

The Secretary General of the Lebanese Resistance Movement Hezbollah Says the Current Generation in Gaza and the Supportive Fronts Will Bring About the Annihilation of the Israeli Regime

# IRAN NEWS

ISIL Terrorist Group Has Claimed Responsibility for Attacking a Mourning Ceremony in the Omani Capital of Muscat on the Day of Ashura Where at Least Six People Were Killed and 28 Others Wounded

VOL. XXIX, No. 8035 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

THURSDAY JULY 18, 2024 TIR 28, 1403

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## Record Low Unemployment Rate in Q1



TEHRAN - The Minister of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare said: According to the announcement by the Iranian Statistics Center, the record low unemployment rate in the spring season was broken, reaching 7.7%. Seyed Solat Mortazavi stated on Wednesday, in a press gathering on the sidelines of the cabinet meeting: According to the announcement by the Iranian Statistics Center, the unemployment rate record in the spring season was broken, reaching 7.7%. There is a 0.1% discrepancy between the announcements from the World Bank and the Iranian Statistics Center, with the World Bank reporting it at 7.6%. The Minister added: The youth unemployment rate has decreased in 19 provinces and has become single-digit in 26 provinces. In the remaining provinces, where the unemployment rate is double-digit and between 10 and 12, it has significantly decreased but is still in a downward trend. The unemployment rate among graduates has decreased by 5%, and the overall number of unemployed has also declined. He continued: In the government of Martyr Raisi, our goal was to bring the unemployment rate down to 6.9%. Mortazavi emphasized: According to official domestic and international announcements, in the realm of social justice and sufficiency, over 6 million people who were in severe poverty have seen a reduction in this government. This is not only confirmed by us but also endorsed by the World Bank. The Minister of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare stated: The Gini coefficient has started its downward trend, and we hope its reduction will accelerate by the end of the year.

He said: Fortunately, the support for pension funds has not only remained stable but the support rate for social security, which is one of the largest pension funds in the country, is increasing.

Mortazavi continued: Currently, our colleagues in the Social Security Organization are paying retirees' pensions within the shortest legal timeframe, with minimal concerns. The issue of pension equalization has also been implemented on an interim basis in both the national pension fund and the social security fund.

The Minister of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare emphasized: I hope this matter will soon be incorporated into the administrative rulings with the approval of the regulations, and we will not let the retirees down.

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK



## New Gov't Focuses on Strengthening Multilateralism

TEHRAN - In a statement addressing the Security Council High-Level Ministerial Meeting on "Multilateral cooperation in the interest of a more just, democratic and sustainable world order", Iran's Acting Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani emphasized Iran's commitment to effective multilateralism. "The Islamic Republic of Iran reaffirms its commitment to effective multilateralism, grounded in international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter," Bagheri Kani said on Tuesday. The Acting Foreign Minister highlighted the importance of the United Nations' founding principles, such as the sovereign equality of states, the prohibition of the use of threats or force, and the peaceful settlement of disputes. He stressed that unilateralism is "antagonistic both to peace and to justice." Bagheri Kani criticized the abuse of the UN Security Council by certain permanent members for their "self-centered political or strategic agendas," particularly in the case of the United States' support for the Israeli regime's "persistent genocide of Palestinians and its frequent aggressions against nations of the region."

The Acting Minister also condemned the "unjust resolutions imposed against Iran during 2006-2010, based on unfounded claims by the United States about Iran's nuclear program," which he said were in clear violation of Iran's rights under the NPT.

Bagheri Kani praised Iran's constructive contribution to the conclusion of the JCPOA, the nuclear deal, as an example of Iran's commitment to multilateralism. However, he criticized the "unilateral and unlawful withdrawal" of the United States from the agreement, which he said "exemplified unilateralism in the international arena, causing

harm to all parties involved." Regarding Iran's foreign policy under the newly elected President, Bagheri Kani emphasized the importance of strengthening partnerships and cooperation for collective security and sustainable development in the region, as well as maintaining constructive relationships with other states based on dialogue, cooperation, equality, and mutual respect. "Multilateralism is key in this regard. We believe this is the only way to establish a safe, just, and inclusive environment where all nations can enjoy sustainable peace and thrive," Bagheri Kani said. This successful multilateral initiative addressed an unwarranted crisis and unfounded concern from the West regarding Iran's peaceful nuclear program, aiming to lift the illegal and unjust sanctions imposed on the Iranian nation. However, this multilateral process encountered a significant challenge due to the unilateral actions of the United States and its allies, he noted.

The U.S. unilateral and unlawful withdrawal from the agreement exemplified unilateralism in the international arena, causing harm to all parties involved. Equally important, Iran's good neighborliness policy highlights the importance of multilateralism in resolving common concerns and challenges, Bagheri Kani added. In this context, Iran pursues regional dialogue and cooperation to create an environment where resources can be devoted to the progress and development of the region for the benefit of all. Strengthening partnerships and cooperation for collective security and sustainable development in the region will be the cornerstone of the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy, he concluded.

## It's Now West's Turn to Prove Honesty in Interaction With Iran



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's interim Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani says the recent presidential election was a testament to national stability, and that it is now the West's turn to positively react to the constructive developments in the country. Bagheri Kani, who is in New York to participate in two debates of the UN Security Council on Palestine and multilateralism, made the remarks in an interview with Newsweek on Tuesday.

"Holding elections in less than 50 days, during which time security was established, as well as the election of Dr. [Masoud] Pezeshkian as the president of my country represent constructive messages for the sake of regional and global stability and peace," the senior Iranian official said.

"And we believe now is the time and turn of other countries to constructively and positively react to these significant developments in the Islamic Republic of Iran," he said.

Bagheri Kani said the people's participation, transparency in the election process as well as high-level security demonstrate stability in Iran.

"We believe the other side now needs to prove honesty for interaction and, of course, to open a new chapter. We have been always very honest and serious. And we will be like so when it comes to ensuring interaction with international actors."

Bagheri Kani also said if the United States wishes to open a new chapter, then it "should respect the choice of the Iranian people and the election."

Iran's election was called early after President Ebrahim Raisi lost his life in the helicopter crash of May 19.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Iranian interim foreign minister said the participation of Iran at the highest level in the two Security Council meetings "indicates the significance the Islamic Republic of Iran attaches to multilateral mechanisms and to the pivotal role of the United Nations when it comes to establishing stability and promoting peace in the world."

## Iran Rejects Claim About Trump Assassination



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has roundly rejected claims of devising plot to assassinate former US president Donald Trump, but vows to pursue legal channels to consign him to justice for his ordering the assassination of the Islamic Republic's top anti-terror commander Qassem Soleimani in 2020.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani made the remarks on Wednesday after US media alleged that American authorities had obtained "intelligence from a human source in recent weeks on a plot by Iran to try to assassinate Trump." It followed an assassination attempt against Trump that took place while he was campaigning in Butler, Pennsylvania. Trump survived the attempt, suffering an ear injury.

Kanaani said Iran strongly rejected allegations of any involvement in the armed attack against Trump or claims of harboring any intention to take such action, Kan'ani said.

The Islamic Republic considers such claims to be a product of malicious political goals and intents, he added.

The country, however, is determined to legally pursue Trump due to his direct role in the assassination of General Soleimani, the spokesman asserted.

Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), and their companions were assassinated in a US drone strike authorized by Trump near Baghdad International Airport on January 3, 2020.

The commanders were highly revered across West Asia due to their key role in fighting the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group in the region, particularly in Iraq and neighboring Syria.

Iran's permanent mission to the United Nations also reacted to the US media report earlier on Wednesday, considering its claim to be "unfounded and malicious."

The mission, nevertheless, asserted that "from the Islamic Republic's standpoint, Trump is a criminal, who should be tried and punished in court for [issuing] General Soleimani's assassination order."

## Lebanon Definitely a Hell With No Return for Israel



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's interim foreign minister has warned that Lebanon will "definitely be a hell with no return for the Zionists," if the Israeli regime dares expand its brutal war on the Gaza Strip to the Arab country and other fronts in the region.

Ali Bagheri Kani made the statement while speaking to reporters after a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov at the United Nations headquarters in New York on Tuesday evening. "The Zionists cannot make up for their losses in Gaza by expanding their war mongering in other areas in the region, rather they will be plunging themselves deeper into the swamp of much more serious risks," the top Iranian diplomat said. Bagheri Kani said they discussed the latest state of Iran-Russia relations in various fields and also exchanged their views on regional and international issues, especially the Israeli crimes in Gaza and the urgency of ending the occupying regime's months-long genocide in the besieged Palestinian territory. Responding to a question about tensions between Israel and Lebanon's resistance movement Hezbollah, Bagheri Kani said, "This is proven experience that the more the Zionists stoke tensions in the region and commit crimes, the more they immerse themselves in the mire of serious threats and dangers."

Iran's interim foreign minister stressed, "Lebanon is reminiscent of historical defeats inflicted on the Zionists [by Hezbollah fighters] both in 2000 and 2006. Therefore, Lebanon will definitely be a hell with no return for the Zionists." Hezbollah and Israel have been exchanging deadly fire since early October last year, shortly after the regime launched a genocidal aggression against the Gaza Strip following a surprise operation by Palestinian resistance groups. The Lebanese resistance movement has

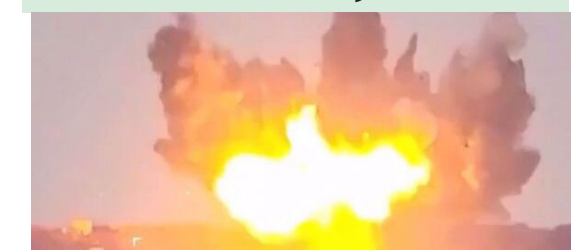
vowed to keep up its retaliatory attacks as long as the Israeli regime continues its Gaza war, which has so far killed over 38,700 Palestinians, mostly women and children. Hezbollah officials have repeatedly said they are not after a war with Israel, while stressing that they are prepared in case it occurs.

Two Israeli wars waged against Lebanon in 2000 and 2006 were met with strong resistance from Hezbollah, resulting in the retreat of the regime in both conflicts. During their meeting on Tuesday, the two diplomats emphasized the need to prevent the continuation of the Israeli regime's crimes and attacks against the Palestinian people in Gaza and warned spread of attacks by the regime is the source of the "escalating tension of crisis" in the region. Bagheri Kani also expressed his gratitude to Russia for its efforts to raise the Palestinian issue and the crimes committed by the Israeli regime in the Gaza war during the country's rotating presidency of the UN Security Council. Pointing to recent developments in bilateral relations between Tehran and Moscow, the top Iranian diplomat said the ties are on the right track but expressed hope that the process of finalizing important cooperation documents, especially the comprehensive strategic partnership treaty, should be completed at the earliest.

The Russian foreign minister, for his part, hailed the successful conclusion of the presidential election in Iran, expressing satisfaction over the progress in bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

Lavrov also noted that Russia was seeking to prevent the possibility of the expansion of the scope of the Israeli conflict but called for the responsibility of all parties in this regard.

## Natanz Incident Had No Connection to the Nuclear Industry



TEHRAN - The head of the Atomic Energy Organization stated that the incident that occurred in Natanz had no connection to the nuclear industry and was not near us.

Mohammad Eslami, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization, said on Wednesday on the sidelines of a government meeting, that the Natanz incident had no connection to the nuclear industry.

The head of the Atomic Energy Organization also commented on the release of a purported video about an explosion in Kashan and the speculations surrounding it. He said the release of a video showing anti-aircraft fire on the Qom road had no connection to the nuclear site and was not near us. Islamic further referred to the will of the thirteenth government concerning the nuclear industry, noting the significant progress in the irradiation industry. He stated that three irradiation sites had been launched in the past three months, and the remaining three sites would be inaugurated in the coming month (August). According to the head of the Atomic Energy Organization, through this approach, the private sector and the active community in the food sector are invited to participate and invest, aiming to increase efficiency and significantly impact food security.

He also said that three irradiation sites had been inaugurated in the past three months.

Eslami stated: "What is important and what we have done in the thirteenth government is to ensure that nuclear technology becomes part of people's lives, with a significant focus on irradiations."

He emphasized: "We have launched three irradiation sites in the past three months, and God willing, we will inaugurate the remaining sites, at least three more, in the upcoming month of August."

# IRAN NEWS



## Russia Ready to Invest in Iran's Amirabad Port

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - A group of economic activists from Russia visited Amirabad Port, Mazandaran province, on Saturday to invest in the production of oil derivatives.

The Director General of Amirabad Ports and Shipping Mohammad-Ali Musapour-Gorji said on the sidelines of the visit that considering the location of the Amirabad port in various fields of investment, a Russian company announced its readiness to invest in this port in the field of oil derivatives production.

Foreign investment in ports is considered one of the important goals of the government and organization in line with the development of the sea-oriented economy, which, in addition to attracting investors and generating income, will also contribute greatly to the transfer of technology and job creation, he added.

## Iran's Oil Production Reaches 3.24m Barrels in June

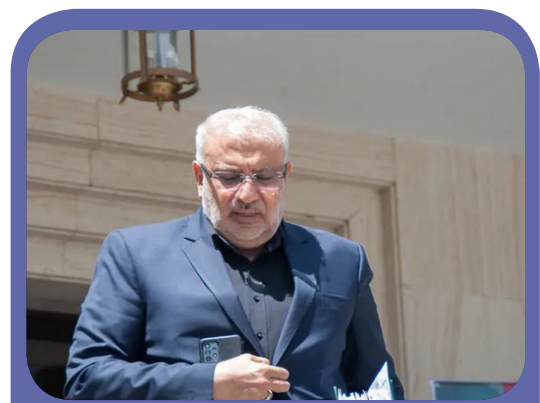


TEHRAN - The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) has reported that Iran's daily crude oil production reached 3.24 million barrels in June 2024.

This production level marks a decrease of 20,000 barrels per day compared to the previous month, when Iran produced 3.26 million barrels per day in May.

The report also highlights a reduction in OPEC's total oil production by 510,000 barrels per day in June, bringing it down to 26.23 million barrels per day. Along with Iran, seven other countries—Equatorial Guinea, Iraq, Kuwait, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Venezuela—also faced declines in their oil production during this month.

Furthermore, the report indicates that the total production of crude oil and condensates in Iran in June 2024 was 4.31 million barrels per day, which is a decrease of 10,000 barrels per day from the previous month. In June, Iran, along with Iraq, was recognized as the second-largest producer of crude oil and condensates among OPEC members, with both countries producing 4.31 million barrels per day.



## Signing Gas Contract With Russia "a Masterpiece of Energy Diplomacy"

TEHRAN - Oil Minister Javad Owji stated at the end of the cabinet meeting, while speaking to reporters: "In the performance report of the Ministry of Oil, we recorded a consumption of 245 million liters of gasoline across all fuel stations in the country, ensuring the fuel needs of our compatriots were fully met. We also achieved a record daily gasoline consumption of 145 million liters."

He added: "As you are aware, during this period, the Ministry of Oil distributes 265 liters of liquid fuel daily from production points and refineries to consumption points, which include more than just the fuel stations nationwide. The Ministry of Oil is responsible for supplying fuel to over 100 power plants in the country. Therefore, the supply of fuel to stations and power plants has been completely stable. Today, during the cabinet meeting, the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and the Vice President personally thanked us for the stable fuel supply to power plants and fuel stations nationwide."

Owji noted that less than a month ago, the documents for the transfer of Russian gas to Iran were signed between Russia's Gazprom and the National Iranian Gas Company. He reminded that a significant portion of the gas transferred to Iran will be used for domestic consumption and export to regional countries. This contract will ensure energy security for regional countries.

He emphasized: "Signing this contract with the Russian side was a masterpiece of energy diplomacy and, God willing, this contract will lead to an economic and industrial revolution and will make neighboring countries' energy security dependent on the Islamic Republic of Iran."



## Barter of Swiss Pharmaceutical Products With Iranian Agro Products Discussed

TEHRAN - In a meeting between the Director for Europe of the International Affairs Department of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce and the Deputy Ambassador of Switzerland in Tehran, the barter exchange of Swiss pharmaceutical products with Iranian agricultural products, as well as conducting research and studies, was discussed and exchanged views.

In the meeting between the Director for Europe of the International Affairs Department of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce and the Deputy Ambassador of Switzerland in Tehran, it was stated that a list of cooperation priorities between the private sectors of the two countries has been prepared. This includes organizing an Iran-Switzerland business cooperation meeting with the presence of ambassadors, traders, and merchants of the two countries to familiarize them with the opportunities, laws, and regulations of trade and investment in Switzerland, which will be communicated to the Swiss Embassy in writing.

Additionally, Iran's interest in the barter exchange of Swiss pharmaceutical products with Iranian agricultural products and conducting research and studies was discussed and exchanged views.

Julien Brigg, Deputy Ambassador of Switzerland in Iran, referring to the presence of Swiss companies in Iran and Switzerland's interest in trading with Iran, said there are issues regarding financial transfers which he hopes will be resolved in the near future.

He pointed out the trade volume of \$140 million between Iran and Switzerland, stating that this includes \$120 million in Swiss exports to Iran and \$20 million in Iranian exports to Switzerland, indicating an increase in Swiss exports to Iran and a decrease in Iranian exports to Switzerland.

Sama Farrokhejad, Director for Europe of the International Affairs Department of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, also proposed the creation of joint venture companies, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) between the two countries, which was welcomed by Brigg.

Farrokhejad also suggested forming joint committees between the chambers of commerce of the two countries in the fields of agriculture and pharmaceuticals, to which Brigg responded that this could happen with the approval of the Swiss chambers of commerce.

## Land Subsidence in 360 Plains of the Country



TEHRAN (IRNA) - The spokesperson for the water industry, announcing that out of 609 plains in the country, more than 420 are prohibited or critically prohibited zones and 360 plains are also experiencing land subsidence, said: the decline in groundwater levels due to excessive extraction leads to instability in the agricultural sector.

Issa Bozorgzadeh spoke about the condition of groundwater reservoirs and the negative impact of excessive withdrawals, adding that more than 50% of water consumption is from groundwater.

He continued: For many years, in large parts of the vast country of Iran, we have relied on qanats and wells to meet the water needs of the agricultural sector, which essentially deplete groundwater resources.

The spokesperson for national water projects noted: In past decades, these resources have been extracted recklessly, and groundwater levels continue to decline. In many aquifers, about 360 have shown signs of land subsidence.

Bozorgzadeh said: Out of 609 plains, more than 420 are prohibited and critically prohibited zones, and about 360 plains are suffering from land subsidence.

He continued: A group of national water experts has become concerned that this method of water extraction will continuously deplete free aquifers, turning them into prohibited and critically prohibited zones with signs of subsidence.

The water industry spokesperson questioned how long this process can continue, stating that in Fars province, there are places where well depths have reached 450 meters. The question is, how long can this trend continue to reach water, and at the cost of significant energy and expenses, to irrigate crops like onions, melons, watermelons, lemons, and vegetables?

Bozorgzadeh added: How long will the groundwater level in the Rafsanjan plain continue to drop, and the extracted water be used for pistachio cultivation?

He emphasized: How long can this trend of declining water levels,

ground compaction, and the resulting cracks in streets and buildings, which pose a serious threat to residents, continue without threatening agricultural jobs?

The water industry spokesperson noted: If water continues to decrease, as it has in many plains like Isfahan and Khorasan, farmers will not have the same water in a few years, and the first to be harmed by excessive extraction in the agricultural sector will be the farmers themselves.

Bozorgzadeh added: This overuse and abundance of agricultural water consumption itself threatens the sustainability of agricultural jobs and farming in the near future. Ultimately, if an aquifer dries up, there will be no water for the farmer, and without water for farming, we won't have food security.

He continued: Under these conditions, without food security, we won't have water security or environmental security.

The spokesperson for national water projects said: All these concerns have led a group of rational experts to conclude that we should not let nature, aquifers, and plains punish us with depletion, reduced water output, and the creation of cracks in homes and streets.

Bozorgzadeh continued: Accordingly, the experts concluded that they should propose a scenario to improve efficiency, so that we can have sustainable agriculture, food security, water security, and environmental security.

He stated: The experts concluded, after analysis, that the physical and economic efficiency of each cubic meter of water in the country's agricultural sector is significantly lower than regional and global scales.

The water industry spokesperson said: From each cubic meter of water, we produce 1.39 kilograms of dry products, which is also documented in the food security record. The experts acknowledged that this can easily be increased to 2.6 kilograms per cubic meter of water.

## Sri Lanka Pays Iran \$55m in Oil Debt With Tea



TEHRAN - Sri Lanka has paid \$55 million of its \$250.9 million debt for oil purchased from Iran through tea exports, according to the Chairman of the Sri Lanka Tea Board.

According to Newswire, the Chairman of the Sri Lanka Tea Board stated that the country has paid \$55 million of its \$250.9 million debt for oil purchased from Iran through tea exports. He mentioned that Sri Lanka started repaying its oil debt via tea exports in August of the previous year, as per a memorandum of understanding with Iran. Niraj de Mel, the Chairman of the Sri Lanka Tea Board, said that the country has so far settled \$55 million of its debt.

He added that in the first four months of the current year, Sri Lanka exported 4.1 million kilograms of tea to Iran, three times more than the amount exported to Iran during the same period in 2023.

In December 2021, it was announced that Iran had agreed to accept Ceylon tea from Sri Lanka in exchange for \$251 million of the country's oil debt. Alireza Peyman Pak, the Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization, said: "In our recent negotiations, we agreed in a written contract to receive Sri Lankan tea monthly as a repayment for the fuel purchased from Iran." At that time, Peyman Pak mentioned that a contract was signed with Sri Lanka to export tea to Iran monthly to settle the \$251 million debt for oil purchased from Iran nine years ago.

## Iran's Artificial Intelligence Organization to Be Established Soon



TEHRAN - Vice President for Science and Technology Rouhollah Dehghani Firouzabadi, speaking on the sidelines of the cabinet meeting, stated: "After 12 months of follow-up, the Artificial Intelligence Organization, which was initiated by the order of the martyred president during last year's elite conference, has begun its work."

The Vice President for Science and Technology said, "When this organization was inaugurated, several events took place. The statutes and the country's artificial intelligence document, which has more than 18,000 pages of supporting documents and hours of expert work, were approved by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution. The organization was established, and its formation was announced, with a building designated for it. So far, 3,500 billion tomans have been allocated to it, with 1,000 billion from leading scientific projects and 2,500 billion from the National Development Fund."

He continued: "This organization will not be a large governmental body; it will be a completely agile organization whose entire task is to create infrastructure. We have three tasks in infrastructure: first, to have a good processing reference in the country; second, to have large software models in the country that everyone can use; and third, to collect operational data related to artificial intelligence in government departments. The whole task of the organization is to create an operator that provides these three services."

Dehghani Firouzabadi added that the development of the economy and the application of artificial intelligence will be carried out by the public, knowledge-based companies, and private companies. The organization can achieve significant results by the end of the year, benefiting the public. Internationally, responsibilities within the Vice President's office and other organizations have been divided; the main mission of the Artificial Intelligence Organization is to develop infrastructure.

## Colombia Calls Off Ceasefire With Some Units of EMC

BOGOTA (Dispatches) - Colombia's government has ended a ceasefire with some factions of the EMC rebels, led by commander Ivan Mordisco, who reject peace talks, the defense ministry said on Tuesday. The Estado Mayor Central (EMC) was formed by dissident former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) fighters who themselves reject a 2016 peace deal with the state. "The ceasefire will continue for three months with the Gentil Duarte block, the Jorge Suarez Briceno block, and the Raul Reyes front," the defense ministry said in a message via X. The government in March suspended a ceasefire with the EMC in certain provinces because of ongoing violence. The move stoked demands by a majority of units in the EMC to reinstate the ceasefire, eventually provoking an internal division that saw various fronts pull out of the talks. The ceasefire will continue in provinces such as Norte de Santander, Antioquia, Meta and Caqueta.

Ivan Mordisco, whose legal name is Nestor Gregorio Vera, was a much-feared commander in the FARC before he began leading dissident rebels.



## China, Russia Kick Off Live-Fire Naval Exercises in South China Sea



BEIJING (Dispatches) - China and Russia have begun live-fire naval exercises in the South China Sea, Russian and Chinese state media reported, with the two countries having strengthened military and trade ties in recent years following U.S. sanctions on both.

The opening ceremony of the Russian-Chinese naval exercise 'Maritime Cooperation - 2024' took place in the Chinese port of Zhanjiang, the Russian defence ministry said on the Telegram messaging app.

During their sea manoeuvres, the crews of ships of the Russian Pacific Fleet and the PLA Navy were to conduct joint air defense exercises and anti-submarine drills with the involvement of PLA naval anti-submarine aviation, the Russian defence ministry said.

Both countries were to deploy at least three vessels each for the three-day exercises, China's state controlled Global Times newspaper said, citing the People's Liberation Army Navy.

Russia's RIA state news agency reported on Tuesday, citing Russia's Pacific Fleet, that the Russian Navy and the Chinese Navy conducted artillery firing as part of the joint drills.

The drills follow the completion of a separate joint naval patrol in the north Pacific, which the Russian defence ministry said earlier involved a detachment of Russia's Pacific Fleet ships, including two corvettes, the Rezky and the Gromky.



## 3 Children Among 5 Dead in Israeli Strikes in South Lebanon

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Lebanese official media said separate Israeli strikes Tuesday in south Lebanon killed five people including three Syrian children, with Hezbollah announcing rocket fire at Israel in retaliation.

"Three Syrian children" were killed "in an enemy raid that targeted farmland in the village of Umm Toot", the National News Agency (NNA) said.

It also said an "enemy" drone strike had targeted a motorcycle on the Kfar Tebnit road elsewhere in south Lebanon, killing two Syrians.

A Lebanese security source, requesting anonymity as they were not authorised to speak to the media, told AFP the two Syrians were "civilians" who worked nearby and had been swimming in the area.

The NNA said that "eyewitnesses reported that the motorbike was carrying two people and that when a number of citizens tried to approach the bike... it was subjected to a second strike".

Hezbollah said it launched rounds of "Katyusha rockets" at northern Israel in response to the Israeli strikes.

The group in separate statements mentioned both "the death of two civilians" in Kfar Tebnit and "the horrible massacre in Umm Toot village" as reasons for the retaliatory fire.

The United Nations children's agency said that "more children are at risk as long as the violence continues."

"The killing of three more children by an airstrike today as they were reportedly playing in front of their home in south Lebanon is horrific," UNICEF said on social media platform X.

Hezbollah has traded almost daily fire with Israeli forces in support of ally Hamas since the Palestinian militant group's October 7 attack on Israel triggered war in the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli military said 40 projectiles fired from Lebanon were initially identified Tuesday, followed by a further 10 later in the day.

The air force launched strikes against parts of south Lebanon where it said there were Hezbollah sites, including a "terrorist cell" in the Yarin area, which is close to Umm Toot.

AFP footage shows Israel's Iron Dome defence system intercepting rockets over the border and smoke billowing above the Lebanese village of Kfar Kela following an Israeli strike.

Sirens warning of incoming fire blared overnight in northern Israel, the military said, with no reports of

casualties.

In Lebanon, the cross-border violence since October has killed 511 people, mostly fighters but also including at least 104 civilians, according to an AFP tally.

On the Israeli side, 17 soldiers and 13 civilians have been killed, according to authorities.

The violence, largely restricted to the border area, has raised fears of all-out conflict between the foes, who last went to war in the summer of 2006.

Meanwhile Israel renewed its bombardment of the Gaza Strip Tuesday, after its key military backer the United States renewed its criticism of its ally over the high civilian casualty toll of the war.

Residents told AFP of Israeli warplanes striking central Gaza and artillery fire hitting the territory's south, while medics said they pulled multiple bodies from the rubble of the latest bombardment.

Hours earlier, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told two top Israeli officials that casualties among Palestinian civilians "still remain unacceptably high".

"We continue to see far too many civilians killed in this conflict," spokesman Matthew Miller said after Blinken met Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer and National Security Adviser Tzachi Hanegbi.

Washington has been pushing for a truce between Israel and Hamas.

But Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh said Sunday that the group was pulling out of indirect talks for a deal in protest at recent Israeli "massacres", including a massive strike on Sunday that the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said killed at least 92 people.

Haniyeh said Hamas stood ready to return to the indirect talks once Israel "demonstrates seriousness in reaching a ceasefire agreement and a prisoner exchange deal".

After the latest deadly strikes, medics from the Palestinian Red Crescent said they recovered four bodies from a house outside the southern city of Khan Yunis and another from Nuseirat camp in the central Gaza.

The Israeli military said that over the previous 24 hours its air force struck "approximately 40 terror targets" in Gaza. They included "sniping posts, observation posts, Hamas military structures, terror infrastructure, and buildings rigged with explosives".

It said its troops were also continuing targeted raids in the far-southern city of Rafah and in the central Gaza Strip.



## Bangladesh Shuts Universities, Colleges Indefinitely After Deadly Protests

DHAKA (Dispatches) - Bangladesh announced it will indefinitely shut down all public and private universities from Wednesday after protests by students against a quota system for government jobs turned deadly this week, leaving at least six people dead and scores injured.

The South Asian nation has been rocked by protests for weeks over public sector job quotas, which include a 30% reservation for family members of freedom fighters from the 1971 War of Independence from Pakistan. It has sparked anger among students who face high youth unemployment rates, with nearly 32 million young Bangladeshis not in work or education out of a total population of 170 million people.

Demonstrations intensified after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina refused to meet the protesters' demands, citing ongoing court proceedings, and labelled those opposing the quota as "razakar" - a term used for those who allegedly collaborated with the Pakistani army during the 1971 war.

The protests turned violent this week when thousands of anti-quota protesters clashed with members of the student wing of the ruling Awami League party across the country. Police used rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse the protesters.

Six people, including at least three students, were killed during the clashes on Tuesday, police said.

"We urgently call on the Government of Bangladesh to immediately guarantee the safety of all peaceful protesters and proper treatment of all those injured," Amnesty International said in a post on X.

Authorities have deployed riot police, along with the Border Guard Bangladesh paramilitary force, at university campuses across the country to maintain law and order.

## Former Trump Rivals to Back His Nomination for U.S. Presidency in Unity Display

MILWAUKEE (Dispatches) - Donald Trump's former rivals for the Republican presidential nomination will voice their support for his candidacy at the party's convention on Tuesday, a deliberate display of unity after a divisive primary campaign.

The second night of the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee will feature speeches from former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, who were roundly defeated by Trump earlier this year in the state-by-state battle for the nomination.

Haley's address in particular will be closely watched after she cast Trump as unelectable and unfit for office during the primary campaign before saying in May she would vote for him. She was not initially invited to speak but has been given a prime-time slot.

The show of unity was intended to draw a contrast with the Democratic Party, which has spent weeks mired in an intraparty squabble over whether President Joe Biden, 81, should abandon his reelection bid after his halting June 27 debate performance against Trump raised fresh questions about his age and mental acuity.

The tenor of the evening's speeches in Milwaukee - centred on the theme of safety - was more aggressive than the first night, with speakers angrily denouncing Biden's southern border policies.

Kari Lake and Bernie Moreno, who are running in high-profile Senate races in Arizona and Ohio, respectively, both called the flow of migrants an "invasion".

While border crossings reached record highs during Biden's tenure, arrests dropped sharply in June after the president implemented a broad asylum ban.

Trump was scheduled to walk into the arena again, a day after he entered to raucous applause in his first public appearance since a gunman tried to assassinate him on Saturday at a Pennsylvania campaign rally. A heavily bandaged ear served as a reminder of how narrowly he survived the attempt.



The shooting also intensified fears among Americans about the deeply divided state of the nation ahead of the Nov. 5 election.

A Reuters/Ipsos poll released on Tuesday found that 80 per cent of voters - including similar shares of Republicans and Democrats - agreed "the country is spiraling out of control" in the wake of the shooting.

Authorities were still trying to identify a motive for the shooting. The 20-year-old gunman was killed at the scene by the U.S. Secret Service.

Trump, 78, announced on Monday that his running mate would be U.S. Senator J.D. Vance, 39, a former Trump critic who has become one of his staunchest supporters in Congress. Vance, the author of the bestselling memoir "Hillbilly Elegy", is likely to energise core Republican voters, but it is less clear whether he can appeal to more moderate voters, including independents.

The Reuters/Ipsos poll found 29 per cent of U.S. voters, including 52 per cent of Republicans, had a favourable opinion of Vance. By comparison, 42 per cent of registered voters and 81 per cent of Democrats had a favourable view of Biden's running mate, Vice President Kamala Harris.

The survey of 992 registered voters, conducted on Monday and Tuesday, found Trump leading Biden by 43 per cent to 41 per cent, within the margin of error.

In his first campaign speech since the assassination attempt, Biden told Black voters in Las Vegas that he was "all in" for his reelection campaign, again dismissing calls from some Democrats to step aside.

The president said he was glad that Trump had not been seriously injured but assailed his record in office. Biden has denounced the attack and called for less heated rhetoric.

## Thai Police Say Cyanide Killed 6 Foreigners in Bangkok Hotel

BANGKOK (Dispatches) - Cyanide poisoning was likely the cause of the deaths of six foreigners whose bodies were found in a room in a plush Bangkok hotel, with the suspected killer among the dead, Thai police said on Wednesday.

The rapid-acting, deadly chemical was found on drinking glasses and a teapot in the room at the luxury Grand Hyatt Erawan hotel, and interviews with relatives of the dead revealed there had been a dispute over debt related to an investment, police said.

The six were all of Vietnamese ethnicity, two of those U.S. nationals, and were found dead late on Tuesday. The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation had assisted police with the investigation, police said.

"We found cyanide in the teacups, all six cups we found cyanide," Trirong Phiwpan, Commander of the Thai police evidence office, told a press conference.

"After staff brought tea cups and two hot water bottles, milk and tea pots... one of the six introduced cyanide." The results of an autopsy were expected within the next day, police said.

Vietnam's government said its embassy in Bangkok was closely coordinating with Thai authorities on the case, while the U.S. State Department said it was monitoring the

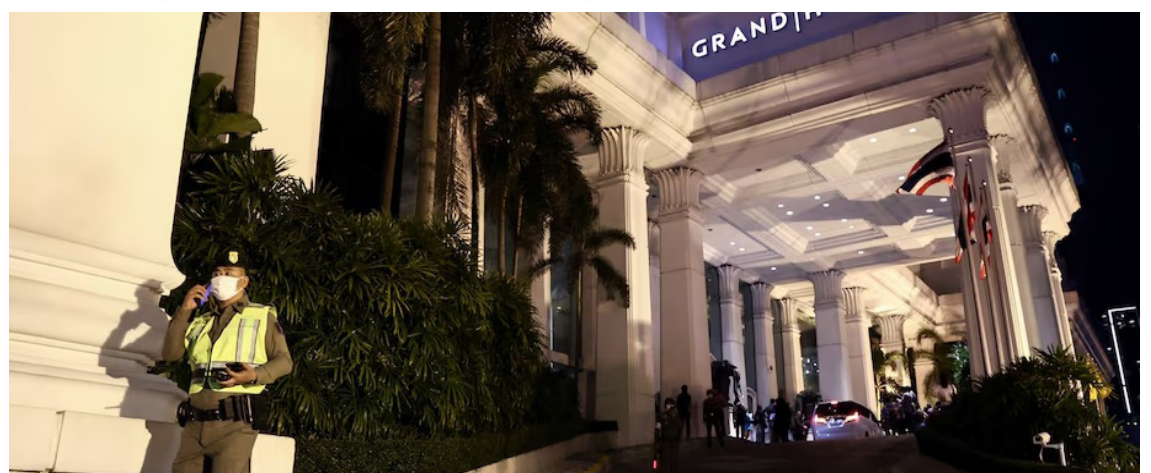
situation and local authorities were responsible for the investigation.

The Grand Hyatt Erawan, operated by Erawan Group, has over 350 rooms and is located in a popular tourist district known for luxury shopping and restaurants.

News of the deaths, initially reported by some Thai media as a shooting, could be a setback for Thailand as it bets heavily on its vital tourism sector reviving an economy that has struggled since the pandemic.

Thailand is expecting 35 million foreign arrivals this year, up from 28 million last year who spent 1.2 trillion baht (\$33.71 billion).

Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin on Tuesday urged a swift probe into the issue to limit the impact on Thailand's travel sector.





## Nadal on Entry List for US Open

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Four-time champion Rafael Nadal was among those on the main draw entry lists revealed on Tuesday for the 2024 US Open after missing the event three of the past four years. The 38-year-old Spanish left-hander has a protected ranking of ninth to put himself into the field for the Flushing Meadows fortnight, which begins on August 26. Nadal, a 22-time Grand Slam winner, played his first singles match since May 27 on Tuesday, beating Leo Borg 6-3, 6-4 at the Nordea Open. Nadal had not played since losing in the first round to Alexander Zverev on the red clay in Paris.

Nadal has played the US Open only once, in 2022, since winning his fourth New York hardcourt crown in 2019.

He was among 14 players to claim a main-draw spot with a protected ranking.

Nadal won the US Open in 2010 to complete a career Grand Slam and added US Open titles in 2013, 2017 and 2019. He reached the fourth round in 2022 but has played in only two Slams since, never going past the second round.

World number one Jannik Sinner, this year's Australian Open champion from Italy, and top-ranked Iga Swiatek, who captured her third consecutive French Open title in June, pace the men's and women's fields.

Defending champions and world number twos Novak Djokovic and Coco Gauff are also in the lineup.

Spain's Carlos Alcaraz, the 2022 US Open champion, is coming off French Open and Wimbledon title runs and could become the first player since Nadal in 2010 to win those trophies and the US Open in the same year.

Reigning Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka, the 2023 US Open runner-up who missed Wimbledon due to injury, and Wimbledon champion Barbora Krejickova are also in the field.

American Reilly Opelka, also in through a protected ranking, is set to play his first Grand Slam tournament since 2022 due to injuries.

Three other past US Open champions were on the main draw lists -- Daniil Medvedev on the men's side plus Sloane Stephens and Emma Raducanu on the women's.

Raducanu's run to the fourth round at Wimbledon secured her a spot in the world rankings top 100 and a place in the US Open.

Among past US Open winners who did not make the direct acceptance list are Bianca Andreescu, Angelique Kerber and Naomi Osaka for the women and Andy Murray, Dominic Thiem and Stan Wawrinka for the men.

All three women missed last year's US Open, Andreescu due to injury and Osaka and Kerber on maternity leave, and all exhausted their protected rankings for majors earlier this year.

Osaka ranks sixth on the women's alternate list. Wawrinka is men's seventh alternate with Murray the 26th alternate and Thiem, who says he plans to retire after 2024, the 36th alternate.

The US Open field will also include 16 wild cards, eight each in the men's and women's field, and 16 qualifiers each for the men and women.

## Quinn, Spizzirri Win in Newport



NEWPORT (Dispatches) - One year ago, American Ethan Quinn earned his first tour-level victory at the Infosys Hall of Fame Open in Newport. On Tuesday, he scored his second ATP Tour win at the same event with a 6-3, 6-7(3), 6-1 result against Aussie Marc Polmans. The win lifted Quinn five places to 10th place in the PIF ATP Live Race to Jeddah. With another victory against fourth seed Christopher Eubanks, the former NCAA singles champion would move into the top eight, further boosting his chances to qualify for the NextGen ATP Finals presented by PIF. Quinn was a constant threat on return in his first Lexus ATP Head2Head meeting with Polmans, converting on seven of 14 break chances, according to Infosys ATP Stats.

"Just make sure to put the pressure on him," the 20-year-old said of the key to the third set. "Second set he was serving very well. I just wanted to make sure I put in a lot of returns, a lot of first balls on my own serve and put a lot of pressure." Another former college standout, Eliot Spizzirri, also advanced to the second round Tuesday with a 6-1, 7-6(4) win over Australian qualifier Li Tu. The former University of Texas star, who saved four of five break points, next faces another Australian, World No. 65 Aleksandar Vukic. Brandon Nakashima continued his recent run of form with a 7-5, 6-2 win over Emilio Nava after dropping just five points on his first serve in 10 service games. The San Diego native improved to 12-10 on the year, just one victory shy of his 2023 match-wins tally of 13. Currently No. 53 in the PIF ATP Live Rankings, Nakashima is eyeing a return to the Top 50 this week. Should he win the title he could move beyond his career-high mark of No. 43.

## Mbappe Says Playing for Real Madrid Will Complete Childhood Dream

MADRID (Dispatches) - France forward Kylian Mbappe said on Tuesday he was so convinced he would one day play for Real Madrid that he began taking Spanish classes at school.

"Since I was a child, I knew my destiny was to play for Real Madrid," Mbappe said at a Bernabeu stadium packed with fans, many of them wearing replica shirts with his name.

The 2018 World Cup winner arrived at a press conference later clutching a model of the Bernabeu stadium he said he'd been given as an eight-year-old.

He surprised journalists by speaking in near flawless Spanish, which he said he had begun learning at school and then continued to practise with Spanish-speaking managers such as Luis Enrique and Mauricio Pochettino at Paris St Germain because he knew he would need to speak it one day at his dream club.

"I wasn't the best at school but I had this dream of playing for Real Madrid and I knew that speaking the language would help me adapt," he said.

Real Madrid announced in June that Mbappe was joining the LaLiga side as a free agent on a five-year contract, ending a transfer saga that had rumbled on for several years.

The club had courted Mbappe in the past but failed to land the player, who signed a contract extension with PSG in May 2022 when the Spanish club had a bid rejected.

Mbappe was met on stage at the unveiling ceremony by



compatriot and former Real Madrid player and manager Zinedine Zidane, who in 2012 had invited Mbappe to visit the club when he was 13-years-old, a visit that he described as an important moment in his life.

The forward won six Ligue 1 titles, four French cups and became PSG's record goal scorer with 256 goals during seven years in Paris but failed to win the Champions League or the Ballon d'Or.

Mbappe reached the semi-finals of the European Championship with France after breaking his nose in the first game against Austria.

He said he would speak to Real Madrid's medical team and manager Carlos Ancelotti before deciding whether to undergo surgery.

Mbappe, 25, joins a Madrid side already boasting stars such as Vinicius Jr. and Jude Bellingham and led by Ancelotti -- the most successful coach in Champions League history with five titles.

Mbappe has often played as a left-sided attacker for club and country, the same position preferred by Vinicius but did not envision fighting over positions.

"I can play in all three positions upfront. Where I'm going to play doesn't matter to me," he said. "I'm arriving (at the club) and have to adapt to the team."

## Southgate Resigns as England's Manager



LONDON (Dispatches) - Gareth Southgate said on Tuesday he was resigning as England manager, two days after they lost to Spain in the Euro 2024 final.

"It's time for change, and for a new chapter. Sunday's final in Berlin against Spain was my final game as England manager," Southgate said in a statement.

Names immediately bandied around as 53-year-old Southgate's successor are Newcastle manager Eddie Howe, and two former Chelsea handlers, Graham Potter and Mauricio Pochettino.

Football Association CEO Mark Bullingham said Southgate had "made the impossible job possible".

Southgate took over in 2016 when England's fortunes were at a low ebb, having exited the Euros after defeat to Iceland and then Sam Allardyce had to resign over a scandal.

In the last four tournaments Southgate led England to three semi-finals and two finals.

Prior to his appointment, the Three Lions had reached just three major tournament semi-finals and one final in their history, when they won the 1966 World Cup.

But despite changing the fortunes of the England team, Southgate was unable to land a first trophy for 58 years as England lost 2-1 to Spain on Sunday.

"Gareth has made the impossible job possible and laid strong foundations for future success," said Bullingham in a statement.

"In the 25 tournaments post 1966 before Gareth took charge, we had won seven knockout games.

"In his four tournaments we have won nine. So, in his eight years, he has won more games that really matter than in the previous 50 years.

"And of course, we have had strong tournament performances throughout their tenure.

"We came so close to winning the Euros in London and securing the first trophy for our men's team for over 50 years -- and came so close again in Berlin on Sunday."

Southgate, who is also credited for restoring pride and lustre to the team as well as turning the players into role models off the pitch, said the job had been a dream of a lifetime for him.

"As a proud Englishman, it has been the honour of my life to play for England and to manage England," he said.

"It has meant everything to me, and I have given it my all."

## Team USA Holds on to Beat Australia 98-92 in Tuneup for Paris Olympics



SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Anthony Davis scored 17 points and grabbed 14 rebounds, Tyrese Haliburton came up with a pair of late 3-pointers that helped stop a freefall by the Americans, and the U.S. beat Australia 98-92 to improve to 2-0 in its five-game slate of exhibitions leading into the Paris Olympics.

Devin Booker scored 16 for the U.S., Anthony Edwards scored 14 and three players -- LeBron James, Bam Adebayo and Joel Embiid -- finished with 10 for the Americans, who are playing host to a pair of exhibitions at Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, this week. They'll play Serbia there on Wednesday.

Jock Landale scored 20 for Australia, which got 17 from Josh Giddey and 14 from Dyson Daniels.

The U.S. led by 24 midway through the third quarter, yet saw that lead cut to six with 5:05 left after Australia went on a 39-21 run. But Haliburton had the next six points on his 3s, pushing the lead back to 92-80.

Australia cut it to four on two separate occasions, but Booker

went 4-for-4 from the line in the final 8 seconds to ensure the U.S. would escape.

"Third quarter, we started turning the ball over," U.S. coach Steve Kerr said. "We gave up a ton of points at the basket. Back cuts, offensive boards and so, the game shifted. It's a good lesson for us. Better to learn that lesson now than later. And this will be a good tape for us to watch. But I give Australia a ton of credit. They were great. They fought. They were really physical. Took it to us in the last quarter and a half and really made it a game."

Just like in the Canada game, the so-called second unit -- Haliburton, Jrue Holiday, Adebayo, Davis and Booker -- changed the game.

That was the group on the floor when the Americans took a game that was tied at 19-19 with 3:15 left in the first and turned it into a 39-23 lead -- a 20-4 run in a span of just over 5 minutes.

Kerr used that group as his starting five to open the second half. But it's become a clear trend already: when the U.S. goes to its bench and can replace All-Stars with other All-Stars, it's just going to be a massive problem for opponents who don't have anywhere near that same level of depth.

"The strength of our team is our depth and we have to utilize our depth," Kerr said.

It's been something the Americans have used to their advantage in the past. Dwyane Wade led the gold-medalist 2008 U.S. Olympic team in points, even though he was sixth in minutes on that team and came off the bench in all eight games.