

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Announced the Martyrdom of Two Members of Its Forces Following a Gas Leak Incident on Wednesday Night in One of Its Workshops in Isfahan Province

IRAN NEWS

The Chief of Staff of Iran's Armed Forces, Major General Mohammad Hossein Bagheri, Says That Iran's Response to the Israeli Assassination of Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran Would Be "Calculated"

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Unlike Israel, Iran After De-Escalation of Tensions in region



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi says Iran is after disposal of tensions in the West Asia region, while the Israeli regime has been contributing to intensification of regional tensions.

The top diplomat made the remarks in a telephone conversation with his Dutch counterpart Caspar Veldkamp.

"The Islamic Republic is after de-escalation of tensions in the West Asia region," Araqchi said, adding, "This is while the Zionist regime's killing and violence machine has contributed to escalation of tension and violence in the region."

The official was referring to the regime's October-present war against the Gaza Strip, Tel Aviv's intensified deadly attacks on Lebanon and the occupied West Bank, and its assassination of senior resistance figures across the region.

He laid emphasis on the need for immediate cessation of the war that has so far claimed the lives of 40,534 Palestinians, mostly women and children.

For his part, the Dutch official expressed concern regarding the spiraling crises throughout the region, urging all concerned parties to exercise restraint.

"The Netherlands hopes that the cycle of violence and tension is stopped across the region, and the ground is prepared for cessation of the Palestinian people's suffering and transfer of humanitarian aid to them," he said.

The officials, meanwhile, addressed various issues of common interest. They underlined the need for continuation of political consultations, with Araqchi saying it was possible for the countries to expand their relations on the basis of mutual respect.

In a separate call conversation, Araqchi has said that the relations between Iran and the (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have to enter a new phase of mutual understanding.

He made the remarks in response to a phone call by (P) GCC Secretary General Jassem Mohamed AlBudaïwi who congratulated his appointment to the post.

The two officials explored avenues for giving a boost to relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the (P)GCC.

Iran Warns Against Israel's Plots to Expand Scale of War Across Palestine



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry says the Israeli regime is pursuing "sinister and racist" plots to expand the scale of killing and crimes across Palestine and violate Islamic sanctities.

In a statement on Thursday, Nasser Kanaani lambasted Israel's raids and assaults in the occupied West Bank and urged international circles to take immediate action to end the regime's genocide against the people of Palestine.

He said Israel's attack on the Palestinian cities and camps in north of the West Bank, the destruction of urban infrastructure and even the armed and violent entry into medical centers and hospitals are in line with the regime's continuation of the genocide in the Gaza Strip.

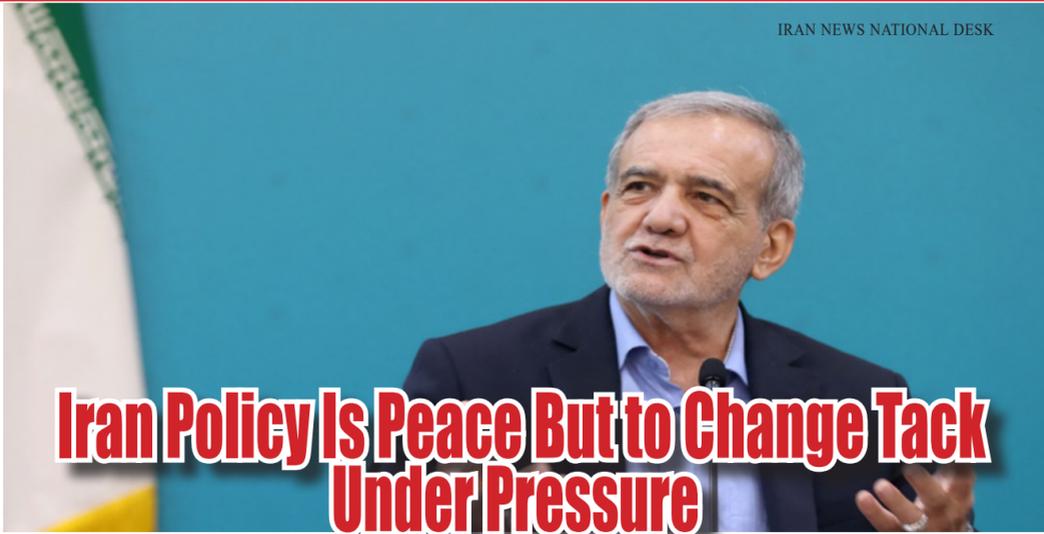
They all "indicate the Zionist regime's intention to expand the scope of killing and crime against Palestinian citizens," the Iranian spokesman added.

He emphasized that Israel's violation of the sanctities of al-Quds and the al-Aqsa Mosque in recent days and revelation of the cabinet's provocative plots "clearly show the regime's ominous and racist plots against the entire geography of Palestine, the Palestinian citizens as well as the Islamic sanctities of this holy land."

Kanaani called on international bodies, especially the United Nations Security Council, to abandon the approach of inaction in the face of Israel's flagrant violation of international law.

World bodies are required to fulfill their legal responsibilities and take a swift and effective action to stop the genocide of the Palestinian people by the child-killing Israeli regime, he said.

Kanaani also hailed brave resistance of the Palestinian people and resistance groups in the face of the killing machine of the criminal Israeli regime in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

Iran Policy Is Peace But to Change Tack Under Pressure

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Masoud Pezeshkian says Iran condemns any aggression in the world, stressing that the Islamic Republic's principled policy is to foster peace and friendship, prevent tensions and interact with world countries.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has always tried to spread peace and friendship, condemned aggression anywhere in the world, and is ready to cooperate to stop wars, violence and insecurity in the world," Pezeshkian told Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre over phone.

The Iranian president criticized the US for violating the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and complained about the European parties' failure to fulfill their obligations under the accord.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran fulfilled all its obligations under the JCPOA, but it was the United States that, in addition to breaking the agreement and unilateral withdrawal from it resorted to increasing pressure and sanctions against our country and nation and the European countries unfortunately did not implement even one clause of their commitments, contrary to expectations," Pezeshkian noted.

"Our policy is peace and friendship, avoiding tension and conflict, and interacting and expanding relations with all the countries of the world, but if our country is forced to do something under sanctions and pressure, then our approach and behavior will definitely move in another direction," he added.

He denounced the double standards of the US and certain Western countries vis-

à-vis human rights and democracy.

"America and some Western countries accuse other countries of violating human rights because of the mistreatment of one person, but they are not only silent toward the bloodshed against tens of thousands of innocent women, children, young and old in Gaza and the bombing of civilian areas, schools and hospitals by the Zionist regime, they also provide financial support and weapons to this regime. Which criterion and logic is this compatible with?"

Pezeshkian appreciated the positions of the Norwegian government in support of the Palestinian nation, calling on the Norwegian prime minister to work more closely with other European countries to immediately stop Israeli atrocities against oppressed Palestinians in Gaza.

For his part, the Norwegian prime minister described relations between Oslo and Tehran as friendly and historical, stating that Norway has always considered Iran as a friend and wished for the development and prosperity of the Iranian nation and will continue to do so.

Støre also expressed concern about the uptick in tensions in the West Asia region, especially Israeli offensives against the residents of the besieged Gaza Strip.

"We have condemned Israel's war against Gaza and its disastrous consequences. Norway, along with Ireland and Spain, was among the first European countries to have recognized the Palestinian people's right to establish an independent state. We hope these bitter and unfortunate developments will come to an end as soon as possible," he noted.

Iran Urges UNSC's Decisive Action to Tame Israel

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran's UN ambassador called on the Security Council to condemn the Zionist regime's malevolent activities and take decisive action to force Israel to end its occupation of the Syrian Golan, cease all acts of aggression against Syria and Lebanon, and stop the genocidal war in Gaza.

Addressing a UN Security Council meeting on "the situation in the Middle East: (Syria)", held in New York on August 28, Saeed Iravani said the humanitarian situation in Syria remains dire and the Syrian people continue to suffer severe economic hardships.

"The politicization of humanitarian aid and the obstruction of international support for Syria's reconstruction largely driven by the US and its Western allies have prolonged the conflict and intensified the suffering of the Syrian people," he said.

"Additionally, the US continues to use inhumane unilateral sanctions as a tool for the collective punishment of the Syrian population. These illegal actions impose unnecessary hardships and hinder Syria's recovery," the envoy added.

Reiterating Iran's call for the immediate removal of these harmful measures, Iravani said, "Providing impartial and non-politicized humanitarian aid to all regions of Syria is crucial to save lives. Early recovery projects should be prioritized to offer comprehensive support and help communities rebuild and strengthen their resilience. Facilitating Syria's reconstruction and ensuring the safe return of refugees and IDPs to their original places of residence must be integral to any comprehensive solution to the current conflict in Syria."

"The interests of millions of Syrian refugees should not be manipulated for political purposes by certain countries. Delaying their return only prolongs their suffering and places an undue burden on neighboring countries," he added.

"We strongly condemn Israel's ongoing aggression against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria, targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure as well as its continued occupation of the Syrian Golan. Israel's malicious activities in the region pose a serious threat to international peace and security," the ambassador stated.

"With ironclad support from the United States and the political support of the UK, the



occupying regime of Israel continues its daily atrocities and systematic war crimes against the people of Palestine in Gaza and the West Bank and violates the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon with full impunity," he noted.

"The Security Council must condemn unequivocally the rough regime of Israel for its malevolent activities in the region and take decisive action to force this terrorist regime to end its occupation of the Syrian Golan, cease all acts of aggression and acts of terrorism against Syria and Lebanon, and stop the ongoing genocidal war against the Palestinian

people," Iravani stated.

"We share the view expressed by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic that any political solution must include ending the illegal presence of US forces, halting their exploitation of Syrian resources, and stopping their support for terrorist groups and militias," he said.

"Iran is committed to a political resolution of the Syrian crisis. We support the efforts of the Special Envoy and commend his active engagement with all parties involved in resolving the conflict. Iran strongly advocates for the prompt resumption of the Constitutional Committee meetings and supports efforts to hold the ninth round of constitutional discussions in Baghdad, Iraq, as this option has gained support from most parties," the envoy added.

Highlighting the responsibility of the United States for the current situation in Syria and the region, the ambassador said, "The illegal presence of US forces is the primary source of instability and insecurity in Syria, providing cover for terrorist groups to strengthen their positions and commit further atrocities."

"It violates Syria's sovereignty, territorial integrity, international law, the UN Charter, and Security Council resolutions, including Resolution 2254 (2015). The claim of fighting terrorism cannot, in any way, justify these egregious violations. Yet, instead of taking concrete action to stop these severe violations, the United States continues its violations and at the same time, stands by Israel and actively provides it with substantial military, intelligence, financial support, and diplomatic cover to continue its atrocious crimes against other nations of the region," he concluded.

Leader Highlights Potential for Enhanced Iran-Turkmenistan Relations



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has placed a premium on the expansion of relations between Iran and Turkmenistan.

Speaking during a meeting with Turkmenistan's National Leader Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov in Tehran on Wednesday, Ayatollah Khamenei said while relations between Iran and Turkmenistan have grown significantly in recent years, there remains substantial capacity for further cooperation.

"We hope that under the new administration of President Pezeshkian, the expansion of relations between the two countries continue more vigorously," the Leader stated.

Ayatollah Khamenei highlighted joint development projects, including the construction of a highway linking the two countries and the expansion of a shared gas pipeline, stating that the implementation of these projects, with the involvement of Iranian experts, would further strengthen the bonds of friendship between the two countries.

For his part, Berdimuhamedov said he had held "good and constructive" negotiations with President Masoud Pezeshkian and expressed hope that the agreements signed between the two sides would yield positive results.

The Turkmen leader also remembered the late President Ebrahim Raeesi and praised his efforts to strengthen ties between the two nations.

Berdimuhamedov affirmed that the long border between Iran and Turkmenistan will always remain a "border of peace and friendship," and emphasized his government's readiness to expand ties in various fields.

Berdimuhamedov arrived at Mehrabad Airport in Tehran on Wednesday morning to hold high-level talks with Iranian officials.

Earlier in the day he held talks with Pezeshkian, and the two sides signed four cooperation documents in various fields, including gas and customs.

MKO Terrorists Will Fail to Achieve Objectives



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran slams the West's solid political and financial support for the Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization group, saying the absurd and sinister dreams of the MKO terrorists and their supporters will never come true.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani made the comment in a post on his official X account on Thursday on the occasion of the National Day of Fight against Terrorism.

The occasion commemorates the 1981 assassination of then president Mohammad-Ali Rajaei and prime minister Mohammad-Javad Bahonar. The two and several other officials had convened at the Tehran office of the Iranian prime minister in a meeting of Iran's Supreme Defense Council when a bomb explosion ripped through the building.

Kanaani pointed to the dark record of the MKO's criminal acts against the Iranian people, and said as mercenaries of the US and Israel, the terrorists have created and promoted state terrorism and played a role in assassinating Iran's nuclear scientists.

He added that the disgraceful existence of the MKO, which is backed by certain Western countries claiming to advocate human rights, and their political and financial aid to the terrorists have led to the martyrdom of 17,000 Iranian people.

In line with enemies' plots, the MKO sought to gain power in the Islamic and the Islamic establishment which was formed based on people's vote, he noted.

Having failed to achieve the goal, the MKO terrorists resorted to "indiscriminate and organized" assassination of Iranian people and officials, the spokesman said.

He added that after fleeing to France, MKO terrorist leaders continued their criminal acts against the Iranian government and nation through the West financial support.

They also sided with former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein in his 1980-88 war on the Islamic Republic, Kanaani emphasized.

The MKO has conducted numerous assassinations and bombings against Iranian statesmen and civilians since the 1979 victory of Iran's Islamic Revolution. Its members fled Iran in 1986 to Iraq, where they enjoyed Saddam's backing.

The anti-Iran cult was on the US list of terrorist organizations until 2012. Major European countries, including France, have also removed it from their blacklists.

IRAN NEWS



Filtering in the Country Is High

TEHRAN - Amin Kolahdoozan, head of the Electronic Commerce Development Center at the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade, spoke to ILNA about the impact of the country's internet quality on the development of this type of commerce.

He said: "In the matter of e-commerce development, the issue of infrastructure is certainly very important. However, infrastructure in this area is not limited to the internet alone. We must also consider the infrastructure for voice communications, internal links within the country that are not related to the internet, and data center infrastructures. Therefore, addressing infrastructures like cloud services, network load distribution across the country, content distribution networks (CDN), and other relevant issues becomes important."

Targeting 20m Tons of Transit Between Iran and Turkmenistan



TEHRAN - During the visit of Turkmenistan's National Leader and his accompanying delegation to Iran, Farzaneh Sadigh Malvajerd, Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development and Chair of the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Economic Commission, first attended a meeting with the Turkmenistan Minister of Transport.

Key transportation issues between the two countries were discussed, including the necessity of increasing transit with the goal of achieving 20 million tons of transit between the two countries by 2025, enhancing rail capacity, utilizing combined transport capacity at all land borders, exporting technical and engineering services, involving Iranian companies in construction projects in Turkmenistan, and resolving tariff and non-tariff barriers.

The Turkmen side welcomed the discussed topics, and it was decided that the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Transport Committee would be established in October this year to review the roadmap and operational plan for achieving the aforementioned goals, culminating in the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the two parties.

Subsequently, the Minister of Roads and Urban Development accompanied the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran in both public and private meetings with Turkmenistan's National Leader. On the sidelines of these meetings, four MoUs were signed, one of which included the twinning agreement between Amirabad Port and Turkmenbashi Port.

It is worth noting that Farzaneh Sadigh Malvajerd is the Chair of the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Economic Commission, and all commercial and economic matters between the two countries are pursued by her and the Turkmenistan Minister of Foreign Affairs within this commission.

Sadigh Malvajerd, as the Chair of the Joint Economic Commission, was present alongside the President in the meeting between Turkmenistan's National Leader and the Supreme Leader.



Gas Cooperation Agreement Signed Between Iran and Turkmenistan

TEHRAN - A document for the development of gas cooperation between Iran and Turkmenistan was signed today (Wednesday, August 28) in the presence of Masoud Pezeshkian, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, and Mohsen Paknejad, the Minister of Oil. The agreement was signed between Majid Chegeni, CEO of the National Iranian Gas Company, and Batyr Amanov, head of Turkmen State Concern.

In addition to this, Iranian and Turkmen officials, in the presence of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the National Leader of Turkmenistan, also signed three joint cooperation documents in the areas of customs, diplomatic cooperation, and the twinning of the Amirabad and Turkmenbashi ports.

These agreements include a cooperation program between the foreign ministries of Iran and Turkmenistan from 2024 to 2026, signed by Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Rashid Meredov, Turkmenistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs; a memorandum of understanding for the twinning of the Amirabad and Turkmenbashi ports, signed by Farzaneh Sadegh Malvajerd, Minister of Roads and Urban Development, and Mohammad Khan, CEO of the Turkmen company; and a joint action plan for deepening and expanding customs cooperation between the two countries from 2024 to 2026.

The National Leader of Turkmenistan arrived at Tehran's Mehrabad Airport this morning for a meeting with Iranian officials and was officially received by the Minister of Roads and Urban Development. He then met with the President of Iran.

According to SHANA, in recent years, Iran imported 23 to 30 million cubic meters of gas daily from Turkmenistan to meet the gas needs of northern and

northeastern regions, especially during the cold months, thus supplying approximately 5% of its annual needs through this means.

Gas imports from Turkmenistan occur via two routes: first, the 200-kilometer-long gas pipeline from Kordkuy to Kordkuy, which began operation in 1997 and has an annual import capacity of 6 to 8 billion cubic meters of natural gas; and second, the 30-kilometer-long Daulatabad-Sarakhs-Khangiran pipeline, with an annual capacity of 12 billion cubic meters.

The peak of natural gas imports from Turkmenistan was 32.4 million cubic meters per day in 2011, and over the past 15 years, Iran has imported an average of 15.3 million cubic meters of natural gas daily from Turkmenistan. However, sanctions-related issues led to a reduction in Iran's natural gas imports from Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan halted all gas exports to Iran on January 1, 2017, due to a payment dispute, and eventually, an international arbitration court ruled in favor of Turkmenistan in 2020.

Iran has been making efforts to resolve the issue since then. The Iranian President visited Ashgabat in late March 2018, where discussions with his Turkmen counterpart on gas swap agreements through Iran took place. In October 2021, it was reported that planned negotiations were underway to resolve the dispute and resume gas supplies.

In July 2020, the International Arbitration Court ruled that the National Iranian Gas Company must pay nearly \$2 billion to Turkmenistan for the gas supplied between 2007 and 2013. The original debt owed by Iran to Turkmenistan for past gas imports has been settled in three installments, and negotiations regarding penalties for late payments are ongoing.

24th Int'l Building Industry Exhibition Kicks Off

TEHRAN - The 24th International Building Industry Exhibition, organized by the Iran Chamber of Cooperatives, has commenced with the presence of deputy ministers from the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade (SMT) and the Ministry of Roads, showcasing the latest achievements.

The exhibition started on Thursday, August 29, at the permanent location of Tehran International Exhibitions, featuring industrial products and services in the building industry.

This edition of the exhibition sees participation from 800 domestic companies and 50 foreign companies from countries including China, Germany, Italy, Turkey, South Korea, and Singapore.

A total of 23 product categories within the building industry are represented at this exhibition, with a focus on showcasing innovative products, technology, and knowledge-based companies.

In the opening ceremony of the event, Deputy Minister of Public Industries at the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade Mr. Mohammad Mehdi Baradaran said that there is a fragmented and subjective approach to housing construction, which has caused problems for the country and is a significant obstacle to the industrialization of building construction.

Baradaran stated that construction must move towards industrialization and the use of modern technologies.

He added that to achieve higher efficiency in the construction industry, we need to increase productivity and reduce the final cost of housing construction.

Emphasizing the need for efficiency in space and energy usage in construction, Baradaran noted that in recent years, municipalities have been unable to implement building standards, leading to serious challenges compared to some other countries.

He mentioned that the building industry and related industries, such as kitchen appliances and other equipment in the faucets sector, are our main concerns. The focus on producing lead-based faucets has not been adequately addressed in the country, and even in administrative buildings, standards have not been met.

Baradaran pointed out that today, with new designs, we are witnessing a reduction in the use of materials in construction. He stated that we need to utilize global experiences in



building construction, and we have the potential to export to neighboring countries, with some regional initiatives already underway.

He emphasized that through regional agreements, we should be able to offer final products in the export of building services and materials through barter arrangements.

He added that the government's commitment is to pursue the seventh plan, which aims for eight percent economic growth. The construction industry must move in this direction to stimulate other industries, as more than 120 industries are connected to construction, which will benefit from a booming construction sector.

Baradaran also addressed urban development in new cities, stating that the private sector and cooperative perspectives should be considered in this industry. If we achieve high growth in the construction industry, we will witness job creation.

He further said that the construction of one million housing units per year is on the agenda, and attention must be paid to building equipment and interior furnishings with high efficiency and low consumption. He mentioned that 700,000 units of low-consumption water heaters have been pursued, and further actions are needed in heaters and other areas. Additionally, there are over 20 million heaters in use, which need to move towards low-consumption models.

The latest achievements and innovations from companies across various sectors such as tools, construction equipment and machinery, roof and wall coverings, prefabricated components, HVAC systems, safety equipment, kitchen appliances, doors and windows, interior design and architecture, paint, adhesives, resins, and insulation, building stones, sanitary fittings, industrialization and new technologies, tiles, ceramics, parquet and flooring, electrical and electronic equipment, pipes and fittings, academic and research centers, consultants and contractors, basic materials, financial and credit institutions, publications and software, government institutions, the Innovation and Prosperity Fund, the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, and hardware are on display.

Iran and Turkmenistan Customs Agree to Enhance Cooperation



TEHRAN - Mohammad Rezvani-Far, the Deputy Minister of Economy and the Head of Iran's Customs Administration, met today in Tehran with his Turkmen counterpart, Maksat Khudaykulyev, to discuss expanding cooperation in various fields.

Rezvani-Far expressed satisfaction with the increased trade volume between the two countries, reporting an exchange of 1.4 million tons of goods valued at \$450 million last year.

He emphasized that joint bilateral and border meetings play a significant role in increasing trade volume and called for the scheduling and continuation of these joint meetings.

The Head of Iran's Customs Administration highlighted the existing capacity and the four active borders between the two countries, stating that increasing the capacity to accept trucks, collaborating to boost trade volume, especially at the Sarakhs border, streamlining the issuance of visas for traders, electronic document exchange, and extending working hours are crucial for enhancing trade volume and facilitating commerce.

Maksat Khudaykulyev, the Head of Turkmenistan's Customs Service, welcomed the development of trade exchanges between the two countries in recent years and reported growth in his country's trade with Iran.

Export of 17,500 Tons of Chicken Meat to Target Countries



TEHRAN - The Deputy Minister of Animal Production at the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad announced the export of 17,500 tons of surplus chicken meat to target countries beyond domestic needs.

In an interview regarding the status of protein product exports, Mohammad Ebrahim Hassan-Nejad stated, "According to the targeted plan, 21,000 tons of surplus chicken meat is expected to be exported in the first half of this year, a significant portion of which has already been achieved."

The Deputy Minister of Animal Production added that the production of parent chickens has increased by 40% compared to last year, and from December, the country's need for day-old chicks and fertilized eggs will be met.

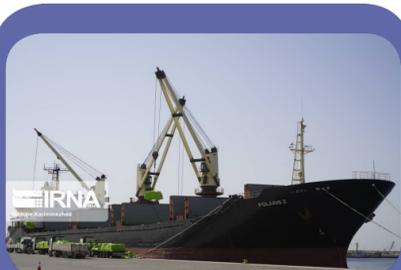
He noted a 21% growth in breeding flocks and emphasized that according to statistics, chicken production in poultry units has grown by 24%, and meat production has increased by 42%.

Hassan-Nejad also described the conditions for egg production as favorable, stating, "According to this year's plan, 160,000 tons of eggs are set to be exported, some of which have already been carried out."

He added that last year, 140,000 tons of egg products were exported to target countries.

The Deputy Minister of Animal Production at the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad highlighted the preservation of breeding livestock as the most important strategy for increasing meat production in the country. He added that last year, over one million tons of long-term livestock feed was provided to farmers to prevent breeding livestock from being sent to slaughterhouses.

He further stated that in order to produce affordable meat, the traditional herding and livestock farming systems must be given attention. He mentioned that the Islamic Consultative Assembly has allocated a budget line under the title of "red meat," directing 1% of the revenues from feed products to this sector, to be invested in rural livestock farming and animal husbandry.



Investment Opportunities for the Private Sector in Iran's Ports Announced

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Director General of Economic Affairs and Zones at the Ports and Maritime Organization announced a new approach by the organization to attract private sector investment. He stated that there are special and extraordinary opportunities in the port and maritime sectors that should be utilized to achieve the development of a maritime economy.

Hussein Yadollahi highlighted the new strategies for private sector investment in the country's ports. He mentioned that the Ports and Maritime Organization is focusing on attracting non-governmental investments in various maritime and port projects, which is crucial for developing a maritime-based economy. The private sector's investment potential can be effectively harnessed through this new approach.

Yadollahi noted that until now, efforts were made to build internal port infrastructure (excluding strategic infrastructure) using funds from the Ports and Maritime Organization. However, under the new approach, even internal port infrastructure will be developed through the private sector using BOT (Build-Operate-Transfer) contracts. Examples include investments in the transportation of petroleum products via pipelines in specialized corridors, road access infrastructure, and investments in support lands.

The Director General emphasized that the projects aimed at attracting investments are diverse, with a new focus on developing infrastructure. Significant progress can be made towards a maritime-based economy through collaboration and investment from the private sector. Efforts have been made to ensure that projects are transparently awarded through auctions and public tenders.

Macron, Starmer Pledge Deeper Ties Between France and Britain

PARIS (Dispatches) - French President Emmanuel Macron pledged on Thursday to deepen ties with Britain over defence, security, migration and energy after a meeting with Prime Minister Keir Starmer in Paris.

Starmer and Macron "agreed on the importance of further strengthening and broadening the close relationship between the UK and France in the coming months," a British government spokesman said, and to work closer together to dismantle migrant smuggling routes and increase intelligence-sharing.

Starmer's arrival in Paris, where he attended the Paralympics opening ceremony on Wednesday, was preceded by a visit to Germany where he and Chancellor Olaf Scholz agreed to work on a treaty covering issues ranging from defence to trade.

His trip to the EU's top powers, Germany and France, is part of the pledge he took after winning election on July 4 to improve Britain's relations with its European allies after years of discord over Brexit and to boost its economic growth.



Ukraine F-16 Crashes, Pilot Dies Repelling Russian Strike



KYIV (Dispatches) - One of Ukraine's F-16 fighter jets crashed while repelling a major Russian attack on Monday, Kyiv's military said, the first such loss reported since the long-awaited arrival of the U.S.-made planes this month.

The jet came down and its pilot died while it was approaching a Russian target, the Ukrainian General Staff said on Thursday on Facebook.

The F-16s had "demonstrated high efficiency" and downed four Russian cruise missiles, it added. Ukraine said Russia launched more than 200 missiles and drones that day targeting the energy sector.

"Connection with one of the aircraft was lost while it was approaching the next target. As it turned out later, the plane crashed, and the pilot died," the statement said.

A U.S. defense official told Reuters that Monday's crash did not appear to be the result of Russian fire, and possible causes from pilot error to mechanical failure were still being investigated.

Ukraine has not given details about the size of its new fleet, though the loss left a significant dent. The Times of London has cited a source as saying Ukraine had six of the jets.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Aug. 4 that Ukraine did not have enough pilots trained to use the F-16s or enough of the jets themselves.

Ukraine's air force western command said on Facebook that pilot Oleksiy Mes died in a combat mission on Monday.

"Oleksiy saved the Ukrainians from deadly Russian missiles. Unfortunately, at the cost of his own life," the statement said.

Mes went by the call sign Moonfish, and CNN reported in 2023 that he was training for F-16 missions.

Al Qaeda Branch Claims It Killed 300 Fighters, Not Civilians

BARSALOGHO (Dispatches) - An al Qaeda-linked group said it killed nearly 300 people in last Saturday's devastating attack in north-central Burkina Faso, but said it targeted militia members linked to the army, not civilians, the U.S. consultancy Site Intelligence Group reported.

The attack outside the town of Barsalogho was one of the deadliest in nearly a decade of Islamist violence in the West African country. A group of victims' relatives said at least 400 were killed when jihadists opened fire on civilians digging defensive trenches on orders of the military.

Al Qaeda affiliate Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin said soldiers and militia members were excavating the trenches when it attacked.

"Those who were eliminated in this attack are nothing but militias affiliated with the Burkinabe army ... not as they lied and said that they were civilians," JNIM said in a communique translated by Site on Thursday.

Several videos apparently filmed by the militants and released on social media showed dozens of bodies in trenches, most of them in civilian clothing.

The bloodshed highlights the danger of the authorities' growing reliance on civilians as they struggle to combat jihadist groups that have destabilised swathes of the Sahel region since an insurgency took root in neighbouring Mali in 2012.

"Civilians are playing a significant role in the conflict," said Ryan Cummings, director of analysis at Africa-focused risk-management company Signal Risk, referring to their recruitment into militia or in fortifying towns, as they appear to have been doing in Barsalogho.

"But civilians that are assisting the military are seen as collaborators. This has made them targets of attacks," he said.

Burkina Faso's ruling junta has not said how many people were killed, but said civilians, soldiers and volunteer army auxiliaries known as VDPs were among the victims.

Fighting Rages in Gaza as Palestinians Hope for a Pause for Polio Vaccinations

CAIRO (Dispatches) - Palestinians in Gaza were waiting on Thursday to see if there would be a pause in fighting to allow a polio vaccination campaign to begin, as the conflict raged across the besieged enclave, killing at least 34 people.

The United Nations is preparing to vaccinate an estimated 640,000 children in Gaza, where the World Health Organization confirmed on Aug. 23 that at least one baby has been paralysed by the type 2 poliovirus, the first such case in the territory in 25 years.

The UN, which called for a humanitarian truce earlier this month, hopes to begin the vaccination campaign on Sept. 1, said Juliette Touma, communications director of UNRWA, the U.N. Palestinian refugee agency.

The World Health Organization named the baby as Abdul-Rahman Abu Al-Jidyhan. He will turn one year old on Sept. 1.

His mother Nivine Abu Al-Jidyhan said she feared for her son after she was told by health officials they could do little to help him.

"I was shocked that my son got this disease amid the war and the closure of border crossings, under these conditions and lack of medicine for him, it's a shock. Would he remain like this?" Abu Al-Jidyhan told Reuters on Thursday.

"He is my only baby boy. It's his right to travel and be treated; it's his right to walk, run and move like before...It is unfair that he stays thrown in the tent without care or attention," she said from a tent in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip.

At Nasser Hospital, in the southern city of Khan Younis, Umm Eliane Bakr fears her 19-month-old daughter may be vulnerable to polio due to ill health brought on by malnutrition.

She hopes her baby will be vaccinated soon, but said she is worried about moving safely in an area where there have been repeated Israeli strikes.

"I cannot walk in the street and get bombed, or have something happen to my daughter, or have a targeted (attack). I need a truce, a ceasefire so I can give my daughter this injection (vaccine)," she told Reuters.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu this week denied media reports Israel was preparing for a generalised humanitarian truce, saying that a more limited plan had been presented.

"These are not pauses in the fighting to administer polio vaccines but only the allocation of certain places in the Gaza Strip," he said in a statement.

Senior Hamas official Izzat El-Reshiq reiterated the group's support for the UN and international organisations' initiative for an urgent humanitarian truce across the enclave to allow the polio vaccination campaign.

He described Netanyahu's statement as an attempt to thwart the process by refusing the UN call.

On Thursday, Israeli forces continued to bombard areas across the Gaza Strip in their battle against Hamas-led militants. Palestinian health officials said Israeli military strikes have so far killed at least 34 people.

One strike on a house in Gaza City killed eight Palestinians, including children, they said, while three others were killed when an Israeli missile hit a motorcycle in Rafah, near the border with Egypt.

A neighbour of the bombed Gaza City house said they had managed to lower a ladder into the building to rescue a family trapped inside, but had only managed to extract one young girl.

"After that, the fire consumed them and we could not reach them," he said.

The latest bloodshed in the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict was triggered on Oct. 7 when Palestinian Islamist group Hamas attacked Israel, killing 1,200 and taking about 250 hostages, according to Israeli tallies.

Israel's subsequent assault on the enclave has killed over 40,600 Palestinians, according to the local health ministry, while also displacing nearly the entire population of 2.3 million, causing a hunger crisis and leading to genocide allegations at the World Court that Israel denies.

Typhoon Shanshan Churns Up Japan, Up to Six Dead



BEPPU (Dispatches) - Typhoon Shanshan dumped record rains Friday as it slowly churned up through Japan, triggering transport havoc and widespread warnings of landslides with up to six people killed.

The typhoon, one of the fiercest to hit Japan in decades, has weakened and was forecast to ease to tropical cyclone strength by Monday, though gusts were still reaching 126 kilometres (78 miles) per hour early Friday.

Even before making landfall on the island of Kyushu, a landslide caused by the heavy rains preceding it killed three members of the same family late Tuesday in Aichi prefecture, around 1,000 kilometres (600 miles) away.

Government spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi confirmed four deaths but said that in one case, "the relation to the typhoon was being studied". Two more were feared dead and two others were missing, Hayashi said.

Eight people were seriously hurt and 70 others had light injuries, he said, with many hurt by broken glass after the typhoon smashed windows and ripped tiles off roofs when it slammed into Kyushu on Thursday with gusts up to 252 kph.

Almost 200 buildings were damaged.

Typhoons in the region have been forming closer to coastlines, intensifying more rapidly and lasting longer over land due to climate change, according to a study released in July.

Another published by World Weather Attribution (WWA) on Thursday said that climate change had turbocharged Typhoon Gaemi, which killed dozens of people across the Philippines, Taiwan and China last month.

A similar rapid attribution analysis from Imperial College London using peer-reviewed methodology calculated that Typhoon Shanshan's winds were made 26 percent more likely by a warming planet.

"Without phasing out fossil fuels, the root cause of climate change, typhoons will bring even greater devastation to Japan," said Ralf Toumi, director of the Grantham Institute at Imperial.

Japanese authorities issued their highest alert in several areas, with more than five million people advised to evacuate, although it was unclear how many did.

The Japan Meteorological Agency issued alerts for possible landslides in many parts of Kyushu and as far away as Shizuoka on the main island of Honshu, the Tokyo region and nearby Kanagawa.

Footage from Japanese broadcaster NHK showed a car park in Kanagawa prefecture with vehicles half-submerged in brown water, with authorities there urging residents to move to higher floors after a local river flooded.

Some parts of Kyushu saw record rains for August, with the town of Misato recording a staggering 791.5 millimetres (31 inches) in 48 hours, the Japan Meteorological Agency said.

Harris Defends Policy Shifts in First Interview as U.S. Presidential Candidate



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Vice President Kamala Harris on Thursday defended shifting away from some of her more liberal positions in her first major television interview of her presidential campaign, but insisted her "values have not changed" even as she is "seeking consensus."

Sitting with her running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, Harris was asked specifically about her reversals on banning fracking and decriminalizing illegal border crossings, positions she took during her last run for president. She confirmed she does not want to ban fracking, an energy extraction process key to the economy of swing-state Pennsylvania, and said there "should be consequence" for people who cross the border without permission.

"I think the most important and most

significant aspect of my policy perspective and decisions is my values have not changed," Harris said.

She went on to say: "I believe it is important to build consensus. It is important to find a common place of understanding where we can actually solve the problem."

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The interview with CNN's Dana Bash came as voters are still trying to learn more about the Democratic ticket in an unusually compressed time frame. President Joe Biden ended his reelection bid just five weeks ago. The interview focused largely on policy, as Harris sought to show that she had adopted more moderate positions on issues that Republicans argue are extreme, while Walz defended past misstatements about his biography.

Harris hadn't done an in-depth interview since she became her party's standard-bearer five weeks ago, though she did sit for several while she was still Biden's running mate.

She said serving with Biden was "one of the greatest honors of my career," and she recounted the moment he called to tell her he was stepping down and would support her.

"He told me what he had decided to do and ... I asked him, 'Are you sure?' and he said, 'Yes,' and that's how I learned about it."

She said she didn't ask Biden to endorse her because "he was very clear that he was going to endorse me."

Harris defended the administration's record on the southern border and immigration, noting that she was tasked with trying to address the "root causes" in other countries that were driving the border crossings.

"We have laws that have to be followed and enforced, that address and deal with people who cross our border illegally, and there should be consequences," Harris said.

Asked about Israel's war in Gaza after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, Harris said, "I am unequivocal and unwavering in my commitment to Israel's defense and its ability to defend itself." But the vice president also reiterated what she's said for months, that civilian deaths are too high amid the Israeli offensive.

She also brushed off Republican Donald Trump's questioning of her racial identity after he suggested falsely that she changed how she presents herself for political reasons and "happened to turn Black." Harris, who is of Black and South Asian heritage, said Trump's suggestion was the "same old, tired playbook."

"Next question, please," she said.

Trump and Harris are set to debate on Sept. 10. In a post Thursday evening, it appeared Trump was paying close attention to the interview. After the debate was mentioned, he posted, "I look so forward to Debating Comrade Kamala Harris and exposing her for the fraud she is."

Trump went on to say that his Democratic opponent "has changed every one of her long held positions, on everything. America will never allow an Election WEAPONIZING MARXIST TO BE PRESIDENT OF THE U.S."



Alcaraz and Osaka Crash out of US Open

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Former champions Carlos Alcaraz and Naomi Osaka were knocked out of the US Open as the final Grand Slam of the year lost two of its biggest crowd-pullers.

Alcaraz, the world number three and 2022 champion in New York, was stunned by Dutch world number 74 Botic van de Zandschulp 6-1, 7-5, 6-4.

Osaka, who counts the 2018 and 2020 US Opens amongst her four career majors, slipped to a 6-3, 7-6 (7/5) loss at the hands of 52nd-ranked Czech Karolina Muchova.

Alcaraz had made at least the quarter-finals in his three previous appearances in New York. Thursday's defeat was his earliest at a Grand Slam since a second round exit at Wimbledon in 2021.

Defeat ended his dream of becoming only the third man in the modern era to win the French Open, Wimbledon and the US Open in the same season.

"The tennis schedule is so tight. I've been playing a lot of matches lately with Roland Garros, with Wimbledon, Olympic Games," said Alcaraz who lost a draining Olympics final to Novak Djokovic in Paris just over three weeks ago.

"I took a little break after the Olympic Games. Probably it wasn't enough. Probably I came here with not as much energy as I thought that I was going to come. But I don't want to put that as excuse."

Van de Zandschulp said he was lost for words after only his second career win over a top five player. "It was an incredible evening out here in my first time in the night session on Arthur Ashe," he said.

"I tried to stay calm. You have to keep your head against these guys otherwise they will take advantage." He broke twice in the opening set to stake his claims in front of a shell-shocked crowd.

He was breaks to the good in sets two and three, leaving Alcaraz to counter-punch before surrendering his hard-earned foothold.

His fate was sealed when he committed his 27th and final unforced error of the night as van de Zandschulp pulled off one of the biggest upsets in recent Grand Slam history.

The Dutchman, who had lost his two previous matches with Alcaraz, will next face 25th-seeded Jack Draper. For Osaka, her comeback from maternity leave remains stalled.

She missed last year's tournament after giving birth to daughter Shai but made up for that absence in the first round when she brushed aside Jelena Ostapenko for a first top 10 win in four years.

However, the 26-year-old went down to a straight sets loss to 2023 semi-finalist Muchova, leaving her without a third round appearance at the majors since the 2022 Australian Open.

Osaka blew three set points in the second set before a wild forehand handed her Czech rival victory. "It's been a little difficult because obviously I can only gauge how I'm doing by results. I feel faster. I feel better, but I lost in the second round. So it's a little rough," said Osaka.

Muchova will meet Russia's Anastasia Potapova for a last 16 spot. Alcaraz's defeat removed a major title barrier from the path of top seed Jannik Sinner, who had been scheduled to meet the Spaniard in the semi-finals.

World number one Sinner won his 50th match of the year when he defeated America's 49th-ranked Alex Michelsen 6-4, 6-0, 6-2 to make the last 32 for a fourth successive year.

The 23-year-old Italian unleashed 28 winners and broke serve eight times. He will face Australia's Christopher O'Connell for a place in the last 16.

Women's world number one Iga Swiatek charged into the third round, routing 217th-ranked Ena Shibahara of Japan 6-0, 6-1 to record her 55th match win of 2024.

Afghan Khudadadi Becomes First Refugee to Win Paralympic Medal



PARIS (Dispatches) - Afghan Zakia Khudadadi completed a remarkable journey to become the first athlete from the refugee team to win a medal at the Paralympics when she clinched a taekwondo bronze on Thursday.

Khudadadi, who made her Paralympics debut in Tokyo days after being exfiltrated from Taliban-controlled Kabul, secured her place on the podium when her opponent withdrew before their bronze medal bout in the K44-47kg category.

The 25-year-old, who was granted asylum by France, was cheered on like a local throughout the day by the Grand Palais crowd and by her coach, Haby Niare, who took a taekwondo silver medal at the Rio Olympics in 2016.

"This medal is fantastic for me but also for all the women in Afghanistan and all the refugees," she said in impeccable French.

"We're not giving up for equality and freedom in my country." Khudadadi, who was already looking ahead to the next Games in Los Angeles where she said she intended to win gold, delivered a message of freedom.

"I want to give this medal to the whole world. I hope that one day there will be freedom in my country, for all the world, for all the girls, for all the women, for all the refugees in the world," Khudadadi, who was born with an atrophied arm, said.

"And that all of us work towards that, for liberty and equality."

The Taliban's restrictions on women and freedom of expression have drawn sharp criticism from rights groups and many foreign governments since the former insurgents resumed control of Afghanistan in 2021.

Western capitals, led by Washington, have said the path to formal recognition of the Taliban is largely stalled until they reverse course on women's rights and open high schools to girls.

Holders Real Madrid Face Dortmund and Liverpool in New-Look Champions League

MONACO (Dispatches) - The draw for the league stage of the new-look UEFA Champions League took place on Thursday, throwing up a series of heavyweight fixtures including a trip for holders Real Madrid to Liverpool and a repeat of last season's final between the Spanish giants and Borussia Dortmund.

Every team will play eight games against eight different opponents in the new format of Europe's elite club competition, with all 36 clubs now pooled together into one league rather than split into groups.

Madrid, who have signed France superstar Kylian Mbappe since winning a record-extending 15th European Cup, will also notably play AC Milan at home and will go to Atalanta.

Real beat last season's Europa League winners Atalanta in the UEFA Super Cup in Warsaw earlier this month.

Liverpool, who are back in the Champions League after a one-season absence, will also notably meet Milan and take on tournament debutants Girona.

However, supporters of the Anfield club will perhaps be most excited about the prospect of hosting German champions Bayer Leverkusen, coached by former Liverpool midfielder Xabi Alonso.

"There will be a lot of focus on the fixture against Real Madrid at Anfield, and rightly so because they are the holders

of the competition, but at the same time there is so much quality among our other opponents that we will spread our attention evenly and take each game as it comes," said Liverpool manager Arne Slot.



Pep Guardiola's Manchester City, winners of the competition in 2023, will play at home to Italian champions Inter Milan and go to both Paris Saint-Germain and Juventus.

However, they were also handed more comfortable opponents including Club Brugge, Sparta Prague and Slovan Bratislava, who have never played in the modern Champions League proper.

Other standout head-to-heads will include Bayern Munich against both PSG and Barcelona, and Arsenal against Inter and Paris.

"It is the best competition in the world with the best clubs in the world. With the new format it will be harder but that is what we like," said PSG's Qatari president, Nasser al-Khelaifi.

The number of clubs in the Champions League has increased from 32 in the past, with the 36 participants split into four seeded pots of nine for the draw.

While in the past the draw was entirely conducted by hand, this time had to be different to avoid the process lasting several hours.

Each team was drawn out by former Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon on the stage in Monaco, before Cristiano Ronaldo pressed a button to activate the computer which revealed all eight of their opponents.

Castrillo Escapes for Vuelta Stage



MADRID (Dispatches) - Pablo Castrillo escaped from a breakaway and held off his pursuers on the climb to the line for an emotional Vuelta a Espana stage win as Ben O'Connor protected his overall lead.

Castrillo, a Spaniard who rides for Kern Pharma, attacked at just before the 10-kilometre climb to the finish of stage 12.

The 23-year-old celebrated his first World Tour victory, and the first by a Spaniard on this year's Vuelta, by crossing the line pointing skywards.

He dedicated his success to his team's founder and former president Manolo Azcona, who died during the night at the age of 71.

"I thought about Manolo the whole stage. I had his strength by my side in those last few kilometres," said Castrillo.

"I suffered a lot but to be able to win a stage in the Vuelta is just crazy. I don't have any words. I've gone to the end of my strength."

Castrillo finished eight seconds ahead of Max Poole after the other members of the elite escape group stopped chasing to avoid helping each other.

Poole, a 21-year-old Briton, had been part of the breakaway the previous day when he finished third.

O'Connor, an Australian who rides for AG2R-Deceathlon maintained his 3min 16sec lead over the Slovenian from Red Bull as the pack finished 6min 29sec behind Castrillo on a hilly 125.7 kilometre meander through Galicia from Ourense to the Manzaneda ski resort.

With a string of tough stages coming up, Primoz Roglic, who had chipped away at O'Connor's lead over the previous two days, did not attempt another late attack.

"We just controlled the race, made some pace on the final climb," said O'Connor. "I felt pretty good today. I never lost confidence! I was annoyed but it doesn't mean I don't believe in myself."

The day started with potentially bad news for his team as they were punished for the way they had attempted to control the race the day before.

Four members of AG2R received yellow cards under a system being tried out by cycling's governing body, the UCI.

Ajax Advance in Style But Chelsea Made to Sweat

PARIS (Dispatches) - Former European champions Ajax, Chelsea and FCSB all survived qualifying in lesser European competitions on Thursday.

Four-time champions Ajax cruised through in the second-tier Europa League.

Kian Fitz-Jim, Kenneth Taylor and Brian Brobbey scored as Ajax beat Jagiellonia from Poland, 3-0, to follow a comfortable victory in the first leg in Bialystok and advance 7-1 on aggregate.

Romanian club FCSB, who won the 1986 European Cup as Steaua Bucharest, squeaked through when Darius Olaru scored in added time to secure a 1-0 home victory over LASK from Austria and a 2-1 aggregate win.

In Istanbul, Ciro Immobile took his total to six goals in three games since moving to Turkey, scoring twice as Giovanni van Bronckhorst's Besiktas thrashed Lugano from Switzerland 5-1 for an 8-4 aggregate win in the Europa League.

Chelsea, slumping in the third-tier Conference League and two goals up from the first leg against Servette, made eight changes from the team that crushed Wolves in the Premier League on Sunday.

When Christophe Nkunku converted a penalty after 17 minutes in Geneva the Londoners seemed in control.

Centre forward Jeremy Guillemenot fired low past goalie Filip Jorgensen before half time and Ivo Crivelli came off the bench to head a Servette second with 18 minutes to play.



Servette won 2-1, but Chelsea squeaked through 3-2 on aggregate.

"In the first half an hour we scored the goal and we had three or four more chances that if we were able to score, the game is finished, and then we conceded the goal," said Chelsea coach Enzo Maresca. "In the end, we deserved it."

"This kind of game at the end, you have many things to

lose and not many things to win."

Last year's beaten finalists Fiorentina survived two red cards to beat Puskas Akademia on penalties in Felcsut.

Fiorentina squandered a two-goal lead in the first leg and did the same on Thursday. Moises Kean gave them a 59th minute lead, then Fiorentina's discipline disappeared.

In the seventh minute of added time Luca Ranieri fouled substitute Lamin Colley conceding a penalty and earning a red card. Zsolt Nagy converted to send the match to extra time.

In the 97th minute Pietro Comuzzo earned a second yellow card, both for fouls on Englishman Colley. Fiorentina survived the rest of extra time with nine men and won the shootout 5-4 because goalkeeper David de Gea saved Roland Szolnoki's kick.

Welsh team New Saints reached the Conference League group stage after drawing 0-0 at home with Lithuanians Panevezys, but led 3-0 from the first leg.

Larne from Northern Ireland needed a hat-trick of penalties from Andrew Ryan as they fought back with 10 men to beat Red Imps from Gibraltar.

Bernardo Lopes put the visitors ahead on the night and two-up on aggregate in the 20th minute. Ryan replied three times from the spot, the last coming after Christopher Gallagher was sent off just before the hour.