

Reacting to a Loud Explosion Heard in the City of Isfahan, the Public Relations Office of the IRGC in Isfahan in a Statement Said the Explosion Was the Result of Observing a Luminous Object in the Sky, and Reaction of the Air Defense System

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Sunni Scholars Express Gratitude Towards Leader Over Implementation of Anti-Israeli Operation



TEHRAN (PressTV) - As many as 3,000 Sunni scholars have written to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, expressing their gratitude and support for the implementation of Iran's recent operation against the occupied Palestinian territories.

In a letter addressed to the Leader on Monday, the scholars thanked Ayatollah Khamenei for "the strong and wise leadership" that led to the execution of the operation by the country's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) following a period of self-restraint.

The operation targeted the heart of the occupied territories with the "flames of the Muslim nation's wrath, relieving the bereaved Palestinians and all of the world's free-thinking people," they wrote.

The operation also strengthened those fighting towards liberation of the holy occupied al-Quds to keep up their struggle against "the evil Zionist regime until the end of the dishonorable existence of this illegitimate child of the global arrogance," they added.

On Tuesday, the Islamic Republic launched 200 missiles towards Israeli military and intelligence bases all over the occupied territories as part of Operation True Promise II in response to the Israeli regime's deadly aggression against the country and other regional nations.

The aggression that prompted the retaliation had, among other things, led to the martyrdom of Hamas's political leader Ismail Haniyeh, Hezbollah's leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, and Abbas Nilfroushan, a senior IRGC commander.

The scholars also voiced their gratitude over the remarks that were made by the Leader during Friday prayers in Tehran following the operation.

Delivering the sermon, Ayatollah Khamenei hailed "the brilliant work" of the Iranian Armed Forces, "while describing the operation as "completely legal and legitimate" and "the least punishment for the usurping Zionist regime over the astonishing crimes of this wolf-like regime and rabid dog of America."

The Leader also asserted, "Whatever duty the Islamic Republic has in this regard, it will fulfill with strength and fortitude. We will neither delay nor hurry in carrying out the task."

U.S. Reportedly Spends Record \$22b on Military Aid to Israel Since October



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The U.S. has spent more than \$22b on military aid to Israel and on funding Israeli aggressions across the region over the past year, a new report says.

According to a report published by Brown University's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, the U.S. has given Israel \$17.9bn in military aid since the onset of the genocidal war on Gaza last October. In inflation-adjusted dollars, this marks the highest amount of military aid to the regime.

The figure surpasses U.S. military aid to the regime during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war.

The dollar figure is also nearly quadruple the amount given to Israel in the 1980s during its war against the Palestinian Liberation Organization in Lebanon, its 15-year occupation of Lebanon, and its 2006 war against Hezbollah, the Middle East Eye said.

According to the report, the aid to Israel includes military financing, weapons sales, and transfers from U.S. weapons stockpiles.

The report highlights how U.S. taxpayer dollars given to Israel as part of military aid have surged in the past year.

Its authors, however, cautioned the figure is incomplete, citing the U.S. administration's "efforts to hide the full amounts of aid and types of systems through bureaucratic maneuvering."



TEHRAN - The President stated that Americans and Europeans are supporters of the brutal Zionist regime, saying: "They do not respect any human framework."

Masoud Pezeshkian stated on Tuesday, during the unveiling ceremony of the sixth shipment of Achaemenid tablets, which includes 1,100 Elamite tablets, at the National Museum of Iran: "The reality we are facing in the region is a series of incidents, and the problems that arise make things harder. A brutal regime has been established by Europe and America, which does not adhere to any human framework."

He added: "They do not respect any human framework. They bomb women, children, the elderly, and the youth, and it is interesting that they speak of human rights and ask, 'Why do you execute a murderer?' No one tells these cowards, 'Why are you killing innocent women and children?'"

The President stated that other countries create what they do not have, but unfortunately, we forget what we have. He expressed: "Our cultural heritage must strive to familiarize students with the concepts at stake. Unfortunately, our students are not acquainted with the depth and meaning of the skills and work that has been done. If the roots of our civilization, development, and awareness are taken from us, we will become disoriented and will no longer know where to go, thus we will be led wherever they want."

Pezeshkian noted: "Our Iran is filled with cultural, scientific, political, governance, social, and ideological assets, and we must first recognize it ourselves and then present it to others so they can come, see, and recognize it."

He mentioned that managers who come to power through currents and groups do not know their

identity and have become individuals who want to leave the country before they become elites, stating: "This land and soil belong to us. We have not been able to educate about our past."

The President added: "Someone who does not know their past cannot plan for their future, as they feel rootless. With the roots we have, there is a lesson for every issue. Our universities are, at best, at a second-generation level; they teach science and conduct research, which, even then, is not based on the needs of society."

Pezeshkian emphasized that researchers work for themselves and others carry out their work, saying: "Over 90% of articles gather dust on the shelves. The art of nurturing and developing something was what we had 2,500 years ago. But now we argue among ourselves, and we are incited to conflict for others' benefit. In the 'Bala' region, they have brought problems upon Muslims; if Muslims were united, could they have done this to us?"

He stated: "We should have no more than one criterion for staying or leaving: are we serving the people or not? Our words are not to gain votes. We speak based on our beliefs. We will not spare any effort to elevate Iran to its rightful place."

The President specified: "Regarding the problems, Mr. Dr. Aref should sit with you to identify the issues. We will help you as much as we can. We are here to solve your problems. If it is within our capacity and possible, we will help without expecting anything in return."

Pezeshkian mentioned that we must present our identity and our deep and proud roots to the world, stating: "We need to clarify these roots. Students must be educated, and every Iranian, wherever they are in the world, should have a heart that beats for their homeland. We must flaunt this identity before the world."

Iran Will Stand Behind the Resistance with Full Force

TEHRAN - On Tuesday, the conference titled "Al-Aqsa Storm; Beginning of Nasrallah" was held at the Center for Political and International Studies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the presence and speech of Seyyed Abbas Araqchi, the Foreign Minister, along with some foreign ambassadors and other national officials.

Addressing the conference, Araqchi referred to the Al-Aqsa Storm operation, stating: "Without a doubt, as the Leader said, this operation made the enemy taste a bitter defeat for the first time. The Leader's description in the Friday prayer sermon about the regime returning to 70 years ago is the best interpretation of emphasizing Al-Aqsa Storm."

He added: "Another point is the firmness and power of Islam, which, through the formation of a joint front, has displayed Islamic strength in such a way that it has shifted the traditional balance of threats in the international arena."

The Foreign Minister declared: "Today, thanks to the efforts of all strong fighters, the hands of the Islamic resistance are full, and it has turned into a flourishing tree. The resistance has never been reliant on individuals. Martyrdom has strengthened the foundations of resistance. The 14th government will remain committed to its firm promise to liberate Al-Quds (Jerusalem)."

He continued: "The 'Promise of Truth' operation clearly showed Iran's determination and will so that everyone understands that Iran will respond strongly to any threat. After intense consultations in New York and the Asian Dialogue Assembly in Doha, our efforts continued with further trips to the region. Iran will stand behind the resistance with full force, and no one should have any doubts about this."



Araqchi emphasized: "In the past years, resistance has seen ups and downs, but it has always continued its path more resiliently each time. We advise the Zionist regime not to test Iran's resolve; if any attack occurs, our response will be more powerful than ever. We are monitoring every movement carefully and will not hesitate, rush, or delay in our response. Any attack on Iran's infrastructure will be met with an even stronger response, and they have already experienced the accuracy and power of our missiles."

He said: "Today, the hands of the Islamic resistance are strong in all fields, including software and hardware."

Araqchi also emphasized: "The resistance movement has never been dependent on an individual."

The foreign minister referred to his trip to Beirut late last week and said: "The message of this trip was clear. Its message was that we will stand behind the resistance with all our might."

Araqchi said: "We tell the Zionist regime not to test Iran's resolve, and any attack on Iran will be met with a stronger response than before."

He stressed: "We closely monitor and examine every move, and in delivering a response, we neither rush nor hesitate."

Araqchi: "The enemies know what targets within the occupied territories are within our reach."

In conclusion, he said: "I remember the prominent martyrs of the resistance, alongside the esteemed guest of Iran, Martyr Ismail Haniyeh."

Iran's Trade in September Quarter at \$30.6b, Up 9.4% Y/Y



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's foreign trade rose 9.4% year on year in the quarter to late September to reach \$30.6 billion.

Iran's non-oil trade rose in the quarter to late September despite growing tensions in the West Asia region over that period.

Figures released by the House of Industry, Mine and Trade (HIMT) on Monday showed that Iran's trade with other countries had reached a total of \$30.6 billion in the three months to September 21, up 9.4% compared to the same period last year.

Exports from Iran reached \$12.3 billion in the September quarter, up 6.2% year on year, while imports into the country rose by 11.6% over the same period to reach \$18.3 billion, showed the figures.

The data showed that exports from Iran had peaked in August when shipments rose by 18% compared to the same month last year to reach \$4.47 billion while imports also rose by 21.6% over the same month to reach \$6.4 billion.

Exports dropped by 7.1% year on year in September to \$3.9 billion while imports rose 12% to \$6.3 billion over the same month, the data showed.

Iran's trade deficit widened to \$6 billion in the September quarter mainly because of a significant increase in imports of gold and cars, said the HIMT, adding that trade had increased by 10% from the June quarter.

Iran's growing trade with the rest of the world over the summer months came as the country was grappling with a series of geopolitical tensions, including its regional confrontation with Israel, over that period.

Many had expected a decline in Iran's trade after the country fired a barrage of missiles on Israel in mid-April to respond to the regime's attacks on its consulate in Syria earlier that month.

Al-Aqsa Flood Endangers Israel's Illegitimate Identity



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf says Operation al-Aqsa Flood against Israel has endangered the "illegitimate" identity of the regime, which was established by Britain and its stooges.

Qalibaf made the remarks in an address to the 7th International Conference on Solidarity With Palestinian Children and Adolescents in Tehran.

He noted that Israel had anticipated capturing Gaza within a few days; however, one year into the Al-Aqsa Flood operation, it has failed to achieve its objectives.

On the anniversary of the operation, Palestinians fired missiles from Gaza towards Tel Aviv, he added.

Qalibaf said Israel continues its crimes against regional nations under the circumstances that "all of us know that the criminal US is responsible for and supporter of all these crimes."

Pointing to Israel's assassination of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, secretary general of the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah, he added that the US is the main accomplice in this crime.

"We have never made and will never make a miscalculation in the fight [against Israel]," the top Iranian parliamentary stated.

Qalibaf said Nasrallah's martyrdom brought deep sadness to the countries of the Axis of Resistance but they will not stand idly and will "bravely and wisely" continue his path.

Qalibaf pointed out that Israel's military doctrine has historically focused on conflicts outside its borders, and while the regime has boasted about its Iron Dome missile defense system, it is now grappling with conflicts in the West Bank.

The Iranian Parliament speaker said the regime has failed to release even one captive despite receiving technological and intelligence support from the US and NATO.

The surprise operation saw the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas and its fellow Gaza Strip-based Palestinian resistance movement of the Islamic Jihad storming the occupied Palestinian territories and taking more than 240 Israelis captive.

IRAN NEWS



Iran, Saudi Arabia Seek Enhanced Air Transport Cooperation

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's consul general in Jeddah has called for efforts to enhance air transport cooperation between the Islamic Republic and Saudi Arabia.

Hassan Zarnegar made the request during a meeting with Raed Ibrahim Al Mudaiheem, chairman of Jeddah Airports Company, on Monday. The Iranian official also said that the number of flights between Iran and Saudi Arabia needed to increase in order to facilitate travel arrangements for Iranian pilgrims visiting the holy cities.

He also mentioned the recent lifting of visa requirements for Saudi citizens traveling to Iran, which he said will further strengthen bilateral ties. In response, Mudaiheem welcomed the prospect of increased cooperation and reiterated the commitment of the Saudi government, along with Jeddah Airport, to provide the best services for the Iranian pilgrims.

Investment Security Situation Hits Worst Level in Three Quarters



TEHRAN - Iran's investment security has reached its most critical point in the last three quarters, according to a recent report from the Islamic Parliament Research Center. The report, titled "Monitoring Security by Provinces and Sectors (26) Spring 1403," was based on official statistics and input from 8,149 economic actors across the country's 31 provinces and nine business sectors. It evaluates investment security during the spring of Iranian calendar year 1403 (March 2024), considering 38 components and seven key indicators.

The overall investment security index in Iran for spring 1403 was recorded at 5.77 out of 10, where 10 indicates the worst possible situation. This marks a decline compared to 5.72 in the winter of 1402 and 5.70 in the fall of the same year. A steady worsening trend has been observed since the summer of 1402, when the index was at 5.66. The spring 1403 figure also shows a deterioration compared to 6.10 in the winter of 1401 and 6.82 in the fall and winter of 1401. These fluctuations signal a significant decline in investment security, reaching its lowest level in the past three quarters.

The report highlights that the key reason for the improvement of investment security until summer 1402 was the more favorable assessment by economic actors of various components. However, the situation began to reverse starting from winter 1402, due to fluctuations in the exchange rate. This negative trend continued into the spring of 1403, with the index moving from 3.95 in fall 1402 to 4.03 in winter 1402, and 4.11 in spring 1403—marking the worst performance in the past year.

A major factor contributing to the decline in the index was the instability in the exchange rate and the rise in the Consumer Price Index during spring 1403. These economic challenges, coupled with the poor evaluation of other components, contributed to a sharp decline in overall investment security compared to previous quarters.

200 kg Per Capita Protein Production



TEHRAN - In last Iranian calendar year 1402 (2023), Iran's total livestock production exceeded 17.25 million tons, ensuring 200 kg of protein per capita for every citizen, according to the Deputy Minister of Livestock Production at the Ministry of Agriculture, Mohammad Ebrahim Hassannejad. This achievement underscores the country's focus on bolstering food security through domestic production of animal protein.

Hassannejad emphasized that livestock products such as red meat, poultry, milk, eggs, and honey are integral to Iran's food security. In addition to these essential products, the nation also produced 1,700 tons of fresh silkworm cocoons, contributing to the livelihoods of those involved in this traditional industry.

Hassannejad noted that poultry meat represented the largest share of the country's livestock production, reaching more than 2.7 million tons in 2023. Other birds such as turkeys, ostriches, partridges, quails, and native chickens accounted for 173,000 tons of meat, reflecting a diverse production base.

The Deputy Minister highlighted the Ministry's strategy to promote native poultry development as a means of preserving genetic resources, improving economic traits, and supporting rural employment. He pointed to the Ministry's efforts in producing dual-purpose chickens to meet both meat and egg demand, thereby enhancing self-sufficiency in rural communities.

In terms of production chains, Hassannejad said that there are currently 114 active chains in the livestock sector, producing over 2.34 million tons of livestock products. Chicken meat production leads with 69 chains, while red meat comes in last with seven chains.

Hassannejad outlined key policies aimed at improving livestock production, including fostering research and innovation, making production knowledge-based, and facilitating the import of genetic materials, especially for poultry. He also stressed the importance of modernizing production units, expanding supply chains, and promoting sustainable exports of surplus domestic products.

Additionally, the Ministry is investing in educational and empowerment programs for stakeholders to ensure the sector's continued growth. These initiatives, along with enhanced support for research and innovation, are expected to play a vital role in boosting Iran's livestock production and securing the country's protein needs in the years ahead.



Korean Brands Penetrate Iranian Market Through Strategic Branding

TEHRAN - In a bid to boost economic growth and enhance the international presence of Iranian products, the Iran Chamber of Commerce recently hosted a brainstorming session focused on commercial branding. The event, attended by prominent figures including the President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Samad Hasanzadeh, former Minister of Industry, and representatives from top Iranian brands, aimed to explore how Iran can harness the power of branding to enhance its global trade footprint.

During the session, Hasanzadeh addressed the gathering, drawing attention to Iran's untapped potential in the global economy. He reflected on the country's rich history of individual contributions to economic development following the Constitutional Movement, even when Iran faced significant challenges. "Today, Iranians can play a crucial role in shaping the global economy," he remarked, expressing optimism about the future despite Iran's current managerial issues.

Hasanzadeh highlighted Iran's unique global position, noting that the country holds 1% of the world's landmass, 1% of the global population, and a staggering 15% of the world's natural resources. Despite these advantages, he lamented the lack of focus on developing exports and the potential for branding Iranian products to change the narrative around the country's goods.

A key example cited during the session was the success of South Korean brands like Samsung and LG. Hasanzadeh recalled how Iranian consumers once hesitated to purchase Korean goods, but these brands have now established themselves as household names both globally and in Iran. This transformation in consumer perception was attributed to effective branding, positioning, and product quality, lessons from which Iranian companies could benefit.

The President of the Chamber stressed that the branding of Iranian products is essential if the country is to compete on the global stage. He acknowledged that while Iranian traders have faced exceptionally challenging conditions, particularly due to international sanctions and economic isolation, they have continued to push forward. Branding, he argued, is key to elevating the global reputation of Iranian goods and helping them gain a greater share of international trade.

However, Hasanzadeh expressed concerns about the perception of Iranian products, particularly in neighboring markets. For example, in Azerbaijan, Iranian goods are often viewed as low quality, which has hampered sales. This

negative perception, he argued, could be turned around with stronger branding and better representation of the quality and craftsmanship behind Iranian products.

"Branding is an economic tool that we have not fully utilized," Hasanzadeh emphasized. "The lack of attention to national branding not only affects the image of our products but also prevents us from reaching our full potential in global trade."

Amir Hossein Asadi, the Secretary of the Branding Commission at the Ministry of Industry, Mines, and Trade, also spoke at the session, underscoring the importance of the private sector in driving branding initiatives. He pointed out that Iranian companies have been slow to adopt international advertising practices, which has left them out of the global conversation on branding. Asadi also criticized the lack of institutions in Iran capable of evaluating and using brand value as collateral for loans, a practice common in other countries where brands are seen as valuable assets.

Ebrahim Jamili, President of the Iran-India Chamber of Commerce, shared similar sentiments. He recalled a time when Iran had strong national brands, but noted that these have eroded over time. Jamili stressed the need to protect and rebuild the country's branding culture to ensure that Iranian products can compete internationally.

Both Hasanzadeh and Asadi emphasized the need for innovation, research, and development (R&D) as central components of building strong brands. The Iranian Chamber of Commerce has already initiated programs to rank companies based on their branding efforts, but progress has been hindered by organizational and governmental challenges.

The session concluded with a call to action for Iranian policymakers and business leaders to place greater emphasis on branding, citing the success of global giants like Samsung and LG as models to emulate. By strengthening the national branding strategy, Iran hopes to improve the perception of its goods abroad, increase exports, and secure a larger role in the global economy.

This focus on branding reflects a broader strategy to counter economic isolation and boost the country's economic resilience through innovation and increased global market participation.

8.5% of Population Should BE Relocated to the Makran Coast to Prevent Water Crisis



TEHRAN - A member of the board of directors of the Iranian Association of Sustainable Water and Soil said that to prevent the occurrence of a water crisis, 8.5% of the country's population must be relocated to the Makran coast.

According to the Ministry of Energy, "Mohsen Mousavi Khansari" added: According to the Seventh Development Plan, 8.5% of the country's population must be relocated to the Makran coast, thus reducing population pressure on the central plateau.

He stated that the Central Plateau basin houses 60% of the country's population, but it only benefits from 10% of the country's renewable water resources.

The board member emphasized that the central plateau does not have the capacity to support such a large population due to the intense population density, the expansion of agriculture, and industrial development, leading to a significant increase in the consumption of both renewable and non-renewable water resources.

Mousavi Khansari added that the Central Plateau's non-renewable water volume was estimated at 300 billion cubic meters, but 150 billion cubic meters of it has already been consumed. This implies that the water resources meant for future generations have been used by the current generation.

He added that the country currently has 604 aquifers, and it is predicted that by 2042, about 118 of them will dry up, all located in the Central Plateau. For example, it is predicted that the aquifers in the Bor Khar and Mahyar plains of Isfahan will dry up by 2023.

This environmental activist explained that groundwater is replenished by aquifers, which include both renewable and non-renewable water. Renewable water is replenished through rainfall and water infiltration and is referred to as dynamic water, which

increases with improved rainfall.

Mousavi Khansari noted that fulfilling the environmental water rights, in addition to providing water for drinking, industry, and agriculture, is a crucial issue that has not received enough attention.

He emphasized the importance of releasing dam water to replenish the environment, stating that one-third of river flow belongs to the environment and infiltrates the soil. However, this process has been neglected today.

He also highlighted the over-extraction of water resources through wells as a major contributor to land subsidence, explaining that the expansion of both legal and illegal wells, lack of proper aquifer replenishment, and drought have led to a sharp decline in groundwater levels, multiplying the risk of subsidence.

Mousavi Khansari emphasized that the underground water in aquifers consists of non-renewable water, which is fossil water formed over millennia and belongs to future generations.

He criticized the deepening of wells to access non-renewable water resources, noting that although individuals are not permitted to deepen wells for this purpose, it is happening today.

The board member pointed out that if renewable water is exhausted, non-renewable water resources will also be depleted, and the lack of infiltration of renewable water into the depths of the earth will result in the filling of voids in the lower layers, exacerbating the lack of water permeability and leading to localized land subsidence.

Mousavi Khansari continued: Overall, the failure to secure environmental water rights from rivers, the increase in legal and illegal wells, and the reduction in well depth and over-extraction have led to the rapid depletion of non-renewable water resources.

20% Decline in Iranian Dried Fruit Exports Over the Last Three Years



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran has witnessed a significant decline in its dried fruit exports, dropping by 20% over the past three years, according to Mohammad Reza Farshchian, head of the Iranian Dried Fruit Exporters' Union. Speaking at a press conference on Monday, Farshchian revealed that the total value of dried fruit exports last year amounted to \$1.3 billion.

He cited official customs statistics, reporting that during the first half of this year, Iran exported 46,000 tons of pistachios, 28,000 tons of raisins, and 2,000 tons of figs.

Farshchian lamented that Iran, once a dominant global player in agricultural exports, has lost its edge in several key markets. Once renowned for its carpets, caviar, saffron, and pistachios, Iran now faces tough competition from countries such as the United States, Turkey, and Afghanistan.

The U.S., for instance, produces around 700,000 tons of pistachios annually—three times that of Iran's 200,000 tons. Spain has also recently entered the pistachio export market, adding further competition. Raisins, another critical export for Iran, are now dominated by countries like the U.S., Turkey, and China.

Farshchian attributed part of the decline to government policies that have restricted the role of exporters in decision-making. "Decisions are made behind closed doors without consulting trade associations," he said. He pointed out that more than 35 agricultural products have seen reduced exports annually due to stringent foreign exchange requirements. Currently, only pistachios, dates, raisins, and a limited amount of figs are exported in significant volumes.

The introduction of the NIMA foreign exchange system has further complicated matters. Exporters are now required to declare their foreign exchange earnings through the system, yet Farshchian argued that the process lacks transparency. He urged the government to reform the system to ensure agricultural profits are reinvested into the sector.

Iran Self-Sufficient in Wheat Production



TEHRAN - According to the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, Sohrab Sohrabi, in the first meeting of the National Agriculture Committee, announced the successful implementation of the guaranteed purchase of surplus wheat from farmers during the last agricultural year. He expressed hope for the continuation of production of this strategic crop in the new agricultural year.

Sohrabi stated that during the 1990s, as well as in 2021, 2023, and 2024, Iran achieved self-sufficiency in wheat, thanks to increased use of fertilizers and improved seeds during these years.

He emphasized that wheat production increased from 9 million tons in 2021 to 15 million tons due to balanced use of chemical fertilizers, the development of modern irrigation systems, the expanded use of improved seeds, increased mechanized farming, and favorable climatic conditions.

He added that this production increase is due to the "production leap" plan in rainfed farms, noting that wheat imports, which stood at 7 million tons in 2021, have dropped to zero. Additionally, the use of potassium fertilizers increased from 62,000 tons in 2021 to 207,000 tons.

The wheat project manager stated that the price of wheat this year reached 20,500 toman, and this price increase will help sustain self-sufficiency.

He continued by mentioning that 11.983 million tons of wheat have been purchased under the guaranteed scheme, with Khuzestan, Kurdistan, and Golestan being the top three provinces in this regard.

Sohrabi also highlighted the need to focus on the production of durum wheat in Iran, which is resistant to stress, climate change, and pests.

He added that the National Wheat Foundation should be present in all provincial meetings related to wheat and that the foundation's capacities must be utilized to achieve 105% self-sufficiency by the end of the Seventh Five-Year Development Plan.

Floods in Bangladesh Leave Five Dead, Thousands Stranded

DHAKA (Dispatches) - At least five people have died and more than 100,000 remain stranded as devastating floods, triggered by heavy rains and upstream torrents, continue to ravage northern Bangladesh, officials said.

In Sherpur, one of the hardest-hit northern districts, the water levels of major rivers have surged, submerging new areas and displacing thousands of families.

Local authorities fear widespread damage to agriculture, with crops and farmlands, particularly rice fields, facing potential devastation. Many homes and roads are under several feet of water, cutting off villages and leaving residents in desperate need of rescue.

"I have never seen such flooding in my life," said Abu Taher, a resident of the district.

Army personnel, using boats and helicopters, have joined rescue efforts, delivering emergency supplies and evacuating those trapped by the floods.

Bridges have collapsed, and roads have been submerged, making it difficult for local authorities to reach affected areas.



Saied Re-Elected Tunisia President With 90.7% of the Vote



TUNIS (Dispatches) - Kais Saied has been re-elected president of Tunisia with 90.69 percent of votes cast, electoral authority ISIE said Monday, although low turnout reflected widespread discontent in the cradle of the Arab Spring pro-democracy uprisings.

Three years after Saied made a sweeping power grab, rights groups fear his re-election will entrench his grip on the only democracy to emerge from the 2011 protests.

Saied, 66, won Sunday's vote by a landslide with 2.4 million votes -- but with turnout at only 28.8 percent of nearly 10 million eligible voters.

His imprisoned rival Ayachi Zammel received just 7.3 percent, and third candidate Zouhair Maghazouli only 1.9 percent, ISIE head Farouk Bouasker said on national television.

Critics said the low turnout reflected widespread disillusionment with the election.

On Sunday, the ISIE said just six percent of voters were aged 18-35, a category constituting a third of the initially eligible electorate.

After longtime dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was ousted in 2011, Tunisia prided itself on being the birthplace of the regional revolts against authoritarianism that became known as the Arab Spring.

But the North African country's path changed dramatically after Saied was elected in 2019 with 73 percent of the vote.

Two years later, he dissolved parliament, and later rewrote the constitution.

Sunday's turnout was the lowest recorded in a Tunisian presidential after Ben Ali's ouster. In 2019, 58 percent turned out to vote for Saied as president.

"I didn't vote yesterday, simply because I no longer have confidence and I am desperate," said Houcine, 63, giving only one name for fear of retribution.

Political commentator Hatem Nafii, author of a forthcoming book on Saied's authoritarian rule, said: "The vote's legitimacy is undoubtedly tainted with candidates who could have overshadowed (Saied) being systematically sidelined."

North Korea's Kim Again Threatens to Use Nuclear Weapons Against S.Korea and US

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un warned again that he could use nuclear weapons in potential conflicts with South Korea and the United States, as he accused them of provoking North Korea and raising animosities on the Korean Peninsula, state media reported Tuesday.

Kim has issued similar threats to use nuclear weapons preemptively numerous times, but his latest warning came as outside experts say North Korea could ramp up hostilities ahead of next month's U.S. presidential election.

In a Monday speech at a university named after him, "Kim Jong Un University of National Defense," he said that North Korea "will without hesitation use all its attack capabilities against its enemies" if they attempt to use armed forces "against North Korea, according to the North's official Korean Central News Agency.

"The use of nuclear weapons is not ruled out in this case," he said.

Kim said North Korea's nuclear response posture must be fully enhanced because South Korea and the United States are pushing to beef up their military alliance based on joint nuclear and strategic planning, a move that he said would increase the danger of breaking the balance of power on the Korean Peninsula.

Kim apparently refers to the new South Korea-U.S. deterrence guideline that the two countries signed in July to integrate South Korean conventional capabilities with U.S. nuclear weapons to better deal with North Korea's evolving nuclear threats. South Korea has no nuclear weapons.

Since adopting an aggressive nuclear doctrine in 2022, North Korea has repeatedly vowed to use nuclear weapons first if it perceives the leadership in Pyongyang as under threat. But many experts question if North Korea could really do so because its military is outgunned by the U.S. and South Korean forces. U.S. and South Korean officials have warned that an attempt by North Korea to use nuclear weapons would result in the end of the Kim government.

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula deepened in recent weeks, with North Korea unveiling a facility to produce weapons-grade uranium, a nuclear ingredient, and continuing a run of missile tests. In recent responses to questions from The Associated Press, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said that North Korea's disclosure of that facility was likely an attempt to grab U.S. attention ahead of next month's presidential election, and the North will likely stage major provocations like a nuclear test explosion and a long-range missile test.

Many analysts say North Korea will likely leverage his enlarged nuclear arsenal for U.S. concessions like sanctions relief after a new U.S. administration is inaugurated.

North Korea earlier said its rubber-stamp parliament was to meet on Oct. 7. But as of Tuesday, state media hasn't said whether the parliament meeting began as scheduled.

Observers say the parliament meeting was likely meant to constitutionally declare a hostile "two-state" system on the Korean Peninsula to formally reject reconciliation with South Korea and codify new national borders. In January, Kim ordered the rewriting of the constitution to remove the long-running state goal of a peaceful Korean unification and cement South Korea as an "invariable principal enemy."

All exchange and cooperation programs between the two Koreas remain dormant since a broader U.S.-North Korea diplomacy on the North's nuclear program collapsed in 2019.

Since late May, North Korea has floated thousands of trash-carrying balloons toward South Korea, reviving a Cold War-style psychological campaign. On Tuesday, South Korea's military said North Korea was again launching such balloons across the border.

Israel-Hezbollah Fighting Intensifies

BEIRUT (Reuters) - Hezbollah fired rockets at Israel's third-largest city, Haifa, and Israel looked poised to expand its offensive into Lebanon on Monday, one year after the devastating Hamas attack on Israel that sparked the Gaza war.

Israelis held ceremonies and protests to mark the first anniversary of the Oct. 7 attack as the Gaza conflict has spread across the Middle East and raised fears of an all-out regional war.

Hezbollah, an ally in Lebanon of the Palestinian militant group Hamas in Gaza, said it targeted a military base south of Haifa with "Fadi 1" missiles and launched another strike on Tiberias, 65 km (40 miles) away.

The armed group later said it also targeted areas north of Haifa with missiles. Israel's military said around 190 projectiles had entered Israeli territory on Monday. There were at least 12 injuries.

Israel's military said the air force was carrying out extensive bombings of Hezbollah targets in south Lebanon and two Israeli soldiers were killed, taking the Israeli military death toll inside Lebanon to 11.

Lebanon's health ministry reported dozens of deaths, including 10 firefighters killed in an airstrike on a municipal building in the border area. Around 2,000 Lebanese have been killed since Hezbollah began firing at Israel a year ago in solidarity with Hamas, most of them killed in the past few weeks.

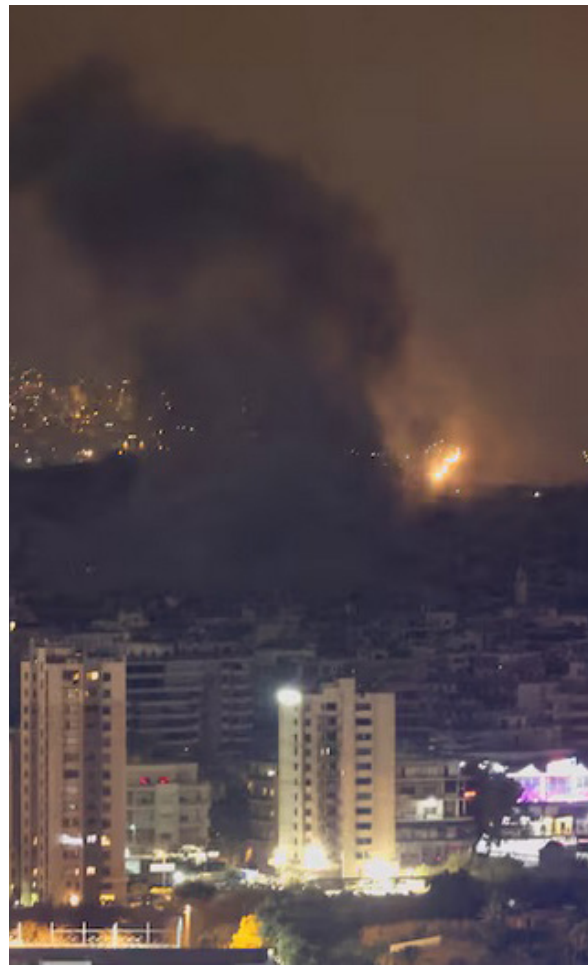
The Israeli military has described its ground operation in Lebanon as "localized, limited and targeted," but it has steadily increased in scale beginning last week.

Israel's superpower ally, the United States, believes the Lebanon ground operation continues to be limited, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Monday.

On Monday, Democratic U.S. President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and Republican former President Donald Trump, who is running against Harris in the Nov. 5 presidential election, all held events to mark the anniversary of Hamas' attack on Israel.

Israeli soldiers have been moving into southern Lebanon. The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) says their aim is to clear border areas where Hezbollah fighters have been embedded, with no plans to go deep into Lebanon.

On Monday, Israel within the space of an hour carried out air strikes on 120 targets in southern Lebanon, including against Radwan special forces units, Hezbollah's missile force and its intelligence directorate.



"This operation follows a series of strikes aimed at degrading Hezbollah's command, control and firing capabilities, as well as assisting ground forces in achieving their operational goals," the military said in a statement.

The spiraling conflict has raised concerns that the United States and Iran will be sucked into a wider war in the oil-producing region.

Iran launched a barrage of missiles at Israel on Oct. 1. Israel has said it will retaliate and is weighing its options. Iran's oil facilities are a possible target.

An Israeli military statement said five rockets were launched towards Haifa, a major Mediterranean port, from Lebanon and interceptors were fired at them.

The statement said 15 other rockets were fired at Tiberias in northern Israel, some of which were shot down. Israeli media said five more rockets hit the area later.

A surface-to-air missile fired at central Israel from Yemen was also intercepted, the military said. The Iran-backed Houthi movement, which controls northern Yemen, has attacked Israel during the past year in what it says is solidarity with Palestinians under attack in Gaza.

Hamas, which triggered the Gaza war with its surprise attack on Israel one year ago, said it targeted Israel's commercial capital, Tel Aviv, with a missile salvo, setting off sirens.

Many Israelis have regained confidence in their long-vaunted military and intelligence after deadly blows in recent weeks to the command structure of Iran's proxy force Hezbollah.

"We are changing the security reality in our region, for our children's sake, for our future, to ensure that what happened on Oct. 7 does not happen again," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said at a cabinet meeting in Jerusalem marking the Gaza war anniversary.

Israeli airstrikes have displaced 1.2 million people in Lebanon, and Israel's intensified bombing campaign has left many Lebanese worried their country will experience the vast scale of destruction wrought on Gaza by Israel.

Israeli forces issued a warning in Arabic to beachgoers and boat users to avoid a stretch of the Lebanese coast, saying it would soon begin operations against Hezbollah from the sea.

The ceremonies in Israel on Monday included a memorial event for victims of the Nova Music Festival, where militants killed 364 people and kidnapped 44 partygoers and staff on Oct. 7 last year.

Harris Calls Trump Incredibly Irresponsible for Spreading Misinformation About Helene Response



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Vice President Kamala Harris on Monday called former President Donald Trump "incredibly irresponsible" for spreading falsehoods about the federal response to Hurricane Helene's destruction, offering especially sharp words as a new storm bears down on Florida with just weeks until Election Day.

"There's a lot of mis- and disinformation being pushed out there by the former president about what is available, particularly to the survivors of Helene," Harris told reporters before boarding Air Force Two to fly to New York. "It's extraordinarily irresponsible. It's about him. It's not about you."

Helene has killed more than 220 people in six states, and Category 5 Hurricane Milton is on a path toward Florida's Gulf Coast.

Trump has made a series of false claims in the wake of Helene, including saying incorrectly that the federal government is intentionally withholding aid to Republican disaster victims. He also falsely claimed the Federal Emergency Management Agency had run out of money because all of it had gone to programs for immigrants in the country illegally.

Harris said "the reality is that FEMA has so many resources that are available to folks who desperately need them now, and resources that are about helping people get back on their feet and rebuild and have places to go."

Ukraine Says Russian Missiles Strike Two Black Sea Grain Vessels

KYIV (Dispatches) - A Russian missile hit a Palau-flagged vessel in Ukraine's southern port of Odesa, killing a Ukrainian national and injuring five crew members in the second such attack in as many days, officials said.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said on X that the two ships were damaged in the Black Sea grain-export hub without giving details on the ships' conditions. He condemned Russia's actions.

"We must join forces of all responsible states and organisations to...ensure freedom of navigation in the Black Sea and global food security."

Russia's defense ministry did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment. Moscow has repeatedly denied it attacks civilian targets.

Odesa regional governor Oleh Kiper, writing on the Telegram messaging app, said the man killed in the latest attack was a port worker. The five injured men were foreign nationals and ship crew members.

Deputy Prime Minister Oleksiy Kuleba identified the vessel as the Optima and said it arrived in Odesa hours before the attack.

Russia "is attempting in this way to destroy shipping in the Black Sea guaranteeing food security. The consequences can only mean greater instability in sensitive regions dependent on food imports and tension in international relations," Kuleba said.

Ukraine's Restoration Ministry identified the ship attacked on Sunday in the nearby port of Pivdennyi as the Saint Kitts and Nevis-flagged Paresa which had a cargo of 6,000 tonnes of corn.

In a Facebook post, the ministry said the Paresa's 15-member crew, Syrian and



Egyptian nationals, was not injured.

The ministry said the Paresa was the 20th civilian vessel to be damaged by Russian attacks.

Last month, the Saint Kitts and Nevis-flagged bulk carrier Aya was hit by a Russian missile in the Black Sea. Another vessel, an Antigua-flagged carrier, was damaged in a Russian missile strike in Odesa.

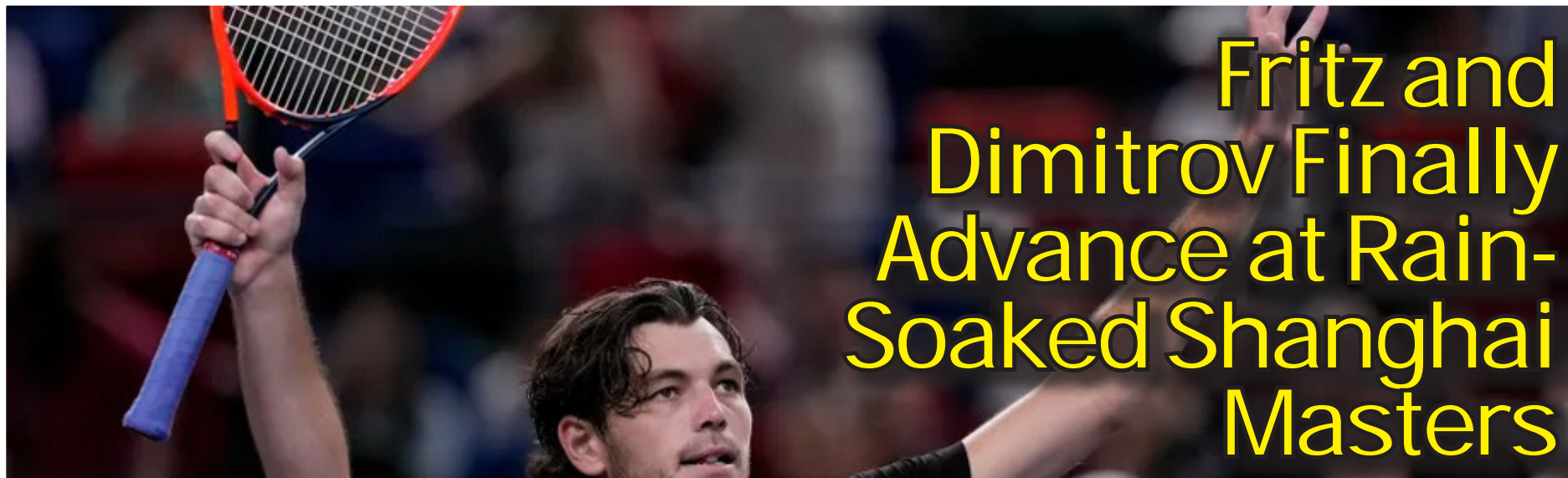
Russia has struck the port repeatedly in the war since its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Meanwhile Ukraine's military said it struck a major oil terminal Monday in Crimea that provides fuel for Russia's war effort as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the war has entered a key phase.

Both sides are facing the issue of how to sustain their costly war of attrition — a conflict that started with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and that shows no signs of a resolution.

Ukraine's General Staff said on social media that the oil terminal in Feodosia, on the south coast of the Russia-occupied Crimean Peninsula, has been supplying the Russian army with fuel and that the strike was part of an ongoing effort to "undermine the military and economic potential of the Russian Federation."

Russian-installed authorities in the city of Feodosia on the coast of the Black Sea reported a fire at the terminal on Monday morning but did not say what might have caused it.



Fritz and Dimitrov Finally Advance at Rain-Soaked Shanghai Masters

SHANGHAI (AP) - Two days after starting, seventh-ranked Taylor Fritz and 10th-ranked Grigor Dimitrov finally complete their second-round matches at the Shanghai Masters.

Fritz, the U.S. Open finalist, led 4-3 in the opening set against Frenchman Terence Atmane when rain suspended play on Saturday at the Qizhong Forest Sports City Arena, and then washed out all matches on the outside courts until Monday.

The American needed two tiebreakers to see off the No. 161-ranked Atmane 7-6 (4), 7-6 (5), with only one break of serve for each in the two-hour match. Fritz will play Japanese qualifier Yosuke Watanuki in the third round.

Dimitrov, playing in his 100th Masters event, resumed on Monday with a set lead but down a break in the second against Zizou Bergs.

The No. 73-ranked Belgian converted his advantage to take the second set. Dimitrov responded by breaking Bergs three times for the loss of one of his own service games, to clinch the match 6-3, 3-6, 6-2.

The Bulgarian will play Australian Alexei Popyrin in the third round.

Holger Rune of Denmark rallied from a set down to beat Matteo Berrettini of Italy 4-6, 6-4, 6-3.

Another Italian lost. Lorenzo Musetti appeared to be heading for an easy victory before a collapse from the 15th seed saw him lose to David Goffin 1-6, 7-6 (6), 6-2. The Belgian will next face Marcos Giron after the American eased past Karen Khachanov 6-4, 6-3.

Flavio Cobolli edged Stan Wawrinka 6-7 (6), 7-6 (4), 6-3 to set up a third-round match against record four-time champion Novak Djokovic.

Rain continued to wreck havoc, however, with play cancelled for the day on outdoor courts. Rescheduled for later were matches including 10th-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas.

Under the retractable roof, U.S. Open semifinalist Frances Tiafoe routed Zhou Yi of China 6-2, 6-4, and Tallon Griekspoor beat the 26th-seeded Jordan Thompson 6-3, 6-2.

No. 12-ranked Beatriz Haddad-Maia beat Madison Keys of the U.S. 7-6 (7), 6-2 in their opening match. The Brazilian, the Seoul Open winner last month for her fourth career title, converted five of her eight break point opportunities to Keys' three from 12.

One-time U.S. Open finalist Leylah Fernandez of Canada rallied to beat 12th-seeded Diana Shnaider 6-7 (7), 6-3, 6-3.

No. 10-ranked Anna Kalinskaya eased past Anna Bondár 6-1, 6-3 and 15th-seeded Donna Vekic overcame Elise Mertens 3-6, 6-1, 6-3.

Rain in Wuhan meant play on the outside courts was suspended.

The top eight seeds, including second-ranked Aryna Sabalenka and China Open champion Coco Gauff, received a first-round bye.

Gauff Beats Muchova in China for Eighth WTA Title



BEIJING (Dispatches) - World number six Coco Gauff dominated unseeded Czech player Karolina Muchova to win the China Open - the eighth WTA title of her career and first since January.

The American fourth seed had struggled with her serve earlier in the week and was forced to battle back from a set down against Paula Badosa in the semis to reach her first final since winning in Auckland at the start of the year.

But the 2023 US Open champion showed little sign of that fragility as she claimed a 6-1 6-3 win in one hour and 17 minutes.

Victory in the WTA 1,000 event in Beijing moved Gauff up to fourth place in the Race to the Finals, with the top seven qualifying for the season-ending tournament in Riyadh in November.

The young star rattled through the opening set in just 30 minutes, harrying her opponent into a series of unforced errors to claim two breaks of serve.

Muchova, 28, who had lost four of her previous five WTA finals and claimed her only title in 2019, was unable to match Gauff's power and athleticism.

However, Gauff's problems with her serve briefly surfaced in her first service game of the second set, as she sent down three double faults to hand Muchova the break and a 2-0 lead.

But she broke back immediately to start a run of four consecutive games.

Muchova eventually handed Gauff victory by firing a forehand long with her 24th unforced error which, when compared to her opponent's 24 winners, told the story of the match.

Gauff celebrated her first title under new coach Matt Daly with a beaming smile, after ending her partnership with Brad Gilbert last month following her fourth-round exit at the US Open, where she failed to defend her crown.

Towns Scores 10 Points in Abbreviated Debut With New York Knicks

CHARLOTTE (Dispatches) - Jalen Brunson thought twice about going 1-on-2 in transition, instead dribbled back outside and flipped the ball behind him to Karl-Anthony Towns, who made a 3-pointer with a defender in his face.

It's the type of two-man game the Knicks are hoping will elevate them to the next level and bring an NBA championship to New York for the first time since 1973.

It's the reason why the Knicks traded for the versatile Towns, a four-time NBA All-Star, last week. He can stretch opposing defense and open even more space for Brunson to operate in the lane and attack the hole.

Towns had 10 points on 2-for-7 shooting and four rebounds in 15 minutes in his preseason debut with his new team Sunday night as the Knicks held on to beat the Charlotte Hornets 111-109. Brunson had 12 points on 5-for-11 shooting and three assists.

Both only played the first half, which ended in a 61-61 tie. "I know their talents, so it's a matter of playing with them," Towns said. "Finally getting to put a Knicks jersey on and playing 5 on 5 that was really cool."

Added Brunson: "It's definitely going to take time, but when people are willing to do what it takes to win it's going to flow at some point. We're talking consistently, we're on the same page and we're excited to be teammates."

For Towns, this is his first time moving to a new team, so he's not sure how long it will take to develop that chemistry. "Every day, it's just learning each other's tendencies and continuing to improve," Towns said. "That is really what is the key for us."



But it's pretty clear Towns is excited about his new start in New York.

"These guys are all super, super special and they are all very talented and they put the work in," Towns said. "The coaches put us through drills that allow us to work on our skills and our timing."

Towns looked out of synch at times in the offense early on but proceeded to get more comfortable as the first half wore on. He struggled from deep, missing his other four 3-point attempts and half of his points came from the free-throw line.

"I figured it would be a little choppy and there are little areas we need to clean up," Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau said. "They need time obviously so I wanted them to get their feet wet. The opener is right around the corner and we need to get to it."

The Knicks had some good ball movement early, but missed some layups.

"We will take a look of that. It's timing," Thibodeau said. "Some sequence were good, some have to do better. Some of it is directing (the ball) to the wrong area."

The 7-foot center was acquired from the Minnesota Timberwolves last week in a three-team trade that included the Hornets, so he hasn't had much work with his new teammates.

The Knicks gave up three-time All-Star Julius Randle and guard Donte DiVincenzo, while reacquiring Keita Bates-Diop and also receiving a first-round pick. The Hornets received Charlie Brown, DaQuan Jeffries and Duane Washington Jr. and two second-round picks, along with the draft rights to center James Nnaji.

Towns has averaged 22.9 points and 10.8 rebounds while shooting 39.8% from 3-point range during his nine seasons in the league.

Mbappe Under Fire for Skipping France Duty While Fit to Play for Real



PARIS (Dispatches) - France captain Kylian Mbappe is facing criticism in his home country for skipping Les Bleus' Nations League games against Israel and Belgium while being available to play for Real Madrid.

The forward picked up a muscle injury last month but made his return to the pitch in the Champions League last Wednesday.

France coach Didier Deschamps left Mbappe out of the squad he announced on Thursday, saying the 25-year-old lacked preparation, having played too few matches.

Mbappe started Real's La Liga game against Villarreal on Saturday.

"Either you're injured, and you don't play with your club and you're not called up in the national team," former France international Maxime Bossis told French sports daily L'Equipe on Monday.

"But when you come off the bench in the Champions League and you start a league game, it makes things fuzzy. He's a special player. We've known that with Michel Platini, when we still wanted him with us when he was injured."

Mbappe's situation is more complicated because the former Paris St Germain player is the national team captain after being handed the armband ahead of Antoine Griezmann, who last week announced his retirement from international football.

Griezmann's commitment to Les Bleus was never in doubt as the Atletico Madrid forward played a record 84 consecutive matches for his country between 2017 and 2024.

"As a captain (Mbappe) must be an example for the fans, and he has not been," Fabien Bonnet, spokesperson for the Irresistibles Francais, the main France supporters' group, told L'Equipe.

"What emerges is that the real captain, Antoine Griezmann, is gone."

France, second in Group A, face Israel in Budapest on Thursday and travel to Belgium next Monday.

Man City and Premier League Both Claim Victory in Legal Case

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester City and the Premier League both claimed victory on Monday after the champions challenged the English top flight's rules on commercial deals.

City launched legal action against the associated party transaction (APT) rules earlier this year on the grounds they were anti-competitive.

The APT rules are designed to ensure commercial deals with entities linked to a club's owners reflect fair market value.

The case is separate from an ongoing hearing involving City, with the club fighting 115 charges relating to alleged breaches of Premier League financial rules.

The Premier League said on Monday that City were "unsuccessful in the majority of (their) challenge" and that the tribunal considering the case had determined the APT rules were necessary and pursued a legitimate objective.

But City released a statement saying the tribunal had declared the APT rules "unlawful" and that the league had abused a dominant position under competition law.

The Premier League said the tribunal had supported the



legitimacy of the regulations and said it had found them essential to make the profitability and sustainability rules (PSR) effective.

It said the tribunal had agreed with the Premier League that if a transaction was evidently not at fair market value, that would distort competition within the league.

The league also said the panel had rejected City's argument that the purpose of the rules was to discriminate against clubs with ownership from the Gulf region.

The Premier League said the panel found in favour of City in "two respects only" -- that shareholder loans should not be excluded from APT rules and that a "limited number of amendments" to the APT rules made earlier should not be retained.

Manchester City said the panel found the APT rules were "structurally unfair" and that the panel had set aside specific decisions of the Premier League to restate the fair market value of two transactions entered into by the club.