readymade garments. Our pharmaceuticals are being exported to more than 150 countries."

The ambassador then said that Bangladesh has faced many challenges in the last 53 years, many were unsurmountable but it has proved to the world Bangladesh is no less capable than others and can face challenges however formidable.

Then he touched upon ties between Iran and Bangladesh and said: The two countries enjoy long standing friendly and brotherly relations. Religious and cultural linkages between the people of the two countries are millennium old. Both the peoples nurture immense goodwill for each other."

Mr. Chowdhury then said it is heartening to see that both the countries are working to deepen bilateral relations and to explore further areas of mutually beneficial cooperation. He reiterated that they will continue seriously working for materializing the huge untapped potentials between the two countries for cooperation.

He said Bangladesh is now focused on economic development and improving wellbeing of its people and the country has returned to the track for fast development since 2009 and under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of the father of the nation. He reiterated Bangladesh is a peace-loving country which is following a principles based foreign policy of friendship to all and malice towards none as established by the Father of the Nation. Then Iran's Deputy Minister of Industry Mr. Zeyghami, for his part in the event, congratulated the day to the ambassador and hailed recent successful parliament election and formation of the government in Bangladesh.

He also thanked Bangladesh for extending condolences and sympathy over the martyrdom of President Raisi and observing one day of mourning.

He then pointed to the deep linkages and commonalities of the two countries and called for strengthening it through exchange of delegations.

Zeighami also said that the ties between the two countries are deepening nowadays, reiterating that Martyr Raisi had pun on the agenda boosting ties with countries like Bangladesh.

He noted that both countries can boost ties and cooperation in the trade and scientific fields. Then the ambassador, accompanied by the chief guests of the event, cut a special caked prepared for the day.



Oil Production to Reach 4m Barrels per Day by Yearend

TEHRAN - Oil Minister announced that crude oil production will reach 4 million barrels per day by the end of this year. He also stated that Iran currently extracts over 100 million cubic meters of gas from South Pars compared to Qatar.

Javad Owji, during a joint press conference with government spokesperson Ali Bahadori Jahromi and Ali Salajegheh, head of the Environmental Protection Organization, said: "Under the thirteenth government, 153 projects in the upstream and downstream sectors worth \$34 billion have been completed."

He added: "In 2021, when we started our activities, oil sales were low, and unfinished projects had demotivated the oil ministry's workforce. Additionally, 20 to 30 million barrels of ultra-heavy oil were left on ships."

The Minister continued: "Due to the inability to sell oil, all onshore and offshore tanks in Iran were full, and 12 VLCC ships, each with a capacity of 2 tons, were used for storage."

Owji stated: "Every six months in the previous government, a ship was bought to store condensates and ultra-heavy oil."

He explained that storing oil and condensates led to reduced gas production, harming power plants and causing fuel shortages, which resulted in power outages in 2020.

He noted: "These ships caused an annual loss of \$460 million to the country. In the thirteenth government, no ships were bought, and all stored oil was sold."

Owji added: "By using modern methods in oil sales and successful energy diplomacy, we managed to sell all the condensates by early 2022."

He said: "At the beginning of the government, our plan was to prioritize incomplete and productive projects,

including storage plans, field development, flare gas collection, and product transfer. Currently, we have over 300 projects worth \$120 billion underway."

He emphasized: "We increased oil production from 2.2 to 3.6 million barrels per day and plan to reach 4 million barrels per day by 2024. Gas production has also increased by 53 million cubic meters. Additionally, petrochemical production capacity increased by 10 million tons, reaching 100 million tons per year."

Owji announced that 4 to 5 petrochemical projects will be inaugurated, adding: "A \$5 billion investment in flare gas collection will result in collecting 30 million cubic meters of flare gas by the end of the year, equivalent to one phase of South Pars production."

Owji stated: "We achieved an unprecedented record in gas production and secured the top rank in gas production increase among GCF member countries, with a growth rate of 5%, compared to the average of 2.5% for other countries."

The Minister said: "In the shared South Pars field, we extract 75 to 100 million cubic meters more gas than our Qatari partners."

He continued: "We have conducted expert studies on South Pars pressure boosting and signed contracts worth \$20 billion with four major holdings."

Owji emphasized: "We concluded phase 11 of South Pars after 20 years of delay, currently extracting 12 million cubic meters, with plans to increase this to 50 million cubic meters per day."

He stressed: "Currently, Iran exports oil to 15 countries. Many refineries in these countries have invested heavily in modifying their processing systems to use Iranian crude oil."



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

Halving Country's Gasoline and Diesel Consumption Is Possible

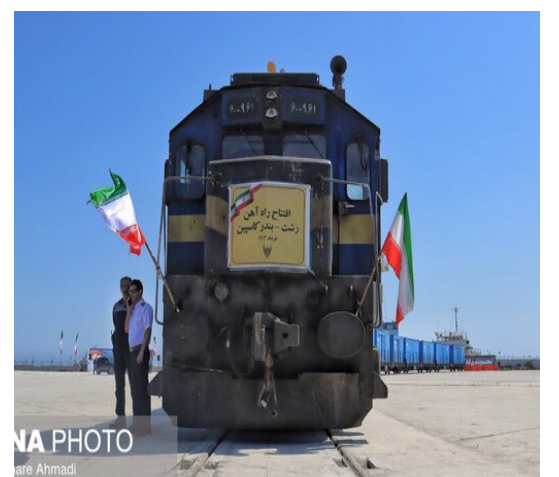


TEHRAN - Jalil Salari, the CEO of the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company, stated in a press conference: "The production and consumption plan for gasoline in 1399 (2020-2021) was set at 105 million liters, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, production reached 94 million liters, and consumption dropped to around 75 million liters, creating an opportunity for Iran to export gasoline."

He added, "Gasoline consumption increased from 75 million liters per day in 1399 (2020-2021) to 91 million liters in 1400 (2021-2022), 104 million liters in 1401 (2022-2023), and 111 million liters in 1402 (2023-2024)." Salari announced the current gasoline consumption in the country at 118 million liters per day and mentioned that over the past three years, approximately 3 million fuel cards were issued to the public annually, and on average, the country's gasoline production capacity increased by 5 million liters per year. He continued, "We consume 205 million liters of petroleum products daily, with an annual growth rate of 8%. The consumption in the transportation sector, with 118 million liters of gasoline and 65 million liters of diesel per day and 31 million vehicles on the roads, does not align with any standards or criteria." The Deputy Minister of Oil emphasized that Iranian vehicles, both gasoline and diesel, are high-consumption. He stated, "Our gasoline vehicles consume an average of 12 liters per 100 kilometers, and our diesel vehicles consume 55 to 60 liters per 100 kilometers. By standardizing vehicles and removing outdated vehicles from the transportation cycle, these figures can be halved."

Salari pointed out, "We are using petrochemical feedstock as fuel. If the fleet is renewed, part of the saved liquid fuel can be allocated to petrochemicals to operate at full capacity, and prevent fuel diversion that leads to smuggling. With these three actions, we can restore 80% of the oil export revenues for the country."

Transit of Turkmenistan Sulfur via Rasht-Caspian Railway



TEHRAN (ISNA) - The CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways, referring to the inauguration of the Rasht-Caspian railway, stated: "With this connection, we anticipate a significant increase in rail freight transit, and starting next week, we will begin transiting Turkmenistan sulfur via this route."

Seyyed Miad Salehi explained that the connection of the Rasht segment to the Caspian port represents the second route linking the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, thus connecting the north and south of the country via rail.

He continued: "With this connection, we expect a significant increase in rail freight transit, and starting next week, we will begin transiting Turkmenistan sulfur via this route. The sulfur will come from the Turkmenbashi port to the Caspian port and will transit through our country by rail."

The Deputy Minister of Roads added: "Out of the six north-south corridors, which include two in the eastern Caspian Sea, two in the middle Caspian Sea, and two in the western Caspian Sea, the Caspian port route is the fourth corridor established between northern and southern Iran, marking a significant step in enhancing the competitive advantage of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

Regarding the features of this route, Salehi said: "With this inauguration, the route for Russian cargo, which previously traveled through the Black Sea, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean towards India, can now be transported via this route, reducing the journey from about 50 days to under 20 days, roughly one-third of the original time."

The CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways concluded: "Given the current capacity of the Caspian port, which is around 2.5 million tons, a substantial portion of cargo can be transported by rail. If the port's capacity is increased, we could transport up to eight million tons of goods."

EU, China Set for Talks on Planned Electric Vehicle Tariffs

SHANGHAI (Dispatches) - China and the European Union have agreed to start talks on the planned imposition of tariffs on Chinese-made electric vehicles (EVs) being imported into the European market, senior officials of both sides said.

Germany's Economy Minister Robert Habeck said he had been informed by EU commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis that there would be concrete negotiations on tariffs with China.

The confirmation came after China's commerce ministry said its head Wang Wentao, and Dombrovskis, executive vice president of the European Commission, had agreed to start consultations over the EU's anti-subsidy investigation into Chinese EVs.

"This is new and surprising in that it has not been possible to enter into a concrete negotiation timetable in the last few weeks," Habeck said in Shanghai.

He said it was a first step and many more will be necessary. "We are far from the end, but at least, it is a first step that was not possible before."



Taiwan War Games to Mimic Combat as Closely as Possible



TAIPEI (Dispatches) - Taiwan's annual war games this year will be as close as possible to actual combat, no longer just putting on a show to score points but aiming to simulate real fighting given a rapidly rising "enemy threat" from China, a senior official said.

China, which views democratically governed Taiwan as its territory, has been staging regular exercises around the island for four years to pressure Taipei to accept Beijing's claim of sovereignty, despite Taiwan's strong objections.

Taiwan starts its five-day Han Kuang exercises on July 22.

A senior Taiwan defence official, speaking on condition of anonymity to be able to speak more freely, said there was an urgent need to rethink how the drills were conducted.

"In recent years, the enemy threat has changed rapidly," the official said. "Our defence combat plan must also be continuously revised on a rolling basis, and the urgency of comprehensive combat training is becoming more and more important."

Elements that were mostly for show, like rehearsal drills, have been cancelled, while this year there will be nighttime exercises and, unusually, the capital Taipei will be included too, the official said.

"It's not about scoring points," the official said. "We want the soldiers to wonder whether this is for real."

Things may go wrong, like vehicle breakdowns, and that is fine, the official added. "These are problems that may be faced in actual combat."

The exercises will be a continuous experience, the official said. "War does not distinguish between night and day."

China's defense ministry did not answer calls seeking comment about the exercises outside of office hours at the weekend. It has previously said it is futile for Taiwan to think it can use arms to prevent "reunification".



GAZA (Dispatches) - Health officials in Gaza said Israeli air strikes on Saturday killed at least 24 people in the territory's north, a day after the International Committee of the Red Cross said 22 people were killed in shelling that damaged its office.

The Gaza City strikes added to at least 120 deaths over the previous 48 hours which the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza reported earlier Saturday.

Dr Mahmud Aliwa of Al-Ahli hospital in Gaza City said his facility received 24 bodies after the strikes, which left smoke rising over the city.

Gaza's civil defence agency spokesman Mahmud Basal told AFP that at least 20 were killed in a strike on a house in Al-Tuffah neighbourhood, while a strike in Al-Shati refugee camp claimed the lives of four others. "People were going about their business" when, suddenly, "the whole area was wiped out" in an air strike, said Abu Mahmud al-Kariri, an eyewitness in Al-Shati. Against a grey backdrop of destruction, men used a donkey cart to remove some of the dead in Al-Tuffah. Earlier on Saturday, Israel's military said its fighter jets were striking "two Hamas military infrastructure sites" in the Gaza City area. The European Union's foreign affairs chief, Josep Borrell, on Saturday called for an "independent investigation" into the shelling that damaged the ICRC office. The EU condemns the shelling which damaged the @ICRC office in #Gaza and led to dozens of casualties.

Jordan, which signed a peace treaty with Israel 30 years ago, condemned what it called Israel's "systematic targeting" of civilians and relief organisations.

Late Friday the ICRC said 22 dead and 45 wounded were taken to a Red Cross field hospital after shelling with "heavy calibre projectiles" near its southern Gaza office.

Local ICRC chief William Schomburg told reporters Saturday: "There were piles of dead bodies, blood everywhere" and a "flood of wounded people" seeking help.

Gaza's health ministry blamed the shelling on Israel, saying 25 were killed and 50 wounded in the coastal Al-Mawasi area, where thousands of displaced Palestinians have been sheltering in tents.

An Israeli military statement on Saturday said an initial inquiry found "there was no direct attack carried out by the IDF against a Red Cross facility", but the incident was still under review and "findings will be presented to our international partners". On Saturday witnesses reported gun battles in Gaza City between militants and

Israeli forces backed by helicopter fire. The deadliest-ever Gaza war began with an unprecedented October 7 attack by Hamas militants on southern Israel. That attack resulted in the deaths of 1,194 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli official figures. The militants also seized hostages, 116 of whom remain in Gaza although the army says 41 are dead. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed at least 37,551 people, also mostly civilians, Gaza's health ministry said on Saturday. Exchanges of fire across the Lebanese border between Israel and the powerful Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah have also escalated, raising fears of wider war.

On Saturday a security source said a leader of the Lebanese Islamist group Jamaa Islamiya, a Hamas ally, was killed in an Israeli strike on a vehicle in eastern Lebanon.

Israel's military said an aircraft carried out a "precise strike" in the Bekaa area "to eliminate the terrorist" Ayman Ghotmeh, who they said supplied weapons to Hamas and Jamaa Islamiya.

In southern Lebanon, Israeli warplanes struck Hezbollah targets, the military said.

Experts are divided on the prospect of a wider war, but United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the cross-border hostilities must not turn Lebanon into "another Gaza".

Citing "bellicose rhetoric" on both sides, he warned: "One rash move -- one miscalculation -- could trigger a catastrophe that goes far beyond the border, and frankly, beyond imagination."

Violence has also soared in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. The Israeli military said on Saturday an Israeli civilian died after being shot near Qalqilya city.

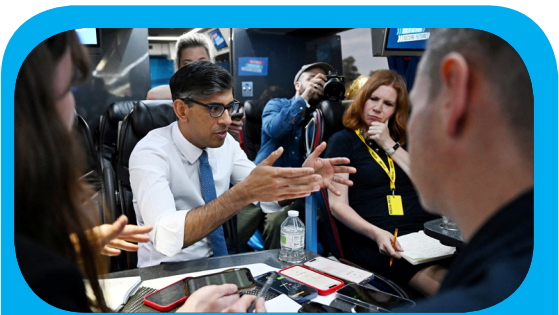
Months of negotiations towards a Gaza truce and hostage release have failed to make headway, but mediator Qatar on Friday said it was still working to "bridge the gap" between Israel and Hamas.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right coalition partners strongly oppose a ceasefire.

Netanyahu, who is on trial for corruption charges which he denies, on Saturday night faced what organisers said was the biggest anti-government protest since the war began.

Tens of thousands rallied in Tel Aviv. One demonstrator's sign accused Netanyahu of being an "Enemy of Israel". Supporters and families of the Gaza hostages also rallied, holding their pictures aloft.

The war has destroyed much of Gaza's infrastructure and left residents short of food, fuel and other essentials.



Another Official From Sunak's Party Probed

LONDON (Dispatches) - An official from Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservative Party is being investigated by Britain's gambling regulator over allegations he placed bets on the date of the general election before it was announced, the Sunday Times reported. Britain's Gambling Commission has already been reported to be investigating two Conservative election candidates and the party's director of campaigning over bets on the date of the July 4 election. The widening scandal has further damaged Sunak's attempts to catch the opposition Labour Party, which is far ahead in opinion polls in the run-up to the election. The official was named by the paper as Nick Mason, chief data officer at the Conservative Party. Mason did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The newspaper cited a spokesperson for Mason as saying he denied any wrongdoing. The Sunday Times cited a statement from the Conservative Party as saying Mason had taken a leave of absence. The party did not confirm this when contacted by Reuters. "As instructed by the Gambling Commission, we are not permitted to discuss any matters related to any investigation with the subject or any other persons," a Conservative Party spokesman said.

Russian Bomb Attack Kills 3 in Ukraine's Kharkiv

KYIV (Dispatches) - Russian guided bombs shattered an apartment building in Ukraine's second-largest city on Saturday, killing three people, injuring 52 and prompting President Volodymyr Zelenskiy to call for more help to deal with the growing threat of such weapons.

Pictures posted online showed parts of the five-storey apartment building in ruins, with windows smashed, balconies wrecked and rubble strewn about a crater on the ground.

Prosecutors in Ukraine's eastern Kharkiv region put the casualty toll at three dead and 52 injured in the mid-afternoon attack, including three injured children. Regional Governor Oleh Syniehubov said four of those hurt were in serious condition.

"This Russian terror through guided bombs must be stopped and can be stopped," Zelenskiy wrote on Telegram.

"We need strong decisions from our partners to enable us to stop the Russian terrorists and Russian military aviation right where they are."

Later, in his nightly video address, Zelenskiy said Russian forces had used more than 2,400 guided bombs on Ukrainian targets in June alone, with about 700 aimed at Kharkiv.

He said after U.S. Congress gave delayed approval of a big aid package in April, Ukraine's replenished arms supplies had reduced the devastation and frequency of missile attacks and the same had to be done now to fend off these bombs.

"The significant reduction in Russian missile terror against Kharkiv and the region proves it is entirely possible to secure our cities and communities from Russian

bombs," he said.

Ukraine, he said, needed promised military aid packages "without delay so that the agreements we reached with (U.S.) President Biden can be realised."

Ukraine and the U.S. signed a 10-year bilateral security agreement this month aimed at bolstering Ukraine's defense against Russia and getting Ukraine closer to NATO membership.

Russia has relied increasingly on relatively inexpensive guided bombs, dropped from a distance and involving fewer risks for its forces.

Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 and has advanced slowly through Donetsk region in the east, capturing a string of villages since seizing the key industrial town of Avdiivka more than three months ago.

It launched a cross-border incursion north of Kharkiv last month, though Zelenskiy says the situation there has stabilised.

In the latest bomb attack, Mayor Ihor Terekhov said there had been four strikes on Kharkiv.

Regional governor Syniehubov said rescue work was proceeding at the building, which housed a store on the ground floor.

Kharkiv Police Chief Serhiy Bolvinov told public broadcaster Suspilne that three floors had collapsed, but he believed no one was trapped under the rubble.

Kharkiv lies about 30 km (20 miles) from the border with Russia. The city of 1.3 million people has frequently been targeted in Russian attacks during nearly 28 months of war.

Moscow denies deliberately targeting civilians but thousands have been killed and injured in the war.



Trump Courts Black Voters in Philadelphia, Asks Christians to Back Him



PHILADELPHIA (Dispatches) - Donald Trump made two speeches on Saturday, urging Christian supporters to go to the polls for him one last time and courting Black voters in Philadelphia by promising to fix a city "ravaged by bloodshed" even as data shows a decline in violent crime.

If elected in November, the Republican presidential candidate told a rally of several thousand at Philadelphia's Temple University, he would give police "immunity" to do their jobs and "surge" federal resources to cities battling violence.

Trump dismissed as "fake" FBI statistics that showed a continued drop in levels of violent crime and murder across the country in the first three months of 2024, and accused Democratic President Joe Biden of lying about the data.

"Under crooked Joe Biden the City of Brotherly Love is being ravaged by bloodshed and crime," Trump said in an arena in a historically Black neighborhood, addressing an audience more diverse than a typical rally, but still largely white.

"Under the Trump administration we are going to bring law and order and safety back to our streets."

The promise to fight crime was part of a larger pitch to Black and Hispanic people, who form more than half the city's population. The Trump campaign has been encouraged by some opinion polls showing he may be gaining ground with these voters this election cycle.

As he often does, Trump portrayed migrants in the country illegally as dangerous and burdensome. He claimed, without citing evidence, that they were taking jobs from Black and Hispanic workers.

"Joe Biden's open border has also been a disaster for our great African-American and Hispanic-American populations," Trump said.

Trump has little chance of winning Philadelphia, which Biden won easily in

2020. But he hopes to narrow the margin in the region, key to the tally in Pennsylvania, a battleground state hotly contested because it can swing either to Republicans or Democrats.

State lawmaker Malcolm Kenyatta, a Democrat, said Black voters remember Trump's history promoting the bigoted conspiracy theory that questioned whether Barack Obama, the first African American president, was born in the United States, and policies he pursued that hurt the Black working class.

"Donald Trump is in a Black place, but Donald Trump does not give a damn about Black people," Kenyatta said at a briefing at a Biden campaign office in Philadelphia before the rally.

Trump and Biden will face off in the first presidential debate of the 2024 race in Atlanta on Thursday.

During a pre-rally stop at a cheesesteak shop in Philadelphia, Trump told supporters he knew whom he planned to choose as his running mate and that person was likely to be at the debate, a video posted to social media by a campaign spokesperson showed.



Portugal Trounce Turkey, Belgium Back With Win

LISBON (Dispatches) - Portugal outclassed Turkey to secure their place in the last 16 of Euro 2024 with a 3-0 win in Dortmund on Saturday while Belgium got their campaign back on track after an impressive 2-0 win against Romania. Earlier, Georgia claimed a historic first point at a major tournament in a 1-1 draw with the Czech Republic. Youri Tielemans breathed new life into Belgium's Euro 2024 campaign as the Aston Villa midfielder's goal after just 73 seconds inspired a vital 2-0 win against Romania on Saturday. It was a Saturday night special played in an astonishing atmosphere in Cologne, with the only mystery being how there were only two goals. All outcomes are now available on the final night of matches when Belgium play Ukraine and Slovakia play Romania, when four points could be enough to top the group but could also see a team eliminated. Belgium, still somehow ranked third in the world by FIFA, were unrecognisable from the sluggish side shocked by Slovakia in their opening game, pouring forward and full of energy from the first whistle. It paid dividends immediately as Romelu Lukaku held up the ball with his back to goal before rolling it into the path of Tielemans, who drilled home a crisp, low shot.

Four minutes later Romania went close with a header by Radu Dragusin that Koen Casteels saved well, but it was a brief respite as Belgium ran the first-half show. Dodi Lukebakio's fierce shot was well saved by Florin Nita after a trademark carving run by De Bruyne, while Lukebakio and Amadou Onana both blazed over when free in front of goal. It seemed only a matter of time before they scored again, but Romania weathered the storm and, knowing how they struck so devastatingly on the counter to beat Ukraine, did not panic. Their fans certainly stayed behind them, helping create an amazing atmosphere as noise rained down from all four stands. Portugal outclassed Turkey to secure their place in the last 16 of Euro 2024 with a 3-0 win in Dortmund on Saturday, after Georgia claimed a historic first point at a major tournament in a 1-1 draw with the Czech Republic. Cristiano Ronaldo's Portuguese side, European champions in 2016, are among the favourites to win the title in Germany and they lived up to their status with a comprehensive victory in front of a partisan crowd to secure first place in Group F. Bernardo Silva of Manchester City opened the scoring midway through the first half, sweeping the ball home after a low Nuno Mendes cross was deflected into his path.

Paul Ousts Korda to Face Musetti in Queen's Final



LONDON (Dispatches) - American fifth seed Tommy Paul beat compatriot Sebastian Korda 6-4 7-6(2) in the semi-finals at the Queen's Club Championships and will face Italian Lorenzo Musetti for the title. Paul becomes the first American finalist at Queen's since an all-American final in 2010, when Sam Querrey beat Mardy Fish to lift the trophy. The 27-year-old, who was the only seeded player in the semi-final lineup, has reached the second ATP 500 final of his career. He will face Musetti in the final after the Italian moved past Australia's Jordan Thompson 6-3 3-6 6-3 earlier. "It was one of the toughest matches of the week," Musetti said. "Jordan was playing amazing, especially in the second and third sets. It was a really tough match. I am really proud of my achievement. I love this sport." Musetti has reached his first ATP Tour final on grass to complete the set of finals on all three surfaces. He joins Matteo Berrettini, Andrea Seppi and Lorenzo Sonego as the only Italians to reach ATP Tour finals on clay, grass and hard courts. Jannik Sinner has also reached that feat in Halle earlier on Saturday by beating China's Zhang Zhizhen to advance into the first grasscourt final of his career. Meanwhile Aryna Sabalenka and Ons Jabeur became the latest top-10 players to retire from the Berlin Open due to injury or illness, after Wimbledon champions Elena Rybakina and Marketa Vondrousova also withdrew this week.

Hurkacz Downs Zverev to Set Up Final With Sinner

HALLE (Dispatches) - Poland's Hubert Hurkacz moved one step closer to his second Halle Open title when he beat home favourite Alexander Zverev 7-6(2) 6-4 to set up a final against his doubles partner and world number one Jannik Sinner. Zverev had beaten Hurkacz in their three previous meetings but the Pole was virtually unstoppable on serve, firing 17 aces and saving four break points to get the better of the German who finished runner-up at the French Open this month. "It needed to be really good. He is such a good competitor and is playing good tennis, reaching the final at the French (Open) and playing at a really high level," Hurkacz said. "I am really confident on my serve, I'm serving really good. There were some moments but I managed to believe in my game and hit some good serves and good shots, so I stayed pretty calm. "I really love grass. The surface suits my game and the atmosphere here, having the full crowd is incredible." World number four Zverev was twice a finalist in Halle,



losing in 2016 and 2017. Sinner beat China's 42nd-ranked Zhang Zhizhen 6-4 7-6(3) to reach the first grasscourt final of his career. While Hurkacz has yet to drop a set at Halle, Sinner came through three consecutive three-setters before his semi-final as the top seed took time to adapt to the surface. "It's going to be very even, he plays so well on this surface. He's won here, he knows this occasion really well," Sinner said on facing Hurkacz in Sunday's final, three days after the pair went out in the doubles quarter-finals in Halle. "I'm excited, I'm going to enjoy tomorrow. Every time you play a final it's a huge pleasure and honour. He's serving really well, it's very, very tough to break him." Sinner will be looking to become the first man since Andy Murray in 2016 to win his first event after reaching the top of the rankings. Meanwhile Australia's Ajla Tomljanovic reached her first WTA final in five years on Saturday with a straight sets win over Russia's Anastasia Potapova at the Birmingham grass-court tournament.

Norris Nabs Spanish Pole After Best Ever Lap



BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Lewis Hamilton brushed aside the drama of his McLaren team's hospitality unit catching fire to produce "the best lap of my life" and deprive Max Verstappen of pole for the Spanish Grand Prix in qualifying. Lewis Hamilton will start on the second row alongside his Mercedes teammate George Russell. Verstappen looked sure to set off for Sunday's 10th round of the season from the front of the grid. But in the last throw of the top-10 shoot-out Norris denied the Red Bull ace by a mere two hundredths of a second. "Today was the perfect lap," said Norris after only his second career pole. "My best lap by a long way, I knew I had to do something perfect, it was probably my best lap ever." Norris produced his one minute 11.383 seconds of magic after a "stressful" day when the McLaren hospitality unit caught fire before third practice. McLaren team boss Zak Brown told Sky Sports one staff member had to go to hospital but had been discharged, adding: "Happy to report everyone is fine." "I lost my shoes. It's all been a bit messy," said Norris. "I like to listen to my music loud beforehand, but didn't have that this time. But it's not the end of the world. I'm not going to complain about it." Turning back to a vintage qualifying session, Norris, whose only other pole came in Russia in 2021, reflected: "It's been a while since Sochi!" Max seemed a bit stronger today, but we made some changes," added the Briton who won his maiden Grand Prix in May in Miami. "I'm super happy to be on pole, it's going to be tough but we're here to win!" Verstappen, targeting a fourth straight world title, leads the championship by 56 points from Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, who starts Sunday's race in fifth, with Norris seven points back in third. "I think the whole of qualifying was better than practice for me," said Verstappen, who won his maiden Grand Prix in Barcelona in 2016 and is on a hat-trick after wins in Catalonia in 2022 and 2023. "It all clicked much better. The other teams are catching up, we need to bring more performance to the car."

Kuldeep, Pandya Lead India to 50-Run Rout of Bangladesh

NORTH SOUND (Dispatches) - Leg-spinner Kuldeep Yadav took three key wickets while Hardik Pandya blasted an undefeated half-century as India moved to the brink of the T20 World Cup semi-finals with a 50-run rout of Bangladesh on Saturday. Chasing 197 for victory, Bangladesh lost three of their top five batsmen to Kuldeep who removed Tanzid Hasan (29), Towhid Hridoy (four) and Shakib Al Hasan (11). Kuldeep finished with an impressive 3-19 from his four overs. India now have two wins from two Super Eight games and will be guaranteed a semi-final spot if Australia defeat Afghanistan later Saturday and also make the last four from Group 1. Pandya, who had made 50 when India batted, started the slide when he took the first Bangladesh wicket, tempting opener Liton Das (13) to sky a chance. Once skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto fell to Jasprit Bumrah for a 32-ball 40, Bangladesh's hopes went with him. Bumrah also ended Rishad Hossain's brief 24-run cameo as the veteran seamer enjoyed figures of 2-13 in four overs before the Tigers finished their 20 overs on 146-8. "Our top score was 50, and we still got 196," said India captain Rohit Sharma. "In T20 you don't need fifties and hundreds, what matters is the pressure you put on the bowlers. That's how we want to play." He added: "Hardik batting well, the way he did today, puts



us in a very good place. We all know what he can do, and today was the perfect example of that. He's a very important player for us, with bat and ball." Put in to bat, 2007 champions India saw five of their top six batsmen reach double-figures. All-rounder Pandya top-scored with an undefeated 50 off just 27 balls with four boundaries and three sixes. India had raced to 71-1 in seven overs with Sharma making a rapid 23 and Virat Kohli hitting his tournament best 37 off 28 balls with one four and three sixes. The only blip was Suryakumar Yadav, who had made back-to-back fifties in his last two innings, scoring just six. Those runs came off the first ball he faced before falling to Tanzim Hasan Sakib who had dismissed Kohli in the same over. Rishabh Pant cracked 36 off 24 balls with Shivam Dube making 34 -- 18 of those runs coming from three sixes. "I think we had a lot of batting options today, but we didn't show the intent we needed," admitted Shanto. India beat Afghanistan by 47 runs in their Super Eight opener in Bridgetown while Bangladesh lost to Australia by 28 runs in a rain-hit clash in Antigua. India have now won all five T20 World Cup clashes against Bangladesh and taken their overall head-to-head record to 13-1.