

Secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights Kazem Gharibabadi Has Said That a Special Judicial Complex Will Be Established in Tehran Province to Address International Lawsuits and Crimes

# IRAN NEWS

The Spokesperson of the Caretaker Taliban Gov't in Afghanistan Praised Iran, Russia, China, Pakistan and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, While Referring to the Participation of Some Countries in the Doha Meeting on Afghanistan

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2

DOMESTIC

## 35% Increase in Food Industry Trade Between Iran and Turkmenistan

> SEE PAGE 2

3

INTERNATIONAL

## Palestinian Islamic Jihad Fire Rockets Into Israel

> SEE PAGE 3

### IMF Reports Controlling Liquidity Growth During the 13th Gov't



TEHRAN - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has reported a containment of the rising trend in liquidity growth during Iran's thirteenth government. It announced that the 40.6% liquidity growth rate during the previous administration has been reduced to less than 35% under the thirteenth government.

According to IRNA, statistics published by the IMF in its Middle East Regional Outlook reports show that the thirteenth government has managed to reduce the 40% liquidity growth rate, which was recorded in the last year of President Rouhani's administration, to less than 35%.

Based on the estimates of this international body, in 2020, which corresponds to the last year of the twelfth government's term, the liquidity growth rate in Iran's economy reached 40.6%. This figure decreased to 39% in the first year of President Ebrahim Raisi's administration (2021), further declined to 31.1% in 2022, and in 2023, the liquidity growth rate in Iran's economy was 34.7%, significantly lower than the 40.6% record in the previous administration.

The IMF has predicted that Iran's liquidity growth rate will further decrease to 32.9% in the current calendar year.

The reduction in liquidity growth during the thirteenth government comes after a continuous upward trend during the four years of the twelfth government, where liquidity growth in Iran increased steadily to 22.1%, 23.1%, 31.3%, and 40.6% during the years 2017 to 2020.

The average liquidity growth rate in the three years of the thirteenth government has been 34.93%, which represents a 14% decrease compared to the 40.6% liquidity growth rate in 2020.

Last month, the World Bank (WB), in its latest report, predicted that Iran's economy will grow 3.2 percent in 2024 and the inflation rate will decrease to 35 percent.

According to the estimate of the international body, Iran's economy experienced a five percent growth and a 40.8 percent inflation in 2023.

The bank has forecast that the industrial sector in Iran will take the lead in 2024, experiencing a 4.9 percent growth, followed by the services and agricultural sectors with a 2.7 and 0.9 percent growth.

### Yemen Unleashes Attacks on Israel, US, UK Ships



SANAA (Dispatches) - Yemen's Armed Forces have announced staging four operations targeting vessels belonging to the Israeli regime, the United States, and the UK, which the forces identified as the "Trio of Evil."

The forces' spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Saree announced the operations in a statement on Monday.

"The first operation was executed with several cruise missiles targeting the Israeli ship MSC Unific in the Arabian Sea, achieving precise and direct hits," he said.

"The second operation was executed with several ballistic and cruise missiles, targeting the American oil tanker Delonix in the Red Sea for the second time this week," the spokesman stated.

The third attack struck British landing ship "Anvil Point" in the Indian Ocean, Saree said, noting that the ship had been targeted with "several cruise missiles" resulting likewise in "precise and direct hits."

A fourth strike by the forces saw them targeting a vessel, named as Lucky Sailor in the Mediterranean Sea, he stated without specifying which party was the vessel associated with.

The official said the operations were carried out in support of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, who are enduring a genocidal Israeli war.

They were also meant as a response to the attacks that the US and the UK have been staging against the Arab Peninsula nation as means of trying to stop its pro-Palestinian operations, Saree stated.

The Armed Forces have vowed to sustain their operations as long as the Israeli regime keeps up the brutal military onslaught that has so far claimed the lives of nearly 38,000 Palestinians, most of them women and children.

They have also pledged to continue their strikes so long as the regime retains a 2006-present siege that it has been enforcing against Gaza, and has markedly tightened during the war.

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



## Iran Exporting Oil to 17 Countries Amid Sanctions

TEHRAN - Oil Minister Javad Owji, at the unveiling ceremony of the Energy and Environment Optimization Market at the Energy Exchange, stated: "Relying on domestic capabilities, we export oil to 17 countries. It is said that the changes in oil sales will not occur with the entry of anyone into the US presidential election. Despite two cyber attacks and oil tanker seizures and sanctions, there was no interruption in the country's energy production and supply for an hour."

The Oil Minister, stating that he is neither reformist nor fundamentalist, said: "I will not allow the achievements of the oil and gas industry to be questioned. It is said that discounts are applied in oil sales, but I declare that the amount of discount is less than the number of fingers on one hand."

With an emphasis on investments made in the oil industry over the past three years, Owji stated: "If investments were not made in this industry, we would have become like Venezuela, where its oil production, which was 4.8 million barrels, dropped to 300,000 barrels."

Highlighting that at the beginning of the thirteenth government, Iran's daily oil production was 2.107 million barrels, the minister continued: "Through the efforts of the oil industry workers, this year's production has reached 3.570 million barrels per day."

The Oil Minister emphasized that oil production has increased by 60% in the past three years, stating: "Oil exports have increased from 182 million barrels per day in 1398 [Iranian calendar] to 565 million barrels per day in 1402."

Furthermore, he noted: "The value of Iran's oil and gas exports, as well as other petroleum products and petrochemicals, has also increased from \$10.8 billion in 1398 to \$36 billion in 1402. In other words, there has been a 3.5-fold growth in this area."

He added that acceptable plans worth \$36 billion have been approved in the Economic Council in recent years for optimization across all sectors. He further stated: "Today, for the

first time, savings rewards totaling 3.8 trillion tomans are being paid to gas consumers, derived from these savings achieved."

Meanwhile in the unveiling ceremony of the energy and environmental optimization market at the Iran Energy Exchange and the start of trading in gas saving certificates, Deputy Oil Minister for Gas Affairs Majid Chegini stated: "The gas industry plays a crucial role in the country, providing invaluable services to the public and various sectors that are beyond description and cannot easily be recounted."

He added: "Significant achievements have been made in the gas and energy supply sector over the past three years, one of which is the launch of the energy optimization market, undoubtedly considered a tool for public participation in the energy sector, in line with this year's motto."

The Deputy Oil Minister for Gas Affairs emphasized: "In previous years, actions have also been taken. Last year, 2.5 trillion tomans of gas saving certificates were issued for renewable power plants."

According to Chegini, approximately 3 trillion tomans of certificates were published in 1401 and the same amount will be issued this year, which are now traded with the launch of the optimization market.

He stated: "Permission has been obtained from the Organization of Planning and Budget of the country to offer 125 million cubic meters of gas on the Energy Exchange, part of which is being offered today in the market. The ceiling for the issuance of saving certificates is set at 10 billion cubic meters."

### Palestinian Resistance Certain to Achieve Definite Victory in Gaza



TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior Iranian commander says the Palestinian resistance will achieve "definite" victory in the face of the Israeli regime in Gaza.

Brigadier General Amir-Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the Aerospace Division of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said, "Be certain that you will change the course of the regional and global history."

Hajizadeh vowed that the Islamic Republic would continue to spare no effort to support the resistance.

He made the remarks on Monday in a meeting with family members of some of the Palestinians, who had been martyred as a result of Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip.

Hajizadeh also pointed to the Israeli regime's October-present genocidal war against the coastal sliver, asserting how "poignant" it was for both the officials and the people inside the Islamic Republic to bear witness to such atrocities.

The commander also said Iran is capable of taking fresh direct military action against the Israeli regime.

"We are hopeful of the arrival of the opportunity for [conducting] Operation True Promise 2," Hajizadeh stated.

In a multi-pronged attack, dubbed Operation True Promise, Iran launched hundreds of drones and missiles at the occupied territories late on April 13 in response to deadly aggression by the Israeli regime against the Iranian diplomatic facilities in the Syrian capital earlier that month.

The Israeli airstrikes on Iran's embassy compound in Damascus had killed two commanders of the Quds Force of the IRGC, Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Zahedi and General Mohammad Hadi Haji Rahimi, as well as five of their accompanying officers.

Hajizadeh noted that the Corps fired as many as "300 missiles" against Israeli targets during the operation.

### Gov't Bans Importing Cosmetics



TEHRAN - The head of the Department for Prevention and Combating of Smuggling of Health Products at the Food and Drug Inspection Organization emphasized the ban on importing cosmetics into the country, stating: Many cosmetic and hygiene products marketed under foreign brands are produced in unauthorized workshops in substandard conditions in Pakistan.

According to IRNA's report from the Food and Drug Organization, Hamed Abdi noted that the importation of cosmetic and hygiene products has been prohibited by the Ministry of Industry since 2018. He added: Currently, most foreign cosmetic and hygiene products are either smuggled or counterfeit.

He stated: Cosmetic and hygiene products are categorized into smuggled goods and counterfeit goods. Smuggled goods include original products, while counterfeit products are found, for example, in famous American cosmetic and hygiene brands produced in Pakistan under substandard conditions and sold at prices similar to those of the original factory brand.

The head of the Department for Prevention and Combating of Smuggling of Health Products at the Food and Drug Inspection Organization emphasized: Currently, there has been an increase in the smuggling of counterfeit cosmetic and hygiene products from countries such as Dubai, Pakistan, and India.

Musa Ahmadzadeh, head of the Iranian Association of Importers of Cosmetic and Perfumery Products, stated that the volume of smuggling of cosmetic and hygiene products amounts to \$2.1 billion, according to research by the Association. Iranians buy five times more cosmetic and hygiene products than Middle Eastern countries, which is a positive development economically as it reduces medical costs associated with skincare.

## Iran Would Use All Means to Back Hizbollah If Israel Launches War

LONDON (FT) - An adviser to Iran's Supreme Leader has warned that if Israel launches an all-out offensive against Hizbollah, it would risk triggering a regional war in which Tehran and the "axis of resistance" would support the Lebanese militant movement with "all means".

Kamal Kharrazi, foreign affairs adviser to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, told the Financial Times that the Islamic republic was "not interested" in a regional war and urged the US to put pressure on Israel to prevent further escalation.

But asked if Iran would support Hizbollah — its most important and powerful proxy — militarily in the event of a full-blown conflict, Kharrazi said: "All Lebanese people, Arab countries and members of the axis of resistance will support Lebanon against Israel."

"There would be a chance of expansion of the war to the whole region, in which all countries including Iran would become engaged," he said in an interview. "In that situation, we would have no choice, but to support Hizbollah by all means."

He added: "The expansion of war is not in the interest of anyone — not Iran or the US."

Another Iranian official told the FT that Iran would be unlikely to directly target Israel, instead mobilizing the network of Iran-backed militant groups across the region that make up the axis of resistance.

Kharrazi said that while there would be "some differences" in approach depending on who won, the overall foreign policy strategy was determined by Khamenei and would remain the same.

The election would create the chance for "new openings" between Iran and the west, he said. But to achieve that, western states would need to retreat "from the current policies and engage in negotiations with Iran based on equal footing and mutual respect".

Kharrazi added. "If they decide to co-operate, we are ready for co-operation."



The Islamic republic would be willing to hold indirect negotiations with Washington about Tehran's nuclear programme under a new government, if it would lead to the US rejoining the 2015 accord Iran signed with world powers — known as the JCPOA — he said.

"We are not for building nuclear weapons," Kharrazi said, citing a fatwa issued by Khamenei in 2003 banning the development of the arms. But he said that if Iran faced an existential threat, "naturally we [would] have to change our doctrine."

He added that if the west triggered "snapback" provisions to reimpose UN sanctions lifted when Tehran signed the JCPOA, in response to Iran's continued expansion of its programme, "there would be a severe reaction from Iran in terms of changing its nuclear strategy."

"Up to now, we have not decided to go further than 60 per cent enrichment," he said. "But we have been trying to expand our experience by using different machines and different set-ups."

The west has also been angered by Iran's sale of armed drones to Moscow, which Russia has used in its war in Ukraine.

Kharrazi insisted Iran was neutral in that conflict, saying it sold drones to Russia prior to Moscow's invasion of its neighbour. When asked about western concerns that Iran could sell missiles to Moscow, he said: "There have been such accusations, but it is not true."

However, he said, there was "no obstacle between Iran and Russia for arms deals", adding that Tehran was in negotiations to buy Russian fighter jets. "We are due to sign a comprehensive strategic agreement with them in the near future," Kharrazi said.

# IRAN NEWS

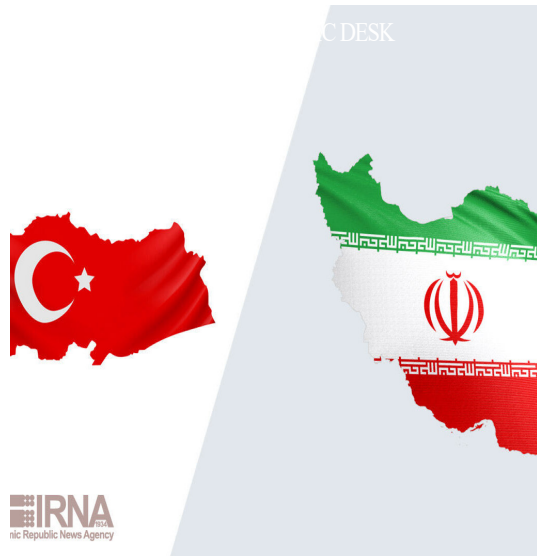


## 7.5% Rise in Economic Growth Under the 13th Gov't

TEHRAN (IP) - Tahan Nazif announced that the Guardian Council, which is responsible for overseeing the electoral process, has confirmed the accuracy and legitimacy of the election results. He stated that the council had provided an opportunity for candidates or voters to file complaints, but no such complaints were submitted. The spokesman noted that preparations are now underway for the runoff election, which will take place on July 5. The two candidates who received the most votes in the first round, Masoud Pezeshkian and Saeed Jalili, will face off in the runoff.

The validation of the election results by GCC is a crucial step in the democratic process, ensuring the integrity and transparency of the electoral outcome. The election was called following the martyrdom of former President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash. The runoff election between Pezeshkian and Jalili will provide Iranian voters with a choice between two distinct political visions for the country's future.

## Iran-Turkey Trade Rises by 5% to \$2.3b



TEHRAN - Trade exchanges between Iran and Turkey in the first five months of 2024 have increased by 5% to reach \$2.3 billion.

According to IRNA, statistics released by the Turkish Statistical Institute indicate that trade exchanges between Iran and Turkey in the first five months of the current year have reached \$2.3 billion. This figure represents a 5% increase compared to the same period last year.

In the first five months of the previous year, Iran-Turkey trade was reported at \$2.189 billion.

The report states that Turkish exports to Iran from January to May 2024 have grown by 16% compared to the same period last year, reaching \$1.34 billion.

In the period from January to May 2023, Turkey exported goods worth \$1.151 billion to Iran. However, Turkish imports from Iran in the first five months of 2024 decreased by 7% compared to the same period last year, falling from \$1.038 billion to \$960 million.

According to the report, Turkey exported \$285 million worth of goods to Iran and imported \$262 million worth of goods from Iran in the fifth month of the current year. Turkish exports to Iran in May increased by 14% compared to the same period last year, while imports from Iran grew by 20%. In May 2023, Turkey exported \$249 million worth of goods to Iran and imported \$217 million worth of goods from Iran.



## Awaiting Surge in Home Appliance Exports

TEHRAN - The Deputy Minister of Public Industries at the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade (IMT) stated that people have shown in practice that they support domestic products. He mentioned that this year, a production record of 20 million units will be achieved, and there will be a surge in home appliance exports. Mohammad Mehdi Baradaran, Deputy Minister of Public Industries at the Ministry of IMT, discussed the trend of liberalizing home appliance imports with an Economy Online reporter. He said that in certain sectors of home appliances, such as air conditioners and small appliances, they have moved towards liberalization, and the import process for these goods is underway. Baradaran added that currently, the major domestic needs in all sectors of home appliances are fully met, especially now that our warehouses are filled with goods. We are focusing more on home appliance export plans rather than new import programs. He explained that competition has emerged in the home appliance industry, and it is one of the industries that has seen significant growth over the past three years. Production has increased from 14.5 million to 17.5 million units, and this year we will achieve a record production of 20 million units. Be assured, this year we will see a surge in home appliance exports. Baradaran emphasized that in the home appliance sector, we have the capability to compete with many similar foreign products. Just as the domestic home appliance market has become competitive, we must also be able to compete in the international market. The Deputy Minister of IMT, responding to the issue that some people prefer to buy foreign home appliances and that the import ban has deprived them of choice, said that people have shown in practice that they support domestic products.



## 35% Increase in Food Industry Trade Between Iran and Turkmenistan

TEHRAN - The head of the Central Asia, Caucasus, and Russia office of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization emphasized the increase in trade exchanges between Iran and Turkmenistan, announcing an upward trend in the trade of agricultural products and food industries to Turkmenistan in the first two months of this year.

The head of the Central Asia, Caucasus, and Russia office of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization emphasized the growth of trade exchanges between Iran and Turkmenistan, announcing an upward trend in the trade of agricultural products and food industries to Turkmenistan in the first two months of the year. Akbar Godari introduced the Turkmenistan market as capable of absorbing Iranian products and added that in the thirteenth government, the development of trade with neighbors through economic diplomacy to reduce sanctions and increase exports of Iranian products was prioritized. Among these efforts, negotiations to expand trade relations with Turkmenistan bore fruit, and this country's market became one of our target export markets.

He stated that Iran's trade with Turkmenistan exceeded one billion dollars at the end of 2014, adding that various factors since the 1990s caused a decline in trade between Iran and Turkmenistan. However, in recent years, improved political relations have increased trade with this country. In 2023, trade with Turkmenistan reached 446 million dollars, of which 186 million dollars were in the industrial sector, 156 million dollars in mining and mineral industries, 74 million dollars in agriculture and food industries, 27 million dollars in petrochemical and oil-based products, and 2 million dollars in carpets.

According to Godari, obtaining visas for Iranian traders is

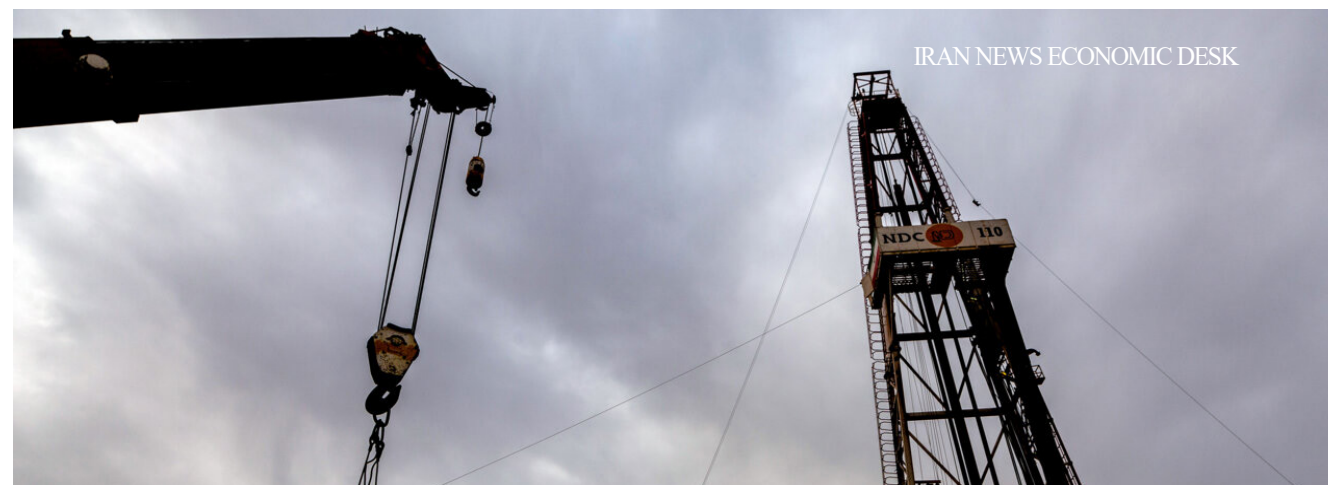
difficult, and it seems that participating in exhibitions will facilitate access to this market. Therefore, in September this year, an exhibition focused on the food industry will be held in this country.

The head of the Central Asia, Caucasus, and Russia office of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization said: Trade in the food industry between Iran and Turkmenistan has experienced significant growth. The trade of food industries and agricultural products between the two countries was around 39 million dollars in 2022, which increased by 35% to 74 million dollars in 2023.

This official continued: We exported about 70 million dollars to Turkmenistan in the first two months of 2024, of which 12 million dollars were in agricultural products and food industries. This figure has experienced significant growth compared to the same period last year. Fresh fruits, vegetables, tomato paste, and some processed products are the main exports of Iran to Turkmenistan, but this market also has the potential to absorb dairy products and various protein products produced in Iran.

Godari concluded by mentioning the planning done to capture a larger share of the Turkmenistan market, stating that on July 7, a seminar focused on introducing the AgroFood Exhibition of Turkmenistan will be held at Iran's Trade Promotion Organization. In this seminar, we will try to examine this exhibition from various perspectives. He continued: Iran's capabilities in the food industry are significant, and companies should not doubt that by participating in this exhibition, they will sign good contracts with business partners from this country, ultimately paving the way for the expansion of exports to Turkmenistan.

## Iran Becomes the Fourth Largest Oil Exporter in OPEC



TEHRAN - Iran's position within OPEC has risen with increased oil production and exports under the 13th government. The Islamic Republic of Iran has surpassed Nigeria and Kuwait to become the fourth largest oil exporter in OPEC.

According to the Ministry of Oil, Iran's oil production and exports have always been directly influenced by the country's political and international conditions. Whenever sanctions pressure has eased, Iran has had the opportunity to increase its oil exports; conversely, when sanctions have intensified, the country's oil production and exports have been restricted.

From the early days of the 13th government's tenure, despite ongoing efforts to develop win-win international relations, major oil industry projects did not rely on foreign entities. As a result, despite the addition of 600 new sanctions against Iran's oil sector, the country's oil production and exports have increased.

According to Vortexa, Iran's oil and gas condensate exports have reached their highest level since the maximum pressure campaign by Trump in August 2018. This news outlet, which monitors global oil and gas movements, highlighted that Iran's oil and gas condensate exports account for 9% of OPEC's total crude oil and condensate exports.

The report indicates that from January to May this year, Iran exported 1.56 million barrels of oil per day, 250,000 barrels more than Kuwait and Nigeria, thereby elevating Iran to the fourth position among OPEC's largest crude oil exporters.

Despite current sanctions, Iran managed to increase its crude oil and gas condensate exports to 1.7 million barrels per day in May, the highest in five years.

Key factors for the increase in Iran's oil exports include higher oil

production, increased demand from China, and the expansion of Iran's oil tanker fleet.

However, some within the country attribute the increase in oil exports not to the successful diplomacy of the 13th government but to a relaxation of sanctions by the US. This notion has been denied by both Iran's Ministry of Oil and Robert Malley, the former US Special Envoy for Iran.

In January 2023, Malley emphasized that the US had not eased any sanctions, especially those related to the sale of Iranian oil.

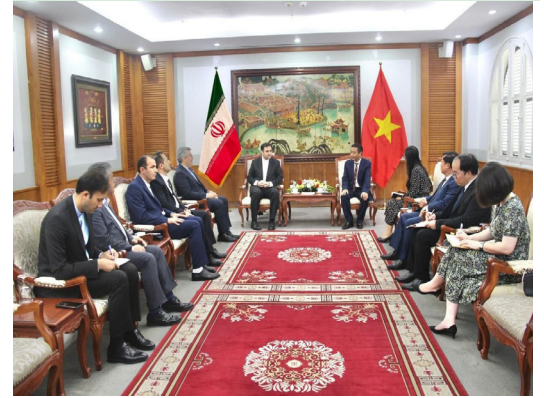
Iran's Oil Minister, Javad Owji, recently reported to the Parliament that despite over 600 new sanctions targeting oil and petrochemical exports, there has been a significant boost in oil exports and revenue collection.

With the activation of energy diplomacy under the 13th government, the increase in oil production and exports, focusing on offshore oil and condensate reserves, began gradually. By the end of 2021, within a few months of the government taking office, Iran's oil exports saw a 40% increase, despite the continued impact of sanctions on the economy.

In 2022, substantial steps were taken to boost exports and expand Iran's oil markets. Iran's initiative in refurbishing overseas refineries and exporting oil to them is a notable achievement that will benefit the country for years to come.

The goal of increasing oil production to 3.8 million barrels per day continued last year, with the resultant rise in exports reflected in the nation's economic statistics. The oil and gas sector recorded the highest growth in economic indicators, productivity, and foreign investment, making black gold the top performer in Iran's economy in 2023.

## Tehran, Hanoi to Expand Cooperation in Tourism Sector



TEHRAN - Ali Asghar Shalbafian, Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, who is visiting Vietnam, met with "Hoang Dao Cuong," Deputy Minister of Culture, Sports, and Tourism of Vietnam, on Monday.

During this meeting, the parties exchanged views and discussed updating the tourism memorandum of understanding between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, increasing meetings between the public and private sectors to better understand the tourism capacities of both countries, and facilitating the entry of Iranian citizens through visa waivers by the Vietnamese side.

A tourism conference (Roadshow) named "Welcome to Iran," with the presence of Shalbafian, the Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts of Iran, Cuong, and representatives of the private and public sectors, is set to be inaugurated today at the Pullman Hotel in Hanoi. The parties will introduce Iran's tourism capacities, and the private sectors of both countries will hold bilateral negotiations aimed at developing the tourism industry.

The introduction of the tourism capacities of the Islamic Republic of Iran, titled "Welcome to Iran," was held today with the presence of Shalbafian, Deputy Minister of Tourism of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Hoang Dao Cuong, Deputy Minister of Culture, Sports, and Tourism of Vietnam, Naderi, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and representatives of the private sectors active in the tourism industry of both countries at the Pullman Hotel in Hanoi.

This dialogue and meeting aim to strengthen bilateral cooperation and create new opportunities for the development of the tourism industry in both countries, considering the special facilities provided by the Iranian government in implementing unilateral visa waiver regulations for Vietnamese tourists.

## Interactions Between Iran and Italy Based on Ancient, Civilized Relations



TEHRAN - The acting head of the presidential institution stated: Iran and Italy's interactions have always been based on ancient and civilizational relations and have always been friendly.

Mohammad Mokhber said on Tuesday during the ceremony of presenting the credentials of the Italian ambassador: Iran and Italy's interactions have always been based on ancient and civilizational relations and have always been friendly, and Italy has taken effective actions to stop the crimes of the Zionist regime.

The acting head of the presidency emphasized the necessity for more active measures by countries around the world to combat the Zionist crimes in the killing of innocent and defenseless women and children in Gaza, stating: The Islamic Republic of Iran expects Italy, as a country with a rich and ancient civilization and culture, to take effective actions to stop the crimes of this regime, despite the support of certain specific countries for the criminal Zionist regime.

In this ceremony, the Italian ambassador also said: In today's perilous world, we are looking for common solutions with various countries, including Iran.

## Maduro Accepts Proposal to Restart Direct U.S. Talks

CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said on Monday that he has accepted a proposal to restart direct talks with the United States. "After thinking about it, I have accepted and next Wednesday the talks will restart with the United States government to comply with the agreements signed in Qatar and to reestablish the terms of the dialogue with respect," Maduro said in a televised broadcast. Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro addresses the media during an event to sign an agreement to recognize the electoral results of the presidential elections of July 28, at the National Electoral Council, in Caracas, Venezuela, June 20, 2024. Miraflores Palace/Handout via REUTERS/File Photo Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tab/late 2023, Washington and Caracas secured a prisoner exchange deal following months of negotiations mediated by Qatar. Venezuelan official negotiator and National Assembly President Jorge Rodriguez will travel for the talks, Maduro said, without detailing the specific topics to be discussed. The talks started some two years ago, but after U.S. oil sanctions were reimposed last April, Maduro's government accused the United States of violating the Qatar accord.



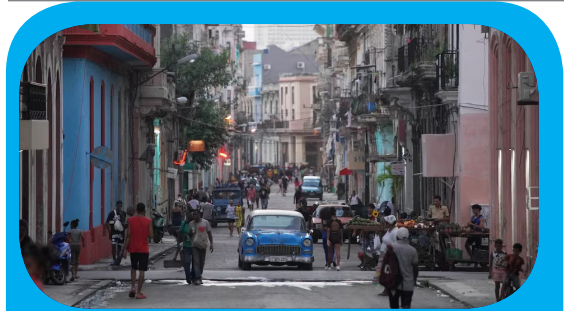
## Panama's New President Vows Migration Crackdown



PANAMA CITY (Dispatches) - Panama's new president, Jose Raul Mulino, took office vowing to curb illegal immigration, with his government quickly signing an agreement with the United States to crack down on migration through the treacherous Darien Gap jungle passage. In his first address as president, Mulino, 65, promised to seek international assistance to find solutions to what he described a costly "humanitarian and environmental crisis." Last year, a record 520,000 migrants risked life and limb, often at the hands of people smugglers, to traverse the Darien Gap, a dense jungle on Panama's border with Colombia. "We cannot continue financing the economic and social costs that massive illegal immigration generates for the country, along with the consequent connection of international criminal organizations," Mulino said. Minutes later, Mulino's new foreign minister signed a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. government to "allow the closing off of the passing of illegal immigrants through the Darien," Panama's government said in a statement. In the agreement, signed by U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, who attended Mulino's inauguration, the United States agreed to "cover" the costs of repatriating migrants who enter Panama illegally. The agreement was "designed to jointly reduce the number of migrants being cruelly smuggled through the Darien, usually en route to the United States," a spokeswoman for the White House National Security Council said in a statement. The United States will "support" efforts to repatriate migrants in Panama illegally but did not give further details.

Mulino was elected in May after taking over the candidacy of his running mate Ricardo Martinelli, a popular former president who was barred from running himself due to a money laundering conviction.

Mulino, who was Martinelli's security minister from 2010-2014 and also served as foreign minister in the 1990s, vowed on Monday to boost job and economic growth while addressing Panama's swollen public debt.



## Cuba Announces New Measures for "War-Time Economy"

HAVANA (Dispatches) - Cuba's government said it would double down on price controls and continue to fight tax evasion in an increasingly desperate bid to tamp down on a ballooning fiscal deficit and spiraling inflation that have devastated its economy. The measures will bring the 2024 budget and goals in line with what the government refers to as a "war-time economy," according to a state-run media summary of a meeting of the Council of Ministers, the country's top executive body. "All of us are here to save the (Cuban) Revolution and save socialism," Diaz-Canel said in the meeting. Cuba's economy has been decimated by a combination of factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic, stiffened U.S. sanctions and a state-dominated business model plagued by bureaucracy, mismanagement and corruption. The social and economic crisis is widely seen as among the worst since Fidel Castro's 1959 revolution, leading to a record-breaking exodus of Cuban migrants in the past two years. The announced measures - many long discussed and implemented in various forms by Cuba's socialist government - aim to bolster foreign exchange, encourage food production and bring order to flailing state-run businesses, said Mildrey Grandillo de la Torre, First Deputy Minister of Economy and Planning. The government said it would announce a "single, inclusive and equal pricing policy ... for all subjects of the economy, which includes both the state and non-state sectors," according to a report from the Communist Party's Granma newspaper.

## Palestinian Islamic Jihad Fire Rockets Into Israel

GAZA (Dispatches) - The Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad fired a barrage of rockets into Israel as fighting raged in Gaza and Israeli tanks advanced deeper in parts of the enclave, residents and officials said.

Islamic Jihad, an ally of Hamas — both of whom are backed by Iran — said its fighters fired rockets towards several Israeli communities near the fence with Gaza in response to "the crimes of the Zionist enemy against our Palestinian people". The volley of about 20 rockets caused no casualties, the Israeli military said. But the attack showed militants still possess rocket capabilities almost nine months into an offensive that Israel says is aimed at neutralizing threats against it. Residents of several neighbourhoods in eastern Khan Younis, which is in southern Gaza, said they had received audio messages from Israeli phone numbers ordering them to leave their homes. "For your safety, you must evacuate immediately to the humanitarian zone," army spokesperson Avichay Adraee posted on social media platform X in a call to residents and displaced people living in those areas. Some suggested this could mean Israeli forces will return to the area, which they left several weeks ago. The Israeli military said in a statement earlier on Monday the rockets were fired from the Khan Younis area.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel was nearing its goal of taking out the military capabilities of Hamas, the Islamist group that governs Gaza and led the October 7 assault on Israel that sparked the war. Less intense operations would continue, he said. "We are advancing to the end of the phase of eliminating the terrorist army of Hamas, and there will be a continuation to strike its remnants," Netanyahu said. Violence also flared on Monday in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where the Palestinian health ministry said a woman and a boy were killed in the city of Tulkarm during an operation by Israeli forces. A day earlier, an Israeli strike in the same area killed an Islamic Jihad member. In some parts of Gaza, militants continue to stage attacks on Israeli forces in areas that the army had left months ago. Israeli tanks deepened incursions into the Shejaia suburb of eastern Gaza City for a fifth day, and tanks advanced further in western and central Rafah, in southern Gaza near the border with Egypt, residents said. The Israeli military said it had killed a number of militants in combat in Shejaia on Monday and found large amounts of weapons there. Hamas said its fighters had lured an Israeli force into a booby-trapped house in the east of Rafah and blown it up, causing

casualties.

The Israeli military announced the death of a soldier in southern Gaza without providing details. Israel's Army Radio said the soldier was killed in Rafah in a booby-trapped house — a possible reference to the incident reported by Islamic Jihad. Also in Rafah, the Israeli military said that an airstrike killed a militant who fired an anti-tank missile at its troops. Israel has signalled that its operation in Rafah, meant to stamp out Hamas, will soon be concluded. After the intense phase of the war is over, its forces will focus on smaller scale operations meant to stop Hamas reassembling, officials say. The war began when Hamas-led fighters burst into southern Israel on October 7, killed 1,200 people and took around 250 hostages, including civilians and soldiers, back into Gaza, according to Israeli tallies. The offensive launched by Israel in retaliation has killed nearly 38,000 people, according to the Gaza health ministry, and has left the heavily built-up coastal enclave in ruins. The Gaza health ministry does not distinguish between combatants and non-combatants, but officials say most of the dead are civilians. Israel says 317 of its soldiers have been killed in Gaza and that at least a third of the Palestinian dead are fighters. Arab mediators' efforts to secure a ceasefire, backed by the United States, have stalled. Hamas says any deal must end the war and bring a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. Israel says it will accept only temporary pauses in the fighting until Hamas is eradicated. Israeli authorities released 54 Palestinians it had detained during the war, Palestinian border officials said. Among them was Mohammad Abu Selmeyah, the director of Al Shifa Hospital, arrested by the military when its forces first stormed the medical facility in November. Israel said Hamas had been using the hospital for military purposes. The military has released the hospital's CCTV footage from October 7 showing gunmen and hostages on the premises and has taken journalists into a tunnel found at the complex.

Hamas has denied using hospitals for military purposes. Abu Selmeyah rejected the allegations on Monday and said detainees had been abused during their detention, including being deprived of food and medicine, and that some had died.

"I was subjected to severe torture, my little finger was broken, and I was beaten in the head until blood came out, more than once," Abu Selmeyah told a press conference at a hospital in southern Gaza.

## Taliban Told to Include Women in Public Life at UN Talks

DOHA (Dispatches) - Taliban authorities were told women must be included in public life, UN Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo said on Monday as she defended a decision to sideline civil society groups at official talks in Doha.

Rights organizations have strongly criticized the controversial UN move to exclude the groups, including women's rights activists, from the two-day meeting on Afghanistan as the price for the Taliban government's participation.

"Authorities will not sit across the table with Afghan civil society in this format, but they have heard very clearly the need to include women and civil society in all aspects of public life", DiCarlo told a Doha news conference.

The UN-hosted meeting began on Sunday and is the third such gathering to be held in Qatar in a little over a year, but the first to include the Taliban authorities who seized power in Afghanistan for a second time in 2021.

The talks were due to discuss increasing engagement with Afghanistan and a more coordinated response to the country, including economic issues and counter-narcotics efforts. The international community has wrestled with its approach to the Taliban since they returned to power, with no country officially recognizing its government.

The group has imposed a strict interpretation of Islam, with women subjected to laws characterised by the UN as "gender apartheid".

The Taliban refused an invitation to Doha talks in February, insisting on being the only Afghan representatives, to the exclusion of civil society groups. But their condition was accepted in the build-up to this latest round.

The United States said it agreed to participate in Monday's talks after receiving assurances that the talks would meaningfully discuss human rights.

US pointman on Afghanistan Thomas West and Rina Amiri, the US special envoy on the rights of Afghan women and girls, in Doha "made clear that the Afghan economy cannot grow while half the population's rights are not respected", State Department spokesman Vedant Patel said.

DiCarlo, who chaired the UN talks in the Qatari capital, said she "hopes" that "there'll be new consideration" of Taliban government policy on women in public life including girls' education.



The UN and international delegations will have the chance to meet with civil society representatives, including women's rights groups, following the close of the main meetings.

But Amnesty International chief Agnes Callamard said in a statement ahead of the talks that "caving in to the Taliban's conditions to secure their participation in the talks would risk legitimising their gender-based institutionalised system of oppression".

The Taliban authorities have repeatedly said the rights of all citizens are guaranteed under Islamic law.

The head of the Taliban delegation, spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, told the more than 20 assembled special envoys and UN officials at the opening session that diplomats should "find ways of interaction and understanding rather than confrontation", despite "natural" differences in policy.

"The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is keen on engaging constructively with Western nations as well," Mujahid said.

"Like any sovereign state, we uphold certain religious and cultural values and public aspirations that must be acknowledged," he added.

Mujahid also pressed to end sanctions, saying Afghans are "being ganged up on".

The Taliban government spokesman questioned whether ongoing sanctions were "fair practice" after "wars and insecurity for almost half a century as a result of foreign invasions and interference".

Russia, which has maintained an embassy in Kabul, hinted it could drop its own sanctions, saying the group were the de facto authorities.

"We've been saying consistently that you have to recognise this fact and deal with them as such because, whether you like it or not, this movement is running the country now. You cannot simply ignore that," said Russia's envoy to the UN, Vasily Nebenzya.

DiCarlo said the issue of sanctions was "raised" but not discussed in depth.

"It's a member-state issue whether they're going to continue certain sanctions or not. The sanctions are on people, not on the country at large," she said.

## Biden Warns Supreme Court Ruling on Immunity is Dangerous Precedent



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Joe Biden criticized the Supreme Court ruling on presidential immunity that was seen as a win for his election rival, former President Donald Trump, calling it a dangerous precedent that did a disservice to the American people.

In calm, measured remarks from the White House, Biden said the decision meant Trump was highly unlikely to go on trial before the November 5 election for his role in seeking to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

The U.S. Supreme Court found on Monday that Trump cannot be prosecuted for any actions that were within his constitutional powers as president, but can be for private acts, in a landmark ruling recognizing for the first time any form of presidential immunity from prosecution.

"This nation was founded on the principle that there are no kings in America. Each, each of us is equal before the law. No one, no one is above the law. Not even the president of the United States," Biden said.

With the decision on Monday, he said, "that fundamentally changed."

Biden is running for re-election against Trump and has been sharply critical of

his rival's actions related to the January 6, 2021, raid on the US Capitol by Trump's supporters, who believed Trump's false claims that he had won the 2020 election.

"Now the man who sent that mob to the US Capitol is facing potential criminal conviction for what happened that day. The American people deserve to have an answer in the courts before the upcoming election," Biden said, referring to Trump being on trial for his role in spurring the riot.

Biden said the public has a right to know what the results of that prosecution before the election in November. "Now, because of today's decision, that is highly, highly unlikely. It's a terrible disservice to the people in this nation."

Biden, 81, was making his first set of remarks at the White House since his shaky debate against Trump last week led to calls for him to step aside as the Democratic Party's standard-bearer for the election.

After he stumbled over his words on the Atlanta debate stage, his remarks and comportment are being scrutinized for signs that he is up to the job of running for re-election and of governing the country for four more years.



## Costa Heroics Earn Portugal Quarters Berth

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Portugal goalkeeper Diogo Costa saved three Slovenia penalties to earn his side a 3-0 shoot-out victory after Cristiano Ronaldo redeemed himself from the spot in a dramatic Euro 2024 last 16 clash on Monday. Portugal forward Ronaldo broke down in tears after missing a penalty in the first period of extra-time in the goalless tie in Frankfurt. But he recovered to convert in the shoot-out as Portugal scraped through to set up a blockbuster clash with France in the quarter-finals. Slovenia battled valiantly to keep Portugal at bay, with Jan Oblak making a stunning save to keep out Ronaldo's penalty after Diogo Jota was fouled. However, Ronaldo, Bruno Fernandes and Bernardo Silva all scored in the shoot-out and Slovenia's trio missed, sending the Selecao through in heart-stopping fashion. Portugal coach Roberto Martinez reverted to a more familiar 4-3-3 system after his side were embarrassed by debutants Georgia in their last group game when he deployed three at the back. The Euro 2016 winners dominated the ball and created their first chance after 12 minutes when Silva's inviting cross just evaded Ronaldo and Fernandes could not turn home at the far post. Slovenia, playing in their first ever knock-out match at a major competition, maintained their defensive shape well and limited Portugal's opportunities. Former Real Madrid striker Ronaldo directed a soft header at his old nemesis, Atletico Madrid keeper Oblak, under vital pressure from Vanja Drkusic. The Slovenian defender was booked moments later for bringing down the surging Rafael Leao as he charged towards

Oblak's goal. Ronaldo smashed the free-kick narrowly over the bar with the goalkeeper at full stretch. Slovenia produced their first effort on target just before half-time when RB Leipzig striker Benjamin Sesko fired at Costa from the edge of the box. Portugal's holding midfielder Joao Palhinha hit the outside of the post with a low drive, the final kick of the first half, after more good work by the menacing Leao. Ronaldo forced a solid stop by Oblak with another venomous free-kick early in the second half as the Al-Nassr forward tried in vain to break down Slovenia's defensive wall, which comfortably held England to a goalless draw in the group stage. Matjaz Kek's side had a golden chance to take the lead on a rare burst forward, but Sesko dragged wide after beating the oldest player in the competition's history, 41-year-old Pepe, for pace. Still determined to score, Portugal captain Ronaldo thumped yet another free-kick over the crossbar with 20 minutes remaining. The pace dipped in extra-time and the first period was uneventful, until the 103rd minute when Jota barged into the area and went down over Drkusic's leg for a penalty. Ronaldo fired it hard to Oblak's left but the goalkeeper produced a stunning save to deny him, tipping his effort against the post and out. In half-time of extra-time, Ronaldo was in tears after his miss, and Portugal fans sang his name to try to raise his shattered morale. Slovenia missed another huge opening of their own when Pepe gave the ball away with a loose pass and Sesko stole it to race through on goal.

## George Joining 76ers, Thompson Heading to Mavs



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Paul George is joining the Philadelphia 76ers and Klay Thompson is heading to the Dallas Mavericks, multiple US reports said Monday as NBA free-agency got into full swing. Nine-time All-Star George is joining the Sixers on a four-year deal worth \$212 million while Thompson, whose exit from the Golden State Warriors was confirmed on Sunday, has agreed terms on a three-year \$50 million contract with Dallas, ESPN reported. The two deals bolster the Sixers' and Mavs' championship aspirations, with George set to form a big three alongside Joel Embiid and Tyrese Maxey, and Thompson linking up with Luka Doncic and Kyrie Irving in Dallas.

Thompson is widely regarded as one of the greatest shooters in basketball history, forming a potent back-court partnership alongside Stephen Curry and featuring prominently in the Warriors' NBA championship-winning seasons in 2015, 2017, 2018 and 2022. George, 34, has averaged 20.8 points, 6.3 rebounds, 3.7 assists and 1.7 steals a game over 867 career contests in 14 seasons for Indiana, Oklahoma City and the Los Angeles Clippers, who he left behind last weekend after five seasons. NBA clubs have a signing moratorium on finalizing all contracts until Saturday, so it's left to media reports to chart the moves that cannot yet become official. George's coming to terms was reported by the Philadelphia Inquirer, The Athletic and ESPN through unnamed sources. The 76ers have not advanced beyond the Eastern Conference semi-finals since 2001 but might have their best chance with George joining All-Star guard Tyrese Maxey and Cameroonian star center Embiid, the 2023 NBA Most Valuable Player.

## Alcaraz Starts Wimbledon Defense With Victory

LONDON (Dispatches) - For the last 50 weeks, Carlos Alcaraz knew the exact date and time he would walk back on Centre Court to open the defense of his Wimbledon title and the Spaniard kept his goosebumps in check to book his place in the second round.

While injury woes have plagued many of the players who have also hoisted the Challenge Cup in recent years -- with question marks over the participation of Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray -- Alcaraz showed he was fighting fit despite a less than ideal build-up to the grasscourt major.

The third seed, who admitted he even gets nervous practising on the spiritual home of grasscourt tennis, beat fellow 21-year-old, Estonian qualifier Mark Lajal, 7-6(3) 7-5 6-2 on an overcast day in southwest London.

"Stepping on this court, it's the most beautiful court I've played on. I still get nerves when I'm playing here," Alcaraz, whose Queen's Club title defence ended with an early exit last month, said courtside.

"I played for 45 minutes here on Thursday and it's the first time I get nervous



practising. I'm glad and I'm a privileged guy to play on this court.

"When I walk around, I get goosebumps. I remember last year and that was a great feeling."

World number one and top seed Jannik Sinner suffered a mid-match injury scare after a slip and was briefly troubled by Germany's Yannick Hanfmann before winning 6-3 6-4 3-6 6-3 to set up a mouth-watering all-Italian clash against 2021 runner-up Matteo Berrettini.

"That's going to be a big challenge for me," Sinner said.

The opening day of the grasscourt Grand Slam saw several seeds pull out with injuries or illness -- the highest-profile being women's third seed Aryna Sabalenka who could not take to court because of a shoulder injury.

Fellow Belarusian and twice Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka also pulled out with a shoulder problem ahead of her match with 2017 U.S. Open winner Sloane Stephens.

## Norris Will Lose Respect for Verstappen Without Apology



LONDON (Dispatches) - McLaren's Lando Norris said he would lose respect for Max Verstappen if the Red Bull driver did not apologise for a collision that wrecked their Austrian Grand Prix. The pair are friends off-track but fierce rivals on Formula One race weekends and that boiled over at Spielberg's Red Bull Ring as they fought for the lead. Stewards ruled triple world champion Verstappen was predominantly at fault for causing the collision and handed him a 10 second penalty, which had no impact on his result, as well as two penalty points. Verstappen, who dropped from first to fifth but now leads Norris by 81 points after 11 races, declared the penalty ridiculous and was backed up by Red Bull team boss Christian Horner. "He (Norris) didn't behave correctly there Max. Desperately unlucky, especially here, but you did your very best," he said over the team radio. A disappointed Norris, who retired with a puncture and car damage, said it was a tough one to take and accused Verstappen of being reckless and desperate in his driving. "It depends what he says. If he says he did nothing wrong, then I lose a lot of respect for that," he told Sky Sports television when asked if their relationship would change. McLaren boss Andrea Stella suggested Verstappen's behaviour, and moving while braking, was the result of the sport's rules being inadequately enforced years ago. "The problem behind it is that if you don't address these things honestly, they will come back," the Italian said. "They have come back today because they were not addressed properly in the past when there was some fights with Lewis (Hamilton in 2021) that needed to be punished in a harsher way."

"We have so much respect for Red Bull, so much respect for Max, they don't need to do this. It's a way to almost compromise your reputation. Why would you do that?," added Stella.

"The regulations must be enforced in a way that is effective, because when a car is out of the race as a consequence of this accident the punishment needs to be proportionate to the outcome."

## France Scramble Into Euros Last Eight

DUSSELDORF (Dispatches) - France have battled their way to the Euro 2024 quarter-finals despite a misfiring attack that once again failed to click in Monday's tense 1-0 win against Belgium.

It took an own goal, the tournament's ninth, with just five minutes remaining in Dusseldorf to give France a nerve-jangling victory that raised fresh questions about the form of their key forwards.

While France celebrated Jan Vertonghen's own goal with gusto, boss Didier Deschamps acknowledged it could have been a far more comfortable passage to the last eight if they taken a host of earlier chances.

No France player has scored in open play in four matches in Germany as the likes of Kylian Mbappe and Antoine Griezmann struggle to reproduce the thrilling performances which carried Les Bleus to the 2022 World Cup final.

Deschamps's side have been worryingly inaccurate in front of goal and they needed two fine saves from Mike Maignan to keep them on level terms before Vertonghen diverted Randal Kolo Muani's shot into his own net.

France had the better of possession, played and completed more passes and had 20 shots to Belgium's five but only worked Red Devils goalkeeper Koen Casteels once before Vertonghen's own goal.

Casteels did well to push away Aurelien Tchouameni's deflected effort from distance three minutes after the half-time but France spurned a host of other presentable opportunities.



Tchouameni smashed over a great chance after a mesmerising raid from Mbappe just before the break and Marcus Thuram should have hit the target when he headed wide from Jules Kounde's pinpoint cross.

"We wasted a few chances out there, maybe six or seven, let's hope it doesn't become a psychological problem with the team, but we'll work on it," Deschamps told reporters.

Mbappe won the Golden Boot at the last World Cup in Qatar, but the Real Madrid star has only a penalty -- scored against an already eliminated Poland team -- to his name at this year's Euros.

That goal is the only one to be scored by a France player at the tournament as both of their wins have been secured by own goals.

Mbappe's overall play was lively on Monday but his finishing was unusually erratic.

The way he snatched at an excellent opportunity in the 56th minute led Deschamps to suggest that the mask he is forced to wear after breaking his nose is affecting his vision.

"He's getting more and more used to it. It's sweaty and that sweat can get into his eyes. I've not tried on the mask so I don't know, but yes it could have an impact on his vision," said Deschamps.

"Everything that is in front of him is ok, but maybe the peripheral vision is a little bit off."

Also lacking threat was Griezmann, who looked isolated on the right wing of a four-man midfield, a position he rarely plays for France and from where he failed to deliver his usual deftness and creativity.

Both Deschamps and right-back Jules Kounde praised Griezmann for his defensive work, but he posed little danger beyond one early scuffed effort from distance.

"It was just a question of balance, as I said before the game, there was always the possibility we might have one or two players not in their best position," said Deschamps.

"It is a position he plays in regularly for his club too. He was very good on the ball even if he can be more clinical.

"He is intelligent, and when there are big matches I know I can count on him."

France will play Portugal in the last eight in Hamburg on Friday.