

Senior Iranian Lawmaker and Former Diplomat, Abolfazl Zohrevand, Has Described Iran's Expenditures in Syria as Minimal Compared to \$5 Trillion Spent by Enemies to Destabilize the Region

President Masoud Pezeshkian Will Reportedly Go to Cairo This Week to Participate in the Meeting of the Group of Eight Developing Countries (D-8) Where He Is to Have Bilateral Meetings With the Officials

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Tehran Denounces London for Anti-Human Rights Actions on Domestic, Int'l Levels



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The Foreign Ministry releases a detailed report recounting and denouncing the UK's human rights violations on the domestic and international levels.

The report titled, "Violation of human rights by UK" in 2024 was issued on Saturday, cataloguing a litany of the violations such as the country's arms sales to the Israeli regime amid Tel Aviv's ongoing genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, and its crackdown on pro-Palestinian protests.

Additionally, it raised concerns about the alarming rate of violation of migrant rights, racial discriminations, femicide, and child abuse in the country among other things.

The report cited the British government's issuing "more than 100 arms export licenses" to the Israeli regime since October 7, 2023, when Tel Aviv launched the war that has so far claimed the lives of more than 44,900 Palestinians, mostly women and children.

"Currently, there are a total of 345 licenses for the sale of weapons to the Zionist regime, including licenses to send weapons before October 7," it said, adding, "Statistics confirm that no arms export license application was rejected or canceled" during the brutal Israeli military onslaught.

The ministry considered London to be an "accomplice" in the Israeli atrocities in light of the military support, saying the support came despite the catastrophic situation in Gaza and the International Court of Justice's recent call on the regime to "immediately halt its military offensive."

It also highlighted the British mission to the United Nations' vetoing the resolutions that had been tabled at the world body's Security Council towards mandating a ceasefire in Gaza as well as London's suspending its aid to UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees.

The report, meanwhile, pointed to the British government's branding pro-Palestinian demonstrations as "hate marches" and indications of anti-Semitism.

Activists in the UK have expressed significant concerns regarding what they describe as an "unprecedented wave of criminalization" targeting those advocating for Palestinian rights and climate change.

Elsewhere, it singled out the government's immigration policies, particularly the controversial "Rwanda plan," which allows deporting asylum seekers to Rwanda, despite objections from the UK Supreme Court and the UN.

The report reminded that the UK had additionally funded the French maritime police to deter migrants, sometimes through violent means.

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK



IRGC Chief Says Zionists Will Be Buried in Syria

TEHRAN - Addressing the biennial festival recognizing outstanding research in the Sacred Defense, Major General Hossein Salami, Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, proclaimed that the identity and character of a nation are not detached from its history. He stated that the prestige and dignity of any nation are a culmination of events, heroic deeds, and the impactful roles played by both prominent figures and the populace throughout history.

Major General Salami emphasized that history is not a collection of disjointed points but rather a continuous temporal function. "No nation can be severed from its past," he asserted, noting the profound connection that exists with the distant and recent history of Islam and Iran.

He remarked that Ashura, a significant event in Islamic history, remains a living identity and a source of values and ideals that shape the nation. "When we reflect on past wars and victories, we feel uplifted, while recollections of defeats bring sadness," he noted, highlighting that nations exist simultaneously in their past, present, and future.

Salami stated that events shape the existence of a nation, asserting that a nation's ability to respond to present and future challenges is informed by past experiences. He warned that wars are often designed to annihilate nations, suggesting that without heroic actions, peoples can be erased from the political geography of the world.

He continued, stating that without great political figures to resist enemies, nations can fall apart. He underscored the importance of historical rises and falls, victories and defeats, in determining a nation's path and identity.

For nations to navigate difficult times, they require great leaders whose spirit and ideals resonate within the populace, he said. "Standing firm demands a rich spiritual backing and deep-rooted convictions," he emphasized, concluding that resistance is a matter of hearts and beliefs, not just physical capabilities.

Writing about the Sacred Defense, according to Salami, should transcend mere historical

description; it involves instilling values, culture, and virtues, and conveying the essence of those who sacrificed for the continuous life of their nation. He depicted martyrdom as a symbol of eternal dignity and perseverance.

Major General Salami stated, "A nation is fortunate if it has heroes," and declared that without their past struggles, the nation could not withstand hegemonic powers today. He remarked on the ongoing spirit of resistance in Iranian society, which continues to create heroes.

Addressing the current geopolitical situation, he mentioned, "The Islamic world today is a theater of jihad, and we firmly protect our interests, history, and land." He criticized foreign intervention in Syria, likening these powers to hungry wolves preying upon a solitary deer in the desert.

Salami said that these foreign powers are dissecting Syria while its people find themselves lost and uncertain about the future. He called this a bitter lesson to learn, yet urged that it should lead to greater insights derived from the lessons of the Sacred Defense.

"We have seen that as long as we were present, the people of Syria were thriving because we sought their dignity," he stated, insisting that Iran's presence in Syria was not for territorial gain but to uphold the honor of Muslims.

He expressed firm opposition to the normalization of the Zionists' presence in Syria, stating that they can observe neighborhoods in Damascus with impunity, which he deemed intolerable. He called for resistance, echoing the sentiment of Iran's leaders that Syria will ultimately be freed by its valiant youth.

In closing, Major General Salami proclaimed that Zionists will pay a heavy price and will be buried in the same territory, stressing that achieving this goal requires immense resilience, determination, and faith—a sentiment echoed among the valiant youth of the Islamic world.

No Hope for Int'l Bodies to Halt Israeli Killings



TEHRAN - Judiciary Chief, Gholam Hossein Eje'i, has expressed skepticism regarding the ability of so-called international organizations to stop the ongoing violence and aggression by Israelis. Speaking during a meeting with the President of the Supreme Court of Oman, who is leading a high-level judicial delegation visiting Iran, Eje'i emphasized the necessity of solidarity among Islamic nations to confront such atrocities, stating that failure to unite and resist would result in accountability before God, both in this world and the hereafter.

In his welcoming remarks, Eje'i praised Oman and its scholars for their commendable stance against the brutal actions of the Israeli regime against the Palestinian people, describing these positions as ones that will be recorded in history.

Eje'i highlighted the pressing obligation of Islamic scholars and legal systems across Islamic countries to condemn and pursue accountability for Israeli atrocities in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria. He noted that over the past year, more than 50,000 Palestinians, including men, women, the elderly, and children, have been killed, with no mercy shown even to sick children. Hospitals, schools, and shelters in Gaza have also come under attack.

He further detailed the impacts of Israeli actions in Lebanon and condemned ongoing violations of Syria's territorial integrity, noting that the Israeli regime is destroying the country's defensive infrastructure.

During the meeting, Eje'i underscored the deep, friendly, and expansive relations between Iran and Oman, urging for enhanced legal and judicial cooperation between the two neighboring countries. He pointed out the importance of sharing experiences and achievements in the legal domain, especially regarding the use of new technologies, electronic proceedings, and artificial intelligence for expediting judicial processes and serving the public.

Israel Long Sought to Eradicate Resistance, But to No Avail



BEIRUT (Dispatches) - The secretary-general of the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement says the occupying Israeli regime has long been seeking the eradication of the resistance front through various atrocious campaigns, but has dismally failed to attain the objective.

Sheikh Naim Qassem made the remarks in a televised speech on Saturday evening, noting that "the Zionist enemy seeks to exterminate any form of resistance that confronts its expansionist ambitions across the region."

"Israeli atrocities aimed at elimination of the resistance front have been unsuccessful, substantiating the fact that such brutalities could not be viewed as achievement at all," he added.

He noted that Hezbollah's retaliatory rocket and drone attacks on illegal Israeli settlements in the northern parts of the occupied territories drove tens of thousands of residents to seek refuge in shelters. "The only pain they (the Israeli regime) could inflict upon us was the targeted killing of our leaders."

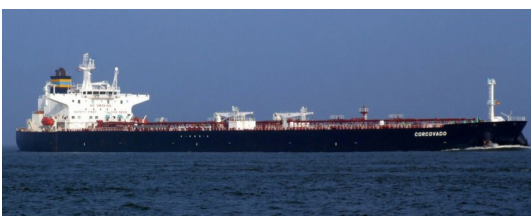
Sheikh Qassem went on to highlight that Hezbollah anticipated the Israeli military aggression on Lebanon both before and after the surprise and large-scale operation by Gaza-based resistance groups, dubbed Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, against the Zionist entity on October 7 last year, but did not know about the exact timing.

"The key factors behind our victory were the steadfastness of resistance fighters, and the sacrifices made through the blood of martyrs. Surrender and humiliation have no place in our lexicon as Hezbollah's resistance is fierce and spirited," he said.

The Hezbollah chief stated that the Lebanese resistance movement made big sacrifices in standing firm against the Israeli regime, adding that Israeli-occupied Lebanese territories could be liberated only by means of resistance.

Sheikh Qassem also noted that the Israeli military would have captured the Lebanese capital Beirut if it were not for the sacrifices of Hezbollah fighters.

Iran Oil Exports to China at Lowest in 4 Months



LONDON (Dispatches) - New data by a major tanker tracking service show that Iran's oil exports to China dropped significantly in November amid a rise in domestic demand for energy as well as regional tensions that affected the transport and removed customers from the market.

The data from Kpler, covered in a Saturday report by the Fars news agency, showed that Iranian oil exports to China had reached an average of 1.31 million barrels per day (bpd) in November, down 0.524 million bpd from October and the lowest reported in four months.

Kpler, a data analytics firm headquarters in Brussels, blamed the fall on a shortage of feedstock at Iranian refineries, geopolitical tensions, and new US sanctions affecting Iran's arrangements for transporting oil to Chinese customers.

It said that Iran's floating oil supplies near Singapore and Malaysia had increased because of declining deliveries to China.

However, Fars said that a sudden fall of government in Syria had caused more Iranian oil shipments to be rerouted to China, giving the Chinese customers increased negotiating power on prices.

Iran has been supplying a bulk of its crude oil to private buyers in China in the past years to avoid US sanctions that restrict its deliveries to state buyers.

Iran's oil exports to China reached record levels in recent months, a major sign that US sanctions had effectively failed to remove the Iranian supplies from the markets.

U.S. Biggest Enforcer of Sanctions, Major Violator of Human Rights

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian Foreign Ministry says the United States is the biggest enforcer of sanctions in the world and a major "systematic" violator of human rights.

The ministry made the announcement in its annual report - titled violation of human rights by USA in the 2024 - which was published on Saturday.

It said the US has "exponentially" increased its unilateral sanctions against countries such as Iran, Syria, Russia, North Korea, Belarus, Venezuela, Cuba, Zimbabwe, Nicaragua, etc. in recent years.

"America has committed a gross and systematic violation of human rights by unilateralism and by intensifying and accumulating economic sanctions outside the authorization of the United Nations and without legal exemptions with the aim of forcing governments to change their policies," the report added.

It emphasized that the capacity and level of human rights protection of the sanctioned countries have been severely weakened as a result of unilateral US sanctions.

"The entire population of the embargoed countries has been affected in various ways, and a large number of cases and examples of human rights are damaged in this process," it said.

It noted that the US sanctions have had the most obvious impact on the "right to health and the right to life" and explained that the authorized trade of medicines, medical products and equipment as well as spare parts often face many problems and obstacles due to "excessive compliance" with sanctions by manufacturers and shippers.

Despite the constant claims and slogans from the US regarding its commitment to human rights, the country's actions—both domestically and internationally—clearly reveal that American statesmen approach this issue based on their political preferences and interests.

The report highlighted the extensive dimensions of US anti-human rights actions at the domestic level, including the rise in gun culture, the unlawful use of coercive force by American police against minorities, the violent treatment of asylum seekers and women, as



well as the violation of the rights of children and Indigenous peoples.

It pointed out that mass shootings in the US have become a "deadly phenomenon" and added, "Mass shootings in schools and other educational centers in America are an important part of the armed violence crisis in this country."

It cited academic research which announced that the existence of wealth based on race has caused the largest economic gap between black and white Americans.

Workers of color face racial barriers in employment and are forced into menial jobs while the poverty rate among black, Latino and Native American families is more than twice that of white families, the report noted.

It added that "inflation and rising prices" have weakened access of people to essential goods and services such as food, housing, and health care.

Describing racial discrimination in US prisons as a serious issue, the ministry said, "At the Angola prison in Louisiana, which is known as one of the largest prisons in the United States, more than 75 percent of the inmates are black."

It further referred to the situation of Muslim prisoners in New York state, especially in Utica prison, as "an example of violation of human rights and religious freedoms."

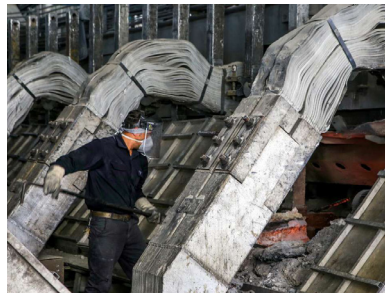
The ministry urged the authorities and human rights institutions to pay immediate attention and take action in order to provide better conditions for these prisoners and prevent religious discrimination.

It pointed to the US anti-human rights actions at the international level and its hypocrisy in claiming to be the leader of human rights in the world.

The US uses human rights as a tool for the intervention and complicity with the Israeli regime in violating the human rights of Palestinians, imposing sanctions one-sidedly, transferring weapons and supporting terrorists, it added.

The report reiterated that the US dominates 42 percent of the arms trade in the world, outpacing several of its next competitors in total.

IRAN NEWS



Iran's Aluminum Ingot Output Surpasses 400k mt

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) has reported that Iran's aluminum ingot production exceeded 400,000 metric tons (mt) from March 20 to November 20, 2024. The state metals company IMIDRO announced on Saturday that Iran's four aluminum smelters produced 400,425 mt of aluminum ingots during the first eight months of the Iranian calendar year, which began on March 20, 2024. In comparison, the country's aluminum ingot production for the same eight-month period last year was 419,573 mt. Among the four major producers in the country, the South Aluminum Corporation (SALCO) performed the best, producing 162,459 mt of aluminum ingots. This was followed by the Iranian Aluminum Company (IRALCO), which produced 115,624 mt, the Almahdi Aluminum Company with 99,954 mt, and the Iran Alumina Company, which produced 22,388 mt of ingots.

Purchase Agreement for Siemens Locomotives Failed



TEHRAN - CEO of the Railway Company Jabbar Ali Zakeri, during a ceremony marking Research Week, highlighted the shift in Iranian universities over the past decades from an education-centric approach to a more research-oriented one. He emphasized the necessity of establishing research institutes, noting the emergence of third-generation universities and knowledge-based companies in the country over the past thirty years. Currently, 14 of the country's leading universities are moving towards a more comprehensive approach, although further development in this area will take time.

Zakeri recalled his experience after studying at Peking University in 1995, where he encountered large buildings housing prominent global companies, including Siemens, which operated a research center on campus. This center played a significant role in identifying outstanding students for research projects, with many initiatives taking place within the university environment. He pointed out that this model creates a stark contrast between education-focused universities and those integrated with community needs, a distinction that Iran has targeted in its goals for its top 14 universities.

The CEO of the Railway Company stressed the importance of innovation centers and proposed that research centers leverage available capacities. Citing the current energy crisis as a critical issue, he suggested that the Research Center for Roads, Housing, and Urban Development could address energy storage topics through regulatory frameworks.

Zakeri also pointed out the ongoing challenge of technology transfer in the country. He noted that while technology transfer has always been a topic of discussion, the purchase agreement for Siemens locomotives included local production provisions. However, a significant number of these locomotives have already been decommissioned, and the technology transfer did not materialize. Although the contract included nominal commitments for technology transfer, these were not implemented in practice.

Iran-Russia Maritime Line to Launch Passenger Cruises



TEHRAN - Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization is planning to launch a tourism project on the Caspian Sea coast, according to Ali Mardan Afifipour, the head of the organization's maritime affairs. "Wherever there is a sea, there are capacities and conditions for marine tourism and travel," he said. "We can establish this tourism by providing the necessary facilities and equipment."

Afifipour mentioned that there is a possibility of launching a cruise line between the ports of Anzali and Caspian, which would require private sector involvement in providing tourism facilities and equipment. "The infrastructure is available in both ports, and we need to encourage the private sector to provide tourism facilities, including passenger ships," he added.

The head of maritime affairs emphasized that the maritime line would be 7 nautical miles long and could have a tourist aspect. "We are currently in talks with the private sector to create opportunities for using this marine tourism capacity," he said.

Afifipour also mentioned that cruise ships operating on the Caspian Sea are being monitored regularly, and cooperation with the private sector is crucial in providing technical services and ensuring safety standards.

The official announced that Iran is planning to launch a maritime passenger line with Russia, stating that Russian cruise ships could enter Anzali Port, allowing Iranians to travel by cruise ship to Russia. "In fact, Russians will also be able to travel by cruise ship to Iran, and our citizens will be able to travel by cruise ship to Russia," he said.

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



Future of Tourism in Iran Set to Flourish Despite Negative Propagation

TEHRAN - Seyed Reza Salehi Amiri, Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, discussed the current state of tourism in Iran and the efforts to overcome regional security issues that may deter international travelers. Emphasizing that Iran today has no significant security problems, he stated that the country's safety indicators are actually better than those of many neighboring nations and even globally.

Salehi Amiri expressed optimism, predicting that Iran will soon emerge from its current critical situation and reach new heights in tourism. He articulated the government's commitment to welcoming tourists, highlighting the economic benefits that tourism can bring across various sectors, such as aviation, transportation, market services, restaurants, and hotels. He noted that revitalizing the tourism sector could create over a hundred new job opportunities in these areas.

Addressing the issue of misconceptions about Iran, the minister asserted that much of the negative perception surrounding the country is unfounded. He criticized the misleading propaganda that fails to align with the reality experienced by those who live in Iran.

To bolster tourism, Iran has initiated a three-pronged approach. First, it involves engaging in dialogue with global tourism officials. Salehi Amiri shared his experiences from recent visits to Azerbaijan and Georgia, where

he met with various officials to promote mutual cooperation. The strategy focuses on establishing a proactive cultural and communicative diplomacy, especially targeting regions like Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Persian Gulf, and China.

The minister highlighted ten strategic areas for development and acknowledged the necessity of maintaining constant communication with target countries to attract more tourists. The primary focus is targeting Central Asia and the Caucasus, specifically Azerbaijan, followed by the Persian Gulf region with a particular emphasis on Iraq.

Further expanding on the tourism strategy, Salehi Amiri identified a third key area, which encompasses the Muslim world, with a focus on Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia and Malaysia that have significant tourism potential.

Looking ahead to next year, the ministry's priority will shift to improving ties with China, tapping into a vast market of 160 million Chinese tourists. Currently, Iran's share of this market is just 60,000 — a figure Salehi Amiri deemed too low and expressed determination to expand.

As the country aims to dispel negative perceptions and embrace its rich cultural heritage, Iran looks forward to a bright future for its tourism sector.

Yazd Steel Industry Eyeing Joint Investment Opportunities with Afghanistan



TEHRAN - The Iranian Chamber of Commerce has reported a significant interest from the Yazd steel industry in pursuing joint investment ventures with Afghanistan. This ambition was articulated during a recent meeting between Afghanistan's Mining and Petroleum Minister's advisor, their accompanying delegation, and key figures from Yazd's mining sector, including the Secretary-General of Yazd Chamber of Commerce.

During the meeting, the Secretary-General highlighted that Yazd is the second most mineral-rich province in Iran and holds the top position in terms of mineral diversity in the country. Mohammad Sepehr, the Secretary-General, emphasized the growing steel production facilities in Yazd and noted a concerning reduction in the raw materials available for these industries. Given Afghanistan's rich mining resources, he expressed a strong desire for collaboration and investment in this area, emphasizing that such interactions could foster a meaningful brotherly relationship between the two nations, bringing both tangible and intangible benefits.

Joining the discussion, Mohammad Ali Faizpour, a researcher and faculty member at Yazd University, shared insights from his previous visit to Afghanistan, noting a stark contrast between the prevalent media narratives and the on-ground realities. He described Afghanistan as a veritable paradise for mining, especially in precious stones, and remarked on the potential for increased collaboration and investment opportunities. There are already some Iranian companies operating in Afghanistan's mining sector.

Zamani, the advisor from Afghanistan's Ministry of Mining and Petroleum, expressed optimism regarding the conducive environment for fostering relationships between the two countries. He pointed out that the current situation in Afghanistan differs significantly from the

images portrayed in the media. He assured that Afghanistan is now secure, with ample opportunities for foreign investors, highlighting the country's untapped natural resources, including lead, zinc, lithium, and an abundance of gold and gemstones.

He further elaborated on the establishment of 1,500 mining contracts in Afghanistan, indicating that Chinese companies are the most active players in this sector, holding the largest mines in the country. Currently, 40 contracts are in the exploration phase, and the conditions seem particularly favorable for Iranian investors, especially in the gold mining sector.

Zamani emphasized that Afghanistan is rich in natural resources but does face challenges, specifically a lack of skilled human resources and modern geophysical equipment. Additionally, he pointed out issues related to the improper pricing of Afghanistan's precious stones as a significant barrier to industry growth.

He reaffirmed that Afghanistan currently has limited international interactions, looking primarily toward Iran and China for expanding cooperative efforts.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Hossein Najafi Yazdi, the head of the Legal and Judicial Commission at the Yazd Mining House, highlighted various infrastructural concerns impacting the mining industry in Afghanistan. Despite the enormous potential, issues such as inadequate access to water, electricity, and proper roads hinder the industry's development. He stressed the importance of the shared border and language between Iran and Afghanistan, envisioning scientific, research, exploration, and extraction collaborations, particularly in processing and completing supply chains. However, achieving these prospects necessitates extensive connectivity between the two nations.

Maritime Fleet Capacity Reaches 87 Vessels



TEHRAN - The Managing Director of the Ports and Maritime Organization announced that the capacity of the country's commercial maritime fleet has increased to 87 vessels due to the construction and purchase of new ships in the Caspian Sea.

Ali Akbar Safaei stated during the third meeting of the Maritime Transport Working Group of the Expediency Council, aimed at evaluating the implementation of sea-oriented development policies, that the 14th government has taken a positive first step in this regard by appointing Ali Abdolali Zadeh as the President's representative for coordinating the execution of the overarching policies for sea-oriented development.

The Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development highlighted the implementation of four special meetings focused on sea-oriented development strategies, attended by the President, with an emphasis on the development of the Makran coasts. Additionally, to foster collaboration nationwide, a working group composed of representatives from the Ministry of Roads, the General Staff of the Armed Forces, the Organization for Planning and Budget, and two private sector experts has been formed, chaired by the presidential representative.

Safaei characterized the comprehensive sea-oriented development plan as a national obligation, adding that beyond the government's key plan in this field, special attention has been given to the maritime economy and transit in the seventh development plan, aligning with overarching sea-oriented development policies.

The Managing Director of the Ports and Maritime Organization reported on the agency's actions toward implementing the nine-point sea-oriented development program, stating that there are currently over 150 trillion tomans (approximately \$3.5 billion) worth of significant maritime and port infrastructure projects underway, many of which have already been completed.

He recognized the creation, acquisition, and modernization of commercial and service vessels as one of the ministry's valuable contributions over the past three years, mentioning that the fleet capacity in the Caspian Sea has reached 87 vessels, bringing it notably close to the capacity of Russia's fleet.

Safaei noted the modernization of maritime and port equipment as another effort by the organization to implement the mandated sea-oriented development policies, stating that despite oppressive sanctions, over 80% of the country's maritime and port equipment is operational and actively engaged.

20% Growth in Home Appliance Production in the First Eight Months



TEHRAN - The Secretary-General of the National Specialized Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers in Iran reported a 20% increase in home appliance production in the first eight months of this year compared to the same period last year.

Omid Fazeli Nia stated that domestic producers manufactured a total of 13 million and 840 thousand small and large home appliances during this period, representing a significant growth from last year.

He highlighted the accumulated demands of home appliance manufacturers, emphasizing the need for serious efforts to overcome production obstacles to further boost production in the sector.

Fazeli Nia noted that of the \$7 billion turnover in the home appliance market, approximately \$1.5 to \$2 billion is linked to smuggling. He pointed out that in the market, smuggled goods are more readily available to consumers than domestically produced items.

He remarked that smuggled goods are entering the country under the guise of specific laws related to border residents and transit, despite these laws being intended for particular regions.

The Secretary-General also criticized the lack of oversight in the virtual space regarding the sale of smuggled goods, stating that certain social media channels and websites are selling counterfeit home appliances featuring well-known brands.

Brazil's Former Defense Minister Arrested in 2022 Coup Plot Investigation

BRASILIA (Dispatches) - Brazilian authorities on Saturday arrested Braga Netto, a former defense minister and close ally of ex-president Jair Bolsonaro, on suspicion of obstructing an investigation into an alleged coup attempt in 2022, a police source told AFP.

Brazil's Federal Police said it had detained "people who would be obstructing" the investigation. "Braga Netto was arrested in the operation," the source said.

In late November, police released a report recommending the indictment of former far-right president Bolsonaro and several dozen allies for attempting a coup d'état to prevent the inauguration of leftist Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

The list included Netto, who was also his running mate in the 2022 elections.



South Korea's Acting President Moves to Reassure Allies



SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korea's acting president, Han Duck-soo, moved on Sunday to reassure the country's allies and calm financial markets a day after President Yoon Suk Yeol was impeached and suspended from his duties over a martial law attempt.

Han spoke with U.S. President Joe Biden by phone, the White House and Han's office said.

"South Korea will carry out its foreign and security policies without disruption and strive to ensure the South Korea-U.S. alliance is maintained and developed steadfastly," Han said, according to a statement from his office.

In a further attempt to stabilise the country's leadership, the main opposition party announced it would not seek to impeach Han for his involvement in Yoon's Dec. 3 martial law decision.

"Given that the prime minister has already been confirmed as acting president and considering that excessive impeachments could lead to confusion in national governance, we have decided not to proceed with impeachment procedures," Democratic Party leader Lee Jae-myung told reporters.

Han, a longtime technocrat picked by Yoon as prime minister, was elevated to acting president in accordance with the constitution while Yoon's case moves to the Constitutional Court.

Yoon's surprise martial law declaration and the ensuing political crisis spooked markets and South Korea's diplomatic partners worried over the country's ability to deter nuclear-armed North Korea.

Biden told Han the ironclad U.S.-South Korea alliance remained unchanged and Washington would work with Seoul to further develop and strengthen the alliance as well as trilateral cooperation including neighbour Japan, Han's office said.

The White House said in a statement that the U.S. president "expressed his appreciation for the resiliency of democracy and the rule of law in the ROK and reaffirmed the ironclad commitment of the United States to the people of the ROK," using the abbreviation for the country's formal name, the Republic of Korea.



Zelenskiy Says Russia Now Using North Korean Troops in Significant Numbers

KYIV (Dispatches) - Russia has begun using North Korean troops in significant numbers for the first time to conduct assaults on Ukrainian forces battling to hold an enclave in Russia's Kursk region, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said.

The Ukrainian leader said the more active use of the troops was a new escalation in the war and called for a global response, as Donald Trump's return to the White House next month fuels speculation of a coming push for peace talks.

"Today, we already have preliminary data that the Russians have begun to use North Korean soldiers in their assaults. A significant number of them," Zelenskiy told Ukrainians in his daily wartime address.

The North Koreans were being used in combined Russian units and only on the Kursk front for now, he said, adding: "We have information suggesting their use could extend to other parts of the front line."

Kyiv first said North Korean forces turned up in Russia's Kursk region in October and later reported unspecified clashes and casualties. It estimates there are 11,000 North Koreans in total, adding to a force of tens of thousands of Russians.

Russia has neither confirmed nor denied the presence of North Koreans on its side. Ukraine, nearly a fifth of which is occupied by Moscow's troops, launched an incursion into Russia's western Kursk region in August, carving out an enclave that it said could be used as a bargaining chip in any talks to end the war.

Ukraine has battled to hold the area, although some Western military analysts have questioned the incursion's rationale, arguing it has extended an already-sprawling front line, exposing Ukraine's manpower weakness as it battles a larger foe.

Kyiv said the operation sought to divert Russian forces, but it has not stopped Moscow notching up its fastest gains in the

east since 2022, although Russian forces have taken heavy casualties, according to Kyiv and the West.

Ukraine's General Staff reported a significant increase in the number of Russian assaults on the Kursk front, along with airstrikes, glide bomb raids and more than 200 artillery attacks.

Andrii Kovalenko, an official at Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council, said the North Koreans had taken losses, but provided no numbers.

"The Russians are counting on numbers and are trying to carry out assault operations with the help of the Koreans, when the task of the Koreans is to run under the blows of our forces and occupy certain areas," Kovalenko wrote on Telegram.

As Trump's return has put the focus on a potential endgame in the war, Kyiv has urged the West to put it into a stronger position and bridled at fears of escalation, a line echoed by Zelenskiy as he denounced North Korea's role in the fighting.

"In essence, Moscow has dragged another state into this war, and to the fullest extent possible. And if this is not escalation, then what is the escalation that so many have been talking about?" Zelenskiy said.

He used his address to issue a fresh appeal to his allies to strengthen their support for Kyiv, something he said he would discuss with European powers next week.

Zelenskiy plans to attend a meeting with the leaders of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Nato, and the EU in Brussels on Wednesday.

At Least 22 Killed in Israeli Gaza Strikes



CAIRO (Dispatches) - At least 22 Palestinians were killed in Israeli airstrikes in Gaza on Saturday, medics said, while the Israeli military said it targeted gunmen operating from shelters and aid storages.

At least 10 people were killed in an airstrike near the municipality building in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip where people gathered to receive aid, medics said.

Casualties were being carried by foot, on rickshaws and private cars from the site of the attack to the hospital, medics said. The strike killed the head of the Hamas-run administrative committee in central Gaza, Diab Ali al-Jaru, a Hamas source said.

The Israeli military said al-Jaru, who was also the mayor of Deir Al-Balah, was the target of the strike and that he had assisted Hamas militants. Four more people were killed in a separate strike in the area.

Earlier, Israeli aircraft struck militants and weapon caches near an aid warehouse, the military said, after gunmen had fired rockets into Israel from there on Friday. Another rocket was fired from Gaza into Israel on Saturday, the military said.

A separate strike in Gaza City on a former shelter housing displaced people targeted Hamas fighters, the military said. At least seven people were killed in that attack, Palestinian medics said, including a woman and her baby.

Georgian Lawmakers Elect Mikheil Kavelashvili as President

TBILISI (Dispatches) - Georgian lawmakers elected Mikheil Kavelashvili, a hardline critic of the West, as the country's new president on Saturday, setting him up to replace a pro-Western incumbent amid major protests against the government over a halt to the country's European Union accession talks last month.

The ruling Georgian Dream party's move to freeze the EU accession process until 2028, abruptly halting a long-standing national goal that is written into the country's constitution, has provoked widespread anger in Georgia, where opinion polls show that seeking EU membership is overwhelmingly popular.

Kavelashvili, a former professional soccer player, has strongly anti-Western, often conspiratorial views. In public speeches this year, he has repeatedly alleged that Western intelligence agencies are seeking to drive Georgia into war with Russia.

Georgian presidents are picked by a college of electors composed of MPs and representatives of local government. Of 225 electors present, 224 voted for Kavelashvili, who was the only candidate nominated.

All opposition parties have boycotted parliament since an October election in which official results gave the ruling Georgian Dream party almost 54% of the vote, but which the opposition says was fraudulent.

Hundreds of protesters gathered in light snowfall outside parliament ahead of the presidential vote. Some played soccer in the street outside and waved red cards at the parliament building, a mocking reference to Kavelashvili's athletic career.

Kavelashvili was nominated for the mostly ceremonial presidency last month



by Bidzina Ivanishvili, a billionaire ex-prime minister who is widely seen as the country's paramount leader.

Kavelashvili is a leader of People's Power, an anti-Western splinter group of the ruling party, and was a co-author of a law on "foreign agents" that requires organisations receiving more than 20% of their funding from overseas to register as agents of foreign influence, and imposes heavy fines for violations.

Outgoing President Salome Zourabichvili, a pro-EU critic of the ruling Georgian Dream party, has positioned herself as a leader of the protest movement and has said she will remain president after her term ends. She considers parliament illegitimate as a result of alleged fraud in the October election.

Opposition parties have said they will continue to regard Zourabichvili as the legitimate president, even after Kavelashvili is inaugurated on Dec. 29.

Georgia has been seen for decades as one of the most pro-Western and democratic of the Soviet Union's successor states, but relations with the West have soured this year, with Georgian Dream forcing through laws on foreign agents and LGBT rights that critics say are Russian-inspired and draconian.

Western countries have raised the alarm at Georgia's apparent foreign policy pivot and authoritarian drift, with the EU threatening sanctions over a crackdown on protests. In a video address to Georgians published on Friday, French President Emmanuel Macron said: "Georgia's European dream must not be extinguished".

Since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, Georgian Dream has moved to improve ties with Russia, which ruled Georgia for 200 years until 1991, continues to back two breakaway Georgian regions, and defeated Georgia in a five-day war in 2008.

Tens of thousands of protesters have rallied outside parliament nightly for more than two weeks. Some have hurled fireworks at police, who have used water cannon, tear gas and ballot attacks to break up demonstrations.

The government has repeatedly said the protests represent an attempt to stage a pro-EU revolution and a violent seizure of power.

Police have detained hundreds of protesters. Georgia's interior ministry has said that more than 150 officers have been injured during the protests.

On Friday, parliament approved sweeping new restrictions on protests, hiking fines for participants and organisers, and banning from gatherings face coverings, fireworks and lasers used to dazzle police officers.

Russia Pulling Back But Not out of Syria

TARTOUS (Dispatches) - Russia is pulling back its military from the front lines in northern Syria and from posts in the Alawite Mountains but is not leaving its two main bases in the country after the fall of President Bashar al-Assad, four Syrian officials told Reuters.

The ousting of Assad, who along with his late father, former President Hafez al-Assad, had forged a close alliance with Moscow, has thrown the future of Russia's bases - the Hmeimim airbase in Latakia and the Tartous naval facility - into question.

Satellite footage from Friday shows what appeared to be at least two Antonov AN-124s, among the world's largest cargo planes, at the Hmeimim base with their nose cones open, apparently preparing to load up.

At least one cargo plane flew out on Saturday for Libya, a Syrian security official stationed outside the facility said.

Syrian military and security sources in contact with the Russians told Reuters that Moscow was pulling back its forces from the front lines and withdrawing some heavy equipment and senior Syrian officers.

But the sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the situation, said Russia was not pulling out of its two main bases and currently had no intention of doing so.

Some equipment is being shipped back to Moscow as are very senior officers from Assad's military but the aim at this stage is to regroup and redeploy as dictated by developments on the ground, a senior Syrian army officer in touch with the Russian



military told Reuters.

A senior rebel official close to the new interim administration told Reuters the issue of the Russian military presence in Syria and past agreements between the Assad government and Moscow were not under discussion.

"It is a matter for future talks and the Syrian people will have the final say," said the official, adding that Moscow had set up communication channels.

"Our forces are also now in close vicinity of the Russian bases in Latakia," he added without elaborating.

The Kremlin has said Russia is in discussions with the new rulers of Syria over the bases. Russia's defence ministry did not respond to a request for comment on Reuters reporting.

A Russian source who spoke on condition of anonymity said discussions with the new rulers of Syria were ongoing and Russia was not withdrawing from its bases.

Reuters was unable to immediately ascertain how Syrian rebel leader Ahmad al-Sharaa - better known as Abu Mohammed al-Golani - saw the long-term future of the Russian bases.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, whose 2015 intervention in the Syrian civil war helped prop up Assad when the West was calling for him to be toppled, granted Assad asylum in Russia after Moscow helped him to flee last Sunday.

Moscow has backed Syria since early in the Cold War, and had recognised its independence in 1944 as Damascus sought to throw off French colonial rule. The West long regarded Syria as a Soviet satellite.



Ten-Man Liverpool Fight Back, Arsenal Slip in Stalemate

LONDON (Dispatches) - Diogo Jota rescued Liverpool as the Premier League leaders recovered from Andy Robertson's early red card to snatch a 2-2 draw with Fulham, while Arsenal's title challenge was dented by a goalless stalemate against Everton.

With just four minutes left at Anfield, Arne Slot's side were in danger of losing for just the second time in 15 top-flight games this season.

But Jota grabbed a valuable equaliser as Liverpool extended their unbeaten run in all competitions to 19 matches since a loss to Nottingham Forest in September.

With last weekend's Merseyside derby at Everton postponed by severe weather, Liverpool have now gone two league games without a win following their 3-3 draw at Newcastle.

The Reds sit five points clear of second-placed Chelsea, who can close the gap with a win against Brentford at Stamford Bridge tomorrow.

Liverpool were rocked in the 11th minute as Fulham midfielder Andreas Pereira met Antonee Robinson's cross with an agile volley that deflected in off Robertson.

The Reds suffered another blow when Scotland left-back Robertson was sent off in the 17th minute for a professional foul on Harry Wilson.

But Slot's men have made a habit of coming from behind this season and Cody Gakpo equalised in the 47th minute with a stooping header from Mohamed Salah's cross.

Fulham forward Rodrigo Muniz delivered a sucker punch as he bundled over the line from Robinson's cross in the 76th minute.

That set the stage for a dramatic finale as Jota levelled in the 86th minute with a cool finish past Bernd Leno from the edge of the area.

"I don't think I could have asked for more from my players, especially after going down to 10 men," Slot said.

"It's an emotional game. It's good to see our performance after so many setbacks."

Arsenal failed to take advantage of Liverpool's rare stumble as the Gunners were kept at bay on a frustrating afternoon at the Emirates Stadium.

The north Londoners have become a force from set-pieces, scoring 23 goals from corners since the start of last season.

But their lack of firepower outside of that route has been questioned this season and once again they were hampered by a failure to turn pressure and possession into goals.

After a second successive league draw, third-placed Arsenal remain six points behind Liverpool, who have a game in hand on last season's runners-up.

"We fully deserved to win the game," Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta said. "It's Frustrating, especially when we concede zero chances and dominate the game so much."

Nottingham Forest climbed to fourth place after staging a dramatic late fightback to beat Aston Villa 2-1 at the City Ground.

Jhon Duran put sixth-placed Villa in front with a powerful header from John McGinn's 63rd minute cross.

But Forest levelled with three minutes left when Nikola Milenkovic's header crept past Emiliano Martinez's weak attempted save.

And Anthony Elanga's composed close-range finish in stoppage-time sealed Forest's third victory in their last four games.

Newcastle handed Ruud van Nistelrooy his first defeat as Leicester boss with a 4-0 rout at St James' Park.

Former Manchester United striker Van Nistelrooy had taken four points from his first two games since replacing the sacked Steve Cooper.

But Newcastle ended that encouraging start as Jacob Murphy struck in the 30th minute and Bruno Guimaraes nodded the second goal in the 47th minute.

Real Madrid's Defensive Blunders Hand Rayo a Point in 3-3 Draw



MADRID (Dispatches) - Real Madrid paid for defensive mistakes as they were held to a 3-3 draw at lowly local rivals Rayo Vallecano, missing the chance to move above leaders Barcelona in LaLiga.

Real are second on 37 points from 17 matches, one behind Barca who host Leganes when Atletico, in third on 35 from 16 games, welcome Getafe. Rayo are 13th with 20 points.

Already missing France captain Kylian Mbappe with a leg muscle injury, Real manager Carlo Ancelotti decided to rest talisman Vinicius Jr from the start and Rayo Vallecano took a two-goal lead in the first half thanks to mistakes.

Rayo stunned the champions with a goal after four minutes on counter when Jorge de Frutos ran past Fran Garcia before crossing to the unmarked Unai Lopez whose header at the far post beat goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois.

They extended their lead when Abdul Mumin was left alone behind Lucas Vazquez and nodded home from a corner in the 36th.

However, a thunderous Federico Valverde strike from long range got Real back in the game three minutes later with Rodrygo finding Jude Bellingham who netted a first-time effort from inside the box to level just before the break.

Rodrygo then almost scored with an angled shot that forced a reflex save from Augusto Batalla just after the break.

But the Brazilian was not to be denied and in the 56th gave Real the lead with a deflected strike from the edge of the area.

Thunder Pull Away From Rockets, Secure Spot in NBA Cup Final

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 32 points and grabbed eight rebounds as the Oklahoma City Thunder clinched a berth in the NBA Cup final with a 111-96 win over the Houston Rockets.

Oklahoma City will attempt to secure the in-season tournament crown against the Milwaukee Bucks in Las Vegas on Tuesday.

Isaiah Hartenstein added 21 points on 9-of-12 shooting to go along with eight rebounds for the Thunder, while Jalen Williams supplied 20 points, five boards and five assists.

Houston was within two, 68-66, after Dillon Brooks converted a layup with 2:12 to go in the third quarter. Oklahoma City extended its lead to 75-69 by the end of the frame, though, then took over in the fourth.

The Thunder went on a 17-10 run over the first 5:59 of the final period, going up 92-79 when Williams pulled up for a jumper. Fred VanVleet eventually had the Rockets' deficit down to 101-93 after drilling a 3-pointer with 2:13 to go, but Oklahoma City answered with the next eight points to put the game away.

Amen Thompson came off the bench to post a team-high 19 points and seven rebounds for Houston, which also got 14 points apiece from Brooks and Jabari Smith Jr. Alperen Sengun chipped in 13 points, but VanVleet was held to eight and went just 3-for-15 from the floor.

A sloppy first half in which neither team shot above 34 percent from the field ended with the Rockets ahead 42-41. Houston was up by six before Gilgeous-Alexander scored the final five points of the second quarter.



The first-half struggles started in the first quarter, when Oklahoma City made 7 of 23 shots (30.4 percent) and the Rockets made 6 of 24 (25 percent). Houston grabbed a 16-9 lead just over 8 1/2 minutes into the game and had a 20-18 edge after 12 minutes of action.

For the game, the Thunder outshot the Rockets 45 percent to 36.5 percent overall.

Meanwhile Giannis Antetokounmpo tallied 30 points, 12 rebounds and eight assists to lead the Milwaukee Bucks to the NBA Cup final with a 110-102 win over the Atlanta Hawks.

Damian Lillard added 25 points for the Bucks, making 8 of 21 attempts from the field and 5 of his 14 attempts from three. Trae Young led the Hawks with 35 points and 10 assists on 9-of-18 shooting. Young fell three rebounds short of a triple-double with seven, all of which came in the first half.

Milwaukee will face either the Oklahoma Thunder or Houston Rockets in Tuesday's title game.

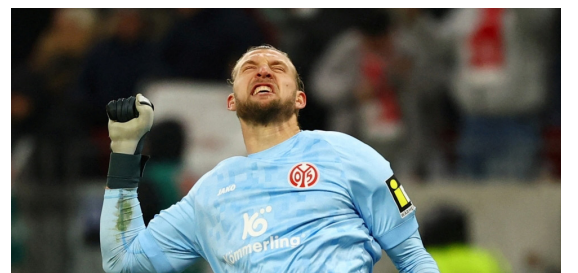
The Bucks outscored the Hawks 28-19 in a highly defensive fourth quarter to secure their trip to the final after losing an eight-point lead in the third. Antetokounmpo scored 10 of his 32 points in the fourth quarter to push the Bucks over the hump.

Young scored 14 points in the third quarter, helping the Hawks erase Milwaukee's lead. Onyeka Okungwu buried a 3-pointer to tie the game at 78 and the Hawks regained an 80-78 lead on a Jalen Johnson dunk with 32.6 seconds remaining in the quarter. However,

Johnson was awarded a technical foul for his response to the basket and Lillard went to the line for a free throw that trimmed Atlanta's lead to 80-79. Johnson, who was fouled, then made his free throw.

Lillard promptly put the Bucks back ahead 82-81 on their next possession, draining a 3-pointer with 15 seconds remaining in the third. Johnson made up for his transgression and put the Hawks ahead 83-82 with a tip-in in the quarter's closing seconds.

Bayern Suffer First League Defeat in 2-1 Reverse at Mainz



MAINZ (Dispatches) - Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich went down 2-1 at Mainz 05 as their unbeaten league run this season was ended after Lee Jae-sung scored either side of the break.

South Korea's Lee struck four minutes before halftime after pouncing on a defensive blunder by the lacklustre visitors.

The 32-year-old then doubled the hosts' lead on the hour, turning beautifully in the box to finish a superb attacking move that left the Bayern defence frozen to the spot.

It was the first league loss for Bayern's Vincent Kompany, who last week became only the third coach in Bundesliga history not to suffer defeat in his first 13 league games in charge.

"We played against a team with a lot of life and spirit and they were prepared to fight for every moment," Kompany said.

"From our side there was not a lack of fighting. We did that to the best of our ability. Today we were not at our best." The Bundesliga goes into a three-week winter break after next week's round of matches.

"This game, we can't play it any more. It's done," Kompany said. "We'll use it to build a fire for next week. That's the only way to give an answer. This game in Mainz this year we can't win it but in the future ... we're looking forward to it."

The Bavarians, who pulled a goal back through Leroy Sane in the 87th minute, are top on 33 points, four ahead of Bayer Leverkusen, who won 2-0 at Augsburg. Mainz are sixth with 22.

Bayern, who were 5-1 winners over Shakhtar Donetsk in the Champions League earlier in the week, were missing eight injured players including top scorer Harry Kane.

They still got off to a strong start, hitting the woodwork through Michael Olise in the sixth minute.

Mainz, who lost 4-0 to Bayern in the German Cup in October, were dealt a major blow when their top scorer Jonathan Burkardt, with 10 league goals this season, was taken off injured after he fired wide following a powerful sprint in the 14th minute.

It was the hosts, however, who were more threatening, with Anthony Caci missing their best chance when his point-blank shot was blocked by goalkeeper Daniel Peretz. Lee did better four minutes before the break, slotting in from a cross that first slipped past Bayern's Kim Min-jae and Olise.

The South Korean then struck again on the hour with Mainz's first chance of the second half, turning well in the box to drill home after a quick six-pass move.

Vonn Hopes Comeback Gets Her to 2026 Olympics

LONDON (Dispatches) - Lindsey Vonn, who next week will make her highly-anticipated return to the World Cup circuit, said on Saturday she hopes her comeback gets her to the Milano-Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics.

Vonn tested out the Birds of Prey course in Beaver Creek, Colorado as a forerunner ahead of the first ever women's World Cup downhill event on the formidable track and later stated the goal behind her decision to return to racing.

"I've tried to keep everything in perspective and not set goals too high but ultimately, if I can make it to Cortina, that would be my goal," said Vonn, who has 82 World Cup wins and counts one gold among her three Olympic medals.

The 40-year-old American had retired in February 2019 citing the physical toll the sport had taken on her body but, following partial knee replacement surgery in April, announced last month she was making a comeback.

Vonn raced last weekend in the lower-level FIS Fall Festival and



next week in St Moritz, Switzerland she will return to the World Cup circuit for the first time in nearly six years.

"I have no pain and no swelling and I just started down this adventure and I thought let's give it a try," Vonn said when asked why she decided to return to the sport.

"And here I am, only a few months later, forerunning my first World Cup and it feels so amazing to be back.

"I can't tell you how big of a difference it makes to be able to ski without pain, it's a completely new world for me and I haven't felt this good in 15 years so I'm excited to be back."

At Beaver Creek, Vonn looked comfortable on the Birds of Prey track but how she fared against the rest of the skiers was unknown as only competitors have official times.

"It's not a race for me so I'm leaving a bit in the tank but I was still testing equipment and I wanted to definitely try harder than in training runs," said Vonn. "I think it was a solid run."