

Iran Has Reported a Slight Fall in Its Unemployment Rate in the Quarter to Late September as Services, Manufacturing and Agriculture Sectors Keep Performing Well in the Iranian Labor Market

IRAN NEWS

Spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry Esmail Baqaei Expressed Sympathy for Bosnia and Herzegovina After Flash Floods Killed Over 20 People in the Southeast European Country

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UK Denies Visas to Iranian Delegation for IMO Meeting



TEHRAN - The United Kingdom has denied visas to members of the Iranian delegation planning to attend the 82nd session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) headquarters in London. The meeting, held from September 30 to October 4, focused on global maritime environmental issues.

Despite repeated follow-ups and prior assurances, the UK failed to issue visas for members of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization. Consequently, the Iranian delegation was forced to attend the session virtually, leading to an official protest. Iran's representatives expressed their dissatisfaction with the UK's failure to comply with the IMO headquarters agreement, which mandates timely visa issuance for member state representatives. The Secretary-General of the IMO acknowledged the issue and assured the Iranian delegation that efforts were underway to resolve it.

During the meeting, discussions under Agenda Item No. 2 addressed the situation in the Red Sea. A few countries, led by the United States, made accusations against Iran. In response, Iran's representatives refuted the claims, stating that the U.S.'s support for Israel has contributed to instability in the region, including the Red Sea.

Puria Koulivand, the deputy permanent representative of Iran at the IMO, highlighted key topics from the session, including efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from ships, improve energy efficiency, and tackle marine waste. The committee also discussed pollution control measures, air pollution, and noise reduction from commercial vessels. Koulivand emphasized the formation of several technical groups to address issues like marine digitalization, plastic waste, and underwater noise pollution.

The session concluded with the re-election of Henri Conway from Liberia as chair and Hankiang Tan from Singapore as vice-chair for 2025. Amendments to Annex 6 of the MARPOL Convention were also approved, strengthening emission control areas in the Canadian Arctic and Norwegian Sea, with enforcement expected by March 2026.

The next MEPC meeting is scheduled for April 7-11, 2025.

Iran Condemns Unlawful U.S., UK Airstrikes on Yemen



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has condemned in the strongest terms the latest round of joint airstrikes by American and British forces against targets in Yemen, stating that the aerial attacks are in flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter and international law.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei, in a post on X, formerly Twitter, on Saturday held the UK and US accountable for such infringements of international laws.

"Repeated military aggression by the United States and Britain against Yemen constitutes a blatant infringement of the UN Charter and fundamental principles of international law."

"The attacking parties bear international accountability for such unlawful acts that run counter to the UN Charter," he wrote.

Baghaei said Israel and its expansionist policy is destabilizing the region.

"The Zionist regime's ongoing occupation, warmongering policies, and expansionism are the main reasons behind insecurity and instability in West Asia," he added.

He stressed the need for the cessation of Israel's bloody aggression against Lebanon and the genocidal war in Gaza as the prerequisite for the restoration of peace and stability in the region.



TEHRAN - In a televised interview with Al-Alam, Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy, stated that Iran's armed forces have prepared themselves over the years to face all types of threats.

Tangsiri mentioned the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz, which lies in southern Iran and is shared with neighboring countries. He noted that this year's Sacred Defense Week began with a parade featuring 583 vessels, including missile-launching ships, support vessels, and ships belonging to the Basij forces, along with combat and transport aircraft and helicopters.

He added, "After 44 years, we take pride in the fact that the equipment you see is produced during a time of full economic sanctions. This year is unique, as we witness the atrocities committed by the Zionists in Gaza, which is part of heroic Palestine, and also in Lebanon. These acts have been condemned by the international community, giving this year a special significance."

The commander highlighted that the September 31 parade sent two clear messages: one for friends and another for enemies. "The message to our friends is that, despite being under various economic sanctions, the Islamic Republic of Iran has never bowed to American bullying."

He explained that despite sanctions, Iran has developed these capabilities, sending the message that Iran can stand on its own and produce what it needs internally. He emphasized, "This is a message to our friends, showing that without relying on the U.S. or Zionists, Muslims have all they need and lack nothing. We also send a message of peace to the Gulf countries and other friendly nations, including those who occasionally send delegations to Iran."

Tangsiri continued by stating that Iran has established security and stability in the Strait of Hormuz and has never allowed American bullies to threaten the region. He added that the parade was also a message to those who stand against the oppressed Muslims worldwide, signaling that Iran can stand up to them as well.

Regarding Iran's military capabilities, Tangsiri remarked, "Our message of peace to our friends is 'We can,' but the message to our enemies is that if they play with fire in the region, we will stand firmly against them." He pointed out that enemies need to create adversaries to sell their weapons,

which is why they portray Iran as a threat to other nations.

He clarified that Islam forbids attacking any country unless they attack first. However, he said enemies are trying to prolong their illegitimate presence in the region by selling weapons and instigating conflicts.

Tangsiri emphasized, "We will not react unless our national and Islamic interests are harmed, but we will defend the oppressed. If any Islamic country is attacked by a non-Islamic nation, or if neighboring countries decide to stand up to U.S. bullying, we will help them."

He pointed out that during the blockade of Qatar, Iran was the only country that maintained air and sea links with Qatar, and if any party were to attack such nations, Iran would not stand idly by but would rush to their defense.

The IRGC Navy commander stressed that the message "We can" is directed at Muslims and regional friends, signaling that Iran stands firm against enemies and will not bow to pressure. "We choose death over submission to injustice or bullying," he asserted.

Regarding Iran's military readiness, Tangsiri mentioned, "Throughout the year, we conduct various exercises inside and outside the region. We evaluate all potential enemy scenarios, whether in the Persian Gulf or beyond, and prepare accordingly."

He also noted that Iran prepares for all situations, and that the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khamenei, and the IRGC chief emphasize constant readiness for normal or exceptional conditions. "One of these scenarios includes Netanyahu's dangerous games, for which we have designed specific trainings."

He recalled that for 44 years, Iran has faced such challenges and now has plans for any possible confrontation. "We have developed scenarios for engaging with the enemy."

Tangsiri lauded the wisdom of Iran's leadership, citing that 20 years ago, Ayatollah Khamenei emphasized the importance of artificial intelligence and modern warfare. "Today, we have missiles with different ranges, some with artificial intelligence, and drones."

Dozens killed in Massive Israeli Bombing of School, Mosque in Gaza

GAZA (Dispatches) - The Gaza government says Israel has committed "two horrific massacres" in the central Gaza Strip, killing 24 Palestinians and injuring 93 others.

In a statement released on Sunday, the government media office in Gaza said the casualties came after the Israeli military bombed the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Mosque, near the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, and the Ibn Rushd School.

It added that both sites, situated in Gaza's Deir al-Balah Governorate, were sheltering hundreds of displaced people.

The Israeli army claimed that the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Mosque and the Ibn Rushd School were the command centers of the Palestinian Hamas resistance group.

However, the regime has consistently failed to provide any substantial evidence to support these baseless claims since the war began last year, which appear to serve as a convenient narrative to justify military strikes on civilian infrastructure.

Also in its statement, the media office said Sunday's crimes followed a series of deadly attacks by the Israeli military on 27 Gaza homes, schools, and displacement centers over the past 48 hours.

Medical sources announced that 60 Palestinians had been killed and dozens more were injured in



the attacks in various areas of the Gaza Strip.

"These new crimes come amidst a worsening health crisis in Gaza," the media office said.

"Humanitarian and medical efforts are also facing enormous challenges due to the ongoing genocide, while the international, Arab, and regional communities remain shamefully silent and powerless."

The media office further held the Israeli regime and the US administration fully responsible for the ongoing brutal aggression against Gaza.

"We urge the international community and all global and UN organizations to pressure the occupation to halt the genocide and stop the bloodshed in the Gaza Strip," it said.

Hamas also issued a press statement in denunciation of Israeli war crimes in Gaza, as well as in the occupied West Bank and Lebanon.

It also called on the Arab and Islamic nations and the freedom-seeking people to keep holding "angry marches to pressure and demand an end to the genocide and condemn this occupation and pursue and try its Nazi leaders."

Israel unleashed its genocidal Gaza onslaught on October 7, 2023, after Hamas carried out its historic operation against the usurping entity in retaliation for the regime's intensified atrocities against the Palestinian people.

Iran's Response to Any Israeli Aggression Will Be Stronger



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi says Iran will give a "stronger" response to any Israeli attack, saying the regime can once again test the Islamic Republic's will.

"For every action, there will be a corresponding and similar or even a stronger reaction [from Iran]. We have proven this in the past and they [Israelis] can test our determination once again," Araghchi said at a press briefing in the Syrian capital of Damascus on Saturday.

"Our response to any act of aggression by the Zionist regime will be clear and obvious," he added.

Araghchi was responding to a question about Israel's rhetoric following Iran's retaliatory missile attack on the regime, dubbed Operation True Promise II.

On Tuesday, the Islamic Republic launched hundreds of missiles towards the Israeli entity's military, and espionage and intelligence bases all over the occupied territories as part of Operation True Promise II.

The operation came in response to the regime's assassinations of Ismail Haniyeh, the head of the political bureau of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas, Secretary General of the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, and Brigadier General Abbas Nilforushan, the Deputy Commander of Operations of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC).

Araghchi said his "very good and successful" visit to Syria and Lebanon conveyed a message that Iran will continue to stand by the resistance front under any circumstances.

He noted that he held talks with the Syrian authorities about the situation of the Lebanese refugees and the establishment of a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon.

The top Iranian diplomat noted that during his "constructive" talks with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, they reached very good agreements on ways to counter the Israeli regime's crimes.

Araghchi also noted that Iran will on Sunday send a plane carrying humanitarian aid for the war-hit people of Lebanon.

Iran Trade With Eurasian Union Members Increases 2.5 Times



TEHRAN - The head of the Trade Promotion Organization announced that Iran's trade with Eurasian Union countries has increased 2.5 times since the start of free trade between the two sides four years ago, as tariffs were reduced or eliminated.

Mohammad Ali Dehghan Dehnavi said at a gathering of producers and traders at the Tehran Chamber of Commerce: "Producers and traders themselves must believe in gradually moving towards free trade, and this has been achieved with the development of trade with Eurasian Union members."

He added, "We signed a free trade agreement with Eurasian Union members, and this agreement is being ratified by the Iranian Parliament. Three of the five member countries of the Eurasian Union have also pursued this agreement and implemented it in their countries."

Dehnavi continued, "Eurasia is Iran's first free trade experience, in which 87% of tariffs are removed. Traders must prepare for this new competition. The member countries also want to offer their goods in Iran."

Addressing the removal of export barriers, he stated, "Alongside the free trade agreement, traders faced challenges in Armenia regarding guarantees, but positive developments have occurred, and we are now providing guarantees for contractors in Armenia and other countries."

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10th Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation of Iran and Qatar to Be Held in December

TEHRAN (ILNA) - Ssecretary of the Iran-Qatar Economic Cooperation Commission, Mojtaba Akbari, mentioned the holding of a joint meeting of the secretaries of the Iran-Qatar Economic Cooperation Commission and stated: During the president's visit to Qatar, the follow-up committee for the 9th Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation between Iran and Qatar was held in Doha. He added that in this meeting, all provisions and clauses of the 9th Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation between Iran and Qatar were reviewed with the presence of Saleh Al-Mana, the Qatari secretary of the commission and the Qatari Deputy Minister of Industry.

Threat to Iran's Agro Products Market in India



TEHRAN - Mohammad Lahouti, the head of the Iranian Export Confederation, in an interview, mentioned the challenge of converting rupees to rials in trade with India.

He said: Unfortunately, Iranian exporters of agricultural products to India are facing difficulties in converting rupees to rials. This issue arises from the fact that, according to Indian regulations, for exports to this country, the payment and invoicing by the buyer must be handled by the country of origin and the original bank. As a result, exporters of agricultural products such as apples to India are encountering this challenge.

He added: This issue has been raised multiple times in the Non-Oil Exports Commission of Iran's Chamber of Commerce. The commission members have discussed it with the Central Bank, trying to find a solution, but the process has been so time-consuming that it has caused concern among exporters. Exporters fear losing their customers in the Indian market.

Lahouti emphasized: Therefore, a mechanism must be implemented as soon as possible for Iranian exporters to India, allowing them to resolve the problem, potentially through barter trade or an agreement with the Indian government. The agreement should ensure that if Iranian goods are exported to India, the payment can also be made in our country. Otherwise, Iran's agricultural sector will face serious issues in the Indian market.

Increase of Two New Border Crossings at the Iran-Turkey Border



TEHRAN - Qasem Karimi, head of the Urmia Chamber of Commerce, emphasized the need to increase the number of border crossings between Iran and Turkey in an interview.

Karimi explained: "In the sixth joint meeting on economic cooperation between the border provinces of Iran and Turkey, held in October last year, discussions were held about increasing the annual trade value between Iran and Turkey to \$30 billion. Both sides agreed on the necessity of realizing this trade volume. These meetings address security, political, and economic dimensions and are attended by provincial and security officials, as well as economic activists."

He added, "The increase in the number of border crossings and, consequently, the trade value between the two countries was also discussed during the administrations of the eleventh and twelfth governments. In a meeting between the president of the thirteenth government and the president of Turkey, negotiations in this regard were fruitful. Following this, during the seventh joint meeting on economic cooperation between the border provinces of Iran and Turkey, held last week, discussions were held on implementing the Kuzeh-Rash and Golinjak border crossings. It was decided that these crossings would be operational by June 2025, coinciding with the eighth joint economic cooperation meeting."

Karimi emphasized that "increasing the number of border crossings is essential to achieving the \$30 billion trade goal. To reach this figure, we need five border exits. So far, three crossings have been activated. As I mentioned, the fourth crossing will be launched next year, and the fifth crossing, which is planned at the Chaldoran border, is under review and should be operational within the next two years."

He also noted that "these terminals will be used not only for cargo transit but also for passenger traffic."

The head of the Urmia Chamber of Commerce further estimated the value of Iran's non-oil exports to Turkey to be between \$8 billion and \$10 billion annually, adding that this figure reaches \$14 billion when including oil and gas exports.

Karimi stated that with this volume of exports, only three border crossings currently exist between Iran and Turkey, leading to long queues of freight trucks at the borders, sometimes waiting up to 10 days to cross. "This year, we succeeded in exporting agricultural products through the Razi 'Kapikoy' border crossing to Turkey, preventing the products from being stuck in long queues at the border."



Iran Needs \$150b in Annual Investment to Maintain Its Position

TEHRAN - Hojatollah Seydi, speaking at a seminar commemorating Brokers' Day, stated that over the past 32 years, we have come to know the capital market through brokerage, and the stock exchange organization of brokers has been in place. He added, "Without brokers, the capital market cannot be sustained."

He continued, "One of our first actions in the organization was to list the issues concerning the organization and the market. We identified 75 problems, prioritizing them, and within the first six months, we will take a series of steps to bring the market towards growth. Ultimately, 17 actions were finalized for the market's growth, two of which are directly related to brokerages."

The head of the Securities and Exchange Organization mentioned that part of the country's economy is tied to the stock exchange and capital market, and today, he presented a brief report at the government's economic headquarters.

He emphasized that everyone is concerned about the country's economic growth, and without growth, welfare cannot be achieved. He stated, "Based on calculations, if we want to be the leading country in the region by 2031, we need to achieve 15% economic growth annually. To maintain our current position, where we are fourth in nominal value and third in terms of purchasing power parity, we need 6.5% growth annually. For this, we need \$150 billion in annual investment."

The head of the Securities and Exchange Organization added, "This need arises while the rate of capital formation in our country is negative, and both the money market and the capital market must facilitate this growth."

Seydi said, "To form capital, we must protect and safeguard investors' rights. To attract investors to the capital market, we need to increase market efficiency and transparency."

He continued, "It's not as though the overall stock index rises or falls based on one person's orders; rather, it reflects the outcome of a series of actions. To improve the market and facilitate capital formation, everyone must contribute, including investment companies. As members of the executive body, we should lead the way, but we have become followers,

allowing news to dictate outcomes."

The head of the Securities and Exchange Organization stated, "When we manage to expand the economy together, the small share of the market's fund will no longer be a concern, as it is not a significant figure. It must be noted that the Development and Stabilization Fund are tools for maintaining calm in the market. The Development and Stabilization Fund have been properly established, and if there are issues in their management, they should be resolved, not dissolved."

The Deputy Minister of Economy, emphasizing one of their major actions in the Securities and Exchange Organization, said, "One of our important actions is the deregulation of the capital market. We cannot eliminate core principles, but we can remove redundant regulations and expedite service delivery through online platforms to reduce transaction costs. I believe that rules and regulations should be set in cooperation with the Brokerage Association."

Seydi also mentioned preparing the conditions for issuing licenses to activate brokerages. He said, "Brokerages seek to offer a variety of services, and withholding licenses from them is not something to be proud of. We must create the conditions for issuing licenses to qualified companies. Since the stock exchange and its laws are new, it's natural that obstacles may arise in some areas, but our mission is to facilitate the process for obtaining licenses and expand commodity exchanges."

He stressed, "The solution to the current energy imbalance, which everyone is complaining about, lies in the energy exchange and commodity exchanges. Additionally, price controls have had an impact on markets, and their effects are visible in the stock exchange. Furthermore, we are pursuing cooperation with monetary policymakers."

The head of the Securities and Exchange Organization, referring to cooperation with monetary policymakers, added, "The cost of money in banks has risen, while the attractiveness of investing in the stock exchange has decreased. The difference between NIMA (government-set) and free exchange rates has created issues, which are reflected in the capital market."

No Concern About Iran's Removal From Corridors



TEHRAN - Director General of the International Transit and Transport Office of the Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization, Javad Hedayati, discussed the goal of achieving 40 million tons of transit by the end of the seventh development plan, despite regional challenges and hostile policies, particularly from Israel, which seeks to remove Iran from regional corridors by showcasing alleged "blessing and hatred" maps at a recent UN session. He emphasized long-term planning aimed at excluding Iran from regional transit routes but stated that the seventh plan's goal of 40 million tons has been communicated, and relevant authorities, including the Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization, are tasked with maximizing efforts to achieve or come close to this target.

Hedayati acknowledged that this transit goal is ambitious and presents numerous challenges, but it also represents an opportunity. The global situation, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to growth in the land transport and transit sector due to disruptions in other transport routes.

As Director General of the International Transit and Transport Office of the Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization, Hedayati emphasized that utilizing transit opportunities under the seventh plan will help address challenges in the sector more effectively. The creation of a National Transit Committee, chaired by the president, as part of the seventh plan, provides a chance to improve internal processes, enhance coordination, and upgrade infrastructure.

Addressing international issues, Hedayati pointed out that all countries are transit competitors, not just Israel. He explained that some countries may be partners in one corridor and competitors in another. For example, Russia is Iran's partner in the North-South Corridor but competes with Iran in the Zangezur and East-West Corridors.

Hedayati added that in international affairs, there are no permanent friends or enemies. Every country competes in transit to gain a larger share, and Iran should seek to build stronger connections with other countries to secure a greater presence in these corridors. This largely depends on the diplomacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Commenting on the AIMEC or Middle Corridor, which seeks to bypass Iran, he explained that corridors often begin as connection ideas, as was the case with AIMEC. Despite its challenges, including transshipment issues in the Black and Caspian Seas and infrastructure weaknesses in the Caucasus and Central Asia, the political will to exclude Iran and Russia led to its establishment. International investments and negotiations created regional and global consensus, allowing the corridor to become operational.

Hedayati noted that Iran should not worry about being excluded from regional corridors, citing examples like the Trans-Afghan route, which was closed due to civil war but is expected to reopen once conditions improve. Similarly, Iraq's corridors were inactive due to security issues during the presence of ISIS, but Iraq is now reviving its "Path of Development."

He believes that if Iran plans well and utilizes regional capacities, it can create cooperative structures with competing corridors and seize new opportunities. For instance, Iran could connect to Iraq's "Path of Development" through the Khosravi and Mehran borders, facilitating access to Central Asia and enabling cargo from countries like Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and even the Horn of Africa to enter Iran via Khosravi, which would benefit Iran.

Hedayati concluded that it is unreasonable to expect the region to remain unchanged. Unexpected events, like the Russia-Ukraine war, have opened up transit opportunities for Iran, but these may not last. Therefore, Iran must work to make its transit corridors more stable before conditions change.

Merchants Should Be Ready for Trade with Eurasia



TEHRAN - Mohammad Ali Dehghan Dehnavi, the head of the Trade Promotion Organization, stated this morning during the first meeting with private sector merchants at the Tehran Chamber of Commerce: "The role of the government is to facilitate, and nothing other than facilitation by the government can function better for trade. The Trade Promotion Organization was established to be the merchants' home within the government."

He added, "Trade development is with merchants; the government itself doesn't engage in trade. Our role in the Trade Promotion Organization is to facilitate the trade process in the country, and we will do everything we can in this regard."

The head of the Trade Promotion Organization emphasized, "To develop trade, we must believe that competitive production can lead to this. We are seeking free trade, and one of our first experiences in free trade is unfolding with Eurasia."

Dehghan noted, "In the past four years, our trade with Eurasia has quadrupled. This was due to tariff reductions, and interestingly, the increase in trade wasn't limited to goods with reduced tariffs."

He said, "We ask merchants to prepare themselves for free trade with Eurasia, as free trade with Eurasia will be a prelude to free trade with the world."

IME Sets Record for Weekly Trade



TEHRAN - Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week saw trade of 3,264,925 tons of commodities with a total trading value of nearly \$895m on its physical market, posting growths of 26% in volume and 38% in value of trades compared to the figures of the previous week.

According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor trade of 2,666,555 tons of commodities valued at more than \$596m.

On this floor the IME sold 1,171,852 tons of cement, 720,600 tons of iron ore, 609,723 tons of steel, 144,500 tons of sponge iron, 9,765 tons of copper, 8,425 tons of aluminum, 1,345 tons of zinc, 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 100 tons of molybdenum and 15 tons of precious metals concentrate.

Based on this report, the exchange saw trade of 300 kg of saffron on its agricultural trading floor.

Furthermore, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 586,254 tons of commodities worth nearly \$277m.

Oil Minister Not Worried About Crises Created by Enemies



BUSHEHR (IRNA) - Oil Minister Mohsen Paknezhad has said that he is not worried about the crises created by enemies of the Islamic Republic.

Paknezhad made the comment on Saturday upon arrival in Assaluyeh, a Persian Gulf port city in southern Iran that hosts the country's gas production facilities.

He told reporters at the Assaluyeh airport that his trip is a normal work trip during which he would make efforts to resolve some of the problems workers face.

The minister said that measures were previously taken to resolve those problems, "but I am willing to directly listen to them [workers] so that challenges are resolved."

Paknezhad's trip comes amid speculations that Israel may attack Iranian oil facilities following Iran's missile launch at the regime's military and security positions on October 1.

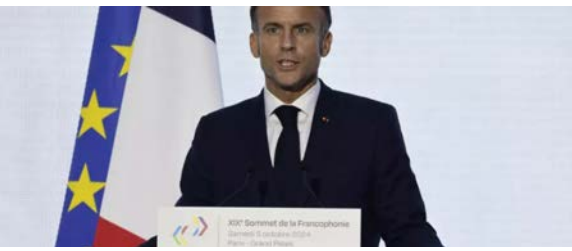
Search Continues for Missing in Deadly Bosnia Floods

JABLONICA (Dispatches) - The search for dozens of people reported missing in floods that have claimed at least 17 lives in Bosnia continued, after torrential rains inundated towns and triggered landslides.

The waters are receding after the floods that struck Bosnia on Friday, but many roads to affected towns remain blocked, and large areas are still covered in debris. Jablanica, located about 70 kilometres (43 miles) southwest of the capital, Sarajevo, appeared to have suffered the worst of the downpours, which cut it off from the rest of the country. The city was buried under mud, rocks and landslides, including granite debris from a nearby quarry, with homes destroyed and vehicles wrecked. Rescue teams with search dogs are combing the area for the missing and those possibly trapped, said an AFP journalist at the scene. In the Jablanica region, 10 people remain missing, according to local official Darko Juka. Earlier on Saturday, authorities from Jablanica region confirmed 13 deaths, revising down a toll of 16 initially reported on Friday.



Macron Criticizes Israel on Gaza, Lebanon Operations



PARIS (Dispatches) - French President Emmanuel Macron called Saturday for a halt on arms deliveries to Israel for use in Gaza, provoking a sharp response from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Macron also criticized Netanyahu's decision to send troops into ground operations in Lebanon.

"I think that today, the priority is that we return to a political solution, that we stop delivering weapons to fight in Gaza," Macron told French broadcaster France Inter.

"France is not delivering any," he added during the interview, which was recorded Tuesday.

Macron reiterated his concern over the conflict in Gaza that is continuing despite repeated calls for a ceasefire.

"I think we are not being heard," he said. "I think it is a mistake, including for the security of Israel," he said, adding that the war was leading to "hatred".

His comments brought a swift response from Netanyahu.

"As Israel fights the forces of barbarism led by Iran, all civilized countries should be standing firmly by Israel's side," Netanyahu said in a statement issued by his office.

"Yet, President Macron and other Western leaders are now calling for arms embargoes against Israel. Shame on them."

Israel was fighting a war on several fronts against groups backed by arch-foe Iran, the statement added.

Macron's office responded with a statement of its own later Saturday.

France is a "steadfast friend of Israel," it said, describing Netanyahu's reaction as "excessive and detached from the friendship between France and Israel".

Qatar, a key mediator in Gaza ceasefire talks, said Macron's statement was "an important and appreciated step towards stopping the war".

Jordan welcomed the French leader's remarks and stressed "the importance of imposing a complete ban on the export of weapons to Israel" and "real consequences" for the country's actions.

In his interview, Macron also said avoiding an escalation in Lebanon was a "priority." "Lebanon cannot become a new Gaza," he added.

Thousands March in London in Support of Palestinians, 1 Year After Oct 7



LONDON (Dispatches) - Thousands of protesters marched through central London on Saturday calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon as the war in the Palestinian territory neared the one-year mark.

Pro-Palestinian supporters from across the country began the march from Russell Square to Downing Street demanding an end to the conflict, which has killed nearly 42,000 people in Gaza;

At Saturday's 20th "National March for Palestine" in London, familiar chants -- "ceasefire now", "stop bombing hospitals, stop bombing civilians" and "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" -- were joined by shouts of "hands off Lebanon".

The rally came ahead of the one-year anniversary of the October 7 attack in Israel by fighters from Palestinian group Hamas which resulted in the deaths of 1,205 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli official figures.

Israel's retaliatory military offensive has killed at least 41,825 people in Gaza, most of them civilians, according to figures provided by the territory's health ministry and described as reliable by the United Nations.

Zackereia Bakir, 28, said he has attended dozens of marches around the UK.

Large numbers continue to turn up because "everyone wants a change", Bakir told AFP.

"It's continuing to just get worse and worse, and yet nothing seems to be changing... I think it's tiring that we have to continue to come out," said Bakir, joined at the rally by his mother and brother.

Several protesters carried posters reading "Starmer has blood on his hands".

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer has called for a ceasefire in Gaza and the release of hostages held by Hamas, as well as suspended some arms licences to Israel.

However, many at the rally said it was not enough.

Sophia Thomson, 27, found the Labour government's stance "hypocritical".

According to Thomson, the size of the protests "goes to show the government doesn't speak for the people".

"It's not good enough. It's not good enough," added Bakir, calling for the government to "stop giving a carte blanche of support to the Israeli government".

London's Metropolitan police put in place a "significant" policing operation ahead of planned protests and memorial events. While the rally was largely peaceful, two were arrested for assaulting an emergency worker, according to the Met.

Three others were arrested as tensions rose between the main march and a counter protest.

While exact numbers at the demonstration were unclear, "it appears to be greater than other recent protests", the Met said on X.

Another rally also took place simultaneously in the Irish capital, Dublin.

Kazakhstan Votes on Whether to Build First Nuclear Plant



ALMATY (Dispatches) - Kazakhstan voted in a referendum on Sunday on whether to build its first nuclear power plant, an idea promoted by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's government as the Central Asian nation seeks to phase out polluting coal plants.

The plan, however, has faced public criticism because of its hazards, the Soviet nuclear testing legacy, and fears that Russia will be involved in the project.

"I have come to the conclusion that the decision to build the nuclear power plant, and to build it with (Russian state nuclear firm) Rosatom, has already been made in (Tokayev's office) and the people of Kazakhstan are being invited to polling stations as 'notaries' to authenticate this decision with their votes," popular blogger Vadim Boreiko wrote.

Despite having sizeable natural gas reserves, the Central Asian nation of 20 million relies mostly on coal-powered plants for its electric power needs, supplemented by some hydroelectric plants and the growing renewable energy sector.

Kazakhstan is already importing electric power, mostly from Russia, as its facilities, many of which are aged, struggle to meet domestic demand. And coal is generally regarded as the most polluting energy source.

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Massive consecutive strikes hit Beirut's southern suburbs from late Saturday into Sunday, Reuters eyewitnesses said, sending booms across the city and sparking flashes of red and white for nearly 30 minutes visible from several kilometers away.

The strikes came after days of bombing by Israel of Beirut suburbs considered strongholds for Iran-backed armed group Hezbollah, killing its leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, and possibly his potential successor.

A Lebanese security source said on Saturday that Hashem Safieddine, the potential successor, had been out of contact since Friday, after an Israeli airstrike near the city's international airport that was reported to have targeted him.

Lebanese security sources said Israeli strikes since Friday on Dahiyeh, a residential area and Hezbollah stronghold south of central Beirut, have kept rescue workers from scouring the site of Thursday night's attack.

Hezbollah has made no comment so far on Safieddine.

His loss would be another blow to the group and its patron Iran. Israeli strikes across the region in the past year, sharply accelerated in the past few weeks, have decimated Hezbollah's leadership.

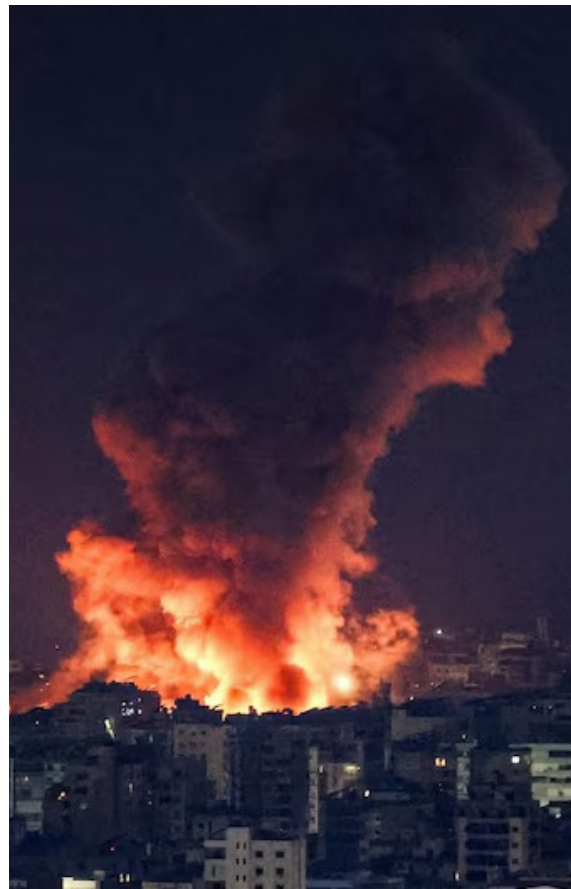
Israel has been expanding its actions in Lebanon. On Saturday, it made its first strike in the northern city of Tripoli, a Lebanese security official said, and Israeli troops launched raids in the south.

At least eight strikes rocked Beirut's southern suburbs late on Saturday including close to the airport, according to Reuters witnesses, after the Israeli military warned some residents to flee.

Before the recent upsurge, exchanges of fire between Israel and Hezbollah had been mostly limited to the Israel-Lebanon border area, in parallel to Israel's year-old war in Gaza against Palestinian group Hamas.

Israeli military spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said on Saturday that Israel had killed 440 Hezbollah fighters in its ground operations in southern Lebanon and destroyed 2,000 Hezbollah targets. Hezbollah has not released death tolls.

Israel says it stepped up its assault on Hezbollah to enable the safe return of tens of thousands of citizens to homes in northern Israel, bombarded by



the group since last Oct. 8.

Israeli authorities said on Saturday that nine Israeli soldiers had been killed in southern Lebanon so far.

The Israeli assault has also killed hundreds of ordinary Lebanese, Lebanese officials say, and forced 1.2 million people - almost a quarter of the population - from their homes.

The Lebanese security official told Reuters that Saturday's strike on a Palestinian refugee camp in Tripoli killed a member of Hamas, his wife and two children. Media affiliated with the Palestinian group said the strike killed a leader of its armed wing, naming him as Saeed Atallah.

The Israeli said in a statement that it had killed two Hamas members operating in Lebanon, but did not say whether they had been in Tripoli, a Sunni Muslim-majority port city also targeted during a 2006 war with Hezbollah.

There was no immediate comment from Hamas.

In northern Israel, air raid sirens on Saturday sent people running for shelters amid rocket fire from Lebanon.

Hezbollah said it had fired missiles at what it called "ATA company for military industries near Sakhnin base," close to Haifa. It was not immediately clear what Hezbollah was referring to.

The Israeli army said two projectiles had crossed from Lebanon, one of which was intercepted while the other landed but caused no damage.

The impact on civilians has prompted widespread protests internationally. Thousands of demonstrators took to the streets in major cities around the world on Saturday as the anniversary approached.

Oil prices have risen on the possibility of an Israeli attack on Iranian oil facilities. U.S. President Joe Biden on Friday urged Israel to consider alternatives to striking Iranian oil infrastructure.

The top U.S. general for the region, Army General Michael "Eric" Kurilla, is traveling in the Middle East, a U.S. defense official said on Saturday, declining to specify which country or to confirm Israeli media reports that he had arrived in Israel for consultations with Israeli military officials.

Trump Rallies at Site of Failed Assassination: "Never Quit"

BUTLER (Dispatches) - Donald Trump defiantly returned Saturday to the site of a campaign rally where an assassin's bullet almost killed him in July, questioning whether his opponents were responsible and declaring he would "never quit."

"Exactly 12 weeks ago this evening, on this very ground, a cold-blooded assassin aimed to silence me," the Republican candidate told tens of thousands of supporters after taking the stage behind bulletproof glass.

Calling the gunman a "vicious monster," Trump vowed he would "never quit... never bend... never break" to cheers of "fight, fight, fight" from the crowd.

Trump's much-hyped return to Butler, Pennsylvania, came exactly one month before the November 5 presidential election, the outcome of which President Joe Biden suggested on Friday might not be peaceful.

Trump lashed out at his political opponents, calling them the "enemy within" who had pushed to indict him and "who knows, maybe even tried to kill me."

"I wasn't supposed to make it," he said ominously.

Security was noticeably tighter than Trump's July rally, with sniper squads atop surrounding buildings, and a surveillance drone deployed overhead.

"There's a lot going on that's unnerving," said Heather Hughes, 43, who had traveled from New Castle in must-win Pennsylvania.

"Do I think he's safe? No, I think there's going to be another attempt. But I think he's going to make it through."

After the assassination attempt, pictures of Trump -- with a blood-streaked face, pumping his fist and shouting "fight, fight, fight" -- became defining images of the campaign.

On Saturday, many Trump supporters wore shirts emblazoned with the iconography,



and some sported ear coverings recalling the bandage the former president wore after the shooting.

Billionaire Elon Musk joined Trump on stage, stressing the tight margins that will likely decide the election in battleground states like Pennsylvania and encouraging voter registration.

Trump "must win to preserve democracy in America," said Musk, echoing the alarmist messaging he frequently pushes to his 200 million followers on his X platform.

Much has changed since Trump's last visit to Butler, when he was riding high in polls after crushing Biden in a TV debate.

Barely a week after the failed assassination bid, the presidential race was turned on its head when Biden dropped out and was replaced as the Democratic nominee by Vice President Kamala Harris.

Harris has clawed back the poll deficit -- reversing it in some states -- and the seismic events in Butler that had threatened to unleash chaos were largely overtaken.

Trump's rally appeared aimed at recovering the momentum as a bruising campaign enters its final phase.

Harris, who Trump called incompetent, was in North Carolina Saturday meeting first responders and people hit by Hurricane Helene, which killed at least 220 as it ripped through the southeast.

The emergency response is "an example of the best we can do when we bring resources together at the federal, state and local level and tap into the kind of collegiality that produces results," she told officials at a briefing.

Trump has criticized the federal response, alleging without evidence that the Biden-Harris administration wrongly redirected relief funds to migrants.



Djokovic Shakes Rust Off to Make Third Round of Shanghai Masters

SHANGHAI (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic said it took time to "get the rust off" as he fought through two tiebreaks to make his way into the third round of the Shanghai Masters.

The Serbian beat American Alex Michelsen in a thrilling two-set match that finished 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (11/9). Meanwhile Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz showed why they were top in the world as they raced through to the next stage with confident straight-set wins.

Sinner dispatched Japan's Taro Daniel 6-1, 6-4, while Alcaraz made short work of China's Shang Juncheng, winning 6-2, 6-2.

Four-time Shanghai champion Djokovic did not have it quite so easy against 43rd ranked Michelsen. Introduced as the "Greatest Of All Time" as he walked onto the court, he received a rapturous welcome from the packed stadium.

But Michelsen started the first set strongly, breaking Djokovic early and going 1-4 up -- to the displeasure of the crowd, fully behind the 37-year-old former world number one.

To their delight, the Serbian levelled, and then hit his stride in the tiebreak, winning it 7-3.

The reverse happened in the second set when it was 20-year-old Michelsen's turn to catch up to take it to the tiebreak.

Djokovic admitted to being "surprised" by Michelsen.

"It took me a little bit of time to get the rust off and to start feeling better on the court," he said.

"I was very glad to keep calm when it mattered in both tiebreaks."

The crowd, already in a frenzy after Djokovic spoke Mandarin at the end of the match, went wild as he showed off a new trick -- attempting a sentence in the Shanghainese vernacular.

World number one Sinner has said he is not in a "comfortable" situation thanks to a World Anti-Doping

Agency (WADA) appeal against a decision by tennis authorities to clear him of wrongdoing after he twice tested positive for a steroid in March.

His recent blistering winning streak was broken by Alcaraz in the China Open final on Wednesday.

But there was no tiredness on display from either player on Saturday, with 23-year-old Sinner looking completely unruffled in the first set against the 93rd-ranked Daniel.

Daniel fell behind again in the second set and despite rallying halfway through to gently test Sinner, the Italian kept his cool, ending the set 6-4.

Sinner will face Argentina's Tomas Martin Etcheverry.

"It will be a tough one tomorrow, very physical, because me and Tomas know each other quite well now," he said.

Earlier, arch-rival Alcaraz also looked comfortable throughout, breaking in the first game, with teenager Shang unable to make much headway against the world number two.

Despite their enthusiasm for Shang, the crowd could not resist Alcaraz's charm.

At the Spaniard's encouragement, they broke into loud cheers when he won a particularly exciting rally in which he hit a tricky backwards shot to keep the point alive.

"I just had one practice then was straight into this match, so to be able to show this level in the first match, I'm just really proud," 21-year-old Alcaraz said after the match.

He will next face another Chinese player, wildcard Wu Yibing.

There were no surprises either for the tournament's second seed Alexander Zverev, who won 6-4, 6-2 against Italy's Mattia Bellucci.

Madrid Beat Villarreal But Carvajal Suffers Knee Injury



MADRID (Dispatches) - Fede Valverde and Vinicius Junior strikes helped Real Madrid bounce back from their first defeat since January with a 2-0 win over Villarreal on Saturday in La Liga.

Los Blancos lost in the Champions League at Lille but are still unbeaten in the Spanish top flight and moved level with leaders Barcelona, before the Catalans visit Alaves on Sunday.

Valverde's deflected effort and a rocket from Vinicius allowed Madrid to put a four-point gap between them and their third-placed opponents, who battled well but came up fractionally short in the capital.

Madrid's victory was marred by a late injury to defender Dani Carvajal, who had to be taken off on a stretcher.

"It seems a serious knee injury, it will be looked at in the coming hours," Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti told reporters.

"The players are sad, worried, because something happened that happens a lot, because of the (busy) calendar, and it happened to a very, very important player for us."

Ancelotti said Vinicius would also have medical tests after being taken off late on with discomfort in his shoulder and neck.

The Italian coach started Kylian Mbappe after the French striker had recovered from a thigh problem.

The former Paris Saint-Germain striker could only appear from the bench in Madrid's disappointing midweek display.

Mbappe, who France have not selected for upcoming Nations League fixtures, was quiet at the Santiago Bernabeu as his team ground out victory with a determined, rather than inspiring, performance.

Liverpool Stay Top of Premier League as Arsenal, Man City Win

LONDON (Dispatches) - Liverpool beat Crystal Palace 1-0 to remain top of the Premier League as Arsenal and Manchester City came from behind to win.

City were 3-2 victors over Fulham to stay one point behind Liverpool, alongside Arsenal who saw off Southampton 3-1.

Arne Slot has now won nine of his first 10 games since succeeding Jurgen Klopp as Liverpool manager, but was frustrated that the visitors invited a late onslaught from the winless Eagles.

Jota prodded the Reds into the lead from Cody Gakpo's cross on nine minutes.

The Portuguese international was then guilty of missing two big chances to extend Liverpool's advantage.

Palace failed to make them pay, but victory came at a cost for Slot as goalkeeper Alisson Becker limped off with a hamstring injury.

"If you score the second you break them mentally," said Slot. "All the fans kept believing in a result because it was only 1-0, even though in my opinion we were the dominant team."

Fresh from a dominant win over Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League, Arsenal were expected to sweep aside winless



Southampton.

But the Saints shocked the Emirates 10 minutes into the second half when Cameron Archer fired in his first Premier League goal since a summer move from Aston Villa.

The lead only lasted three minutes before Kai Havertz scored for the seventh consecutive home game.

Gabriel Martinelli was introduced after an hour and took just eight minutes to make his mark with a finish on the volley from Bukayo Saka's cross.

Having set up Arsenal's first two goals, Saka pounced on a loose ball to score the third himself.

"He has the capacity to change games, to decide games," said Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta on Saka's impact.

"If you want to be at the top, sometimes players have to create those moments and he's certainly done that today."

Rodri's season-long absence due to a serious knee injury is expected to be a major blow to City's chances of retaining the title for a fifth consecutive season.

Thuram Treble Fires Inter Past Torino and Up to Second



MILAN (Dispatches) - Marcus Thuram shot Inter Milan second in Serie A with a hat-trick in Saturday's 3-2 win over 10-man Torino which moved the champions to within two points of league leaders Napoli.

France forward Thuram headed home first-half crosses from Alessandro Bastoni and Francesco Acerbi before bundling in his third on the hour mark to give Inter a narrow, but deserved win at the San Siro.

Inter can be overtaken by both Juventus, who host Cagliari, and AC Milan on Sunday with their local rivals at Fiorentina in the weekend's final fixture before the international break.

Thuram leads the scoring charts in Italy's top flight with seven goals alongside Mateo Retegui, who hit a treble of his own in Atalanta's 5-1 hammering of Genoa earlier on Saturday.

"It's been a few matches since I last scored but it was more important that the team won tonight," said Thuram to Sky.

"Being top scorer doesn't interest me, the only thing that counts is that Inter win matches."

Back to near full strength, after the second string hammered Red Star Belgrade in the Champions League on Tuesday, Simone Inzaghi's Inter won their third straight match in all competitions since losing the Milan derby last month.

Thuram was involved in everything good Inter did going forward and was also left in agony on the ground by Guillermo Maripan's awful tackle in the 20th minute which left Torino a man down.

The 27-year-old could easily have been seriously injured but instead he punished Torino five minutes later with the first of two almost identical headers, the second of which came in the 35th minute.

Duvan Zapata, who was later stretchered off with what could be a serious knee injury, pulled a goal back for sixth-placed Torino seconds later after poor defending by Yann Bisseck.

But Thuram re-established Inter's two-goal lead when he pounced on goalkeeper Vanja Milinkovic-Savic's failure to hold Lautaro Martinez's header.

Inter have been less solid than when they romped to the Scudetto last season and Hakan Calhanoglu gave Torino some hope with five minutes remaining by bringing down Adam Masina and allowing Nikola Vlasic to cut the deficit from the penalty spot.

However Inter held out for a win which will leave them hot on Napoli's trail as their players head off to their respective national teams.

Heavyweights Australia, England Off to World Cup Winning Starts

SHARJAH (Dispatches) - Defending champions Australia and fellow heavyweights England enjoyed winning starts at the Women's T20 World Cup, shrugging off the crushing heat and humidity of Sharjah.

Australia began their title defense with a six-wicket win over Sri Lanka before England saw off Bangladesh by 21 runs.

Megan Schutt equalled the highest wickets for a bowler in Women's T20 World Cup history when the pace bowler returned figures of 3-12 to move level with former South African quick Shabnim Ismail on 43 wickets.

Schutt's efforts kept Sri Lanka down to 93-7, a total the Australian batters overhauled with 34 balls to spare after losing four wickets.

Opener Beth Mooney, player of the tournament in the 2023 edition, hit an unbeaten 43, taking regular drink breaks to beat the heat.

"In the heat it was tough," player of the match Schutt said.

"I think 'Moons' lost about 16 kilos out there. I think we've finally acclimatised because I didn't feel like I would die today. We've played in hot conditions before. It is what it is, got to suck up and get on with it."

Sri Lanka slumped to their second loss in the tournament and are still looking for their first victory against Australia in women's T20 matches.

"We are struggling on these tracks with low turn and bounce," said Sri Lanka skipper Chamari Athapaththu.

"Our first four batters struggled and that cost us. I hope we will improve in our next game (against India on Wednesday) and our girls



will perform well in Dubai."

Australia, playing their first match since the retirement of four-time winning captain Meg Lanning, remain favourites for a seventh title in the tournament.

Meanwhile, spinners Linsey Smith and Charlie Dean took two wickets each as England defeated Bangladesh.

England's strategy to play four spinners paid dividends as the 2009 champions restricted Bangladesh to 97-7 to defend their lowest total in T20 World Cups.

England had made 118-7, riding on a 40-ball 41 by opener Danni Wyatt-Hodge who was voted player of the match.

Middle-order batter Sobhana Mostary played a lone hand for Bangladesh, making 44 off 48 balls, including a huge six off Dean over deep square leg.

The result was a disappointment for Bangladesh, who beat Scotland in the tournament opener on Thursday for their first T20 World Cup win in a decade.

"We missed a good opportunity to beat a good side. Our bowlers did a good job but our batters disappointed," said Bangladesh captain Nigar Sultana.

England skipper Heather Knight said: "It was tough out there, conditions were tough for batting and boundary-hitting. Wyatt-Hodge and (Maia) Bouchier did well."

India and Pakistan clash in the standout tie of the tournament so far before Scotland and West Indies, both winless, meet with the two games taking place in Dubai.