

IRGC Chief Commander Urged Muslim Countries to Cut Aid Routes to Israel After the International Criminal Court Issued Arrest Warrants for Senior Israeli Officials Over War Crimes Against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip

IRAN NEWS

A Spokesman for "Martyrs of Security" Operation by the IRGC Announced that 26 Members of Terrorist Groups in Sistan and Baluchestan Province Have Been Killed Since the Start of the Operation Nearly a Month Ago

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Iran to Launch New, Advanced Centrifuges in Response to IAEA Resolution



TEHRAN - The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) says it plans to activate a "series of new and advanced centrifuges" in response to the latest politically-motivated resolution issued by the UN nuclear agency.

New Submarines to Join Iran's Navy



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

IRANI NAVY Day Commemoration Ceremony by the Presence of Foreign Military Attaches

Iran Dismisses U.S., UK Accusations Over Ukraine War, West Asia Conflicts



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's ambassador to the UN has categorically rejected as baseless accusations made by the US and UK against Tehran over the Ukraine war and regional destabilization.

The International Atomic Energy Agency's Board of Governors on Thursday voted 19 to 3, with 12 abstentions, for the resolution, brought by Britain, France, and Germany (E3), that alleged Tehran had a poor cooperation with the agency and requested a "comprehensive" report on its nuclear activities "at the latest" by spring 2025.

"After the resolution, we immediately started our remedial measures. We will significantly increase enrichment capacity," Behrouz Kamalvandi, Deputy Chairman of International, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, said in a televised interview on Friday.

He added that the AEOI will use a variety of advanced machines, increase the speed of research and industrial development for each of these machines and improve infrastructures.

He said the European countries seek to push Iran's nuclear industry backward through pressure tactics "but this will never happen."

Kamalvandi added that the number of countries that voted in favor of Europe in passing a new resolution against Iran was significantly fewer than before.

An earlier resolution in June, tabled by France, Britain, and Germany (E3), received significant support, with 20 member states voting in favor. China and Russia voted against the resolution and 12 countries abstained from the vote.

The AEOI official said the IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi toured Iran's enrichment complexes and thousands of centrifuge machines during his visit to the country last week.

"We told him these [centrifuges] were ready and that we were looking for interaction. But if they want to adopt other methods, we were also ready," Kamalvandi said.

The IAEA chief proposed a temporary pause on reserves of 60% and higher enrichment levels -- not a permanent halt -- to prepare the ground for interaction, he added.

"We accepted this [proposal] with conditions but we made it clear that we will act on the spot," he said.

The Iranian nuclear official noted that the AEOI Thursday night informed the IAEA of the measures that the country will take in response to the 35-nation board's resolution.

He said the resolution will "lead to an increase in our capacity in the nuclear industry sectors."

TEHRAN - Admiral Shahram Irani, Commander of the Iranian Navy, announced the upcoming deployment of newly developed submarines to bolster Iran's naval capabilities. Speaking on Saturday during a media briefing marking Navy Day, Admiral Irani highlighted the strategic strides the Iranian Navy has achieved in overcoming sanctions and threats while advancing defense and maritime initiatives.

Admiral Irani began by condemning the actions of the Israeli regime, calling attention to what he described as brutal attacks against innocent civilians, including children, women, international organization staff, and media personnel. He reaffirmed Iran's commitment to countering such injustices.

He praised the Navy's ability to maintain its revolutionary course through unity and cooperation with other nations, stating that these efforts align with Iran's vision of becoming a more robust and independent state. According to Admiral Irani, Iran's naval advancements symbolize the country's resolve to showcase its strategic strength on the global stage.

Irani revealed that the Navy is finalizing the construction of advanced submarines, which will soon be integrated into its fleet. He noted significant progress in unmanned technology across air, surface, and subsurface domains, as well as advancements in missile systems with a range exceeding 1,000 kilometers. Additionally, he emphasized the Navy's growing capabilities in electronic warfare, stating, "We take pride in the achievements in this field."

The Iranian Navy is focused on expanding its reach and capabilities in oceanic operations. Efforts include upgrading naval bases and enhancing healthcare and logistical support for personnel in remote and oceanic regions. Admiral Irani also highlighted the Navy's role in ensuring the safety of international shipping lanes, particularly against threats like piracy and terrorism.

The Navy is currently building two new destroyers in the "Mowj" class. These projects, he said, represent a transition to heavier and more advanced vessels. Admiral Irani assured that details of these developments will be disclosed in due time.

Admiral Irani announced plans for multiple international joint naval exercises by year's end, involving allied and neighboring countries. Iran is also strengthening cooperative ties with other nations, focusing on joint patrols and maritime security operations. He emphasized that many international shipping companies now prefer Iranian naval protection for safe passage.

On the domestic front, Admiral Irani praised government efforts in developing the Makran coast, a strategic region overlooking the ocean. The Navy has contributed to infrastructure projects, including schools, healthcare facilities, and utilities, to improve the quality of life for coastal residents.

Admiral Irani stressed the need for a cultural shift in how Iranians view the sea, advocating for a "sea-to-land" perspective to unlock the economic and strategic potential of maritime resources. He called for an increase in maritime-related educational programs to inspire youth to pursue careers in the naval and maritime sectors.

In conclusion, Admiral Irani underscored Iran's refusal to be isolated, stating, "The enemies must understand that Iran and its people will never be marginalized or subdued by sanctions." He reaffirmed Iran's commitment to fostering global peace while showcasing its naval strength as a deterrent and diplomatic tool.

"I categorically reject the identical accusations made by the representatives of these two countries against Iran concerning the conflict in Ukraine," Amir Saïd Iravani wrote in a letter to rotating President of the UN Security Council Barbara Woodward.

He said that Iran's position on Ukraine is "clear, consistent, and remains unchanged."

Iravani said the US, through its unconditional political, military, and financial support for Israel, bears direct responsibility for the destabilization of the region and the atrocities committed against civilians in Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon.

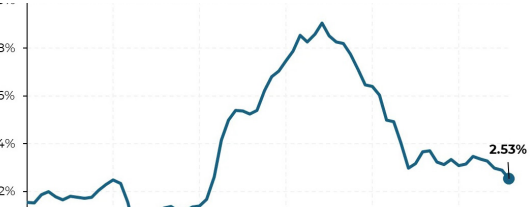
"It is an irrefutable fact that the civilian deaths, devastation, and destruction of infrastructure in Gaza and Lebanon are enabled by US-made weapons and its unwavering support, while its repeated vetoes of ceasefire resolutions in the Security Council shield Israel from accountability," Iravani said.

The US, he said, has paralyzed the Security Council, and granted Israel a license to continue its aggression and carnage under the pretext of self-defense with full impunity as evidenced by the recent US veto of the ceasefire resolution on Gaza.

"Similarly, we reject the baseless allegations made by the UK's Foreign Minister [David Lammy] in the meeting, accusing Iran of regional destabilization. These unfounded claims are an obvious attempt to obscure the UK's own historical and ongoing role in creating instability and turmoil in the region.

"The UK's colonial imposition during the Mandate for Palestine coupled with its calculated political engineering to deprive the Palestinian people of their rights, laid the foundation for the injustices and brutalities we witness today," Iravani said.

Annual Inflation Declines, Point-to-Point Inflation Rises



Year	Annual Inflation	Point-to-Point Inflation
2023	~3.6%	~3.6%
2024	2.8%	2.53%

New Chapter in Cooperation: Iran, Venezuela Sign New MoUs



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - According to the latest report from the Statistical Center of Iran, the annual inflation rate for households across the country has decreased to 33.1%, marking a 0.5 percentage point drop compared to the previous month.

In November 2024, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for households reached 279.5, reflecting a 2.8% increase compared to the previous month. On a year-over-year basis, the CPI increased by 32.5%. Over the 12-month period ending in November, the annual inflation rate stood at 33.1% compared to the same period last year.

Point-to-point inflation refers to the percentage change in the CPI compared to the same month of the previous year. In November 2024, point-to-point inflation for Iranian households was 32.5%. This means that, on average, households spent 32.5% more for the same basket of goods and services compared to November 2023. Point-to-point inflation in November 2024 rose by 0.9 percentage points compared to the previous month.

Monthly inflation measures the percentage change in the CPI compared to the previous month. In November 2024, the monthly inflation rate for households was 2.8%. Within major expenditure groups, monthly inflation was 3.6% for "food, beverages, and tobacco" and 2.5% for "non-food goods and services."

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran and Venezuela have signed a series of cooperation documents in Caracas where Defense Minister Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh is visiting at the helm of a high-ranking delegation.

Nasirzadeh, who traveled to Caracas on Tuesday to participate at the 10th meeting of the Iran-Venezuela joint economic cooperation commission, met President Nicolas Maduro who highlighted the extensive work done by various working groups to map out bilateral cooperation.

"Iran has established itself as an emerging power in the multipolar and multicentric world that is emerging today," Maduro said.

"It is a country with great technological capacity, a rich educational, cultural, and scientific tradition," he said, noting Iran's resilience against imperialist siege for over 45 years, which has strengthened its fighting spirit.

Venezuela, Maduro said, has never had such a strong relationship with a powerful country like Iran.

He recalled the various stages of this relationship, noting that the 10th joint commission meeting opens a new chapter with a cooperation map full of great challenges and opportunities in a world aspiring to be free of colonies, hegemony and fascism.

"From Venezuela and Iran, we say yes to freedom, to open dialogue between peoples and civilizations, to joint construction. A new stage of the Iran-Venezuela relationship is opening to increase trade, mobility, and exchange through tourism. Venezuela is ready to receive large contingents of families and tourists from Iran," he said.

Nasirzadeh said geographical distance has never been an obstacle to deepening relations between the Venezuelan and Iranian people.

"Iran and Venezuela are friends and brothers in a single boat carrying the destiny of both countries amid existing threats. Imperialism always seeks to dominate free and sovereign peoples and is upset by the cooperation between our countries that seek a world free of hegemony," he said.

Nasirzadeh predicted that the joint commission meeting would become a milestone in bilateral relations due to the significant achievements and agreements, opening a new chapter in the relationship between the two countries.

"Iran will spare no effort to consolidate cooperation with Venezuela. We will facilitate relations and contracts between private sector companies," he said.

Nasirzadeh met several members of the Venezuelan cabinet, including Minister of Transport Ramon Velazquez who said significant progress had been made in 17 areas of cooperation in recent years, advancing various projects such as transportation, tourism, cultural integration, and mutual understanding.

"There is a high level of cooperation in contributing to the education of our future generations. An Iranian entrepreneur intends to equip 50 schools in Venezuela with tools for learning artificial intelligence. These are the scientific seedbeds," Velazquez said.

Separately, Nasirzadeh and Venezuelan Vice President and Oil Minister Dely Rodriguez discussed ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation, and emphasized the need to follow up on the implementation of bilateral agreements.

In talks with Venezuela's Minister of Science and Technology Gabriel Jimenez, the two sides emphasized the importance of collaboration in research and development, technology transfer, and the exchange of expertise in biotechnology, nanotechnology, and geosciences.

The Iranian defense minister also held talks with Venezuela's Minister of Industries Alex Saab on opportunities for joint industrial projects, mutual export exchanges, and the expansion of Iranian business activity in Venezuela.

The two sides also discussed the establishment of preferential tariff agreements and the development of industrial infrastructure.

Talks between Nasirzadeh and Venezuelan Minister of Mines Hector Silva revolved around investments in the mining sector, joint projects, and technology transfer for mining operations, particularly in the private sector.

He also discussed with Venezuelan Minister of Agriculture Mendez Fernandez potential cooperation in agricultural trade, livestock vaccination, seed production, pest control, and agricultural machinery.

Diplomat Discourages Recourse to Pressure Against Iran



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - A ranking Iranian diplomat has strongly discouraged Western countries from resorting to pressure, intimidation, and confrontational approach against the country over its legitimate and peaceful nuclear activities.

Seeking recourse to the above measures "does not amount to adoption of a sustainable and credible course, and [application of such methods] will eventually hit a dead end," Mohsen Naziri Asl, Iran's permanent representative at the United Nations office in Vienna, said on Friday.

"The Islamic Republic is [rather] prepared for joining positive interaction through dialog and constructive cooperation towards potential achievement of a sustainable issue [to standing issues]."

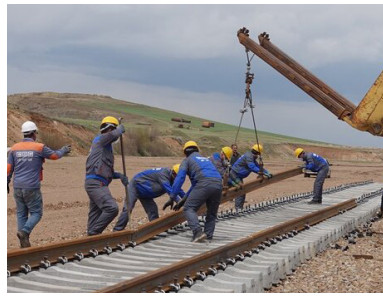
The remarks came after the Board of Governors of the UN's nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), adopted an anti-Iranian resolution based on a proposal that had been forwarded by the UK, France, and Germany. The resolution reiterated the trio and their allies' accusations against the Islamic Republic of insufficient cooperation with the IAEA.

In chorus with the United States and others, the threesome European states have been taking numerous similar measures against Iran in line with the accusations that run counter to the standing status of the country and the agency's cooperation, which has even increased in frequency and quality over the past years.

The ongoing confrontational approach on the part of the West comes, while it was the US that broke off its internationally-endorsed commitments to Iran by unilaterally and illegally leaving a 2015 nuclear agreement between the Islamic Republic and world countries and returning the sanctions that the deal had lifted.

The European trio, which were likewise signatories to the deal, meanwhile, failed to return Washington to the accord, despite their repeated insistence that they would do so.

IRAN NEWS



Completion of the Shalamcheh-Basra Railway Project Within Three Years

TEHRAN (ILNA) - Jabbar Ali Zakeri, CEO of Iran Railways, announced in a joint meeting with Jabbar Alawi Lahis, CEO of Iraq Railways, that significant progress has been made on the Shalamcheh-Basra railway project over the past two months. He highlighted the expertise of Iranian engineers in designing and constructing bridges and technical structures, which has accelerated the bridge construction phase of the project.

The railway project, aimed at facilitating travel for pilgrims visiting the shrine of Imam Hussein (PBUH), is being developed with urgency. "We hope the rapid completion of this route will enhance the comfort of travelers and pilgrims," Zakeri added. Jabbar Alawi Lahis, CEO of Iraq Railways, expressed appreciation for Iran Railways' efforts in demining and advancing the project. He emphasized the Iraqi Prime Minister's directive to complete the project within the next three years.

Switzerland Remains Iran's Largest European Trade Partner



TEHRAN - Sharif Nezam Mafi, the president of the Iran-Switzerland Chamber of Commerce, discussed the current state of trade relations between the two nations in an interview with ILNA. He noted that Iran-Switzerland trade has been significantly affected by banking restrictions. With U.S. sanctions exerting pressure on Swiss companies and limiting banking transactions, only Swiss firms with a longstanding presence in Iran continue to operate. Meanwhile, new Swiss companies have largely avoided entering the Iranian market, and Iranian products in Switzerland have also become increasingly scarce. Nezam Mafi characterized the current trade situation as far from satisfactory for businesses in both countries.

Nezam Mafi highlighted that Swiss imports to Iran, particularly pharmaceuticals and grains, continue to dominate the trade relationship. In contrast, Iran's exports to Switzerland are limited to traditional goods and industrial components, with volumes so small they are barely significant.

Despite these constraints, Switzerland remains Iran's largest European trade partner. According to Nezam Mafi, Swiss companies have not abandoned their operations in Iran, even after the U.S. withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). He emphasized that Swiss firms have long-term plans and continue to view Iran as one of the most promising markets in the region, Asia, and even globally. Notably, these companies have maintained transparency and their registered brand names while operating in Iran.

Addressing reports about the creation of joint committees between Iranian and Swiss chambers of commerce, Nezam Mafi dismissed such claims. He clarified that prior collaborations were mainly between individual chambers in Switzerland's cantons and Iranian chambers, particularly with Geneva. However, such interactions have significantly decreased, and current meetings are now limited to economic discussions rather than actionable trade initiatives.

IRANNEWSNATIONALDESK



95% of Retirees Are Under 60

TEHRAN - Minister of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare, Ahmad Maidari, revealed that 95% of retirees in the country are under the age of 60, pointing out a significant gap in the nation's pension system. He compared this to the standards in other countries where retirement typically comes after 40 years of work at the age of 60, while many in Iran retire after only 20 to 25 years of service.

In a meeting with the Student Basij on the country's major issues, held on Thursday, November 21, Maidari highlighted several critical aspects regarding the labor market and retirement policies. He stated that the situation of pension funds in Iran required serious attention, as previous policies focused on equality but neglected the functionality and efficiency of the funds. Currently, retirees from the Government Pension Fund average 52 years of age, while those from the Armed Forces' pension fund are typically 45 years old, and those in the Steel Fund average only 40 years.

Maidari noted that these early retirements are not only financially unsustainable but also contribute to a broader issue of inefficiency within pension systems. He cited a 50% budget shortfall in 2024, leading to a 40% inflation rate, primarily due to government support for pension funds. Maidari also called for a deeper understanding of the root causes of poverty in Iran, citing the need for think tanks to examine these problems more thoroughly.

One particular issue that Maidari emphasized was the lack of adequate support for people with disabilities. He acknowledged that the monthly assistance provided to individuals with disabilities—around 1.5 million rials—is insufficient, given their high living costs.

Maidari also addressed allegations of corruption within Iran's social security and pension systems, acknowledging that while there have been issues of misconduct, the more significant problem was the flawed decision-making from

the past. He emphasized that reform would require a collective effort and a "Basij spirit" to correct the errors in society's structures.

On the topic of infrastructure, particularly roads, Maidari defended the need for more funding, even proposing an increase in road tolls to maintain and improve the country's roads. He drew a comparison with Switzerland, where, despite being one of the wealthiest nations, tolls are used to fund high-quality infrastructure.

Another critical issue was Iran's mining sector. Maidari pointed out that out of the 101 coal mines in Iran, only one is modernized, with the rest operating under outdated and unsafe conditions. He attributed this to pressures from various groups who kept the mines small-scale, even though larger operations would be more efficient and safer. Following the deadly 2010 Tabas mine disaster, the government had closed seven mines due to their unsafe practices.

Maidari stressed the need for reform in administrative structures to address these challenges, indicating that solving Iran's economic problems is not about finding "economic surgeons" but about addressing the deeper systemic issues. He also noted that the price of Iranian coal is one-third of imported coal, yet the country still imports large quantities, which demonstrates inefficiency in domestic production.

The Minister suggested that labor unions and student organizations, such as the Basij, need to be more involved in solving the problems in the mining sector, particularly in negotiating better wages for workers. However, he cautioned that an increase in wages could lead to the closure of some mines if not carefully managed.

Finally, Maidari discussed the complexity of achieving justice in Iran's economy, emphasizing that true justice is not simply about redistributing wealth but ensuring that inequalities are reduced and productivity is increased.

Negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement with Pakistan



TEHRAN - The Head of Iran's Trade Development Organization announced ongoing negotiations to establish a free trade agreement with Pakistan while highlighting the economic potential of Sistan and Baluchestan province for trade expansion.

Mohammad Ali Dehqan Dehnavi revealed ongoing talks to sign a free trade agreement with Pakistan, emphasizing the significant role Sistan and Baluchestan can play in boosting cross-border trade.

Dehnavi noted that the current kolbari law (a policy supporting small-scale cross-border trade for local residents) has not been fully implemented in Sistan and Baluchestan. According to the regulation, families of four are entitled to a monthly customs duty discount of 2.8 million tomans on imported goods. This initiative is already active in provinces like Kurdistan and other western regions but needs more attention in Sistan and Baluchestan.

The Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade announced that a new framework for organizing and supervising border trade (kolbari and seafaring activities) has been approved by the Cabinet and will soon be enacted. The new regulation aims to increase household quotas and facilitate small-scale border trade, creating opportunities for greater economic participation.

To address challenges faced by local traders, the ministry has allowed updates in the trade system for goods imported before the anti-smuggling law was enacted. Discussions are also underway with the Central Bank to release suspended trading licenses for border traders.

Dehnavi suggested studies to explore the establishment of small border markets in Sistan and Baluchestan, stating that the current number of such markets nationwide is insufficient. He clarified that most "border markets" function as customs terminals, with limited facilities for trade. The proposal aims to create dedicated spaces to support small-scale traders in the province.

He added that a list of permitted goods under the updated kolbari regulation would soon be finalized. Expanding this list could significantly boost local trade and economic growth.

Dehnavi expressed optimism that a free trade agreement with Pakistan would resolve many existing trade challenges with the neighboring country. He emphasized transforming informal trade activities into organized frameworks to promote local production, employment, and regional commerce.

The Deputy Minister concluded by highlighting the need to leverage small-scale trade initiatives for broader development in Sistan and Baluchestan, ensuring sustainable economic benefits for the region.

Iranian Banks in Talks with Russian Counterparts



TEHRAN - Kazem Jalali, Iran's ambassador to Russia, discussed the connection between Iran's Shetab network and Russia's Mir network for financial exchanges. He noted that currently, this linkage is only useful for financial transactions in tourism. Jalali expressed skepticism about the possibility of using these networks for trade due to the high volume of transactions in commercial exchanges, which exceed the capacity of these networks. Even domestically, Shetab faces limitations, making it unsuitable for large-scale trade.

When asked whether unifying currency exchange rates is necessary for such networks, Jalali clarified that it is not essential. He explained that exchange rates can be adjusted based on market discovery, though stability would be preferable for smoother operations.

Jalali highlighted ongoing negotiations between Iranian public and private banks with their Russian counterparts, which he believes could benefit traders. Regarding withdrawal limits on the Mir network, he stated that the current limit is around 500 rubles, which will soon increase to 1,000 rubles.

The ambassador outlined five major challenges impeding the growth of trade between Iran and Russia:

Lack of Awareness: Jalali stressed the importance of Iranian traders increasing their presence in Russia, including opening representative offices and establishing a physical presence. Currently, Iranian representation in Russia remains minimal.

Transit Issues: He elaborated on the North-South Corridor's three branches. The eastern branch, passing through Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan into Iran, began operations in 2023, transporting 650,000 tons of goods. This figure is expected to rise to 2 million tons by the end of 2024, though the corridor has a capacity of 15 million tons. The middle branch, which utilizes the Caspian Sea, requires coordination among four countries to strengthen the maritime fleet. The western branch faces challenges with the Rasht-Astara railway project, but recent high-level discussions have led to significant directives for its development.

Banking and Financial Issues: Jalali noted ongoing efforts to gradually address monetary and banking challenges.

Customs Procedures: He emphasized the need for considerable improvements in customs operations.

Logistics: This includes maritime, rail, and road transportation, all of which require enhancements to meet trade demands.

Iran and Afghanistan Committed to Expanding Rail Trade



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The President of the Mashhad Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture, Mohammadreza Tavakolizadeh, has emphasized the need to address obstacles in utilizing the Afghanistan rail route. Speaking at a meeting with the Head of Afghanistan Railways, he noted that the rail link between Iran and Afghanistan holds immense potential for boosting bilateral trade and fostering regional connectivity. Tavakolizadeh expressed optimism that collaborative efforts could resolve these issues, enhancing goods transfer between the two nations and facilitating broader regional trade.

Afghan Deputy Minister of Public Works and Head of Afghanistan Railways, Ishaq Sahibzada, shared positive outcomes from recent discussions in Tehran. These talks underscored the shared goal of Iran and Afghanistan to strengthen trade and transit links through the development of rail infrastructure. Sahibzada welcomed Iran's cooperation, emphasizing that leveraging rail capabilities would streamline goods movement, bolster Afghanistan's exports to Iran, and enable access to European markets.

Sahibzada provided updates on the Khaf-Herat railway project. While the third segment in Afghanistan has been completed, the fourth segment—divided into two sections—shows significant progress. The first section, with 80% physical completion, is slated to finish this year, while the second section will connect Herat to its airport and industrial zones. Contracts for this phase have been finalized, and construction is set to begin shortly.

Acknowledging the hurdles facing the Khaf-Herat railway, Sahibzada noted ongoing efforts with Iranian officials to address these issues. Special freight discounts for traders using the rail link will

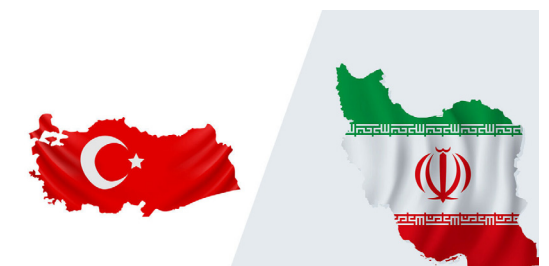
soon be announced to encourage its use. He emphasized that rail transport offers cost advantages crucial for Afghanistan, where high logistics costs impede development. The Afghan government prioritizes railway expansion as a solution to these challenges, while actively seeking Iran's partnership in reconstruction and trade enhancement.

Mahmoud Siyadat, President of the Iran-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce, stressed the importance of dual-direction freight operations to reduce costs. He proposed establishing a dedicated committee under the Mashhad Chamber to advance the rail link's activation. Additionally, he suggested that private sector entities collaborate to ensure the project's success. Siyadat underscored the need for proper storage facilities and equipment along the Khaf-Herat route to support seamless operations.

Mahmoud Emti, a board member of the Mashhad Chamber, highlighted the private sector's robust capacity to expand trade. Over 1,500 transit and export trucks already cross the Afghan border daily, showcasing the trade volume potential. Activating the rail link could transform this dynamic, aligning with Afghanistan's aspirations for enhanced connectivity. However, Emti emphasized that infrastructure issues on the Khaf-Herat railway must be addressed promptly.

Mirajan Suleiman Khil, Head of the Afghanistan-Iran Joint Chamber, underlined the significance of mining cooperation. Afghanistan's smaller mines are exporting minerals, but large-scale mining operations face extraction challenges. Suleiman Khil called for Iran's expertise and investment in this sector, advocating for mutually beneficial partnerships that leverage both countries' resources.

Iran Welcomes Turkish Tourists



TEHRAN - In a joint meeting held at Istanbul Airport's pavilion, Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Seyyed Reza Salehi Amiri, along with Iran's Consul General and Cultural Counselor in Istanbul, discussed strategies to attract Turkish tourists to Iran.

According to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage's public relations office, the meeting highlighted Turkey's strong commitment to sending tourists to Iran. It also emphasized Turkey's readiness to organize familiarization tours for travel agency representatives under the supervision of TURSAB (Association of Turkish Travel Agencies).

Additionally, Turkey plans to send well-known social media influencers to Iran on familiarization tours. These influencers would explore Iran's attractions firsthand and later promote them through digital platforms and video content, aiming to encourage more Turkish tourists to visit.

Seyyed Reza Salehi Amiri welcomed Turkey's initiatives and expressed Iran's readiness to host several familiarization tours. These tours would include prominent Turkish tour operators, media representatives, and social media influencers.

The meeting also concluded with an agreement to leverage shared cultural and historical ties between the two nations to enhance tourism. Both countries plan to develop necessary infrastructure and tailor tourism programs that highlight these shared values to attract Turkish visitors to Iran.

Taiwan's President to Visit Pacific Allies

TAIPEI (Dispatches) - Taiwan President Lai Ching-te will visit Taipei's three remaining diplomatic allies in the Pacific on a trip starting at the end of the month, his office said, but the government declined to give details on U.S. transit stops. Taiwanese presidents usually use visits to allied countries to make what are officially stop-overs in the United States, Taiwan's most important international backer and arms supplier, which frequently anger Beijing. On two occasions in the past two years China staged military drills around Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its own territory, after presidential or vice-presidential stopovers in the United States. On those stopovers, Taiwanese presidents often meet with friendly politicians and give speeches. Reuters reported last week that Lai was planning to stop off in Hawaii and maybe the U.S. territory of Guam while he was in the Pacific.



North Korea Reportedly Received Over 1m Barrels of Russian Oil



SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korea has likely received more than 1 million barrels of oil from Russia over an eight-month period this year in breach of U.N. sanctions, according to an analysis of satellite imagery published on Friday by UK-based Open Source Centre and the BBC.

North Korean oil tankers have made more than 40 visits to Russia's Far Eastern port of Vostochny since March, the report on the research group Open Source Centre's website said.

"Dozens of high-resolution satellite images, AIS (Automatic Identification System) data and imagery released by maritime patrol missions tasked with monitoring North Korea's U.N.-sanctions busting activities show North Korean tankers repeatedly loading at an oil terminal at the Russian port of Vostochny," the report said, adding that Russia's foreign ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

North Korea has continued to illicitly import refined petroleum products in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions, according to the UNSC.

Earlier this year, the United States and South Korea launched a new task force aimed at preventing North Korea from procuring illicit oil as a deadlock at the UNSC cast doubts over the future of international sanctions.

Under UNSC restrictions imposed over North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile development, Pyongyang is limited to importing 500,000 barrels of refined products a year.

Pyeongyang and Moscow have ramped up diplomatic and economic ties in recent years, culminating in Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to North Korea in June when the countries' leaders agreed a mutual defence pact.

The military cooperation between the two countries has been met by international alarm, with Washington, Kyiv and Seoul condemning the North for sending military equipment and more than 10,000 troops to Russia to support its war against Ukraine.

Russia's envoy to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said last month Russia's military interaction with North Korea did not violate international law.

IMF Approves Third Review of Sri Lanka's \$2.9b Bailout



COLOMBO (Dispatches) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved the third review of Sri Lanka's \$2.9 billion bailout on Saturday but warned that the South Asian economy remains vulnerable.

In a statement, the global lender said it would release about \$333 million, bringing total funding to around \$1.3 billion, to the crisis-hit nation. It said signs of an economic recovery were emerging.

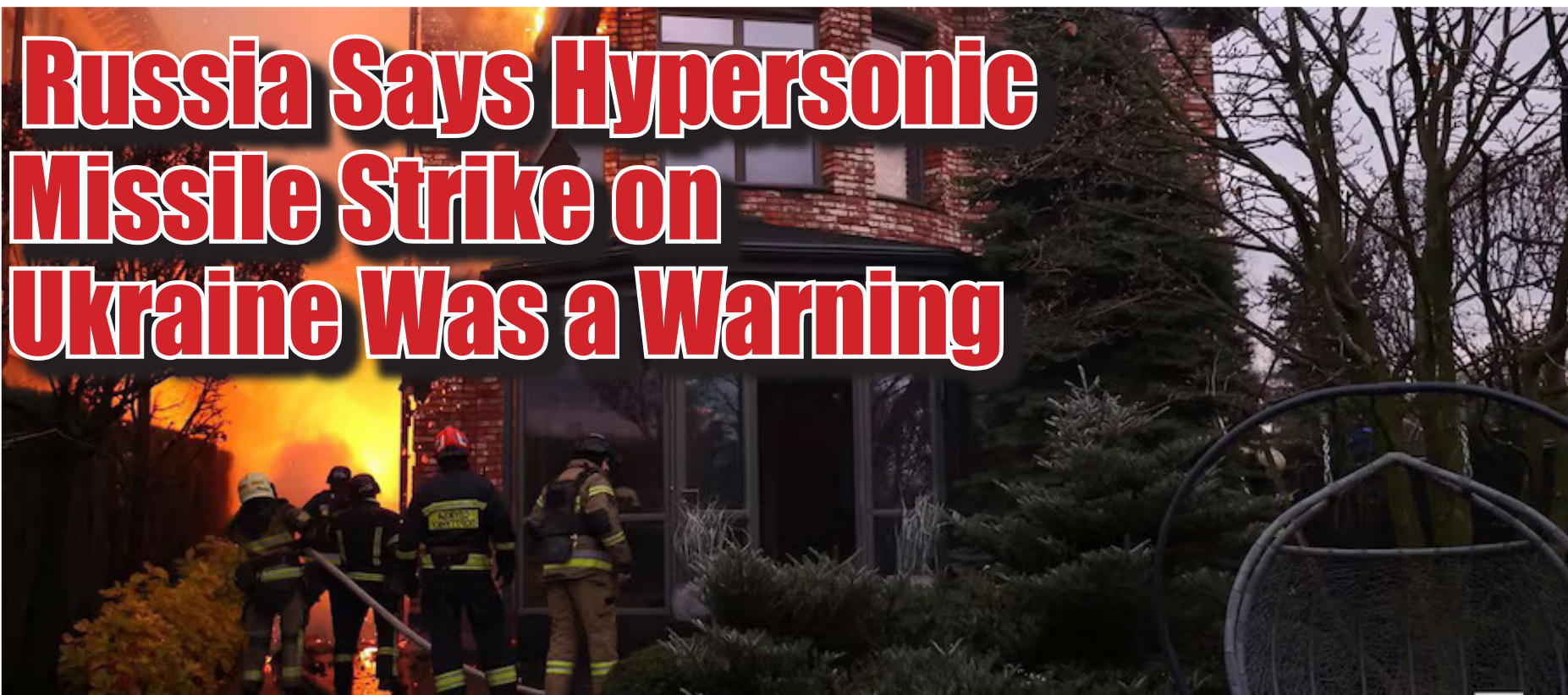
The country still needs to complete a \$12.5 billion bondholder debt restructuring and a \$10 billion debt rework with bilateral creditors including Japan, China and India to take the programme forward, the IMF said.

The IMF bailout secured in March last year helped stabilise economic conditions after cash-strapped Sri Lanka plunged into its worst financial crisis in more than seven decades in 2022.

Staying in line with tax revenue requirements and continuing reforms of state-owned enterprises will remain crucial to hitting a primary surplus target of 2.3% of gross domestic product next year, said IMF Senior Mission Chief Peter Breuer, wrapping up a delegation visit to the capital Colombo.

"The authorities have committed to staying within the guardrails of the programme," Breuer said. "We have agreed on a package for them to achieve their priorities and objectives and as soon as that is submitted to parliament it will then be possible to go ahead with the fourth review process."

Russia Says Hypersonic Missile Strike on Ukraine Was a Warning



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - The Kremlin said that a strike on Ukraine using a newly developed hypersonic ballistic missile was a message to the West that Moscow will respond harshly to any "reckless" Western actions in support of Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was speaking a day after President Vladimir Putin said Moscow had fired the new missile - the Oreshnik or Hazel Tree - at a Ukrainian military facility in response to Kyiv striking Russia with U.S.-made and British-made missiles this week for the first time after the U.S. granted its approval.

"The main message is that the reckless decisions and actions of Western countries that produce missiles, supply them to Ukraine, and subsequently participate in strikes on Russian territory cannot remain without a reaction from the Russian side," Peskov told reporters.

"The Russian side has clearly demonstrated its capabilities, and the contours of further retaliatory actions in the event that our concerns are not taken into account have been quite clearly outlined," he said.

Moscow has said it regards Ukraine's firing of ATACMS and Storm Shadow missiles into Russia as proof of direct U.S. and British involvement in the war. It says satellite targeting data and the actual programming of the missiles' flight paths must be done by NATO military personnel because Kyiv does not have the capabilities itself.

Putin said Moscow had struck a missile and defence enterprise in the Ukrainian city of Dnipro, where missile and space rocket company Pivdenmash, known as Yuzhmash by Russians, is based.

Russia's Defence Ministry said on Friday that all of the missile's warheads had hit their targets and hailed what it said was its first successful use of an intermediate-range hypersonic ballistic missile with conventional warheads in combat.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said Russia's use of the new missile amounts to "a clear and severe escalation"

and has called for strong worldwide condemnation.

Peskov said Russia had not been technically obliged to warn the United States about the strike because the missile used had been intermediate-range rather than intercontinental, but he said Moscow had informed the U.S. 30 minutes before the launch anyway.

He said Putin remained open to dialogue, but that the outgoing administration of U.S. President Joe Biden "prefers to continue down the path of escalation" and urged it to heed a warning Putin issued in September.

Putin said at the time that the West would be directly fighting with Russia if it allowed Ukraine to strike Russian territory with Western-made long-range missiles, a move he said would alter the nature and scope of the conflict and force Moscow to take "appropriate decisions" based on the new threats.

In his televised remarks on Thursday, Putin said that Russia had fired its new missile after Ukraine, with approval from the Biden administration, had struck Russia with six U.S.-made ATACMS missiles on Tuesday and with British Storm Shadow cruise missiles and U.S.-made HIMARS on Thursday.

Peskov said he hoped that the U.S. had received and understood Moscow's message.

"As for openness to dialogue, even in yesterday's statement the president stressed his readiness for any contacts - both with a view to de-escalation, to avoiding further escalation, and to reaching a peaceful trajectory," said Peskov.

"Yesterday's statement (from Putin) was very comprehensive, clear, and logical. We have no doubt that the current administration in Washington had the opportunity to familiarise itself with this statement and understand it."

Powerful Israeli Airstrike Shakes Central Beirut

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - A powerful airstrike killed at least four people in central Beirut early on Saturday, the health ministry said, shaking the Lebanese capital as Israel pressed its offensive against the Iran-backed Hezbollah group.

The attack destroyed an eight-storey building and caused a large number of fatalities and injuries, Lebanon's National News Agency said. Footage broadcast by Lebanon's Al Jadeed station showed at least one destroyed building and several others badly damaged around it.

Israel used bunker buster bombs in the strike, leaving a deep crater, the agency said. Beirut smelled strongly of explosives hours after the attack.

The blasts shook the capital at around 4 a.m. (0200 GMT), Reuters witnesses said. Security sources said at least four bombs were dropped in the attack.

It marked the fourth Israeli airstrike this week targeting a central area of Beirut, in contrast to the bulk of Israel's attacks that have targeted the Hezbollah-controlled southern suburbs. On Sunday an Israeli airstrike killed a Hezbollah media official in the Ras al-Nabaa district of central Beirut.



Rescuers searched through rubble.

A man whose family was hurt tried to comfort a traumatized woman outside a hospital. Car windows were shattered.

"There was dust and wrecked houses, people running and screaming, they were running, my wife is in hospital, my daughter is in hospital, my aunt is in the hospital," said the man, Nemir Zakariya, who held up a picture of his daughter.

"This is the little one, and my son also got hurt - this is my daughter, she is in the American University (of Beirut Medical Centre), this is what happened."

Israel launched a major offensive against Hezbollah in Lebanon in September, following nearly a year of cross-border hostilities ignited by the Gaza war, pounding wide areas of Lebanon with airstrikes and sending troops into the south.

The conflict began when Hezbollah, Tehran's most important ally in the region, opened fire in solidarity with its Palestinian ally Hamas after it launched the Oct. 7, 2023 attack on southern Israel.

A U.S. mediator travelled to Lebanon and Israel this week in an effort to secure a ceasefire. The envoy, Amos Hochstein, indicated progress had been made after meetings in Beirut on Tuesday and Wednesday, before going to meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz.

Wealthy Nations Offer \$250b on Climate Action

PARIS (Dispatches) - A new draft of a deal on cash to curb and adapt to climate change released Friday afternoon at the United Nations climate summit pledged \$250 billion by 2035 from wealthy countries to poorer ones. The amount pleases the countries who will be paying, but not those on the receiving end.

The amount is more than double the previous goal of \$100 billion a year set 15 years ago, but it's less than a quarter of the number requested by developing nations struck hardest by extreme weather. But rich nations say the number is about the limit of what they can do, say it's realistic and a stretch for democracies back home to stomach.

It struck a sour note for developing countries, which see conferences like this one as their biggest hope to pressure rich nations because they can't attend meetings of the world's biggest economies.

"Our expectations were low, but this is a slap in the face," said Mohamed Adow, from Power Shift Africa. "No developing country will fall for this. They have angered and offended the developing world."

The proposal came down from the top: the presidency of the climate talks - called COP29 - in Baku, Azerbaijan.

COP29 lead negotiator Yalchin Rafiyev, Azerbaijan's deputy foreign minister, said the presidency hopes to push countries to go higher than \$250 billion, saying "it doesn't correspond to our fair and ambitious goal. But we will continue to engage with the parties."

This proposal, which is friendly to the viewpoint of Saudi Arabia, is not a take-it-or-leave-it option, but likely only the first of two or even three proposals, said Climate Analytics CEO Bill Hare, a veteran negotiator.

"We're in for a long night and maybe two nights before we actually reach agreement



on this," Hare said.

Just like last year's initial proposal, which was soundly rejected, this plan is "empty" on what climate analysts call "mitigation" or efforts to reduce emissions from or completely get off coal, oil and natural gas, Hare said.

The frustration and disappointment at the proposed \$250 billion figure was palpable on Friday afternoon.

Tina Stege, Marshall Islands' climate envoy, called the drafts "shameful."

"It is incomprehensible that ... (we) receive only sympathy and no real action from wealthy nations," she said.

"It is a disgrace that despite full awareness of the devastating climate crises afflicting developing nations and the staggering costs of climate action - amounting to trillions - developed nations have only proposed a meagre \$250 billion per year," said Harjeet Singh of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

That amount, which goes through the year 2035, is basically the old \$100 billion year goal with 6% annual inflation, said Vaibhav Chaturvedi a climate policy analyst with New Delhi-based Council on Energy, Environment and Water.

Experts put the need at \$1.3 trillion for developing countries to cover damages resulting from extreme weather, help those nations adapt to a warming planet and wean themselves from fossil fuels, with more generated by each country internally.

The amount in any deal reached at COP negotiations - often considered a "core" - will then be mobilized or leveraged for greater climate spending. But much of that means loans for countries drowning in debt.

Singh said the proposed sum - which includes loans and lacks a commitment to grant-based finance - adds "insult to injury."



Antetokounmpo's Triple-Double Helps Bucks Past Pacers

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Giannis Antetokounmpo recorded his second triple-double of the season with 37 points, 10 rebounds and 11 assists as the Milwaukee Bucks led wire-to-wire in a 129-117 win over the visiting Indiana Pacers in an NBA Cup game.

Damian Lillard had 24 points and 12 assists for his third straight double-double to help Milwaukee win its third straight. The Bucks have won five of their last six since opening the season 2-8.

Six players scored in double figures for Milwaukee. The other were Gary Trent Jr. (18 points), Bobby Portis (17), Taurean Prince (13) and Brook Lopez (11).

Indiana trailed by as many as 25 points in the third quarter and lost for the fifth time in its last six games. The Pacers shot 11 of 34 (32.4 percent) from 3-point range and fell to 0-2 in the NBA Cup.

Trailing 93-79 at the start of the fourth quarter, Indiana used a 16-3 run to cut the deficit to 108-102 with 5:52 remaining. Milwaukee withstood the rally and improved to 2-0 in the NBA Cup.

Antetokounmpo recorded his 47th career triple-double, and the Bucks, who shot 53.3 percent from the field and 17 of 36 (47.2 percent) from 3-point range.

Pascal Siakam led Indiana with 25 points. Benedict Mathurin had 20 points, nine rebounds and three steals. Tyrese Haliburton scored 18 points to go with nine assists, Myles Turner had 15 points, and T.J. McConnell chipped in 12 points and eight assists off the bench.

Milwaukee scored the game's first 10 points and led 34-22 at the end of the first quarter. Antetokounmpo had 13 points in the opening period.

Obi Toppin scored with 1:18 left in the second quarter to cut the deficit to 48-44, but the Bucks closed the half on a 10-0 run to lead 58-44.

Indiana was held to 38.1 percent shooting from the field and 26.7 percent (4 of 15) from beyond the arc in the first half. Portis had 17 points to lead all scorers.

Lillard hit back-to-back 3-pointers to extend Milwaukee's lead to 75-55 with 7:52 left in the third quarter. Zach LaVine scored 26 points and Ayo Dosunmu and Coby White added 20 apiece to spark seven Chicago players in double figures and boost the Bulls to a 136-122 victory against the visiting Atlanta Hawks in an NBA Cup game.

Nikola Vucevic posted 18 points and 13 rebounds for Chicago. Josh Giddey scored 18 points, while Jalen

Smith (13) and Dalen Terry (12) were next.

Chicago reached a season high in points while blocking a season-best 10 shots, led by four from Vucevic, to help offset three Hawks with 20-plus points. The Bulls have won two of three after surrendering at least 143 points in losses to the Cleveland Cavaliers and Houston Rockets last weekend.

Atlanta's Jalen Johnson had 25 points and 13 rebounds, Trae Young contributed 25 points and 13 assists and Clint Capela amassed 21 points and 11 rebounds.

The Hawks led by four points in the early going but struggled to establish a rhythm on offense. Atlanta shot 45.8 percent overall from the floor compared to 57 percent for the Bulls, but the visitors were hampered by a 10-for-34 effort (29.4 percent) from 3-point range.

Atlanta's Bogdan Bogdanovic connected on 4-of-8 3-point attempts on the way to 16 points. De'Andre Hunter added 14 points for the Hawks.

White dished nine assists for Chicago.

LaVine and Dosunmu sparked a balanced Bulls attack in the early going, scoring 12 points apiece in the first half to help Chicago to a 58-51 lead at the break.

Johnson (13 points) and Capela (11) led the Hawks in the first half. Atlanta trailed by as many as 12 in the final minute of the second quarter but recovered with a 5-0 run entering the break, including a Young layup on a goaltending violation by Dosunmu.

Chicago improved to 1-1 in East Group C of the NBA Cup while Atlanta fell to 2-1. Group play continues on Tuesdays and Fridays through Dec. 3 to determine an eight-team knockout bracket later in the month.

Andrew Wiggins poured in a season-best 30 points, Stephen Curry added 19 and the Golden State Warriors clinched no worse than a tie for first place in West Group C of the NBA Cup with a 112-108 road victory over the New Orleans Pelicans on Friday night.

Draymond Green chipped in with 11 points, eight rebounds and five assists for the Warriors, who improved to 3-0 in tournament play with just one round-robin game remaining on Dec. 3 at Denver.

Trey Murphy III went for a season-best 24 points and Jeremiah Robinson-Earl compiled a 19-point, 12-rebound double-double off the bench for the Pelicans, who fell to 1-2 in Cup play.

Russell Fastest Ahead of Las Vegas Grand Prix Qualifying



LAS VEGAS (Dispatches) - George Russell topped the time sheets in the final practice ahead of qualifying at the Formula One Las Vegas Grand Prix, beating out McLaren's Oscar Piastri and Ferrari's Carlos Sainz.

Mercedes' Russell set the pace with a lap of one minute, 33.570 seconds, 0.215 clear of Piastri and 0.348 better than Sainz in a session that saw a late red flag.

Defending Las Vegas Grand Prix champion Max Verstappen, who can claim his fourth consecutive title for Red Bull on Saturday, struggled again with grip in slippery conditions in the race along the glamorous Las Vegas Strip.

"I can't drive it. I'm going to crash," Verstappen said early in the practice session.

But the Dutchman said he felt "miles better" after a switch to soft tires and bounced back to finish the practice in fifth with a time of 1:34.137.

Verstappen was still left looking up to fourth place finisher Lando Norris of McLaren, who clocked a lap of 1:34.008.

Lewis Hamilton swept the first two practice sessions on Thursday and was sharp again on Friday, leading the pack early before finishing sixth, 0.771 behind his Mercedes team mate Russell.

Aston Martin's Lance Stroll stopped on the track in the waning moments of the session leading to a late red flag.

Kane Nets Hat-Trick in 3-0 Win Over Augsburg



MUNICH (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich's Harry Kane scored a hat-trick with two of the goals in second half stoppage time, to give the league leaders a 3-0 win over visitors Augsburg on Friday and open up an eight-point gap at the top with their sixth straight clean sheet across all competitions.

The Bavarians, who take on Paris St Germain in the Champions League on Tuesday, are undefeated in the Bundesliga and on 29 points following their fifth consecutive league game without conceding a goal.

Second-placed RB Leipzig, who travel to Hoffenheim on Saturday, are on 21 points.

"We said at half time we should just keep going and create chances," Kane, who has scored 14 league goals this season, told reporters. "Thankfully we got the penalty and from there the game opened up."

Kane has scored 50 league goals since joining Bayern last year, needing just 43 Bundesliga games to reach that mark, faster than any player in the league's history.

Bayern have a busy schedule coming up with PSG on Tuesday before the trip to Borussia Dortmund in the Bundesliga in a week. They cap off their 11-day four-match run with the German Cup last-16 clash at home to holders Bayer Leverkusen on Dec. 3.

"We have a big week ahead with PSG in the Champions League then Dortmund then Leverkusen in the Cup. We're in a good moment, we're feeling good and should just keep the momentum up," Kane said.

As expected Bayern had more than 70% possession for much of the first half but Augsburg had keeper Nediljko Labrovic to thank for a goalless first half after the Croatia international stopped efforts from Harry Kane, Jamal Musiala and Leon Goretzka, who also hit the crossbar four minutes after the restart.

Labrovic then denied Michael Olise in the 51st but could do nothing to prevent Kane from scoring with a well-taken 63rd minute penalty.

The England captain was then awarded another penalty following a lengthy VAR review in stoppage time with Augsburg's Keven Schlotterbeck sent off for tripping him in front of goal.

Labrovic was beaten by Kane once more after picking the wrong side again before the forward completed his hat-trick only seconds later after controlling a Goretzka cross with a superb first touch and then heading in.

Netherlands Beat Germany to Reach Davis Cup Final for First Time

MALAGA (Dispatches) - An inspired Netherlands team made Davis Cup history as they put their nation into the final for the first time ever with a 2-0 defeat of Germany.

Singles wins for Botic Van de Zandschulp and Tallon Griekspoor sparked a party amongst an army of orange-clad Dutch fans inside the Jose Maria Martin Carpena arena.

Paul Haarhuis's team will face either defending champions Italy or Australia in Sunday's final. They face each other in the second semi-final on Saturday.

Van de Zandschulp, the player who ended Spanish great Rafa Nadal's career on Tuesday, held his nerve to beat Daniel Altmaier 6-4 6-7(12) 6-3, although he required 10 match points to give his side the edge in the semi-final.

The world number 80 has won all three of his rubbers this week, including beating Carlos Alcaraz and Marcel Granollers in the decisive doubles against Spain on Tuesday.

Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff looked like keeping the three-times champions in with a chance of reaching the final for the first time since 1993 as he led by a set and a break of serve against Griekspoor.

But 40th-ranked Griekspoor produced a stunning fightback to win 6-7(4) 7-5 6-4, capping the decisive win with his 25th ace. "It's unbelievable, we have been talking about this for two or three years," the 28-year-old Griekspoor said on court.

"We came here all the time and had unbelievably tough draws, losing to finalists and winners and this year we had Spain in the quarter-finals, but we believed in ourselves so much and we felt like it was possible."



The 29-year-old Van de Zandschulp looked on course for a comfortable win after taking the opening set and leading in the second. But he was dragged into a marathon 26-point tiebreak in which he saw five match points go begging before Altmaier stole it to take the match to a deciding set.

Van de Zandschulp got ahead in the decider only to allow Altmaier back but then broke serve again to lead 5-3 as both players struggled to maintain a high level.

Gripped by nerves he served three double faults as he tried to close out the match, one on a match point, but eventually got the job done. The second singles was a much higher-quality duel with both players producing some stunning tennis on the fast indoor court.

Struff barely put a foot wrong in taking the first set but will rue not taking either of the two break points he had when Griekspoor served at 3-4 in the second set.

From that moment on Griekspoor, serving like a man possessed, charged back to outplay his opponent and kept his cool in the deafening noise to hold serve for victory.

Captain Haarhuis, who played in the Dutch Davis Cup team from 1990 to 2005, paid tribute to his players.

"For me it means I'm a finalist for the first time ever in the Davis Cup and to be part of this team who have played so well in the past five years," he said.

"Especially unique as we don't have the top five player, the top 10 player, but it's a team effort and we have shown we can get here. The guys have a lot of confidence after this but we will have to come out there with big balls on Sunday and believe that it's our time."

Napoli's Conte hopes Ranieri Will Succeed at Roma

ROME (Dispatches) - Napoli manager Antonio Conte hopes that everything will go well for his friend Claudio Ranieri after he came out of retirement to take over at AS Roma, but only after their Serie A meeting this weekend is out of the way.

Ranieri was tempted back into management by a return to where he began as a player, and his third spell at Roma comes after the club sacked two coaches already this season and with the team 12th in the standings.

A trip to leaders Napoli is Ranieri's first task, and Conte is looking forward to meeting up with the 73-year-old.

"I am pleased to see Claudio, I have great esteem for him and there is also friendship," Conte told reporters ahead of Sunday's game.

"I am happy with the chance he had been given. It will be a tough game, for us and for them. Last year Roma finished ahead of Napoli, they are in the Europa League and had a good transfer window.

"They are not performing according to expectations and I hope for Claudio that everything starts to work, after Sunday's game."

The arrival of Ranieri in place of Ivan Juric brings with it not just



the danger of the 'new manager bounce' but also upsets Conte's plans for the game.

"When a team changes coach there is an important input on a nervous level," Conte said.

"They are at the third change on the bench. It's inevitable that, if Juric had remained, we knew what kind of team we were going to face.

"Now it's an enigma, we don't have much information nor do we know how they will deal with us. So let's think about ourselves, there is a desire and enthusiasm to continue this path."

Conte's Napoli may be top of the table, but he knows it is still early, and with just two points separating the top six clubs, which includes the likes of Atalanta, Fiorentina and Lazio, for now it is a different title race than usual.

"Only 12 games have passed and there are many teams within very few points," he said.