

Iran Has Joined and Begun Cooperating With FAO's Global Soil Doctors Programme, According to Safdar Niazi, a Senior Official With the Country's Ministry of Agricultural Jihad

IRAN NEWS

Iran's Industry Minister Abbas Aliabadi Says Car Output in the Country Will Reach 1.7 Million Units in the Current Calendar Year Which Ends on March 20, 2025, Noting 1.335 Million Cars Produced Last Year

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DOMESTIC

ICCIMA Warns Over Losing Iraq Market

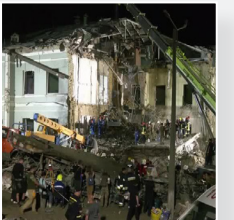
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INTERNATIONAL

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IRGC Chief Says Islamic Republic Cripples U.S. Power



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says Iran has over the past decades eroded the power of the US and turned it into a "small and weak" state.

Speaking in the northeastern holy city of Mashhad on Monday, Major General Hossein Salami said that the United States' situation today is not comparable with its condition two or three decades ago.

He also referred to the takeover of the U.S. embassy, better known as Den of Espionage, by a group of Iranian students in November 1979, saying it was beyond imagination.

"We eroded the U.S.'s power. The United States has become small and weak, and it has gradually lost its power because of the erosion caused by [Iran's] Islamic Revolution," he said.

Salami also noted that enemies have failed to isolate Iran through imposing economic sanctions on the country and stealing its oil tankers as Iran has taken retaliatory measures.

"They seized our ships in Gibraltar; We confiscated their ships here and made them regret what they had done," he said. "The embargo [imposed on us] was broken with [our] power. If you are strong, you will overcome isolation," he asserted.

The Islamic Republic, he added, proved that "the world is much bigger than the US and that the US is much smaller than the world."

Touching on claims about voter apathy in Iran's recent presidential election, the IRGC chief said that the nation disrupted the enemies' calculations by increasing its participation from 40 percent in the first round to 50 percent in the second round.

"The Iranian nation is very skillful and experienced in defeating the enemy and proving that its calculations are wrong," he pointed out.

President-Elect Holds Phone Talks With Erdogan, Putin



TEHRAN - Iranian President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian has received separate phone calls from the presidents of Turkey and Russia.

In his phone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Iranian president-elect highlighted the significance of ties with Russia and pledged to further expand mutual relations.

Pezeshkian said the new administration will pursue and implement the agreements signed with Russia under the late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi. He added that it is important for Tehran and Moscow to strengthen cooperation in regional and international organizations and treaties, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the BRICS group of emerging economies and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Pezeshkian noted that documents related to Iran-Russia comprehensive cooperation agreement have been finalized and are ready to be signed soon. The Russian president, for his part, congratulated Pezeshkian on being elected Iranian president and wished him every success in his work, the Kremlin press service said after the phone call. Both sides agreed to establish "personal contact" this year. They hailed high-level mutual relations based on good neighborliness and reiterated their readiness to strengthen cooperation in different sectors. Pezeshkian emerged victorious in the second round of the presidential vote on July 5. He garnered more than 16 million votes against ex-nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili, who secured upwards of 13 million out of over 30 million votes cast, with the voter turnout standing at almost 50 percent. In the phone conversation on Monday, Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Turkey and Iran have maintained deep-rooted relations. He added that the two countries will further promote ties in various fields during Pezeshkian's tenure. The Turkish leader congratulated Pezeshkian over his election as the new president of Iran and wished him success. Erdogan and Pezeshkian discussed mutual relations and regional and international developments.

Start of Gasoline Production at Venezuela's El Palito Refinery



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Jalil Salari stated at the conference on the transfer of technology and local production of refining, petrochemical, and gas catalysts: "In the 1990s, we needed catalysts but faced difficulties accessing them due to sanctions. Although we experienced years of change and development, nothing significant happened in this area."

He added, "We also engaged with Indian companies to ensure we did not face fuel supply issues."

The CEO of the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company noted that the sanctions helped enable the production of catalysts for refineries. He said, "In 2012, we faced issues using Chinese catalysts in the olefins sector, but now we produce them ourselves and have resolved the challenge of relying on foreign suppliers."

Salari mentioned that units that produced naphtha are now producing gasoline and emphasized that they have reached a point where they can export catalysts.

He stated, "Currently, Iranian catalysts are being used in Venezuela's El Palito refinery, and we have started gasoline production at this refinery."

He noted, "We have managed to neutralize the impact of sanctions. Today, our plan is to increase production, improve quality, and extend the lifespan of refineries."

The Deputy Oil Minister said that the consumption of catalysts in the country's refineries is about 25 to 26 thousand tons, adding, "We need catalysts to improve the quality of products, and now these conditions are in place."

He emphasized that they will provide the necessary support for the domestic production of this product. Salari stated, "The necessary infrastructure for producing Iranian catalysts is in place; only the raw materials and equipment need to be established. We will provide

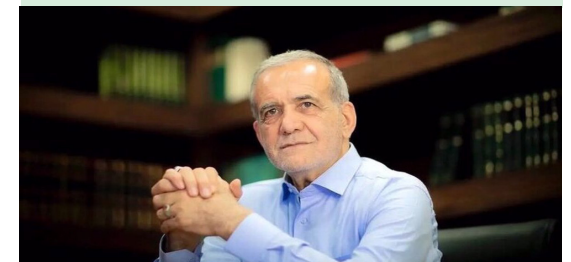
the necessary support and environment for making the production of this product competitive." Meanwhile on Tuesday, A bilateral memorandum of understanding on the localization of catalysts needed for the oil industries was signed between the Iranian knowledge-based company "Pishro Catalyst Almas" and the Russian company "Antaraks" with the aim of technology transfer and localization of catalysts needed in the oil industry.

The bilateral memorandum of understanding for scientific-technological cooperation and the local production of catalysts for refining, petrochemical, and gas industries was signed on the sidelines of the "Technology Transfer and Localization of Refining, Petrochemical, and Gas Catalysts" conference. This agreement, between the Iranian company "Pishro Catalyst Almas" and the Russian company "Antaraks," aims to localize and domesticate catalysts in the isomerization, reforming, hydrotreating, and super-class groups.

The purpose of signing this memorandum is to transfer technical knowledge in four groups of catalysts required by the oil industry, which will be localized with the participation of the Russian company and the Iranian knowledge-based company Pishro Catalyst Almas. Currently, about 92 types of catalysts needed by the oil industries have been domestically produced, and only five types remain. With the implementation and completion of this memorandum, four of these types will be domestically produced.

The "Technology Transfer and Localization of Catalysts for Refining, Petrochemical, and Gas Industries" conference was held this morning, organized by the Research and Technology Unit of the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company, with the aim of technology transfer, localization, and production of catalysts needed by the oil industries.

Support for Resistance Front Rooted in Iran's Core Policies



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian says his incoming administration will spare no effort to offer wholehearted support to resistance forces in West Asia, stressing that support for the Axis of Resistance is rooted in the Islamic Republic's core policies.

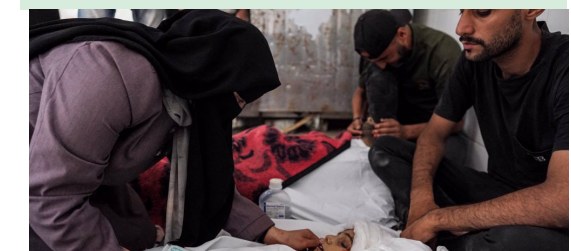
In a message addressed to Secretary-General of Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, Pezeshkian extended his gratitude for the valuable and kind message of the 63-year-old Lebanese cleric following his victory in Iran's runoff presidential vote on July 5.

The Iranian president-elect further noted that Tehran has always supported the resistance and steadfastness of regional peoples against the illegitimate Zionist entity.

Pezeshkian underlined that his country will continue supporting the Axis of Resistance as it is rooted in the fundamental policies of Iran, the ideals of the late founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini and the guidelines of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

He also expressed confidence that the resistance movements in the region will not allow the Israeli regime to continue its warmongering and criminal policies against oppressed Palestinians and other nations in the region. Meanwhile, the head of the political bureau of the Palestinian Hamas resistance movement, Ismail Haniyeh, has congratulated Pezeshkian on winning Iran's presidential race and the smooth running of the vote. Pezeshkian received more than 16 million votes against former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili with more than 13 million out of over 30 million votes cast, electoral authorities said. The runoff on Friday followed a June 28 ballot in a snap election to find a successor to President Ebrahim Raisi, who lost his life with his Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and others in the helicopter crash of May 19 in northwest Iran. Pezeshkian originally ran against a field of five candidates last week, winning the largest number of votes but falling short of a majority which sent him and Jalili to a second round.

186,000 Palestinians May Have Been Killed in Israeli War on Gaza



GAZA (Dispatches) - A leading general medical journal has estimated that the death toll from Israel's genocidal war on the Gaza Strip could be 186,000 or even more, translating to 7.9 percent of the population in the Palestinian territory.

In a report published on Friday, The Lancet said the figure includes both direct and indirect deaths from the Israeli onslaught and those still buried under the rubble in the besieged Gaza.

The journal added that it had applied a conservative estimate of four indirect deaths per one direct death reported by the Gaza Health Ministry. "It is not implausible to estimate that up to 186,000 or even more deaths could be attributable to the current conflict in Gaza," it said.

Israel unleashed its brutal Gaza offensive on October 7 after the Palestinian Hamas resistance group carried out its historic operation against the occupying entity in retaliation for the regime's intensified atrocities against the Palestinian people. According to the Gaza Health Ministry, the Tel Aviv regime has so far killed at least 38,514 Palestinians, mostly women and children, in Gaza. The figure provided by the ministry is "likely an underestimate," The Lancet said. "The total death toll is expected to be large given the intensity of this conflict; destroyed health-care infrastructure; severe shortages of food, water, and shelter; the population's inability to flee to safe places; and the loss of funding to UNRWA, one of the very few humanitarian organizations still active in the Gaza Strip." It also called for an immediate and urgent ceasefire in Gaza accompanied by measures to enable the distribution of medical supplies, food, clean water, and other resources for basic human needs.

SCO Members Can Use Their Capacities for Green Development

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of Iran's Department of Environment Ali Salajegheh has said the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) members using their capacities can make a difference for green development in the region, as well as become a perfect model for environmental cooperation at the global level.

Salajegheh made the remarks while addressing the SCO Green Development Forum commenced officially in Qingdao, China, where regional leaders are addressing global climate change challenges and promoting sustainable development. While expressing gratitude to SCO leaders and members for sending condolence messages and holding memorial services following the tragic loss of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in a copter crash in May this year, Salajegheh also hailed the Chinese government for hosting the two-day event that began on Monday aimed at protecting the environment and promoting green development. The SCO meeting provides an opportunity to come up with effective and appropriate measures to solve common and regional challenges related to the environment and green development, he said. Salajegheh also pointed to common responsibility of members in condemning the genocide and the brutal killing of about 40, 000 innocent people in Gaza, the need for all-round support for the Palestinian people and condemning the crimes of the Zionist occupation regime as well as measures to stop these crimes along with efforts to compensate for the damage caused to the environment of Gaza. Population growth and the industrialization and related issues such as migration and various infectious diseases, water scarcity, increase in greenhouse gases, global warming, melting of polar ice have more or less disrupted the balance of ecosystems and their risks on biodiversity, food



security and human health and the environment, are among the current pressing issues in the world that must be addressed with thorough policy making by prioritizing goals and adopting strategies, the Iranian official said. The head of Iran's Department of Environment also said that although it is difficult to establish a balance

between environmental measures and other development goals, including poverty alleviation and economic growth, but any compromise between development measures and goals and neglecting one for the benefit or detriment of the other should be avoided. "Developing countries should make sure of their social and economic development as the main priority, because the fight against poverty and the development of health and the provision of housing and energy is still for a significant part of the developing world, considered a basic priority". As an independent and responsible country, the Islamic Republic of Iran has always emphasized the importance of protecting the environment and has placed this importance task at the forefront of its policies, strategies, and development plans, he emphasized but underlined that the unjust and illegitimate unilateral sanctions against Iran has resulted in numerous effects in terms of environmental destruction and a decrease in the level of balanced development. Of course, the youth of my country, in the form of knowledge-based companies, have not sat idle in the face of these cruel unilateral sanctions, and by focusing on research and development and innovation, and relying on their knowledge, they have tried to solve part of environmental problems. Here, I would like to express the readiness of Iran to share these achievements and experiences and cooperate seriously with other SCO member countries with the aim to improve the environmental status of the region.

IRAN NEWS



Majlis Working on Approval of FTA With EAEU

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has been sent to the Iranian Parliament for approval.

It was sent to the Parliament for fulfilling the legal formalities, according to the Mehr news agency.

Under the terms of the agreement, Iran and the five-member bloc will lift tariffs on 87% of the items being exchanged between them.

The rest 13% includes items that each of the six parties consider as sensitive items whose free imports may damage their domestic industry or agriculture. A long-awaited free trade agreement was signed between Iran and the EAEU on December 25, 2023.

The FTA has yet to be ratified by the parliaments of all the six parties to the agreement before it can take effect.

100 Aircraft, Helicopters Joining Air Fleet



TEHRAN - Mohammad Mohammadi-Baksh in a press conference said that the aviation sector is of utmost importance because it is at the forefront of technology, is people-oriented, and is subject to sanctions. He said: "One of the components of a country's development is the advancement of transportation. So far, Western countries have imposed every sanction they could against Iran's aviation industry, many of which contradict safety principles, and have executed oppressive sanctions against Iran's aviation sector during this period."

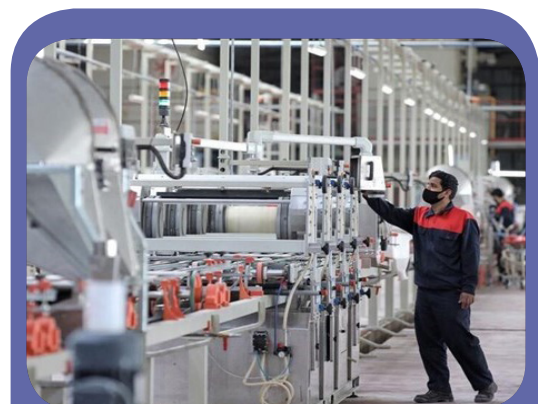
He continued: "In the aviation sector, we have seriously pursued two issues: safety and security, and we must always respond to ICAO regarding these matters, acting very strictly in these areas."

The head of the Civil Aviation Organization, referring to the introduction of new fleets in the past 33 months, said: "During this period, 100 aircraft and helicopters have entered the country, of which 55 have been operationalized."

The Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development added: "Currently, 270 ultra-light aircraft and helicopters are operating in the country's air fleet."

Mohammadi-Baksh stated that today, the air fleets of 28 foreign countries fly to Iran, and our country's aircraft operate flights to 5 continents. Today, not only are no Iranian helicopters sent abroad for repair, but we also welcome helicopters from other countries for repair. We repair and manufacture over 2,000 types of parts in Iran, producing more than 300,000 pieces. This is despite the fact that during the sanctions, even aviation publications were not provided to Iran."

He emphasized that the impacts of the Ukrainian airplane incident were among the threats to Iran's aviation industry. International organizations pointed out that the military and civilian aviation sectors were not coordinated. Therefore, ICAO representatives were invited to reassess the negative perceptions against Iran, which subsequently led to an increase in flight permits.



Iran's Monthly PMI Dips Sharply

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran's new PMI data for the fiscal month of Khordad (May 21 - June 20, 2024), released by the country's Chamber of Commerce, has declined to a 44-month low.

The new PMI was reported at 45.1, indicating a major decrease in economic activities compared to data from last month.

The seasonally adjusted PMI was also reported at 44.9 which posted a 44-month low.

Many indicators contributed to the significant fall of the PMI this month, including power outages, problems in the supply of raw materials and uncertainty about the results of the country's presidential elections.

The Statistics and Economic Analysis Center of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, the sponsor and coordinator of the survey, announces the whole economy PMI data in a report every month.

The headline PMI is a number from 0 to 100, such that over 50 shows an expansion of the economy when compared with the previous month. A PMI reading under 50 indicates contraction and a reading of 50 implies no change. PMI is an index of the prevailing direction of economic trends, aiming to provide information about business conditions to company directors, analysts and purchasing managers. The "business activities" sub-index was reported at 40.7 after seasonal adjustment, marking the lowest in the 57-month survey. The "new orders" sub-index declined sharply to 42.1 after seasonal adjustment and registered its lowest in 35 months. The reading of the "raw material inventory" sub-index was also seasonally adjusted to settle at 45.6, its lowest in 16 months.

The seasonally adjusted reading of the "exports of goods and services" sub-index also declined for a second month in a row to post its lowest in 37 months.



ICCIMA Warns Over Losing Iraq Market

TEHRAN - The president of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) stated that in the current critical period of Iran's economy, joint chambers play a significant role in the development of exports and trade relations with foreign countries.

Samad Hasanzadeh, in the Joint Chambers' Presidents Council, continued: Joint chambers, with their good relationships, have been able to resolve some of the traders' issues, including problems with issuing business visas, thus facilitating foreign trade. He mentioned that studies are underway to standardize the joint chambers' programs and enhance their performance, adding that the Iran Chamber's board is examining the main demands of the joint chambers. These include the membership of some of their representatives in the Iran Chamber's board of representatives, transferring responsibilities related to the dispatch and reception of delegations and participation in foreign exhibitions to the joint chambers, revising the criteria for ranking joint chambers, and providing financial assistance to the joint chambers based on the new ranking. Hasanzadeh emphasized that these proposals are agreed upon in the Iran Chamber, and we want to support the joint chambers. He expressed a serious commitment to further developing the joint chambers, especially with the new president's interest in private sector cooperation, creating a good opportunity for collaboration between the chamber and joint chambers with the government. He noted that holding seasonal meetings of the Joint Chambers' Presidents Council is on the agenda to address the issues in the country's trade. These quarterly meetings can ensure good coordination. The president of the Iran Chamber highlighted that a third of our exports are to Iraq and stressed: Unfortunately, due to the existing problems in Iran-Iraq trade, we will soon lose this market. He continued: Due to the lack of a banking system, our export products are about 20 to 25 percent more expensive, and money transfer issues have caused us to lag behind our competitors. If this situation continues for a few more months, we will no longer be able to maintain our presence in the Iraqi market. The joint chambers need to intervene and create conditions for us to participate in their markets collaboratively. Hamed Asgari, Deputy of International Affairs at the Iran Chamber, referred to the meetings of the

International Affairs Directorate's committee with the joint chambers' presidents, stating: Our focus and efforts are on minimizing the gap between the joint chambers and the Iran Chamber. He emphasized that fortunately, this year, with the cooperation of the board, the joint chambers' budget has quadrupled compared to last year, which is good news for these chambers. The continuation of this meeting was devoted to the views of the joint chambers' presidents. Shahin Asghari, president of the Iran-Germany Joint Chamber, said: One of our main demands is the presence of joint chambers' presidents on the Iran Chamber's board. We want to be alongside the Iran Chamber on various issues. Hamidreza Monaghebi, president of the Iran-Australia Joint Chamber, stressed the need for a review of the Iran Chamber's role and the use of new communication methods and technologies, including artificial intelligence, in trade relations.

Majidreza Hariri, president of the Iran-China Joint Chamber, emphasized the necessity of defining the role of international relations within the Iran Chamber and pursuing membership in influential international organizations. He suggested that the Iran Chamber should define its bilateral, multilateral, and international trade programs and delegate their pursuit and execution to the joint chambers.

Amir Abedi, president of the Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Chamber, believed that a roadmap and strategy for the cooperation between the Iran Chamber and joint chambers should be developed as soon as possible. He emphasized the need to revive consulting and marketing offices in the joint chambers.

Ahmad Pourfalah, president of the Iran-Italy Joint Chamber, emphasized that direct communication between the chambers across the country and embassies and target countries without coordination with related joint chambers should be prevented. He called for dedicated offices for joint chambers within the Iran Chamber and greater coordination of the International Affairs Directorate with the joint chambers' board in drafting and revising regulations and performance evaluation criteria.

Jahanbakhsh Sanjabi, secretary of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber, believed that there are many overlaps in the tasks of joint chambers from associations and chambers across the country, which need to be reviewed and planned.

Growth in Oil Exports Attributed to Increased Relations With China

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



TEHRAN - Mohsen Qamsari in an interview evaluated statements regarding the increase in Iran's oil export destinations, including European countries and Turkey. He stated that while specific data on oil exports is not available, the claim that Iran currently exports oil to 17 countries should be substantiated with evidence. Regardless, it is not possible to confirm or deny the reported export figures and destinations at this time.

Qamsari added that it is undeniable that the country's export conditions have improved compared to the early days of the Raisi administration, with oil exports increasing from about 500,000 barrels to over one million barrels per day. Overall, the export situation is better than at the beginning of the current administration. However, exporting to countries other than China requires multiple infrastructures, which are currently lacking.

The former director of international affairs at the National Iranian Oil Company said that necessary conditions must be provided to change and improve oil export customers and destinations. Financial conditions must primarily be met. If a shipment is sold somewhere, the country's banking systems need to facilitate financial transfers, which is not currently possible.

He noted that conducting global oil transactions requires insurance contracts, risk coverage, banking channels, and transportation as essential logistics and support tools, which are not yet available.

Qamsari emphasized that foreign diplomacy and diplomatic relations can aid the process of oil exports. If the necessary

infrastructure is established, it would be possible to export to countries other than China, including European countries.

He attributed the increase in oil exports to the enhanced cooperation between Iran and China. During this period, Iran has managed to sign agreements with China, boosting bilateral trade. These agreements require financial resources, and the Chinese, to operationalize these agreements, need money. Hence, they have facilitated conditions for Iran to export more oil to China. Diplomatic efforts to strengthen ties with China have significantly contributed to this increase.

Regarding the oil export situation under the fourteenth government, Qamsari stated that it is challenging to predict the future. Export conditions largely depend on the actions of the United States and the new government's interactions with the world.

He expressed hope that the fourteenth government would succeed in increasing oil exports, emphasizing that resolving diplomatic issues is a key infrastructure for boosting oil exports, and called for collective efforts to achieve this.

Oil Minister Javad Owji recently emphasized that Iran has sold crude oil wherever it has desired, announcing that oil exports are currently conducted to 17 countries. Foreign media recently reported that Iranian crude oil has also been exported to Europe, confirming the news. Owji reiterated that with the current trajectory, no future U.S. administration could halt Iran's oil exports.

200 Investment Opportunities in Airports Ready for Contract Signing



TEHRAN (IRNA) - The CEO of Iran Airports and Air Navigation Company stated that 200 investment opportunities in the airport sector, worth 400 trillion rials, are ready to be contracted with investors. Reza Nakhjavani announced today (Tuesday) in a press conference discussing the performance of the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development and the 13th government that the investment atlas for the country's airports has been prepared. He added that this atlas includes 200 investment opportunities worth 400 trillion rials, which are ready for contract signing.

Referring to the plans for developing Mehrabad Airport as the hub for domestic flights, he said that the seventh development plan proposed the maximum transfer of flights from this airport to Imam Khomeini Airport. However, this proposal was overwhelmingly rejected by 95% of the Parliament representatives. He noted that the feasibility studies for developing this airport, covering an area of 120,000 square meters, have been completed, with a budget estimate of 300 trillion rials. This budget will be funded from the internal resources of the Airports Company and does not require government funds. Nakhjavani emphasized that the main obstacle to the airport's development was its location on land associated with the military. However, with the assistance and support of the commander-in-chief of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army, this issue will be resolved. The CEO of Iran Airports and Air Navigation Company further stated that the country's airports are currently in good condition, and even if the number of domestic flights increases, they are capable of providing services. He also noted that all decision-makers oppose transferring Mehrabad flights to Imam Airport, as it is fundamentally not worthwhile for people to travel over an hour to Imam Airport for flights under 40 minutes. He said 56 airports in the country are active under the Airports Company. He noted that 3 airports have certifications and soon 7 more will receive the relevant certifications. He continued: "In the past 33 months, we have completed and inaugurated two airports, Saqqez and Benabad, which had been stalled and left incomplete for 27 and 30 years, respectively. Additionally, Saravan and Greater Tunb airports are currently operational." The CEO of the Airports and Air Navigation Company said the number of overflights is approximately 950 flights per day.

23% Growth in Passenger Traffic



TEHRAN (IRNA) - The CEO of Imam Khomeini Airport City, referring to the commencement of phase 2 of Imam Khomeini Airport, stated that phase 2 is being implemented in two stages, with the first stage, known as "early actions," having achieved 40% physical progress.

Saeed Chalandari, in a press conference today (Tuesday) presenting the performance of the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development in the thirteenth government, said: The early actions phase includes southern runways, connecting bridges, etc., which are being carried out with the cooperation of a consortium of a Chinese company and the Khatam al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters, and has so far achieved 40% physical progress.

He stated that phase 1 of this airport was no longer sufficient to meet the needs, and said: The implementation of phase 2 has been a 20-year aspiration for the people of Iran, as Imam Khomeini Airport is the most important and largest airport in the country, spanning 14,000 hectares.

Chalandari further referred to the increase in passenger traffic at Imam Khomeini Airport and stated: In 2021, the number of passengers was 4 million, in 2022 it was 6.6 million, in 2023 it was 7.6 million, and from the beginning of this year until July 7th, 2.5 million passengers have been transported through this airport, showing a 203% increase compared to 2021.

He added: The number of flights from this airport was 31,400 flights in 2021, which increased to 45,000 flights in 2022, to 49,200 flights in 2023, and until July 7th of this year reached 16,000 flights, with a predicted growth of 17% this year.

Cuba Foils Plot to Sneak Arms Onto Island From U.S.

HAVANA (Dispatches) - Cuba has foiled a plot to sneak arms and ammunition onto the Caribbean island from the United States, detaining nearly three dozen people in a broader scheme authorities say sought to destabilize its government, a Cuba Interior Ministry official said on Monday.

Cuba first unveiled details of the plot last December, when authorities said a Cuban man residing in the United States arrived on the island by jetski, armed with guns, ammunition and military gear, to recruit others and commit acts of violence.

A subsequent seven-month investigation, said Victor Álvarez, a lead criminal investigator with Cuba's Interior Ministry, unveiled a broader plan that includes participation by 32 Cuban residents and a U.S.-based group called La Nueva Nación Cubana, which Cuban authorities say continues to plot attacks on Cuba from U.S. soil.

Cuba said it had notified the U.S. government agencies of the results of the investigation, but said the individuals continue to act with impunity.



Latest Israeli Attack on Gaza Could Jeopardize Ceasefire Talks



CAIRO (Dispatches) - A new Israeli assault on Gaza on Monday threatened ceasefire talks at a crucial moment, the head of Hamas said, as Israeli tanks pressed into the heart of Gaza City and ordered residents out after a night of massive bombardment.

Residents said the airstrikes and artillery barrages were among the heaviest in nine months of conflict between Israeli forces and Hamas militants in the enclave. Thousands fled.

The assault unfolded as senior U.S. officials were in the region pushing for a ceasefire after Hamas made major concessions last week. The militant group said the new offensive appeared intended to derail the talks and called for mediators to rein in Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The assault "could bring the negotiation process back to square one. Netanyahu and his army will bear full responsibility for the collapse of this path," Hamas quoted leader Ismail Haniyeh as saying.

Gaza City, in the north of the Palestinian enclave, was one of Israel's first targets at the start of the war in October. But clashes with militants there have persisted and civilians have sought shelter elsewhere, adding to waves of displacement. Much of the city lies in ruins.

Residents said Gaza City neighbourhoods were bombed through the night into the early morning hours of Monday. Several multi-storey buildings were destroyed, they said.

The Gaza Civil Emergency Service said it believed dozens of people were killed but emergency teams were unable to reach them because of ongoing offensives.

Gaza residents said tanks advanced from at least three directions on Monday and reached the heart of Gaza City, backed by heavy Israeli fire from the air and ground.



Russian Missile Attacks Kill at Least 41

KYIV (Dispatches) - Russia blasted the main children's hospital in Kyiv with a missile in broad daylight on Monday and rained missiles down on other cities across Ukraine, killing at least 41 civilians in the deadliest wave of air strikes for months.

Parents holding babies walked in the street outside the hospital, dazed and sobbing after the rare daylight aerial attack. Windows had been smashed and panels ripped off, and hundreds of Kyiv residents were helping to clear debris. "It was scary. I couldn't breathe, I was trying to cover (my baby). I was trying to cover him with this cloth so that he could breathe," Svitlana Kravchenko, 33, told Reuters. President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, who stopped in Poland before heading off to Washington for a NATO summit, put the death toll at 37, including three children. More than 170 were injured. But tallies of casualties from the sites of attacks in different regions totalled at least 41. Writing on the Telegram messaging app, Zelenskiy said more than 100 buildings had been damaged, including the children's hospital and a maternity center in Kyiv, children's nurseries and a business center and homes. "The Russian terrorists must answer for this," he wrote. "Being concerned does not stop terror. Condolences are not a weapon." The Interior Ministry said there had also been damage in the central cities of Kryvyi Rih and Dnipro and two eastern cities. The government proclaimed a day of mourning on Tuesday for one of the worst air attacks of the war, which it said demonstrated that Ukraine urgently needed an upgrade of its air defenses from its Western allies. Air defenses shot down 30 of 38 missiles, the air force said. An online video obtained by Reuters showed a missile falling towards the children's hospital followed by a large explosion. The location of the video was verified from visible landmarks. The Security Service of Ukraine identified the missile as a Kh-101 cruise missile. Kyiv's military authorities said 27 people had died in the capital, including three children, and 82 were wounded in the main missile volley and a strike that came two hours later.

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said the attack was one of the largest of the war, causing damage in seven city districts. The Health Minister said five units of the children's hospital were damaged and children were evacuated to other facilities. Eleven were confirmed dead in the Dnipropetrovsk region and 68 were wounded, regional officials said. Three people were killed in the eastern town of Pokrovsk where missiles hit an industrial facility, the governor said. Zelenskiy, addressing a news conference in Warsaw alongside Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, called on Kyiv's Western allies to give a firm response to the attack.

"We will retaliate against these people, we will deliver a powerful response from our side to Russia, for sure. The question to our partners is: can they respond?" Zelenskiy said.

The attack came a day before leaders of NATO countries were due to begin a three-day summit, with the war in Ukraine one of the focuses.

U.S. President Joe Biden said that Moscow's deadly missile strikes in Ukraine, including on the children's hospital in Kyiv, were "a horrific reminder of Russia's brutality." In a statement released by the White House, Biden added that Washington and its NATO allies would be announcing new measures to strengthen Ukraine's air defenses. Diplomats said the United Nations Security Council would meet on Tuesday at the request of Britain, France, Ecuador, Slovenia and the United States.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, deplored the attacks, saying: "Among the victims were Ukraine's sickest children." Russia's Defense Ministry said its forces had launched strikes on defense industry targets and aviation bases.

Moscow has repeatedly denied targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, although its attacks have killed thousands of civilians since it launched its invasion in February 2022.

Ukraine's Prosecutor General said he discussed the attacks with International Criminal Court Prosecutor Karim Khan, adding that his office would be sharing evidence with the ICC.

Modi, Putin Hold Talks Amid Outrage Over Ukraine Strikes

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Prime Minister Narendra Modi was set to hold talks with President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday, a day after the Indian leader arrived in Moscow amid global outcry over Russian strikes in Ukraine.

Modi, visiting Moscow for the first time since Russia launched its campaign in Ukraine in February 2022, will seek to nurture New Delhi's India's long-standing relationship with Moscow.

At the same time, he is courting closer Western security ties after being returned to power last month as leader of the world's most populous country.

"There are no surprises in preparation. The main thing is to create an atmosphere for meaningful interaction," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told state TV when asked about the talks.

Modi landed in Moscow hours after Russia launched a massive barrage targeting cities across Ukraine Monday that killed more than three dozen people and heavily damaged a children's hospital in Kyiv, sparking condemnation from governments in Europe and North America.

Russia is a vital supplier of cut-price oil and weapons to India, but Moscow's isolation from the West and growing ties with Beijing have impacted its partnership with New Delhi.

Western powers have in recent years also cultivated stronger relations with India as a hedge against China and its growing influence across the Asia-Pacific, while pressuring New Delhi to distance itself from Russia.

The United States on Monday urged Modi to make clear in his talks with Putin that "any resolution to the conflict in Ukraine must... be one that respects the UN Charter with respect to Ukraine's territorial integrity".

Modi last visited Russia in 2019 and hosted Putin in the Indian capital two years later, weeks before Russia began its offensive against Ukraine.

India has largely shied away from explicit condemnation of Russia ever since and abstained on United Nations resolutions targeting the Kremlin.



But Russia's fight with Ukraine has also had a human cost for India.

New Delhi said in February it was pushing Moscow to return several of its citizens who had signed up for "support jobs" with the Russian military, following reports some had been killed after being forced to fight in Ukraine.

Moscow's relationship with China has also been a cause for concern.

Washington and the EU accuse China of selling components and equipment that have strengthened Russia's military industry -- allegations Beijing denies.

China and India remain intense rivals competing for strategic influence across South Asia.

India is also part of the Quad grouping with the US, Japan and Australia that positions itself against China's growing boldness in Asia.

New Delhi and Russia have maintained close links since the Cold War, which saw the Kremlin become a key arms provider to the country.

But Ukraine has stretched Russia's weapons supplies thin, pushing India to look for other sources for arms -- including growing its own defence industry.

Russia's share of Indian imports of arms has shrunk considerably in recent years, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

At the same time, India has become a major purchaser of Russian crude, providing a much-needed export market for Russia after it was dropped by traditional buyers in Europe.

That has dramatically reconfigured their economic ties, with India saving itself billions of dollars while bolstering Moscow's war coffers.

India's month-on-month imports of Russian crude "increased by eight percent in May, to the highest levels since July 2023", according to commodity tracking data compiled by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air.

But this has also resulted in India's trade deficit with Russia rising to a little over \$57 billion in the past financial year.

South Korea's Yoon to Discuss Pyongyang's Distinct Threat to Europe at NATO

SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said he would discuss with NATO leaders the distinct threat North Korea poses to Europe by deepening military ties with Russia, warning that Moscow must choose between the two Koreas where its true interests lie.

It "depends entirely" on Russia where it wants to take future ties with South Korea, Yoon said, adding that Seoul would make a decision on weapons support for Ukraine based on how a new military pact between Moscow and Pyongyang plays out.

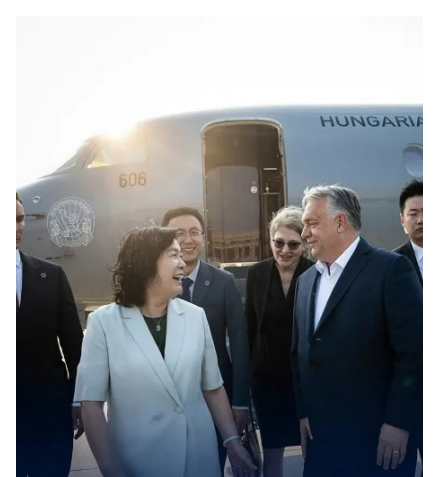
"Military co-operation between Russia and North Korea poses a distinct threat and grave challenge to the peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in Europe," Yoon told Reuters. The remarks came in a written response to Reuters' questions ahead of a visit to Washington for a NATO summit. Yoon, who became the first South Korean leader to attend a NATO summit in 2022, is set to depart on Monday for the Washington event, his third time attending such a meeting. Together with Australia, Japan and New Zealand, South Korea makes up the four Asia-Pacific partners joining in the talks on July 10 and 11. Relations between South Korea and Russia have soured as Moscow receives shipments of ballistic missiles and artillery from Pyongyang for its war against Ukraine. Both Russia and North Korea deny such deals.

Xi Calls on World Powers to Help Russia, Ukraine Resume Direct Talks

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Chinese President Xi Jinping told Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban that world powers should help Russia and Ukraine re-start direct negotiations during a visit to Beijing branded a "peace mission" by the European leader. Orban's trip to China comes a day before NATO is due to hold a summit to mark its 75th anniversary, with setbacks in Ukraine expected to dominate discussions, and follows surprise visits by the Hungarian premier to Russia and Ukraine in the past week. The United States said it was concerned by the meeting between Orban and Xi, with National Security Council spokesman John Kirby saying the trip "certainly doesn't seem to be productive in terms of trying to get things done in Ukraine". China has refused to condemn Russia's invasion and last year released a paper calling for a "political settlement" to the conflict, which Western countries said could enable Russia to retain much of the territory it has seized in Ukraine. Chinese state broadcaster CCTV quoted Xi as saying the "international community should create conditions and provide assistance for the two sides to resume direct dialogue and negotiations". "Only when all major powers exert positive energy rather than negative energy can the

dawn of a ceasefire in this conflict appear as soon as possible," Xi told Orban, according to CCTV. CCTV said in a readout: "Xi Jinping stressed that it is in the interests of all parties to cease fire and seek a political solution as soon as possible." Following the talks, Orban wrote on social media platform X that China was "a key power in creating the conditions for peace" in the Russia-Ukraine war. "This is why I came to meet with President Xi in Beijing, just two months after his official visit to Budapest," he said. Orban -- who said his unannounced trip to Beijing was a "Peace mission 3.0" -- wrote on his Instagram page he would be heading to Washington after Beijing. Orban, the friendliest EU leader towards Moscow, held talks on Friday with President Vladimir Putin, who said Ukraine must withdraw its troops from regions that Russia has annexed if it wants peace. Hungary took over the European Union's rotating presidency at the start of July, and the EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said Orban's trip to Russia was purely a bilateral affair and he "has not received any mandate from the EU Council to visit Moscow". Kyiv's foreign ministry said Orban's visit to Russia was made "without any agreement or coordination with Ukraine". Close to both

Xi and the Kremlin, Orban has refused to send weapons to Kyiv, unlike his fellow EU leaders. China and Russia's strategic partnership has grown closer since the invasion of Ukraine. Beijing presents itself as a neutral party in the war and says it is not sending lethal assistance to either side, unlike the United States and other Western nations. It has however offered a critical lifeline to Russia's isolated economy, with trade booming since the conflict began. Xi visited Hungary in May this year, for the final leg of a European tour that also took him to France and Serbia.



Djokovic Lets Rip After Majestic Performance



LONDON (Dispatches) - Emotions ran high for Novak Djokovic as he angrily lashed out at Wimbledon fans following his three-set demolition job over young Dane Holger Rune in the fourth round, while it was game over for a previously indestructible Alexander Zverev. After tentative performances in his two previous outings, seven-time champion Djokovic had appeared to be back to his best against Rune as he dished out a 6-3 6-4 6-2 masterclass to set up a quarter-final date with Australian Alex De Minaur. But for the thousands of fans who had stuck around late into the night to watch the match under a closed Centre Court roof, it is unlikely their abiding memory from day eight of the championships will have anything to do with the dazzling backhands or forehands that were on show. Instead, what they will remember is the astonishing words that flowed out of Djokovic's mouth during a bizarre post-match interview, in which he accused the crowd of disrespecting him. Irritated by the fans who greeted Rune's occasional moments of brilliance with chants of "Ruuune!", he ranted: "To all those people that have chosen to disrespect the player, in this case me, have a goooooood night! Gooooood night! Gooooood night!" When the interviewer suggested the fans had merely been chanting his rival's name, Djokovic disagreed. "I don't accept that, no, no, no. I know there they were cheering for Rune but that's an excuse to also boo. Listen, I've been on the tour for more than 20 years. So trust me, I know all the tricks. I know how it works. It's fine. It's fine," he added pointing to the stands. "I focus on respectful people that have respect that paid the ticket to come and

watch tonight and love tennis and appreciate the players and the effort they're putting in. "I've played in much more hostile environments. Trust me, you guys, you guys can't touch me." It was a strange way to end proceedings on Centre Court which had earlier witnessed world number four Zverev becoming the highest men's seed to fall by the wayside. The German came unstuck against Taylor Fritz in a five-set thriller despite being only two games away from securing a place in the last eight for the first time. Like Djokovic, who had knee surgery last month, Zverev turned up on court wearing a protective support around his leg after falling awkwardly during his previous match. That did not stop the German trading brutal blows with Fritz for 3-1/2 hours before he fell to a 4-6 6-7(4) 6-4 7-6(3) 6-3 defeat after he was finally broken for the first time at this year's championships having chalked up 56 successive holds of serve. Zverev regularly bombarded his American opponent with 130 mph missiles, fired down 19 thunderbolt aces, produced 55 winners and even won the longest rally in the contest which dragged on for 21 shots -- and at the end of it all, the German declared he had been playing "on one leg". The Fritz-Zverev marathon was the 35th match to go five sets at the All England Club this year, tying the record for the most at any slam since tennis turned professional in 1968. Eastbourne champion Fritz's victory also raised a glimmer of hope that the 21-year slam drought for American men might soon end after he joined Queen's Club champion Tommy Paul in the last eight. For the first time since 2000, more than one American man will feature in the Wimbledon quarter-finals.

Spain's Path to Euro 2024 Victory Is Through the Beautiful Game

MUNICH (Dispatches) - Spain manager Luis de la Fuente said that his side will stay true to their identity which is playing entertaining football in their Euro 2024 semi-final against France that is expected to be a contrast of styles. While Spain have looked in imperious form in their five straight wins in Germany, goal-shy France have come under fire from fans and pundits for some unimpressive performances and have reached the last four without scoring a goal in open play. De la Fuente said that he doesn't think that watching France is "boring", but acknowledged that Spain have a different approach to the game under his command. "We all try to build a gameplan that will help you win. It comes that our model is all about doing that through a beautiful spectacle," he told a press conference. "Spain are an eye-catching team, I won't deny that, it's our DNA, but in the end, here it's about winning. We want to play, but we want to be practical. Our way to get the result is to try to be eye-catching. But at this stage it's the result that counts because it is how your job will get judged and evaluated in the end." At the same venue in which France



manager Didier Deschamps hit back at the critics of his side's style, saying that those who think his side are "boring" should "go watch something else". De la Fuente said he admired his rivals' game. "What I value and analyze is their potential and France have players of a very high level, they are a great team. You are free to get bored with what they want, I'm not bored when I watch them," the Spanish coach said. De la Fuente will be without three key players in defenders Dani Carvajal and Robin Le Normand, both suspended, and midfielder Pedri, who will miss the rest of the Euros due to a knee injury. The players have had a limited period to recover after their draining extra-time win against hosts Germany in the quarter-finals. "We are recovering well considering the travel, the stress and the games. It's only a few days and it doesn't help much in the recovery. Let's see how we are tomorrow," De la Fuente said. "But that's the way it is and the players are used to the grind and have their own process, they will be ready."

Germany's Immigration Is out of Control

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Toni Kroos said he believes Germany's influx of migrants was "too uncontrolled" and that the country has changed considerably in the 10 years since he left. The Germany and Real Madrid star, who returned to his home country for the Euros this summer, said he welcomed migrants but concluded that Germany was not successful in managing mass immigration. In an interview recorded before his country lost to Spain on Friday, he compared the two countries and agreed with his interviewers that there was a feeling of "loss of control" in Germany. When pressed by a conservative-leaning podcast, he replied: "I believe that this control over certain issues has simply slipped away a little over the years and there's a reason for that. In my opinion, the reason is that people have overwhelmed them." He said that it was "great" how Germany had greeted migrants with open arms, before adding that "it was just too uncontrolled". He added: "I think we didn't manage it, this basically very positive approach that I support 1000 per cent, because I find that sensational, that people come to us from the outside and then are happy." He said he thought the impact of migration was "underestimated", and was "in the end something too uncontrolled". "Clearly when many people come, there is always a percentage who do not do us good, just



as there is among Germans," he said, adding that German attitudes to migration have become divided. Germany has been split on the topic since Angela Merkel's decision to allow a million refugees to enter Germany in

2015 with the far-Right Alternative for Germany (AfD) entering the German Parliament in the aftermath.

Olaf Scholz's "traffic light" coalition passed reforms allowing dual citizenship but the AfD rose to new heights, recently coming second in the European elections.

Kroos's comments come after his former Real Madrid teammate Kylian Mbappé urged the French to reject "extremists" and vote against Marine Le Pen's far-Right National Rally in legislative elections. Le Pen hit back at Mbappé for being "too wealthy" to represent French migrants.

Earlier in the interview, before the issue of migration was raised, Kroos said he would be staying in Spain after retiring from Real Madrid, in part because he didn't feel his home country was safe enough for his daughter.

He said he felt that Germany had become less secure since he left, and was now concerned his child would not come back "unharmful" from a night out alone.

Kroos told the Lanz & Precht podcast: "I think Germany is a great country and I'm happy to be here, but it's not really the same country that it was 10 years ago when we left." The central midfielder said that when his seven-year-old daughter gets older, he would rather she goes out in a Spanish city at 11pm than a German one. He added that if he moved back to Germany he would be concerned about his daughter coming home from a night out, a feeling that he "wouldn't have had that 10 years ago".

Messi Fit for Copa America Semifinal Against Canada



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Argentina captain Lionel Messi will be fit to play in the Copa America semi-final against Canada in New Jersey, coach Lionel Scaloni said, despite the forward's hamstring injury concerns. Messi returned to action on Thursday in Argentina's quarter-final win against Ecuador after missing the final group-stage match due to injury. He played the entire game, but looked physically hampered. The 37-year-old Inter Miami player missed a penalty in the shootout that decided the game at Houston's NRG Stadium. "Leo (Messi) is fine, he finished well, so tomorrow he will be part of the match, we are calm," Scaloni told a press conference on Monday ahead of the semi-final clash at the MetLife Stadium. "His level looks good. He is essential for us."

Argentina and Canada will meet for the second time in the tournament after the opening match in Group A, where the defending champions beat the CONCACAF side 2-0.

Scaloni said this time he and his Canada counterpart Jesse Marsch will seek to try "something different".

"All coaches take notes to correct mistakes and hurt our opponents," the 46-year-old manager said. "Each coach will have to do something different. We will try to have the ball and stop them from playing their game."

Pressure Mounting on Perez After Another Blank Weekend



LONDON (Dispatches) - Sergio Perez is under more pressure than ever at Formula One champions Red Bull after the Mexican failed to score any points for the third weekend in five races.

Perez, overall runner-up last year to team mate Max Verstappen, has taken only 15 points from his last six races and has fallen to sixth in the championship at the halfway point of the season.

"Of course he's under pressure. That's normal in Formula One and when you're under-delivering that pressure only mounts," team boss Christian Horner said after Perez started from the pitlane in Sunday's British Grand Prix and finished 17th.

Triple world champion Verstappen, winner of seven races this year and now 84 points clear of McLaren's Lando Norris, was second.

Perez's blank meant resurgent McLaren outscored Red Bull for the fifth time in six races, a rate that could bring that team into the title reckoning.

McLaren boss Zak Brown said last Saturday that Perez's continued under-performance could be a key factor in the championship.

Horner said nothing had gone the Mexican's way at Silverstone, starting with his spin into the gravel in qualifying that had the team boss shaking his head on the pitwall.

"We took a gamble in the race, he started on the hard tyre and was making decent progress early on in the race, the rain started to arrive he was P15 or 16 at the time, you roll the dice a little at that point," Horner said.

"He went on to the inter, if the rain had picked up he'd have looked a hero. It didn't, so you don't."

"Then he had an extra stop and the time loss of being on an inter on a drying track was haemorrhaging a lot of time for him. So yeah, obviously a lot to look at from over the weekend. "He knows it's unsustainable to not be scoring points," added the Briton.

"We have to be scoring points with that car and he knows that. He knows his role and his target. Nobody is more eager than Checo to get back and find his form again."

Red Bull extended Perez's contract in June, a move that now looks premature although performance clauses could also be triggered.

"Of course, there's frustration when both of your cars aren't performing collectively," said Horner.