

# IRAN NEWS

Newly-Appointed CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company Says the Country Is Determined to Increase Its Oil Production From Oilfields in the South, Especially Those That Straddle the Iran-Iraq Border

The Spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry Nasser Kanaani Says the Desperate Israeli Regime Is Pursuing a "Scorched-Earth" Policy in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip

VOL. XXIX, No. 8075 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

MONDAY SEPTEMBER 9, 2024 SHAHRIVAR 19, 1403

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## Approximately 2.1m Officially Registered Foreign Nationals Live in Iran



TEHRAN - Mohammad Saleh Jokar, in an interview with ILNA about the bill for organizing foreign nationals and determining the status of illegal immigrants in the country, said: In the 11th Parliament, both the government presented a bill regarding the organization of foreign nationals, and the Commission of Councils and Internal Affairs included this issue on its agenda. A plan named "Organizing Foreign Nationals" was presented, but it was not reviewed in the session.

The Chairman of the Commission of Councils and Internal Affairs added: At the beginning of the 12th Parliament, the plan for organizing foreign nationals was put on the agenda. Recently, a specialized meeting of the Commission was held to discuss organizing the foreigners present in the country.

He said: The first issue was identity and data collection. A comprehensive system to collect all the identity information and documents of foreign nationals is necessary, and part of this has already been done.

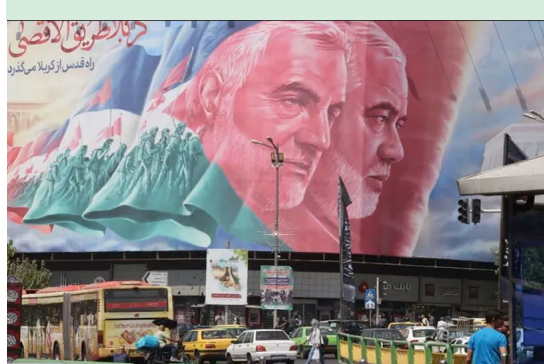
This member of Parliament explained: The plan foresees the establishment of a steering council composed of the Ministry of Interior and 21 organizations under the responsibility of the Minister of Interior. The work of this council is to set policies on the designated issues.

Jokar also noted: The National Migration Organization has an executive role in cooperation with other agencies.

He added: In a recent meeting with relevant agencies about organizing foreign nationals, representatives from the Ministry of Interior, intelligence, and security agencies were present. The plan was reviewed again, and specialized opinions were given on organizing the foreign nationals present in the country, while decisions were made about illegal immigrants.

The Chairman of the Commission of Councils and Internal Affairs pointed out that various guarantees and mechanisms were foreseen. For example, discussions were held about housing, employment, education for talented immigrants, and foreign investors who want to bring their capital into the country to generate wealth. Given the existing laws on immigration and residency—whether permanent or temporary—these regulations need to be updated, and the meeting concluded on these actions.

## People Will Hear Good News About Iran's Revenge



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - A high-ranking commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has reiterated Iran's resolve to avenge the blood of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh who was assassinated in the capital Tehran in July.

"The revenge is certain and it has been declared multiple times and there is no doubt about it. It must be taken at the right time to be effective," Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Naqdi, the IRGC's deputy commander for coordination, said on the sidelines of a ceremony on Saturday.

"The public will hear good tidings about the revenge," he added.

Haniyeh was assassinated alongside one of his bodyguards in Tehran on July 31, a day after he attended the swearing-in ceremony of Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian.

The assassination occurred against the backdrop of Israel's gory aggression on Gaza, which has since October last year claimed the lives of nearly 41,000 Palestinians, most of them women and children.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Naqdi censured the Israeli regime's months-long onslaught on the Gaza Strip and described the US administration as the "sole patron" of the occupying entity's crimes against Palestinians in the besieged territory.

"More should be done to stop the [Israeli] killing of children and students in Gaza," Naqdi underlined.



TEHRAN - While Iran's unemployment rate has been declining over the past three years, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced in its latest report that Iran ranks 17th globally in terms of unemployment, with a rate lower than six European countries and Turkey.

The unemployment rate has been decreasing over the past three years, dropping from 9.2% in 2021 to 8.1% in 2023. This downward trend continued in the spring of this year, with the unemployment rate for individuals aged 15 and older reaching 7.7% in the first quarter of 2024, showing a 0.5% decrease compared to the same period last year.

The reduction in the unemployment rate over the past three years has occurred alongside an increase in the labor force participation rate, which rose from 40.9% in 2021 to 41.3% in 2023.

The employed population aged 15 and older in the spring of this year was 24.746 million, an increase of 440,000 compared to the same period last year. In the spring of 2024, 41.2% of the population aged 15 and older were economically active, meaning they were either employed or unemployed. A review of the changes in the economic participation rate shows that it remained unchanged compared to the same period last year (spring 2023).

An analysis of seasonal changes in the unemployment rate among young people aged 15 to 24 shows a 1.6% decrease in the unemployment rate in the spring of this year compared to the same period last year (spring 2023).

The IMF's latest report on unemployment across 99 countries shows that in 2024, 11

countries have double-digit unemployment rates, with Sudan having the highest at 49.5%. South Sudan (33.5%) and Georgia (15.7%) rank second and third, respectively. Ukraine ranks fourth with a 14.1% unemployment rate.

Spain, with an unemployment rate of 11.6%, is the most notable European country among the top 10, ranking ninth. North Macedonia (14.1%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (13.3%), and Albania (11%) are three other European countries that rank 5th, 6th, and 10th in the world for unemployment. Armenia, with a 13% unemployment rate, is ranked 7th, and Morocco, with 12%, ranks 8th.

IMF data shows that Iran, with an unemployment rate of 8.9%, ranks 17th globally, below six European countries.

According to the report, in 2024, Iran's unemployment rate was lower than that of 16 countries, including six European nations. North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Spain, Albania, Serbia, and Greece had higher unemployment rates than Iran. Serbia and Greece both had an unemployment rate of 9.4% in this year.

Turkey, with an unemployment rate of 9.6%, ranked higher than Iran, occupying 13th place in the global unemployment ranking. Contrary to common perceptions of Western Europe's economic status, Sweden, Italy, France, and Finland had unemployment rates close to Iran's in 2024. The IMF reported Sweden's unemployment rate at 8.4%, Italy at 7.8%, Finland at 7.6%, and France at 7.4%. The unemployment rate in the United States was 4%, and in the United Kingdom, it was 4.2%.

## President Hails Country's Defense and Military Power

TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian emphasized the importance of the systematic structure of the armed forces and its ability to be applied to other managerial domains in the country. He stated that in management science, the highest and most precise evaluations of military systems are extracted and then taught and theorized in universities. The Islamic Republic of Iran's Army, with its systematic structure, has the capability to transfer its valuable experiences in this area to various sectors.

Pezeshkian, in a meeting with senior commanders of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army held at the Command and General Staff College, noted that communities whose components—ranging from engineers, industrialists, and doctors to military personnel—operate together purposefully and where individuals advance through hierarchical systems in organizations are more developed than others. He praised the Islamic Republic of Iran's Army for being one of the few institutions where individuals cannot advance to higher positions easily and without adherence to regulations, highlighting this as a point of pride for the army.

The President also identified unregulated promotions, instability in management, and lack of accountability among organizational managers as serious problems within the country's administrative and executive systems. He expressed that the Islamic Republic of Iran Army is fortunately exempt from these issues, and its non-partisan strengthening over the decades since the Islamic Revolution is worthy of appreciation and congratulations.

The President further discussed the significance of the systematic structure of the armed forces and its potential to be applied to other managerial areas in the country. He noted that in management science, the most precise evaluations of military systems are extracted and then taught and theorized in universities, and the Islamic Republic of Iran's Army, with its systematic structure, is capable of transferring its valuable experiences to different sectors.

He also referred to the esteemed position of the military in the words of Amir al-Mu'minin (AS), stating that, according to Imam Ali (AS), soldiers are the adornment of society and are the source of honor, security, and dignity for the people.



The security that exists in the country today, allowing people to work in complete safety in various fields, is a blessing from the brave soldiers.

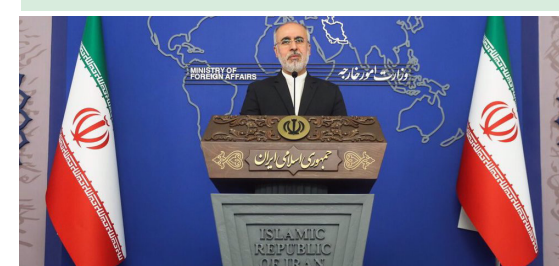
Pezeshkian emphasized the need to strengthen social and personal values in the younger generation and in the educational system, alongside transferring knowledge and skills. He noted that the phenomenon of migration among the younger generation is due to neglect in reinforcing individual and social values within the educational system, leading them to migrate rather than stay and address issues in their homeland. This is in contrast to how the armed forces train individuals to be willing to sacrifice their lives for their country and beliefs, which is highly valuable.

The President mentioned a sacred Hadith stating that God has linked the life of the earth to the existence of humans, the life of humans to the existence of knowledge, the life of knowledge to action, and the life of action to sincerity. He asserted that if this belief is ingrained in everyone, it will lead to the growth and advancement of societies. He commended the army for embodying this belief with their skills, creativity, and capabilities, ensuring that they will not stop progressing and will remain the best, preventing others from oppressing or harming them.

He also emphasized that military power should be used to serve people, not to harm innocent women and children. He criticized those who claim to support human rights and democracy yet ignore the bombardment of women, children, and hospitals in Gaza while still talking about human rights, which he finds disgraceful.

The President concluded by stating that if the country did not have its current defensive capabilities, the criminals would have committed such atrocities against the Iranian people. He praised the army for their valor and capability in providing defensive strength, preventing such threats, and assured that the government is committed to supporting and empowering the armed forces. He expressed hope that they will continue to uphold their strength and honor, bringing greater pride to the nation

## Iran Has Never Been Part of Russia-Ukraine War



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran says it has played no role in the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, reiterating its call for dialogue to bring an end to the conflict.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani made the remarks on Sunday, a day after US media alleged that Iran had transferred short-range ballistic missiles to Russia, citing unidentified sources.

Kanaani said that Tehran's principled approach to the Ukraine crisis remains "unchanged" and that "completely baseless" claims about the transfer of Iranian ballistic missiles to Russia are in line with the political objectives of some Western countries.

"As it has been emphasized time and again, the Islamic Republic opposes the war and supports a political solution to resolve differences between Russia and Ukraine and end military conflicts," he added.

"Since the start of the Ukraine crisis, Iran has never been a part of the military conflict and its continuation, and it has always supported a political solution and bilateral talks to end the battle."

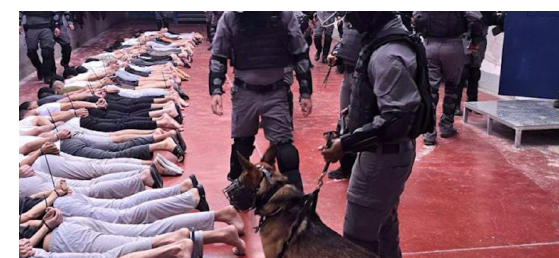
Russia launched what it called a special military operation in Ukraine in February 2022 partly to prevent NATO's eastward expansion after warning that the US-led military alliance was following an "aggressive line" against Moscow.

Iran has maintained its policy of impartiality regarding the conflict. However, the US and its Western allies have repeatedly claimed that Iran is supplying weapons to Russia for direct use in the Ukraine war.

Iran has categorically rejected the unfounded accusations, saying the Western countries are escalating the war through the supply of advanced weaponry to Kiev.

Russia has also warned that the flow of Western arms to Ukraine is prolonging the conflict.

## Hamas Blasts Israeli Sadism as Video Emerges of Palestinians Tortured in Jail



GAZA (Dispatches) - Hamas has condemned Israel's torture and humiliation of Palestinian detainees in Megiddo Prison, calling on the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to document such crimes.

"The humiliation of the Palestinian prisoners in Megiddo Prison by the occupying forces and their Nazi prison service shows the hatred and sadism of the prison guards towards the Palestinians," Hamas said in a statement.

"These crimes are part of the occupying Israeli regime's ongoing brutal treatment of Palestinian prisoners, which includes torture, mistreatment, starvation, deliberate medical negligence and deprivation of fundamental human rights. As a result, the number of Palestinians who have lost their lives as a result of negligence and torture has surpassed 60," it added.

Leaked footage from Megiddo Prison has showed Israeli forces abusing Palestinian prisoners and terrorizing them with sniffer dogs.

The video shows dozens of prisoners lying on the ground with their hands tied behind their backs on their stomachs, some of them without clothes, while Israeli security personnel terrorized them with dogs.

In its statement, Hamas called on international human rights organizations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to document such abuses and other horrific crimes against Palestinian detainees.

It also asked world bodies to take immediate action to pressure Israel and its prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu to stop their blatant violations of international law and standards concerning prisoners, and to hold Israeli leaders accountable for their continuous crimes.

The ministry of detainees' and ex-detainees' affairs in Gaza said, "The occupying Zionist entity, under the supervision of extremist and terrorist minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, has turned prisons and detention centers into death chambers."



# IRAN NEWS



## 21% Rise in Exports to Iraq

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Abdolamir Rabihavi, Director General of West Asia at Iran's Trade Promotion Organization, stated that Iraq is a strategic neighbor for Iran. The annual trade between Iran and Iraq amounts to around \$10 billion. In the first five months of this year, trade reached approximately \$4.8 billion, with exports accounting for over \$4.5 billion of that total.

In an interview with IRIB, he added that the value of exports to Iraq has increased by 21% compared to the same period last year, when it stood at \$3.508 billion. He expressed hope that in the second half of the year, they could break the \$10 billion record.

Rabihavi highlighted the main export items to Iraq, which include liquefied gas, steel sections, various petrochemical products, construction materials, and foodstuffs. The most imported goods from Iraq consist of scrap iron, aluminum, and some oil derivatives.

## Historical Background Between Iran and China Should Transform into Diverse Exchanges



TEHRAN - During a visit to the Eyvanki Caravansarai in Garmsar County, located in the west of Semnan province, "Zong Peiwu" stated that Iran and China have had long-standing cultural ties spanning 2,000 years, and the exchange process between them has played a fundamental role in the history of both countries.

The Chinese ambassador to Iran, highlighting the impact of visiting the cultural heritage of Semnan province and emphasizing that cultural heritage belongs to all humanity, added: "I feel that Iran's exchanges with countries, including the People's Republic of China, can be expanded, as the people of China have a special interest in ancient Iran, and the people of Iran should also attain the necessary awareness of China's rich history."

The mayor of Semnan and the head of the International Center of Capital Cities of the Silk Road also stated during this visit: "Since 2022, Semnan province has been representing Iran as the international center for tourism of the cities along the Silk Road, including Semnan, Garmsar, Sorkheh, Eyvanki, Damghan, and Shahrud."

Hossein Mousavi added: "A memorandum of understanding introducing Semnan city to China has already been signed."

He referred to the existence of 73 countries and 300 cities in the International Center of Capital Cities of the Silk Road and mentioned: "39 cities from Islamic Iran are located along the Silk Road route and are members of this union."

The mayor of Semnan pointed to two upcoming events at the International Center of Capital Cities of the Silk Road, saying: "A trip from Semnan to Kunming, China, to introduce Iran will take place at the end of September, and in November, an international elite event with the participation of mayors who are members of the union will be held."



## Shalamcheh-Basra Railway Project Moving Forward Rapidly

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways stated that the construction of the Shalamcheh-Basra railway is one of the key international projects of Iran's railway system and is progressing rapidly.

Seyyed Mi'ad Salehi spoke about the construction of the Shalamcheh-Basra railway, adding that the two countries of Iran and Iraq have been waiting for over 50 years for the establishment of this rail link.

He noted that one of the obstacles in this project is mine clearance, stating, "Since last year, with the efforts made, we have managed to clear approximately four kilometers of mines in Iraqi territory."

Salehi also mentioned the discovery of over 6,000 different types of war mines and mortars, adding that "So far, in three phases, the discovered stockpiles have been destroyed, and more will be uncovered and neutralized gradually."

He added that most of these mines are in the Shalamcheh region and are remnants from Operation Karbala-5. In the area, mine clearance has been carried out across five layers, up to six meters deep, 50 meters wide, and four kilometers long.

The CEO of the railway company also discussed the construction of a bridge for this rail line, saying, "A bridge is being built over the Arvand River in northern Basra, which has 17 foundations on land and water. This project is technically complex, and we are currently pile-driving. Each pile has a diameter of 1.5 meters and a depth of 45 meters."

He expressed hope that, given the fast progress of the project, direct train service from Tehran to Karbala will be operational soon, completing the missing 36-kilometer link between the two countries.

## Investment Statistics in the Country Are Concerning

TEHRAN - The President of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture stated that for several years, issues have arisen in the development of investment for the country's economy. Economic actors are facing major challenges in solving the most basic problems, such as fulfilling their duties, creating wealth, and exporting. He expressed hope that with the help of officials, fundamental solutions will be devised to address these challenges.

At the inauguration of the Foreign Investment Event at the Kerman Chamber of Commerce, Samad Hassanzadeh added that in the 1990s, due to economic instability and sanctions, negative growth was experienced, especially in the export sector.

Hassanzadeh emphasized that, based on official statistics from the country and the Iranian Statistics Center, capital formation has been declining over the past decade, dropping from 170 thousand billion toman in 2011 to 93 thousand billion toman in 2022, and to 72 thousand billion toman in 2023. These alarming statistics indicate that the country is losing the motivation for domestic investment or joint ventures with foreign countries.

Stressing that this situation is not befitting the Iranian nation given its great potential, he said that despite the attractive environment for attracting foreign investment, unfortunately, the conditions in the country have significantly reduced foreign participation.

The president of the Iran Chamber of Commerce added that ensuring the country's economic security and stability, as well as maintaining international relations with all countries, is the primary element for investment. He urged the 14th government to address this issue with a plan, while preserving the authority of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

He noted that securing investor safety is one of the most important factors for improving the business and investment environment. Unfortunately, according to the latest report from the Research Center of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, the national business environment index stands at 6.04 out of 10, reflecting an unfavorable condition for investment.

Hassanzadeh further stated that based on official data, Iran ranked 113th out of 125 countries in the Global Property Rights Index in 2023, a very low and regrettable position, and urged fundamental action to be taken with the help of officials.

He also pointed out that property rights in Iran are weak, and the annulment of privatizations carried out under Article 44 of the Constitution has caused concern in the private sector. The investment risk has become discredited, pushing capital toward speculative and short-term investments, with little interest shown in long-term investment in production and

economic development.

Hassanzadeh stressed the need for a national industrial and economic strategy, as well as clarity on which sectors should receive investment and in what direction capital should flow.

He concluded that the expectation of the nation, especially economic actors, is to create an appropriate environment by improving business indicators, reforming political and economic relations with countries, and reducing international tensions to enable economic relations and benefit from global investment and knowledge.

The president of the Kerman Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture also highlighted the importance of investment and the country's loss due to a lack of investment opportunities. He warned that without investment, the province's future is unclear, and it will likely rely on raw material exports alone.

Seyyed Mehdi Tabibzadeh, addressing the challenges in the mining sector of Kerman and the country, said, "We take pride in Iran and Kerman being rich in minerals, and it is one of the wishes of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution for minerals to replace oil. But can this be achieved merely by talking about it?"

Emphasizing that the mining sector requires significant investment, he continued, "Iran accounts for 1% of the world's population but should have 7 times the impact on the global economy. However, its impact is less than 5%, and the mining sector's contribution is only 1%, while globally, it's over 5%."

Tabibzadeh questioned why Kerman, despite holding 60% of Iran's mineral reserves, hasn't become a more developed province. He noted that less than 10% of the country's lands have been explored, with even fewer in Kerman, and mining operations have not yet reached depths beyond 200 meters, leaving raw materials to be sold in their unprocessed form.

He concluded that added value in mining requires technology, and attracting foreign investment is the fastest shortcut in this area. However, 75% of Kerman's taxes, which are paid to the national treasury, come from just 10 mining companies, whose resources will eventually be depleted.

The president of the Kerman Chamber of Commerce added that the goal is to produce 1 million tons of copper cathodes and 10 million tons of steel ingots in the province. The development of downstream industries requires both technology and investment, and the only way to achieve this is through foreign investment, which depends on high-level economic decisions regarding sanctions and FATF.

## Participation of 813 Domestic and Foreign Companies in Iran Plast Exhibition



TEHRAN (IRNA) - The director of the 18th International Iran Plast Exhibition announced that 288 foreign companies and 525 domestic companies are participating in the largest specialized event in the petrochemical value chain industry.

Farid Doosti announced that the 18th International Iran Plast Exhibition will start tomorrow (Sunday, September 8) and will run for four days at the Tehran International Permanent Fairground. He emphasized that this international event will feature participants from countries such as China, Italy, Taiwan, South Korea, Turkey, France, India, Germany, Spain, and Russia.

He stated that the total gross indoor space allocated for the exhibition is 55,000 square meters and noted that the exhibition will include 244 foreign companies, 44 representatives of foreign companies, and 525 domestic companies.

The director of the 18th International Iran Plast Exhibition further added that 150 individuals from countries like Russia, Serbia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, China, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Belarus, Syria, Iraq, and Oman, as part of 12 trade delegations, will visit this major petrochemical industry event with the aim of expanding cooperation with Iranian companies.

The 18th International Iran Plast Exhibition, which covers product groups such as raw materials and petrochemical products, engineering and technical services, pre-made and finished products, machinery and equipment, academic and research centers, laboratory testing (HSE), information technology and digital transformation, as well as other services like masterbatches, granules, and polymer compounds, will be held from September 8 to 11 at the Tehran International Permanent Fairground.

## 18m Tons of Grain Annually Imported



TEHRAN - The President of the Association of Food Industries of Iran emphasized that securing goods is a key indicator of food security, and stated: according to statistics, between 17 and 18 million tons of various grains are imported into the country annually, with a large portion provided by the private sector.

Seyyed Mohammad Reza Mortazavi said today (Saturday) at a press conference for the fourth "Iran Grain" conference: considering climate changes and domestic conditions, the volume of essential goods for self-sufficiency could range from a minimum of 12 to 16 million tons, and at its highest, between 18 to 20 million tons.

The President of the Association of Food Industries of Iran mentioned that between 7 to 9 million tons of imported grains consist of corn and noted that a significant portion of domestic demand for oilseeds is met through imports.

Mortazavi emphasized that one of the key indicators of ensuring food security in the country is the availability and affordability of goods for society. He said: "The country's capability in terms of land, water, and climate for securing food security is clear, but we have not been able to optimally use existing capacities due to untimely decisions. For instance, Iraq, as the largest importer of flour neighboring Iran, is a market where we have no share."

He added: "To ensure food security, we must certainly adhere to legal standards and country-specific benchmarks for securing, storing, and purchasing essential goods; otherwise, the market for essential goods will face challenges."

The President of the Association of Food Industries of Iran also said that the private sector is ready to purchase grains such as wheat, while government companies, which are buyers of grains, lack silos to store these goods.

## 14th Gov't Will Listen to the Voices of Women



TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Vice President for Women's and Family Affairs said that this office in the fourteenth government plans to listen to the voices of all women, identify their issues, and work to resolve them.

Zahra Behrouz Azar discussed the fourteenth government's programs concerning women and family affairs. She stated: "The most important program of this government is to hear the voices of all women, identify their issues, and, with their help, find solutions to these problems. We aim to choose and implement the most effective solutions."

She added: "In this process, we may use some experiences from previous terms of the Women's Affairs Office, or we may find and implement new solutions."

Behrouz Azar continued: "We do not insist that we are the best or that we have the best solutions, but we believe the most effective solutions are the ones the people suggest."

She emphasized: "If we can find these solutions through the people, we will also find a way to implement them and strive to make them a reality."

The Vice President for Women's and Family Affairs stressed that the public can communicate with the Women's Office through all official channels in the Presidential Office as usual, and they are responsive.

Regarding the shortcomings and challenges of the Monitoring Center, which was recently inaugurated during the thirteenth government, Behrouz Azar said that one of the center's goals in this term is to find a way to gather statistics on women and families and make them accessible to researchers. She explained: "The Monitoring Center is the center for statistics and information on women, but it faces a significant challenge: access to information. As an institution, we cannot access all the data from various organizations."

She emphasized: "We need to improve and enhance the process of accessing interdepartmental information. Once we receive the data, the second step will be to make it available to all researchers, which is part of the Vice Presidency's program."



## Ethnic Violence in India's Manipur Escalates, Six Killed

GUWAHATI (Dispatches) - Six people, including one civilian, were killed as fresh violence broke out between two warring ethnic communities in the northeast Indian state of Manipur, authorities said.

The majority Meitei community and the tribal Kukis have clashed sporadically since last year after a court ordered the state government to consider extending special economic benefits and quotas in government jobs and education enjoyed by the Kukis to the Meiteis as well.

More than 225 people have been killed and some 60,000 have been displaced.

Saturday's gunfire incident represents the most number of casualties for a single day in the latest spurt of violence that began a week ago. The attacks earlier this week have also seen the use of drones to drop explosive devices in what authorities have called a significant escalation.

Police say they suspect that the drones were used by Kuki militants - a claim denied by Kuki groups.



## Almodovar's "The Room Next Door" Wins Top Prize at Venice Film Festival



VENICE (Dispatches) - Spanish director Pedro Almodovar won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival for "The Room Next Door", while France's Vincent Lindon and Australian star Nicole Kidman took the top acting prizes.

This was Almodovar's first English-language feature, and his Golden Lion comes five years after he won a career achievement award at the festival. The film stars Tilda Swinton and Julianne Moore.

Kidman won her award playing a lusty, unfulfilled CEO embarking on a torrid affair with an intern in "Babygirl". But she was unable to collect her award following the sudden death of her mother.

"The collision of life and art is heartbreaking and my heart is broken," said the Australian actress in a statement read on her behalf by the film's Dutch director, Halina Reijn.

"I'm in shock, and I have to go to my family. But this award is for her. She shaped me, she guided me, and she made me," she said.

French veteran actor Vincent Lindon won the festival's best actor award for "The Quiet Son."

Over his 40-year-career, the Cannes-winning Lindon has often gravitated towards films with social themes, playing flawed working-class men roused to fight injustices.

The winners were among 21 contenders vying for the top prize in a 10-day festival that swarmed with top Hollywood talent, from Angelina Jolie to George Clooney.

## Hundreds of Thousands Protest Macron's Pick of PM

PARIS (Dispatches) - Thousands of people demonstrated across France on Saturday against Emmanuel Macron's decision to pick centre-right politician Michel Barnier as prime minister, with leftist parties accusing the president of ignoring election results.

Macron named 73-year-old Barnier, a conservative and the former Brexit negotiator for the European Union, as prime minister on Thursday, capping a two-month search following his ill-fated decision to call a legislative election that delivered a hung parliament.

"Democracy is not only the art of knowing how to accept victory, but the humility to accept defeat," Jean-Luc Melenchon, head of the far-left France Unbowed party (LFI), told protesters at the start of the march in eastern Paris.

"I call on you to undertake a long battle."

The organisers said about 300,000 people demonstrated peacefully across France, including 160,000 in Paris, although police in the capital said 26,000 people had protested in the city.

The Interior Ministry did not immediately give a figure for the entire country, but its numbers are usually much lower than those given by organisers.

Barnier meanwhile made his first official visit, meeting staff at a Paris hospital. The worsening condition of the public health sector has been one of the areas that people have demanded action after months of procrastination.

"Without carrying out miracles, we can make improvements," Barnier, who lacks a clear majority, told reporters.

He said on Friday he wants to include conservatives, members of Macron's camp, and some from the left in his future government.



## U.S. and UK Spy Chiefs Praise Ukraine for Audacious Russia Incursion

LONDON (Dispatches) - The heads of the British and American foreign intelligence agencies said Saturday that Ukraine's surprise incursion into Russia is a significant achievement that could change the narrative of the grinding 2 1/2-year war, as they urged Kyiv's allies not to be held back by Russian threats of escalation.

Richard Moore, the head of MI6, said Kyiv's surprise August offensive to seize territory in Russia's Kursk region was "typically audacious and bold on the part of the Ukrainians, to try and change the game." He said the offensive - which Ukraine said has captured about 1,300 square kilometers (500 square miles) of Russian territory - had "brought the war home to ordinary Russians."

Speaking alongside Moore at an unprecedented joint public event in London, CIA Director William Burns said the offensive was a "significant tactical achievement" that had exposed vulnerabilities in the Russian military.

It has yet to be seen whether Ukraine can turn the gains into a long-term advantage. So far the offensive has not drawn Russian President Vladimir Putin's focus away from eastern Ukraine, where his forces are closing in on the strategically situated city of Pokrovsk.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has repeatedly pressed allies to let Kyiv use Western-supplied missiles to strike deep inside Russia and hit sites from which Moscow launches aerial attacks. While some countries, including Britain, are thought to tacitly support the idea, others including Germany and the US are reluctant.

US President Joe Biden has allowed Ukraine to fire US-provided missiles into Russia in self-defense, but the distance has been largely limited to cross-border targets deemed a direct threat, out of concerns about further escalating the conflict.

Burns said the West should be "mindful" of the escalation risk but not be "unnecessarily intimidated" by Russian saber-rattling, revealing that there was a moment in late 2022 when there was a "genuine risk of the use of tactical nuclear weapons" by Moscow.

He also warned of the growing and "troubling" defense relationship between Russia, China, Iran and North Korea that he said threatens both Ukraine and Western allies in the Middle East. North Korea has sent ammunition and missiles to Russia to use against Ukraine, while Iran supplies Moscow with attack drones.

Burns said the CIA had yet to see evidence of China sending weapons to Russia, "but we see lot of things short of that." And he warned Iran against supplying ballistic missiles to Moscow, saying "it would be a dramatic escalation" of the relationship.

He did not say whether such missiles had already been sent. But two people familiar with the matter said the United States has told allies that it believes Tehran has transferred short-range ballistic missiles to Russia. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a matter that has not been publicly disclosed.

Ahead of their joint appearance at the FT Weekend Festival at London's Kenwood House, the two spymasters wrote an opinion piece for the Financial Times, calling for a cease-fire in Israel's war against Hamas and saying their agencies had "exploited our intelligence channels to push hard for restraint and de-escalation."

Burns has been heavily involved in efforts to broker an end to the fighting, traveling to Egypt in August for high-level talks aimed at bringing about a hostage deal and at least a temporary halt to the conflict.

So far there has been no agreement, though United States officials insist a deal is close. Biden said recently that "just a couple more issues" remain unresolved. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, however, has said reports of a breakthrough are "exactly inaccurate."

"I cannot tell you how close we are right now," Burns told the London audience. He said negotiators are working on new, detailed proposals that would be presented within several days.

Burns said that while 90% of the text has been agreed between the warring sides, "the last 10% is the last 10% for a reason, because it's the hardest part to do."

Burns said ending the conflict would require "some hard choices and some difficult compromises" from both Israel and Hamas.

The US and the United Kingdom are both staunch allies of Israel, though London diverged from Washington on Monday by suspending some arms exports to Israel because of the risk they could be used to break international law.

The intelligence chiefs' speech came ahead of a busy week of trans-Atlantic diplomacy that includes a meeting in Washington between Biden and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer. The White House said the talks would touch on Ukraine, Gaza and other issues.

## Israeli Strikes in Gaza Kill 61 in 48 Hours

CAIRO (Dispatches) - Israeli military strikes across the Palestinian Gaza Strip killed at least 61 people in the space of 48 hours, medics said on Saturday, as Israeli forces battled Hamas-led militants in the territory.

Eleven months into the war, numerous rounds of diplomacy have so far failed to clinch a ceasefire deal to end the conflict and bring the release of Israeli and foreign hostages held in Gaza.

Airstrikes on two former schools that were housing displaced people, one in Gaza City and one in Jabalia, killed at least 12 people, Palestinian medics said.

The Israeli military said the strikes targeted Hamas gunmen who were operating in the compound. Five more people were killed in a strike on a house in Gaza City, Palestinian medics said, with a total of 28 people killed on Saturday.

The armed wings of the Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Fatah groups said they had fought Israeli troops across Gaza with anti-tank rockets and mortar bombs, and in some incidents detonated bombs to target tanks and other army vehicles.

The two warring sides continued to blame one another for the failure of mediators, including Qatar, Egypt and the United States, to broker a ceasefire. The U.S. is preparing to present a new proposal, but the prospects of a breakthrough appear slim as gaps between the sides remain wide.

CIA Director William Burns, the chief U.S. negotiator, told an event in London that a more detailed proposal would be made in the coming days.

Tens of thousands of Israelis joined protests in Tel Aviv and other cities, demanding Prime Minister Benjamin



Netanyahu and his government make a deal under which the remaining 101 hostages would be released.

The killing of six hostages last week triggered an outpouring of anger and grief that led to mass protests. The hostages had been shot in the head by Hamas, Israel said, not long before their bodies were found by troops in a Gaza tunnel last Saturday.

"They could have been saved," said Einav Zangauker, whose 24-year-old son Matan had been abducted by militants from his home in Nir Oz kibbutz. "As long as Netanyahu is in power, we will keep getting the hostages back in body bags."

On Thursday, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said it was incumbent on both Israel and Hamas, which seized control of Gaza almost two decades ago and was responsible for the Oct. 7 killing spree in Israel that triggered the war, to make concessions to reach a deal.

On Saturday, senior Hamas official Hossam Badran said the group had made no new demands and remained committed to a July 2 proposal put

forward by the United States, accusing Netanyahu of attaching new conditions that would not end the war.

Netanyahu says it was Hamas that introduced unacceptable conditions.

Despite the deadlock, the United Nations, in collaboration with local health authorities, has pursued a campaign to vaccinate 640,000 children in Gaza after its first polio case in around 25 years. Limited pauses in the fighting have allowed the campaign to proceed.

U.N. officials said they were making progress, having reached more than half of the children needing the drops in the first two stages in the southern and central Gaza Strip.

## Venezuela Says Presidential Opposition Candidate González Has Left Country



CARACAS (Dispatches) - The Venezuelan government said Saturday opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia -- in hiding after he challenged President Nicolas Maduro's disputed reelection -- has left the country, seeking asylum in Spain.

"After taking refuge voluntarily at the Spanish embassy in Caracas a few days ago, (Gonzalez Urrutia) asked the Spanish government for political asylum," Venezuela's vice president said on social media, adding that Caracas had agreed to his safe passage.

A lawyer for Gonzalez Urrutia confirmed to AFP the opposition candidate had departed for Spain.

Venezuela has been in a political crisis since authorities declared Maduro the victor of the July 28 election. The opposition cried foul, claiming it had evidence Gonzalez Urrutia had won by a comfortable margin.

Numerous nations, including the United States, European Union and several Latin American countries, have refused to recognize Maduro as the winner without Caracas releasing detailed voting data.

After the election, Venezuelan prosecutors issued an arrest warrant for Gonzalez Urrutia over his insistence that he was the rightful winner of the election.

Prior to leaving the country, he had been in hiding for a month, ignoring three successive summons to appear before prosecutors.

He had said that attending the hearing could have cost his freedom.

Post-election violence in Venezuela has claimed 27 lives and left 192 people injured, while the government says it has arrested some 2,400 people.

Authorities said Maduro had won reelection to a third, six-year term with 52 percent of the vote. The opposition published its own voting records, which it says showed Gonzalez Urrutia winning 67 percent of the vote.

Venezuela's electoral authority has said it cannot provide a full breakdown of the July 28 election results, blaming a cyber attack on its systems.

Observers have said there is no evidence of any such hacking.

Lawyer Joel Garcia, who has defended opposition figures in Venezuela, said if Gonzalez Urrutia was charged with everything the government has accused him of, he could face a jail sentence of 30 years.

Prior to the election, Gonzalez Urrutia was a little-known retired diplomat.

He became the last-minute presidential candidate after main opposition figure Machado was banned from running by state institutions seen as loyal to Maduro.

After Venezuela's last election, in 2018, Maduro was proclaimed winner amid widespread accusations of fraud.

He has led the oil-rich but cash-poor country since 2013.

His tenure, which has suffered from domestic economic mismanagement as well as international sanctions, has seen GDP drop 80 percent and more than seven million of the country's 30 million citizens emigrate.





## England Impress on Carsley Bow, Germany, Dutch Hit Five

DUBLIN (Dispatches) - England interim boss Lee Carsley got off to an impressive start in a 2-0 win at the Republic of Ireland on Saturday, while Germany and the Netherlands scored five to begin their Nations League campaigns in style.

The clash in Dublin showcased what might have been for the hosts as Declan Rice and Jack Grealish, who both previously represented Ireland, struck in the first half for the Euro 2024 finalists.

Carsley won the under-21 European Championship with England in 2023 and did his case to succeed Gareth Southgate full time no harm on the field with a performance that had a lot more attacking verve than in much of the Three Lions' Euros campaign.

However, he again faced questions after the match for not singing the English national anthem before kick-off.

Rice silenced the boos that greeted his every touch with a thumping finish into the top corner on 11 minutes.

The Arsenal midfielder then turned provider for Grealish to fire in his first international goal since the 2022 World Cup.

"I'm pleased with it but not surprised. I think they've both been in football long enough now to understand and respect that it was going to be a little bit hostile at times, but in the right way," said Carsley.

"Obviously, it's great for them two that they've scored the goals but more importantly that the team has won and they've kept a clean sheet."

England are aiming to get back into the top tier of the Nations League after being relegated last time out. In League A, Germany and the Netherlands built on their strong showings at the Euros.

Germany demolished Hungary 5-0 in Duesseldorf with creative duo Florian Wirtz and Jamal Musiala

stealing the show.

The young forwards showed the future for German football remains bright despite the retirements of 2014 World Cup winners Manuel Neuer, Toni Kroos and Thomas Mueller, along with captain Ilkay Gundogan.

Wirtz and Musiala combined to tee up Niclas Füllkrug to open the scoring in the first half.

Musiala then converted the second from Wirtz's pass early in the second to open the floodgates.

Wirtz made it 3-0 before Aleks Pavlovic's first Germany goal and a Kai Havertz penalty rounded off the scoring.

The Netherlands suffered no hangover from their semi-final exit to England at the Euros with a thrilling 5-2 victory over Bosnia and Herzegovina in Eindhoven.

Joshua Zirkzee was handed his first international start and rewarded Ronald Koeman within 13 minutes with his first goal for the Oranje.

Ermedin Demirovic hit back quickly for the visitors against the run of play.

However, Tijjani Reijnders capped his excellent display with the Netherlands' second goal just before half-time.

Cody Gakpo tapped in Reijnders' low cross to make it 3-1 before Edin Dzeko again hauled Bosnia back into the game.

But late goals from Wout Weghorst and Xavi Simons gave the scoreline the reflection the Dutch dominance deserved.

Next up for Ronald Koeman's men is a mouthwatering clash with old rivals Germany in Amsterdam on Tuesday.

## USA Slump to First Home Defeat Against Canada in 67 Years



KANSAS CITY (Dispatches) - Canada scored their first away win over the United States in 67 years on Saturday with a 2-1 friendly international victory over their North American rivals in Kansas City.

Goals from Jacob Shaffelburg and Jonathan David handed the Canadians their first win over the Americans on US soil since a 3-2 World Cup qualifying win in St. Louis in 1957.

The result was no less than Canada coach Jesse Marsch's well-organised team deserved, and only a string of fine saves from US goalkeeper Patrick Schulte prevented a heavier defeat.

The loss was another downbeat note in what has been a gloomy few months for the US, however, following their first-round exit at the Copa America in July which prompted the sacking of head coach Gregg Berhalter.

Reports on Saturday said former Tottenham, Chelsea and Paris Saint-Germain manager Mauricio Pochettino is poised to take over as US coach, with his appointment set to be confirmed imminently.

But the scale of the task facing the former Argentina international was highlighted by a Canada side who dominated for long periods at Children's Mercy Park.

The game was only four minutes old before Canada were threatening the US goal, Schulte saving smartly from France-based striker David's well-struck effort after the US had conceded possession cheaply in midfield.

Canada midfielder Stephen Eustaquio almost opened the scoring in the 16th minute, curling a shot just wide.

That should have been a wake-up call for the home side, but moments later the US defence was once again caught napping.

## Sabalenka Downs Pegula to Win US Open Thriller

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Aryna Sabalenka said she felt "super proud" to win the US Open and claim her third Grand Slam crown with a thrilling victory over a gallant Jessica Pegula in a rollercoaster final on Saturday.

World number two Sabalenka triumphed 7-5, 7-5 to add the New York title to her back-to-back Australian Open victories.

Pegula went down fighting, however, recovering from 0-3 and break point down to lead 5-3 in the second set before Sabalenka came through.

The 26-year-old from Belarus clubbed 40 winners to become the first woman since Angelique Kerber in 2016 to capture both hardcourt majors in the same season.

"I remember all those tough losses in the past here and it's going to sound easy but never give up on your dream and just keep trying, keep working hard," said Sabalenka, the runner-up last year and semi-finalist in 2022 and 2023.

"I'm speechless right now. So many times I thought I was so close to get the US Open title. It has always been a dream of mine and finally I got this beautiful trophy.

"I'm just super proud of myself. I'm super proud of my team as well."

Pegula had arrived in New York with a title in Toronto and runner-up spot to Sabalenka in Cincinnati.



She had won 15 out of 16 matches on the North American summer hard court swing.

"I wish she would have at least let me get one set. We had a tough match in Cincinnati a few weeks ago and she's one of the

best in the world," said the American.

"She's super powerful and isn't going to give you anything. She can take the racquet out of your hand.

"I'm just glad I was able to stay in there and keep taking opportunities."

Sabalenka made a point of thanking the crowd after taking a thinly-veiled dig at the atmosphere she had faced when she defeated New York-born Emma Navarro in the semi-finals.

"Honestly guys, thank you. I heard a lot of support. You were cheering for me on those good moments but of course I expected you to cheer for Jessica. I wouldn't be normal if you were to cheer for me," she said.

"Thank you so much for all this support throughout this incredible two weeks."

Sabalenka lost the 2023 US Open final to Pegula's compatriot Coco Gauff and she struggled to settle in during the early stages on Saturday as a flurry of errors handed the home favourite a break for 2-1.

"If I can't take confidence from this, there's got to be something wrong," said Pegula on her performance.

"I'm kind of annoyed. I feel I should have done better and stuff like that. But I think that will pass in a little bit."

## Dunbar Takes Second Vuelta Stage



MADRID (Dispatches) - Eddie Dunbar clung on to take his second stage of the Vuelta a Espana while Primož Roglic cemented his grip on first even as a "wave of sickness" forced three team-mates out.

After finishing third on Picon Blanco, the Slovenian leads by 2 minutes and 2 seconds with just Sunday's time trial to come.

Dunbar, a 28-year-old Irishman, had collected his first Grand Tour stage win nine days earlier.

"Moments like this don't come around too often," Dunbar said at the line.

"I've had two of them in the last two weeks. I'm just looking forward to sharing these moments and celebrating them with friends and family."

Spaniard Enric Mas chased Dunbar across the line, seven seconds back after the 172km run from Villarcayo.

Ben O'Connor, who surrendered his race lead the day before, fought hard to protect his second place crossing the line in sixth, 14 seconds behind Dunbar.

The Australian did enough to end the day nine seconds ahead of Mas.

Roglic added eight seconds to his lead over O'Connor while losing three ailing Red-Bull-Bora-hansgrohe team-mates.

"The guys were not feeling their best from the morning on, there's something going around," Roglic said. "Luckily for me, I'm still feeling fine."

Dani Martinez and Patrick Gamper abandoned while Nico Denz made the finish but after the cut off time and was eliminated. Aleksander Vlasov rolled in 34 minutes after Dunbar and survived to ride the final day.

"A wave of illness has swept over us overnight," said Bora on their web site.

"We are currently investigating whether food poisoning or any other reason is the cause. Several staff members have been affected and have had to pull out of today's stage. Also, Nico, Gampi, Dani and Aleks were unwell during the stage."

## Players Need to Play for National Team Despite Packed Calendar

GENEVA (Dispatches) - Players need to be involved with their national sides despite a crammed calendar causing concerns over the impact on players' health, Spain manager Luis de la Fuente said before their Nations League clash against Switzerland.

The European champions will face Switzerland in Geneva after both teams dropped points in their competition openers, with the Swiss losing 2-0 to Denmark and Spain finishing goalless against Serbia.

"Tomorrow we'll have a very tough opponent in front of us. I think that during the European Championship we were the teams that played best," De la Fuente told a press conference on Saturday.

"Tomorrow we will see two teams of a very high level, perhaps in one of the most important games that could be currently played in Europe. We are planning to try to enhance our strengths and minimise those of our opponents."

The Spanish coach was questioned about increased fixture congestion and its consequences for the national team.

"We think of the players first. But they also have to play with the national team," De la Fuente said.

"The calendar is agreed (by others), we comply with it, nothing else. (But) it's our country, our



national team, and I think we should give it the importance it has.

"All the players want to go to the national team and the clubs - without exception - want their players to be internationals. We are victims of this calendar, not the culprits."

The Spanish coach added that he would not agree to reduce the contributions of players at high profile teams to protect their performance at club level.

"Our duty is to represent our country, to put out the best players, to compete to win. We have a huge responsibility, a great prestige to defend and the only way I would know how to do it is to put the players I think are the best," he added.

"Besides, we have to be fair, and I would not be fair if I protected some more than others because of their club."

The fixture could see the return of midfielder Rodri, who is yet to play for his club Manchester City after he was forced off at halftime during Spain's win against England in the Euro 2024 final.

"We always prioritise the player's health. (But) Rodri is perfectly trained and at some point he will have to start playing, either here or with his club," De la Fuente said.

"If we understand that tomorrow he has to start, then he will start without any risk. But then, football is the way it is and anything can happen."