

A Group of Majlis Lawmakers Met With the Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia and Discussed the Issue of Parliamentary Cooperation Between the Two Countries

IRAN NEWS

Iran Exported Over \$4.6b Worth of Polymer Products in the Previous Iranian Calendar Year (Ended on March 19), the Head of Iran National Plastic and Polymer Industries Association (INPIA) Said

VOL. XXIX, No. 8096 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

SUNDAY OCTOBER 6, 2024 MEHR 15, 1403

2 DOMESTIC

Turkey Has Taken Iran's Market in Qatar

> SEE PAGE 2

3 INTERNATIONAL

Hundreds of Tunisians Rally Against President Saied Ahead of Elections

> SEE PAGE 3



Iran Warns of Destroying All Israel Gas Fields, Power Plants



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran will simultaneously destroy all of Israel's energy facilities if the regime attempts any new aggression against Iran, warns IRGC's deputy-in-command.

General Ali Fadavi told the Lebanese television channel Al-Mayadeen on Friday that the Israeli regime will risk its existence if it attacks Iran. "If the occupying entity makes a mistake, we will target all its energy resources, power plants, refineries, and gas fields."

He pointed out that Iran is a large and vast country with many economic centers, while Israel has only three power stations and several refineries. "We can strike them all at once," the general asserted.

Iran launched Operation True Promise II late Tuesday in response to the Israeli assassination of late Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran in April and also the assassination of late Hezbollah chief Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah along with Iranian military advisor, Brigadier General Abbas Nilforoushan in September.

Iran fired around 200 ballistic missiles at Israel during that operation, saying 90 percent of them hit their targets.

The Israeli regime has vowed to respond to that attack, with some Zionist officials calling for attacks on Iran's nuclear energy sites, oil fields, and other scientific and economic infrastructure.

Iran has warned to attack the regime's infrastructure if it wants to respond to the Iranian retaliation.

Meantime, commander of the Iranian Army Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi told Al-Mayadeen on Friday that the Israeli regime would receive a "severe and devastating response" if it engaged in uncalculated actions.

"We have exercised restraint and patience in the past, but we are ready to deliver a precise and destructive blow at the right time," he said.

He noted that Iran would respond more forcefully than the level of aggression shown by its enemies if they made a mistake at any level.

Innovations Regarding Ceasefires in Lebanon and Gaza



ATEHRAN - Upon his arrival in Syria, Iran's Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araqchi, stated in a press gathering: "The purpose of my visit to Damascus is to continue consultations on regional developments. In Beirut, we had very important discussions with Lebanese government officials."

He said: "We will continue discussions in Damascus with the Syrian government for further consultations. We have always been in close consultation with our friends in the Syrian government regarding regional developments. The most important topic of the day is the issue of the ceasefire in Lebanon, particularly in Gaza."

Araqchi added: "There are some innovations in this regard and consultations have been made, which we hope will yield results. Unfortunately, the hostilities and crimes of the Zionist regime continue. As we have always believed, the Zionist regime knows no language other than force, war, and crime, and continues its crimes every day in Beirut, southern Lebanon, and Gaza. This requires a collective effort by the international community to stop these atrocities."

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



Remote Sensing Satellite "Kosar" to Be Launched Soon

TEHRAN - The head of the Iranian Space Organization announced that the launch of the "Saman 2" orbital transfer block, as well as the launch of the "Tolou 3" and "Zafar 2" satellites within a space constellation, and the IOT satellite constellation are among the most important plans of the country's space industry. Additionally, the remote sensing satellite "Kosar" will be launched soon.

Hassan Salarieh, during the inauguration of World Space Week on Saturday, explained the country's space industry and stated that the entire capacity of images from the "Kosar" satellite has been purchased by the government to encourage private sector involvement in this field.

The Deputy Minister of Communications added: "Recently, the 'Chamran 1' satellite was successfully launched and placed in orbit and is currently carrying out its missions. In the near future, the 'Saman' orbital transfer block (aimed at increasing the orbital height of satellites) will be launched, and we will also launch the three remote sensing satellites Kosar, Tolou 3, and Zafar 2, which will form a satellite constellation together."

He continued: "The Space Organization was established in the 2000s, and various institutions started operating thereafter. In the early days, we built the first communication satellites with simple structures, aiming to place an object in orbit. In 2008, we launched the 'Omid' satellite with basic communication features. Afterward, multiple remote sensing satellites were developed by universities. The focus back then was on imaging with several tens of meters resolution, but in less than 20 years, we have reached a stage where we build

multiple high-precision telecommunication and remote sensing satellites within the country."

The head of the Iranian Space Organization also said: "Last year, the 'Pars' satellite was launched with a 15-meter resolution, and now other versions of this satellite with 7-meter resolution are being designed and built. The very significant event currently taking place is the entry of the private sector into the space industry. This year, we have plans to launch private sector satellites. In my opinion, the entire history of the country's space industry should be seen on one side, and today, with the private sector's involvement, on the other side, as their participation will speed up progress."

Salarieh further elaborated on the future plans of the country's space industry, saying: "We have scheduled test launches of the IOT (Internet of Things) satellite constellation for next year in collaboration with the private sector. This satellite constellation will enable us to utilize satellite infrastructure in areas where there is no ground-based infrastructure for receiving data. It can provide real-time data reception, significantly improving decision-making speeds during crises."

Every year the World Space Week Association selects a theme for events held during World Space Week (October 4-10). This year, the association has named the theme for 2024 as "Space and Climate Change."

The slogan for this year's World Space Week has been announced as "Space and Climate Change."

Necessity of Facilitating Trade Between Iran and BRICS Member States

TEHRAN - The Director General of Europe and America at the Iran Trade Development Organization emphasized the importance of facilitating the development of exports to BRICS member countries and stated that Iran's exports to Brazil reached \$163 million in the first five months of the year 1403 (according to the Iranian calendar), representing a 2.5-fold increase.

Ahmad Firoozi, in an interview discussed the volume of exports to BRICS member countries, stating that Iran's exports to Brazil were \$63 million in the last 12 months, indicating growth this year.

He continued: "Regarding Iran's exports to BRICS countries, considering that it has been less than a year since Iran joined BRICS, we should not expect significant changes in our trade with these countries; a realistic assessment should consider medium- and long-term timeframes."

The Director General of Europe and America at the Iran Trade Development Organization referred to Iran's membership in BRICS, noting that during the 15th BRICS summit, held in August 2023 in Johannesburg, South Africa, representatives and leaders from the five member countries—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—invited the Islamic Republic of Iran to join BRICS; Iran's full membership was officially confirmed on January 1, 2024.

He stated: "During this time, Iran has had a significant presence in events related to industry and trade, including the participation of the head of the Iran Trade Development Organization at the 14th meeting of BRICS trade ministers held in Moscow on July 27 of this year, and the presence of the Deputy Minister of Industry, Mines, and Trade at the 8th meeting of BRICS industry ministers, where Iran showcased its industrial capabilities."

Firoozi highlighted the impact of trade and economic development with BRICS membership, stating that for developing countries like Iran, which are not ready for sudden entry into free trade, regionalism can be the most effective way to gradually open up their national economies and integrate them into the global economy, with one of the important components of regionalism being membership in regional organizations.

He added: "The most important benefit of Iran's membership in BRICS is countering sanctions. Other benefits include strengthening economic and financial cooperation, access to

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



the New Development Bank, signing bilateral and multilateral trade agreements with member countries, and leveraging investment opportunities."

This official added: "It should be noted that merely being a member of such organizations is not sufficient; an actionable roadmap is required to utilize these capacities."

He also stated: "Our approach and perspective toward BRICS should be long-term, and with this perspective, we can be hopeful that benefiting from the BRICS platform will contribute to the growth and development of the

country's economy in the long run."

The Director General of Europe and America at the Iran Trade Development Organization provided statistics on exports to BRICS countries, indicating that BRICS accounts for 40% of the global population, 27% of global GDP, 30% of land coverage, and 18% of global trade. Brazil, Russia, India, and China produce about 40% of the world's wheat (over 260 million tons), more than 30% of chicken meat (over 30 million tons), and 30% of the world's beef.

He stated that BRICS commodity trade, according to statistics, exceeded \$3 trillion in 2022, accounting for 18% of global commodity trade, with their share gradually increasing.

Firoozi recalled that the growth rate of exports within BRICS has surpassed the global average, indicating fruitful economic cooperation, which has contributed to a gradual increase in investment within BRICS.

He mentioned that BRICS countries attracted over 22% of total global foreign direct investment in 2021, while this figure was only 16.9% in 2009. Additionally, BRICS countries' share of fixed investment in the global market significantly increased from 9.7% in 2009 to 18% in 2021.

The Director General of Europe and America at the Iran Trade Development Organization emphasized the continuity of Iran's interaction with BRICS member countries, stating that BRICS has created a new platform for cooperation among countries across different continents, which can serve as a basis for expanding the use of national currencies in trade and reciprocal investment transactions, thereby reducing dependence on the US dollar and the euro; indeed, participation in BRICS strengthens a new transformation among emerging powers to facilitate coordination in macroeconomic policies.

Iran Urges Int'l Community to Hold Israel Accountable for Its Crimes



LONDON (IRNA) - Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office in Geneva has called for immediate action to stop Israel's crimes in Lebanon and Palestine, and hold the regime accountable for these crimes.

Ali Bahreini called for the action in separate letters he wrote to the president of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the UN high commissioner for human rights.

The Iranian ambassador, while condemning the recent attacks of the Zionist regime on Lebanon, demanded an immediate response from the international community to the regime's aggression and hold it accountable for its crimes.

He also said that the Israeli airstrikes in Beirut, which led to the assassination of Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah and Iranian general Abbas Nilforoushan, are strongly condemned and are a clear violation of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Referring to Israel's use of US-made weapons in these attacks, including BLU-109 bombs, the Iranian ambassador said this shows that the West, especially the US, is directly complicit in Israel's military actions, and urged an immediate stop to Western countries' arms delivery to the Israeli regime.

Referring to Iran's military response to the Israeli regime, the ambassador said that missiles were fired in response to Israeli aggression and in defense of Iran's national sovereignty and regional security.

U.S. Daily Verifies Major Damage Inflicted on Israeli Bases by Iran Missiles



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The Washington Post confirms that several Israeli military and "security" facilities were seriously damaged by missiles fired by Iran during a recent retaliatory operation.

Reporting on Friday, the daily said that footage and images analyzed by it showed that at least two dozen of the missiles had made impact on at least three of the installations.

Twenty missiles struck the Nevatim airbase, in the southern Negev Desert, and three struck the Tel Nof base in the central part of the occupied territories, it said.

At least two missiles also landed near the headquarters of the regime's Mossad spy agency in Tel Aviv, the report added.

"Analysts told The Post the visuals were consistent with direct impacts on the bases rather than debris from intercepted missiles," according to the report.

The paper said its findings raised questions about "the full scope of the damage [that has been done] to Israeli military bases" by the Iranian missiles.

The regime and the United States have, however, claimed that the projectiles had caused "minimal damage on the ground" with the Israeli military also claiming that its bases were "fully operational."

The report came after the Islamic Republic launched hundreds of missiles toward the Israeli bases all over the occupied territories as part of Operation True Promise II on Tuesday in response to the martyrdom of Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh, Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, and IRGC commander Abbas Nilforoushan.

According to Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), 90 percent of missiles struck the intended targets, evading the regime's much-hyped missile systems.

IRAN NEWS



Pezeshkian Felicitates South Korean President

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - In a message, the Iranian President congratulated the President and the people of South Korea on the National Day of the Republic of South Korea.

In a message, Masoud Pezeshkian congratulated the President of the Republic of Korea, Yoon Seok-Yul on the arrival of the country's national day, and expressed his hope that in light of the long-standing relations between the two countries, the two countries will boost bilateral ties on the path of development.

Iran, Turkey Eye \$30b Trade Volume



TEHRAN - The governor of Turkey's Hakkari province stated that so far, seven joint meetings between Iran and Turkey have been held in Urmia and Van, with the goal of reaching a trade volume of \$30 billion between the two countries.

Ali Çelik said in a conversation with reporters on Friday that, based on agreements between the officials of the two countries, the trade volume between Iran and Turkey should reach \$30 billion. He noted that the current trade volume is between \$7.5 to \$10 billion, and both sides are striving to expand this figure.

He added that the task of border governors is critical in achieving the \$30 billion trade volume between the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran, and these annual meetings are held toward that objective.

Emphasizing the need to update the equipment of customs offices and border markets, Çelik said: "As border governors of the two countries, we must make every effort to triple the current trade volume through modern and advanced equipment in customs and border markets."

The goal of the joint Iran-Turkey meetings is to reach a \$30 billion trade volume.

Çelik further called for improving the conditions of the border gates and customs for passenger transit and border interactions, stating: "With modern equipment and the optimization of customs and border markets, we can enhance the level of relations between the two countries."

Referring to the seventh meeting of joint cooperation between the border provinces of the two countries, hosted by Urmia, the governor of Hakkari said that representatives from Turkey's ministries of transport, agriculture, customs, and foreign trade were present at the meetings to facilitate and address existing obstacles to improving cooperation.

IRANNEWS/ECONOMIC/DESK



TEHRAN - Mostafa Salehinejad, Secretary General of the Iran-Qatar Joint Chamber of Commerce, spoke about the potential outcomes of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's visit to Qatar and its impact on facilitating trade between the two countries. He stated that despite the familial and geographical closeness between Iran and Qatar, their trade volume is relatively low, with an average annual trade value of \$200 million. Political relations between the two countries are strong, creating a solid foundation for commerce.

Salehinejad emphasized that the primary obstacle to increasing this trade figure is the lack of financial and banking exchanges between the two nations. He proposed that a joint bank could help mitigate the impact of sanctions, though such a move currently seems unfeasible. At the very least, the establishment of a currency exchange could simplify transactions for Iranian merchants in Qatar, a plan that has been under discussion since President Raisi took office. He expressed hope that it would be implemented soon.

Salehinejad noted that Qatar strictly adheres to international laws regarding sanctions against Iran. Therefore, if the establishment of a currency exchange is the main outcome of the Iranian President's visit, it would still be a significant achievement. Currently, Iranian traders must first transfer money from Qatar to the UAE before sending it to Iran, which reduces their profits by 20%. Furthermore, while digital currency transfers are allowed in the UAE, Qatar does not permit such transactions, only transferring money to Qatari or Emirati bank accounts.

He pointed out that while Iran-Qatar political and strategic relations are deep and strong, they haven't yet paved the way for smooth trade for Iran's private sector in Qatar. If Iran's diplomatic efforts succeed in establishing this currency exchange, it would greatly ease trade for Iranian businesses.

He also remarked that Turkey has managed to penetrate Qatar's market, even though trade with Turkey costs Qatar about 30% more than trade with Iran. However, Turkish products have replaced Iranian goods in Qatar, largely due to Turkey's effective diplomacy and the fact that Turkey is not subject to sanctions like Iran.

Salehinejad further explained that out of Qatar's 3 million residents, only 300,000 are Qatari citizens, with the rest being expatriates attracted by the country's favorable investment conditions and tax-free policies. These 300,000 Qataris do not stay in Qatar during the summer months, preferring to reside in Europe, Australia, or Turkey, but none choose to spend their summer vacations in Iran, despite its close proximity and lower costs. This is due to the inability to use international credit cards in Iran, forcing travelers to carry cash. Previous experiences have also shown that Iran lacks the infrastructure to attract Qatari investors.

In response to a question about the halt in activities of Iran's trade center in Qatar, Salehinejad explained that the center was established at the suggestion of the Iran-Qatar Joint Chamber of Commerce. However, during President Raisi's administration, the project was transferred to the Iranian Trade Promotion Organization and handed over to a private company, whose weak performance led to the center's closure.

Economic, Cultural, and Tourism Collaborations Between Iran and Turkey to Be Enhanced



TEHRAN - Governor of West Azerbaijan, referring to the agreements made at the 7th Conference of Governors of the Border Provinces of Iran and Turkey, said: "An agreement consisting of 25 clauses and three chapters—economic, scientific, and transit—was signed. With the fulfillment of the commitments stated in this agreement, economic, cultural, and tourism cooperation will be enhanced."

Mohammad Sadegh Motamedian, on Friday, at the closing of the 7th Joint Cooperation Meeting between West Azerbaijan and the bordering provinces of Turkey, said: "At this conference, agreements in the fields of economy and trade, transportation and transit, science, culture, tourism, and handicrafts were developed with the governors of eastern Turkey. We aim to strengthen cooperation between the two countries, particularly in the border provinces, and to remove existing barriers in these areas."

He emphasized the importance of these agreements, adding: "With the implementation of the decisions in the areas of economy, culture, tourism, and security, we hope to witness the development of transit, tourism, and the expansion of comprehensive relations with our neighboring, brotherly, and friendly country, Turkey."

He continued: "These actions can greatly contribute to the region's economic growth and facilitate trade and tourism relations."

The Governor of West Azerbaijan noted that after the 6th meeting, significant actions were taken, which had specialized outcomes, and added: "Security, as one of the main pillars of this meeting, was thoroughly examined."

Motamedian stressed: "The priority for both countries is to establish lasting security along the shared borders, as without it, no activities would be possible."

Economic, cultural, and tourism cooperation between the border provinces of Iran and Turkey will be enhanced.

He said: "These agreements are part of the efforts of Iran and Turkey to strengthen strategic cooperation and maintain security and stability in the sensitive Middle East region."

He added: "Further cooperation in combating terrorism and establishing stronger security infrastructures could pave the way for solidifying bilateral relations and securing the shared interests of both countries."

Referring to the fight against smuggling, the Governor of West Azerbaijan said: "The scourge of smuggling is another priority. Specialized meetings have led to efforts to combat the smuggling of weapons, unauthorized crossings, and various goods. It was decided that future meetings would also pay special attention to this issue."

Urmia has been hosting the 7th Joint Cooperation Meeting between West Azerbaijan and the bordering provinces of Turkey for two days since yesterday.

The governors of West Azerbaijan from Iran, and Hakkari, Van, Iğdır, and Ağrı from Turkey, along with economic traders from both sides, attended this meeting.

Sustainable Productivity Is Based on Economic Growth



TEHRAN - The head of Iran's National Productivity Organization said that growth in any field occurs in two ways: one is based on injecting more inputs, such as capital and human resources, which leads to increased output, and the other focuses on developing technology, optimizing processes, and structures to achieve more output from the same inputs. Sustainable growth is achieved when it is based on productivity.

Mirsaman Pishvaei, in the 11th session of the "Development Governance Dialogue" series titled "Productivity Governance," which was attended by the head of the National Development Fund, stated: "The first clause of the general policies for the seventh development plan emphasizes an average economic growth of eight percent, focusing on increasing total factor productivity. Governance systems around the world pursue various goals, including social justice, productivity, quality of life, and public participation, which are common objectives worldwide."

Pishvaei added: "Today's meeting focuses on productivity, which is a cross-disciplinary concept relevant to all fields. In defining this term, effective and efficient use of resources and production factors is aimed at achieving greater outputs, both quantitatively and qualitatively, to meet the intended goals of the system. Many people, even at high management levels, are unaware of this simple definition, which causes issues."

The head of the Productivity Organization emphasized that an organization can be considered productive only when it operates efficiently and effectively, with all its members working towards a defined goal.

He further explained the relationship between productivity and economic growth: "Growth occurs in two ways: one is based on injecting more inputs, such as capital and human resources, which leads to increased output, and the other focuses on developing technology, optimizing processes, and structures to achieve more output from the same inputs. The growth that remains sustainable is the one based on productivity, and both wings must move together."

Pishvaei noted that one of the major obstacles to productivity in the country is the lack of motivation in the private sector, which must be strengthened to enhance productivity. The government should open the space for knowledge-based companies to participate.

Minister Urges Students to Stay in Country to Solve Problems



TEHRAN - Seyed Sattar Hashemi, Minister of Communications and Information Technology, during this meeting, also invited the top-ranking students of the national entrance exam to join and work at the Research Institute of Communications and Information Technology, affiliated with the Ministry of Communications, to utilize their knowledge.

In this friendly meeting, which lasted nearly three hours at the minister's office, Hashemi congratulated the top-ranking students of the mathematics and technical entrance exam for their success and said: "There are many issues in the country, but there are also great opportunities. You, as the future builders and elite of the country, should stay and solve these problems."

Addressing the top 10 students of this year's mathematics entrance exam, he added: "You might receive attractive offers from abroad, but the real achievement is to stay because you represent the country's elite."

He further added: "During this period, you may have unintentionally distanced yourselves from society, but try to pay attention to other aspects of life as well."

Hashemi emphasized the need for elites and scholars to provide solutions for the country's major issues, stating that solving problems requires understanding. "To gain understanding, one needs to be present in the field. Try to step away from just theoretical focus and engage in practical work and problem-solving, as this is crucial."

The Minister of Communications, who is also a professor of Artificial Intelligence at Shiraz University, highlighted the differences between high school and university education and encouraged participation in projects alongside academic studies.

Addressing the top students, Hashemi asked: "What solutions do you propose for these imbalances?" After hearing their responses, he said: "Various solutions are being proposed, but using the potential of artificial intelligence in this area is very interesting and can be effectively utilized to solve these issues."

He emphasized the importance of teamwork and synergy in advancing various scientific and executive activities, adding: "Teamwork requires self-sacrifice and courage, which we must learn and practice."

In another part of his speech, Hashemi shared some of his personal experiences during his studies in Yasuj, his hometown, and later in Tehran during his bachelor's, master's, and doctoral studies. He urged the top students to appreciate this period and prepare themselves to serve the country in various fields.

In the conclusion of his speech, Hashemi introduced the capacities of the Research Institute of Communications and Information Technology as one of the important departments of the Ministry and announced that these students could take advantage of the institute's resources, particularly through teamwork, as this capacity is available to them.

8% Growth in Car Production



TEHRAN - The Director-General of the Automotive Industries Office at the Ministry of Industry, Mining, and Trade announced an 8% growth in car production in last Iranian calendar month of Shahrivar (Mid-August to Mid-September).

Mehrdad Khosravi, in an interview, stated: "A review of car manufacturers' production statistics in September this year, compared to the previous month (August), shows an increase in monthly production."

He added: "According to the statistics, car manufacturers produced 75,642 passenger vehicles in August this year."

The Director-General continued: "In Shahrivar of this year, 81,509 vehicles were produced, marking an almost 8% increase compared to August."

U.S. Forces Strike 15 Houthi Targets in Yemen

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. forces on Friday hit 15 targets in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen, the U.S. military said.

Four provinces were struck, the group's Al Masirah television network reported.

The United States and Britain have repeatedly carried out strikes aimed at curbing the Houthis' ability to target shipping, but the rebels' attacks on merchant vessels transiting the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden have persisted.

"U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) forces conducted strikes on 15 Houthi targets in Iranian-backed Huthi-controlled areas of Yemen today," the military command responsible for U.S. forces in the Middle East said on social media.

"These targets included Houthi offensive military capabilities," CENTCOM said, adding that the strikes were carried out "to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels."



At Least 70 Killed in Gang Attack on Haitian Town



GENEVA (Dispatches) - The death toll from a grisly attack Thursday on a small Haitian town by the heavily armed Gran Grif gang has risen to at least 70, the UN human rights office said Friday, adding that women and children were among those killed.

The tally of victims killed in this week's brutal attack on a small town in central Haiti by heavily armed gang members has risen to at least 70, the U.N. human rights office said Friday.

Bodies lay strewn on the streets of Pont-Sondé following Thursday's attack in the Artibonite region, many of them killed by a shot to the head, Bertide Harace, spokeswoman for the Commission for Dialogue, Reconciliation and Awareness to Save the Artibonite, told Magik 9 radio station.

Initial estimates put the number of those killed to 20 people, but activists and government officials have been gradually accessing areas of the town and discovering more bodies. Among the victims is a young mother, her newborn baby and a midwife, Harace said.

"We are horrified by Thursday's gang attacks," the U.N. Human Rights Office of the Commissioner said in a statement.

It said 10 women and three infants were among those killed, and at least 16 others seriously injured, including two gang members hit during an exchange with police.

The office said gang members reportedly set fire to at least 45 homes and 34 cars.

The motive remains unclear for what was one of the biggest massacres in the central region in recent years. Attacks of that kind have taken place in the capital of Port-au-Prince, 80% of which is controlled by gangs, and they typically are linked to turf wars, with gang members targeting civilians in areas controlled by rivals. But Pont-Sondé is considered part of Gran Grif's own territory.

The gang was created after former Haitian legislator Prophone Victor began arming young men in the area to secure his election and control over the Artibonite region nearly a decade ago, according to a U.N. report.

Hundreds of Tunisians Rally Against President Saied Ahead of Elections



TUNIS (Dispatches) - Hundreds of Tunisians took to the streets in the capital Tunis on Friday, denouncing mounting repression as the country readies for presidential elections in which incumbent Kais Saied is poised for victory.

Since a sweeping power grab by Saied, a number of his critics, including a candidate for Sunday's vote, have been detained.

"Kais Saied has trampled on freedoms," said Leila Chebbi, an actor taking part in the protest. "I will boycott these elections. They violate the law and are not legitimate."

Marching along a heavily policed Habib Bourguiba Avenue, the capital's main thoroughfare, protesters called for an end to Saied's rule, with signs calling him a "Pharaoh manipulating the law".

"The streets are still active in denouncing attacks on freedoms and human rights two days before the elections," said Bassem Trifi, head of the Tunisian League for Human Rights.

"We came out to denounce the flouting of freedoms, democracy, the achievements of the revolution, in particular freedom of expression and assembly," he added.

Tunisia has prided itself on being the birthplace of the Arab Spring uprisings, which began in the North African country

with the ousting of longtime dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in 2011.

After rising to power in a landslide in 2019, Saied, now 66, staged a power grab in 2021 that saw him dissolve parliament and later rewrite the constitution.

A crackdown on dissent followed, with a number of his critics across the political spectrum now jailed. New York-based Human Rights Watch recently said that more than "170 people are detained in Tunisia on political grounds or for exercising their fundamental rights".

On Sunday, Saied is set to face former lawmaker Zouhair Maghzaoui, a supporter of Saied's power grab, and Ayachi Zammel, a little-known businessman who has been jailed since his bid was approved by ISIE, the election board, last month.

Zammel currently faces more than 14 years in prison over accusations of having forged election endorsement signatures, among others.

ISIE has barred 14 hopefuls from joining the race, citing insufficient endorsements among other technicalities.

Pakistan Police Clash With Supporters of Former PM Khan in Islamabad



ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Police in Pakistan's capital fired teargas as they clashed with supporters of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan who were holding an anti-government rally in defiance of a ban on congregating in the city.

Authorities had sealed off Islamabad, and blocked cellphone services to prevent the gathering, with the city on high alert in the lead-up to a series of high-level diplomatic events, including a visit from the India foreign minister, scheduled over the next two weeks.

Shipping containers blocked entry points to Islamabad, guarded by large numbers of police and paramilitary troops.

However, dozens of Khan's supporters evaded the blockades. Some, including the former premier's sisters, were detained by law enforcement, Khan's party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and local media said.

"Release Imran! Release Imran!" dozens of protesters chanted, holding pictures of Khan and PTI flags, less than a kilometre from the city's red zone, which houses the country's parliament and a fortified enclave of foreign embassies.

Biden Says Not Confident of Peaceful U.S. Election

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Joe Biden said Friday he was not confident the U.S. election in November would be peaceful, citing incendiary comments by Republican contender Donald Trump, who still rejects his 2020 defeat.

Biden's warning came with lawmakers and analysts voicing concern over increasingly belligerent campaign language ahead of the vote.

Trump -- who survived an assassination bid in July and another apparent plot in September -- alleged widespread fraud after his defeat to Biden, and pro-Trump rioters rioted up by his false claims ransacked the US Capitol.

"I'm confident it will be free and fair. I don't know whether it will be peaceful," Biden told reporters as he discussed the election.

"The things that Trump has said and the things that he said last time out when he didn't like the outcome of the election were very dangerous."

Trump was impeached in 2021 for inciting the insurrection after hundreds of his supporters -- exhorted by the defeated Republican to "fight like hell" -- battered police as they smashed windows at the Capitol and broke through doors.

He has been indicted over what prosecutors allege was a "private criminal effort" to subvert the election that culminated in the violence.

Trump -- who is due to return to the venue of his first assassination bid in Butler, Pennsylvania on Saturday -- has long been assailed over his violent rhetoric.

Biden made his comments during what was the first appearance of his presidency in the White House briefing room, where he touted his administration's achievements as his vice president, Kamala Harris, battles Trump.

Harris and Trump meanwhile were barnstorming the



battleground states that are likely to decide who wins the White House.

Trump campaigned Friday in North Carolina, where he reprised his claims of 2020 voter fraud: "We should get elected, but remember this, they cheat like hell," he said.

He also visited neighboring Georgia, a swing state narrowly claimed by Biden four years ago but won by Trump in 2016 -- and one of the biggest prizes of the 2024 election map.

The Republican inserted himself aggressively into Georgia politics after his 2020 defeat, pushing for state officials to "find" enough votes to overturn Biden's victory.

Trump, 78, was charged by state prosecutors with racketeering, in a case that is on pause and expected to start up again after the election. He denies wrongdoing.

On Friday Trump joined Georgia Republican Governor Brian Kemp after receiving a briefing on the devastation wreaked by Hurricane Helene, the deadliest storm to hit the US mainland since Katrina in 2005.

Trump has repeatedly spread misinformation about the federal response to the disaster, falsely alleging that funding for relief has been misappropriated by Harris and redirected towards migrants.

Harris, who is neck-and-neck with Trump in all seven swing states, rallied Friday in Michigan -- a union stronghold that epitomized the US manufacturing decline of the 1980s.

The Democratic contender accused Trump of jeopardizing Michigan auto jobs.

"This is a man who has only ever fought for himself. This is a man who has been a union buster his entire career," she said at a stop in Detroit.

Later, in the city of Flint, she branded Trump "one of the biggest losers of manufacturing jobs in American history."

Macron Warns Against Double Standards in World Conflicts

VILLERS-COTTERETS (Dispatches) - French President Emmanuel Macron on Friday urged the international community to avoid "double standards" in global conflicts including the Middle East and Ukraine as he opened a summit of francophone leaders.

Macron insisted that French-speaking countries could together make a major contribution to global peace, even as analysts say France's global influence is waning especially in Africa.

"I believe deeply that the francophone world is, yes, a place where we can have a diplomacy together that defends the sovereignty and territorial integrity everywhere across the planet," said Macron.

"It is a place that is speaking the same language on Ukraine, which is being attacked today, threatened in its borders and in its territorial integrity by the Russian war of aggression," he said.

"But it also defends a vision where there is no room for double standards, where all lives are equal for all conflicts throughout the world," he added.

Macron has previously expressed alarm over Israel's campaign in Lebanon against targets of Shiite militant group



Hezbollah saying the number of civilian casualties was "absolutely shocking".

In his speech he said Lebanon, a former French colony, was "today shaken in its sovereignty and peace" as the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah escalates.

"There can be no peace in the Middle East without a two-state solution" between Israel and the Palestinians, he added. Referring to, but not naming, China, Macron also called for a "peaceful region" in the Indo-Pacific "where no power can call this peace into question".

The leaders gathered Friday at a chateau in Villers-Cotterets northeast of Paris and Saturday in the French capital for the "Francophonie" summit, the first time the event has been held in France for 33 years.

The dozens of leaders attending range from Democratic Republic of Congo President Felix Tshisekedi to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

French influence in Africa has been eroded by coups in Mali in 2021, Burkina Faso in 2022 and Niger in 2023 which saw Paris-friendly governments replaced by juntas who become closer to Russia. None of the new governments in those countries have been invited.



Revenge for Medvedev, Tsitsipas at Shanghai Masters

SHANGHAI (Dispatches) - Both Daniil Medvedev and Stefanos Tsitsipas served sweet revenge at the Shanghai Masters, vanquishing old foes in straight sets as they progressed through to the third round. World number five Medvedev came from behind in both sets to beat Brazil's Thiago Seyboth Wild 7-5, 7-5, while Tsitsipas battled through a tight match against Japan's Kei Nishikori to win 7-6 (8/6), 6-4. Medvedev and Seyboth Wild have only met once before, but it was memorable. The Russian, then world number two, was unceremoniously ejected from the 2023 French Open by qualifier Seyboth Wild in the first round. The tenacious Brazilian did not make it easy for Medvedev on Friday, setting the tone by breaking first to pull 1-3 ahead. But Medvedev persevered, making up the gap and then getting a crucial break in the 11th game, before winning the set 7-5. Seyboth Wild pulled ahead early in the second set too, but again Medvedev caught him and repeated his earlier feat. "It was not easy," Medvedev said on court after the match. "Thiago played great... some shots were unbelievable." "It was a very tough night and I'm very glad I was able to stay in it... and give him pressure." Tsitsipas -- who suffered a shock defeat to Nishikori in Montreal in August -- said he was happy with his own "great fighting spirit". The Greek, once ranked third in the world, has slipped out of the ATP top 10 in recent months to now stand at 12th. The loss in August to Nishikori, who is a former world number four but was ranked 576th at the beginning

of the Montreal tournament, was followed swiftly by Tsitsipas dropping his father as coach after publicly criticising him. "I did want to put out a fight and I wanted to show that I can go out there and play a good match against (Nishikori)," the 26-year-old said. The match was closely fought, with the first set ending with a nail-biting tiebreaker that could have gone either way. "Being able to win (the tiebreaker), coming back and helping me win the first set was an important and critical moment," Tsitsipas told reporters after the match. "Overcoming it was good, because it felt like I was able to restart now with a new mindset and it helped me get a bit of confidence." In the second set, 34-year-old Nishikori, who has been plagued in recent seasons by injury, required a medical time-out. Despite encouragement from the crowd, he never recovered his momentum and Tsitsipas won four of the last five games to close out the match. There was one upset late Friday, when world number nine Casper Ruud was defeated by 91st ranked Australian Aleksandar Vukic in straight sets. The loss comes on the heels of another early exit for the Norwegian at the Japan Open in late September. Vukic said he was "very proud". "It was always going to be a very tough match, but I'm playing well so I didn't really want to change much, just stick to my game plan," the 28-year-old said.

Ancelotti Says Real Madrid Lack Intensity in Defense and Ball Circulation



MADRID (Dispatches) - Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said Friday that two of the main factors behind his team's poor play this season are "lack of intensity in defense and slow ball circulation". Real Madrid sit second in La Liga on 18 points, three points behind leaders Barcelona, but have not set the new season alight despite the long-awaited addition of star striker Kylian Mbappe over the summer. On Wednesday, the reigning Liga and European champions lost their first match of the season away to French club Lille in the Champions League. "We are still not up to par, but we are not far away," Ancelotti said during his pre-match press conference ahead of Madrid's domestic clash with Villarreal. "I think there are players who have not reached their best level, it's normal, we have to be patient. We have a lack of intensity in defence, also offensively, and slow ball circulation -- that's where we have to improve." The Italian was philosophical when it came to discussing his side's 1-0 defeat at Lille, saying that "sometimes a defeat brings you back to reality and I liked the way the players have reacted". Ancelotti also addressed concerns about Real's strength in depth: "I don't think there's a lack of players to play with. "We have a lot of variety and even if we have not shown all the quality we have, there is nothing missing".

Boston Beat Denver in NBA Exhibition Season Opener

ABU DHABI (Dispatches) - Veteran guard Russell Westbrook made his debut for the Denver Nuggets as they opened the National Basketball Association pre-season by losing to Boston in Abu Dhabi on Friday but was in awe of one his new team-mates. Nikola Jokic "sits in a category of his own", Westbrook, a 16-year NBA veteran, said after the game. Playing the first of two preseason games against the Boston Celtics in the UAE capital, the Nuggets, the 2023 NBA champions, squandered a 14-point lead and lost 107-103 to the team that took the crown at the end of last season. Westbrook, a 35-year-old former league MVP and nine-time All-Star, joined the Nuggets in July after spending last season with the Los Angeles Clippers. He shared some minutes with centre Jokic in the first half before the Nuggets rested their starters. "He's so unique in the sense of he's so unselfish," said Westbrook of the three-time MVP.



"He loves to be able to make the game easy for his teammates and he's done that and won a championship and multiple MVPs and he's still the same person since I've been around. "I'm grateful to be on his team and learn from him as well." Jokic had 14 points, eight rebounds, two assists, and a 71.4 field goal percentage in under 17 minutes of play. He is coming off a hectic summer during which he helped Serbia to a bronze medal at the Olympic Games. He said on Friday that his participation in an international tournament might be a good omen for the Nuggets. "Last time, I remember, when I played for the national team, we won the championship, so maybe that's saying something, maybe not, who knows. Most players say that summer tournaments, like the Olympics, kind of help you stay in shape or to get better maybe," said Jokic.

Pogba Says Nightmare Is Over After Drug Ban Cut to 18 Months



GENEVA (Dispatches) - French international footballer Paul Pogba said Friday his "nightmare is over" after a four-year ban for doping was reduced to 18 months. Pogba, who is under contract with Italian giants Juventus until 2026, will be able to return to competitive football from March 11 next year, four days before his 32nd birthday. "Finally the nightmare is over. I can look forward to the day when I can follow my dreams again," the player said in a statement released to Britain's Press Association. "I always stated that I never knowingly breached World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) regulations when I took a nutritional supplement prescribed to me by a doctor, which does not affect or enhance the performance of male athletes. "I play with integrity and, although I must accept that this is a strict liability offence, I want to place on record my thanks to the Court of Arbitration for Sport's judges who heard my explanation.

Lukaku Stars as Napoli Beat Como to Hold Serie A Top Spot

MILAN (Dispatches) - Romelu Lukaku starred again for Napoli by scoring once and setting up two more goals in Friday's 3-1 win over Como which ensured top spot in Serie A for at least another week. Belgium striker Lukaku laid on Scott McTominay for his first goal in Italy's top flight after just 25 seconds, before netting from the spot seven minutes after half-time and rolling in David Neres as Napoli extended their league lead to four points. Closest rivals Juventus can pull back to within a point of Napoli with a home win over Cagliari. Lukaku has settled in immediately in Naples under Antonio Conte, scoring three times in five league appearances in which he has also made four assists for a team which looks ready to challenge for the league title. "We're getting there. It's going to take time because I got here late. It's all thanks to my teammates, the coaching staff and fans that we're doing so well," said Lukaku to Sky. Napoli didn't have it all their own way at the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona as they were pushed hard by promoted Como. Cesc Fabregas' team were deservedly level at the break thanks to a stunning long-range strike from Gabriel Strefezza, which came shortly after Nico Paz thumped a shot off the woodwork. And the match was firmly in the balance until Neres rolled home his second Napoli goal in the 86th minute after being brilliantly slipped through by Lukaku.



Lukaku looks lighter on his feet than he has at any point since winning Serie A with Inter Milan in 2021 and he also supplied a neat pass from which Scotland's McTominay lashed in his second Napoli goal after also netting against Palermo in the Italian Cup last month. McTominay has been excellent since signing for Napoli from Manchester United in the summer, adding a new dimension to the midfield for southern Italy's biggest club. "It was great to get off to a good start. It was a great ball. Obviously for me it's nice to get a goal and then we lost a little bit of control in the first half and then we tweaked a through things at half-time and it made a difference," said McTominay to Sky. Napoli are unbeaten since being humiliated at Verona -- who beat Venezia 2-1 in Friday's late match -- on the opening day of the season. And under Conte Napoli look much more like the team which swept to their third Scudetto in 2023 than the disastrous outfit which last season failed to even qualify for European football as reigning champions. "We just want to take it game by game. We want to play football and hopefully win as many games as we can," added McTominay. "The boys have been great with helping me bed in. Game by game, no-one's looking any further past the next game." Como, backed by Indonesian tobacco giants Djarum, sit 10th on eight points after an encouraging start to their first Serie A season in 21 years.

"This has been a hugely distressing period in my life because everything I have worked so hard for has been put on hold." Earlier Friday, a spokesperson for the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) confirmed that Pogba's suspension had been slashed. "I can confirm the decision: an 18-month suspension with effect from 11 September 2023. The reasons for the decision will follow later," the CAS spokesperson told AFP. Pogba tested positive for testosterone in August 2023 after a match between Juventus and Udinese in Italy. He was provisionally suspended in September of the same year, and then banned for four years by the Italian National Anti-Doping Tribunal the following February. Pogba's representatives said the testosterone came from a food supplement prescribed by a doctor he consulted in the United States. After the ban was announced, Pogba posted on his Instagram account that he had "never knowingly or deliberately" taken doping products. "I am sad, shocked and heartbroken that everything I have built in my professional playing career has been taken away from me," he wrote at the time. On Friday evening, after the CAS ruling, his post was wordless, showing only a close-up of two feet wearing Pogba football boots with socks bearing his initials and decorated with the French flag and the two World Cup stars. A key figure when France won the 2018 world title in Russia, Pogba collected four Serie A titles in his first stint at Juventus but had a string of problems, on and off the pitch, after his 2022 return from Manchester United.