

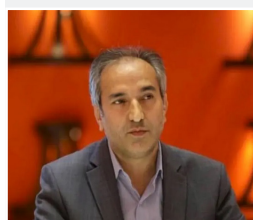
As Many as 56,356 Foreign Nationals Have Been Sent Back to Their Home Countries Through the Southeastern Province of Sistan and Baluchestan, a Local Official Says

IRAN NEWS

Iran's Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization Announced That From August 6 to August 17, Some 2,055,396 Pilgrims Passed Through Iran's Border Crossings to Take Part in This Year's Arbaeen Processions in Iraq

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DOMESTIC



Annual Hotel Occupancy Rate Is Below 40%

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INTERNATIONAL

Ukraine Claims It Has Destroyed Another Bridge in Russia's Kursk Region

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Iran Court Holds First Trial Session Over U.S.-Orchestrated 1953 Coup



TEHRAN (PressTV) - An Iranian court has begun the trial of the US administration and its officials over the 1953 coup against the democratically-elected government of Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh.

The first session of the trial was held at the 55th branch of the court dealing with international affairs in Tehran's Imam Khomeini Judicial Complex on Sunday, on the occasion of the 71st anniversary of the coup.

The court will hear a lawsuit filed by some 402,000 Iranians against six American natural persons and legal entities over their role in the ousting of Mosaddegh that consolidated the rule of the pro-Western monarch, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, until the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Lawyer Shami Aghdam, representing the defendants, said documents show the US spy agency CIA, with the help of its British counterpart MI6, planned the coup by using internal and external agents against the legitimate government of Iran on August 19, 1953. Washington and London, it added, "designed the military coup through violating international principles and rules, and interfering in the internal affairs of Iran, intending to maintain their influence and power in the government, securing their interests and looting the country's property."

It added that the coup was perpetrated by military and political figures affiliated with the US and the UK governments, as well as thugs. "In fact, the coup marked the beginning of the US's complete domination over Iran to make it more dependent than before and prevent its independence and progress. The domination lasted for more than 25 years and inflicted costs, as well as material and spiritual damage, on the country and the nation."

Also on Sunday, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kan'ani said in an X post that the overthrow of the Mosaddegh government, and political, security, and military support for the tyranny, will always remain a disgrace to the US and the UK regimes. "Slavery, colonialism, coups, and military interventions in other countries are only part of the dark and shameful history of the US and UK meddling in the world's affairs," he said.

Biggest Concern of Gov't Is to Ensure Public Satisfaction



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - In the cabinet meeting on Sunday, President Masoud Pezeshkian elaborated on the critical relationship between the government and governance in the Islamic system, discussing the perspective of the Fourteenth Government on this matter.

He emphasized the decisive role of the people as the main support for governments throughout history, stating: "Today, the most significant concern and issue for the Fourteenth Government is to take actions that reduce the distance between the people and the government and increase public satisfaction."

The President also referred to the anniversary of the American coup on August 19, 1953, noting that America's approach towards other countries has always been based on intervention. He mentioned internal divisions as one of the reasons for America's success in the coup and added: "If there had been unity and cohesion among the clergy, intellectuals, and the people at that time, this American conspiracy against the Iranian people would have surely failed."

Pezeshkian further highlighted the deep belief and confidence of Imam Khomeini in the people's support for the Islamic system and revolution. He added: "With this confidence in the people's backing, Imam Khomeini was able to stand against all of America's threats and conspiracies and lead them to failure."

The President expressed hope that with the help of the Parliament in speeding up the formation of the cabinet and with public participation, the government's service delivery and efforts to solve the country's problems and achieve its vision will continue uninterrupted.

In another part of his speech, Pezeshkian requested the Minister of Interior to ensure that the conditions for the Arbaeen pilgrimage are such that there are no issues for the pilgrims of Imam Hussein.

The President also emphasized the importance of reducing the number of fatalities in road accidents and highlighted the need for preventive measures in this regard, including addressing hazardous road spots, improving driving education, and encouraging disciplined drivers.

Pezeshkian also pointed out the Fourteenth Government's commitment to addressing retirees' issues, stating that improving healthcare services and expediting and facilitating the payment of pensions and retirees' claims will be priorities.

In the cabinet meeting, the Minister of Sports and Youth presented a report on the preparation of Iranian athletes for the Paralympic Games. He announced that the Islamic

Republic of Iran would participate in these games with 65 athletes competing in 10 men's sports and 5 women's sports.

Kioumars Hashemi predicted that the Iranian delegation would win 15 medals and be among the top 15 countries globally. He also mentioned that the recently returned Olympic champion delegation has left for Najaf to participate in the Arbaeen march.

Later on Sunday evening, Pezeshkian, in separate meetings with the assemblies of representatives from the Central, Gilan, and Mazandaran provinces, identified the existence of discord and division within the government and between the government and the people as one of the greatest threats to the country's security and progress. He emphasized that the fourteenth government made fostering unity the foundation of its work in order to overcome differences and harness all the country's capacities and capabilities towards solving problems.

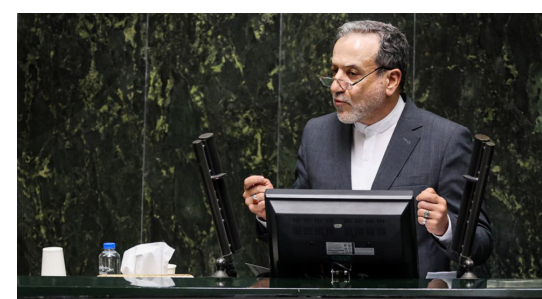
The President stated that the government has based its efforts to create unity on the belief in the full implementation of the Vision Document, the macro policies, and the five-year plan. He added that through unity centered on the implementation of the system's macro policies, it is possible to reach a common language and practical solutions for solving the country's problems.

Pezeshkian considered the incomplete and improper implementation of the Vision Document and the system's macro policies, which are derived from experts' opinions and approved by the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, as a factor in the continuation of the country's problems. He stressed that despite differences in tastes and opinions, everyone should unite around one axis, which is the Supreme Leader's views that should be the final word for everyone.

He regarded the employment of capable individuals, free from factional and political biases, as a transformation in the administration of the country to address shortcomings and solve problems. He called on members of the parliament to assist the government in developing criteria for selecting and appointing specialized, efficient, and transformative executive managers.

Pezeshkian said, "We will strive to allocate the country's limited resources carefully and meticulously, based on justice and regional development plans, to serious priorities and issues that will bring the most public benefit to the people. We will also endeavor to engage in honest interaction with the public to maximize their participation in the administration of affairs."

New Gov't to Pursue Removal of Sanctions



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - President Masoud Pezeshkian's pick for foreign minister, Abbas Araqchi, says pursuing the "dignified and honorable" removal of sanctions will be a priority of the Foreign Ministry if his appointment is approved by the Parliament.

On the second day of debates in the Iranian Parliament on President Pezeshkian's proposed list of ministers, Araqchi presented and defended his main priorities, including ways to deal with the sanctions against Iran.

He said plans to remove sanctions will be pursued in coordination with Iranian lawmakers, adding that any decision will be made based on consensus and common understanding.

He emphasized that Iran will not tolerate rushed or attritional negotiations regarding the lifting of sanctions.

The new Iranian administration's foreign policy will be based on preparing the ground for increasing the country's wealth, power and dignity, Araqchi, a former nuclear negotiator, pointed out.

The negotiations to restore the 2015 nuclear deal - officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (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.

Elsewhere in his address to the Iranian lawmakers, Araqchi said he would vigorously pursue the policy of good neighborliness and would try to seize great economic and political opportunities to improve productive relations with the neighboring countries.

The president's pick for foreign minister said Iran prioritizes relations with countries such as Russia and China which stood by Iran "during tough times and sanctions".

He added that the improvement of ties with emerging powers in Africa, Latin America and East Asia is among other priorities of his ministry.

"If Europe corrects its wrong and hostile behavior towards the Islamic Republic of Iran, it will be on our priority list," Araqchi emphasized.

He said Iran will pursue the policy of "hostility management" and not "cessation of hostility" in ties with the United States.

Iran's Natural Gas Grid Expanded by 53,000 km Since 2021



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - CEO of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) says the gas grid in the country has expanded by 53,000 kilometers in the past three years.

Majid Chegeni said on Sunday that Iran had built more than 1,800 kilometers of new high pressure gas transmission pipelines since August 2021 when the outgoing government took office.

Chegeni said the number of gas grid customers in Iran had increased by nearly a million over the past three years, adding that some 50 new cities and 6,800 villages had also been connected to the country's nationwide gas pipeline network over the same period.

Natural gas became available to 24 new power plants and 21,000 industrial units across Iran over the past three years, he said, adding that the NIGC had also built seven new pumping stations with 24 compressors to power long-distance gas pipelines in the country.

Iran is one of the four largest producers and consumers of natural gas in the world. The country injects more than 850 million cubic meters per day of natural gas to its nationwide grid during cold winter months.

Total gas output in Iran has exceeded 1 billion cubic meters per day, a bulk of which comes from South Pars, the world's largest gas field which is located on the maritime border between Iran and Qatar in the Persian Gulf.

Chegeni's comments on Sunday came during a ceremony to inaugurate a 176-kilometer gas pipeline in eastern Iran where the NIGC has been carrying out projects to boost gas supplies to households and industries in the region.

Israeli Forces Suffer Casualties After Infiltration in Lebanon Repelled

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Fighters from the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement have shelled and fired a barrage of rockets at a group of Israeli forces as they were attempting to sneak across the border from the northern part of the 1948 occupied territories into southern Lebanon.

Hezbollah said in a statement early on Monday that its members carried out the operation after they closely monitored the Israeli troops that sought to infiltrate Lebanon in the Hadab Aita forest area.

The attack caused casualties and forced the Israeli troops to retreat, the resistance group noted.

On Sunday, Hezbollah claimed a series of attacks on the northern side of the occupied lands, including a rocket attack on military barracks in Beit Hillel and military positions in Jal al-Allam, al-Malikiya, Zabadani and Shtula.

Hezbollah fighters also targeted and destroyed spying devices at the Ruwaisat al-Alam site in the occupied Lebanese Kfar Shuba hills with artillery shells.

Moreover, Israeli Zebdine and Ruwaisat al-Qam military sites in the occupied Lebanese Shebaa Farms were struck with separate rocket barrages, and the designated targets were precisely hit.



Hezbollah resistance forces also targeted espionage devices at the Misgav Am site, and shelled the Rahib site.

A state of anticipation and caution prevails in Lebanon following the assassination of senior Hezbollah military commander Fuad Shukr in an Israeli airstrike on a building in the southern Beirut suburb of Dahieh on July 30.

Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah has vowed retaliation for the act of terror.

Hezbollah and Israel have been exchanging deadly fire since early October last year, shortly after the regime launched the genocidal war against the Gaza Strip in response to a surprise operation by the Palestinian Hamas resistance group.

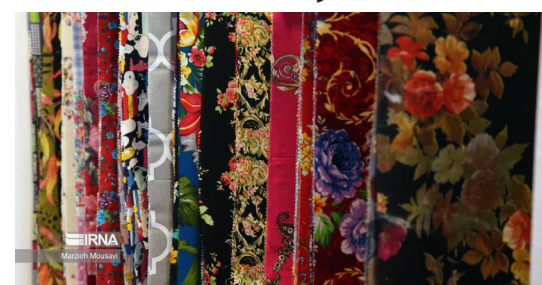
The Lebanese resistance movement has vowed to keep up its retaliatory attacks as long as the Israeli regime continues its war on Gaza, which has so far killed more than 40,000 Palestinians, mostly women and

children, in the besieged territory.

Hezbollah officials have repeatedly said they do not want a war with Israel while stressing that they are prepared in case it occurs.

Two Israeli wars waged against Lebanon in 2000 and 2006 were met with strong resistance from Hezbollah, resulting in the retreat of the regime in both conflicts.

120 Companies From 13 Countries Attending Textile Industry Exhibition



TEHRAN - The 30th Textile Industry Exhibition, including machinery, raw materials, home textiles, embroidery machines, and textile products, kicked off on Monday at the permanent location of Tehran's International Exhibitions, featuring 170 domestic companies and 120 foreign companies from 13 countries.

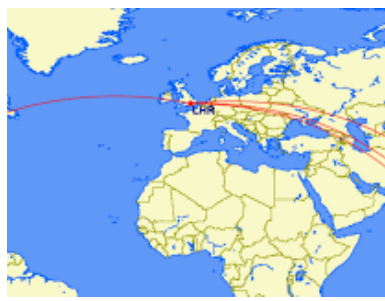
This exhibition, which will continue until August 22nd, features participants from countries such as Germany, Italy, Taiwan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, South Korea, Turkey, Pakistan, Austria, Switzerland, India, Japan, and China, showcasing their latest products and services in the textile industry.

Over 290 domestic and foreign companies have gathered at this exhibition to not only showcase their capabilities but also to facilitate investment opportunities, commercial exchanges, and discussions about the latest industry developments.

Various equipment, industries, and related services, including textile machinery, parts, sewing machines, embroidery and cutting machines, home textiles, accessories and parts, fabric, clothing, yarns, fibers, dyes, cooperative materials, and various raw materials for the textile industry, as well as home textiles such as blankets, upholstery and curtain fabrics, bed linen, kitchen, bathroom and toilet sets, and various fabrics for clothing production, are exhibited and displayed at this event.

The 30th International Textile Industry Exhibition, spread over an area of more than 15,000 square meters, also features 12 scientific workshops, two specialized conferences with the participation of experts and university professors, and visits from several foreign trade and commercial delegations.

IRAN NEWS



No Decrease in Overflight Revenue Despite Regional Tensions

TEHRAN (ILNA) - Reza Nakhjavani, the CEO of the Iranian Airports Company, addressed a question regarding whether the recent regional tensions and caution exercised by airlines when passing through Iranian airspace have led to a decrease in overflight revenue. He stated that revenue in the navigation market fluctuates globally, and our country is not exempt from these fluctuations. He added that all countries in the region experience these fluctuations, which occur naturally in response to seasonal and regional conditions. The Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development emphasized that if we examine the statistics of other countries in the region, we see that these fluctuations are entirely normal, and the revenue from overflights in the first three months of this year has not been less than that of the previous year.

Joining of 10 Planes to Air Fleet in Past Two Months

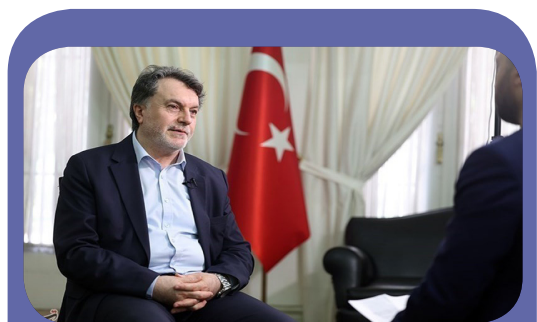


TEHRAN - The Minister of Roads and Urban Development, referring to the signing of a \$2 billion agreement between the National Development Fund and the Housing Bank to provide low-interest loans to the transportation sector, announced that over the past two months, more than 10 aircraft have been imported into the country, and currently, the path for aircraft importation is completely open.

Mehrdad Bazrpash mentioned on the sidelines of the signing and exchange ceremony of the memorandum of understanding between the Airports Company and private sector investors in the airport industry, the unveiling of the investment atlas of the Airports and Air Navigation Company of Iran, and the comprehensive document on airport smartification, that an airport investment agreement has been signed with two airlines. He added that the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, under the 13th government, had expressed readiness to transfer large airports to airline companies.

He further added, "From the beginning, our approach at the ministry was to activate airlines in the discussion of importing and purchasing aircraft, instead of the government directly purchasing aircraft. We activated the airlines because we believe that, given the sanctions, the airlines perform better, and the government should take on a supporting role."

Bazrpash, noting that over 10 aircraft have been imported in the last two months, stated, "Currently, the path for aircraft importation is completely open, and the government, in coordination with the Central Bank, has provided the necessary foreign exchange for these companies. Moreover, coordination with the Supreme National Security Council has been made to clear parts and aircraft in the shortest possible time."



Turkey Counts on Iran to Mend Syria Ties

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The ambassador of Turkey to Iran said his country banks on the Islamic Republic playing a constructive role in a rapprochement between Ankara and Damascus.

In an exclusive interview with Tasnim in Tehran, Hicabi Kirlangic expounded on the process of restoration of relations between Turkey and Syria.

Pointing to Turkey's concerns and the necessities of normalization of ties with Syria, the ambassador urged that no threat of terror whatsoever should be posed from inside Syria.

He said that an insistence on the withdrawal of foreign forces, including the Turkish army forces, from Syria would pave the way for chaos caused by the US in the Arab country.

Turkey is well aware that a series of terrorist groups in Syria are turning into organizations with the overt help of the US, Kirlangic stated, adding that Ankara has a clear stance in this regard.

"We are looking for the establishment of relations with Syria. We deem Iran's role significant for the continuation of meetings with Syria (officials)," the ambassador underlined.

Kirlangic stated that Turkey needs "Iran's constructive behavior" in the case of Syria, saying his country is in contact and has made joint efforts with Iran in this regard.

Turkey hopes to take steps forward with Iran because the region can ill afford these problems in such conditions, he added.

"We really need to make decisions by ourselves and create and stabilize peace in the region. Iran and Turkey play a big role in this regard. Specifically, Iran's relations with Syria could encourage Syria to move towards peace with Turkey," Kirlangic stated.

Annual Hotel Occupancy Rate Is Below 40%

TEHRAN - Jamshid Hamzehzadeh, President of the Iranian Hoteliers Association, announced that a meeting of the association's members was held with Seyyed Reza Salehi Amiri, the proposed Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts.

He stated that the outcomes of this lengthy meeting were positive, with Mr. Salehi Amiri emphasizing the continuation of such sessions to address the challenges facing the tourism sector.

He added that the proposed minister stressed during the meeting with the Iranian Hoteliers Association that the government should not intervene directly and that tasks should be delegated to professional and legal organizations so that the private sector can develop tourism policies independently. This issue has long been a priority for private sector organizations, and if Mr. Salehi Amiri implements this plan, many of the private sector's problems will be resolved.

Hamzehzadeh emphasized that one of the ongoing challenges for the private tourism sector has been the intervention of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism in all matters, with the ministry wanting to control everything, reflecting a governmental rather than an expert approach.

He said that the tourism sector has suffered greatly from the lack of coordination among various agencies. For example, in a recent incident, the head of the village of Abyaneh, without coordinating with the relevant authorities, independently imposed an entrance fee on tourists visiting the village. Hamzehzadeh noted that the Supreme Council of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, which includes several ministers, has not held a meeting for several years. The Minister of Cultural Heritage serves as the secretary of this council, and the head of the council is the First Vice President, who should hold regular meetings. The decisions made by this council are equivalent to government resolutions. However, in the past six years, only one or two meetings have been held. In this council, all issues can be addressed, with the presence of the Minister of Interior, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Minister of Cultural Heritage. If strengthened, the directives issued by the First Vice President in this council would have the authority of government resolutions and be binding.

Referring to the current state of tourism and the entry of tourists into the country, the President of the Iranian Hoteliers Association said that simply

opening the borders does not mean that foreign tourists are waiting at the borders to enter Iran. Instead, significant advertising and marketing efforts need to be made abroad, including participating in major international tourism exhibitions. Visa waivers should also be implemented simultaneously to attract tourists to the country.

Hamzehzadeh emphasized that attracting tourists to the country is closely tied to political relations with foreign governments. In other words, with better political relations with a country, its tourists can enter Iran more easily. Conversely, tourists from countries with which we have political issues do not come to Iran. Currently, the entry of European and American tourists to Iran has dropped to zero.

Referring to the damage caused by the absence of foreign tourists to the country's hotel industry, the President of the Iranian Hoteliers Association added that the annual occupancy rate of hotels in Iran is below 40%. This means that hotels in Iran have many vacancies, and it will take years for them to fill up.

He said that compensating for this loss requires a specific, systematic, and comprehensive plan. Since the tourism industry is a multi-sectoral industry, all related organizations and ministries, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, the Ministry of Interior, law enforcement agencies, and the Ministry of Economy, must closely cooperate with each other. However, the current problem within the government is that related organizations prioritize their own interests over broader national interests.

He added that the Tax Administration says it is not concerned about providing more exemptions to tourism operators to attract foreign tourists and insists on collecting more taxes. Insurance agencies, using various pretexts, take a similar stance, and none of them show flexibility to develop tourism. Therefore, the problem in the tourism sector is the insular perspective of related organizations toward the tourism industry.

Hamzehzadeh concluded by emphasizing that the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, as the responsible authority, from the minister down to managers and experts, must be committed to the tourism industry and must utilize specialists to pull this industry out of its current crisis.

National Development Fund Reaches 13th Position Globally



TEHRAN - The Director of International Cooperation at the National Development Fund announced that the fund has achieved the 13th position in the global ranking of sovereign wealth funds.

Negin Heidarizadeh stated that this year, the National Development Fund has made a remarkable achievement in the Governance, Sustainability, and Resilience (GSR) index among sovereign wealth funds, reaching the 13th position in the global rankings.

She explained that the National Development Fund has secured a 52% score in the GSR index this year, which stands for "Governance, Sustainability, and Resilience" among global sovereign wealth funds. This has positioned the fund 13th in the world and 5th in the Middle East and North Africa region.

She added that this success has been achieved with an 18% improvement in scores compared to the previous year. By securing the 13th position in the 2023 rankings, the fund has made significant progress compared to 2022 in improving the components related to the GSR index, reflecting the fund's continuous efforts to enhance service quality and improve the related qualitative indicators.

Heidarizadeh emphasized that sovereign wealth funds in the Middle East and North Africa region have significantly improved their global rankings this year, with their index scores increasing from 32% in 2020 to 52% in 2023.

She noted that the GSR index for sovereign wealth funds is calculated out of 100%, highlighting that this progress is due to the better performance of the region's funds, including Iran's National Development Fund, in governance-related components.

The Director of International Cooperation at the National Development Fund pointed out that during the new operational period of the fund, guided by the board members and under the leadership of Mehdi Ghazanfari, the fund has achieved a 200% growth in the GSR index, which includes 25 important components, 10 of which relate to governance.

She said that with the new strategic direction and transparent approach initiated by Ghazanfari in 2021, the fund has achieved a 200% growth compared to 2021, securing an "excellent" score in 9 out of 10 governance components.

Heidarizadeh added that these achievements confirm the National Development Fund's commitment to adhering to international standards, transparency, and operational efficiency. The fund has been able to achieve this by regularly and accurately publishing performance reports, uploading data and information related to activities and projects, and facilitating access and communication between the public and fund managers and experts.

550 Aircraft Required to Meet the Country's Needs



TEHRAN - Ali Asghar Shalbafian, Deputy Minister of Tourism at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, spoke at a meeting with the heads of the Tourism Commissions of the Provincial Chambers of Commerce. He mentioned that Kyrgyzstan and East Asian countries are not just buying new fleets but are also leveraging their unique geographical locations to make various destinations within their countries more accessible. Many airlines in East Asia are interested in operating under open skies in Iran to establish a presence in the country.

He emphasized, "Some believe that simply purchasing an airline fleet will solve the problems. However, I must say that even if we were not under sanctions and had no issues financing the purchase of an airline fleet, there would still be limitations in ordering the fleet. This is because aircraft manufacturers produce fleets in limited quantities."

In another part of his speech, he referred to a recent letter from domestic airline agencies regarding the lack of flight tickets and their high prices. He stated, "The issue of liberalizing airline ticket sales and preventing government intervention in pricing has been raised in the past. However, implementing this under the current conditions has consequences. Such a move can only be made when, firstly, airlines are strong, and secondly, there is a balance between supply and demand. Otherwise, with high demand and low supply, especially in air transport, we end up in the same situation as recently, with a 150% increase in ticket prices."

He further mentioned the country's goal of attracting 15 million inbound tourists and stated that 550 aircraft are needed to meet the current needs of the country.

He emphasized the importance of attracting investment in the tourism sector, saying, "The country's tourism capacity far exceeds its infrastructure. If lands designated for tourism use are allowed to be used for other purposes and if permits for tourism projects with mixed-use are issued, more investment in the tourism sector will be encouraged."

He noted, "Currently, there are over 2,500 tourism projects in the country, requiring 400 trillion tomans for completion. In this regard, facilitating and encouraging private sector investment is a priority to expedite decision-making processes. Additionally, a council will be established in coastal provinces, chaired by the Minister of the Interior and with the secretary being the Director General of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts of the province."

During the continuation of this meeting, the heads of the Tourism Commissions of the Provincial Chambers of Commerce in Iran discussed the existing problems in Iran's tourism industry.

Total Precipitation in the Country Reaches 248.4 mm



TEHRAN (IRNA) - An analysis of the country's precipitation data shows that from the beginning of the current water year (starting from early Mehr 1402 / September 2023) until August 16, there has been 248.4 millimeters of rainfall.

The current water year (from early Mehr 1402 to the end of Shahrivar 1403 / September 2024) began with low rainfall in the initial months.

The continuation of low rainfall raised concerns about the state of water resources, but with the onset of winter, followed by spring and summer 1403 (2024), this trend changed, and the rainfall situation improved.

However, according to Firooz Ghasemzadeh, spokesperson for the water industry, due to previous years of drought, the rainfall this year was insufficient to make up for the water resource shortages.

A recent review by the National Water Data and Information Office shows that from the start of the current water year until August 16, there has been 248.4 millimeters of rainfall.

This amount represents a 2% increase compared to the long-term average of 243.1 millimeters of rainfall in the country.

The rainfall of the current water year shows a 19% increase compared to the same period last year, which had 208.4 millimeters of precipitation.

Although the overall rainfall situation has improved, several provinces are still experiencing low rainfall, and a total of seven provinces are facing a shortage of rainfall.

Russia Denies Report About Indirect Talks With Ukraine

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia on Sunday denied a report that Ukraine's attack on the Kursk region had derailed indirect talks with Kyiv on halting strikes on energy and power targets, saying there had been no talks with Kyiv about civilian infrastructure facilities.

The Washington Post reported on Saturday that Ukraine and Russia were set to send delegations to Qatar this month to negotiate a landmark agreement halting strikes on energy and power infrastructure on both warring sides. The Post said the agreement would have amounted to a partial ceasefire but that the talks were derailed due to Ukraine's attack on Russian sovereign territory.

"No one broke anything off because there was nothing to break off," Maria Zakharova, spokeswoman for Russia's foreign ministry, said of the Post report. "There have been no direct or indirect negotiations between Russia and the Kyiv regime on the safety of civilian critical infrastructure facilities."

Ukraine's government did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. The Post reported that Ukraine's presidential office said the summit in Doha had been postponed due to the situation in the Middle East and that it would take place in video conference format on Aug. 22.



IRAN NEWS

Protests Spread Over Indian Doctor's Rape and Murder



KOLKATA (Dispatches) - Some Indian junior doctors remained off the job on Sunday as they demanded swift justice for a colleague who was raped and murdered, despite the end of a strike called by a big doctors' association, while some other people held street protests.

Doctors across the country have held protests, candlelight marches and refused to see non-emergency patients in the past week after the killing of the 31-year-old postgraduate student of chest medicine in the early hours of Aug. 9 in the eastern city of Kolkata.

In solidarity with the doctors, thousands of people marched in the streets of Kolkata on Sunday evening chanting "we want justice", as authorities in West Bengal state struggle to contain demonstrations against the horrific crime.

Women activists say the incident at the British colonial-era R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital has highlighted how women in India continue to suffer despite tougher laws following the gang-rape and murder of a 23-year-old student on a moving bus in Delhi in 2012.

"My daughter is gone but millions of sons and daughters are now with me," the father of the victim, who cannot be identified under Indian law, told reporters late on Saturday, referring to the protesting doctors. "This has given me a lot of strength and I feel we will gain something out of it."

India introduced sweeping changes to the criminal justice system, including tougher sentences, after the 2012 attack, but campaigners say little has changed and not enough has been done to deter violence against women.

Harris Implies Trump a "Coward"

MOON TOWNSHIP (Dispatches) - U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris indirectly criticized former President Donald Trump on Sunday, suggesting her opponent in the Nov. 5 election was a "coward" whose politics focused on putting down rivals.

The remarks came in a campaign appearance in the critical battleground state of Pennsylvania with running mate Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, before Harris heads to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, which kicks off Monday.

"Over the last several years there's been this kind of perversion that has taken place, I think, which is to suggest that the measure of the strength of a leader is based on who you beat down. When what we know is the real and true measure of the strength of a leader is based on who you lift up," Harris told a crowd of supporters. "Anybody who's about beating down other people is a coward."

She did not directly name Trump, who in a campaign appearance Saturday in eastern Pennsylvania referred to Harris as a "radical" and a "lunatic."

Opinion polls have shown Harris bringing fresh energy to the campaign and closing the gap with former President Trump both nationally and in many of the eight highly competitive states including Pennsylvania that will play a decisive role in picking Democratic President Joe Biden's successor.

Harris, who is Black and has Asian heritage, will be the first woman president if she wins in November.

She said that she was nearly done writing the speech she will deliver when she accepts the Democratic presidential nomination on Thursday.

"There will be a lot that is about what I believe is a way forward, a new way forward, and bringing everyone along in that," she told reporters outside a restaurant.



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukrainian air forces destroyed another strategic bridge over the Sych River in Russia's Kursk region, limiting the supply capacity of a Russian group opposing the Ukrainian advance, Ukraine's commander said on Sunday.

Kyiv said it had seized more than 80 settlements over 1,150 square km (444 square miles) in Kursk since launching a surprise strike across the border on Aug. 6, the biggest invasion of Russia since World War Two.

"Kursk direction. Minus one more bridge! Ukrainian Air Force aviation continues to deprive the enemy of logistical capabilities with precision airstrikes, which significantly affects the course of hostilities," Mykola Oleshchuk said on the Telegram messaging app.

He posted a video showing a growing cloud from an explosion on a bridge and one of its sections destroyed. Reuters could not independently confirm the destruction of the bridge or the situation on the battlefield in Kursk.

Reuters was able to confirm the location of the bridge in Oleshchuk's video as in the village of Zvanoye in the Kursk region. Reuters was not able to independently verify the date when the video was filmed.

There was no immediate response from Moscow officials to Ukraine's reports. Some Russian military bloggers, including the prominent War Gonzo project, reported that there was a Ukraine's attack on Sunday on the bridge in Zvanoye.

A Russian military blogger close to the defence ministry who goes by the name "Rybar" said on the Telegram messaging app that the bridge was heavily damaged, but did not collapse and can be used by pedestrians and - in

some cases - light vehicles.

The bridge was the second attacked by Ukraine since Friday.

Earlier, military analysts said there were three bridges in the area of the Ukrainian army's offensive through which Russia supplies its forces and that two of them have been either destroyed or seriously damaged.

Yuri Podolyaka, an influential Ukrainian-born, pro-Russian military blogger, said that the situation on the battlefield in Kursk was "relatively calm," on Sunday with Ukrainian forces regrouping.

He added that Ukraine is likely to try to take control in the coming days of another strategic bridge, over the Psoyol River - key for further advancement of Kyiv forces or for holding defence.

Zelenskiy on Sunday thanked the Ukrainian forces involved in the Kursk operation and on the eastern front and asked the country's allies to speed up the delivery of promised military aid.

"Our operation in the Kursk region is still inflicting losses on the Russian army and the Russian state, their defence industry and their economy," President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said in an evening television address.

"Regarding deliveries from our partners - need acceleration, we ask very much. War has no holidays," Zelenskiy said.

Russia has called the Ukrainian incursion a major provocation and vowed to retaliate with a "worthy response," more than 2-1/2 years since it launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Venezuelan Opposition Protests as Election Dispute Drags on

CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuela's political opposition and its supporters gathered in cities around the country on Saturday to demand recognition of what they say is their candidate's resounding victory in a presidential vote nearly three weeks ago.

The country's electoral authority, considered by the opposition to be an arm of the ruling party, has said President Nicolas Maduro won his third term in the July 28 contest, with just under 52% of the vote.

But the opposition, led by former lawmaker Maria Corina Machado, has published online what it says are 83% of voting machine tallies, which give its candidate Edmundo Gonzalez a hearty 67% support.

The disputed vote has thrown the economically beleaguered nation into political crisis, and a government crackdown on protests has led to at least 2,400 arrests. Clashes connected to the protests have also led to at least 23 deaths.

The international community has offered a raft of suggestions for overcoming the nearly three-week-old election crisis - including a new vote - but most have been rejected outright by both the ruling party and opposition.

In the capital Caracas, thousands gathered in the eastern part of the city along its main thoroughfare.

Standing on a truck in the center of the crowd, Machado called for independent, international verification of the election and for her supporters to stay in the streets.

"There is nothing above the voice of the people and the people have spoken," she said.

Jesus Aguilar, a 21-year-old theology student, said he turned out to support the opposition in hope of a better future: "We know that with this government there are no possibilities for growth. I've even seen myself trying to leave the country."

In cities across the country, Venezuelans were in the streets. In Maracaibo, Venezuela's once oil-rich city in the northwest, hundreds had gathered by 9 a.m. (1300 GMT).

"We have already been through the worst, we don't have any more fear," Noraima Rodriguez, 52, told Reuters. "My daughter died because there were no medical supplies in the university hospital. I have nothing to lose, but I want a future for my grandchildren."

In the cities of Valencia, San Cristobal and Barquisimeto, hundreds demonstrated, many waving Venezuelan flags, protest signs or copies of voting tallies. In Maracay, about 110 km (70 miles) west of Caracas, about a hundred protesters were dispersed with tear gas.



From Bogota to Madrid, the Venezuelan diaspora turned out in droves. In downtown Mexico City, nearly 1,000 people gathered at the central Plaza de la Revolution.

"This is the moment for a free Venezuela," said Jesus Mata, 30, a street vendor who arrived in Mexico two years ago.

Motivated by economic and political crisis, he was among tens of thousands of Venezuelans to cross the treacherous jungle between Colombia and Panama known as the Darien Gap, notorious for robberies, kidnappings, rapes and other dangers.

"I hope for an end to 25 years of darkness, that there is freedom so that the almost 8 million Venezuelans who are outside the country can go back home," he added.

Maduro has presided over economic collapse, with a loss of over 73% of Venezuela's gross domestic product since 2013, according to researchers from the Institute of Superior Administration Studies in Caracas.

At Miraflores Palace after a march in support of the government, Maduro promised 8% growth this year and railed against international critics and the opposition.

"We have won the right to make whatever future we want in Venezuela, however we want, and no one can stick their noses in Venezuela," he told a crowd waving Venezuelan flags. "I do not go around giving advice to anybody in the world about what to do with this country or that country...the door will be slammed on anyone who pokes their nose into Venezuela."

The opposition is still pushing for recognition of its victory, but its options are narrowing as international attention moves elsewhere, opposition sources and analysts told Reuters this week.

Many Western countries have urged full publication of results, while Russia, China and others have congratulated Maduro on his victory.

Washington, which hardened oil sanctions in April on the OPEC member for what it said was Maduro's failure to comply with a deal on electoral conditions, and other Western countries are showing little sign of swift, tough action over what many of them have condemned as voting fraud.

Latin American leaders will discuss the crisis this weekend when many are in the Dominican Republic to attend the inauguration of that country's new president, Panama's president has said.

Philippines, China Trade Blame After Vessels Collide in the South China Sea



BEIJING (Dispatches) - The Philippines and China accused each other on Monday of ramming vessels and performing dangerous manoeuvres in the South China Sea, the latest flare-up after the two nations had agreed to try to ease tensions and manage disagreements at sea.

China's Coast Guard said in a statement a Philippine vessel which had ignored its repeated warnings "deliberately

collided" with a Chinese vessel in an "unprofessional and dangerous" manner in the disputed waterway early on Monday.

The Philippines disputed Beijing's account, saying two of its coast guard vessels "encountered unlawful and aggressive manoeuvres" from Chinese vessels near Sabina Shoal while on their way to supply Filipino personnel stationed in two occupied islands.

"These dangerous manoeuvres resulted in collisions, causing structural damage to both PCG (Philippine Coast Guard) vessels," said Jonathan Malaya, a

spokesperson for the national security council and Manila's South China Sea task force.

Manila said coast guard vessels Cape Engano and Bagacay were on their way to resupply personnel stationed in Flat Island which Manila calls Patag and Lawak Island and which China calls Nanshan, when the at-sea confrontation happened near Sabina Shoal. A collision occurred between Cape Engano and a Chinese coast guard ship at around 3:24 a.m. on Monday (1924 GMT on Sunday), Manila said.

Around 16 minutes later, the Philippine coast guard ship Bagacay "was rammed twice" by a Chinese coast guard vessel, which resulted to "minor structural damage", Manila added.

The Chinese coast guard posted a short video of the incident which showed the collision with what it said was one of their vessels.

China's maritime security said the same Philippine vessel involved in the collision then entered waters near Second Thomas Shoal after being prevented from entering Sabina Shoal waters.

Sabina Shoal is in the Spratly Islands, which are claimed by China, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.

Two Philippine Coast Guard vessels "illegally intruded" into waters adjacent to Sabina Shoal without permission in the early hours on Monday, according to China Coast Guard spokesperson Gan Yu.

"The Philippines has repeatedly provoked and caused trouble, violated the temporary arrangements between China and the Philippines," Gan said, referring

to Philippines' supplies missions to a vessel grounded on Second Thomas Shoal.

China's Coast Guard said it took control measures against the Philippine ships in accordance with the law in the incidents early Monday, and warned the Philippines to "immediately stop infringement and provocation" or "bear all consequences".

The Philippine task force said both of its vessels will continue with their mission to supply personnel in Flat Island.

"The National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea urges restraint and adherence to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and other relevant international laws to prevent further escalations and ensure the safety of all vessels operating in the region," it said.

The incident came less than two weeks after an air incident between the Chinese and Philippines militaries in Scarborough Shoal.

The two countries reached a "provisional agreement" in July after repeated altercations near the Second Thomas Shoal. China has been sharply criticised by Western nations for aggression in blocking Philippine efforts to resupply troops aboard a navy ship it intentionally grounded 25 years ago.

Beijing claims almost all of the South China Sea, including both shoals, rejecting a 2016 ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague that Beijing's expansive claims had no basis under international law.



Sinner to Meet Tiafoe in Cincinnati Final

CINCINNATI (Dispatches) - Jannik Sinner ended his losing streak against Alexander Zverev with a 7-6 (11/9), 5-7, 7-6 (7/4) win on Sunday to set up a final in the Cincinnati Open against American Francis Tiafoe.

The world number one had lost four of five previous matches against the German, with his only win coming at Roland Garros four years ago.

The tight victory took more than three hours not including a rain interruption.

The match was paused midway through the first-set tiebreaker for nearly 30 minutes while a shower passed over the area -- another episode of the poor weather which has plagued the event in recent days.

Sinner saved two Zverev set points and won the opener on his own third chance, only to fall in the second set as he lost an early break and was broken again in the 12th game as he sent an overhead into the net.

The third set went into a tiebreaker with Sinner taking a 5-2 lead and triumphing on his second match point.

"It was a tough match, a very exciting match," the Italian said. "We played in different conditions: sunny, rain and then night."

"There was a lot of tension for both of us. I'm very happy with my performance and happy to be in the final."

Sinner, who won his last title on grass in Halle two months ago, will play a rare Monday final against the winner from Frances Tiafoe and Danish 15th seed Holger Rune.

"I had to play with my gut, I feel that is my strength," the 23-year-old said. "We had some ups and downs over three hours."

"I couldn't have played a better match than this to prepare," he said, looking ahead to the start of the US Open in eight days.

The player who has suffered recently with a hip problem, illness and the tonsillitis which forced him to skip the Olympics, said he needs to keep up his fitness.

"If I'm going to win bigger matches, I have to be more in shape. Today I stayed mentally strong; I'm proud of that."

Sinner will be playing in his fifth career Masters 1000 final.

Tiafoe came from 5-2 down in the final set and claimed a tiebreaker for a 4-6, 6-1, 7-6 (7/4) defeat of Danish 15th seed Holger Rune.

Tiafoe is the first American man to play the final here since John Isner in 2013; he saved two match points in his come-from-behind win.

Tiafoe will move into the ranking top-20, joining four compatriots in the strongest US showing since 1997.

Meanwhile Aryna Sabalenka squandered nine match points but defeated world number one Iga Swiatek 6-3, 6-3, breaking through to her first final at the WTA and ATP Cincinnati Open.

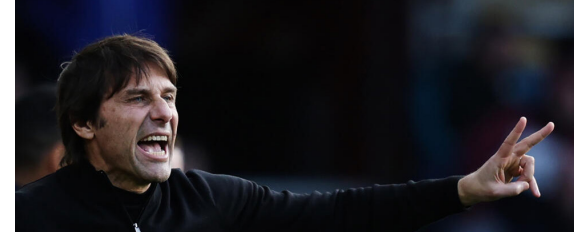
Four-time Cincinnati semi-finalist Sabalenka will rise to second in the WTA rankings with a week to go before the start of the US Open.

"I finally broke the barrier," Sabalenka said of her place in the final. "It was such a tough battle with Iga, and we also had to be patient with the weather."

Raindrops required the court lines to be dried by towels during several short interruptions. Sabalenka will play Monday's final against US sixth seed Jessica Pegula, a 6-2, 3-6, 6-3 winner over Spain's Paula Badosa.

Pegula, who won last week's Toronto title, is the third American in the Open Era to reach the Canadian and Cincinnati finals in the same year after Rosie Casals (1970) and Serena Williams (2013).

Conte Apologizes for Napoli's Opening Day Debacle at Verona



MILAN (AFP) - Antonio Conte apologised to Napoli fans after Sunday's 3-0 humiliation at Verona in his first Serie A match in charge, while last season's surprise package Bologna were held to a 1-1 draw by Udinese.

Verona new boys Dailon Livramento and Daniel Mosquera, with a brace, were on target in the second half at the Stadio Marcantonio Bentegodi, giving Conte a nightmare league start at troubled Napoli.

"We have to say sorry to our supporters because it was a second half that was, well it's difficult even to assess what happened," said a baffled Conte to DAZN.

"In the first half there was only one team on the pitch and it was Napoli. Then we came out for the second half maybe too satisfied with ourselves for the first half performance even though we were still goalless. But it wasn't the same attitude as in the first half."

Conte blasted his team, who only scraped past Serie B outfit Modena on penalties in the Italian Cup last weekend, for melting "like snow" once Livramento put Verona ahead four minutes after half-time.

"It is really worrying. Good teams react to difficult situations... but we completely fell apart," added Conte.

"I'm the coach and it's my responsibility, so I apologise. It was a debacle and it's my fault."

Koepka Wins LIV Golf Greenbrier Title



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Brooks Koepka beat Jon Rahm in a playoff to win the LIV Golf Greenbrier title on Sunday for his record fifth career crown on the Saudi-backed series.

Koepka, whose most recent LIV win came in May at Singapore, said it was his most prized because of his day-long fight with playing partner Rahm.

"This is probably my favorite one," Koepka said. "It's always good when you have to battle good players."

"Jon is a hell of a player. For whatever reason, he has always gotten the better of me a little bit as of late. It feels nice just to get one."

Rahm outdueled Koepka in the final round to win the 2023 Masters for his second major title but Koepka said that didn't add motivation.

"I wasn't thinking about it," he said. "Just one of those things. Let's go play golf. It's a good win."

Koepka fired a seven-under par 63 in the final round while Rahm shot 65 to leave both on 19-under 191 after 54 holes at the Old White course in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia.

American Jason Kokrak was third on 18-under with England's 51-year-old Richard Bland and Australian Marc Leishman sharing fourth on 17-under.

In the playoff, Rahm's tee shot at the par-3 18th went to the back edge of a bunker. One leg in and the other out of the sand, the Spaniard blasted 20 feet beyond the hole.

Koepka missed his birdie putt but tapped in for par, then Rahm lipped out on his par putt and Koepka had the victory.

Koepka's earlier LIV titles came at Jeddah in 2022 and 2023, Orlando in 2023 and Singapore.

Koepka collected major wins at the 2017 and 2018 US Opens and the 2018, 2019 and 2023 PGA Championships.

Rahm, who also won the 2021 US Open, jumped from the PGA Tour to LIV Golf last December and won his first LIV event last month, taking LIV Golf UK at Centurion in England.

Meanwhile Hideki Matsuyama survived a back nine near-collapse to recover and win the PGA Tour's St Jude Championship at TPC Southwind in Memphis on Sunday.

The 32-year-old from Japan began the day with a five shot lead and was two-under for his round until he got into trouble with bogeys on the 12th and 14th and then a double bogey on the par-4 15th.

That allowed Xander Schauffele, who had started the day nine shots off the lead, and Norway's Viktor Hovland to join in him in a three-way share of the lead on 15-under.

Mbappe and Madrid Denied in Mallorca Draw

PALMA (Dispatches) - Kylian Mbappe was left frustrated on his Real Madrid La Liga debut on Sunday as a resilient Real Mallorca held the Spanish and European champions to a 1-1 draw in their title defence opener.

The French superstar was thwarted by Mallorca goalkeeper Dominik Greif and after Rodrygo Goes sent Madrid ahead early on the hosts levelled in the second half through Vedat Muriqi's towering header.

Madrid's star-studded side struggled to break down Mallorca, who came closer to winning the game in the final stages at Son Moix stadium.

Los Blancos defender Ferland Mendy was sent off in stoppage time for a high challenge on Muriqi.

"We went ahead, we had chances to score the second, and then in the second half we lacked balance," Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti told reporters.

"We conceded counter-attacks, it was not a good game, it was quite a clear game to see that we need to defend better and have better balance on the pitch."

Ancelotti selected the same starting line-up which defeated Atalanta to win the UEFA Super Cup on Wednesday, with Jude Bellingham in midfield behind the Mbappe, Vinicius Junior and

Rodrygo attacking line.

Mbappe scored in that victory but the former Paris Saint-Germain forward was unable to celebrate his first match in his new homeland with another goal.

Ancelotti was not impressed with his team's work-rate.

"We have to do better, with more attitude," continued the Italian coach.

"This game can serve us to learn a lot from, it's a game where it was quite clear where we had a problem.



"Mallorca had a very good game in a defensive sense, better than us."

Mallorca coach Jagoba Arrasate was facing his first match in charge of the Copa del Rey runners-up and could not have asked for a tougher challenge on paper than the reigning champions, bolstered by Mbappe's arrival.

However, his team rose to the challenge and earned a creditable point.

Madrid, who lost just once last season as they marched convincingly to the title, started quickly and took the lead after a slick combination between their Brazilian forwards.

Vinicius rolled the ball backwards for Rodrygo to collect in the area and the winger bent a shot into the far corner, beyond the reach of Greif.

The goalkeeper tipped away another Rodrygo effort and Mbappe sent an effort wide as Madrid stayed on top but could not expand upon their advantage.

Muriqi came close before the break for the hosts and tough-tackling defender Pablo Maffeo was booked for an ugly challenge on Vinicius.

Mallorca levelled early in the second half with burly Kosovo target man Muriqi powering a header home from Dani Rodriguez's corner.

Man City Beat Chelsea to Start Premier League Title Defense

LONDON (Dispatches) - Pep Guardiola praised Manchester City's attitude to defy a disrupted pre-season and get their Premier League title defence off to a winning start by beating Chelsea 2-0 on Sunday.

Goals from Erling Haaland and Mateo Kovacic inflicted defeat on Enzo Maresca in his first match in charge of the Blues.

City were shorn of all four of their Euro 2024 finalists -- Rodri, Kyle Walker, John Stones and Phil Foden -- from the start as Guardiola opted to give them extra time off to recover from their summer exertions.

The likes of Kevin De Bruyne, Bernardo Silva, Ruben Dias and Manuel Akanji did play the 90 minutes despite their late return to training after reaching the knockout stages of the Euros.

Yet, the champions were still able to lay down a marker against one of the few sides they failed to beat in the league last season.

"I really didn't expect it. I know what these guys can do, but the first day and lack of training," said Guardiola.

"We had two or three days to prepare, but we solved this lack of many things with our commitment."

"You cannot imagine how privileged and fortunate I am to live these experiences with this incredible group of players."

Maresca has the tough task of moulding a functioning



team unit from a bloated Chelsea squad that has 43 players and over 50 on the books including those on loan.

The consequences of those difficult decisions played out even before kick-off as Raheem Sterling's camp released a statement expressing his dismay at being left out of the matchday squad.

Ben Chilwell was another to face the cull, while Conor Gallagher and Romelu Lukaku are among those not to have been handed squad numbers.

None of Chelsea's nine summer signings to date were included in Maresca's starting line-up.

Even more surprisingly, Enzo Fernandez was named captain despite being embroiled in a race row for a post on social media after Argentina's Copa America victory last month.

City, by contrast, are a model of continuity and consistent excellence.

Haaland was one of City's few stars to have had a summer off from international tournaments and took just 18 minutes to make his mark.

Jeremy Doku's low cross was deflected by Bernardo Silva into the Norwegian's path and he coolly dinked over Robert Sanchez.

But Chelsea ended the first half in the ascendancy and should have been level before the break.