

Chinese Foreign Minister Says Beijing Supports Iran in Defending Its "Sovereignty, Security and National Dignity" Amid Tehran's Promise to Harshly Punish Israel Over the Assassination of Ismail Haniyeh

# IRAN NEWS

High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell has Called for Blacklisting the Hardliner Ministers in the Israeli Cabinet Like Ben Gvir Who Calls for Cutting Fuel and to Civilians in Gaza

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DOMESTIC

## Iran Trade Exchange With African States Hit Around \$1.3b

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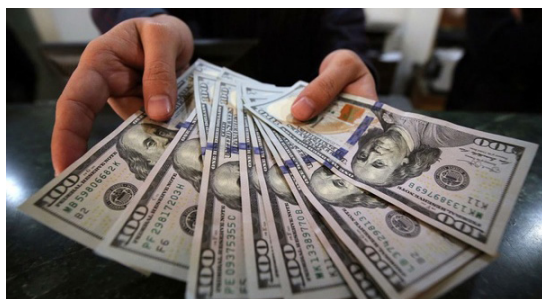
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INTERNATIONAL

## Israel Orders More Gaza Evacuations After School Genocide

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## Foreign Investment Reaches a New Record of \$5.5 Billion



TEHRAN - The head of Iran's Organization for Investment and Economic and Technical Assistance announced a record-breaking level of foreign investment last year.

Ali Fekri, head of Iran's Organization for Investment and Economic and Technical Assistance, stated in an interview that favorable conditions were created over the past three years. The value of issued permits for direct foreign investment reached \$5.5 billion last year, a figure unprecedented in the 16-year history of the organization. He mentioned that while some foreign investment permits were issued, they were removed from the list because the investments did not materialize in practice. In addition, foreign investments that entered the country without the organization's permit amounted to \$2.5 billion last year.

Regarding claims that Afghan investments in Iran have increased, Fekri stated that total Afghan investment last year reached \$35 million. According to Fekri, the highest amount of foreign investment last year came from China, totaling \$2 billion, followed by Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and then by Iranians living abroad. Fekri also mentioned that Iranians abroad have significant assets, and Iran welcomes the transfer of these assets into the country.

The head of the Organization for Investment and Economic and Technical Assistance stated that most foreign investment last year was attracted to the industry and mining sectors. Overall, under the administration of Martyr Raisi, the oil and gas sectors ranked first in attracting foreign investment, with a total of \$11 billion in foreign investment during this period.

According to Fekri, the record for attracting foreign investment was broken last year with \$5.5 billion. He emphasized that the mutual benefits for foreign investors are tied to their investments. Foreign investors bring new technology for profitability, which leads to the transfer of technology into the country, resulting in economic benefits for both the foreign investor and Iran. Regarding the impact of foreign investment on countering sanctions, Fekri said that foreign investors know how to transfer capital and overcome the obstacles posed by sanctions.

## Hezbollah Conducts Massive Rocket Attack on Occupied Lands



TEHRAN (MNA) - Lebanese Resistance Movement Hezbollah carried out a massive rocket attack on an Israeli military headquarters in occupied Palestine early on Monday.

Zionist sources on Monday reported that Hezbollah has conducted a rocket attack on the Israeli-occupied territories of Palestine. Lebanon's Hezbollah confirmed the reports and announced that its forces have targeted a newly established Israeli military headquarters.

Local sources reported that an explosion was heard following the Hezbollah attack.

Although there are still no official details regarding the casualties and possible damages of the Hezbollah attack, footage published in the media showed that ambulances were moving towards the targeted place in the north of occupied Palestine.

Hezbollah said in a statement on Monday that a volley of Katyusha rockets was fired at the newly established headquarters of the 146th Division in Giaton.

It added that the operation was carried out in response to Israel's attacks on civilian areas in southern Lebanon, particularly in the town of Maaroub.

The Lebanese Resistance movement has been conducting regular attacks since early October against the Israeli regime's military position in retaliation for the occupying regime's offensives against Gaza and southern Lebanon.

Israel waged its brutal war on besieged Gaza on October 7 after Hamas carried out an unprecedented operation against the occupying entity in retaliation for its intensified atrocities against the Palestinian people.

Meanwhile local sources in Yemen reported a fresh aggression carried out by the United States and the United Kingdom against the Arab country on Monday.

The United States and the United Kingdom attacked Kamaran Island in Yemen's Hodeidah province on Monday, according to the reports.

There were no immediate reports of possible casualties or damage. In late July, the US and the UK fighter jets attacked the Hodeidah International Airport. Local officials said that American and British fighters bombed the airport four times.



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

## Talks Underway With Foreign Countries for Joint Aircraft Production

TEHRAN - Head of the Civil Aviation Organization Mohammad Mohammadi-Bakhs discussed the latest status of the Iranian Simorgh aircraft production. He stated that the Simorgh is a new aircraft currently being designed and constructed by three entities: the Ministry of Defense, the Civil Aviation Organization, and the Vice-Presidency for Science and Technology.

He mentioned that there have been some design changes to the Simorgh, noting that the aircraft is primarily intended for cargo. The design modifications include lengthening the aircraft and making changes in the navigation area. The Simorgh is undergoing the certification process under the supervision of the Civil Aviation Organization as a new aircraft.

The head of the Civil Aviation Organization stated that the Simorgh is in the process of obtaining a type certificate. He noted that although the Iran-140 aircraft had already received this certification from both Ukraine and Iran, the Simorgh, being based on a newer platform with newer structures, is currently undergoing the certification process.

Mohammadi-Bakhs mentioned that two Simorgh aircraft have been produced. The first aircraft has completed its test flights, all of which were successful, and various tests have been conducted on it.

He explained that although the test flights are cargo flights, they simulate passenger weight by carrying cargo. Different conditions are created during these test flights to ensure the aircraft passes all stages, with the Civil Aviation Organization involved throughout. Representatives from the organization are present during the flights, and sensors have been installed to provide accurate information on the aircraft's performance during flight.

The Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development, when asked about which market models the aircraft resembles, stated that the Simorgh is similar to the Antonov-140 but with

different conditions, including changes in the engine and body. While the aircraft is assembled, it is considered a new aircraft with a new design.

Mohammadi-Bakhs emphasized that Iran has now established its own aircraft manufacturing factory, supported by a network of knowledge-based companies and specialized firms. The output of these activities benefits the aviation industry. Today, a significant portion of the aviation industry's critical components are produced domestically with the approval of the Civil Aviation Organization, overcoming previous bottlenecks in the industry.

He continued, stating that the Simorgh is not the final goal of this factory. The initial step is aircraft production, and the factory is designed to attract scientists, with a think tank in place, and an active supply chain and industry knowledge to sustain aircraft manufacturing. In this context, Iran can negotiate with other countries, demonstrating that it has its own aircraft manufacturing capabilities. This enables participation in international consortia and the potential to jointly produce aircraft with two or three other foreign companies. Such collaboration would allow Iran to gain market share and enhance the resilience of its aviation industry.

Regarding the status of the second Simorgh aircraft, the head of the Civil Aviation Organization said that it is currently in the stage of wing attachment, landing gear installation, and engine mounting.

In response to a question about whether there is demand from airlines for the Simorgh, he said that while the priority for the Simorgh is cargo, considering the diverse needs within the country, the Simorgh is one of the aircraft that addresses the demand for short-range regional jets.

## Crushing Response to Israel "On Its Way"



TEHRAN (PresTV) - A senior Iranian military official asserts that the Islamic Republic's harsh revenge on the Israeli regime over the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in the Iranian capital of Tehran is "fast approaching".

The retaliation "is on its way," Brigadier General Ali Shadmehri, deputy coordinator of Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, said in Russia on Sunday.

The headquarters is tasked with planning and coordinating joint military operations within the Iranian Armed Forces.

"The aspects of this [retaliatory] measure are under consideration," he noted, adding, "It will definitely take place." The assassination claimed the lives of Haniyeh, the Palestinian resistance movement's Political Bureau chief, and one of his bodyguards in Tehran late last month. Haniyeh was in the Iranian capital to attend the inauguration ceremony of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian.

Soon after the atrocity, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei warned the Israeli regime of a "harsh response," saying it was the Islamic Republic's duty to avenge the blood of the Palestinian resistance leader.

Shadmehri described the regime as "bloodthirsty and homicidal" and "a criminal Zionist gang," which had "crossed red lines and trampled on morality and human rights on numerous occasions."

He was referring to the regime's litany of acts of deadly aggression against the regional nations, including the Iranian people. The atrocities targeting the Islamic Republic have included assassination of at least seven Iranian nuclear scientists over years and bombing of the Consular Section of the Iranian Embassy in the Syrian capital of Damascus back in April, which led to the martyrdom of seven Iranian military advisors.

Referring to Haniyeh, however, Shadmehri said, "By assassinating our dear guest, the Zionist regime perpetrated an atrocity that was worse than the previous ones."

Also on Sunday, Brigadier General Ali Mohammad Naeni, deputy head of the Public Relations Department of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), denounced the assassination as "a clear violation" of the United Nations Charter, warning the regime that it would receive the response to its "foolish" terrorist act in due time.

He added that fear of Iran's response had engulfed the entire occupied territories, stressing that the regime thought it could compensate for its defeats on the battlefield by carrying out assassinations, while its existence and identity were on the brink of collapse.

## Iran's Presence in BRICS, SCO Decision-Making Is Important



TEHRAN - A ceremony commemorating Journalist Day was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the presence of journalists, photographers, and videographers from domestic and foreign media outlets. The event was attended by Ali Bagheri, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Nasser Kanani, Spokesperson and Head of the Public Diplomacy Center of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

During the ceremony, representatives from domestic and foreign media shared their opinions, suggestions, and demands to improve professional activities and discussed the diplomatic body's approach.

The Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, in his remarks, congratulated the journalists on their day and honored the sacrifices of the martyrs from the country's media community. He described the mission of the media and journalists as important, valuable, and challenging, likening it to the critical responsibility of prophets. He emphasized that conveying the truth to the audience is an artistic task.

He noted that a journalist's strength lies in criticism, but it must be constructive and encourage the audience to take action.

Regarding the approach and goals of the diplomatic body in foreign policy and relations, the Acting Minister pointed to the impact of multilateralism on safeguarding national interests and security. He stated that multilateralism is a new model for gaining power during the transition period, and the presence of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the decision-making processes of multilateral institutions like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is of great importance.

He further emphasized that in the realm of foreign policy, their efforts are focused on strengthening deterrent factors against enemies, and thus, the ongoing progress of the Islamic Republic of Iran is crucial.

## U.S. Double Standards Embolden Israel to Commit Heinous Crimes

TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian says double standard policies of the United States and some European countries have further emboldened the Israeli regime to commit more heinous crimes in Gaza and across the region.

In a phone conversation with President of the European Council Charles Michel on Sunday, Pezeshkian said the Israeli regime is now posing more threats to regional and international peace and security.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has always supported peace, tranquility and stability across the world and for all nations and believes that any trend in any part of the world that endangers these values should be stopped," he added.

Pezeshkian made the remarks a day after the Israeli regime's brutal attack on a school sheltering displaced people in the east of the Gaza Strip, which killed more than 100 civilians.

The Gaza government media office said more than 100 citizens were killed and dozens injured on Saturday morning after the Israeli occupation forces bombed the al-Tabi'in school in the al-Daraj neighborhood in Gaza City.

Backed by the US and its Western allies, the Israeli regime launched an all-out invasion of Gaza after it was caught off-guard by Operation Al-Aqsa Storm inside the occupied territories in October last year.

The Iranian president stressed the importance of promoting a multipolar system in the world.

He said the US policies on exerting pressure on countries like Iran and depriving them of all their rights and interests are in line with



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Washington's goal to prevent the establishment of a new world order, warning that such moves will harm global stability and peace.

Pointing to the European Council's willingness to resume talks with Iran to revive the 2015 nuclear agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Pezeshkian insisted on mutual confidence and interests as prerequisites to a possible deal.

"If the two sides fulfill all their obligations and build confidence, they can discuss other issues [of common interests] in addition to the revival of the nuclear agreement," the Iranian president emphasized.

The negotiations to restore the JCPOA began in April 2021, three years after the US unilaterally withdrew from the UNSC-endorsed agreement and began to target Iran's economy with tough economic sanctions.

Iran has criticized the lack of will on the side of the US and the E3 to revive the deal and has ramped up its nuclear activities in response to their non-compliance.

For his part, Michel said European countries are keen to promote relations with Iran.

He expressed hope that Iran and the European Union will resume effective interaction based on common interests and the removal of obstacles in the way of enhanced relations.

Pointing to the latest developments in Gaza, the president of the European Council emphasized the need to observe humanitarian rights, stop Israel's attacks, establish a ceasefire, dispatch aid to the people of Gaza and recognize an independent Palestinian state.

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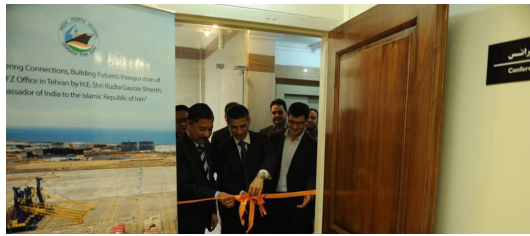


## First Iranian Visa Waiver Flight Lands in Dushanbe

DUSHANBE (IP) - After launching the visa waiver agreement between Iran and Tajikistan, the first Iranian flight from Tehran landed at Dushanbe airport. Visa Waiver between Iran and Tajikistan, allowing Tajikistan and Iranian citizens to travel between the two nations without visas take effect on August 10. According to the agreement between the two countries, citizens can travel up to 90 days per year with the first visit limited to 30 days. After the cancellation of visas between Iran and Tajikistan, the first flight from Tehran to Dushanbe landed at Tajikistan International Airport on Sunday. At the arrival of the flight from Tehran in conversation with passengers including tourists, businessmen, and residents found that the cancellation of visa has been well received by the people. The purpose of canceling visas between Iran and Tajikistan is to expand commercial, economic, cultural, and tourism cooperation.

Cancellation of visas is possible in the first step for people who use the Tehran-Dushanbe air route and vice versa to travel to Iran and Tajikistan.

## Opening of Chabahar's Indian Operator Office in Tehran



TEHRAN - The office of IPGCFZ was inaugurated in a ceremony attended by the Indian Ambassador to Iran, Rudra Gaurav Shresth, and Sunil Mukundan, CEO of IPGL.

IPGCFZ is an Iranian company affiliated with India Ports Global Limited (IPGL), and has so far been operating through its office in Chabahar. This company is responsible for implementing the long-term contract for the equipment and operation of Chabahar Port by the Indian government.

At the ceremony, the Indian Ambassador highlighted the opening of this office in Tehran, three months after the signing of the long-term development contract for Chabahar Port, demonstrates India's seriousness and commitment to executing this contract. He stated that the implementation of this contract is a win-win situation for both India and Iran, as it provides India with access to Central Asia and Eurasia through the territory of its friendly country, Iran, while also allowing Iran to strengthen its ties with India's economy, the fastest-growing economy in the world, and gain substantial transit revenue.

The Indian Ambassador expressed hope that the strong cooperation between India and Iran at Chabahar Port under this long-term contract would make Chabahar Port a shining example of bilateral cooperation.

Additionally, at the ceremony, Sunil Mukundan, CEO of IPGL, mentioned that IPGCFZ plans to increase its staff from 40 to over 160 people, and current trends indicate that the company's cargo handling at Chabahar Port is expected to rise from 64,000 TEU in the 2023-2024 fiscal year to 100,000 TEU in the current year.



## Iran Trade Exchange With African States Hit Around \$1.3b

TEHRAN - The head of the Iran-Africa Joint Chamber of Commerce stated that Iran's trade exchange with the African continent is around \$1.3 billion, and efforts should be made to increase this figure.

Masoud Barhaman, speaking at the Africa Trade Opportunities Seminar at the Zanjan Chamber of Commerce, added that Africa has a financial turnover of \$1.5 trillion, with half of it being exports and the other half imports.

Barhaman further noted that in addition to mineral reserves, Africa has significant capacities in natural resources, environmental, and agricultural sectors. However, unfortunately, Iran's trade with this continent amounts to only \$1.3 billion, with \$1 billion of this being exports and the rest imports.

The head of the Zanjan Chamber of Commerce also highlighted the benefits of trade relations with developing countries and Africa's potential. He emphasized that the global economy needs export development and market expansion. To achieve this, governments should support their private sectors with effective and practical economic policies to facilitate the entry of products into global markets.

Samad Yousefi Asl stated that Africa is a unique market with significant potential for exporting goods and engineering services. Unfortunately, Iranian traders have taken minimal advantage of this untapped potential, even though

Iranian products could significantly meet the needs of African markets.

He mentioned that the Zanjan Chamber of Commerce's interaction with joint chambers is a productive approach for planning effective trade programs and mapping out a successful trade roadmap in the face of export stagnation. He added that economic institutions, especially private sector hubs, need to continuously collaborate, exchange useful and up-to-date information, participate in specialized exhibitions, and maintain consistent communication with economic advisors in various countries.

He also stressed the importance of introducing the needs, characteristics, and potentials of global markets, especially neighboring countries, to the province's traders. He noted that the Zanjan Chamber of Commerce, by inviting specialists and experienced individuals, strives to familiarize Zanjan traders with the real conditions of foreign markets and how to trade with them.

At the end of this seminar, a cooperation agreement was signed between the Zanjan Chamber of Commerce and the Iran-Africa Joint Chamber of Commerce. The office of this joint chamber was also inaugurated at the Zanjan Chamber of Commerce and began its operations. The Zanjan province has 1,200 production units and 200 exporters.

## Economic Growth in Last Three Years Surpasses 20-Year Average



TEHRAN - According to the Minister of Economy, the country's average economic growth over the past 20 years was 2.7%, and the average growth over the last 10 years was 0.5%. However, from 2021 to 2023, this figure increased by 4.5%.

In a special news program, Minister of Economy Seyyed Ehsan Khandouzi said: "Significant developments occurred in key economic indicators during the 13th government. Until 2011, Iran's economy was heavily reliant on oil revenues, but the sanctions from 2012 disrupted this structure. Economic indicators only improved for two years in the mid-2010s when sanctions were temporarily lifted."

The Minister elaborated on the performance of his ministry under the 13th government, stating that the past three years have marked a distinct historical experience in the economy. Despite ongoing sanctions, key economic indicators shifted back to long-term performances. According to the Minister, the country's 20-year average economic growth was 2.7%, and the 10-year average was 0.5%, but from 2021 to 2023, growth exceeded 4.5%.

Khandouzi noted that some attribute this economic growth to the oil sector's growth, but this is not the case. He stated that non-oil economic growth was 1.2% over the past 10 years and 3.5% over the past 20 years, while in the last three years, this figure reached 4%. Additionally, investment, which had been at -7% over the past 10 years and -0.3% over the past 20 years, increased to 6.4% in the last three years. He emphasized that the increase in investment has even surpassed economic growth, to the point that the contribution of investment to economic growth rose to 22%.

According to the Minister of Economy, non-oil exports set a new record in terms of both value and volume in 2022, surpassing all previous years, and this figure further increased in 2023. He added that without the increase in exports, the surge in foreign currency availability would not have occurred. He also highlighted that the combined policies of the 13th government and the leadership of the late President in relations with aligned and neighboring countries have collectively expanded and outwardly oriented our economy.

He also mentioned that the country's economic growth has even exceeded the forecasts of international organizations. While the International Monetary Fund had predicted a 2.3% economic growth for Iran in 2022, the actual growth was 3.8%. He stated that for 2023, the predicted growth was 2.3%, but according to a report published in April 2024, the actual economic growth for 2023 was 4.7%.

## \$25b Needed to Address Blackouts



TEHRAN - Secretary of the Electricity Industry Syndicate Mehdi Masaeli discussed the current electricity imbalance, blackouts, and strategies for the industry to overcome these challenges.

He stated that currently, blackouts are scheduled across various sectors, including agriculture and industry. For example, the electricity supply to agricultural wells is cut off for five hours daily (from 1 PM to 6 PM). Industrial parks and large industries have also been informed of their blackout schedules.

Masaeli warned that we should expect even worse conditions than we currently face. He noted that there has been no significant investment in the electricity industry for over a decade, leading to a weakened ability to attract investment. As a result, electricity consumption has grown by 8.4% this year, while production has not even increased by 2.5%.

The Secretary of the Electricity Industry Syndicate explained that when production and consumption do not align, the gap between them grows, and we shouldn't expect anything better. This year, the situation has worsened compared to last year, with the electricity deficit increasing from 10,000-12,000 megawatts last year to 18,000-19,000 megawatts this year. This indicates a 50% growth in the imbalance, as consumption has increased far more than production.

He emphasized that when consumption exceeds production, a technical imbalance occurs. In the short term, this can only be improved through energy-saving measures and optimization. In the medium and long term, it requires investment and the initiation of projects, which take about five years in the power industry. If the Fourteenth Government decides to build a power plant today, it won't be operational until the Fifteenth Government. If no action

is taken, the situation will remain the same, as previous governments have not made significant efforts.

Masaeli pointed out that the solution to the electricity problem lies in revising international relations and attracting foreign investment. If this doesn't happen, regardless of whether 2024 sees a wet or dry season, the situation could worsen. Some regions are already experiencing water shortages, meaning that in addition to lacking electricity, industries also lack water, and some areas face inadequate gas supplies. In other words, we currently do not have stable access to the three essential elements of water, electricity, and gas, making the situation unsustainable.

He highlighted that over the next four years, \$20 to \$25 billion needs to be invested in the electricity industry to reach an installed capacity of 130,000 megawatts and overcome the current imbalance. This means that 40,000 megawatts need to be added to the existing 92,000 megawatts of power plants.

The Secretary noted that the current government had planned to build 35,000 megawatts of electricity generation by the industrial sector and 35,000 megawatts of renewable energy, but this was not implemented due to a lack of funds. No contractor is willing to work on power plant construction without financial returns.

Masaeli pointed out that the root of all imbalances is economic. Without the ability to attract investment in the electricity industry, the situation will not improve, and the same problems will persist in 2025, possibly even worsening.

He added that we must utilize our oil and gas resources and expand the network. We should also optimize the outdated sections to increase efficiency, resulting in better energy consumption and output.

## Ditching Dollar From Iran's Trade is Merely Formality

TEHRAN - Mehdi Rang Rona, Vice President of the Iran-India Joint Chamber of Commerce, touched upon the removal of the dollar from Iran's foreign trade. He stated that when Iran is a party to international transactions, there is a high risk of the transaction being blocked.

For this reason, both the Iranian government and the private sector decided to eliminate the dollar from international transactions to reduce this risk. Consequently, the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade (MIMT) has banned dollar-based import registrations for the past two years, replacing the dollar with other currencies such as the euro, dirham, dinar, lira, and others. In fact, any currency other than the dollar is accepted in the import registration system, and the ministry does not allocate dollars in its approvals.

However, he added, the dollar remains a key currency with strong backing and is still widely used globally. As a result, fluctuations in the dollar affect our economy, and, in other words, the dollar continues to play a dominant role. Fluctuations in other currencies also occur in proportion to the dollar's fluctuations.

Rang Rona noted that the Central Bank of Iran monitors the entry of dollars earned from Iranian exporters and requires them to offer the export earnings on the NIMA system at rates approved by the Central Bank. This currency is allocated for the importation of essential goods, and through this mechanism, efforts have been made to replace the dollar with other currencies depending on the country of origin in imports. However, if dollars are needed for imports, even if the order is placed in a currency other than dollars, dollars are still allocated to the importer. Therefore, it can be said that the removal of the dollar from Iran's trade is more of a formality than a reality.

Regarding the nature of financial exchanges between Iran and India, he explained that the Central Bank of Iran holds financial resources in India, which are used to finance imports to Iran. Additionally, Iranian traders who export goods to India hold rupees, and those who sell their goods in rupees to Indians transfer their earnings to importers, maintaining ongoing exchanges.

The Vice President of the Iran-India Joint Chamber of Commerce stated that some importers who finance through exchange offices and state banks may face temporary issues, but given the volume of trade between Iran and India, there have been no serious problems in financing with rupees so far.

## 11% Increase in Home Appliance Exports



TEHRAN - The Deputy Minister of Public Industries at the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade announced that Iran's home appliance exports have increased by 11% in the first four months of this year compared to the same period last year.

Mohammad Mehdi Baradaran stated that the rise in home appliance exports reflects higher domestic production, greater depth, and improved quality of locally manufactured home appliances.

Baradaran added that as long as domestic needs are met and a competitive market exists within the country, there is no need for home appliance imports. However, if imports are necessary, protective measures such as tariffs should be utilized to ensure that local producers do not face unfair competition from foreign manufacturers.

He also noted that over 200 home appliance units within the country are competing in terms of product diversity, quality, and warranty. While some of our products are highly competitive internationally, there is concern that newer products might face challenges, potentially harming the domestic capabilities and the collaborations formed between universities, knowledge-based companies, and parts manufacturers. Therefore, to enhance competitiveness, special attention must be given to exports.

## Greece Orders Thousands to Evacuate as Wildfires Rage

ATHENS (Dispatches) - Greece on Sunday ordered thousands of people to evacuate as firefighters battled a spate of wildfires, and experts warned of more extreme weather to come next week. Firefighters were battling a "dangerous" fire near Athens on Sunday night, with smoke covering parts of the capital in a dark haze. The emergency services issued evacuation orders in several towns including the historic site of Marathon. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis cut short his holiday and returned to Athens Sunday evening to deal with the crisis. By Sunday afternoon, firefighters had quickly dealt with 33 out of the 40 blazes that had broken out in the past 24 hours, fire brigade spokesman Vassilis Vathrakogiannis told the press at an emergency briefing. But the force was battling seven more in the high Mediterranean summer heat, he said. Already Saturday, Civil Protection Minister Vassilis Kikilias had warned that half the country was under a high-risk warning for fires due to high temperatures, wind gusts and drought conditions. In the East Attica region near the capital, a blaze in the Vamarea area spread to a pine forested zone with scattered houses, giving off so much smoke that Athens glowed red at one point. It was still raging Sunday night.



## N. Ireland Violence Shocks Muslims



BELFAST (Dispatches) - A week of racism-fueled disorder in Northern Ireland, sparked by disturbances in English towns and cities, is proving harder to end, with fears the UK region's sectarian divisions are feeding into the violence.

"They burned every single thing, there is nothing left inside, just ashes," said Bashir, whose supermarket in Belfast was torched during attacks against foreign-owned shops and businesses.

A mosque in a town near Belfast was also targeted late Friday. "We are scared at what may happen next, there is lots of hostility against the Muslim community," said the 28-year-old from Dubai, who did not want to give his full name citing safety reasons.

Northern Ireland has seen nightly unrest, mainly in pro-UK loyalist neighbourhoods, that began after an anti-immigration protest in Belfast on August 3.

The violence has mirrored disorder across England, spurred by misinformation spread on social media about the suspected perpetrator of a knife attack in Southport on July 29 which killed three children.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) said Saturday that 31 people have been arrested during the disturbances.

"On a fundamental level the Belfast attacks are similar in its dynamic to anti-immigration protests in white working class areas in England, the Republic of Ireland and elsewhere in Europe," said Peter McLoughlin, a politics lecturer at Queens University Belfast.

"It is driven by racism and fear of the other, but in Northern Ireland it also interfaces with sectarian political dynamics," he told AFP.

## Israel Orders More Gaza Evacuations After School Genocide

CAIRO (Dispatches) - Israel expanded evacuation orders in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip overnight, forcing tens of thousands of Palestinian residents and displaced families to leave in the dark as explosions from tank shelling reverberated around them.

The Israeli military said it was attacking militants from the Hamas group - which administered Gaza before the war - who were using those areas to stage attacks and fire rockets.

On Saturday, an Israeli airstrike on a school where displaced Palestinians were sheltering in Gaza City killed at least 90 people, according to the civil defence service, prompting an international outcry.

The Israeli military said it had struck a Hamas and Islamic Jihad militant command post, an allegation the two groups rejected as a pretext, and killed 19 militants.

In Khan Younis in the south of the Gaza Strip, the evacuation instruction covered districts in the centre, east and west, making it one of the largest such orders in the 10-month-old conflict, two days after tanks returned to the east of the city. The announcement was posted on X and in text and audio messages to residents' phones: "For your own safety, you must evacuate immediately to the newly created humanitarian zone. The area you are in is considered a dangerous combat zone." Philippe Lazzarini, head of the United Nations' agency for Palestinian refugees UNRWA, said people in Gaza were trapped and had nowhere to go.

"Some are only able to carry their children with them, some carry their whole lives in one small bag. They are going to overcrowded places where shelters are already overflowing with families. They have lost everything and need everything," he said. The Israeli army said it had struck around 30 Hamas military targets in the previous 24 hours, including military structures, anti-tank missile launch posts, and weapons storage facilities.

The Islamic Jihad armed wing said fighters fired mortar bombs against Israeli forces massing in the eastern areas of Khan Younis. Later on Sunday, an Israeli airstrike near the Khan Younis market at the center of the city killed four Palestinians and wounded several others, medics said.

Lines of smoke rose from areas where Israeli planes carried attacks in the eastern and western parts of the city. Residents said two multi-floor buildings were bombed.

Nearly 40,000 Palestinians have been killed in the Israeli offensive in Gaza since the war broke out last October and the toll is rising by the day, the Gaza health ministry says. Gaza health officials say most of the fatalities have been civilians but Israel says at least a third are fighters. Israel says it has lost 329 soldiers in Gaza.

Meanwhile Hamas reportedly on Sunday urged Gaza mediators to implement a truce plan presented by US President Joe Biden instead of holding more talks, as Palestinians fled a new Israeli military operation.

The statement from the Palestinian group, whose October 7 attack on Israel triggered the war, came a day after one of the deadliest reported Israeli strikes on the besieged Gaza Strip in more than 10 months of war.

International mediators had invited Israel and Hamas to resume talks towards a long-sought truce and hostage-release deal, after the fighting in Gaza and the killings of Iran-aligned militant leaders sparked fears of a wider conflict.

Israel, whose Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been accused of prolonging the war for political gain, has accepted the invitation from the United States, Qatar and Egypt for a round of talks planned for Thursday.

Hamas said Sunday it wanted the implementation of a truce plan laid out by Biden on May 31 and later endorsed by the UN Security Council, "rather than going through more negotiation rounds or new proposals".

Hamas "demands that the mediators present a plan to implement what they proposed to the movement... based on Biden's vision and the UN Security Council resolution, and compel the (Israeli) occupation to comply", it said. Unveiling the plan, Biden had called it a three-phase "roadmap to an enduring ceasefire and the release of all hostages", and said it was an Israeli proposal. Mediation efforts since then have failed to produce an agreement.

Hamas on Tuesday named its Gaza chief Yahya Sinwar to succeed slain political leader and truce negotiator Ismail Haniyeh, killed July 31 in Tehran in an attack blamed on Israel, which has not claimed responsibility.

## Zelenskiy Says Kursk Attack Will Pressure Russia and Restore Justice

SUMY REGION (Dispatches) - President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Ukraine had launched an incursion into Russian territory to "restore justice" and pressure Moscow's forces, in his first acknowledgement of Kyiv's surprise offensive into the western Kursk region.

Moscow's forces on Sunday were in their sixth day of intense battle against Kyiv's largest incursion into Russian territory since the start of the war, which left southwestern parts of Russia vulnerable before reinforcement started arriving.

Russian authorities rushed to evacuate residents and imposed a sweeping security regime in three border regions on Saturday, after the attack which military analysts say caught the Kremlin off-guard. Belarus, a staunch ally of Moscow, also sent more troops to its border with Ukraine, accusing Kyiv of violating its air space.

In his nightly video address, Zelenskiy said he had discussed the operation with top Ukrainian commander Oleksandr Syrskyi, vowing to respond in kind after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of its neighbour in February 2022.

"Today, I received several reports from Commander-in-Chief Syrskyi regarding the front lines and our actions to push the war onto the aggressor's territory," he said late on Saturday.

"Ukraine is proving that it can indeed restore justice and is ensuring the exact kind of pressure that is needed - pressure on the aggressor."

Russia's defense ministry said on Sunday it had destroyed 14 Ukrainian drones and four Tochka-U tactical ballistic missiles overnight over the Kursk region, and 18 drones over other Russian regions that Ukraine frequently attacks.

In a statement, it called the ground incursion "barbaric" and said it made no military sense.

Ukraine has at most occupied several tens of square kilometres of Russian territory without laying claim to it, while Russia controls more than 100,000 sq km of Ukraine's internationally recognised territory.

Russia's top general, Valery Gerasimov, said on Wednesday the attacks had been halted, but Russia has not pushed the Ukrainian forces back over the border.



Russian military bloggers said the situation had stabilised after Russia's reinforcements, though they said Ukraine was swiftly building up forces.

Zelenskiy said on Sunday Russia had launched nearly 2,000 cross-border strikes on Ukraine's Sumy region from the region of Kursk this summer and that such strikes deserved a Ukrainian response.

"Artillery, mortars, drones. We also record missile strikes, and each such strike deserves a fair response," the Ukrainian leader said.

Earlier, Kursk officials said 13 people were injured in the city after debris from a destroyed Ukrainian missile fell onto a nine-storey residential building.

An image posted by Kursk's mayor showed flames rising through a shattered apartment block surrounded by charred

debris.

It was not clear whether there was further damage. Moscow and Kyiv rarely disclose the full extent of damage inflicted by attacks on them unless there are injuries or damage to residential buildings.

Alexei Smirnov, Kursk's acting governor, ordered local authorities to speed up the evacuation of civilians in areas at risk. On Saturday, Russia's TASS state news agency reported that more than 76,000 people had been evacuated.

Kyiv and Moscow deny targeting civilians in their attacks in the war, which has killed thousands of people and displaced millions of Ukrainians, and has no end in sight.

Russian military bloggers say fighting is taking place as deep as 20 km (12 miles) inside the Kursk region, prompting some of them to question why Ukraine was able to pierce the Kursk region so easily.

A few dozen Russian soldiers, including fighters from Chechnya, who were captured allegedly in Kursk were shown in a video posted by "I want to live," a project which is linked to Ukraine's military spy agency. Reuters could not immediately verify the video.

## Philippines Says Actions of China Air Force Illegal, Reckless

MANILA (Dispatches) - Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Sunday condemned Chinese air force actions in waters of the South China Sea claimed by both countries, calling the actions "unjustified, illegal and reckless".

Manila and Beijing accused each other on Saturday of disrupting their militaries' operations around the Scarborough Shoal in the first incident since Marcos took office in 2022 in which the Philippines has complained of dangerous actions by Chinese aircraft, as opposed to navy or coast guard vessels. The Philippine military on Saturday condemned "dangerous and provocative actions" when two Chinese aircraft dropped flares in the path of a Philippine aircraft during a routine patrol around the shoal on Thursday.

The Chinese military's Southern Theatre Command countered that the Philippines had disrupted its training, accusing Manila of "illegally intruding" into its airspace.

On Sunday, Marcos urged China to act responsibly both in the seas and in the skies. "We have hardly started to calm the waters, and it is already worrying that there could be instability in our airspace," Marcos said in a statement posted by the Presidential Communications Office on the social media platform X.

The Chinese embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Sunday.

The Scarborough Shoal is one of Asia's most contested maritime features and a flashpoint for flare-ups over sovereignty and fishing rights.

Chester Cabalza, president of the Manila-based think tank International Development and Security Cooperation, said China's actions were a "show of force" in response to Manila's participation in multi-nation drills that promote freedom of navigation and overflight.

## Biden Calls Trump a Genuine Danger to U.S. Security

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - President Joe Biden, in his first TV interview since dropping out of the White House race, warned that Republican candidate Donald Trump was "a genuine danger to American security."

"Mark my words, if he wins... this election, watch what happens," Biden told CBS News in a pre-taped interview broadcast on Sunday.

"He's a genuine danger to American security. Look, we're at an inflection point in world history... and democracy is the key."

Biden, 81, has kept a low profile since ending his campaign after his flailing debate performance against Trump underlined fears about his age and mental abilities.

In the short TV interview, recorded in the White House last week, he appeared frail but cogent, again admitting he failed in the debate but stressing that health-wise he has "no serious problem."

Explaining his exit, he said other Democratic Party politicians standing for re-election feared he would damage their chances - and added that his only priority was to stop Trump from returning to power.

"A number of my Democratic colleagues in the House and Senate thought that I was going to hurt them in the (election) races," he said.

"I was concerned if I stayed in the race, that would be the topic you'd be interviewing me about," he continued.

He singled out former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a party heavyweight whose refusal to explicitly back his campaign was seen by many as pivotal.

"You'd be interviewing me about why did Nancy Pelosi say (something)... I thought it'd be a real distraction," the president said.

"A critical issue for me still is -- not a joke -- maintaining this democracy.

"I have an obligation to the country to do what is the most important thing we can do, and that is -- we must, we must, we must defeat Trump."

Biden said he was proud of his record on jobs, investment and Covid recovery -- and vowed to campaign hard for Vice President Kamala Harris, who has replaced him on the ballot.

"I'm going to do whatever Kamala thinks I can do to help most," he said.

Biden's age had come to dominate the 2024 campaign, and the Democrats' hopes of winning have soared since his withdrawal, as Harris enjoys a surge in support that has left Trump struggling.

The outgoing president said he had expected to serve only one term when he won in 2020, but that he had been persuaded to push for a second.

"I thought of myself as being a transition president -- I can't even say how old I am. It's hard for me to get it out of my mouth -- but things got moving so quickly, it didn't happen," he told CBS's Robert Costa.

As Harris holds huge rallies in swing states, Trump's light schedule has come under scrutiny, and it was his running mate, J.D. Vance, who blitzed the Sunday morning political talk shows.

Appearing on CNN, ABC and CBS, Vance fielded questions about child care, asylum seekers and abortion. In one testy exchange with CBS's Margaret Brennan, Vance complained that she had asked "six questions about abortion."

"I'm still trying to get a clear answer," Brennan retorted.

He also claimed that Harris was the one "calling the shots" in the Biden administration.

"If she's not calling the shots, Dana, who is?" he told CNN's Dana Bash.





## Tom Cruise Hands Olympic Flag to LA, Closing Paris Games

PARIS (Dispatches) - Movie star Tom Cruise rappelled from the roof of France's national stadium and received the Olympic flag, bringing a heavy dose of Hollywood to the closing ceremony of the Paris Games as the French capital handed over to the next host Los Angeles.

Grammy-winning R&B artist H.E.R. teased the Mission Impossible soundtrack as Cruise made his leap, drawing gasps from spectators as he dropped 50 metres to the floor of the Stade de France, in the finale to a ceremony that blended the traditional, the obscure and the razzle dazzle of Tinseltown.

While Paris used iconic landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower and the Palace of Versailles to win the hearts of Olympians and spectators alike, LA was swift to turn to its star draw: A-list celebrities.

Paris was bringing down the curtain on an Olympic Games that brought scintillating sport to the heart of the capital, breathing new life into an Olympic brand hurt by the difficulties of Rio de Janeiro's 2016 Games and the soulless spirit of Tokyo's COVID-hit event.

Even Parisians were carried away by the Olympic fervor.

"We wanted to dream. We got Leon Marchand," Paris 2024 chief Tony Estanguet told the crowd, referring to the French swimmer who won four golds.

"From one day to the next Paris became a party and France found itself. From a country of grumblers, we became a country of frenzied fans."

The two weeks of sporting drama saw China and the United States duke it out for top spot in the medal table right down to the last event.

Echoing the heartache delivered to France by the United States in the men's basketball final, the American women's basketball side handed France a gut-wrenching one-point defeat to earn a 40th gold medal and top spot on the medal table.

As the world emerged from the COVID pandemic in 2022, Paris had promised an Olympic "light at the end of the tunnel" and to provide the stage for a carefree Games.

But Russia's war in Ukraine on Europe's eastern flank, conflict in the Middle East, and France's heightened state of security alert loomed large as the Games got under way.

International Committee President Thomas Bach saluted the athletes as he declared the Games closed. "During all this time, you lived peacefully together under one roof in the Olympic

Village. You embraced each other," Bach said. "You respected each other, even if your countries are divided by war and conflict. You created a culture of peace."

Cruise's exit on a motorbike saw the closing ceremony transition to a prerecorded video of the 62-year-old skydiving down to the Hollywood sign, where a wide shot showed the Olympic rings incorporated into the LA landmark.

The flag was then passed from U.S. Olympians past and present as it traversed the city before reaching a beach party, where the LA music icons the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Billie Eilish, and Snoop Dogg and Dr. Dre performed.

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass has acknowledged Paris has set a high standard. But the City of Angels has billed itself as a beacon of diversity and will have Hollywood to fall back on.

"They've got a high bar to reach. A lot of work to do," said James Rutledge, 59, a former banker wearing a Team USA t-shirt outside the Stade de France. "Hollywood next? That's something to play with."

France will take away fond sporting memories.

The French had a new golden boy to celebrate with swimmer Marchand emerging as the king of the pool, before French judoka Teddy Riner reigned supreme as he claimed his fifth Olympic gold medal.

Simone Biles put her twisties misery of Tokyo behind her, making a long-awaited Olympic return in front of a star-studded crowd. She arrived the world's most decorated gymnast and left with a further three gold medals for her trophy cabinet.

Breaking made its Olympic debut - to some derision on social media - whilst 3x3 basketball, sports climbing, skateboarding and surfing made their second appearances.

The IOC will be relieved that no major scandals erupted, although it did have to grapple with some controversies.

A simmering doping row involving Chinese athletes hung over the Olympic swimming meet where the United States faced the biggest challenge to their reign in decades.

A storm around gender eligibility hit the women's boxing competition, revealing the toxic relations between the IOC and a widely discredited International Boxing Association.

## Relentless Real Madrid the Team to Beat in Mbappe's Debut Season



MADRID (Dispatches) - Clearly, a LaLiga-Champions League double last season was not enough to satisfy Real Madrid, who have welcomed the arrival of France captain Kylian Mbappe to an already stellar cast as they set their sights on another trophy-laden campaign.

Under the calm guidance of Italian mastermind Carlo Ancelotti they reclaimed the Spanish title from bitter rivals Barcelona in dominant fashion and won a record-extending 15th Champions League title - their sixth in the last 11 seasons.

As they get ready to kick off their season in Warsaw on Wednesday against Europa League winners Atalanta in the UEFA Super Cup, Real look to be even stronger this year.

Mbappe, 25, joined Real as a free agent from Paris St Germain on a five-year contract in June, ending a transfer saga that had rumbled on for years.

He won six Ligue 1 titles and four French Cups at PSG and became their record scorer with 256 goals during seven years in Paris, but failed to win the Champions League with the club, or the Ballon d'Or.

Mbappe's hunger for glory seems like the perfect match for Real's obsession with excellence, while Ancelotti's relentless search for improvement means there will be no let-up in the intensity. The most successful coach in Champions League history with five titles, Ancelotti has expertly managed a club constantly under pressure to uphold sky-high standards.

## Rublev to Face Popyrin for ATP Montreal Title

MONTREAL (Dispatches) - Andrey Rublev powered into his second ATP Masters 1000 final of the season on Sunday as he lined up a title match against Alexei Popyrin in Montreal.

Fifth seed Rublev, who won the Madrid Masters title in May, overcame a two-hour rain interruption as he beat Italy's Matteo Arnaldi 6-4, 6-2 in their semi-final.

He faces off Monday evening for the trophy against Australian Popyrin, who put out last week's ATP Washington winner Sebastian Korda 7-6 (7/0), 6-3 in 92 minutes.

Rublev has had a patchy 2024, melting down several times on court in frustration with his play and being disqualified last February in Dubai for blowing up at a linesman.

But the Russian, who skipped the Paris Olympics to be prepared for the North American hardcourts that continue next week in Cincinnati, said he made the right scheduling choice.

"That was the plan, to be set for the US Open," he said. "I guess if I'm in the finals of Montreal, it must be working."

Rublev will be competing in the sixth Masters final of his career and tuned up for the title bid by knocking out top-seeded world number one Jannik Sinner in a Saturday quarter-final.

He said it was not easy facing Arnaldi, whose ranking will move to around 30th, putting him in the frame for a US Open seeding.

"He can hit hard out of nowhere and doesn't give you any rhythm. The wind did not help," Rublev said.

"After the rain delay I played much better. I was focused and could dictate and play more aggressive."

Popyrin twice traded first-set breaks with Korda, but totally dominated the tiebreaker to love.

The Aussie broke to start the second set and held the margin all the way to victory as he reached his first Masters final.

Popyrin beat Rublev on clay last spring in Monte Carlo but knows the seed is also a huge hardcourt danger.

Rublev came out after the rain interruption in his win over Arnaldi and produced a double break after less than 30 minutes to reach the final.

In a pair of quarter-finals held over by rain, Alexander Zverev missed a chance to collect his 50th victory of the season in a 7-6 (7/5), 1-6, 6-4 loss to American Korda and Popyrin accounted for Hubert Hurkacz 3-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-5.

Meanwhile defending champion Jessica Pegula advanced to the WTA Toronto Masters final by defeating Diana Shnaider 6-4, 6-3, giving her a chance to be the event's first back-to-back winner since 2000.

Sixth-ranked Pegula eliminated the 24th-ranked Russian in 83



minutes to book an all-American final against Amanda Anisimova, who ousted US eighth seed Emma Navarro 6-3, 2-6, 6-2.

Pegula, trying for the first Canadian repeat since Martina Hingis in 1999-2000, is 2-0 against Anisimova, most recently winning in April at Charleston.

"She's probably one of the biggest, cleanest ball strikers I've ever played against, so when she's on it can be really tough," Pegula said of Anisimova.

## Bo Nix Sharp as Broncos Edge Colts



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Bo Nix completed 15 of 21 passes for 125 yards and a touchdown as the Denver Broncos knocked off the host Indianapolis Colts 34-30 in both teams' preseason opener.

After Jarrett Stidham quarterbacked Denver's first two drives and amassed 37 yards with an interception, Nix took over for the rest of the half and into the third quarter. The first-round draft pick guided four scoring drives for the Broncos (1-0), including one that ended with a 1-yard TD pass to Marvin Mims Jr. in the second quarter. He also ran three times for 17 yards.

The Broncos' third quarterback option, Zach Wilson, went 10-of-13 for 117 yards. Audric Estime ran for 31 yards and one of three Denver rushing touchdowns.

Anthony Richardson led two brief Indianapolis drives to start the game before giving way to four quarterbacks in relief. Richardson went 2-for-4 for 25 yards plus a 1-yard rush. Star running back Jonathan Taylor started and had two carries for four yards for the Colts (0-1).

The Colts' Micah Abraham returned a fumble by Estime 45 yards for a touchdown.

Stetson Bennett found Miller Forristall for a 6-yard touchdown with four seconds left in the fourth quarter to lift Los Angeles Rams to a 13-12 victory over Dallas Cowboys in Inglewood, Calif.

Outside of the game-winning TD pass, Bennett had a rough day, getting picked off four times. He completed 24 of 38 passes for 224 yards. Jordan Whittington hauled in six catches for 74 yards for the Rams (1-0).

The Cowboys (0-1) were up 12-6 after a pair of fourth-quarter field goals -- from 38 and 52 yards out -- by Brandon Aubrey. Trey Lance threw for 188 yards on 25-for-41 passing, and he was also Dallas' leading rusher (six carries, 44 yards).

## Athanaze Heroics Guide West Indies to South Africa Draw

PORT OF SPAIN (Dispatches) - Alick Athanaze missed out on a maiden Test century but played the key role in ensuring the safety of a draw for the West Indies against South Africa on the final day of the rain-affected first Test of a two-match series at Queen's Park Oval on Sunday.

Set the unlikely victory target of 298 after the Proteas declared their second innings at 173 for three just before lunch, Athanaze's determined 92 and a fifth-wicket partnership of 65 with Jason Holder (31 not out) guided the hosts from the discomfort of 127 for four just after tea to 201 for five at the end of play.

As in the first innings, Keshav Maharaj presented the greatest threat to the hosts, the left-arm orthodox spinner claiming four for 88 to finish with match figures of eight for 164.

Coming to the crease with the West Indies in trouble at 18 for two just after lunch due to early strikes by Maharaj and Kagiso Rabada, Athanaze displayed admirable restraint in an innings spanning over three hours during which he faced 116 balls and stroked nine fours.

However that discipline wavered with the end of play in sight as the 25-year-old left-hander from Dominica, clearly keen to get to the landmark, top-edged a sweep off Maharaj to give Ryan Rickelton a comfortable catch at backward square-leg.

"It was just about dragging the length back and trying to exploit the rough outside his off-stump," said player of the match Maharaj in explaining his plan to claim Athanaze's wicket. "Full credit must go to him though for the way he

played. I just tried to stick to my plans and utilise different angles from the crease."

Earlier, Tristan Stubbs' aggressive 68 off 50 balls (six fours, two sixes) led the Proteas' pursuit of quick runs on a bright, sweltering morning.

His maiden Test half-century was supported by openers Tony de Zorzi (45) and Aiden Markram (38) in scoring at almost a run-a-ball before captain Temba Bavuma declared when Stubbs was bowled by veteran seamer Kumar Roach.

"We expected the wicket to break up a little more than it did," Bavuma said.

"In the end we just didn't have enough time, plus the elements got in the way of what could have been a really good competitive game of cricket."

West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite, who fell in the first over of the innings, slicing an ambitious lofted drive to cover off Maharaj, was not thinking about a draw when he walked out to bat with opening partner Mikyle Louis.

"We believed we could have gotten the runs," he stated bluntly.

"We knew it wasn't going to be easy, but my message to the boys was to back themselves and fully commit to their plans at the crease."

Given the significant interruptions by rain - more than two days' playing time was lost - there is already concern the second and final Test, scheduled for the Guyana National Stadium from Thursday, will also suffer a similar fate.

It again raises questions about the wisdom of scheduling

international cricket - especially Test matches - in the southern Caribbean at the heart of the rainy season.

