

Brigadier General Qader Rahimzadeh, Commander of the Country's Khatam al-Anbia Air Defense Base Says the Country's Air Defenses Aim to Achieve Maximum Efficiency to Counter Enemies at a "Sensitive and Critical" Juncture

IRAN NEWS

President-Elect Masoud Pezeshkian, Stating That the Path of Martyr Soleimani Was One of Unity and Solidarity, Emphasized They Must Solve the Country's Problems by Emulating the Path and Principles of This Great Martyr and Through Unity

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2 DOMESTIC



Infection of 150 People with Dengue Fever

> SEE PAGE 2

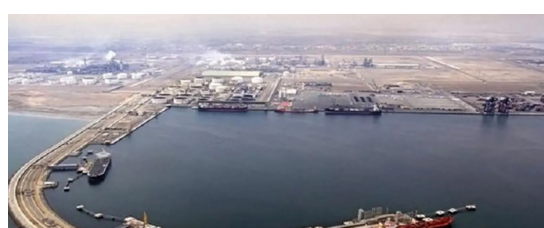
3 INTERNATIONAL

Top UN Court Says Israel's Occupation of Palestinian Territories Is Unlawful



> SEE PAGE 3

Part of Chabahar Contract with the Indian Operator Is Confidential



TEHRAN - Last week, the Managing Director of the Ports and Maritime Organization of Iran, in a press conference, responded to inquiry about the details of the contract with the Indian operator at Shahid Beheshti Port in Chabahar. The question was about what equipment the company should purchase and when. He stated that providing any information about foreign contracts could cause problems and lead to pressure from the United States on the Indians.

This has led to the ambiguity that this international contract with the only foreign port operator in Iran has been made confidential.

Ali Akbar Safaei, Managing Director of the Ports and Maritime Organization, in an interview with ILNA regarding the confidentiality of the contract with the Indian operator, given that there are many ambiguities in the drafting of the 10-year contract, said: "The contract with the Indian operator is not confidential, but some aspects of the contract have been made confidential."

In another response to whether any serious investor besides India had expressed readiness to invest in Shahid Beheshti Port, he stated: "We have serious demands for foreign investment in the hinterland, but there were no serious proposals from foreign companies to conduct operational activities at the wharf." The Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development also discussed the details of establishing a joint shipping company between Iran and India, which is one of the topics of this contract. He continued: "In the meeting with the Indian Minister of Ports and Shipping, it was announced that the joint shipping company between Iran and India should be revived. Iran and India had a joint shipping company active in the region at one time in the past, but we faced some problems, part of which was due to sanctions, and this company was dissolved." Safaei added: "Therefore, our Minister of Roads and Urban Development, in a meeting with his Indian counterpart, proposed that given the trade volume between the two countries, this company should be re-established. The Indian Minister of Ports and Shipping welcomed this proposal. Currently, we have raised this issue in negotiations with the Indian ambassador in Iran, but the counterpart also needs to reach a definitive policy to reactivate this company."

Iran Ready to Strengthen Integration for Regional Peace



TEHRAN - Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN Amir Saad Iravani made the remarks at the UNSC meeting with the topic: "UN cooperation with regional and sub-regional organizations in maintaining peace and security: the role of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization against terrorist threats".

In this remark, Iravani added: "Considering Afghanistan's challenges, Iran believes that the enhanced collaboration between these institutions has a significant capacity to strengthen stability and development in Afghanistan".

"In a more complex global environment, maintaining international peace and security requires coordinated responses at the national, and international levels, and strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and regional institutions is more important than ever", he added.

Iravani reiterated that Iran considers the role of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the Commonwealth of Independent States, very valuable in reinforcing the peace and security in the region and believes that the importance of multilateralism in dealing with global threats and challenges is very prominent.

He noted: As a new member of the SCO, which actively participated in the 24th summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) held in Astana on 3 and 4 July 2024, the Islamic Republic of Iran attaches great importance to effective and enhanced cooperation between the UN and SCO. Drug trafficking and other forms of transnational organized crime are significant concerns for Iran and offer opportunities for practical interactions between the UN and the SCO."

He added: "The SCO, with its multi-faceted structure, can actively contribute to international efforts by developing its regional capacity and aiding national governments in combating terrorism and extremism. The SCO also supports international efforts in conflict prevention and resolution, counter-terrorism through its Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), transnational crime prevention, combating illegal drugs, and ensuring international information security."

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



Current Condition of Iran, Despite Enormous Wealth, Not Befitting of Iranians

Tehran - The President-elect stated that poverty, the prevalence of koolbari or fuel-carrying, scavenging, and the shame of household heads before their families are absolutely unacceptable and unbearable to him. He emphasized that today's state of Iran, despite the country's enormous resources and capacities, is not worthy of the Iranian people. Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian, in a meeting with representatives of various terms and the 12th term of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, thanked the attendees and clarified: "The things I mentioned in my election campaign were not mere slogans and promises but were my heartfelt beliefs that I have lived by my whole life." The President-elect stated that injustice is a significant oppression in everyone's eyes, and no one has the right to exclude a group or faction for the growth of a select few. "We are all like brothers and sisters to each other, and this country belongs to all of us. However, we must admit that the current state of our Iran is not worthy of us. Overcoming the current problems requires moving beyond differences and collaborating and showing solidarity to build Iran." Pezeshkian pointed out that poverty, the prevalence of koolbari or fuel-carrying, scavenging, and the shame of household heads before their families are entirely unacceptable and unbearable to him. He stated: "Today's state of Iran, despite the country's enormous resources and capacities, is not worthy of the Iranian people. We need to set aside the power struggles and work together to rebuild the country." The President-elect said: "If we love all people with all our hearts, stand against oppression and injustice, and treat friends and enemies with fairness, will 60% of the people still refrain from participating in elections? The reason for the people's dissatisfaction is that we not only fail to treat them with kindness but also respond to them with batons and clubs." Pezeshkian identified his most important duty as the elected representative of the people to be serving all people without discrimination, practicing fairness, and striving to secure the rights of all, regardless of ethnicity, religion, and gender. He emphasized: "When I, as a responsible person, allocate opportunities to my friends and

acquaintances and exclude anyone who is not with me, I am taking a path of misguidance, which ultimately leads to severe punishment. This severe punishment is a situation where we are entangled in problems but cannot resolve them." The President-elect stressed that the problem lies more in our own performance than in the enmity of enemies like the United States. He said: "If we join hands, entrust work to experts and talented individuals, and allow all those concerned about Iran to participate in affairs, the country will prosper." Pezeshkian reiterated that he does not see himself as superior to others, stating: "If I am treated as if I have become someone due to the people's trust, I will be afraid of myself. I am the same person I always was and do not accept any additional respect because of my position." The President-elect emphasized: "My belief is in the words of Imam Ali, who said that if I am on the right path, accompany me, and if I go astray, warn me. If you praise me unjustly and give me undue respect, I might think I have become someone important. It is you who can turn me into an unconventional person, otherwise, I have not changed at all, and a heavy responsibility has been placed on me, which I need your help to fulfill." Pezeshkian concluded by stating that the election competition has ended, and now is the time for national unity and solidarity to solve problems and advance the country. "If we all unite, hold hands, and bring the existing capabilities and capacities in the country into play, we will certainly succeed in achieving the outlined goals." Before the President-elect's speech, various representatives including Nasser Nasiri, Hadi Shushitari, Ahmad Hemmati, Yadollah Eslami, and Abdolreza Azizi representing different terms of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, Fereyda Olad Ghabad representing female representatives of different terms, Moeinoddin Saedi representing religious minority representatives of various terms, as well as Mohammad Reza Sabaqian Balqi, Mohammad Jalali, Reza Sepahvand, Ghodrat-Ali Heshmatian, and Gholamreza Nouri Ghezjeljeh from the 12th term also shared their views.

Iran Turns Controversial Zangezur Corridor Into the Aras Corridor



TEHRAN - Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash stated at a press conference today that the Iran Road Project was defined with the aim of re-establishing Iran's corridor role in regional dynamics. Official transit statistics reflect the status of this major project, showing that in the year 1402 (2023-2024), the country broke its transit record, reaching a total of 17 million tons for rail and road transit. This is in contrast to the highest figure in 1393 (2014-2015), which was around 13 million tons.

He continued: "Road transit increased by 58% last year compared to 1401 (2022-2023), and in the first four months of this year, we observed a 56% growth in transit, with a 70% increase in road transit during the same period."

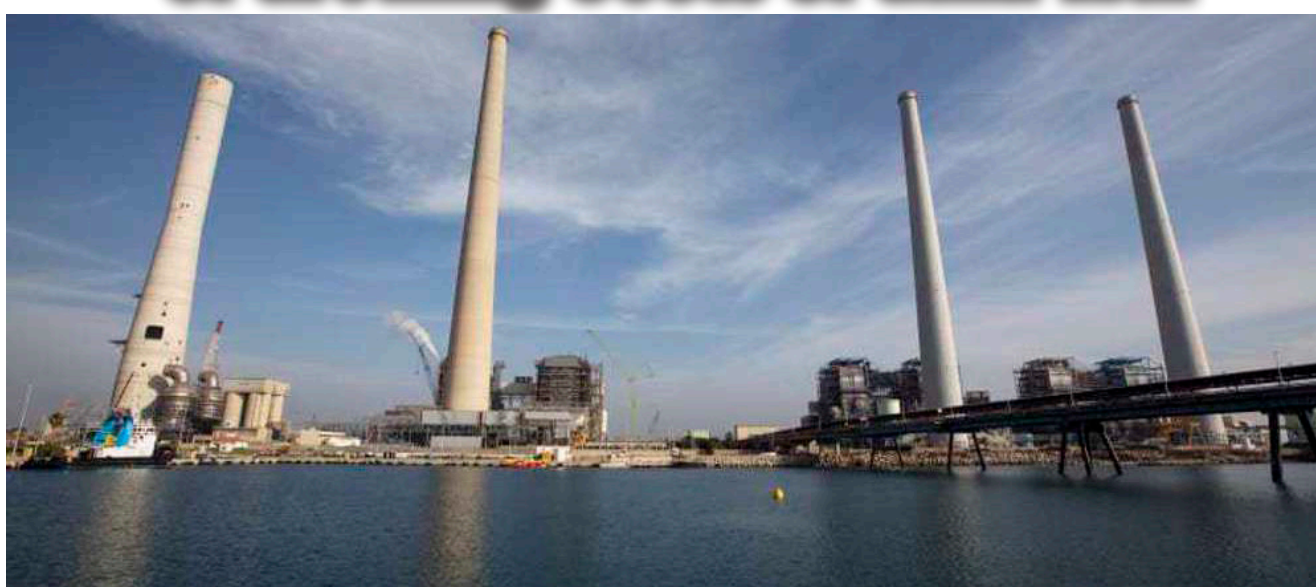
The Minister of Roads and Urban Development emphasized: "According to the Seventh Development Plan, the target for transit in the first year of this plan was set at 16 million tons. However, with this trend, the transit volume will exceed 22 million tons by the end of this year. This success, which was a long-standing aspiration of the country in the transit sector, is the result of improved relations with neighboring countries, and we have achieved an unprecedented transit record in the past decade."

Bazrpash discussed the development of the country's transit corridors, saying: "One of the significant actions of the government in this area was transforming the controversial Zangezur Corridor into the Aras Corridor. Today, the implementation of this project between Azerbaijan and Iran is underway, and during the last visit of the Martyr President to this project, the physical progress was described as unbelievable."

He added: "Another transit project is the Rasht-Astara railway, which will, in any case, take time to execute the contract between Iran and Russia."

Bazrpash also announced that over 2.6 million units of the National Housing Movement are currently under construction, and stated: "Central Bank statistics show a growth in housing production and construction from a negative 6.9% in 2021 to a positive 7.1% at the end of 2023 (a total growth of 14%)."

Iraqi Resistance Group Warns Israel of Growing Costs of Gaza War



BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - The leader of Iraq's Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq anti-terror resistance group has warned Israel of "growing costs" of its continuing ground and aerial invasion of the besieged Gaza Strip.

"The Zionist enemy will pay a much greater price in terms of security, economy, and even its existence as long as it continues its aggression," Qais al-Khazali said in a statement on Friday.

He praised all forces of the Axis of Resistance, who are fighting off the Israeli war on Gaza for more than nine months.

"Resistance groups are fighting an honorable battle in defense of the Muslim Ummah's sanctities, while Arab and Muslim governments are reluctant to take any concrete measure," Khazali said.

The Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq chief noted that the latest drone strike by Yemeni forces on Tel Aviv, alongside previous operations by regional resistance groups, "clearly shows that Palestinians are not alone in standing up against the Israeli aggression."

He said Israel's delusion of grandeur has been shattered and that the continuation of Gaza atrocities will incur dramatic losses on the "Zionist enemy".

Khazali emphasized that the rules of engagement are constantly changing, but their outcomes always align with justice.

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq has been launching attacks on Israeli targets ever since Tel Aviv launched its war on Gaza last October.

The resistance has been also hitting American military bases in Iraq and neighboring Syria in retaliation for Washington's support for the Israeli war.

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq said it has carried out a new retaliatory operation against an Israeli target in the occupied Palestinian territories.

In a statement, the umbrella group of resistance factions said on Saturday morning it used an Al-Arqaq cruise missile to hit a military target in Haifa on Friday.

The Iraqi resistance said the attack was a response to the Israeli massacre of Palestinian civilians in Gaza, including women, children and the elderly.

"Continuing in our path of resisting the occupation, in support of our people in Palestine, and response to the massacres committed by the usurping entity against civilians, including children, women, and the elderly, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, at dawn today, Friday, 19-7-2024, attacked a military target in occupied Haifa with an 'Arqaq' advanced cruise missile," the statement said.

Tehran Denies Damaged Tankers Carrying Iranian Crude Oil



TEHRAN - According to Shana, on Friday two tankers collided off the coast of Singapore. The incident was quickly reported by major global news agencies, with some, like Reuters and Bloomberg, claiming that a giant tanker (VLCC) involved in the incident was carrying 2 million barrels of Iranian crude oil destined for China. Iran's Oil Ministry has officially stated that none of the damaged tankers were related to Iran. Furthermore, the cargo of crude oil on neither of the damaged tankers is associated with Iran or owned by Iran. According to published documents, the supertanker "Series 1" is registered under the flag of São Tomé and Príncipe, an island country in the Gulf of Guinea off the west coast of Africa. The other tanker involved in the collision is Singaporean. It is unclear why Western media would attribute the cargo of this giant tanker to Iran, especially given that Iran has managed to increase its oil production and exports despite U.S. sanctions. According to reports two large oil tankers were on fire after colliding near Singapore, the world's biggest refuelling port, with two crew members airlifted to hospital and others rescued from life rafts, authorities and one of the tanker operators said. Singapore is Asia's biggest oil-trading hub and the world's largest bunkering port. Its surrounding waters are vital trade waterways between Asia and Europe and the Middle East and among the busiest global sea lanes. The Singapore-flagged tanker Hafnia Nile and the Sao Tome and Principe-flagged tanker Ceres I were about 55 km (34 miles) northeast of the Singaporean island of Pedra Branca on the eastern approach to the Singapore Straits, the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) said.

IRAN NEWS



Iran, Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan Seek to Develop Eastern Route of North-South Corridor

TEHRAN - The Ministry of Transport of Kazakhstan announced that Iran, Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan signed the development roadmap of the eastern route of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) for 2024-2025.

The implementation of this document will increase the operational capacity of the corridor to 15 million tons per year by 2027 and to 20 million tons by 2030. The Kazakh minister of transport said that Kazakhstan plans to continue its active participation in the development of the eastern route of the North-South International Transport Corridor, which has the highest capacity for cargo flow growth until 2030.

He continued asserting that this corridor is the safest and shortest transportation route to the Indian Ocean.

"Therefore, it is necessary to start the road map signed today in the context of the simultaneous development of the potential of the eastern route of this corridor from the territory of Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkmenistan and Iran," he added.

The document was signed at the first Trade and Export Forum of the North-South International Transport Corridor in Aktau, Kazakhstan.

Iran's Electricity Consumption Equals 60% of That of 27 EU States



TEHRAN - The head of the Electricity Distribution Research Institute at the Nirop (Power) Research Institute said, "Our country's energy consumption alone is more than half the consumption of the 27 member countries of the European Union. In other words, we consume 60% of the energy used by 27 European Union member countries."

Mojtaba Gilvanejad stated, "Since most of our country's electricity is generated by burning gas, rising temperatures not only reduce production efficiency but also increase the country's energy consumption." He continued, "Considering that the current heat in the country and even worldwide is unprecedented, the Earth has been breaking heat records for 16 consecutive months, putting the country's transmission and distribution system in an unprecedented situation." He added, "With each degree of temperature increase, the electricity grid load increases by about 1800 megawatts, and the capacity of electricity production and network facilities decreases by more than 400 megawatts. This means that with each degree increase in temperature, the imbalance between production and consumption adds more than 2200 megawatts to the grid. Therefore, for each degree increase, the difference between load and production, or the increase in load and shortage of production, reaches 2200 megawatts, causing an imbalance."

Gilvanejad emphasized that the solution to overcoming these tough conditions lies in managing and reducing consumption. He added, "Managing and reducing consumption is the most important strategy that can currently be suggested, a practice that is continuously carried out worldwide throughout the year."

He concluded by comparing Iran's energy consumption to that of EU countries, reiterating, "Our country's energy consumption alone is more than half the consumption of the 27 member countries of the European Union. In other words, we consume 60% of the energy used by 27 European Union member countries."



Unifying Exchange Rates Will Increase Inflation

TEHRAN - The representative of Tehran to Majlis, regarding the potential unification of exchange rates under the new government, said: "This action will lead to higher prices because we have previous experience with such policies in the country. It would be better for the government to follow a policy of removing the dollar from Iran's economy, which would strengthen the national currency and reduce inflation."

Kamran Ghazanfari commented on President Pezeshkian's economic approach: "We have to wait and see whom he will appoint for various ministries. However, the initial positions Pezeshkian took after the election results regarding Hezbollah, Hamas, Russia, and China were positive. They continue the foreign policy of the Raisi government. We hope this trend is not temporary and that foreign policy continues on this path." He emphasized: "Regarding domestic policies and economic policy, Pezeshkian repeatedly stated during the election debates that he does not have a specific idea and needs to consult experts' opinions. Therefore, it is still unclear what he intends to do. However, a report has been published indicating that he plans to use Tayebnia as the Minister of Economy or as a significant member of the cabinet. If this is true, considering Tayebnia's recent statements about unifying exchange rates, we should expect increased inflation. Previous governments, due to improper currency policies, have never managed to maintain a single exchange rate for more than a short period. After that, multiple exchange rates would reappear, and the free market rate would become the official rate, while a new, higher free market rate would emerge. This situation resulted in severe inflation for the people."

The Tehran representative in Parliament stressed: "If the new government follows this policy and does not pursue removing the dollar from Iran's economy, the outlook will not be good. The fact is that eliminating the dollar benefits the people and the country and will reduce inflation. Currently, the government uses national currencies in its trade transactions with some countries, for example, with Russia and China. But this trend should be expanded to include other major trading partners." Ghazanfari continued: "Bilateral monetary agreements are essential in this context. Removing the dollar strengthens the national currency. Russia did this after the US and Europe imposed sanctions in recent years. After the start of the Ukraine war, the West sanctioned Russia, causing the ruble's value to fall. In response, Russia told Europeans that gas purchases must be made in rubles. This action not only compensated for the 20% drop in the ruble's value but also increased its value compared to before the sanctions. We should do something similar with major buyers of our oil, gas, and petrochemical products. For instance, we could require 50% of the payment for exported goods to be made in rials. This action will ultimately reduce inflation."



TEHRAN - Abdolreza Miroliaee, Program Manager for the Management of Diseases Transmitted by Invasive Aedes at the Ministry of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education, discussed the latest status of combating the Aedes mosquito and dengue fever in an interview with ILNA reporter. He stated that climate changes have caused the spread of mosquitoes in various countries. Given that many regions in the country have conditions suitable for the establishment and proliferation of mosquitoes, we have captured the Aedes mosquito in several provinces. He continued, saying that these conditions exist in our country as well, and we must not allow the Aedes mosquito to spread and cause disease among our compatriots. Therefore, the important point is to quickly identify the mosquito where it is spreading. Our neighboring countries are mostly contaminated with the Aedes mosquito, meaning they either have the Aedes mosquito or both the Aedes mosquito and dengue fever, so they are considered infected countries. Miroliaee emphasized that in the next one to two months, due to changing weather and cooler temperatures, the countries along the southern coast of the Persian Gulf will also have cooler temperatures. This will increase mosquito activity, and whenever mosquito activity increases, the chance of disease increases as well. Therefore, now is the time to prepare so that when the weather gets cooler, we can prevent mosquito proliferation and disease. Miroliaee noted that besides monitoring and surveying border areas and provinces like Gilan, Bushehr, and Hormozgan, we are also monitoring neighboring provinces because we suspect that the mosquito may infiltrate from provinces where it has already been captured into neighboring provinces. Therefore, we have carried out monitoring, and we are currently surveying the mosquito in Mazandaran province and Ramsar county. Fortunately, we have found this mosquito at the border of Gilan and Mazandaran provinces in Ramsar county, and we have taken control measures. Currently, this mosquito has not spread to other parts of Mazandaran. He continued, mentioning that in recent days, in Bilehsavar county in Ardabil province, which borders Azerbaijan, we had set up surveillance nets and identified the Aedes albopictus mosquito there. Control measures have been initiated by my colleagues in this area. It is very positive that the health surveillance system is alert and identifies the mosquito as soon as it enters an area, and we are hopeful that we can fully control this mosquito to prevent its spread. He also emphasized that environmental improvement and cleanliness should be seriously considered. This mosquito, as stated, can grow due to poor waste management and if sewage or garbage is left in public areas. Additionally, there may be mosquito habitats in residential homes that have not been eliminated, posing a risk of spreading in homes and cities. We urgently need public cooperation in combating this mosquito. As stated, if water collects in flowerpot saucers, water containers under air conditioners, abandoned tires in streets, or in the walls of gardens, this mosquito can lay eggs. Therefore, it is crucial for people to assist alongside organizations responsible for environmental sanitation in public areas to make conditions unfavorable for the mosquito's habitat. Miroliaee stated that cases of the disease from the UAE have remained stable in recent weeks, meaning no new patients from the UAE have entered our country. Despite flights from the Persian Gulf countries, the Oman Sea, Qatar, and the UAE at our ports and international airports, no new patients have been identified.

Ruble Has No Buyers in Iran



TEHRAN - An economic expert discussed non-dollar transactions between Iran and Russia, emphasizing that the rial is beneficial for Russia. This is because neighboring countries can easily convert rials to dollars in Iran or convert them into high-quality assets like real estate.

In an interview with ILNA, Albert Boghzhian elaborated on Iran-Russia economic relations without the dollar. He stated that any transaction requires an exchange of value that serves as currency, meaning it must be countable and capable of preserving its value. However, in barter transactions, there is no currency involved. For instance, importing fruit equivalent to the value of one million barrels of oil.

He continued, stating that when money is used in transactions, such as those conducted in dirhams, both parties avoid concerns about barter exchanges. Additionally, the dirham's relationship with the dollar is stable, and it can be used globally. Nonetheless, no currency has the same dominance as the dollar. Even if all global transactions were in dollars, the dollar would still prevail.

This economic expert pointed out that Russian currency does not count as an international currency or a global reserve. Prudent countries either store gold or dollars, and even the euro is printed only as needed in Europe, not excessively to end up with smugglers. Therefore, if Iran holds rubles, they can only be spent in Russia.

When Iran's reserves include yuan and rubles, issues arise when trading with countries like India that do not accept these currencies.

Boghzhian added that BRICS countries use their own currencies in transactions to reduce dollar dominance. When a country is sanctioned, dollar transactions in banks are traceable, whereas ruble and yuan transactions are not monitored, enabling sanction circumvention.

Regarding the economic benefit of the rial and ruble for sanctioned countries like Iran and Russia with weak currencies, Boghzhian emphasized that the rial is more advantageous for Russia. Neighboring countries can easily convert rials to dollars in Iran due to high-volume exchanges of rial to dollar in places like Herat, Sulaymaniyah, and the UAE. They can also convert rials to high-quality assets like real estate. Iran allows unlimited money to enter any transaction, which in other countries would be suspected of money laundering. However, rubles cannot be converted to dollars anywhere in the world, making them useless for Iran.

Russians can easily convert rials to dollars, but Iranians face issues with ruble transactions. This also applies to countries like Iraq, where the central bank has been distributing dinars to travelers for years. Transactions between Iraq and Iran are in dinars, and the central bank uses dinar reserves for this purpose. People are aware that converting dinars to dollars in Iraq incurs high fees, over 15%, causing dissatisfaction.

Boghzhian stated that rubles have no buyers in Iran, and some economic activists face conversion issues. Conversely, the US can print unlimited dollars without affecting its economy because these dollars are circulated globally by currency smugglers due to dollar-based transactions.

In Iran, dirhams are in demand and play a crucial role in determining the dollar rate. Initially, the dirham rate is set, and the dollar rate in Iran is calculated based on it. Converting dirhams to dollars is straightforward in the UAE, and vice versa. Economic activists do not face the same issues with dirhams as they do with rubles. Any amount of dirhams can be converted to dollars with low fees, and global trade websites now list prices in dirhams.

64% Progress in National Information Network



TEHRAN - The Minister of Communications and Information Technology announced that the progress of the National Information Network has increased from approximately 20% at the beginning of the thirteenth government to 64%. About 18 years ago, the idea of developing the "National Information Network" was proposed to provide users with a secure and high-speed communication network. This plan, which aimed to reduce dependency on the global internet and ensure the country's independence in this field, has been on the agenda since 2005. The realization of the National Information Network leads to higher quality access and better services for the people. Multiple agencies have been working towards this network's realization for years, and the National Center for Cyberspace has set the benchmarks and objectives for assessing this network according to the grand plan and architecture document of the National Information Network, approved by the Supreme Council of Cyberspace. The progress of the network is measured based on these benchmarks and objectives. By reviewing the progress of these goals and benchmarks, the overall progress of the National Information Network is also estimated. These goals mainly focus on increasing internet speed, improving the quality of access to domestic services and content, providing high-speed access for businesses and educational centers, and facilitating access to new technologies. The evaluation process of the National Information Network started in late September last year. According to a statement by "Isa Zarepour," the Minister of Communications and Information Technology, on his Iranian social media page, the progress of the National Information Network has increased from around 20% at the beginning of the thirteenth government to approximately 64%.

Power Supply to Various Sectors Depends on Consumption Management



TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Minister of Energy stated that due to an unprecedented rise in temperatures over the next two weeks, the country's electricity consumption needs will see a significant increase. He emphasized that power supply to various sectors can be achieved through consumption management. Ali Akbar Mehrabian, in a meeting on managing electricity consumption during the hot season at the National Dispatching Center of the Iran Grid Management Company, attended by senior officials of the electricity industry, said: "As weather reports indicate, we will witness an unprecedented rise in temperatures across the country over the next two weeks. This simultaneous temperature rise in different parts of the country will lead to a significant increase in electricity consumption demand." He continued: "The establishment of a heat dome and the severe temperature increase is not limited to Iran; the entire West Asia region is facing these conditions. Reports show that some Persian Gulf countries, despite having suitable infrastructure in the electricity sector, have had to implement power outages." The Minister of Energy noted that despite the substantial increase in temperatures, the national power grid in Iran remains stable. Mehrabian said: "Given the special conditions we are in, all sectors of the electricity industry, including power plants, the transmission sector, and the distribution sector, are on full alert and are making every effort to maximize electricity production and distribution to various consumption sectors." He continued: "In the production sector, we are at the highest possible capacity serving various sectors." Regarding the meeting on managing electricity production and consumption at the National Dispatching Center on Saturday morning, the Minister noted: "In this meeting, the country's electricity production capacity through various power plant units such as thermal, renewable, nuclear, and hydroelectric was reviewed. It was decided that the limited units that are out of operation due to maintenance will return to production by tomorrow noon, ensuring we serve the various electricity-consuming sectors with the highest possible capacity."

Tunisia's President to Seek Re-Election

TUNIS (Dispatches) - Tunisian President Kais Saied, who grabbed wide-ranging powers two years after his 2019 election, announced on Friday he will seek a new five-year term in an election set for October.

"I officially announce my candidacy for the October 6 presidential election in order to keep up the fight in the battle for national liberation," Saied, who has ruled by decree since suspending parliament in July 2021, said in a video released by his office.

Speaking in the southern region of Tataouine, the 66-year-old said he was answering the "country's sacred call" which left him no choice but to run for a second term.

Several would-be challengers to the president who had announced their candidacy are either in prison or being prosecuted.

In his announcement Friday, Saied called on "everyone preparing to sponsor (candidates) to steer off any corruption".



Democratic Calls Mount for Biden to End Campaign



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Joe Biden vowed on Friday to continue his campaign for reelection even as more fellow Democrats in Congress urged him to end his floundering campaign, fearing that it could cost the party dearly in the Nov. 5 election.

More than one in 10 congressional Democrats have now publicly called on the 81-year-old incumbent -- who is isolating at his Delaware home with a case of COVID -- to drop out following a disastrous June debate against Republican Donald Trump that raised questions about Biden's ability to win or to carry out his duties for another four years.

Biden remained defiant, saying he would resume campaigning soon.

"I look forward to getting back on the campaign trail next week to continue exposing the threat of Donald Trump's Project 2025 agenda while making the case for my own record and the vision that I have for America," he said in a statement, referring to a policy plan developed by Trump's conservative allies.

The divide among Democrats stood in sharp contrast to the scenes that played out this week at the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, where former party rivals united around Trump, who accepted the Republican nomination in a rambling speech that featured his familiar mix of grievance and bombast. So far, 32 of the 264 Democrats in Congress have openly called for Biden to end his campaign, while other senior Democratic leaders have pushed him behind the scenes to do so, according to sources and media reports.



Top UN Court Says Israel's Occupation of Palestinian Territories Is Unlawful

THE HAGUE (Dispatches) - The International Court of Justice ruled Friday that Israel's presence in the occupied Palestinian Territories is illegal and called on it to stop building settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas hailed the decision while Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said it cannot alter the "legality of Israeli settlement in all the territories of our homeland". The top UN court said Friday that Israel's presence in the Palestinian Territories is "unlawful" and called on it to end and for settlement construction to stop immediately, issuing an unprecedented, sweeping condemnation of Israel's rule over the lands it captured 57 years ago. In a non-binding opinion, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) pointed to a wide list of policies, including the building and expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, use of the area's natural resources, the annexation and imposition of permanent control over lands and discriminatory policies against Palestinians, all of which it said violated international law. The 15-judge panel said Israel's "abuse of its status as the occupying power" renders its "presence in the occupied Palestinian territory unlawful." It says its continued presence was "illegal" and should be ended as "rapidly as possible." It said Israel must end settlement construction immediately and that existing settlements must be removed, according to the 83-page opinion read out by court President Nawaf Salam. Israel, which normally considers the United Nations and international tribunals as unfair and biased, did not send a legal team to the hearings. But it submitted written comments, saying that the questions put to the court are prejudiced and fail to address Israeli security concerns. Israeli officials have said the court's intervention could undermine the peace process, which has been stagnant for more than a decade. The Palestinian militant group Hamas, which rules the Gaza Strip, called for "immediate" international action to end Israel's occupation of the Palestinian Territories after the ICJ issued its ruling. A statement from the group, which has been fighting Israel in Gaza since leading the deadly October 7 attacks on southern Israel, said the ruling puts "the international system

before the imperative of immediate action to end the occupation".

The office of Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas welcomed a "historic" decision by the ICJ. "The presidency welcomes the decision of the International Court of Justice, considers it a historic decision and demands that Israel be compelled to implement it," it said in a statement on its official news agency shortly after the ruling was made public.

In response to the ruling, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said the West Bank and East Jerusalem were part of the Jewish people's historical "homeland". "The Jewish people are not conquerors in their own land -- not in our eternal capital Jerusalem and not in the land of our ancestors in Judea and Samaria," he said in a post on X. "No false decision in The Hague will distort this historical truth and likewise the legality of Israeli settlement in all the territories of our homeland cannot be contested." The court's opinion, sought by the UN General Assembly after a Palestinian request, is unlikely to affect Israel's policy. But its resounding breadth -- including saying Israel could not claim sovereignty in the territories and was impeding Palestinians' right to self-determination -- could impact international opinion. It came against the backdrop of Israel's devastating 10-month military assault on Gaza, which was triggered by the October 7 attacks. In a separate case, the ICJ is considering a South African claim that Israel's campaign in Gaza amounts to genocide, a claim that Israel vehemently denies. Israel captured the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians seek all three areas for an independent state. Israel considers the West Bank to be disputed territory, whose future should be decided in negotiations, while it has moved population there in settlements to solidify its hold. It has annexed East Jerusalem in a move that is not internationally recognized. It withdrew from Gaza in 2005 but maintained a blockade of the territory after Hamas took power there in 2007. The international community generally considers all three areas to be occupied territory.



U.S.-Japan Patriot Missile Production Plan Hits Boeing Component Roadblock

TOKYO (Dispatches) - A U.S. plan to use Japanese factories to boost production of Patriot air defense missiles -- used by Ukraine to defend against Russian attacks -- is being delayed by a shortage of a critical component manufactured by Boeing, four sources said.

Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) already makes about 30 PAC-3 missiles each year under license from defense contractor Lockheed Martin and can increase that number to about 60, two Japanese government officials and two industry sources told Reuters.

The U.S. hopes to increase production from about 500 a year to more than 750 per year globally as soon as possible, a person familiar with the program said. But no expansion at all will be possible in Japan without additional supplies of the missiles' seekers, which guide them in the final stages of flight, the officials and industry sources said.

"It could take several years before MHI is able to raise output" because of the shortage, said one of the industry sources, who like the others declined to be identified because they are not authorized to speak to the media.

The production snag in Japan shows the challenges Washington faces in plugging industrial help from its global allies into its complex supply chains.

Boeing last year began expanding its seeker factory in the United States to increase production by 30%, although the additional lines won't operate until 2027. The company did not say last year how many were produced, but noted it had just delivered its 5,000th.

A Boeing representative referred questions to Lockheed Martin, the prime contractor for the interceptor.

Lockheed Martin has said it is increasing its U.S. output of Patriot interceptors from 500 to 650 by 2027. Each costs about \$4 million.

Even if enough seekers are available, expanding annual PAC-3 production in Japan beyond 60 would require MHI to build more capacity.

Global Tech Outage Eases After Widespread Disruption

LONDON (Dispatches) - Services from airlines to healthcare, shipping and finance were coming back online on Friday after a mistake in a security software update sparked hours-long global computer systems outages, another incident highlighting the vulnerability of the world's interconnected technologies.

After the outage was resolved, companies were dealing with backlogs of delayed and canceled flights and medical appointments, missed orders and other issues that could take days to resolve. Businesses also face questions about how to avoid future blackouts triggered by technology meant to safeguard their systems.

A software update by global cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike, one of the largest operators in the industry, triggered systems problems that grounded flights, forced broadcasters off air and left customers without access to services such as healthcare or banking. Global shipper FedEx faced major disruptions and some moderators who police content on Meta's Facebook were hit.

CrowdStrike is not a household name but it is an \$83 billion company with more than 20,000 subscribers around the world including Amazon.com, and Microsoft. CrowdStrike CEO George Kurtz said on social media platform X that a defect was found "in a single content update for Windows hosts" that affected Microsoft customers.

"We're deeply sorry for the impact that we've caused to customers, to travelers, to anyone affected by this, including our company," Kurtz told NBC News.

CrowdStrike has one of the largest shares of the highly competitive cybersecurity market, leading some industry analysts to question whether control over such operationally critical software should remain with just a handful of companies.

The outage also raised concerns that many organizations are not well prepared to implement contingency plans when a single point of failure such as an IT system, or a piece of software within it,



goes down. But these outages will happen again, experts say, until more contingencies are built into networks and organizations introduce better back-ups.

The scale of the outage was massive, but not yet quantifiable because it involved only systems that were running CrowdStrike software, said Ann Johnson, who heads Microsoft's security and compliance business.

"We have hundreds of engineers right now working directly with CrowdStrike to get customers back online," she said.

President Joe Biden was briefed on the outage, a White House official said. The U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency said it observed hackers using the outage for phishing and other malicious activities.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection said it was experiencing processing delays and working to mitigate issues related to international trade and travel. The Dutch and United Arab Emirates' foreign ministries also reported disruptions.

"This event is a reminder of how complex and intertwined our global computing systems are and how vulnerable they are," said Gil Luria, senior software analyst at D.A. Davidson.

"CrowdStrike and Microsoft will have a lot of work to do to make sure that it won't allow other systems and products to cause this kind of failure in the future," he said.

Air travel was immediately hit, because carriers depend on smooth scheduling that, when interrupted, can ripple into lengthy delays. Out of more than 110,000 scheduled commercial flights on Friday, 5,000 were canceled globally with more expected, according to aviation analytics firm Cirium.

Airports from Los Angeles to Singapore, Amsterdam and Berlin said airlines were checking in passengers with handwritten boarding passes, causing delays.

Protesters Storm Prison in Bangladesh, Death Toll Tops 100

DHAKA (Dispatches) - Bangladeshi student protesters stormed a prison and freed hundreds of inmates Friday as police struggled to quell unrest, with huge rallies in the capital Dhaka despite a police ban on public gatherings.

This week's clashes have killed at least 105 people, according to an AFP count of victims reported by hospitals, and emerged as a momentous challenge to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's autocratic government after 15 years in office.

Student protesters stormed a jail in the central Bangladeshi district of Narsingdi and freed the inmates before setting the facility on fire, a police officer told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"I don't know the number of inmates, but it would be in the hundreds," he added.

Dhaka's police force took the drastic step of banning all public gatherings for the day -- a first since protests began -- in an effort to forestall another day of violence.

"We've banned all rallies, processions and public gatherings in Dhaka today," police chief Habibur Rahman told AFP, adding the move was necessary to ensure "public safety".

That did not stop another round of confrontations between police and protesters

around the sprawling megacity of 20 million people, despite an internet shutdown aimed at frustrating the organisation of rallies.

"Our protest will continue," Sarwar Tushar, who joined a march in the capital and sustained minor injuries when it was violently dispersed by police, told AFP.

"We want the immediate resignation of Sheikh Hasina. The government is responsible for the killings."

At least 52 people were killed in the capital on Friday, according to a list drawn up by the Dhaka Medical College Hospital and seen by AFP.

Police fire was the cause of more than half of the deaths reported so far this week, based on descriptions given to AFP by hospital staff.

UN human rights chief Volker Turk said the attacks on student protesters were "shocking and unacceptable".

"There must be impartial, prompt and exhaustive investigations into these attacks, and those responsible held to account," he said in a statement.

The capital's police force earlier said protesters had on Thursday torched, vandalised and carried out "destructive activities" on numerous police and government offices.





Nadal Reaches Bastad Semis After Four-Hour Marathon

BASTAD (Dispatches) - Spain's Rafael Nadal trailed in the second set before overcoming No. 5 seed Cameron Norrie of Great Britain 6-4, 6-4 to reach the Nordea Open quarterfinals in Bastad, Sweden. The opening set was on serve before Nadal broke Norrie in the seventh game. He then fell behind 4-1 in the second before sweeping the last five games. He recorded 22 winners and only seven unforced errors. The unseeded Nadal will meet No. 4 seed Mariano Navone of Argentina next in his first quarterfinal since January. Navone was a 6-4, 6-2 winner against India's Sumit Nagal. Kazakhstan's Timofey Skatov ousted No. 3 seed Tallon Griekspoor of the Netherlands 1-6, 6-3, 6-4, and seventh-seeded Nuno Borges of Portugal rallied past countryman Henrique Rocha 1-6, 6-4, 6-0.

No. 5 seed Arthur Fils of France advanced to the quarterfinal in Germany with a 7-6 (3), 6-2 victory against Serbian Laslo Djere. Fils, 20, saved six of seven break points and became the fifth man to reach multiple Hamburg quarterfinals before the age of 21, a list that includes Novak Djokovic and Mats Wilander. Up next is No. 2 seed Holger Rune of Denmark, a 6-4, 6-3 winner over Argentina's Marco Trungelliti.

Top-seeded Alexander Zverev of Germany outlasted Frenchman Hugo Gaston 4-6, 6-2, 7-5 and No. 8 seed Zhizhen Zhang of China defeated Italy's Flavio Cobolli 6-1, 7-6 (5).

No. 3 seed Felix Auger-Aliassime of Canada moved into his fourth quarterfinal of the season with a 7-6 (6), 6-2 win over Germany's Yannick Hanfmann in Switzerland. Auger-Aliassime, seeking his maiden title on clay, fought off two set points in the opening set. He will face 2018 champion Matteo Berrettini of Italy next. The sixth-seeded Italian won 6-4, 6-2 over Daniel Elahi Galan of Colombia. Brazil's Gustavo Heide knocked out No. 2 seed

Ugo Humbert of France 6-7 (2), 6-2, 6-3, while Frenchman Quentin Halys defeated Lukas Klein of Slovakia 6-3, 6-7 (7), 6-4. No. 2 seed Marcos Giron shrugged off a slow start to record a 4-6, 7-5, 6-4 win against Benoit Paire of France in Newport, R.I.

Giron, who hit eight aces while capitalizing on Paire's nine double faults, will face Australia's Alex Bolt in the quarterfinals.

The afternoon in Newport saw two quarterfinal matches. No. 3 seed Alex Michelsen hung on for a 6-4, 6-4 win over Aleksandar Kovacevic, overcoming Kovacevic's 12 aces without a double fault. Reilly Opelka defeated Mackenzie McDonald 4-6, 6-3, 6-4.

Meanwhile Reilly Opelka hammered 27 aces in a 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 victory over Mackenzie McDonald to book a semi-final meeting with Alex Michelsen at the ATP grass-court tournament in Newport, Rhode Island. Opelka, playing on a wild card in his first tournament in almost two years, became the lowest-ranked player to reach a semi-final in the ATP era, having fallen to 1,188th in the world as he recovered from hip and wrist operations. "There is a bit of a good element to that," said Opelka, who shocked top seed and defending champion Adrian Mannarino in the previous round. "Let's just call it like it is, these guys don't want to lose to a guy that hasn't played in two years," Opelka said.

"I'm playing with house money. It allows me to be a little bit more free and there's extra nerves on the other side of the net."

But Opelka, who last played at Washington in 2022 when he was ranked 17th in the world, acknowledged he has some rust to shake off before a hoped-for appearance at the US Open in August.

Norris Stays the Nice Guy and Tops Hungarian Practice



BUDAPEST (Dispatches) - McLaren's Lando Norris said he had no intention of changing his "nice guy" behaviour after he outpaced world champion Max Verstappen of Red Bull to top the times on Friday in a sweltering second free practice ahead of this weekend's Hungarian Grand Prix.

The 24-year-old Briton, who trails Red Bull's three-time champion by 84 points in the drivers' title race, reacted on and off the track after it was suggested he is not ruthless or aggressive enough to be a consistent winner.

In a closely-fought session, he clocked a best time of one minute and 17.788 seconds to beat his friend and rival Verstappen, a driver with a more rugged reputation, by 0.243 seconds.

Shrugging aside suggestions that he is "too nice" to be a consistent on-track winner, Norris showed once again that he and McLaren have the potential to win Sunday's race.

"I don't care what people say," he countered to those who believe his behaviour on track is too respectful.

"I'm a nice guy and I try to be respectful in every way I can, but that has zero relevance to what happens on the track. What happened 10 years, 15 or 20 years ago is completely different from today.

"If I wanted to, I could be a lot more of a jerk and act like an idiot, that kind of character, to make people think I'm ruthless, but I don't need to and I don't want to."

Recent ill-luck with team tactics and decision-making has deprived him of four potential victories following his maiden triumph in Miami, but Norris has avoided complaining or blaming his McLaren team.

Eubanks and Giron Advance to Newport ATP Semis Matchup

NEW PORT (Dispatches) - Chris Eubanks won five of the last six points in a third-set tiebreaker to defeat Australia's Aleksandar Vukic on Friday and reach the ATP Hall of Fame Open semi-finals. The 28-year-old American eliminated Vukic 6-2, 4-6, 7-6 (7/3) after two hours and five minutes in the grass-court event at Newport, Rhode Island. "The match had a lot of ups and downs. Third set I really caught a good rhythm and that energized me," Eubanks said. "After I got that first hold in the third set I felt like myself again. I was enjoying it. I was really pleased with how I played and how I competed. Excited to get another win." Eubanks, who won his only prior ATP final on Mallorca grass in June 2023, advanced to a Saturday semi-final against US second seed Marcos Giron, who ousted Aussie qualifier Alex Bolt 6-4, 6-1 to create an all-American last four. Giron reached his third



ATP semi-final of the year, all on home soil. He lost to Tommy Paul in February's Dallas final and dropped a Delray Beach semi-final to Taylor Fritz. The other semi-final will send wild card Reilly Opelka, in his first tournament since 2022 at Washington, against 19-year-old Alex Michelsen, last year's Newport runner-up. Opelka, at 1,188th in the world, is the lowest-ranked player in the ATP era to reach a semi-final, having tumbled during his absence following hip and wrist operations. Eubanks, ranked 128th, was only 6-15 in ATP matches this year until his Newport run. Vukic, who fell to 8-2 this year in deciding-set tiebreakers, surrendered a double fault to give Eubanks a 4-2 lead and Eubanks followed with a forehand winner. They exchanged errant forehands before the sixth-seeded Aussie netted a forehand volley to hand fourth-seeded Eubanks the triumph.

Pogacar Wins 19th Stage to Close on Tour de France Triumph



ISOLA (Dispatches) - Tadej Pogacar climbed to a convincing victory on stage 19 of the Tour de France, extending his overall lead over defending champion Jonas Vingegaard to close on a historic Tour-Giro double.

With two tough stages remaining, the 2020 and 2021 Tour de France champion Pogacar leads Vingegaard by 5min 3sec. Remco Evenepoel remains third, now at 7min 1sec.

Pogacar is also two stages away from a Giro d'Italia and Tour de France double, which would be a first in 26 years.

A dominant and confident Pogacar had promised to attack here on the "Queen" stage with its massive mountains. He came into stage 19 with a 3min 11sec lead over Vingegaard, with Evenepoel at 5min 11sec in third.

"He set a terrible pace, he was just stronger," said Belgian Evenepoel. "I was hoping Vingegaard might wilt, but he did well."

A happy Pogacar, who lives in nearby Monaco, celebrated at the line with his girlfriend.

"It helps that I live near here, I've trained here a lot and well, I also had good legs," said Pogacar, who raced sparingly this spring. "Coming second in the Tour gave me a lot of motivation to get better. This is no chance thing that I'm here." Previous weak moments for the Team UAE rider have come at altitude and in hot weather as he let slip the last two Tour de France titles to the Dane Vingegaard. So the 25-year-old will have been happy riding under overcast skies as the mercury dipped to 18.5 Celsius (65 Fahrenheit). There was plenty of altitude on the menu however as the pack first crossed the fan-packed Col de la Bonette, a 23km climb at 7 percent average gradient to the dizzying altitude of 2,800m. The final climb to Isola 2000 ski resort is hardly less crushing and Pogacar attacked with a jaw-dropping 10km to go.

He left his rivals trailing and chewed up the attackers in quick succession.

Matteo Jorgenson ended up second on the stage at 21sec. Simon Yates, who had led much of the way, dropped to third at 40sec. Richard Carapaz was fourth at 1min 11sec and Evenepoel fifth with Vingegaard on his wheel.

Vingegaard won his two titles by tailing Pogacar doggedly, wearing the more attack-minded rider down.

But on Friday, Vingegaard looked haggard as he slumped over his handlebars at the Isola ski resort.

Man Utd Have Less Depth Than Premier League Rivals



AMSTERDAM (Dispatches) - Manchester United are still in the process of building their squad and have less depth than many of their Premier League rivals, manager Erik ten Hag said on Friday, as he blamed injuries for last season's disappointing eighth placed finish. Ten Hag earlier this month extended his contract until 2026 despite speculation he would be fired after a poor season, where they managed to put on some gloss with FA Cup success at the end of the campaign. He

called a total of 61 matches for his club in all competitions last season "simply bizarre". "That's really too much. We are not the only team that struggled with injuries, other clubs had the same," he told the Dutch daily Algemeen Dagblad on Friday.

"Last season we had constantly injuries for players in the same positions, all at the back. At one point we had almost no defenders available.

"When we started here, United hadn't won a trophy for six years and it really wasn't because they didn't have good managers here. It does say something about the composition and quality of the player group. I knew that when I started, of course, but they were players with long-term contracts. "We were and still are in that process (of building). If you compare our squad with other top clubs in the Premier League, we are certainly a bit less in terms of depth. That is exactly why we found it so difficult to deal with those injuries." Ten Hag's position look almost untenable as last season headed to a close but the 2-1 win over Manchester City in the FA Cup final at Wembley looked to save his job. "There was so much going on at that stage but I still firmly believed that we could win that final. The most important thing of all was to convey that belief to my team. I had to be careful that the entire environment did not become negative in advance," Ten Hag explained. He said he was not concerned about his future at the club. "If United's management find someone tomorrow who they think is better, then I'll go. It's that simple. Those are the mechanisms in football that you have to respect. At a club like this, it is crystal clear: if you don't win, you have a problem."

The 54-year-old Dutchman admitted the season did leave him exhausted.

"Let's face it: you lose too many matches, it just takes strength to keep the team focused and motivated every time. The players are disappointed, the people around you are disappointed," he told the newspaper. There has since been a staff overhaul at the club and Ten Hag suggested better times are ahead. "If you put in place the right structures and work well together, if you also have a good relationship with the players, then you know that things will get better again," he added.