

# IRAN NEWS

The Iranian Navy Is Slated to Host the Caspian Sea Combined Rescue and Relief Exercise as the Main Stage of the Caspian Sea Combined Rescue and Relief Drills Will Be Held with the Presence of the Iranian and Azeri Navy Forces

Iran's Civil Aviation Organization Has Dismissed Reports on the Closure of the Country's Airspace, Stressing That No Flight Restrictions Are in Place as No NOTAM Has Been Issued on the Closure of the Country's Airspace or Even a Small Part of It

## 2 DOMESTIC



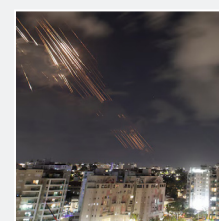
### Minister Urges Swift Employment of Graduates to Stem Brain Drain

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### Iran's Year-End Inflation Projected at 31.7%



TEHRAN - In its latest report, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced that Iran's economic growth for the current year is projected to reach 3.7%. Additionally, the IMF forecasts Iran's inflation rate to decrease to 31.7% by the end of the Iranian year 1403 (March 2025), which is 5.8 percentage points lower than its April estimates.

The IMF has reviewed Iran's economic outlook, adjusting its predictions on inflation and economic growth in a more favorable direction compared to previous reports.

The report indicates that Iran's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate is expected to reach 3.7% this year, marking a slight decrease from last year's 5% growth. While oil production fluctuations remain, the IMF anticipates that growth will continue, driven by expansion in the services and industrial sectors.

The IMF's forecasts suggest that the general price level will increase by approximately 31.7% in 1403, a significant decrease from last year's inflation rate of 40%.

The IMF also predicts that Iran's inflation will drop further to 29.5% in 1404 (starting March 2025), which brings the government's target of lowering inflation below 30% within reach.

In addition, unemployment is expected to decline by 0.1 percentage points to 8% this year. However, it is forecasted to rise slightly, reaching 8.4% in 1404.

Meanwhile, the IMF report shows Iran's current account balance will reach 2.9% of GDP this year, marking a 0.1 percentage point increase from last year. The current account balance is projected to reach approximately 3% of GDP by 1404.

### Resistance Is an Enduring Asset Against the Anti-Human Nature of Global Imperialism



TEHRAN - The commander of Iran's Navy, Admiral Shahram Irani, emphasized that the "resistance front" serves as a lasting asset and defense against what he described as the anti-human nature of global imperialism and hegemony. Speaking at the conclusion of the November 4th marches in Qom, he stated that resistance, being a spiritual and moral value, is impervious to damage from adversarial forces.

Admiral Irani highlighted the role of martyrs' families, noting, "The grandeur we see today belongs to your unparalleled spirit and the religious and Islamic upbringing you instilled." He remarked that despite over four decades of threats and conspiracies aimed at undermining Iran's Islamic system, these efforts have not succeeded.

He recalled the 1979 seizure of the U.S. embassy in Tehran, referring to it as Iran's "second revolution," which set a precedent for standing against imperialism. "Our nation's path has led us to this day, where enemies now attempt to target our loved ones in brutal ways. They are misguided if they think they will succeed."

The admiral dismissed the notion of a unipolar or bipolar world, stating that today, the voices of Muslims globally resonate powerfully. He credited the guidance of Iran's Supreme Leader, under which Iran's youth proudly carry the flag of the revolution, advancing toward their goals.

He also denounced Zionism as a "filthy phenomenon entrenched in West Asia," asserting that Iran's revolutionary and anti-imperialist ideologies have taken root both within Iranian society and abroad. He attributed this influence to the deep-rooted faith of Iranian Muslims in the teachings of the Prophet's family, saying they relay this message globally without prejudice.



TEHRAN - In a speech at the "13 Aban Day" event in Tehran, Major General Hossein Salami, the commander of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), delivered remarks on the ongoing conflict in the region and U.S. influence in West Asia.

General Salami began by stating that the United States has consistently tried to turn Islamic countries into battlefields since the Islamic Revolution over 46 years ago. He pointed out the U.S. interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, noting that America left behind a legacy of instability and an \$85 billion military in Afghanistan after two decades of occupation.

Salami emphasized that U.S. efforts to dominate the region have continually faltered. He cited America's unsuccessful support of Saddam Hussein against Iran, failed attempts to subdue Iran through sanctions, and unsuccessful peace negotiations in the region, referring to the stalled Abraham Accords. The IRGC commander claimed these events reflect a gradual "sunset" on American influence.

Salami argued that current conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon reveal what he described as American hypocrisy on human rights, accusing the U.S. and Israel of causing widespread suffering in these areas. He condemned the loss of life in Gaza and Lebanon, describing it as a result of "brutal and medieval actions" by Israel with U.S. support. He claimed that American and Israeli forces are "nearing their sunset," with resistance forces in the region prepared to respond.

Highlighting U.S. interventions globally, Salami pointed to what he called contradictions in America's stated values of democracy and freedom. He referenced historical events like the atomic

bombings in Japan and coups, including the 1953 overthrow in Iran, as examples of America's pattern of imposing its will through force. He argued that the U.S. continues this approach today by supporting "repressive regimes" and fueling regional conflicts.

Salami also addressed the resilience of Palestinian and Lebanese resistance groups, who he said are standing firm in the face of immense pressure from U.S.-backed coalitions. He asserted that these resistance movements are gaining strength, creating "new flames of hope" as they persist in their opposition.

The IRGC commander underscored that Islamic countries are increasingly resolved to reject American influence. He emphasized that through perseverance and unity, the region is on a path to reclaim control over its future, suggesting that Muslim men and women have found empowerment through resistance.

Salami described Hezbollah's commitment to countering Israeli forces in Lebanon and maintaining its influence in the region, insisting that Hezbollah's resistance remains "alive, confident, and courageous." He stated that Hezbollah aims not merely to withstand Israeli aggression but to eventually end Israeli influence in occupied Palestinian territories.

Finally, Salami asserted that Israel faces growing isolation globally, with international sports figures and officials allegedly avoiding Israeli territory. He further suggested that American officials are facing resistance and opposition even in Islamic countries, which he said reflects a shifting regional sentiment.

### Lebanon to Lodge UN Complaint Against Israel for Abducting Citizen

BEIRUT (Dispatches)- Lebanon's government has announced that it will submit a complaint to the United Nations Security Council concerning the recent Israeli abduction of a Lebanese citizen north of the capital Beirut, amid Israel's intensified aggression against the Hezbollah resistance movement.

The Lebanese citizen was kidnapped in a suspected Israeli naval operation in Batroun, about 30 kilometers north of Beirut, with the illegal entity claiming that the abductee was a "senior operative" of Hezbollah.

Lebanese authorities stressed that the individual, who was not named in reports, was a sea captain and rejected that he was a Hezbollah member.

A statement by Prime Minister Najib Mikati's office said the premier had instructed his Foreign Minister Abdullah Bouhabbib to file a UN complaint over the abduction.

The statement said Mikati contacted Israel's occupation army commander General Joseph Aoun to be briefed on the ongoing investigation into the circumstances of the case. Mikati also contacted the command of the UN peacekeeping mission (UNIFIL), which confirmed that it is conducting the necessary investigations and coordinating with the army on this matter, the statement added.

The Lebanese prime minister underscored the need to "expedite the investigations to clarify the circumstances of this case and to set matters right."

The Lebanese National News agency (NNA) said an "unidentified military force" carried out a "sea landing" on the shore of Batroun, south of Tripoli, at dawn on Friday.



An acquaintance of the abductee identified him as a student at the state-run Maritime Sciences and Technology Institute (MARSATI) in Batroun, Lebanon's primary training college for the shipping industry.

However, the Israeli military claimed that "a senior operative of Hezbollah, who serves as an expert in his field, was apprehended."

"The operative has been transferred to Israeli territory and is currently being investigated."

Fortified by the Hezbollah, the Christian-majority city of Batroun has been less affected by Israel's

months-long bombardment of southern Lebanon than the other areas such as the southern suburbs of Beirut and the eastern Bekaa Valley.

Hezbollah opened a support front for Palestinians in Gaza only a day after the Israeli regime unleashed a genocidal war against the besieged territory on October 7, 2023, killing more than 43,000 people so far.

After the Israeli regime conducted a series of attacks involving pagans and walkie-talkies in Lebanon in September, it intensified its aggression against Hezbollah, resulting in significant loss of life and destruction.

At least 2,865 people have been killed and 13,047 others injured in Israeli attacks on Lebanon since early October last year, according to the country's health ministry.

In late September, the regime also assassinated Hezbollah's leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah in a strike in southern Beirut.

Since then, Hezbollah has increased its retaliatory attacks against Israeli targets and vowed to continue its fight in support of Gaza and Palestine, and in defense of Lebanon.

### Israeli Regime Incapable of Calculating Iran's Decisive Response



TEHRAN - A spokesman for the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says the Israeli regime is incapable of figuring out Iran's retaliation, vowing a "definitive and decisive" response to the occupying entity's recent aggression on the country.

Brigadier General Ali Mohammad Naeini, the IRGC's spokesman and deputy head of the Public Relations Department, was speaking on Saturday about Iran's retaliation against Israeli aggression on Iranian soil on October 26.

The Islamic Republic has already launched hundreds of missiles on the Israeli-occupied territories as part of two retaliatory operations, dubbed Operation True Promise I and 2.

"Iran is able to alter the enemy's perception in line with the strategy of disciplining and punishing those who violate [the country's] national security," Naeini said.

"In fact, Operation True Promise II was the beginning of the story of catching the Zionists off guard. Henceforth, Iran will always leverage the surprise factor in its operations against the Zionists and will show that the Zionists' calculation system is incapable of figuring out Iran's action."

Touching on Iran's strong response to the recent Israeli aggression, the IRGC spokesman said the enemy should realize that the Islamic Republic will give a "crushing" response to any mischief.

"I state clearly and firmly that the answer to the enemy's latest attack will be given definitively and decisively. The response will be beyond the perception of the enemy, thoughtful and powerful," Naeini said.

"The enemy should learn that he cannot do any evil and he will undoubtedly receive a crushing response for his mischief."

IRGC's Chief Commander Major General Hossein Salami had earlier in the week warned the Israeli regime of an "unimaginable" response for its recent act of aggression against Iran.

On October 1, the Islamic Republic launched 200 missiles towards Israeli military and intelligence bases all over the occupied territories as part of Operation True Promise II.

### Germany's Closure of Iranian Consulates Unjustifiable



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has said Germany's decision to shut down Iranian consulates is a strange and unjustifiable action that causes troubles for Iranians residing in that country.

Araqchi made the remark at a meeting with his deputies on Saturday, two days after the German government announced that Iranian consulates would be closed in the cities of Frankfurt, Hamburg, and Munich following the execution of Iranian-German national Jamshid Sharmahd.

The top Iranian diplomat described Berlin's move as "strange and unjustifiable" that causes troubles for Iranians residing in Germany and other applicants for visas and consular services.

He said that the Iranian Foreign Ministry considers it a duty to adopt necessary measures to ensure that Iranians residing in Germany would receive consular services. The ministry will spare no effort in this regard, he stressed.

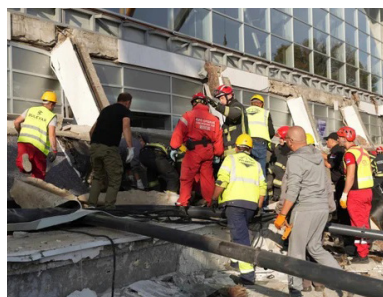
During the Saturday meeting, it was decided that consular services offered online are boosted to help Iranian nationals in Germany. It was also decided that Iranian embassies in Berlin, Bern, The Hague, Vienna, Prague and Brussels render consular services to Iranian residents in Germany.

Araqchi on Friday also reacted to Germany's closure of Iranian consulates, calling the move "a sanction" against Iranians living in the European country.

"In support of a terrorist who took 14 innocent lives and injured more than 200 others, the German government is sanctioning tens of thousands of other Iranians holding German passport", he said on X social media, in reference to Jamshid Sharmahd who was executed last week for the terror attacks he had conducted in Iran.



# IRAN NEWS



## Iran Sympathizes With Serbia Over Railroad Station Accident

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry offered condolences to Serbia over the fatal collapse of a roof at the entrance of a railroad station in the city of Novi Sad.

“We are so saddened by the tragic loss of lives in the railway station canopy collapse in Novi Sad, Serbia,” Esmaeil Baqaee said in a post on his X account on Sunday morning.

“We offer our condolences to the families of the victims and stand in solidarity with the government and people of Serbia,” he added. Rescue workers have scoured piles of concrete and twisted metal for survivors after a roof collapsed at the entrance of a railroad station in Novi Sad, killing 14 people.

## Gasoline Prices Likely to Rise Next Year



TEHRAN – Majlis lawmaker Mehrdad Lahouti discussed the potential for an increase in gasoline prices in 2024, clarifying that while the government has not explicitly proposed a gasoline price hike in its budget bill, changes in budget allocations suggest otherwise.

Lahouti explained that this year, Iran allocated 900 trillion rials (approximately \$2.14b) for gasoline imports. However, for 2024, this figure has been reduced to 650 trillion rials. According to Lahouti, this reduction implies that the government is likely considering a price increase to balance the budget without cutting back on gasoline supplies.

He emphasized that, under normal conditions, the gasoline import budget for next year should have increased to 1.2 quadrillion rials, given that there has been no significant change in fuel-saving measures, vehicle efficiency, or public transportation infrastructure. Without these changes, reducing gasoline consumption isn't feasible, making a price hike the more likely option.

Lahouti also mentioned that in a recent meeting, Oil Minister Javad Owji openly informed parliamentary representatives that discussions were underway among top government bodies about potential methods for a gasoline price adjustment.

Expressing frustration, Lahouti criticized the decision-making process, stating that it has largely sidelined parliament, leaving representatives with limited influence. “The people are represented by us in Parliament, yet decisions affecting them, such as gasoline pricing, are being made elsewhere,” he said.

He questioned why the government should obscure its intentions, asserting that it is clear the administration is seeking a way to raise gasoline prices. If Parliament approves the 650 trillion rials proposed in the budget bill for gasoline imports, it would essentially greenlight a price increase, according to Lahouti.

He further suggested that if Parliament wishes to avoid a gasoline price hike, it could increase the import budget to 1 quadrillion rials by reallocating funds from other sectors, such as cultural budgets.

In conclusion, Lahouti stressed that Parliament's approval of the lower import budget would signify its agreement with a price increase, while boosting the allocation could signal opposition to any hike.

## Tourism, Accommodation Complex to Be Established on Bo Musa Island



TEHRAN – Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts announced plans to build a 30-hectare recreational tourism and accommodation complex on Bo Musa Island, aiming to make it accessible for all citizens and Iranians to visit and stay.

Seyyed Reza Salehi Amiri spoke during a cabinet meeting, where he discussed his recent visits to the provinces of Kerman, Sistan and Baluchestan, and Hormozgan. Reflecting on his recent trip to Bo Musa Island, he shared that sections of the island were opened with the cooperation of military forces and are undergoing development. A 30-hectare tourist camp is planned to feature both lodging and recreational facilities, enabling citizens and Iranians to travel to and enjoy the island.

Salehi Amiri highlighted the ongoing, extensive development in the Chabahar and Makran regions, noting that a large private sector tourism project is underway in Makran with an investment of 5 trillion tomans. This project is expected to significantly boost the region's access to open waters and its appeal with green spaces, natural beauty, and tourism attractions.

Addressing tourism development and environmental preservation on Ashuradeh Island, Salehi Amiri emphasized that protecting the island's natural environment is a priority, in line with policies set by previous governments. Ashuradeh, which forms part of the national marine tourism route stretching from Ashuradeh to Anzali and from Khorramshahr to Chabahar, is to be developed with both tourism and environmental considerations in mind. Joint sessions with the Environmental Protection Agency and local government officials are set to address obstacles to tourism development, ensuring that environmental standards are maintained on Ashuradeh Island.

IRANNEWS NATIONAL DESK



TEHRAN – Minister of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education highlighted the growing issue of “brain drain” and emphasized the urgent need for swift employment of graduates to prevent further loss of talent from the country.

In a ceremony at the Ministry of Health, Dr. Mohammadreza Zafarghandi addressed an audience at the inauguration of the new Deputy for Research and Technology, emphasizing the significance of keeping Iranian graduates and skilled professionals within the country. He outlined a multi-pronged approach aimed at addressing this issue and fostering research and development within Iran's healthcare sector.

Dr. Zafarghandi opened his speech by acknowledging the toll that the emigration of educated professionals takes on Iran. “Every time a well-trained professional decides to leave the country, it's a loss that impacts us at multiple levels,” he stated, noting that Iran invests considerable resources in educating young people who may later take their expertise abroad. He called for a concerted effort to address this through meaningful employment opportunities and removal of bureaucratic barriers that make it challenging for graduates to secure relevant jobs.

He noted that while academic publishing is a mark of a country's intellectual growth, it's not the sole indicator of development. “True progress,” he emphasized, “is when science can be applied to real-world issues.” He urged Iranian institutions to prioritize research that can directly benefit society, such as studies aimed at reducing health risks and solving public issues.

“Meaningful development arises when research helps improve lives,” he said. Zafarghandi used the example of traffic fatalities to illustrate the importance of applying research findings for societal good, citing efforts in past years that successfully halved traffic-related deaths through dedicated safety studies.

In a bid to retain medical professionals, Dr. Zafarghandi highlighted the need to address some of the bureaucratic hurdles that medical graduates face. Currently, Iranian medical graduates must complete a series of mandatory service terms at various stages of their education, including general, specialty, and subspecialty levels. This practice, according to the Health Minister, adds unnecessary burden and delays, prompting some graduates to seek opportunities abroad.

By simplifying these processes, he suggested, Iran can retain a larger portion of its skilled workforce, particularly in healthcare—a field where talent is urgently needed.

One of the key points raised by Dr. Zafarghandi was the importance of expanding research opportunities within Iran. He noted that an environment where young professionals can participate in advanced research projects encourages them to stay. He acknowledged the disappointment that educators and families feel when talented individuals, after years of training, decide to leave the country. “This migration represents a significant loss not only for families but for the nation as a whole,” he remarked.

Zafarghandi also emphasized that scientific progress needs a supportive environment where researchers feel respected and valued. In recent years, he said, Iran's standing in international research publications has waned, with countries like Turkey and Saudi Arabia advancing in academic output and citation impact. This, he argued, underscores the need for an environment where researchers are acknowledged and supported.

During the event, Yunus Panahi, the former Deputy Minister of Health, outlined an eight-point health research development plan launched in 2021. This plan included efforts to boost knowledge-based enterprises, ensure equitable resource distribution across universities, and establish new science and technology parks and research centers.

## Iranian and Indian Cultural Heritage: A Treasured Legacy for Humanity



TEHRAN – The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in New Delhi emphasized the historical artifacts of Iran and India as a precious legacy not only for the two nations but also for all humanity, highlighting a profound bond and deep-rooted connection between the two peoples.

According to the Noor International Microfilm Center's Public Relations, Iranian Ambassador to India, Iraj Elahi, emphasized the historical depth of Iran-India relations. He noted that mutual respect and interest have existed between the people of these countries since ancient times, with cultural and literary exchanges serving as a bridge for friendship and deeper understanding.

Elahi stated, “The histories of Iran and India are rich with shared stories, art, and literature, representing not only a heritage for our nations but also a treasure for humanity. These connections should be further recognized and strengthened, as they reveal the solidarity and deep bond between our two peoples.”

B.R. Mani, Director of the National Museum of India, also underscored the importance of constructive, historical interactions between Iran and India. He commented that the cultural heritage of these nations extends beyond geographical borders and is rooted in the hearts of both peoples. Iran and India have significantly influenced each other, with their arts, cultures, and literatures intricately woven

together to showcase cultural solidarity.

“This shared heritage,” he added, “is a symbol of the extensive interactions that have shaped our histories and persist to this day. Indians continue to regard Iranian culture and art with respect and admiration, and this cultural bond remains alive across generations in both countries.”

Mehdi Khajeh-Piri, Director of the Noor Microfilm International Center, mentioned ongoing collaborative cultural projects between the two countries, particularly in digital preservation, cataloging, and restoration of written heritage. He expressed hope that these efforts would foster a lasting cultural bridge between Iran and India, enabling future generations to take pride in this cultural treasure.

He emphasized that joint cultural projects, such as manuscript restoration and exhibitions of valuable works, play a key role in preserving this shared heritage and fostering mutual understanding.

During their visit, B.R. Mani, Iraj Elahi, and Mehdi Khajeh-Piri toured the activities of the Noor International Microfilm Center at the Iranian Cultural House in New Delhi. This visit focused on the center's efforts in preserving, restoring, and digitizing the “written heritage of Iran and India,” and discussions highlighted the need to expand bilateral cooperation to promote and safeguard these cultural treasures.

## Preparations for Chinese Investment in Iran's Renewable Energy Development



TEHRAN – Alireza Parandeh Motlagh, Deputy of Technical and Engineering Affairs at SATBA, stated that the Minister of Energy and the Deputy Minister (Head of SATBA), along with a delegation, visited China to attend the Third Belt and Road Energy Ministers' Conference. During this trip, effective negotiations were held with Chinese officials to address part of the energy imbalance in Iran through the development of renewable energy plants by attracting Chinese companies to invest in renewable power projects.

He highlighted that China is one of the leading countries in renewable energy globally, capable of constructing 250,000 megawatts of new renewable capacity in a year. Currently, discussions in China revolve around the construction of 1,000 megawatts of renewable energy daily. Other countries have leveraged this capacity; for example, Brazil, in collaboration with Chinese companies, develops nearly 30% of its wind power plants annually, establishing itself as one of the leading nations in wind energy development.

Parandeh Motlagh mentioned Iran's efforts to advance renewable energy projects, noting that the country's installed capacity in renewable energy stands at approximately 1,300 megawatts. Iran aims to create significant changes in this sector over a short period through new pathways to help alleviate part of the energy imbalance.

Regarding the outcomes of the minister's visit to China, he pointed out that the Minister and the accompanying delegation met with the Chinese Minister of Energy and several major Chinese companies in the renewable energy sector. Consequently, agreements were reached, and a memorandum of understanding was signed to facilitate the initial groundwork for Chinese investment and their participation in financing and constructing renewable energy plants in Iran.

The Deputy of Technical and Engineering Affairs at SATBA added that the signing of a contract for a 100-megawatt wind power plant by MAPNA in collaboration with a Chinese company, along with a memorandum of understanding between SATBA and a Chinese firm for joint cooperation in renewable energy services—covering technology transfer and training—were other achievements of the minister's trip to China.

## Iran Ready to Share Expertise in E-Government, AI, and Postal Services with Venezuela



TEHRAN – Minister of Information and Communications Technology, Seyed Sattar Hashemi, announced Iran's readiness to share its expertise in e-government, artificial intelligence, and modern postal services with Caracas. This statement came during a meeting with Venezuela's Minister of Transportation, Ramon Blázquez.

Hashemi, during his visit to Caracas, met with Blázquez, who also serves as the head of the Joint Economic Cooperation Commission between the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Hashemi expressed appreciation for Venezuela's hospitality and noted the upcoming meeting of the Joint Economic Cooperation Commission. He shared his hope that the trip and the future commission meeting will further enhance bilateral relations between Tehran and Caracas.

During the discussions, Hashemi highlighted Iran's capabilities in AI and expressed a willingness to share knowledge and experience in this field with Venezuela. He also spoke about Iran's achievements in intelligent road management, noting that smart traffic management has significantly reduced congestion in Iran and that Iran is prepared to transfer this experience to Venezuela.

Hashemi mentioned a productive meeting between the heads of the national postal services of Iran and Venezuela, where they discussed technical knowledge exchange, specialized postal equipment, geographic information systems, and expanding postal services. It was agreed that both countries would work to further develop cooperation in these areas, with a draft for postal cooperation expected to be prepared and reviewed during the upcoming joint commission meeting, ultimately formalizing a partnership between Tehran and Caracas.



## Japan Cuts Growth Forecast Again

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan's government lowered its GDP growth forecast for the current fiscal year as weaker exports drag on a fragile economic recovery.

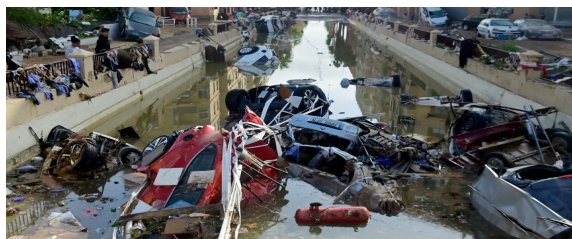
In its revised estimates, the Cabinet Office cut its inflation-adjusted gross domestic product growth forecast for the current fiscal year ending in March 2025 to 0.7% from 0.9% projected in July.

The new downgraded forecast follows a similar cut to the outlook in July, but is still above private-sector forecasts for 0.5% growth. The growth projection for the next fiscal year was kept at 1.2%.

The government releases its economic growth forecasts in January and then revises them around July. A revision this time of the year is rare, however, and highlights the growing pressure on the economy from cooling global demand and fragile domestic consumption.



## Spain Sends Ten Thousand More Troops, Police as Flood Death Toll Continues to Rise



MADRID (Dispatches) - Spain is deploying 10,000 more troops and police officers to the eastern Valencia region devastated by historic floods that have killed 213 people, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said.

Hopes of finding survivors were slim more than three days after torrents of muddy water submerged towns and wrecked infrastructure in the European country's worst such disaster in decades.

Almost all the deaths have been recorded in the Valencia region, where thousands of security and emergency services personnel were frantically clearing debris and mud in the search for bodies.

Sanchez said in a televised address that the disaster was the second deadliest flood in Europe this century and announced a huge increase in the security forces dedicated to relief works.

The government had accepted the Valencia region leader's request for 5,000 more troops and informed him of a further deployment of 5,000 police officers and civil guards, Sanchez said.

Spain was carrying out its largest deployment of army and security force personnel in peacetime, he added.

Restoring order and distributing aid to destroyed towns and villages - some of which have been cut off from food, water and power for days - is a priority.

Authorities have come under fire over the adequacy of warning systems before the floods, and some stricken residents have complained the response to the disaster is too slow.

"I am aware the response is not enough, there are problems and severe shortages... towns buried by mud, desperate people searching for their relatives... we have to improve," Sanchez said.

In the ground-zero towns of Alfajar and Sedavi, AFP reporters saw no soldiers while residents shovelled mud from their homes and firefighters pumped water from garages and tunnels.

"Politicians promise a lot, help will come when it comes," said Mario Silvestre, 86, a resident of Chiva where gaping sinkholes risked triggering the collapse of buildings.

## Rockets From Lebanon Wound 11 in Israel

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Rockets fired from Lebanon wounded 11 people in central Israel on Saturday, Israeli emergency services said, after one of them hit a house, as prospects for a ceasefire dimmed.

Fighting has escalated between Israeli forces and the Lebanese Hezbollah group since September, and hopes that a U.S. push this week for a ceasefire have faded.

"We went out and saw dust, children screaming, women screaming and everyone went to the house that was struck," said Qasim Mohab, a resident of Tira, where the rocket hit. "We were able to evacuate and rescue those who were inside the house, and thank God we were blessed that there was no one killed."

Around the time the rockets hit, Hezbollah said it had targeted a military base on the outskirts of Tel Aviv.

Israel's ambulance service said that 11 people were hurt by shrapnel. Air raid sirens continued to sound in northern Israel as rocket fire and drone attacks from Lebanon continued, the military said.

On Friday, Lebanon's health ministry said 52 people were killed in Israeli strikes on more than a dozen towns in the Baalbek region, which has UNESCO-listed Roman ruins.

The Israeli military said on Saturday it had killed two Hezbollah commanders in the area of Tyre on Friday. There was no immediate comment from Hezbollah.

More than 43,000 Palestinians have since been killed in Israel's offensive in Gaza, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run enclave, and at least 2,897 people have been killed in Lebanon, its health ministry said on Friday.

Seventy-one people in Israel and Israeli-occupied territories have been killed by Hezbollah's fire, according to Israeli

authorities.

Meanwhile an Israeli naval force mounted a "special operation" in the northern Lebanese coastal town of Batroun early on Friday and captured one person, a security source said.

Another source confirmed the incident, but did not say who was responsible.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said security forces were investigating the incident.

An Israeli military official said "a senior operative of Hezbollah, who serves as an expert in his field, was apprehended".

The official said the operative had been transferred to Israeli territory and was being investigated.

Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati has called for an investigation into the kidnapping of a Lebanese citizen from the northern coastal city of Batroun, a statement from Mikati's office on Saturday said.

It identified the person seized as Imad Amhaz.

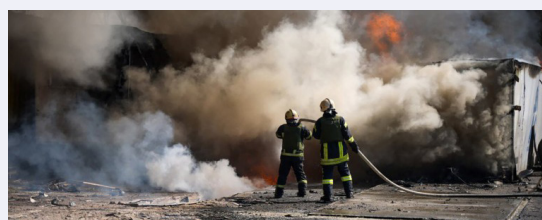
Mikati consulted with Lebanese military and UNIFIL officials and called for Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib to file an urgent complaint with the UN Security Council, the statement added.

Pro-Hezbollah journalist Hassan Ilaik said in a post on X that a large group of Israeli troops made a landing in the resort town and captured the man, before departing on speed boats.

He shared CCTV footage appearing to show soldiers walking in a street, two of them holding a person.

Lebanese transport minister Ali Hamiyeh, who represents Hezbollah in Lebanon's government, said the video was accurate but did not provide further details.

## Russia Targets Kyiv in Hours-Long Drone Attack



KYIV (Dispatches) - Russia unleashed its latest overnight drone strike on Ukraine, targeting the capital Kyiv in an attack that lasted into midday and wounded at least one person, city officials said.

Debris from downed drones struck six city districts, wounding a police officer, damaging residential buildings and starting fires, according to city military administrator Serhiy Popko.

"Another night. Another air-raid alert. Another drone attack. The armed forces of the Russian Federation attacked Kyiv again according to their old and familiar tactics," Popko wrote on social media.

All the drones aimed at Kyiv had been shot down, he said.

Ukrainian energy provider DTEK said a high-voltage line powering the capital and two distribution networks in the Kyiv region had been damaged.

DTEK said in a statement that electricity had mostly been restored and that repairs were underway.

Reuters correspondents reported hearing explosions in and around the city during an air-raid alert that lasted more than five hours. One drone was seen flying low over the city amid the din of automatic-weapons fire.

Ukraine's military reported on Saturday that air defences had destroyed 39 out of 71 Russian drones that had been launched, and that another 21 had been "locationally lost".

## COP16 Ends With No Agreement on Funding Roadmap for Species Protection

CALI (Dispatches) - The world's biggest nature conservation conference closed in Colombia on Saturday with no agreement on a roadmap to ramp up funding for species protection.

The 16th Conference of Parties (COP16) to the UN's Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was suspended by its president Susana Muhamad as negotiations ran almost 12 hours longer than planned and delegates started leaving to catch flights.

The exodus left the summit without a quorum for decision-making, but CBD spokesman David Ainsworth told AFP it will resume at a later date to consider outstanding issues.

The conference, the biggest meeting of its kind yet, with around 23,000 registered delegates, was tasked with assessing, and ramping up, progress toward an agreement reached in Canada two years ago to halt humankind's rapacious destruction of nature's bounty.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework that emerged from that meeting had set 23 targets to be met in just over five years from now.

They include placing 30 percent of land and sea areas under protection and 30 percent of degraded ecosystems under restoration by 2030, reducing pollution, and phasing out agricultural and other subsidies harmful to nature.

The Canada summit had also agreed that \$200 billion per year be made available to protect biodiversity by 2030, including the transfer of \$30 billion per year from rich to poor nations.

The actual total for 2022 was about \$15 billion, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

On top of that, nations have pledged about \$400 million to a Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF) created last year to meet the UN targets.

In Cali, negotiators were split largely between poor and rich country blocs as they haggled over increased funding and other commitments.

The biggest ask from the summit - to lay out a detailed funding plan - turned out to be a bridge too far.

Muhamad, Colombia's environment minister, had offered a draft text



proposing the creation of a dedicated biodiversity fund, which was rejected by the European Union, Switzerland and Japan.

Developing nations had insisted on the creation of a dedicated biodiversity fund, saying they are not adequately represented in existing mechanisms including the GBFF, which they say are also too onerous.

The meeting did manage to coalesce around the creation of a fund to share the profits of digitally sequenced genetic data taken from plants and animals with the communities they come from.

Such data, much of it from species found in poor countries, is notably used in medicines and cosmetics that can make their developers billions, very little of which ever trickles back down.

Delegates also approved the creation of a permanent body to represent the interests of Indigenous people under the UN's Convention on Biological Diversity.

Representatives of Indigenous peoples, many in traditional dress and headgear, broke out in cheers and chants as the agreement was gavelled through.

But the talks on biodiversity funding stumbled even as new research presented to coincide with COP16 showed that more than a quarter of assessed plants and animals are now at risk of extinction.

Only 17.6 percent of land and inland waters, and 8.4 percent of the ocean and coastal areas, are estimated to be protected and conserved.

UN chief Antonio Guterres, who had stopped over in Cali for two days with five heads of state and dozens of ministers to add impetus to the talks, reminded delegates that humanity has already altered three-quarters of Earth's land surface and two-thirds of its waters.

"The clock is ticking. The survival of our planet's biodiversity - and our own survival - are on the line," he said.

The meeting was held amid a massive security deployment following threats from a Colombian guerrilla group with its base of operations near Cali. No incidents were reported.

## Moldova Holds Presidential Runoff Election

CHISINAU (Dispatches) - Moldovans voted on Sunday in a presidential runoff that has been overshadowed by election meddling allegations and could see Moscow gain more influence in a diplomatic battleground between Russia and the European Union.

Pro-Western incumbent Maia Sandu, who has accelerated the southeast European nation's push to leave Moscow's orbit and join the EU, faces Alexandr Stoianglo, an ex-prosecutor general backed by the pro-Russian Socialist Party.

The fortunes of Sandu, who set Moldova on the long path of EU accession talks in June, will be closely followed in Brussels a week after Georgia, another ex-Soviet state hoping to join, re-elected a ruling party seen as increasingly pro-Russian.

Stoianglo says that as president he too would back EU integration but also develop ties with Russia in the national interest. He has vowed to try to revive cheap Russian gas supplies and said he would meet with President Vladimir Putin if Moldovans wanted it.

The outcome of the vote is likely to set the tone for next summer's parliamentary elections where Sandu's ruling party is expected to struggle to retain its majority and which will determine the stripe of the future government.

Stoianglo's East-West balancing rhetoric contrasts with Sandu's four years in power, during which ties with the Kremlin have unravelled, a slew of Moscow's diplomats have been expelled and she has condemned Russia's invasion of neighbouring Ukraine.

Moscow has said that her government is "Russophobic".

Sandu portrays Stoianglo as the Kremlin's man and a political Trojan horse, painting Sunday's vote as a choice between a bright future in the EU by 2030 and one of uncertainty and instability.

Stoianglo says that is untrue and that she has failed to look out for the interests of ordinary Moldovans. He accuses Sandu of divisive politics in a country that has a



Romanian-speaking majority and large Russian-speaking minority.

The police have cracked down to try to avoid a repeat of what they said was a vast vote-buying scheme deployed by Russian-backed fugitive oligarch Ilan Shor in the first round and a referendum on the EU's aspirations on Oct. 20.

Russia denies interfering, while Shor has denied wrongdoing. He lives in Russia and has openly called on people via social media to vote against Sandu and promised payment for following his instructions.

Sandu has said the meddling affected the Oct. 20 results and that Shor sought to buy the votes of 300,000 people, more than 10% of the population.

A Moldovan government source said Chisinau had notified several EU nations that it believed Russia would try to disrupt voting by Moldovan expatriates on Sunday at polling stations in their countries.

The source, who asked not to be identified, told Reuters polling stations in Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Canada, Romania, United States and Britain might be targeted by disruption including with the use of bomb hoaxes.

Moldovan voters living in the West are seen as largely pro-European and therefore more likely to support Sandu, who has championed Moldova's effort to join the 27-nation bloc by 2030.

The referendum result went to the wire, delivering a slender win of 50.35% for the pro-EU camp.

Sandu won 42% of the vote in the first round, falling short of the 50% needed to win outright. Stoianglo came second with 26%.

Stoianglo is expected to benefit from protest votes against Sandu's handling of the economy in the poor agricultural nation of fewer than 3 million people.





LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester City suffered their first Premier League loss since December as Bournemouth stunned the champions, while Arsenal were rocked by Newcastle and Liverpool seized top spot.

City were unbeaten in their previous 32 league games, dating back to a defeat at Aston Villa last year. But Pep Guardiola's second-placed side saw that streak come to an unexpected end in a 2-1 loss on England's south coast.

The Cherries had never beaten City in their 21 previous meetings, losing 19 of those matches, yet Andoni Iraola's team sprang a huge upset to derail the champions' push for a fifth successive title.

Bournemouth recently damaged Arsenal's title hopes with a 2-0 win at the Vitality Stadium and they inflicted pain on City as well.

Guardiola had claimed City faced an injury "emergency" after they suffered fitness problems in Wednesday's League Cup defeat at Tottenham.

Exhausted or not, City were rocked in the ninth minute when Bournemouth winger Antoine Semenyo drilled Milos Kerkez's cross past Ederson from inside the area.

Guardiola's men were unable to muster a response to that blow and Evanilson doubled Bournemouth's lead in the 64th minute with a composed finish from Kerkez's cross.

Josko Gvardiol's header reduced the deficit in the 82nd minute, but it was too late to save City from a second defeat in four days.

"We have a lot of players with no minutes so the balance is a bit uncomfortable. Today we could not handle their intensity. That's why we lost the game," Guardiola said.

Newcastle put a huge dent in fourth-placed Arsenal's title aspirations with a 1-0 win at St James' Park. Alexander Isak netted in the 12th minute, heading home Anthony Gordon's pinpoint cross.

Injury-hit Arsenal struggled to get out of first gear and produced just one shot on target in the entire game.

Mikel Arteta's team, runners-up to City for the past two years, have taken just one point from their last three games.

"Today we weren't our best version. It's about how you react to that. We're not going to find the right words or answers to describe how we feel," said Arteta, whose side are seven points adrift of first place.

At Anfield, Liverpool were in danger of a surprise loss of their own before regrouping to take advantage of their rivals' stumbles with a 2-1 win over Brighton.

Ferdi Kadioglu gave Brighton the lead in the 14th minute with a fierce strike that cannoned in off the post after Danny Welbeck flicked on Kaoru Mitoma's cross.

But Liverpool had beaten Brighton in the League Cup last 16 in midweek and they repeated the trick thanks to a late revival.

Cody Gakpo bagged the equaliser in the 69th minute with a cross that looped straight into the net.

Three minutes later, Mohamed Salah put Liverpool ahead, the Egypt forward curling a fine finish into the top corner for his ninth goal this season.

In Arne Slot's first season in charge, Liverpool are two points clear of City after their eighth win in 10 league games.

"More than the position we are in, if you face a team like this and are 1-0 down and can come back to a 2-1 win that gives me a lot of confidence," Slot said.

Nottingham Forest are up to third place after beating 10-man West Ham 3-0 to make it three consecutive top-flight victories for the first time since 1999.

Chris Wood grabbed his eighth goal in 10 league games in the 27th minute and West Ham had Edson Alvarez sent off in first-half stoppage-time.

Callum Hudson-Odoi struck in the 65th minute and Ola Aina sealed the points 12 minutes from full-time at the City Ground.

## Brazilian GP Qualifying Postponed Due to Heavy Rainstorm



SAO PAULO (Dispatches) - A prolonged heavy rainstorm led to the postponement of qualifying at the Brazilian Grand Prix as deteriorating conditions and poor light ended the day's action at Interlagos.

The session has been delayed until Sunday morning, in the hope the weather improves, but forecasts have suggested that may not be a foregone conclusion.

Officials later said qualifying will take place on Sunday at 10:30 GMT (6:30pm Malaysian time) with the start of the race brought forward 90 minutes due to concerns over the weather and will get underway later.

As night began to fall on Saturday, drivers waved to fans on the pit-wall — giving the big crowd who had waited for more than two hours in the rain — some reward for their patience.

Formula One boss Stefano Domenicali confirmed the postponement at 19:50 GMT and praised the fans inside the circuit for their patience and support.

"First of all, the fans here are incredible," he told FITV.

"But unfortunately, we cannot control the weather and it is just not safe to drive. It's as simple as that and problems too with the light make it worse so that's it."

"The plan now is to run in the morning and the final check will be made with a plan and details for the day."

He added: "I have to say the fans here are unique and we thank them for waiting so long, but it is impossible to race today."

The Safety Car was deployed to evaluate the conditions several times with marshals using brooms to clear deep pools of water around the circuit and in the paddock and pit lane.

## Zverev to Face Humbert on Return to Paris Masters Final

PARIS (Dispatches) - Third seed Alexander Zverev produced a near-flawless display to outclass former champion Holger Rune 6-3 7-6(4) and return to the Paris Masters final after a gap of four years.

The 27-year-old Zverev, who is poised to leapfrog Carlos Alcaraz into second in the world rankings ahead of this month's season finale in Turin, next meets Ugo Humbert after the home favourite beat 2018 champion Karen Khachanov 6-7(6) 6-4 6-3.

"I feel like I made it a little difficult for myself, but he (Rune) is a champion," Zverev said. "It's probably his favourite tournament and favourite court, but I'm happy to be in my second final here. I'm looking forward to it."

Sustained pressure from the baseline helped Zverev grab the early break for a 3-1 lead but the German had to work a lot harder in the fifth game before unleashing a couple of booming serves to consolidate it.

The Roland Garros runner-up shrugged off a late double fault to wrap up the opening set on the back of 11 winners at a packed Palais Omnisports in Bercy.

A tighter second set ensued as Rune ramped up the aggression by serving and volleying at times, but Zverev was undeterred and came up with a powerful smash at the net to break the 21-year-old Dane again in the seventh game.

Zverev held his serve to love in the next game to go within touching distance of his first ATP 1000 hardcourt final since a run to the Cincinnati title three years ago.

Rune battled on bravely to level at 5-5 with a break and roared amid loud cheers before edging ahead following a six-deuce



game that lasted more than 10 minutes.

After firing big winners on both flanks to force a tiebreak, Zverev took control by racing ahead 3-0 and held his nerve from there to earn a career-high 65th win of the season.

Defeat ended Rune's hopes of qualifying for the ATP Finals.

Meanwhile Aryna Sabalenka began her quest to secure the year-end number one ranking with a thumping 6-3 6-4 victory over China's Zheng Qinwen in her opening round robin match at the WTA Finals in Riyadh.

Australian and U.S. Open champion Sabalenka, who is headlining the first women's professional tennis tournament in Saudi Arabia, packed far too much power for Zheng at crucial points in their fourth meeting of 2024 to stay perfect.

"She's such a great player. We always have great battles," Sabalenka said.

"She plays aggressive tennis. She forced me to step in and go for it. That's why I bring my best tennis and I'm super happy with the first win."

In a rematch of their Melbourne and Wuhan title clashes, it was Belarusian Sabalenka who edged ahead in a tight opening set with a break in the sixth game and took the early lead in the contest by holding to love.

Olympic champion Zheng enjoyed plenty of vociferous support at the King Saud University Indoor Arena and led four times in a closer second set but Sabalenka drew level each time and finally broke for a 5-4 lead with a searing forehand winner.

She wrapped up the contest on serve despite a wobble with a double fault, when Zheng sent a forehand long.



## Bayern Munich Dominates Bundesliga, Dortmund Beat Leipzig

MUNICH (Dispatches) - Harry Kane scored twice and set up another as Bayern Munich moved three points clear at the top of the German Bundesliga with a 3-0 home win over Union Berlin.

The England captain put Bayern ahead from the spot on 15 minutes after Union's Benedict Hollerbach brought down Michael Olise on the edge of the box.

Kane returned provider just before half-time, tapping the ball into Kingsley Coman's path, the France forward blasting in over Union goalkeeper Frederik Ronnow.

Kane added another after 51 minutes, eagerly getting to a loose ball inches ahead of teammate Jamal Musiala to complete his brace.

Despite two consecutive Champions League losses at Aston Villa and Barcelona, Bayern have now scored 16 without conceding in their past four games against German opposition.

"We've not started the Champions League well, so the pressure is on in every Champions League game now," Kane said.

"I think if we use the confidence that we've played the last few games with, we can cause any team a lot of problems."

"There's still a long way to go, but we've got the right mentality and the right attitude," Kane told Sky.

"If we keep going like this, everything will be OK—we're in good shape."

Having needed a win to avoid relegation on the final match day last season, Union now sit sixth and captain Christopher Trimmel told Sky "we can live with it—Bayern were the favourites and have unbelievable quality."

Borussia Dortmund carved out a 2-1 home victory over RB Leipzig to relieve the pressure on under-fire coach Nuri Sahin.

Dortmund came into the game with four losses in their past five games, including Tuesday's German Cup elimination by Wolfsburg—their earliest exit in 15 years.

Dortmund spurned several clear-cut chances early before Benjamin Sesko put Leipzig in front after 27 minutes, blasting in off the crossbar.

The hosts hit back three minutes later, Maximilian Beier tapping in a ball in the box for his first Dortmund goal since arriving in the summer.

With just over half an hour remaining, Beier looped a cross in to Serhou Guirassy, who headed Dortmund in front, his fifth goal in his past six league games.

"The style and manner was great today. That's what we expect of ourselves, even if we don't always get there," Dortmund captain Emre Can told Sky.

## Johnson's 25 Points Off Bench Lead Spurs Past Timberwolves

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Keldon Johnson poured in a season-high 25 points off the bench and Jeremy Sochan and Chris Paul amassed double-doubles as the San Antonio Spurs defeated the visiting Minnesota Timberwolves 113-103 on Saturday evening.

The game was the second of a home-road back to back for the Timberwolves, who didn't arrive in the Alamo City until 4:45 a.m. on Saturday.

San Antonio led by five points at halftime and by 13 after three quarters and never let the Timberwolves back in the game in the fourth period. Minnesota pulled its starters with 3:08 to play and down by 14 points, and the Spurs cruised to the finish, capturing their second straight win and third in their past four games.

Sochan added 19 points and 10 rebounds for the Spurs, with Victor Wembanyama hitting for 17 points, Chris Paul racking up 15 points and 13 assists and Harrison Barnes hitting for 14 points.

Julius Randle and Anthony Edwards led the Timberwolves with 21 points each while Donte DiVincenzo had 14, Naz Reid scored 11 points and Rudy Gobert added 10 points.

The Timberwolves built a seven-point lead when Reid canned



a 3-pointer at the 2:35 mark of the first period. San Antonio swung back, tying the game at 32 by the quarter's end as Johnson poured in a 3-pointer as the stanza's final points.

Minnesota again built its advantage to seven points on Nickeil Alexander-Walker's jumper with 6:53 to play in the second period. The Spurs answered, running off 10 straight points capped by Paul's 3-pointer and carried a 62-57 lead to the break.

Johnson led all scorers with 15 points before halftime while Paul had a dozen, Wembanyama tallied 11 and Sochan tossed in 10 for the Spurs, who shot a season-best 58.5 percent from the floor in the first half.

Randle paced Minnesota with 11 points over the first two quarters, with Edwards and Reid scoring 10 each.

San Antonio took charge in the third quarter, forging a 20-6 run over the first five and a half minutes to go up by 19 points. The Timberwolves rallied, culling the margin to 88-78 when Randle tossed in a finger roll with 2:03 to play in the period. San Antonio led 95-82 heading to the final quarter.