

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi Has Issued a Warning to the United States After President Joe Biden Said He Knows "How and When" Israel Would Attack Iran

IRAN NEWS

The Assassination of the Leaders and Commanders of the Resistance Front Will Not Weaken the Islamic Nation's Resistance Against Bullying and Occupation, Says President Masoud Pezeshkian

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Resistance Won't Stop for a Moment After Sinwar's Martyrdom



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says the resistance movement will not stop for even a moment after the martyrdom of Hamas Leader Yahya Sinwar.

Ayatollah Khamenei issued a message of condolence on Saturday on the martyrdom of Sinwar who was martyred in the terrorist act of the Zionist regime on Thursday.

Addressing Muslim nations and the courageous youth of the region, he offered both congratulations and condolences over the incident.

Hamas is alive and will remain alive despite the loss of its influential leaders, Ayatollah Khamenei noted.

Describing Sinwar as a shining image of Resistance and struggle, the Supreme Leader underlined that the Martyr stood with unwavering determination against the cruel enemy, striking them with his acumen and courage.

He struck the irreparable blow of October 7 (to the Zionist regime) that will be remembered as a part of the history of this region, Ayatollah Khamenei said.

For one like him who had dedicated his life to the battle against the usurping cruel enemy, anything less than martyrdom would have been an unworthy fate, the Supreme Leader underscored.

Indeed, his loss is painful for the Resistance Front. However, this front did not halt its progress in the wake of the martyrdoms of eminent figures such as Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Fathi Shaqaqi, Rantisi, and Ismail Haniyeh. Similarly, it will not falter the least with the martyrdom of Sinwar either, Ayatollah Khamenei said.

Following the martyrdom of Sinwar, in a condolence message on Friday, President Masoud Pezeshkian extended his condolences over the sad incident.

Iran-Russia Comprehensive Agreement to Be Inked in Bilateral Meeting



MOSCOW (IRNA) - The Iranian and Russian presidents have decided to sign the comprehensive cooperation agreement in a bilateral meeting. Iran's Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali said, dismissing speculations that the deal would be inked in the forthcoming BRICS meeting in Tartarstan.

Tehran and Moscow agreed to sign the document in a separate meeting from the BRICS summit as the latter may overshadow the glory of such a signing ceremony, Jalali told IRNA on Friday.

Iran and Russia are determined to finalize the cooperation agreement in a bilateral meeting in the future, the ambassador added.

He explained that the finalization of the agreement, on which Iranian and Russian officials have been working for three years, was delayed after the martyrdom of former Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash in northwest Iran in May.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian visited Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on Friday and met with Russian President Vladimir Putin for the first time since he took office in July.

In the meeting, Pezeshkian expressed hope that the signing ceremony of the comprehensive agreement would be held soon.

Putin, too, invited his Iranian counterpart to visit Russia to have bilateral talks.

The two presidents' meeting was held on the sidelines of the International Forum "Interconnection of Times and Civilizations - Basis of Peace and Development" in the Turkmen capital on Friday.

Iran Welcomes Progress in Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Talks



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has welcomed the progress in the process of peace negotiations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Araqchi was speaking at the 3+3 South Caucasus Regional Cooperation Platform in Istanbul, Türkiye, on Friday.

The third meeting of the 3+3 South Caucasus Regional Cooperation Platform was held in Istanbul with the participation of the foreign ministers of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Iran, and the Russian Federation.

The meeting was concluded with a joint declaration released by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

It said the primary objective of this platform is to enhance multilateral cooperation in the South Caucasus, based on mutual benefit and guided by the principle of regional ownership.

The meeting addressed matters regarding the establishment of lasting peace and stability, as well as regional development in the South Caucasus. An exchange of views was also held on deepening regional cooperation through concrete projects.

The joint declaration emphasized the contributions of regional economic cooperation to confidence building between countries, as well as to prosperity and stability. It was agreed to explore cooperation opportunities in the fields of transport, communication, trade, energy, investment, and connectivity.

The declaration also underscored the importance of promoting peace and stability in the region through dialogue.

Araqchi termed the 3+3 regional cooperation mechanism as a symbol of the will of these countries to resolve regional issues by the regional countries.

Welcoming Armenia-Azerbaijan peace talks, Araqchi said Iran respects the countries' territorial integrity, national sovereignty, and internationally recognized borders, as well as avoiding resorting to or threatening to use force as requirements for lasting peace in the region.

Referring to the ongoing brutal crimes committed by the Zionist regime in Gaza and Lebanon, he censured the silence of the US and some Western countries as a symbol of hypocrisy.

Meanwhile the spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry says Tehran is ready to promote stability and friendship in the Caucasus region based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all regional states.

Esmael Baghaei made the remark in a post on his X account on Friday following Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi's participation in the third meeting of the 3+3 regional cooperation platform in the Turkish city of Istanbul.

"Iran stands ready to work with other partners to make the Caucasus a sphere of stability, friendship, and prosperity based on respect for sovereignty, sovereign equality, and territorial integrity of all regional states," Baghaei wrote.

The Iranian spokesman stressed the necessity to promote economic cooperation and connectivity as well as people to people ties with the purpose of consolidating peace and stability in the Caucasus region.

The 3+3 consultative platform, comprising the three South Caucasus countries of Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan plus Russia, Turkey, and Iran, was established in an attempt to settle regional issues without foreign interference.

The first 3+3 meeting was held in Moscow, Russia, in December 2021 at the level of deputy foreign ministers and without the presence of Georgia.

The second was held in Tehran on October 23 with the participation of the foreign ministers of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Russia and Turkey.

The dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region had been at the center of talks.

The land-locked region has always been internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan though it is mostly populated by ethnic Armenians.

Azerbaijan won the 2020 war, regaining much of the Nagorno-Karabakh. Another battle in September left the entire territory under the control of the Baku government after months of blockade.

Tripling of Russian Cargo Transit Through Iran

TEHRAN - Following the onset of the Russia-Ukraine war, predictions suggested an increase in Russian cargo transiting through Iran en route to India. However, these expectations have not been fully realized. According to the Secretary of the Shipping Companies Association, only 1% of transit cargo between Russia and India has passed through Iran during this period.

Javad Hedayati, Director General of the Transit and International Transport Office at Iran's Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization, explained to IRNA why the North-South Corridor has not met expectations post the Russia-Ukraine war. He pointed out that a major factor is the nature of Russia's main cargo—coal—which is considered low-cost and high-volume. This type of cargo is generally more suited for sea transport.

He emphasized that it is more cost-effective for cargo owners to transport bulk goods like coal and grains via sea routes. Therefore, it is not economically viable for Russia to move such cargo through the North-South Corridor to India. While the war has increased the demand for transporting these goods through this corridor, he asserted that if a better and cheaper route opens, the bulk of these goods will inevitably be shifted to sea routes, as they are primarily sea-friendly.

Hedayati also mentioned the establishment of a joint Russia-India maritime route, which has significantly reduced transport costs.



The FESCO shipping line, launched by Russia and India to the port of Nava Shiva, has reduced shipping costs to around \$4,000. Due to the large volume of goods being transported by sea, these costs can drop even further, making maritime transit more cost-effective for cargo owners.

He continued by explaining that no matter what steps are taken to enhance the North-South Corridor, the shipping costs will not drop below \$4,000. Thus, Iran needs to focus on commercializing cargo that can make the North-South Corridor economically viable and sustainable. In addition to costs, transit time is also a crucial factor in determining the competitiveness of this route.

Hedayati highlighted that there is demand for the transit of certain goods like potash and other chemicals between Russia and India via the North-South Corridor. He stressed the importance of focusing on containerized cargo to ensure that transit through this corridor remains commercially competitive with other regional routes, even in peacetime.

The Director General further noted that, despite challenges, there has been a significant increase in the volume of Russian cargo passing through the North-South Corridor. In the first six months of this year, road transit saw a 61% growth. In 2022, the volume of transit cargo entering Iran through Astara, most of which originated from Russia, was around 320,000 tons. This figure tripled in 2023, reaching 1.08 million tons, and growth remains evident in 2024 as well.

IRGC Chief Exalts Martyred Hamas Leader



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The chief commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) honors the memory of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas' martyred Political Bureau Chief, Yahya Sinwar, who was assassinated in a direct clash with the Israeli forces on the battlefield in southern Gaza.

In a statement, Major General Hossein Salami praised Sinwar as "the untiring fighter and elite member of the Palestinian Islamic resistance" as well as "the legend of struggle against the criminal and ruthless Zionist regime."

The Hamas leader's martyrdom serves to "further stoke the flames of wrath of anti-Zionist resistance," Salami added, saying Sinwar's name now shines along the names of other heroic resistance leaders such as his predecessor Ismail Haniyeh and Hamas' founder Ahmad Yassin.

"By God's grace, this wrath will turn the usurpers of the holy land [of Palestine] into ashes in the not-too-distant future," the Iranian commander stated.

He hailed Sinwar for turning Hamas into a powerful organization and serving as a "terrible nightmare for the Zionists and making the usurping regime and its supporters tremble [in fear]" upon becoming the movement's political leader.

Salami also praised the martyred resistance leader for his successful commandship of such resistance operations as the al-Aqsa Storm that was carried out by Gaza's resistance groups last year, during which they stormed the occupied Palestinian territories, encircled Israeli military bases and illegal settlements, and took 240 Zionists captive.

Such operations led to the disintegration of the Zionist regime's myth of security and intelligence superiority and afflicted the Zionist society with "catastrophic strategic confusion," the commander noted.

According to Salami, Sinwar ascended to martyrdom while leading resistance fighters at the heart of the battleground and on the frontlines, not from the recesses of Gaza's clandestine tunnels, where the Zionist regime used to refer to as his whereabouts.

The resistance's ranks would grow stronger in power and structure with Sinwar's martyrdom, he affirmed, saying that the regional Axis of Resistance has now transformed into the "Great Resistance Front" that has trampled on the United States' oppressive and criminal existence in the region.

Iran Warns EU of Interfering in Domestic Affairs



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of Iran's Strategic Council of Foreign Relations Kamal Kharrazi warned in a statement that the United Arab Emirates should put aside its hostility with Iran over its territorial integrity and return to the dialogue based on historical facts and existing documents, what leads to the resolution of the dispute and the development of peace and tranquility in the region; otherwise, the path that others open in front of their feet will lead to nothing but destruction and war.

"The European Union's support for the UAE in the case of the three islands is the clear hostility of this union to Iran under the false pretext of Iran's support for Russia in the Ukraine war, while the United States and Europe have not confirmed that Iran has provided ballistic missiles to Russia," Kharrazi said.

"On the other hand, Iran has repeatedly expressed its opposition to the occupation of Ukrainian lands, and has demanded a cease-fire, negotiations and removal of the occupation," he added.

In relevant remarks earlier, Iran's government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani had emphasized that the three Persian Gulf islands of Abu Mousa, Greater Tunb, and Lesser Tunb are integral parts of great Iran.

In reaction to the unfounded claims regarding the three Iranian islands in the final statement of the joint meeting between the European Union and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council in Brussels on Wednesday, Mohajerani emphasized in a Farsi post on her X account on Thursday, "Iran's territorial integrity is not an issue that foreigners dare to talk about."

She stated that Abu Mousa, Greater Tunb, and Lesser Tunb are integral parts of Iran.

Mohajerani emphasized, "The European Union and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council are not in a position to comment on the great land of Iran."

IRAN NEWS



Iran Donates Aid to Flood-Hit Bosnian People

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran sent a cargo of humanitarian aid to the flood-hit Bosnian people, which was delivered to the relevant Bosnian relief official with the presence of the Islamic Republic's ambassador to Sarajevo.

In the wake of heavy rain, a flood inundated different parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially in Herzegovina, and caused serious damage to the infrastructure, destroyed 1,700 houses, and claimed the lives of 25 people.

The Iranian ambassador Abouzar Ebrahimi Torkaman said that the aid was prepared by the Islamic Republic's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other charity institutes and was delivered to Marahamat Institute to be distributed among the flood-hit people.

Iran and Pakistan Agree to Remove Trade Barriers



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Minister of Industry, Mining, and Trade announced that the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan have reached an agreement to remove trade barriers.

Seyed Mohammad Atabak stated in an interview that the trade organizations of both countries are fully prepared to implement this decision. He added that the necessary planning has been done for Pakistan's Minister of Commerce to visit Tehran in the next two months, where both sides aim to finalize a free trade list between Tehran and Islamabad.

He further explained that once free and preferential trade is established between the two countries, it is natural for some tariffs to be reduced. However, he noted that both sides still need to agree on certain tariffs, although an agreement has already been reached on some of them.

Atabak expressed optimism, stating, "We are hopeful that we will reach an agreement with the Pakistani minister on the remaining tariffs, and that the agreements made will lead to positive outcomes."

The 23rd meeting of the heads of government of the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) concluded yesterday in Islamabad with the signing of a joint document and a joint statement by member countries.

During the Islamabad meeting, the chairmanship of the SCO Council of Heads of Government was handed over to the Russian Federation.

The Minister of Industry, Mining, and Trade headed the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran at the SCO meeting.



First Anniversary of Kandovan's Global Tourism Recognition Celebrated

TEHRAN - The first anniversary of the global recognition of Kandovan, a rock village, as one of the best villages by the United Nations World Tourism Organization, was celebrated on Friday at the historic village's rock hotel.

The event was attended by the Deputy Director of Tourism for the East Azerbaijan Cultural Heritage Organization, the Governor of Osku, Members of Parliament, the Head of the Tourism Faction, Fariddin Nasriev, Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Iran, along with a tourism official from one of Uzbekistan's provinces, and ecotourism activists from Kandovan.

During the program, Hossein Firouzi, the Governor of Osku, announced that two million people visit this village annually. He added that Kandovan's global recognition has sparked new efforts to develop tourism in the village.

Addressing the event, Uzbek Ambassador touched upon the good relations between the two countries and highlighted some major actions for boosting cooperation between the two countries in the field of the tourism.

He said the launch of two direct flights between Tehran and Tashkent can

help both countries to boost ties in all levels.

Alireza Bayramzadeh, Deputy Director of Tourism for East Azerbaijan, stated: "Last year, on this day, the governor, along with the Deputy Director of Tourism and former Minister of Cultural Heritage, Ezatollah Zarghami, were present in Samarkand, representing our country, and we watched the village's global registration ceremony live from Kandovan."

He further noted that a year has passed, and Kandovan remains one of Iran's most prestigious villages. The theme of this year's World Tourism Organization campaign is "Tourism and Peace," and we hope for better days in this field.

Following the speeches and local music performances, a painting depicting Kandovan's beauty was unveiled. A cake celebrating the village's global registration was cut by the event's guests, creating a memorable moment for the village residents.

Officials and journalists who were invited to the event also toured Kandovan's attractions.

Iran, Zambia Emphasize Strengthening Relations



TEHRAN - The Minister of Agriculture and the President of the autonomous region of Zanzibar, during a meeting and discussion, emphasized the follow-up of cooperation agreements and the transfer of Iran's capabilities, and both called for the development of relations.

Gholamreza Nouri Ghezeljeh, after arriving in Dar es Salaam and meeting Tanzanian officials, went to Zanzibar and met with Hussein Ali Mwinyi, the President of this autonomous region.

During this meeting, he conveyed the greetings of Masoud Pezeshkian, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and stated that the 14th government has prioritized relations with African countries in its foreign policy agenda, with serious attention to developing relations in cultural, economic, scientific, and agricultural fields.

The Minister of Agriculture expressed hope that cooperation agreements between the two countries would pave the way for more interaction between Tehran, Dar es Salaam, and Zanzibar.

Nouri emphasized cultural cooperation between the two countries and said Iran is ready to restore historical monuments related to Iran in Zanzibar.

The Minister of Agriculture further mentioned scientific and academic cooperation, tourist exchange between the two countries, facilitating visa issuance for Iranian traders and tourists, participation in exhibitions in Tanzania and Zanzibar, and the development of the petrochemical industry as other areas of collaboration between the two nations.

Nouri also noted the participation of 50 Iranian economic and business activists in this trip as a sign of Iran's strong commitment to expanding cooperation and added that providing technical and engineering services in all construction and agricultural fields is part of Iran's strong potential for cooperation.

In this meeting, the Minister of Agriculture also expressed readiness for agricultural land cultivation in Zanzibar, considering Africa as a priority for overseas farming.

The President of Zanzibar, during his meeting with Gholamreza Nouri, viewed the signing of cooperation agreements between the two countries as a sign of Tehran and Zanzibar's determination to strengthen and deepen relations. He stated, "We believe Iran is very advanced, and we are eager to utilize Iran's expertise in agriculture."

Hussein Ali Mwinyi welcomed scientific and academic cooperation and expressed hope for the presence of Iranian investors in his country.

The Minister of Agriculture invited the President of Zanzibar to visit Iran.

Iran Seeks to Learn from South Korea's Urban Regeneration Success



TEHRAN - Iran is looking to benefit from South Korea's successful experiences in urban regeneration, particularly in addressing housing challenges. The second session in a series of specialized meetings, titled "Familiarization with South Korea's Experiences in Urban Regeneration," was held in Tehran, featuring discussions on South Korea's National Housing Movement. South Korean Ambassador Kim Junpyo, Iran's Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mohammad Aieni, and various experts participated in the event.

The focus of the session was on South Korea's urban housing strategies and how they could serve as a model for Iran, which is facing significant challenges in housing, particularly in aging and deteriorated urban areas.

During the session, South Korean Ambassador Kim Junpyo reflected on his country's past struggles with rapid population growth, which had placed a significant strain on housing, particularly in the capital, Seoul. Kim noted that South Korea faced a severe housing shortage as a result of both rapid economic growth and the sudden population increase in and around Seoul.

"The housing problem was so serious that every president who came to power would promise to build more homes to alleviate the pressure," Kim stated. He emphasized that through careful planning, South Korea was able to navigate this crisis and overcome the housing shortage. His message conveyed hope that South Korea's experience could offer valuable lessons for Iran's cities, especially in improving the quality of life in neighborhoods slated for urban regeneration.

Following Ambassador Kim's remarks, Ki Boom Park, a professor and counselor at the South Korean Embassy in Tehran and a former official of South Korea's Land and Housing Corporation, offered a deeper dive into how his country addressed the housing crisis.

Ki Boom Park explained that by the early 1980s, the population of

Seoul had exceeded 10 million, creating serious urban challenges, such as informal settlements and unequal housing distribution. One of the solutions South Korea adopted was high-density, high-rise apartment buildings, which now make up about 65% of the housing in Seoul.

"South Koreans tend to prefer living in high-rise buildings," Park noted, explaining that such buildings were designed to be tall but narrow, fitting well into the dense urban landscape of Seoul.

He stressed that a key to solving housing problems efficiently is reducing construction time and increasing public participation in urban regeneration efforts. Park outlined four principles for effective urban regeneration: smaller housing blocks, greater density in construction, mixed-use development, and public engagement in the renovation process. He also underscored the importance of preserving the cultural identity of neighborhoods by ensuring a mix of old and new buildings.

Mohammad Aieni, Iran's Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development, emphasized that urban regeneration is Iran's best strategy for addressing its housing needs, especially in areas with deteriorating infrastructure and informal settlements. He acknowledged the complexities involved in urban regeneration, noting that Iran faces a range of challenges in dealing with different types of urban areas, including historic textures and middle textures. Nevertheless, Aieni argued that accelerating housing renovation was crucial to the country's future development.

During the session, Aieni highlighted the importance of empowering local residents in the urban regeneration process. He stressed that with government support and the facilitation of municipalities, residents could actively participate in rebuilding their homes, contributing to the overall success of the projects.

Turkmenistan's Restrictions Delay the Reopening of Incheh-Borun Border Market



TEHRAN - Amir Yousefi, the head of Gorgan's Chamber of Commerce, announced in an interview with ILNA that the Incheh-Borun border market has been inactive since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. He stated that the market, located on the Iran-Turkmenistan border, had previously facilitated trade between the two nations for many years. However, it was closed during the pandemic and has yet to reopen, despite efforts by Gorgan's Chamber of Commerce to negotiate with Turkmen authorities. These markets are an important source of income for the border residents of both countries and play a significant role in boosting the regional economy.

Yousefi added that, although the Bajgiran border market on the shared border with Turkmenistan is operational, Turkmenistan's stringent policies are still preventing the reopening of the Incheh-Borun market.

He further explained that the Bajgiran border is mainly used for passenger vehicle traffic, while the Incheh-Borun border handles freight trucks transporting goods from Iran to Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan.

Responding to a question about why agricultural exporters are pushing for an exemption from repatriating export revenues, Yousefi explained that agricultural exporters are considered small-scale, and their goods are perishable. A portion of the country's agricultural produce is wasted each year, so increasing exports could help reduce waste. One example is potatoes, which were overproduced this year. In Golestan Province, a portion of the excess potatoes was purchased through a cooperative agreement, but after four months, farmers have still not received payment.

Yousefi emphasized that while the government has delayed payments to farmers, the farmers themselves cannot delay repaying their bank loans.

He pointed out that the financial obligations of agricultural exporters are not substantial, but removing these obligations would significantly promote agricultural exports. The requirement for exporters to return foreign currency earnings has made exporting some greenhouse products unprofitable.

Yousefi also reported on poultry and egg exports from Golestan Province. Golestan is a major supplier of chicken and eggs for the country, and chicken is exported primarily to Iraq, with some shipments going to Gulf countries. However, the main challenge in exporting chicken is that permission for export is granted periodically, and it can suddenly be banned without notice.

NIGC Official Warns on Entering Gas Shortage Phase



TEHRAN (Shana) - The National Iranian Gas Company Dispatching Manager, Saeed Aghli has warned that without other governmental bodies' cooperation, the country will enter a phase of gas shortage, announcing over 21 billion cubic meters of natural gas are transferred monthly to the country's consumption points.

Speaking at a conference of the NIOPDC managers, Saeed Aghli also stated that 21 million cubic meters of natural gas are delivered daily to oil refineries, increasing to 24 million cubic meters during the cold season.

He stated that since the beginning of the year 1403 on 21 March 2024, more than 99% of gas delivery plans have been fulfilled.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he noted that in the summer of 1402, NIGC was able to increase the amount of gas delivered to power plants by 3.8 billion cubic meters and prepare the strategic reserves of the power plants for the cold season in collaboration with refining companies.

Aghli reminded the gathering that an average of 700 million cubic meters of natural gas and 260 million liters of oil products are distributed on a daily basis.

He explained that more than 70% of the country's fuel is supplied from the South Pars joint gas field, adding that over 400,000 barrels of gas condensates are sent daily from the South Pars gas field to the Persian Gulf Star refinery for gasoline production.

The Dispatching Manager of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) emphasized at the end that if all institutions and organizations do not cooperate in energy consumption management, over the next year, we will move beyond gas imbalance and enter a phase of gas shortage.

Meanwhile the CEO of the National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company (NIOPDC), Keramat Veis-Karami, says that in the first seven months of this Iranian calendar year, which began on March 21, about 9.7 billion liters of liquid fuel have been delivered to the country's power plants, representing a 38% increase compared to the same period last year.

Cuba Slowly Starts Restoring Power After Island-Wide Blackout

HAVANA (Dispatches) - Cuba restored a trickle of power to its grid by mid-evening on Friday, officials said, hours after the island plunged into a countrywide blackout following the collapse of one of its major power plants. The vast majority of the country's 10 million residents were still in the dark on Friday night, but scattered pockets of the capital Havana, including some of the city's major hospitals, saw lights flicker back on shortly after dark. Grid operator UNE said it hoped to restart at least five of its oil-fired generation plants overnight, providing enough electricity, it said, to begin returning power to broader areas of the country.



Macron Slams Media, Ministers for Fuelling Controversy Over Israel Comments



PARIS (Dispatches) - French President Emmanuel Macron on Friday faced accusations of seeking to reduce the media to merely reproducing press releases after blaming journalists, ministers and commentators for the furore over comments attributed to him on Israel.

A visibly furious Macron late Thursday began his press conference after an EU summit in Brussels with a tirade against those who he accused of distorting remarks made in a closed-door cabinet meeting and showing a "lack of professionalism" in their work.

The remarks attributed to Macron that Israel needed to adhere to UN resolutions in its campaigns in Lebanon and Gaza as the state was created by the world body angered Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu but also sparked strong reactions in France.

His comments were quoted by two participants who spoke to AFP after the meeting and asked not to be named.

"Mr. Netanyahu must not forget that his country was created by a decision of the UN," Macron told ministers, 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.

Netanyahu accused Macron of a "distressing distortion of history" and "disrespect". In France, the speaker of the upper house Senate, Gerard Larcher, said he was "astounded" by the remarks and accused the president of showing his "ignorance" of the history.

"I would like you to allow me to recall a few rules," Macron solemnly told reporters at the start of his news conference on Thursday.

"I must tell you how astonished I was to read so many comments, comments on comments, reactions, including from political leaders, foreign or French, to remarks that I made without seeking to know what exactly I said."

Macron attacked "ministers", "journalists" and "commentators" for the ensuing controversy, denying his remarks "as they were reported", arguing his words were taken out of context.



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - The BRICS group will generate most of the global economic growth in the coming years thanks to its size and relatively fast growth compared with that of developed Western nations, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Friday.

Putin hopes to build up BRICS - which has expanded to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates as well as Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - as a powerful counterweight to the West in global politics and trade.

The Kremlin leader is due to host a BRICS summit in the Russian city of Kazan on Oct. 22-24.

"The countries in our association are essentially the drivers of global economic growth. In the foreseeable future, BRICS will generate the main increase in global GDP," Putin told officials and businessmen at BRICS business forum in Moscow.

"The economic growth of BRICS members will increasingly depend less on external influence or interference. This is essentially economic sovereignty," Putin added.

Next week's summit is being presented by Moscow as evidence that Western efforts to isolate Russia over its actions in Ukraine have failed.

Russia wants other countries to work with it to overhaul the global financial system and end the dominance of the U.S. dollar.

China, India and the UAE confirmed on Friday that their leaders would attend the summit in Kazan.

Putin said 30 countries around the world had expressed interest in cooperation with the BRICS grouping and that next week's summit would consider possible options for the group's further enlargement.

"The doors are open, we are not barring anyone," Putin told reporters from BRICS countries.

Putin cited some of the initiatives that Russia has previously outlined ahead of the summit, including a joint cross-border payments system and a reinsurance company.

Putin said that group members were working on a SWIFT-like financial messaging system immune to Western sanctions and the use of national digital currencies in financing investment projects with high growth potential inside and outside BRICS.

He stressed that Russia's financial initiatives for the summit implied the extensive use of national currencies, while talk of creating a single currency for the BRICS grouping was "premature".

He called on the New Development Bank, the BRICS' only functioning multilateral development institution, to invest in technology and infrastructure across the countries of the Global South.

"As a development institution, the bank already serves as an alternative to many Western financial mechanisms, and we will naturally continue to develop it," Putin said. He called for more investment in e-commerce and artificial intelligence.

Putin sought to promote Russia's new transport megaprojects such as the Arctic Sea Route and the North-to-South corridor, linking Russia to the Gulf and Indian Ocean through the Caspian Sea and Iran.

"It is the key to increasing freight transportation between the Eurasian and African continents," he said.

Biden Urges European Allies to Bolster Ukraine's Military as U.S. Election Looms

Philippine Political Rift Widens



MANILA (Dispatches) - Philippine vice-president Sara Duterte accused President Ferdinand Marcos Jr of incompetence and a lack of leadership in a scathing attack on Friday that showed the deepening rift between the two powerful families ahead of midterm elections.

Duterte, the daughter of Marcos' predecessor, resigned from cabinet in June, signalling the collapse of a formidable political alliance that helped her and Marcos, son and namesake of the late strongman, secure their 2022 electoral victories.

"The sitting leader does not know how to become president," Duterte said during a two-hour, freewheeling press conference, where she attributed problems such as inflation and food security to what she called a lack of clear government policies.

"It's not my fault that we are in this road to hell," added Duterte, who had served as education secretary in cabinet, saying Marcos ran without a plan for his administration.

"I don't ever remember him discussing what he would do in government," she said.

Marcos would not be responding to Duterte's claims, presidential communications secretary Cesar Chavez told reporters.

Duterte's accusations come as the country gears up for mid-term elections in May 2025, seen as a litmus test of Marcos' popularity and a chance for him to consolidate power and groom a successor before his single six-year term ends in 2028.

BERLIN (Dispatches) - U.S. President Joe Biden urged the West on Friday to sustain its support for Ukraine against Russia's invasion as Kyiv faces a bleak winter and a looming U.S. presidential election raises worries about the strength of Washington's own resolve.

Biden was speaking to reporters before holding closed-door talks with ally German Chancellor Olaf Scholz during a one-day trip to Berlin to discuss matters ranging from Ukraine to the expanding conflict in the Middle East.

"As Ukraine faces a tough winter, we must, we must sustain our resolve," Biden said in a statement. "And I know the cost is heavy, but make no mistake, it bears in comparison to the cost of living in a world where aggression prevails, where large states attack and bully smaller ones simply because they can."

He said he would discuss with Scholz efforts to increase military support for Ukraine and shore up its civilian energy infrastructure "by unlocking the value of frozen Russian assets". They would also discuss the Middle East conflict.

Biden told reporters before departing Germany that there was no consensus for giving Ukraine long-range weapons that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has been requesting from Western nations for months to conduct deeper strikes into Russia.

"Right now, there's no consensus for long-range weapons," Biden said.

Biden's trip comes just 2-1/2 weeks before the U.S. presidential vote, in which former President Donald Trump, the Republican candidate, is seeking reelection in a close race against Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic candidate.

Trump has signalled he would be more reluctant than Biden to continue to support Ukraine, which could deprive Kyiv of its biggest military and financial backer.

He has also indicated that U.S. aid to allies in the NATO western



military alliance would come with conditions attached.

Earlier on Friday, Germany's President Frank-Walter Steinmeier referred to previously strained European-U.S. ties under Trump's first 2017-2021 presidency during a ceremony to award Biden Germany's highest order of merit.

"Just a handful of years ago, the distance had grown so wide that we almost lost each other," he said of Europe and the United States. "When you were elected president, you restored Europe's hope in the transatlantic alliance literally overnight."

Steinmeier said the NATO alliance was indispensable.

"So in the months to come, I hope that Europeans remember America is indispensable for us. And I hope that Americans remember your allies are indispensable for you," he added.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron joined Biden and Scholz on Friday afternoon for talks focused largely on how to end the fighting in Ukraine as Russian forces advance in the east.

"We discussed how to speed up our support for Ukraine" Starmer told reporters afterwards. "So as Ukraine enters a difficult winter, it is important to say we're with you."

The leaders also discussed the need for a ceasefire in Gaza, the release of all Israeli hostages and immediate access for humanitarian aid to the Palestinian enclave, he said.

"The world will not tolerate any more excuses on humanitarian assistance," he said.

That Biden paid what could be his last visit to Europe as president to Berlin is testament to the close working relationship he has with Scholz.

Biden built trust with Germany at the start of his term and looked the other way for a while on the Nord Stream 2 Baltic Sea gas pipeline project, designed to double the flow of Russian gas direct to Germany, said Sudha David-Wilp of the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

Israeli Strikes Kill 33 People in Jabalia Refugee Camp in Gaza

CAIRO (Dispatches) - At least 33 people were killed and 85 wounded in Israeli strikes that hit several houses on Friday in Jabalia, the largest of Gaza's eight historic refugee camps, medics said, where residents said tanks blew up roads and houses.

The Hamas-run Gaza government media office said the death toll from the strikes could rise because some people were believed to be trapped under the rubble, and the Palestinian official news agency Wafa said children were among those killed. There was no immediate Israeli comment.

Other Israeli strikes killed at least 39 Palestinians across Gaza on Friday, 20 of them in Jabalia, the Gaza health ministry said.

Residents of Jabalia said Israeli tanks had reached the heart of the camp after pushing through suburbs and residential districts. They said the Israeli army was destroying dozens of houses daily, from the air and the ground, and by placing bombs in buildings then detonating them remotely.

The Israeli military said its forces, which have been operating in Jabalia for the past two weeks, killed dozens of militants in close-quarters combat on Thursday, carried out aerial strikes, and dismantled military infrastructure.

On Thursday Israel said it had killed the country's number one enemy, Hamas chief Yahya Sinwar, whom it blamed for ordering the Oct. 7 attack on Israel -- the deadliest in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



The Israeli military says its operation in Jabalia is intended to stop Hamas fighters regrouping for more attacks.

Residents said Israeli forces had effectively isolated the far northern Gazan towns of Beit Hanoun, Jabalia, and Beit Lahiya from Gaza City, blocking movement except for those families heeding evacuation orders and leaving the three towns.

They said communications and internet services had been cut, disrupting rescue operations.

On Friday, health officials appealed for fuel, medical supplies and food to be sent immediately to three northern Gaza hospitals overwhelmed by the number of patients and injuries.

At the Kamal Adwan Hospital, medics said they had to replace children in intensive care with more critical cases of adults badly wounded by Israeli airstrikes on a school sheltering displaced Palestinians in Jabalia on Thursday.

Israel said it had targeted militants holed up in the complex.

Kamal Adwan's director, Hussam Abu Safiya, said in a video sent to media that the children had been moved to another division inside the facility, where they were being cared for. He said medical staff were exhausted and hospital supplies, including food, were badly depleted.



Top Seeds Fall in Antwerp, Stockholm, Almaty

LONDON (Dispatches) - Frenchman Hugo Gaston ousted No. 1 seed Alex de Minaur of Australia 6-3, 3-6, 7-5 as the top three seeds all bowed out of the European Open quarterfinals in Antwerp, Belgium.

Gaston converted 3 of 4 break points and finished with a 36-26 edge in winners, including a 20-8 advantage in the third set.

Joining de Minaur on the sidelines were second seed Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece and third seed Felix Auger-Aliassime of Canada. Czech fifth seed Jiri Lehecka swept past Tsitsipas 6-4, 6-4, while Spaniard Roberto Bautista Agut rallied for a 3-6, 6-2, 7-6 (6) victory over Auger-Aliassime, despite the Canadian firing 19 aces and saving three match points.

Gaston will face Bautista Agut in the semifinals, while Lehecka will take on American eighth seed Marcos Giron, a 6-2, 6-2 winner over Belgium's Zizou Bergs.

Three-time major winner Stan Wawrinka of Switzerland drew another step closer to an elusive tournament title when he felled No. 1 seed Andrey Rublev of Russia 7-6 (5), 7-6 (5) in the quarterfinals in Stockholm.

Wawrinka, 39, hasn't won on the ATP Tour since May 2017. He is the third-oldest semifinalist at an ATP event since 1990. His age didn't stop him from firing 14 aces past Rublev and saving 3 of 4 break points.

Wawrinka's semifinal opponent will be American No. 4 seed Tommy Paul, who beat Serbia's Miomir Kecmanovic 7-6 (9), 6-2. Dutch seventh seed Tallon Griekspoor upset Norwegian No. 2 seed Casper Ruud 7-5, 7-6 (5), and third seed Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria beat Switzerland's Dominic Stricker 6-3, 6-2.

Aleksandar Vukic of Australia fended off No. 1 seed Frances Tiafoe 6-2, 7-6 (11) in the quarterfinals in Kazakhstan.

Vukic, who had 13 aces among his 35 winners, trailed the second-set tiebreaker 4-1 before charging back. Tiafoe then saved four match points and held an 11-10 lead, but Vukic struck the final blow with the last three points of the match.

Vukic is set to face Russian third seed Karen Khachanov, who beat Kazakh wild card Beibit Zhukayev 6-2, 6-4. No. 4 seed Francisco Cerundolo of Argentina breezed past Kazakhstan's Alexander Shevchenko 6-2, 6-3 in 64 minutes, but Canada's Gabriel Diallo knocked out second seed Alejandro Tabilo of Chile 3-6, 6-3, 6-4.

Meanwhile no. 5 seed Daria Kasatkina of Russia saved two match points in the tiebreaker to defeat Yulia Putintseva 6-4, 1-6, 7-6 (6) to reach the semifinal of the Ningbo Open in China.

Kasatkina lost the numbers game to Putintseva, of Kazakhstan, winning nine fewer points, serving up eight double faults, committing more unforced errors and ringing up fewer winners. But she came through in the clutch, coming back from down 4-2 in the third set and 6-4 in the tiebreaker of the two-hour, 41-minute match.

The Russian moved to her sixth semifinal of the year, where No. 8 seed Paula Badosa of Spain awaits. Badosa was a 6-3, 6-2 winner over No. 6 seed Beatriz Haddad Maia of Brazil.

Verstappen Returns to Pole for U.S. Formula One GP



AUSTIN (Dispatches) - Red Bull's Formula One leader Max Verstappen took pole position for the Saturday sprint race at the U.S. Grand Prix with McLaren rival Lando Norris qualifying a 'shocking' fourth and in danger of losing momentum in the title battle.

Mercedes' George Russell joined triple world champion Verstappen on the front row with Ferrari's Charles Leclerc third.

Verstappen, who last year won both the 100km sprint and Sunday grand prix at Austin's Circuit of the Americas, lapped with a fastest time of one minute 32.833 seconds - 0.012 quicker than Russell.

The Dutch driver, who has won all three sprints so far this season, leads Norris by 52 points with six rounds and a maximum 180 points remaining.

"The whole day the car was working well. I'm happy to be first, it's been a while, so happy with today," he said of his first pole of any sort since Austria in June.

"This track is amazing to drive. With new Tarmac, a little bit of old, then the bumps, it's not easy but it's fun."

The sprint pays out eight points to the winner, and rewards the top eight, which means Verstappen could well have extended his lead before the main race.

"We will do the best we can in the sprint but we also know the most points are available on Sunday, so that's where we really want to do well," he said.

Norris will be unable to count on support in the sprint from team mate Oscar Piastri after the Australian had his fastest lap deleted and failed to progress beyond the first phase, qualifying only 16th.

"In a way, I'm happy with P4 because I felt like it could have been a lot worse. But my lap was shocking," said the Briton.

"Not a terrible day - it could have been worse, could have been better, but I'll take it."

Verstappen's team mate Sergio Perez will start well down the field in 11th.

Lakers Beat Suns in a Preseason Game

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - The plan, at least how it was conceptualized, was for the Lakers to come to Phoenix and go through an exercise that mimicked a regular-season game.

They would prepare for the Suns by going through a scouting report and the kind of game-day routine they'll adopt for the season. They would extend starters' minutes and try to mimic real game substitutions.

But even before JJ Redick became the Lakers' coach, he knew plans sometimes aren't worth the paper they're written on.

"You don't often get to live in an idealized world in this league and that's OK," Redick said before the Lakers' fifth preseason game. "... You don't get to live out things exactly the way you want in this league very often, and that's fine."

Redick laid it all out. LeBron James, heading into Year 22, was going to get extra rest. Rui Hachimura, who felt a little tightness in his calf, was going to take the time to get right. Austin Reaves wasn't going to push his sore ankle too much. Gabe Vincent wasn't going to take any chances after missing almost all of last season because of a knee injury, and Max Christie's minor hip soreness wasn't worth any extensive minutes.

The Lakers' dress rehearsal, which ended with a 128-122 overtime win, was going to take a backseat to caution.

The team, Redick said, still was able to go through its normal pregame routine, even if Cam Reddish and Christie needed to move into the starting lineup in the absence of James and Hachimura. James also is expected to rest in



the preseason finale Friday at Golden State.

Anthony Davis likely wrapped up his preseason, playing 34 minutes while scoring 35 points. He started incredibly hot from three-point range, making four from deep in the first quarter.

He wasn't the only Laker to get hot from deep. Rookie Dalton Knecht had his best game of the preseason, scoring 25 of his 35 points in the fourth quarter and overtime - catching fire while the Lakers' bench playfully fanned those flames.

After missing a game-winner against the Suns in Palm Desert earlier in the preseason, Knecht drilled a three over 7-foot-3 Bol Bol to force overtime, one of Knecht's eight threes.

Devin Booker scored 22 for the Suns and Kevin Durant added 19.

In addition to the Lakers not getting the ideal rehearsal, the team also won't have its complete roster on opening night. Redick announced Jarred Vanderbilt won't be cleared to return despite his continuing recovery from offseason foot surgeries.

"His rehab and return to play is going well and is progressing in a very positive direction. It's very likely that we won't have an update for you probably the next two weeks, so he will not be ready to start the regular season," Redick said. "We are taking sort of a long-term approach. The coaching, medical staff, Jarred himself, we're all on board. It's a long season, and we want to make sure he's right."

Ten Hag Blasts Journalists for Lying About His Future

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag was under enormous pressure heading into the Premier League game against Brentford.

His team are languishing in 14th place, having scored only five times in seven games, which represents their worst start in 35 years.

But during the pre-match press conference, the Dutch manager once again reiterated that the team was progressing and while recent results have not been up to the mark, he guaranteed the team will end the season on a high just like last term.

"We have to climb a mountain, but that's top football, sometimes you have to face challenges, but I'm sure we will make a success, just like we did in the last two seasons. I see the good things, good patterns and the good stats that confirms we're in a good direction, but the ranking doesn't lie and where we are isn't good enough."

Rumours of a sack have been doing the rounds since the season started and while INEOS decided against pulling the plug during the international break, they will be expecting a turnaround and soon.

Addressing these claims, Ten Hag felt the media was blowing things out of proportion while revealing that his relationship with the new hierarchy remains as strong as ever.



"No, the noise is only coming from the media, from some of you, not all of you, creating stories and fairytales, bringing lies because I know we're on one page within this club. I said before the break but several journalists probably didn't believe me. Within the club, it's quiet."

But for the team's luck to change, Ten Hag needs all hands on deck but unfortunately key personnel are currently out injured with Kobbie Mainoo and Harry Maguire the latest to drop out.

In good news, Noussair Mazraoui is back in training and that means the full-back crisis can be averted for now. However, when pressed on Luke Shaw and Tyrell Malacia's returns, the manager said a cautious approach will be taken to avoid further complications.

"Injuries do not help, for sure, you need players available to perform. Kobbie and Harry are out for a couple of weeks, but Mazraoui is good news. He has returned on the training pitch and is available tomorrow."

"We can't force their return and have to do it clever. We don't want them to return and quickly drop out, but of course, we hope they come back as soon as possible because this team needs to a left-full back."

England Manager's Nationality Does Not Matter



LONDON (Dispatches) - The appointment of Thomas Tuchel as England manager has led to mixed reactions from media and fans but Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has called on the country's supporters to back the German unconditionally regardless of his nationality.

Former Chelsea and Bayern Munich boss Tuchel is the first German to manage England and only the third foreigner to take charge after the late Sven-Goran Eriksson of Sweden and Italian Fabio Capello.

"We don't decide where we're born. Mum and Dad decide that and nine months later we're here. I didn't decide to be Catalan, you don't decide to be English," Guardiola told reporters ahead of City's clash at Wolverhampton Wanderers on Sunday.

"The federation decided to go for a foreign manager with a great record. My view is I would support him unconditionally. If he wins he will be praised and if he loses he will be criticised. But it doesn't matter his nationality."

"I know we are proud of where we are from, but the world is so big. You have to be open minded. I came here to learn from you," the 53-year-old said at a Friday's press conference.

Guardiola was linked with the England job along with Newcastle United's Eddie Howe and former Chelsea boss Graham Potter.

The Spaniard said he hoped to coach a national team one day but when asked if he had been approached by the FA he replied: "Thomas Tuchel is the manager, forget about it."

"I'm the manager of Man City, forget about it. The rest is not important."

City are second with 17 points after seven games, level with third-placed Arsenal and a point behind leaders Liverpool.

Wolves, who have one point, beat City 2-1 in the fixture last season, with Guardiola saying it would be a tough trip.

"They've got fewer points than they deserve. That's all I can see. It's always tough with Wolves," he added.

Guardiola said midfielder Kevin de Bruyne, who has been sidelined with a hamstring problem for weeks, would not be available for the match.