

The Official News Agencies of Iran, Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Azerbaijan Have Agreed on a Framework of Forming a Media Union in Order to Exchange News, Produce Joint Broadcast and Exchange Experiences

IRAN NEWS

The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Says It Has subsidized More Than \$27b Worth of Imports Into the Country in Nearly Five Months That Have Passed Since the Start of the Calendar Year in March 20

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DOMESTIC



Lack of Interest in Iran-Tajikistan Road Route

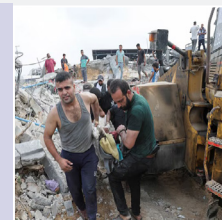
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INTERNATIONAL

Israeli Strike Kills at Least 17 Palestinians in Central Gaza

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Gov't Seeking to Employ Talented and Elite Individuals



TEHRAN - The President emphasized the necessity of synergy, cohesion, and unity among internal currents and groups to overcome external challenges. He stated that in a situation where the country is engaged in an all-out economic war, any disruption in internal cohesion would create problems for the country in dealing and interacting with international challenges.

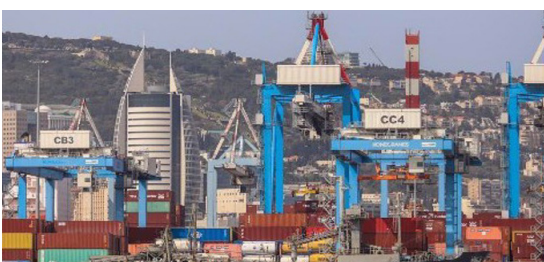
Masoud Pezeshkian, in separate meetings with the representatives of Zanjan and Khorasan Razavi provinces, cited the provision of health, education, and livelihood for the people as the three main pillars in the planning of the 14th government. He stressed that convergence, unity, and sincere efforts by officials would increase public trust in the government and encourage public participation, enabling the government to overcome many challenges.

The President pointed to the lack of focus in management and the dispersion in decision-making as among the challenges and issues of the country's executive system. He emphasized that relying on collective wisdom, avoiding arbitrary actions and decisions, and employing scientific and expert methods would correct many incorrect and misguided management practices in the country.

Pezeshkian also reiterated the importance of synergy, cohesion, and unity among internal currents and groups to overcome external challenges. He stated that in a situation where the country is engaged in an all-out economic war, any disruption in internal cohesion would create problems for the country in dealing and interacting with international challenges.

In another part of his speech, the President noted that in the process of selecting proposed ministers for the Parliament, the criterion was not factional, political, ethnic, or gender-based approaches, but rather meritocracy with indicators such as capability, efficiency, adherence to the law, and the implementation of the vision document and development plan. He added that strict and exclusionary policies in previous periods have led to the exclusion of many dedicated and hardworking managers, depriving the country's executive system of the service of deserving individuals. Therefore, the government of national unity seeks to employ talented and elite individuals regardless of any perspective, religion, or ethnicity.

Hezbollah Can Destroy \$150b Worth of Israeli Assets



BEIRUT (Dispatches) - The Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah can hit and destroy as much as \$150 billion worth of Israel's economic and industrial assets in case Israel decides to enter a war with Lebanon, a report shows.

Israel is reportedly heavily reliant on the economic and industrial infrastructure it has built over decades in the north of the occupied Palestine.

It said the regime has invested some \$130 billion in the past 35 years to build 132 factories in an area which has some of the most fertile lands in the West Asia region because of its proper climate and its fresh water resources.

The area is viewed as the economic heart of Israel as it is responsible for 80% of the grain supply, some 40% of the meat supply and 70% of dairy supply to the inhabitants of the Israeli-occupied territories, said the report.

Any attack by Hezbollah on companies like Adom, a major meat supplier, and Tnuva, a large dairy company, would paralyze the food market in Israel, it said.

More than 60% of Israel's oil refining and fuel production capacity is scattered around the port of Acre near the border with Lebanon which is responsible for processing the entire imports of energy carriers into the occupied territories.

That highly increases the vulnerability of Israel against any attack by Hezbollah as it could lead to massive number of deaths in a radius of 8 kilometers from Acre, said the report.

The report comes as Hezbollah has vowed it would retaliate against an Israeli airstrike on July 30 on a building in southern Beirut that killed the group's top military commander Fuad Shukur.



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

Defeat of Most Enemy Plans in Recent Times

TEHRAN - The proposed Minister of Intelligence stated that in recent times, the Ministry of Intelligence has successfully thwarted the majority of enemy plans through a series of counter-terrorism and counter-intelligence operations.

Hojjat al-Islam wal-Muslimin Seyed Esmail Khatib, in a parliamentary session on Sunday, in defense of his plans, said: "It is hoped that the honorable representatives, based on their legal duties, will fully support the government. We stand today on the honorable path of the Alavi and Velayi, at a point where the nation's security and strength are acknowledged by scholars and politicians worldwide, and even recognized by both friends and foes."

He continued: "On one hand, we are in a region faced with multiple wars and tensions, including the creation of the most brutal example of Takfiri terrorism under the name of ISIS, and on the other hand, we are witnessing the unveiling of state terrorism with the unleashing of the most savage Zionist racist gang and the unprecedented massacre of women, children, and the elderly in full view of the world."

Khatib emphasized: "The enemy's confrontation with the Islamic system has always existed from the beginning of the revolution until today, and now the enemy has placed hybrid warfare with cognitive warfare tools on its agenda, aiming to weaken the internal structure."

He added: "Today, the intelligence services of 53 countries have desks focused on Iran, and many anti-security projects are carried out with the participation of various actors and a division of labor."

The proposed Minister of Intelligence continued: "Nevertheless, the Islamic Republic of Iran, with God's grace, the leadership's wisdom, and the people's presence, along with the efforts of the unknown soldiers of Imam Mahdi (AS), is progressing towards security. The country's security apparatuses and armed forces have powerfully overcome conspiracies and ensured security and unity."

The proposed Minister of Intelligence continued: "The national security environment has now undergone significant changes that require a knowledgeable and specialized transformative approach to confront, and the Ministry of Intelligence has practically adopted this re-evaluation and implemented new strategies."

He added: "Prioritizing preventive and proactive actions over defensive and reactive measures, reinforcing and strengthening religious, legal, and ethical standards in determining qualifications, prioritizing protective approaches over security confrontations for all members of society, expanding public intelligence and basing intelligence on the people, maximizing the use of modern technologies, focusing particularly on cognitive warfare and narrative battles, combating anti-security actors and actions, strengthening the resistance movement, and aligning intelligence services are among these new approaches."

He continued: "As the country's primary intelligence agency, the Ministry of Intelligence has been able to take significant steps towards neutralizing enemy actions through synergy

with the broader intelligence and security community."

Khatib continued: "If I continue to be successful in serving, I will dedicate all my efforts before God, the Leader of the Revolution, and the Iranian people to enhance and elevate national security, so that with the help of Imam Mahdi (AS), I may be an effective driver in advancing the ideals of the Islamic Revolutionary Front and the development and progress of our beloved country, Iran."

He added: "In all three areas of knowledge production, safeguarding and purification, and enhancing governance quality, the role of intelligence has been redefined and implemented according to the demands of the current era."

Khatib said: "In the area of education and awareness-raising, both for the elite and the general public, by producing various high-quality products and holding different meetings and conferences with the target community, we have protected a large number of people."

He reminded: "The development and strengthening of security through changing processes and methods, smart management, empowering human resources, and establishing a professional perspective on them, along with constructive interaction with various organizations in this field, requires even more attention from the Islamic Consultative Assembly, and I emphasize this request here."

The proposed Minister of Intelligence said: "Paying attention to identifying and utilizing emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and cognitive sciences has led to significant transformations in the collection and analysis of intelligence, making the achievement of major goals more accessible."

He added: "Investment in this area and the utilization of elite human resources will continue in the future, and a compassionate and empathetic approach by the intelligence apparatus towards individuals has always been an important basis in the intelligence journey."

The proposed Minister of Intelligence added: "If the intelligence apparatus stands firmly and powerfully against the enemies and traitors of the nation, it also deals with the errors of the deceived and unaware with patience and support."

Khatib said: "A significant number of individuals were only warned instead of being arrested or summoned, or they were persuaded and guided in compassionate discussions."

He stated: "Based on the directives of the honorable President, strengthening national unity and domestic cohesion will be the focus of the Intelligence Ministry's programs in the new government. Sustainable security, increasing social capital, national power, and the country's progress depend on a compassionate approach by different political and social factions and the reduction of all divides."

The proposed Minister of Intelligence continued: "The intelligence apparatus, influenced by the government's wise approach, will employ all its capacities to strengthen and enhance the revolutionary front."

Hamas Official Dismisses Biden's Truce Optimism as "Illusion"

GAZA (Dispatches) - A senior Hamas official has dismissed as "an illusion" US President Joe Biden's optimism that a ceasefire deal in the Gaza Strip is in sight following the latest round of Gaza talks in the Qatari capital Doha.

Sami Abu Zuhri of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas made the remarks in a statement on Saturday, a day after Biden claimed a ceasefire deal in the West Asia region is "closer than ever."

"To say that we are getting close to a deal is an illusion," he said.

"We are not facing a deal or real negotiations, but rather the imposing of American diktats," the Hamas official added.

On Friday, Biden said a deal to end fighting in Gaza is "much closer" after two days of ceasefire talks in Qatar.

"We're not there yet. But we're much, much closer than it was three days ago. So keep your fingers crossed," Biden said, warning all parties in the region to not do anything to undermine the talks at this crucial stage.

His remarks came after the United States, Qatar and Egypt issued a joint statement saying they held Gaza ceasefire talks in a positive atmosphere in Doha, adding that the talks were "serious, and constructive."

The mediators put forward a "bridging proposal" that would allow the "swift"



implementation of a deal that would end the war in Gaza and see the release of Israeli captives, the joint statement said.

The mediating trio claimed that their proposal "narrows the gaps between the parties," referring to Hamas and the Israeli regime.

Hamas has already said it would not accept new conditions from the Israeli regime as outlined in the new proposal.

Meanwhile, Sultan Barakat, professor of public policy at Hamad Bin Khalifa University, says Biden wants a ceasefire to allow US Vice President Kamala

Harris to "regain some of the Muslim and Arab votes."

In contrast, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is trying to continue the war, he told Al Jazeera, stressing that his strategy is to ramp up attacks on Gaza every time there are truce talks, making it very difficult for Palestinians "even to accept to consider an end to this war".

Israel launched its brutal onslaught on Gaza after the territory's resistance movements launched a surprise attack, dubbed Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, against the usurping regime on October 7, 2023.

Despite the ceasefire talks, the Israeli regime is pushing ahead with its air and artillery attacks in the besieged enclave as the genocidal war enters its eleventh month.

Completion of the 7,000-Ton Iranian Ship Construction in Russia Nears



TEHRAN - The Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) has ordered the construction of a 7,000-ton ship in Russia as part of its efforts to expand its maritime trade volume with countries bordering the Caspian Sea. This move is aimed at increasing its share in the export and import cargo transportation sector. Additionally, the Iranian port of Solyanka has secured the top rank among the ports of Astrakhan.

The construction of the 7,000-ton ship ordered by IRISL from a Russian company is nearing its final stages, and soon this ship will be added to Iran's maritime fleet in the Caspian Sea.

This ship, designed to enhance IRISL's operations in the Caspian Sea and to further boost cargo transportation in the North-South Corridor, is scheduled to be delivered to the IRISL fleet by this fall.

Over the past two years, with the acquisition of Solyanka Port in Astrakhan, IRISL has seen significant growth in cargo transport from Iran's northern ports to Russia and other Caspian Sea littoral states. According to assessments by Russian port authorities, the Iranian Solyanka Port has achieved the top rank among the ports of Astrakhan.

The port, spanning an operational area of 18 hectares, features five berths capable of simultaneously docking five ships. It also includes a 14,000-ton covered warehouse. Additionally, the port is equipped with eight portal cranes, 80 rail cranes, three locomotives, wood dryers, a cold corridor, a terminal, a grain elevator, and refrigerated container sockets.

According to official statistics, Solyanka Port has captured approximately one-fourth of the share of Iranian ships passing through Astrakhan ports.

Moscow Warns Neo-Nazi Kiev Regime Poses Threat to All of Europe



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova has warned that the "Neo-Nazi Kiev regime" poses a threat to all of Europe by planning to attack nuclear facilities in Russia.

Zakharova in a statement urged the international community to resolutely respond to reports about plans by Kiev to attack the nuclear power plant in Kursk.

"We call on the international bodies, the UN and the [International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)] in particular, to immediately condemn the provocative actions prepared by the Kiev regime and to prevent the violation of both nuclear and physical security of the Kursk Nuclear Power Plant," she said.

These actions by the Ukrainian military "could result in a large-scale technogenic catastrophe in Europe," she warned.

Kiev's plans do not just pose a "direct threat" to the nuclear power plant's security but also go against the principles of the IAEA formulated by its head, Rafael Grossi, in 2022, amid the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, she added.

"The entire international community should understand the threat posed by the neo-Nazi Kiev regime to the European continent."

Zakharova also maintained that any attempts to "intimidate and terrorize entire regions and all of the international community should be resolutely stopped by joint efforts."

Last week, a cross-border incursion into the Russian border region where the plant is located was launched by Ukrainian forces.

On Friday, Russian military journalist Marat Khairullin reported, citing sources, that Kiev was plotting a false flag operation involving the detonation of a dirty atomic bomb and targeting the spent nuclear fuel storages of a nuclear power plant.

Reports say the operation would either be directed against Russia's Zaporozhye NPP in Enerгодar or the Kursk NPP.

Kursk nuclear power plant is reportedly 90 kilometers from the Ukraine-Russia border, which has become an arena of fierce clashes between the two sides.

The Zaporozhye plant is the largest in Europe and is also located close to the front line.

Neither the UN nor the IAEA have responded to the Russian Foreign Ministry's statement as of Saturday evening.

The Russian Defense Ministry earlier warned that any attempts to create a "man-made disaster in the European part of the continent" would be met with "tough military and military-technical countermeasures."

IRAN NEWS



VTB Bank of Russia's Correspondent Relationships With 10 Iranian Banks

TEHRAN - Mohammad Reza Rajai, the official representative of VTB Bank of Russia in Iran, stated that VTB Bank, the second-largest bank in Russia by asset value, with assets worth \$290 billion in 2022, has recently begun its activities in the Iranian financial market. He continued by noting that the total asset value of all Iranian banks combined is approximately \$265 billion. Rajai added that VTB Bank, as the first major Russian commercial bank, has opened its office in Iran after receiving a license from the Central Bank of Iran and is working to develop banking relations between Iran and Russia. The official representative of VTB Bank in Iran pointed out that the bank has been officially active over the past year and has established correspondent relationships with nearly 10 Iranian banks.

Iran Raps Israel's Deceitfulness in Gaza Truce Talks



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The caretaker foreign minister of Iran lashed out at the Zionist regime for committing heinous crimes against Gaza and resorting to deception and tricks in the negotiations on a possible ceasefire.

In a telephone conversation on Saturday, Ali Baqeri and Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty talked about the latest developments in the efforts to stop the Zionist regime's genocidal war on Gaza.

The Iranian caretaker minister said the criminal gang ruling in Tel Aviv resorts to crimes on the battlefield and to deception in negotiations.

By publicly supporting the crimes of the Zionists, the US has proven that it is an accomplice in the Zionist regime's atrocities, he added.

Baqeri noted that the US cannot be an impartial mediator as it is continuously trying to obstruct efforts to stop the Israeli regime's crimes and encourage it to continue genocide in Gaza.

On the Israeli assassination of Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, Baqeri said Iran reserves its inherent and legitimate right to legitimately respond to the Zionist regime's crime, stressing that the Palestinian people will not surrender to Israel thanks to their exemplary courage.

For his part, the foreign minister of Egypt pointed to the multilateral meetings to establish a ceasefire in Gaza, saying Cairo's efforts are aimed at helping the Palestinian people and immediately stopping the Zionists' crimes in Gaza.

Abdelatty also voiced concern about the dire food and medication shortage in Gaza as well as the outbreak of diseases in the enclave.

"Today, we need consensus in the international community to establish a ceasefire in Gaza as soon as possible," he stated.



Tehran Hosts Conference of "Abai Legacy, Global of Kazakhstan Honor"

TEHRAN - On the occasion of the commemoration of Hakim Abai Qonabai, Eco-Cultural Institute in cooperation with the Embassy of Kazakhstan in Iran, organized a ceremony titled "Abai's Legacy, the Global Honor of Kazakhstan", at the international conference hall of this institute in Tehran.

In this international meeting, Ontalap Onalbayev, the ambassador of Kazakhstan in Tehran, referring to the deep concepts and themes of Hakim "Abai Qonabay" works, said: "Abai is a person with global culture, and Abai's rich literary heritage is not only the spiritual treasure of a nation but also belongs to the whole humanity."

In this international meeting, Saad Khan, the head of the Eco-Cultural Institute, also pointed out the role of various cultural elements in bringing together the Eco nations: Abai is not just a poet, but a social reformer, and his ideas must be translated into different languages.

In this ceremony, personalities delivered speeches: "The Ambassador of Tajikistan, Nizamuddin Zahedi, the Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan, Turdaqun Sedikov, the Ambassador of Uzbekistan, Fariduddin Nasriyev, the Advisor of Turkmenistan, Sardar Qut Nizaf, and Jalal Nazaft, the Deputy Director of the Eco Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran. "Bichakli", Deputy Secretary General of ECO Economic Cooperation Organization, "Alireza Habibi", Professor of Allameh Tabataba'i University, and "Gohar Omar Khanova."

Lack of Interest in Iran-Tajikistan Road Route

TEHRAN - Mohammad Hossein Roshanak, the head of the Iran-Tajikistan Joint Chamber of Commerce, explained in an interview with an ILNA reporter the details of the visa exemption for travel between the two countries. He stated that visas have been removed for both air and land travel between Iran and Tajikistan. However, for Tajik travelers coming to Iran, a temporary visa is issued upon arrival at Mashhad airport until the infrastructure is fully developed. Those arriving through Imam Khomeini Airport do not need an airport visa. Currently, there are two weekly flights from Tehran and one from Mashhad to Dushanbe.

He further announced that the two countries are determined to increase trade value to \$500 million by the end of this year, noting that Iranian companies have performed well in exporting technical and engineering services to Tajikistan. However, due to the sanctions on Iran and the requirement to repatriate foreign exchange earnings, Iranian exporters provide these services in Tajikistan under non-Iranian labels.

Roshanak also provided more details on the trade between the two countries, stating that building materials, especially tiles, ceramics, cables, and electrical equipment, are currently the main products exported from Iran to Tajikistan. Previously, Iranian food products and detergents were also available in the Tajik market, and these goods are still being exported, but their volume has significantly decreased. This decrease is due to the increased production costs of Iranian goods and the currency commitments imposed on exporters by the government, which have reduced Iran's competitiveness in the Tajik market.

He noted that Tajikistan has a population of over 9 million people, and Turkey, Russia, India, and China are Iran's competitors in this market. These

competitors do not face the challenges that Iranians do in trade, which has led to better performance in this market. Nevertheless, trade with Tajikistan has the advantage for Iran that Iranian goods can also reach the markets of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan through this country.

He estimated the value of imports from Tajikistan to Iran at around \$90 million, stating that Iran's imports from this country mainly consist of dried fruits and cotton, making Iran's exports to Tajikistan outweigh its imports.

Roshanak dismissed the possibility of removing the dollar from trade between the two countries. He explained that removing the dollar from Iran-Tajikistan trade requires the creation of infrastructures that are currently lacking, and stabilizing this process would take about two decades. Moreover, if Iran's sanctions were lifted, this solution would no longer be effective.

He added that currently, Iran's Export and Trade Banks have branches in Tajikistan, but neither is ready to receive "Somoni" (Tajik currency) from Iranian traders in Tajikistan and give them "Rial" in Iran. While it might be possible for governments to exchange the two countries' currencies, this is not feasible for private sector traders.

Regarding the latest status of the road corridor between Iran and Tajikistan, he said that this corridor runs from Urumqi in China to Kyrgyzstan, and from there to Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and finally to Iran. Currently, the road route between Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan is operational, but due to insufficient security in Afghanistan, it has not been widely adopted. Nevertheless, he believes that the route is now secure enough to be used for transporting goods and passengers.

Lagging Behind Global Technology Blamed for Rising Domestic Production Costs

TEHRAN - The 13th IMPEX exhibition press conference was held at the Handcrafted Shoe Manufacturers Union.

Ali Lashgari, the head of Iran's footwear industry, highlighted the workforce in this sector. He mentioned that despite the industry being stuck in stagflation, leading many businesses to shut down or downsize, there are still 12,000 small and large production units and 50,000 distribution units for leather bags and shoes. Most of these units employ fewer than 50 people.

Lashgari noted that Iran's leather footwear industry has a history spanning thousands of years, with 90% of its raw materials produced domestically. Even the chemicals are supplied by local petrochemical companies. This has led to Iran ranking 12th globally in leather bag and shoe production, which could improve to 7th if unlicensed and home-based units are included. Iran is also among the top 20 countries in terms of consumption.

Lashgari stated that, based on field data, approximately 270 million pairs of various footwear types were produced last year. On the export front, Iran has averaged \$100 million annually over the past five to six years. However, since the ban on importing footwear in 2018, imports have significantly declined. Despite this, \$45 million worth of footwear was illegally imported last year.

He also addressed why Iranian shoes are more expensive compared to those produced in other countries like China. The primary reason is that Iran is lagging behind in adopting the latest global technologies. Besides the challenges posed by sanctions, money transfers are also difficult, making it



hard to utilize global advancements. In the past, Italian and foreign experts would come to Iran to provide training and purchase equipment, but now, due to regional security concerns, they are hesitant to participate.

Mohsen Gorji, the Director General of the Clothing and Textiles Office at the Ministry of Industry, Mines, and Trade, emphasized that Iran's leather and footwear industry is fully localized, with raw materials, petrochemicals, and final products all produced domestically. The industry boasts a high level of internal production depth. He added that 95% of a shoe is produced locally, making it a significant advantage for the country.

Gorji also mentioned that the industry has seen localization in machinery as well, with coordinated efforts to utilize knowledge-based companies for further localization. The industry is recognized for its job creation potential and self-sufficiency, and efforts are underway to maximize its benefits through clustering strategies. The leather and footwear industry has been identified as a key sector in the 7th Development Plan, with specific programs to be rolled out six months into the plan.

He expressed hope that the new government would continue to support this industry and that the demands of associations and unions would be taken seriously. The Ministry of Industry is expected to present its approved plans to the government and parliament, ensuring that future decisions are based on these plans.

Regarding the fight against the smuggling of shoes, Gorji noted that the first serious steps were taken at the end of 2023 after a four-year hiatus, and efforts are ongoing.

Iran Among Countries in Region With "Low" Alert Level for Mpox



TEHRAN - The head of the Center for Infectious Disease Management at the Ministry of Health stated that Iran is among the regions with a "low" alert level by the World Health Organization (WHO) concerning monkeypox (mpox). He mentioned that the Ministry of Health has implemented special measures for individuals entering Iran from African countries, particularly the "Democratic Republic of the Congo," to manage and prevent the spread of monkeypox.

Dr. Shahnam Arshi noted that the WHO has issued a notification regarding monkeypox. The notification includes various levels of urgency: "low," "medium," and "high." According to the WHO's classification, the "Democratic Republic of the Congo" in Africa is categorized as a "high urgency level" region, and currently, no other country is at this level.

He added that local transmission of monkeypox has not been reported in some countries, including Iran. Presently, Iran is categorized under regions with a low alert level. However, despite being at a low alert level, border surveillance has been prioritized.

The head of the Infectious Disease Management Center at the Ministry of Health, discussing border surveillance for controlling and preventing monkeypox, said that there is a possibility that some non-citizens wishing to enter Iran might show symptoms of monkeypox. Upon identification, these individuals will be sent back to their country. Additionally, primary precautions are taken for those who travel to European countries such as Germany, France, and Spain, which are considered high-risk due to the past outbreaks of the disease in these countries. If travelers from European countries show initial symptoms, they are advised to see a doctor to take necessary actions.

Regarding the measures for travelers from African countries, Arshi explained that the Ministry of Health has implemented special precautions for individuals entering Iran from African countries, particularly the "Democratic Republic of the Congo," to manage and prevent monkeypox. Currently, the preventive measures are at a medium level.

Trade Volume on IME Up by 67%



TEHRAN - Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 3,318,090 tons of commodities with a total trading value of more than \$980m on its physical market.

According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor trade of 2,552,226 tons of commodities valued at more than \$677m.

On this floor the IME sold 1,103,495 tons of cement, 625,000 tons of iron ore, 631,071 tons of steel, 174,000 tons of sponge iron, 10,760 tons of copper, 5,700 tons of aluminum, 2,000 tons of coke and 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate.

Moreover, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 97,970 tons of commodities worth nearly \$283m.

Commodities traded on this floor included 268,500 tons of vacuum bottom, 113,503 tons of bitumen, 97,970 tons of polymeric products, 54,458 tons of chemicals, 50,000 tons of lube cut, 41,700 tons of sulfur, 3,142 tons of oil, 280 tons of feedstocks and 100 tons of waterproofing materials.

The IME also traded within the same week 18,210 tons of goods on its side market.

Turkey Battles Forest Fires for Third Day

IZMIR (Dispatches) - Firefighters were battling a strong forest fire in Turkey's Aegean city of Izmir for a third day, AFP reporters said, a day after hundreds of local people in nearby villages had to be evacuated. Firefighters said they had partially beaten back the flames that have been threatening the port city over the last three days, although fires were still burning in the nearby forests. In the northern suburb of Omekkooy, AFP journalists saw the charred remains of several buildings and vehicles in an industrial zone while grey smoke billowed into the sky. "We don't know what to do. Our workplace is located in the middle of the fire. We have lost our livelihood," said 48-year-old Hanife Erbil, who earns a living collecting paper and plastic waste. The pine trees that once crowned the surrounding hills were also burned. "It was such a beautiful route, it smelled of pine trees everywhere. It makes me want to cry," said taxi driver Ayhan. The smell of smoke was hanging over the city, the third-most-populated in Turkey.



IRAN NEWS

Russia Says Ukraine Used Western Rockets to Destroy Bridge in Kursk Region



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia's foreign ministry said Ukraine had used Western rockets, likely U.S.-made HIMARS, to destroy a bridge over the Seym river in the Kursk region, killing volunteers trying to evacuate civilians.

"For the first time, the Kursk region was hit by Western-made rocket launchers, probably American HIMARS," Maria Zakharova, spokeswoman for the Russian foreign ministry, said late on Friday on the Telegram messaging app.

"As a result of the attack on the bridge over the Seym River in the Glushkovo district, it was completely destroyed, and volunteers who were assisting the evacuated civilian population were killed."

There was no indication of how many volunteers were killed in Friday's attack.

Ukrainian army chief Oleksandr Syrskiy said that Kyiv's forces had advanced between 1 and 3 kilometres (0.6 to 1.9 miles) in some areas in the Kursk region on Friday, 11 days since beginning an incursion into the western Russian territory.

Kyiv has claimed to have taken control of 82 settlements over an area of 1,150 square kilometres (440 square miles) in the region since Aug. 6.

Russia's defence ministry, cited by the Interfax news agency, said on Saturday that Russian forces repelled several Ukrainian attacks in the Kursk region, but did not report recapturing any territory.

Indonesia Holds Curtailed Independence Day Event in Troubled New Capital

NUSANTARA (Dispatches) - Indonesia celebrated its independence anniversary at the site of its planned new capital, Nusantara, for the first time on Saturday, in a scaled-back ceremony as the still-under-construction city is beset by problems and faces delays.

A legacy project of outgoing President Joko Widodo, Nusantara has suffered construction delays and funding shortages due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a lack of foreign investment, and more recently, resignations of project leaders.

In Saturday's celebration of the country's independence from Japanese rule that ended in 1945, the number of attendees was cut to 1,300 guests, down from 8,000 initially, as lodgings and food supply were limited, Jokowi, as the president is popularly known, said earlier this week.

Hundreds of attendees from local communities and construction workers joined the ceremony under red umbrellas, with several under-construction buildings behind them.

Mulyana, a 38-year-old construction worker at the new capital, said he spent the last nine months to build a ministry office building which was partially used on Saturday for the celebration amid limited infrastructure to move the materials.

"For five months we work in 24-hour shifts, due to limited access we need two to three hours (daily) to move the concrete using heavy equipment," Mulyana, who like many Indonesians has a single name, told Reuters on Friday, adding that when he came a year ago, water and electricity supply were limited at the site.



GAZA (Dispatches) - At least 17 Palestinians were killed and dozens wounded in an Israeli strike in the central Gaza town of Zawayda on Saturday, health officials said, as Israel issued new evacuation orders, citing Hamas rocket fire nearby.

Israel also announced the names of two soldiers Israeli media reported were killed on Saturday afternoon when a roadside bomb exploded in the central Gaza Strip, and an air strike in the occupied West Bank that it said killed two senior Hamas militants involved in the killing of an Israeli.

The violence occurred before U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken was expected to land in Israel on Sunday and meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday, amid stepped-up diplomatic efforts to conclude a deal to end the fighting between Israel and the militant Islamist group and free Israeli hostages.

Most of the people killed in Zawayda were from the same family and they included eight children and four women, according to health officials in the Hamas-administered enclave.

"They were asleep in their beds, kids and babies, then three missiles targeted their place," said Abu Ahmed Hassan, a neighbour. The owner of the house was a known merchant, he said. "There are no military activities here at all," he added.

The Israeli military said in response it had struck militant targets in an area from which rockets were fired at its troops. It said the incident was under review.

Israel's military spokesperson posted instructions in Arabic on X on Saturday for people in parts of central Gaza, including in the Maghazi district near Zawayda, to evacuate to a designated humanitarian zone.

Reuters could not immediately verify whether Zawayda was among the places ordered to evacuate and whether people there had received the military's instructions. Residents said thousands were streaming out of Maghazi.

On Friday, two sections of the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis within what Israel has designated as a

humanitarian zone were deemed dangerous by the military, which ordered people to evacuate them, saying militants had been regularly firing rockets from there.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said Friday's orders, which also included other areas of the enclave outside the humanitarian zones, had affected around 170,000 displaced people.

"This is one of the largest evacuation orders affecting the zone to date and it shrinks the size of the so-called 'humanitarian area' to about 41 square kilometres, or 11 per cent of the total area of the Gaza Strip," an OCHA report said.

In the central part of the enclave, residents said Israeli tanks advanced further on Saturday into the eastern area of Deir al-Balah, an area they had not entered before, where hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians are sheltering.

Most of Gaza's 2.3 million population has been displaced by the 10-month-old Israeli offensive, which has laid waste to much of the enclave.

Another Israeli airstrike on a car in the occupied West Bank city of Jenin on Saturday killed at least two more Palestinians, one an 18-year-old, the Palestinian health ministry said.

Gaza ceasefire talks in Doha, mediated by the U.S., Qatar and Egypt, were due to resume next week.

A statement from Netanyahu's office said Israel's negotiating team had expressed "cautious optimism" on the possibility of advancing a deal "in accordance with the updated American proposal (based on the May 27th framework), including components acceptable to Israel."

U.S. President Joe Biden said on Friday, following two days of talks in Doha, that efforts to reach a deal were now in sight, although he warned that negotiations were "far from over".

Venezuelan Opposition Holds Nationwide Rallies Against Maduro

CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado came out of hiding to attend the protest in Caracas against the government of Nicolas Maduro. It was one of hundreds of rallies she had called for Saturday in Venezuela and abroad. "With intelligence, prudence, resilience, boldness... peaceful protest is our right," she said.

Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado, who has mostly been in hiding since July 28 presidential polls, led a "Protest for the Truth" in Caracas Saturday against Nicolas Maduro's disputed claim of having won reelection.

Atop an opposition campaign truck, and surrounded by motorcyclists and cars waving the national flag, she joined hundreds of supporters gathered in the capital in response to her call for mass gatherings in more than 300 cities in Venezuela and abroad.

Earlier, Machado had called for the anti-Maduro movement to "remain firm and united" in the face of threats and violence.

"They're trying to scare us, to divide us, to paralyze us, to demoralize us, but they can't because they are absolutely entrenched in their lies (and) violence," she wrote on X.

To display this content from X (Twitter), you must enable advertisement tracking and audience measurement.

Many protesters waved printed copies of election records from their voting stations, which they say prove the opposition won.

Venezuela's National Electoral Council (CNE) proclaimed Maduro the winner of a third six-year term until 2031, giving him 52 percent of votes cast on July 28 but without providing a detailed breakdown of the results.

The opposition says polling-station-level results show its candidate Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia took more than two-thirds of the vote.

Gonzalez Urrutia replaced Machado on the ballot after she was ruled out of running by institutions loyal to the regime.



"If we keep quiet, this makes no sense," demonstrator Adriana Calzadilla, a 55-year-old teacher, told AFP in Caracas.

"This is a criminal government that wants to hold on to power. I smell freedom, I have nothing to fear."

Anti-Maduro protests have claimed 25 lives so far, with nearly 200 injured and more than 2,400 arrested since election day.

Early Saturday, a heavy security presence took shape in the capital, with two armored vehicles and 40 motorcycle-mounted troops controlling access to the low-income Petare neighborhood, a few miles from the opposition's gathering point.

Local media reported similar deployments in other areas.

At one of the first overseas demonstrations to get under way Saturday, more than 100 Venezuelans in Australia rallied in Sydney, waving national flags and balloons.

"This is a strong message to our people in Venezuela. We are with you, and we want the world to listen what we are saying," said protest organizer Rina Rivas.

It was unclear if Gonzalez Urrutia, also in hiding, will attend Saturday's march. He last appeared in public at a protest on July 30.

Maduro had called for Machado and Gonzalez Urrutia to be arrested. He accuses them of seeking to foment a "coup d'etat."

Maduro's victory claim has been rejected by the United States, the European Union and several Latin American countries.

Neighbors Colombia and Brazil on Thursday called for fresh elections in Venezuela, but Machado said this would show "a lack of respect" for the popular will already expressed on July 28.

On Friday, Brazil's Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, traditionally a leftist ally of Maduro, described the regime in Caracas as "very unpleasant" and insisted on the release of a detailed vote breakdown.

Trump Says Harris Easier Than Biden to Beat

WILKES-BARRE (Dispatches) - Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump said on Saturday he believed Democrat Kamala Harris will be easier to beat than President Joe Biden even as some polls showed her edging ahead in the race for the Nov. 5 presidential election.

Trump, the former president, spoke at a rally in Wilkes-Barre in northeastern Pennsylvania, a state looming large in the campaign. Vice President Harris will conduct a bus tour of western Pennsylvania starting in Pittsburgh on Sunday, ahead of the kickoff of the Democratic National Convention on Monday in Chicago.

"I believe she will be easier to beat than him," said Trump, referring to her as "radical" and a "lunatic."

Trump has sought to portray Harris as far left on a number of policies. At the rally, he highlighted her previous call for a ban on fracking, an industry important to the state. Harris' campaign has recently indicated she would not support a ban.

He also continued to attack Harris on personal terms, even as some political analysts say such comments could hurt Trump with moderate voters.

"Have you heard her laugh? That is the laugh of a crazy person," Trump said, adding that he was displeased by the illustration of Harris on the cover of the latest issue of Time magazine. "I'm much better looking than her."

In a meandering speech, Trump repeated his false claim that he lost the 2020 election due to fraud, dismissed the threat of climate change and said his plan to impose across-the-board tariffs on foreign goods would not act as a tax on U.S.

consumers, an assertion that most economists contest.

The Mohegan Sun Arena, where Trump appeared, has a capacity of roughly 8,000 and was nearly full when he started speaking. But the crowd began to thin after the one-hour mark. He spoke for more than 100 minutes in total.

Trump said Harris should have done more to tackle inflation and other issues since she and Biden took office. If reelected he said he would sign an executive order directing cabinet secretaries and agency heads to take action to lower prices.

"Another rally, same old show," Joseph Costello, a spokesperson for the Harris campaign, said in a statement responding to Trump's rally speech, which he described as filled with "lies, name-calling, and confused rants."

Pennsylvania was one of three Rust Belt states, along with Wisconsin and Michigan, that helped power Trump's upset victory in 2016. Biden, who grew up in Scranton, Pennsylvania, flipped the trio back to the Democrats in 2020.

With 19 electoral votes out of the 270 needed to secure the White House, compared with 15 in Michigan and 10 in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania may be the biggest prize in this year's election and potentially tip the balance for either candidate.

Harris' entry into the race after Biden ended his reelection bid last month has upended the contest, erasing the lead Trump built in the final weeks of Biden's campaign. Harris is leading Trump by more than two percentage points in Pennsylvania, according to the poll tracking website FiveThirtyEight.

Trump won Pennsylvania in 2016 by about 44,000 votes, a margin of less than one percentage point, while Biden prevailed by just over 80,000 votes in 2020, a 1.2-point margin.

Both campaigns have made the state a top priority, blanketing the airwaves with advertisements. Of the more than \$110 million spent on advertising in seven battleground states since Biden dropped out in late July, roughly \$42 million was in Pennsylvania, more than twice any other state, the Wall Street Journal reported on Friday, citing data from the tracking site AdImpact.





Liverpool, Arsenal Start With Wins in Premier League

LONDON (Dispatches) - Arne Slot made the perfect start to his Liverpool reign with a 2-0 win at Ipswich, while Arsenal dispatched Wolves 2-0 to begin their Premier League title challenge in style on Saturday.

Newcastle defied an early red card for Fabian Schar to edge past Southampton 1-0, while Brighton ran riot under new manager Fabian Hurler in a 3-0 victory at Everton.

Aston Villa spoiled Julen Lopetegui's first game in charge of West Ham with a 2-1 win at the London Stadium.

Slot has huge shoes to fill at Anfield after the departure of Jurgen Klopp, who restored the Reds to the top of the English game.

The Dutchman was left less than impressed by his side's first 45 minutes at Portman Road as Ipswich flew out of the traps on their return to the Premier League for the first time in 22 years.

However, Liverpool were a different side after the break as goals from Diogo Jota and Mohamed Salah barely reflected their dominance to get Slot off to the perfect start.

"We as a team made a big change at half-time because we came out totally different to how we had come out in the first half," said the former Feyenoord boss.

"Second half, we won more duels, we won more second balls and we played more balls in behind because if the other team takes the risk of playing one-v-one and you have the likes of Luis Diaz, Mo Salah and Diogo Jota then use them, play the balls in behind."

Arsenal have finished second to Manchester City in each of the past two seasons and are highly-fancied to be the champions' closest challengers again.

Kai Havertz opened the scoring at the Emirates from Bukayo Saka's cross to reward the Gunners' early dominance.

However, Mikel Arteta's men needed a vital save from David Raya to deny Jorgen Strand Larsen and Matheus Cunha missed a huge chance to level before Arsenal made the points safe.

The roles from the first goal were reversed as this time Havertz teed up Saka to lash home.

"We generated a lot. We probably we should have scored two or three in the first half. Second half we became a bit sloppy, then the game was a bit more open. But Bukayo had an unbelievable action to score the second," Arteta said.

Newcastle's hopes of a winning start to the season looked to have been undone when Schar was sent off after just 28 minutes for what the referee deemed a headbutt on Ben Brereton Diaz despite limited contact between the pair.

Southampton had dominated even the early exchanges against the Magpies' full compliment but failed to convert from 19 shots and nearly 80 percent possession.

By contrast, Newcastle were clinical as Alexander Isak teed up Joelinton for the only goal just before half-time.

Everton's final season at Goodison Park got off to a nightmare start as 31-year-old Hurler enjoyed a dream start to life in the Premier League.

Kaoru Mitoma fired Brighton in front on his return from injury that saw the Japanese international miss much of last season.

Danny Welbeck added a second after the break and Everton were reduced to 10 men when Ashley Young saw red before Simon Adingra made it 3-0 late on.

Antoine Semenyo stepped into the void left at Bournemouth by the departure of Dominic Solanke with a late equaliser to salvage a 1-1 draw at Nottingham Forest.

Leverkusen Defeat Stuttgart on Penalties to Win German Super Cup



LEVERKUSEN (Dispatches) - Ten-man Bayer Leverkusen beat Stuttgart 4-3 on penalties in the season-opening German Super Cup, winning the trophy for the first time.

Victor Boniface's 11th-minute goal was cancelled out four minutes later when Stuttgart's Enzo Millot levelled.

Leverkusen were then reduced to 10 men shortly before half-time when Martin Terrier saw red for a dangerous tackle.

Deniz Undav gave Stuttgart the lead in the second half but Patrik Schick scored with two minutes remaining to equalise for Leverkusen and send the match to penalties.

Bayern Munich loanee Frans Kratzig and Silas Mvumpa missed from the spot while Leverkusen converted all of their penalties.

"What we did in the last 10 or 15 minutes, with a man down, to score the equaliser -- it was unbelievable," Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso said after the match, praising his side's "huge spirit".

"I'm happy with the way we kicked off the season -- we've got this spirit back".

The season curtain-raiser, which puts the Bundesliga champions up against the Cup winners or league runners-up, was the first not to feature either Bayern Munich or Borussia Dortmund since 1993.

Lewandowski Brace Earns Flick First Barcelona Win



VALENCIA (Dispatches) - Robert Lewandowski struck twice for Hansi Flick's Barcelona to deliver a battling 2-1 win at Valencia in their La Liga opener on Saturday.

The German coach celebrated his first competitive match at the helm with three points as Barca came from behind against Ruben Baraja's solid Valencia side.

Hugo Duro sent the hosts ahead after 44 minutes but veteran Polish striker Lewandowski levelled from close range before the break and netted a penalty early in the second half.

With champions Real Madrid, led by new superstar Kylian Mbappe, in action on Sunday at Real Mallorca, Barcelona started their bid to steal the crown with an impressive result at Valencia's rowdy Mestalla stadium.

Barca were without key players, including Frenkie de Jong, Gavi and Ronald Araujo and Flick selected three 17-year-olds in his starting line-up.

They were Spain's Euro 2024 star Lamine Yamal, whose father was stabbed earlier this week in a violent attack, Pau Cubarsi and midfielder Marc Bernal, the latter making his debut.

"In the second half I think we played much better and with three or four very young players -- I think this match is very important, to win at the beginning of the season, especially at this stadium in Valencia, it's very difficult," Lewandowski told Movistar.

"My aim is always to score goals, I don't know how many goals by the end of the season, but it is very important for me that as today was the first game, (I got) goals for confidence."

Barcelona's summer signing Dani Olmo is not yet registered to play and Flick said the playmaker still needs to get up to speed in terms of fitness.

The coach was happier with his team's second half display than their performance before the break.

"The second half was much better than the first half (where) we made a lot of mistakes," Flick told Movistar.

"We came back at the end of the first half and in the second half, we did much better."

An even first half burst into life as the break beckoned after the teams managed to create few clear chances in the first 40 minutes.

Duro nodded the best of them over the bar from a corner, while Valencia goalkeeper Giorgi Mamardashvili saved a fierce Raphinha drive.

Valencia took the lead in the 44th minute, with Duro nodding home Diego Lopez's cross after losing Inigo Martinez, who played him inside.

on.

Sinner, Swiatek Stage Cincy Fightbacks as Zverev Escapes

CINCINNATI (Dispatches) - World number ones Jannik Sinner and Iga Swiatek both turned around losing situations to move into the semi-finals of the ATP and WTA Cincinnati Open.

Sinner prevented rival Andrey Rublev from repeating a triumph from last Saturday in Montreal as he defeated the sixth seed in a 4-6, 7-5, 6-4 fightback.

Swiatek did the same in the women's draw as she worked to overcome teen Mirra Andrejeva 4-6, 6-3, 7-5.

Sinner will square off in the semis against third-ranked 2021 champion Alexander Zverev, who got past rain interruptions in the final set to defeat Ben Shelton 3-6, 7-6 (7/3), 7-5.

The third set was start-stop but the German advanced to his third consecutive Cincinnati final-four spot.

"Conditions and the interruptions were tough, but Ben was the toughest part of the match," Zverev said.

"He has played amazing tennis all week. It was tough to find my comfort zone today, but it's great to get the win."

Top seed Sinner took to the court for only his second match of the week after a first-round bye and a walkover on Friday.

Zverev has won four of five matches against Sinner -- three at Grand Slams, including last year's US Open.

Sinner -- whose fitness has been compromised in recent months by a hip niggle, illness and the tonsillitis which forced him to miss the Olympics -- stormed back to win the second set and break Rublev to start the third.

He clinched victory in a set where five of the 10 games were breaks of serve. His match point ball was caught by a gust of wind and put out of the reach of his opponent.

"There was a lot of mental strength required today," Sinner said. "It was tough conditions, very, very windy."

"In the first set I didn't play my best tennis. In the second I improved and was able to wait for my chances. I was happy to win today."

Sinner ended with 31 winners, including 10 aces, while Rublev, the runner-up at Montreal, committed 47 unforced errors.

Poland's Swiatek grabbed a break in the penultimate game of a match lasting more than two and a half hours to finally advance past Andrejeva at the US Open tuneup, which concludes on Monday.

Swiatek moved through on her first match point, her opponent driving a return long, and won a 30th match this season at the WTA 1000 level. She stands 53-6 for the season and has won

25 matches on hardcourt.

"It was a tight match. Every point matters at the end. It was not easy for sure," Swiatek said.



South Africa Defeat West Indies to Maintain 25-year Test Series Grip

PROVIDENCE (Dispatches) - South Africa defeated the West Indies by 40 runs on an eventful third day of the second and final Test on Saturday to extend their dominance over the Caribbean side.

Set a challenging target of 263 after fast bowler Jayden Seales' Test-best figures of six for 61 dismissed the Proteas for 246 in their second innings in the morning session, the home team lost wickets at regular intervals to be dismissed for 222.

In a cruel twist of fate, Seales was the last wicket to fall just minutes before the scheduled close of play. He fell to man of the series Keshav Maharaj who claimed his 13th wicket of the two-match duel via a short-leg catch by David Bedingham.

The win extended South Africa's unbeaten Test series run against the West Indies from the first-ever series meeting between the two teams in 1998/99 when Shaun Pollock's men demolished the visitors led by Brian Lara 5-0.

West Indies had defeated South Africa in a one-off encounter in Barbados in 1992, their first-ever official Test encounter which marked the Africans' return to the Test fold after 22 years in isolation because of the country's apartheid policy.

Maharaj's left-arm orthodox spin earned him figures of three for 37.

Kagiso Rabada shared bowling hours in the innings with



three for 50, leaving the 29-year-old fast bowler one wicket away from claiming 300 victims in Tests.

"For a team that is in a transition phase we really did well to come away with this success," said a delighted Maharaj, whose three wickets lifted him one above Hugh Tayfield's 170 as the most successful spinner in South Africa's Test history.

"Getting ready for Test cricket is always part of my plan, no matter what other formats I play. I always have a red ball in my bag."

Maharaj was full of praise for his captain, Temba Bavuma, and his refreshing confidence in slow bowlers.

"He trusts spin and backs spin," he explained.

"He allows me to read the game and brings his input as well. It's a privilege to be in a side led by him."

South Africa's only period of anxiety came during a 77-run seventh-wicket partnership between Gudakesh Motie, who top-scored with a Test-best effort of 45 and wicketkeeper-batsman Joshua da Silva (27).

They lifted their team from the depths of 104 for six in mid-afternoon but the reintroduction of Maharaj brought the vital breakthroughs when he trapped Motie and da Silva lbw in successive overs.