

The Islamic Republic of Iran Red Crescent Society Has Dispatched 35 Trucks Carrying Medicines Worth 850b Rials to the War-Stricken Lebanon as it Includes Gastrointestinal, Cardiac and Infectious Drugs

# IRAN NEWS

Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi Said That Iran and Turkey Have a Lot in Common When It Comes to Culture, Adding That the Common Cultural Ground Should Be Benefitted From

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### U.S. Deployment of THAAD in Israel Part of Psychological Warfare



TEHRAN - Iran's Defense Minister Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh has downplayed as part of a "psychological warfare" the U.S. deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-missile system in the Israeli-occupied territories.

Speaking with reporters on the sidelines of a weekly cabinet session in Tehran on Wednesday, Nasirzadeh said, "THAAD is an anti-ballistic [missile] system. It is not anything new and had already been brought up."

"We consider such measures by the enemy to be in line with a psychological war. There is no specific problem," he added. "None of the threats issued by the Zionist regime is new."

In its latest round of military assistance to the occupying regime, the United States sent its advanced THAAD missile defense system to Israel along with scores of soldiers and crew to operate it.

Made by U.S. aerospace manufacturer Lockheed Martin, THAAD is an advanced missile defense system that uses a combination of radar and interceptors to thwart short-, medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles, with its missiles having a range of 150 to 200 kilometers.

The system can intercept missiles inside and outside Earth's atmosphere during their final stage of flight, which begins when the detached warhead re-enters Earth's atmosphere and ends upon detonation.

The deployment is viewed as Washington's attempt to test if its advanced THAAD system is useful in the face of Iran's new hypersonic ballistic missiles against Israel.

On October 1, Iran responded to the Israeli assassination of Hamas political bureau chief Ismail Haniyeh, Hezbollah Secretary General Seyed Hassan Nasrallah, and IRGC general Abbas Nilforoushan by launching as many as 200 ballistic missiles toward the occupying regime's military and intelligence bases all over the occupied Palestinian territories.

Dubbed Operation True Promise II, the retaliatory strike dealt a severe blow to the illegal regime all the more ruinous than its prequel in April, with Tel Aviv having so far declined to reveal the extent of loss it suffered despite vowing to respond on several occasions.

While the Israeli regime has threatened to retaliate, Iranian officials have warned that Tehran is "ready" to respond to any adventurism.

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

## Iran Ready to Give Decisive Response to Any Israeli Adventurism

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has warned of the Islamic Republic's decisive response to any acts of adventurism by the Israeli regime, amid heightened escalation following Tel Aviv's recent assassination of the resistance front's leaders and top commanders.

Araqchi made the statement in a phone conversation with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres as the two discussed the ongoing developments in the region as well as Israel's brutal onslaught on the Gaza Strip and Lebanon.

Pointing to the catastrophic humanitarian situation caused by Israel's continued genocide in Gaza and its aggression on Lebanon, the top Iranian diplomat asked the UN chief to use all the capacities of the international body in order to stop the crimes and aggression of the Israeli regime and to send humanitarian aid to Lebanon and Gaza.

Reiterating Iran's principled stance on the necessity of maintaining peace and stability in the region, Araqchi said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran, while making an all-out effort to safeguard regional peace and security, is fully prepared for a decisive and regret-inducing response to any adventurism by the Zionist regime."

He underlined that the responsibility for the consequences of the spread of insecurity in the region will rest with the Israeli regime and its main supporter, the United States.

Guterres, for his part, expressed concerns over the heightened tensions in the region following Israel's continued attacks on Gaza and Lebanon, stressing the need to reach a political solution in order to end the war and the need to provide aid to the injured and displaced people in Gaza and Lebanon.

Placing a premium on the significance of protecting Lebanon's sovereignty, the UN chief highlighted the continued deployment of his organization's peacekeeping forces in the south of the country despite threats.

The two sides also discussed developments in Yemen and the humanitarian situation in the Arab country.

The Iranian foreign minister has been making a flurry of regional trips over the past weeks with the aim of keeping up Tehran's diplomatic efforts aimed at bringing about cessation of the Israeli regime's ongoing regional atrocities.

The trips have taken Araqchi to Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iraq, Syria, Oman and Jordan. Iran fired a barrage of missiles towards the Israeli entity's military, and espionage and intelligence bases all over the occupied territories on October 1 as part of Operation True Promise II.

Meanwhile Araqchi and his French counterpart Jean-Noel Barrot had, in a phone conversation, discussed latest regional developments, including Israel's aggression against Lebanon.

The top Iranian diplomat stressed the need for an end to Israeli attacks on Lebanon, calling for the removal of obstacles created by the occupying regime to dispatch of international humanitarian aid to the refugees amid the dire situation in the Arab country.

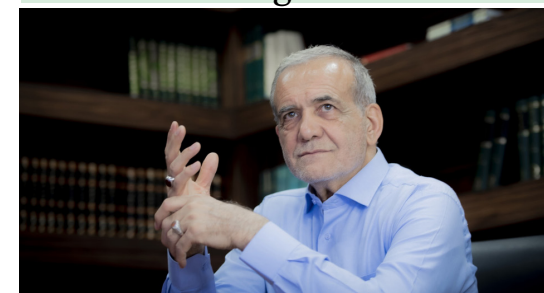
He also warned against any new act of adventurism by the Israeli regime in the region, as Tel Aviv continues its brutal aggression against Lebanon and the Gaza Strip.

Israel has escalated its deadly attacks against Lebanon after launching a genocidal war on the Gaza Strip on October 7 last year.

The ongoing Israeli bombardment has left Lebanon and its citizens in a dire humanitarian situation.

Araqchi said the Israeli war machine has to be "immediately" stopped as means of preventing further escalation and deterioration in the region.

### President Urges Muslims to Act as One Against Zionist Regime



TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian says increased pressure on the supporters of the Zionist regime can stop its "killing machine."

In a phone conversation with Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said on Wednesday, President Pezeshkian thanked Muscat for its stance on Israeli violations in Gaza and Lebanon, urging "greater unity" among Muslim countries.

"If Muslim countries act as one, the Zionist regime will not dare commit violations so easily, nor will the US and Western countries be able to support it," he said.

Pezeshkian also reiterated Tehran's willingness to strengthen bilateral ties with Muscat, noting that relations with Oman are among the Islamic Republic's top priorities and lie within the framework of expanding cooperation with neighboring states.

"Strengthening friendly and amicable relations between regional countries, and expanding regional cooperation, guarantee a shared vision and language to solve our region's problems. This also provides a platform for collective development, promoting the welfare, peace, and comfort of our nations," he added.

For his part, Sultan bin Tariq hailed Iran's stance on regional issues, including Gaza and Lebanon, and stressed the need for Western countries to avoid double standards in addressing such issues.

He also emphasized that supporting the rights of the oppressed people of Gaza and Lebanon remains a priority for Oman, saying, "Oman has always maintained that the continued support by Western countries for Israel's crimes is neither acceptable nor justified in any way."

### Iran-EAEU FTA Has to Be Finalized by January



TEHRAN (MNA) - The deputy head of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) said that the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Iran and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) should be finalized by January 2025.

Presently, the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Iran and EAEU member states is expected to be finalized and communicated by the end of January 2025.

Deputy Head of TPOI for Promotion of International Businesses Mohammadsadegh Ghannadzadeh expressed hope that the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Iran and member states of the union would be finalized by January 2025.

He put the products imported into the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) annually at \$400 billion.

Ghannadzadeh went on to say that the economies of Iran and EAEU member states are complementary to each other, adding that Iran's imports from the member countries of the Eurasian Economic Union mostly include inputs and basic goods and Iran's export of goods to the member states of the union are the goods with high added value.

Developing the transportation fleet and equipping ports should be taken into consideration in order to enhance trade relations with the EAEU member states, he underlined.

The temporary agreement on creation of a free trade zone between the EAEU and Iran was concluded on May 17, 2018 and came into force on October 27, 2019.

On December 25, 2023, the EAEU countries signed a full-scale free trade agreement with Iran. "The agreement officially comes into force from the moment it is ratified by the member states."

The parliaments of the three countries of this union approved this agreement and the Iranian parliament is also going through the stages of its finalization.

Last week the head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) has said that the trade volume between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has increased by more than 2.5 times.

Mohammad-Ali Dehghan Dehnavi on Sunday addressing the businesses of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce Industries Mines and Agriculture said that Iran and the EAEU started the implementation of the preferential trade agreement in 2018.

### Iran, Jordan Weigh Plans to Rein In Israel



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The foreign ministers of Iran and Jordan held talks in Amman about forcing the Israeli regime to stop its onslaught on Gaza and Lebanon.

In a meeting in Amman on Wednesday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi and his Jordanian counterpart Ayman Al Safadi discussed issues of mutual interest in the relations between the two countries as well as the latest regional developments.

Voicing concern about the critical situation in the region caused by the Zionist regime's genocidal crimes in Gaza and its onslaught on Lebanon, Araqchi stressed the need for collective action by the regional states to halt the Israeli war machine, prevent the spread of war in the region, and safeguard regional security and stability to serve the interests of the nations.

For his part, Safadi expressed serious concern about the escalation of security circumstances in the region.

He also highlighted Jordan's stance on the necessity for ending the massacre of people in Palestine and Lebanon, stopping the Israeli acts of aggression against Lebanon, and preventing further instability in the region.

The Iranian and Jordanian foreign ministers finally called for the mobilization of efforts by the international community to help the people displaced in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria.

Meanwhile Araqchi and Jordan's King Abdullah II emphasized the necessity for solidarity and collective efforts to stop atrocity and ensure regional security

## Israeli Occupation Threatens Region, Beyond, Hezbollah Warns

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Hezbollah's Deputy Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem condemned Israel's occupation of Palestinian land, warning that its expansionist ambitions threaten not only Palestine but the entire region and beyond.

Sheikh Qassem described Israel as a "usurper and an occupying regime" that poses a significant threat to the region and the world. In his televised address, Qassem emphasized the importance of resistance against Israeli aggression and its backers.

"This regime does not limit its occupation to Palestine; it seeks to expand its control, as Palestine alone is insufficient for its ambitions," he said, underscoring that Israel aims to dominate Arab and Muslim territories.

Qassem emphasized the need for resistance in the face of ongoing violence by the Israeli regime and its allies, stating, "Israel and those behind it wage war and commit massacres, leaving us no choice but to take a stand."

He also highlighted a joint US-Israeli scheme in the Middle East, saying, "America, the biggest devil, wants a new Middle East. Netanyahu shares the same vision. This means the US and Israel are deliberately carrying out this genocide."

Qassem affirmed that Hezbollah will not be defeated in its war with Israel, asserting, "The Resistance will not be defeated because it owns the land and because its fighters are martyrs who accept nothing but a life of honor."

He warned Tel Aviv that if it wants Zionist settlers to return to the northern occupied territories, it must cease its assaults on Gaza and Lebanon. "The solution is to cease fire, and after the ceasefire, the settlers will return to the north," he said.



Qassem warned that continued aggression would lead to the abandonment of more settlements, putting hundreds of thousands, possibly over two million, settlers at risk.

Referring to the operation led by Palestinian Resistance groups in October 2023, Qassem said the attack was an effort to "get rid of the occupier." He stressed that after 75 years of occupation, Palestinians have the right to resist and stop Israel's expansion.

He criticized the international community for not addressing the root cause of the conflict, urging, "Instead of questioning why the Al-Aqsa Storm occurred, ask why the occupation still exists."

Qassem reiterated Hezbollah's commitment to the Palestinian cause, stating, "Our war with Israel began with the pager explosions," referencing the September 17 attacks on Hezbollah members and the assassination of its leader, Seyed Hassan Nasrallah, on

September 27.

He said Hezbollah's direct engagement with Israel over the past two weeks had exceeded expectations. The resistance group's fighters have engaged Israeli forces in various locations, and their successes were "beyond expectations."

Qassem also referred to Hezbollah's drone strike on an Israeli training camp near Binyamina, south of Haifa, which reportedly killed four Israeli soldiers and injured many others.

Concluding his address, Qassem issued a warning: "If the war persists, more settlements will become uninhabitable. If the Zionist regime chooses to continue, we will continue."

In an earlier speech on October 8, Qassem had assured that Hezbollah's leadership and military capabilities remain intact despite the ongoing conflict.

# IRAN NEWS



## Iran Air Cancels Flights to Europe

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) spokesman has announced that flagship airline Iran Air has canceled all flights to Europe. Jafar Yazari said that the cancellations came after the European Union imposed sanctions on Iranian airlines, including Iran Air, Saha Airlines and Mahan Air. He explained that Iran Air will stop flights to Europe as it is no longer able to receive permits for landing at European airports and to prevent passenger disruptions. The official said COA would take necessary measures to facilitate travel for passengers to European destinations under the current sanctions. On Monday, the EU approved new sanctions against seven Iranian individuals and seven entities, including the above-mentioned airlines under the pretext of sending ballistic missiles to Russia for use in the Ukraine war.

## Russia's Central Bank Set to Purchase Rial Soon



TEHRAN - Kambiz Mirkarimi, a member of the Iran-Russia Joint Chamber of Commerce, discussed the potential formation of a platform for cross-border payments among BRICS member countries in an interview with ILNA.

He said that previously, the presidents of China, Brazil, and Russia—key BRICS members—had suggested eliminating the use of the US dollar and euro in trade between BRICS countries, proposing instead the creation of a new currency. Several options were considered, including creating a new joint currency or using the currency of a member country with greater stability as the basis for transactions.

Mirkarimi added that in the trade between Iran and Russia, the two countries are already conducting some transactions in their national currencies. Currently, part of the trade is settled in rubles, and the Central Bank of Iran purchases rubles. He also revealed that Russia's Central Bank is expected to begin purchasing and holding Iranian rials in the near future. However, some Iranian companies avoid using the existing banking systems between Iran and Russia and instead settle their transactions through third-country intermediaries, often based in the UAE. This is due to the discrepancy between the official currency rates on the NIMA system and the rates in Iran's open market, along with the fact that ruble reserves in Iran exceed rial reserves in Russia because Iran exports less to Russia than it imports.

Mirkarimi also noted that ruble-based transactions are not exclusive to Iran and Russia, as India and Russia also trade using rubles and rupees. Additionally, Russia has designated smaller banks in China, and Russian companies have opened non-resident accounts in these Chinese banks to settle their commercial transactions using Russia's national currency.

## Tehran and Baku Emphasize Pursuing and Expanding Joint Energy Projects



TEHRAN - Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad, in a meeting with Shahin Mustafayev, highlighted the deep civilizational, historical, and national ties between Iran and Azerbaijan, stating that these shared connections bring the two nations closer. He emphasized that in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, neighboring countries hold a special priority, and among them, the position of the Republic of Azerbaijan is unique. He expressed hope that during the term of Iran's 14th government, there would be an improvement in the cooperation between the two countries.

Paknejad further noted that the oil and energy sectors are key areas for the expansion of economic relations with Azerbaijan. He stated that Iran welcomes any initiative proposed by Azerbaijan to enhance the level of cooperation in these fields.

The Oil Minister emphasized the establishment of a joint working group between the two countries to accelerate the development of cooperation in the energy sector. He assigned the International Affairs and Commerce Department of the Ministry of Oil the responsibility of forming and actively participating in this working group.

During the meeting, Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister, Shahin Mustafayev, congratulated Paknejad on his new position as the Oil Minister and said that there are currently extensive relations between Iran and Azerbaijan, built on deep-rooted connections. The purpose of their visit to Iran was to review bilateral relations and discuss the implementation of future projects.

Mustafayev referred to his meeting with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian the previous day, stating that the President is keen on developing relations with Azerbaijan. He also noted that Ilham Aliyev, the President of Azerbaijan, places great importance on mutual relations with Iran and has reaffirmed his commitment to the execution of both current and future joint projects.

Mustafayev also welcomed the formation of the joint working group between Iran and Azerbaijan to follow up and advance bilateral projects.

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



## Iran and Indonesia Aim for \$20b Trade

TEHRAN - Yadollah Tahernajad, the head of the Iran-Indonesia Joint Committee at the Iran Chamber of Commerce, explained the details of establishing preferential trade between Iran and Indonesia in an interview with ILNA.

He stated that during President Ebrahim Raisi's visit to Indonesia, a preferential trade agreement was reached between the two countries. The parties agreed to increase trade volume to \$20 billion, while the current figure stands at less than \$1 billion. This vision marks a significant step toward expanding trade between Iran and Indonesia. Achieving this requires certain preconditions, one of which is the establishment of preferential tariffs in trade. However, this issue was not resolved during the 13th government and has been pursued by the 14th government, with the agreement signed by Mr. Pezeshkian. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade has not yet issued the necessary directives, and this implementation requires a clear and executable framework. It should also be noted that economic players are actively following this matter.

Tahernajad added that the preferential tariff for the export of goods from Iran to Indonesia is like a one-sided visa waiver. However, there is no preferential tariff defined for the export of goods from Indonesia to Iran.

Iran's exports to Indonesia significantly exceed its imports from Indonesia, but both countries have the potential to substantially grow the value of their trade. Indonesia has a population of around 290 million, making the prospect of \$20 billion in trade not far-fetched.

Tahernajad pointed out that currently, bitumen, steel, and petrochemical products are three key goods with the potential for over \$1 billion in exports from Iran to Indonesia. However, the range of exportable goods is not limited to these items and includes finished products as well. Paper, rubber, and coffee are the main goods imported from Indonesia to Iran.

The head of the Iran-Indonesia Joint Committee emphasized that certain prerequisites, such as establishing banking transactions, improving transportation, and creating direct flights between the two countries, are essential for achieving the \$20 billion trade goal, but these conditions are not yet in place.

He also reminded that Iranian traders face significant challenges in financial exchanges with Indonesia, bearing considerable risks. Nevertheless, the complexities found in Iran's trade with other countries do not exist with Indonesia, and due to shared religious and cultural ties, many issues progress more rapidly.

## Minister of Agriculture Feted With Azizul Haq International Rural Development Award



TEHRAN - The Director-General of the Center on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) presented the Azizul Haq Rural Development Award to Iran's Minister of Agriculture in recognition of the Islamic Republic of Iran's efforts in advancing rural development and combating poverty.

During a meeting between Gholamreza Noori and Chandrasekhara, Director-General of CIRDAP, the two discussed Iran's Ministry of Agriculture's successful initiatives in rural development, employment creation, poverty alleviation, and human resource development, as well as its rural communication networks.

The Minister of Agriculture emphasized a rural-centered policy, asserting that agricultural development in Iran is deeply intertwined with the development of rural areas. He highlighted that supporting farmers and agricultural producers is one of the ministry's key strategies.

Chandrasekhara expressed appreciation for Iran's policies and its alignment with CIRDAP's international programs aimed at achieving global rural development goals. He awarded the Azizul Haq medal to the Minister of Agriculture in recognition of these efforts.

The Azizul Haq Award is named in honor of the late founder of

CIRDAP, a Bangladeshi thinker, philosopher, and policymaker who played a significant role in organizing and developing the rural community of Comilla. The award is given to individuals, institutions, and organizations that are actively involved in rural development.

It is noteworthy that CIRDAP, established in 1979 as a regional intergovernmental organization, works closely with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. Its headquarters are in Bangladesh, and the organization currently has 15 member countries, including Iran, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam.

The Islamic Republic of Iran became a member of CIRDAP in 2004, following a law passed by the Iranian Parliament.

The Minister of Agriculture serves as Iran's representative on the CIRDAP Governing Council, and the Agricultural Planning, Economic, and Rural Development Research Institute of the Ministry of Agriculture acts as Iran's Country Linked Institute (CLI), representing the nation on CIRDAP's executive and technical committees.

## Roadmap for Achieving 15m Tons of Transit Between Tehran and Baku to Be Developed



TEHRAN - Minister of Roads and Urban Development has called for the development of a roadmap to achieve the annual transit target of 15 million tons of goods between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Farzaneh Sadegh stated during a joint meeting with "Shahin Mustafayev," the Deputy Prime Minister of Azerbaijan: "The expansion of relations with the Republic of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and I am confident that these relations will be further enhanced in the future for the benefit of both countries."

Expressing satisfaction with the reopening of the Azerbaijani embassy in Tehran, Sadegh said, "We are ready to develop relations between the two countries in all sectors, and we can hold the 16th Joint Economic Commission between the two countries in Tehran as soon as possible to review all areas of cooperation."

Sadegh continued: "The cooperation between the two countries in all areas of transportation, logistics, and infrastructure projects is continuously progressing."

She added: "Iran has initiated the construction of the Rasht-Astara railway, which is a turning point in the development of the North-South Corridor. The participation of the Azerbaijani government in the development of railway infrastructure leading to this route is of great importance."

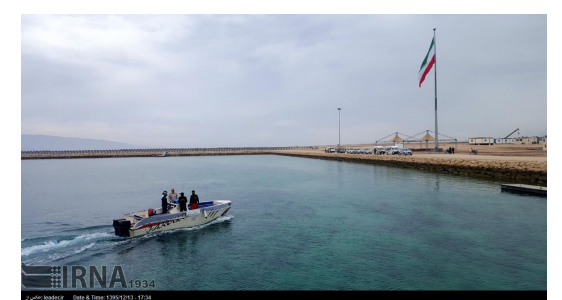
The Minister of Roads and Urban Development emphasized: "Considering the current border capacities in the road sector, I suggest increasing the daily acceptance of vehicles at the Astara border to 1,000 vehicles, at Bileh Savar to 800 vehicles, at Jolfa to 700 vehicles, and at Poldasht to 600 vehicles."

She stressed the need for a comprehensive memorandum of understanding (MoU) on transportation cooperation between the two countries, stating: "As infrastructure develops, the flow of transportation should also accelerate, and we can arrange the necessary preparations for the meeting and the MoU within the next month."

Sadegh also mentioned the necessity of preparing a roadmap to achieve the annual goal of 15 million tons of goods transit between the two countries.

Regarding the development of port and maritime cooperation, she added: "A joint expert meeting must be held in the next month to finalize the draft cooperation agreement."

## Removing Barriers to Investment a Key Priority for Free Trade Zones



TEHRAN - The Secretary of the Supreme Council of Free Trade-Industrial and Special Economic Zones announced that eliminating obstacles to domestic and foreign investment, in line with the Supreme Leader's directives on boosting production and creating jobs, is among the government's top economic priorities for Free Trade Zones under the 14th administration.

Reza Masroor, the Secretary of the Supreme Council, highlighted these priorities during a meeting with the Council's deputies and heads of Free Trade Zone organizations on Monday, October 14, 2024.

Masroor emphasized the importance of infrastructure development and the need for collaboration between the parliament and judiciary to improve laws and regulations. He stressed that removing barriers to investment and fulfilling the Supreme Leader's goals for production and job creation are key elements of the government's economic agenda for Free Trade Zones.

He also discussed implementing goal-based management within the Secretariat of the Free Trade Zones, noting that it requires active participation from employees in setting goals and precise planning to achieve them. This approach, he said, could enhance the performance and efficiency of the Secretariat.

Masroor called for the establishment of a committee focused on simplifying processes and regulations in Free Trade and Special Economic Zones. He explained that streamlining these processes would contribute to good governance and improve satisfaction among residents and economic actors in the zones.

## Austrian Conservatives Again Rule Out Far-Right Alliance

VIENNA (Dispatches) - The leader of the conservative Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), Chancellor Karl Nehammer, said after a meeting with far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) leader Herbert Kickl that he remains opposed to joining a government with Kickl in it.

The eurosceptic, Russia-friendly FPÖ won a parliamentary election for the first time on Sept. 29 but with 29% of the vote it would need to assemble a coalition to command a majority in parliament and form a government. Kickl says he should be chancellor but other parties have ruled out an alliance.

President Alexander Van der Bellen, who oversees the formation of governments, said last week the leaders of the three parties with the most votes should meet this week to see if they "really mean what they have said".

"I will not be an enabler for Herbert Kickl," Nehammer told a brief press conference after his meeting with the FPÖ leader, the first of the three face-to-face encounters.



## Taiwan Reports Record 153 Chinese Aircraft Near Island



TAIPEI (Dispatches) - Taiwan detected a record 153 Chinese military aircraft around the self-ruled island, official data showed Tuesday, after China held a day of large-scale drills.

The aircraft were spotted in the 25 hours to 6:00 am on Tuesday (2200 GMT Monday), the defence ministry said in a statement -- the most for a single day.

Beijing deployed fighter jets, drones, warships and coast guard boats to encircle Taiwan on Monday, with Taiwan responding by dispatching "appropriate forces" and placing its outlying islands on heightened alert.

Taiwan condemned China's actions as "irrational and provocative", and the US called them "unwarranted".

Japan said Tuesday it had expressed its "concerns" to China over the drills, and scrambled fighter jets near its southern island of Yonaguni.

"The government is closely monitoring the related activities with great interest, and has conveyed Japan's concerns to the Chinese side," deputy chief cabinet secretary Kazuhiko Aoki told reporters.

Taiwan's foreign ministry on Tuesday urged China "not to cause trouble for no reason and become a troublemaker that undermines peace and stability".

China claims Taiwan as part of its territory and insisted Monday it will never renounce the use of force to bring the island under its control.

Beijing has ramped up military pressure on Taipei in recent years to accept its claims of sovereignty over the island, and Monday represented the fourth round of large-scale drills in just over two years.

Taiwan's defence ministry also recorded 14 Chinese navy ships in the latest 25-hour period, slightly fewer than the 17 announced Monday afternoon.

Of the aircraft spotted, 111 crossed the median line of the sensitive Taiwan Strait that separates mainland China and Taiwan, the figures showed.

The United States said China's actions on Monday were "unwarranted" and risked "escalation" as it called on Beijing to act with restraint.

China said the drills, dubbed Joint Sword 2024B, were held in areas to the north, south and east of Taiwan.

## U.S. Says It Opposes Scope of Israeli Air Strikes in Beirut

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States, Israel's closest ally, said it opposed the scope of the country's air strikes in Beirut over the past few weeks amid a rising death toll and fears of wider escalation involving Iran.

Israeli military evacuation orders were also affecting more than a quarter of Lebanon, according to the U.N. refugee agency, two weeks after Israel began incursions into the south of the country that it says are aimed at pushing back Hezbollah.

Some Western countries have been pushing for a ceasefire between the two neighbours, as well as in Gaza, though the United States says it continues to support Israel and was sending an anti-missile system and troops.

On Tuesday, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said the U.S. had expressed its concerns to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's administration on the recent strikes.

"When it comes to the scope and nature of the bombing campaign that we saw in Beirut over the past few weeks, it's something that we made clear to the government of Israel we had concerns with and we were opposed to," he told reporters, adopting a harsher tone than Washington has taken so far.

Separately, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin wrote to Israeli officials on Sunday demanding concrete measures to address the worsening situation in Gaza and telling them to take specific actions within 30 days, U.S. officials said.

Israel has been turning up the heat on Hezbollah since it began incursions into Lebanon after killing Hezbollah leaders and commanders, including its veteran secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah last month in the biggest blow to the group in decades.

On Tuesday, Netanyahu told President Emmanuel Macron of France during a phone conversation that he opposed a unilateral ceasefire and said he was "taken aback" by Macron's plan to hold a conference on Lebanon, according to an Israeli readout.

The Israeli military said on Tuesday it had captured three members of Hezbollah's elite Radwan forces, adding that they had

been moved to Israel for investigation. Hezbollah has not commented.

Its deputy chief Naim Qassem said earlier on Tuesday the Iran-backed group would inflict "pain" on Israel but he also called for a ceasefire.

"After the ceasefire, according to an indirect agreement, the settlers would return to the north and other steps will be drawn up," Qassem said in a recorded speech.

There was no immediate comment from Israel, which says its operation in Lebanon aims to secure the return of tens of thousands of residents forced to flee their homes in northern Israel because of Hezbollah attacks.

Qassem said more Israelis will be displaced and "hundreds of thousands, even more than two million, will be in danger at any time, at any hour, on any day".

The health ministry said 41 people were killed and 124 were wounded on Monday. Around 50 Israelis, both soldiers and civilians, have been killed since fighting began, according to Israel.

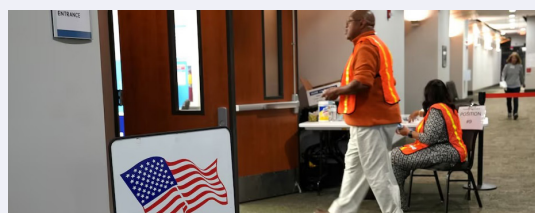
The figures underscore the heavy price Lebanese are paying as Israel tries to destroy the Iran-backed militant group's infrastructure in their conflict, which resumed a year ago when it began firing rockets at Israel in support of Hamas at the start of the Gaza war.

The U.N. refugee agency's Middle East director, Rema Jamous Imsej, said Israeli repeated evacuation orders to scores of villages in southern Lebanon meant over a quarter of the country was now affected.

"People are heeding these calls to evacuate, and they're fleeing with almost nothing," she told a briefing in Geneva.

Israel expanded its bombing campaign in Lebanon on Monday, killing at least 22 people in a strike in the north on a house where displaced people were sheltering, health officials said.

## Georgia Reports Record Turnout as Early Voting Begins in U.S.



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Voters in Georgia turned out in record numbers as the battleground state opened early voting for the Nov. 5 presidential election between Democrat Kamala Harris and Republican Donald Trump, state officials said on Tuesday.

At least 252,000 voters had cast ballots at early-voting sites as of 4 p.m. EDT (2000 GMT), nearly double the 136,000 who participated in the first day of early voting in the 2020 election, said Gabriel Sterling, Georgia's No. 2 election official. "Spectacular turnout," he wrote on social media.

Early voting, either in person or by mail, has become increasingly popular with U.S. voters. Nearly 1 in 7 voters cast their ballots ahead of Election Day in 2020, according to the University of Florida's Election Lab. However, many Republicans opposed the dramatic expansion of mail voting that year, saying it was less secure than in-person voting, and Trump cited false claims of mail ballot fraud as he sought unsuccessfully to overturn his defeat by Democrat Joe Biden.

Some Republicans continue to insist that voters should be able to cast their ballots only in person on Election Day, though party officials are encouraging supporters to vote ahead of time.

Nationwide, 5.5 million Americans have already voted this year, according to Election Lab. By contrast, 27 million people had cast their ballots at this point in the 2020 election as voters sought to avoid crowded polling places during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## North Korea Blows Up Inter-Korean Road, Rail Lines Near Border

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korea blew up sections of inter-Korean roads and rail lines on its side of the heavily fortified border between the two Koreas on Tuesday, prompting South Korea's military to fire warning shots.

Pyongyang said last week it would cut off the inter-Korean roads and railways entirely and further fortify the areas on its side of the border as part of its push for a "two-state" system scrapping its longstanding goal of unification.

At around midday on Tuesday, some northern parts of road and rail lines connected to the South were destroyed, the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said.

Seoul's unification ministry, which handles cross-border affairs, condemned the incident as a clear violation of past inter-Korean agreements, calling it "highly abnormal."

"It is deplorable that North Korea is repeatedly conducting such regressive behaviour," ministry spokesperson Koo Byoung-sam told a briefing.

Tensions mounted after the North last week accused Seoul of sending drones over Pyongyang. North Korea said the drones scattered a "huge number" of anti-North leaflets, and Kim Yo Jong, leader Kim Jong Un's powerful sister, warned on Tuesday that Seoul would "pay a dear price".

South Korea's government has declined to say whether the South Korean military or civilians had flown the alleged drones.

The two Koreas have also clashed over balloons of trash floated since May from North Korea. Pyongyang has said the launches are a response to balloons sent by anti-regime activists in the South.

After Tuesday's demolitions, video released by the South's military showed an explosion and a plume of smoke rising above an area of road where the North had put up a black barrier.

It also showed several dump trucks and earth-movers approaching with a group of North Korean military officials observing and guiding the vehicles.



In response to the blasts, the South's military fired warning shots south of the military demarcation line, although there was no damage on Seoul's side of the border, it said.

Pyongyang has been taking steps to sever inter-Korean ties, redefining the South as a separate, hostile enemy state, since Kim Jong Un declared it a "primary foe" early this year and said unification was no longer possible.

The two Koreas are still technically at war after their 1950-53 war ended in an armistice, not a peace treaty.

The cross-border roads and railways are remnants of rapprochement that included a 2018 summit. Seoul has funnelled more than \$132 million into rebuilding the links in the form of cheap loans to Pyongyang, unification ministry data showed.

"It was a major inter-Korean cooperation project that was carried out upon the request from the North," said ministry spokesperson Koo, adding Pyongyang was still obliged to repay the loans.

In 2020, the North blew up a joint liaison office set up in a border town after nuclear talks with the United States collapsed.

South Korea filed a lawsuit in 2023 against the North, seeking damages of around 45 billion won (\$33 million) from the joint office's demolition.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a press briefing that Beijing was concerned about developments and wanted "to avoid further escalation of the conflict."

The government of South Korea's Gyeonggi Province bordering the North said on Tuesday a special police force would be brought in to crack down on the practice of flying anti-North Korea leaflets from some border areas.

South Korea's constitutional court overturned a ban on such launches last year.

Proponents say leaflet campaigns should be respected as freedom of speech but critics and some lawmakers say police should block them if they threaten lives and safety.

## Macron Blasts Israel PM

PARIS (Dispatches) - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu should not forget his country was created as a result of a resolution adopted by the United Nations, French President Emmanuel Macron told Cabinet urging Israel to abide by UN decisions.

Tensions have increased between Netanyahu and Macron with the French leader last week insisting that stopping the export of weapons used by Israel in Gaza and Lebanon was the only way to stop the conflicts.

France has also repeatedly denounced Israeli fire against UN peacekeepers in southern Lebanon, who include a French contingent.

"Mr Netanyahu must not forget that his country was created by a decision of the UN," Macron told the weekly French cabinet meeting, referring to the resolution adopted in November 1947 by the United Nations



General Assembly on the plan to partition Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state.

"Therefore this is not the time to disregard the decisions of the UN," he added, as Israel wages a ground offensive against the Iran-backed Shiite militant group Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, where the UN peacekeepers are deployed.

His comments from the closed door meeting at the Elysee Palace were quoted by a participant who spoke to AFP and asked not to be named.

UN Security Council Resolution 1701 states that only the Lebanese army and the UN peacekeeping mission UNIFIL should be deployed in southern Lebanon.

Netanyahu on Sunday called on the UN to move the 10,000 strong peacekeeping force, who include 700 French troops, deployed in south Lebanon out of "harm's way", saying Hezbollah was using them as "human shields".

## Portugal Close in on Nations League Quarters With Scotland Draw



GLASGOW (Dispatches) - Portugal all but sealed a berth in the Nations League quarter-finals with a 0-0 draw away to Scotland, the first points Roberto Martinez's side have dropped in their four games. The Portuguese remain top of Group A1 with 10 points, three ahead of Croatia, who drew 3-3 away to Poland, while the Scots are bottom on one point. The third-placed Poles have four points with the top two in the group moving into the last eight. Martinez said his men were missing "a bit of magic in the area". "We had a lot of desire, we worked very well without the ball," the Spanish manager told Sport TV. "It was a dangerous game because we could have had possession, but Scotland needed very little to score a goal. We showed freshness, but we lacked freshness in the final third." Portugal were on the front foot for most of the night but squandered chances including a sitter early in the second half for Cristiano Ronaldo, who had scored in their previous three games. Unmarked in the box, he put a diving header over the bar. The 39-year-old Ronaldo earned another ironic cheer from Scotland's "Tartan Army" when he sent a bicycle kick wide. Asked if Portugal lacked a Plan B, Martinez said: "Our talent, our players, is plan A, B, C, D, E. "We have players on the inside, on the outside, we're talking about a team that didn't take risks, that defended very well. We're talking about a team (Portugal) that got into the final third 53 times. We have to give credit to Scotland and to ourselves for managing to keep a clean sheet."

The hosts also had chances on a night when they were plagued by careless turnovers as Scott McTominay narrowly missed with a header before the game was five minutes old. Ben Doak laid the ball back to Andy Robertson and the captain found the unmarked McTominay with a pinpoint cross but the midfielder headed it straight at goalkeeper Diogo Costa. Scotland keeper Craig Gordon made a handful of terrific saves in the dying minutes against a swarming Portugal side. The Hampden Park crowd erupted when Gordon dived to block a shot from Bruno Fernandes and then corralled the ball before Ronaldo could get there for the rebound. Meanwhile European champions Spain claimed a place in the Nations League quarter-finals with a 3-0 home win over Serbia thanks to goals by Aymeric Laporte, Alvaro Morata and Alex Baena. With two games left, Spain have secured at least a second-place finish as they top League A Group Four with 10 points, three ahead of Denmark and six clear of Serbia, with Switzerland bottom on one point after a 2-2 home draw with the Danes. Spain were missing several players from the team that beat England 2-1 in the Euro 2024 final in July but still outclassed Serbia with 30 shots against three from the visitors. Defender Laporte gave the Spaniards the lead with a close-range header in the fifth minute and Morata, who missed a penalty in the 54th, extended Spain's lead with a strike from just inside the box after 65 minutes.

## Mbappé to Take Legal Action for Libel



PARIS (AFP) - Kylian Mbappé was "shocked" to see his name linked to a Swedish rape investigation, his lawyer told AFP Tuesday. The France captain, however, is "at ease" because "he has done nothing wrong", lawyer Marie-Alix Canu-Bernard said. A Swedish prosecutor said Tuesday that a rape investigation had been opened without mentioning Mbappé, following media reports that the Real Madrid and France star was the suspect following a visit with friends to Stockholm. Swedish newspapers Affonbladet and Expressen, and public broadcaster SVT all reported that 25-year-old Mbappé was the target of the investigation, following his two-day visit to the Nordic capital last week. Mbappé's lawyer Canu-Bernard said the player was "not aware of the extent of the media frenzy, but is completely calm and does not understand what he could be accused of". "He is stunned to hear that it could concern him. He preferred to go to training and asked my office not to leave things as they are because it is impossible to let yourself be slandered and defamed in this way. "This is the reason why we are going to file a complaint for libel." The lawyer said she could neither confirm nor deny claims in Swedish media that Mbappé was the suspect. "We read the press," Canu-Bernard said. "The Stockholm prosecutor's office issued a statement, but it does not allow us to know whether Kylian Mbappé is the target. "I therefore have no information allowing me to confirm whether this is indeed a complaint filed against him."

## Jarry Ousts Home-Country Favorite in Stockholm

LONDON (Dispatches) - Fifth seed Nicolas Jarry fended off a match point at the BNP Paribas Nordic Open, topping Sweden's Elias Ymer 2-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7) in Stockholm. Jarry won despite putting up 54 unforced errors against 28 winners, absorbing Ymer's 12 aces and falling behind a set. After Jarry failed to capitalize on a 6-5 lead in the third-set tiebreaker, Ymer went ahead 7-6 and served for the match before Jarry fought back to score the final three points. In the second round, the Chilean will take on Miomir Kecmanovic of Serbia, who ousted Great Britain's Cameron Norrie 6-4, 6-4. Jacob Fearnley, a British qualifier, won his first ATP Tour hard-court match, defeating Corentin Moutet of France 6-2, 7-6 (5). Also moving on are Frenchman Alexandre Muller and Serbia's Laslo Djere, who next will meet the fourth seed Tommy Paul, the 2021 Stockholm champion. Fifth-seeded Jiri Lehecka topped Jaume Munar of Spain 6-1, 6-4 in Antwerp, Belgium, with the Czech capturing his second first-round win against his opponent in 10 days. Lehecka also defeated Munar in the opening round at the Rolex Shanghai Masters. In other action, eighth seed Marcos Giron got his 100th ATP Tour win, losing only two points on his first serve to Botic van de Zandschulp of the Netherlands in a 6-4, 6-1 win. Other winners were Brazilian qualifier Thiago Seyboth Wild, Roberto Bautista Agut of Spain, Zizou Bergs of



Belgium and Frenchmen Arthur Rinderknech and Hugo Gaston. Russia's Aslan Karatsev upset China's Zhizhen Zhang, the sixth seed, 6-4, 7-6 (2) to advance to the second round in Kazakhstan. A pair of Kazakh players also moved on, including Alexander Shevchenko, who defeated countryman Mikhail Kukushkin, 7-6 (5), 7-6 (4), and Beibit Zhukayev. Adrian Mannarino of France, the eighth seed, outlasted Russian Roman Safiullin 5-7, 7-6 (4), 6-3. Great Britain's Daniel Evans ousted Taro Daniel of Japan, Otto Virtanen of Finland defeated Italy's Fabio Fognini and Canadian Gabriel Diallo held off Australia's Christopher O'Connell. Meanwhile seventh-seeded Anna Kalinskaya of Russia rallied for a 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 win against Australia's Priscilla Hon in the opening round of the Ningbo Open in China. Kalinskaya overcame seven double faults and converted seven of 13 break chances to advance in 2 hours and 18 minutes in the only three-set match of the day. England's Katie Boulter defeated Italy's Sara Errani 6-3, 6-2. China's Ye-Xin Ma rolled to a 6-2, 6-2 victory against compatriot Xiaodi You, Czech Katerina Siniakova beat Poland's Magda Linette 6-2, 6-4, and Germany's Ella Seidel was a 6-3, 6-1 winner over Liechtenstein's Kathinka von Deichmann. Third-seeded Elise Mertens of Belgium crushed Japan's Mai Hontama 6-1, 6-1 in 61 minutes in a first-round match in Osaka.

## Injuries Cost Top Leagues 732m Euros Last Season, Bundesliga Worst Hit



LONDON (Dispatches) - Players in Germany's Bundesliga are most likely to be injured amongst Europe's top five domestic leagues but England's Premier League bears the most injury-related costs, according to a report published on Tuesday. The fourth edition of insurance firm Howden's Men's European Football Injury Index charts the upward trend in injuries recorded in the Premier League, Bundesliga, LaLiga, Ligue 1 and Serie A with a combined 4,123 during the 2023-24 season -- a 4% rise on 2022-23 and 37% more than in 2020-21. Injuries cost clubs a combined 732 million euros (\$797.73 million) last season in wages paid to players while out of action while since the report's first edition in 2020-21, there have been 14,292 injuries in Europe's top leagues, costing clubs 2.3 billion euros in players' salaries. The report comes with player welfare, including injuries, an increasingly hot topic with FIFA's expanded Club World Cup and UEFA's revamped club competitions adding to the workload of already packed domestic schedules. On Monday players' union FIFPRO Europe and the domestic leagues warned that players could be pushed to strike action. James Burrows, Head of Sport at Howden, said the data underlines the ever-increasing physical demands on players. "As fixture congestion intensifies with expanded competitions domestically and internationally, we are seeing more players sidelined for longer periods, with a notable 5% rise in injury costs this season alone," he said. The Howden report highlights a worrying increase in the severity of injuries to Premier League players aged under 21 with each injury equating to an average 44-day lay-off -- up from 26.5 in 2022-23. Knee injuries across all age groups reached a new high with 367 across the top leagues last season, costing clubs a combined 141 million euros. Overall last season, an injury occurred every 92 minutes across the five leagues, costing teams an average of 172,975 euros per game. Bundesliga clubs had an injury every 52 minutes with Darmstadt enduring one every 33 minutes. Borussia Muenchengladbach became only the second team to record more than 100 injuries in a season since the first publication of the report. The Premier League's total number of injuries actually fell from 944 in 2022-23 to 915 in 2023-24, although the English top-flight made up 44% of injury costs for the five leagues last season. Injuries last season cost Premier League clubs a combined 318 million euros, compared to LaLiga's 142 million. Manchester United had the highest injury cost figure in the Premier League last season with 39 million euros being paid to players unavailable because of 75 injuries. Newcastle United were the most injured team with 76.

## Tuchel Signs Contract to Become New England Manager

LONDON (Dispatches) - Former Chelsea head coach Thomas Tuchel has signed a contract to become the new England manager, it was widely reported by British media on Tuesday. The Football Association's chief executive Mark Bullingham will host a news conference at Wembley when the 51-year-old German's appointment is expected to be confirmed. Tuchel will become the third foreign manager to take charge of England but the first from Germany. Sweden's Sven-Goran Eriksson and Italian Fabio Capello also held the post. Known for his progressive football, Tuchel replaced Frank Lampard at Chelsea in January 2021 and led them to the Champions League title that season, beating Manchester City in the final. Lee Carsley, England's under-21 manager, has been in temporary charge since the resignation of Gareth Southgate after England's defeat by Spain in the Euro 2024 final in July. Carsley had looked the favourite to land the role on a full-time basis but a shambolic home defeat by Greece in the Nations League on Thursday appears to have undermined his chances. Manchester City's serial title-winner Pep Guardiola was also reported to be in the mix but the Football Association has opted for Tuchel, who has been out of work since leaving Bayern Munich at the end of last season. Bayern finished third in the Bundesliga, behind Bayer Leverkusen and VfB Stuttgart -- the first time they failed to win the title since 2011-12. Tuchel built his reputation as a forward-thinking tactician in the Bundesliga after taking over from Juergen Klopp at Mainz 05 in 2009. When Klopp left Borussia Dortmund at the end of the 2014-15



campaign, Tuchel also replaced him there, leading the team to German Cup success in 2017. He joined Paris St Germain the following year, replacing Unai Emery and winning back-to-back French league titles. Tuchel also took PSG to their first Champions League final in 2020, which they lost to Bayern, before leaving for Chelsea. Tuchel was unbeaten in his first 14 matches for Chelsea in all competitions -- a club record -- and took them to Champions League glory against City. His time at Bayern was mixed and he will now be tasked with finally getting England over the line in major competitions after several near misses under Southgate. England, who have not won anything since the 1966 World Cup, reached a World Cup semi-final and two European championship finals under Southgate but fell just short despite boasting a squad full of world-class talent. Southgate's tactics often came under fire with many labelling him too conservative, and Tuchel's task will be to harness the full attacking potential of the likes of Jude Bellingham, Phil Foden and England's record scorer Harry Kane. He will also have to deal with the intense scrutiny that comes with one of the most challenging jobs in soccer. According to British media reports, the FA informally reached out to Manchester City boss Guardiola at the start of the season. Guardiola's contract expires at the end of the current campaign. Carsley was hesitant when asked if he was interested in the permanent position, repeatedly saying his remit was to guide the team through six Nations League games.