

A Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Between Russia and Iran Is on Its Advanced Stage and It Is About 85 Percent Ready, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov Said

# IRAN NEWS

While Expressing His Deepest Condolences to Those Who Lost Their Lives in Gaza, Iran Judiciary Spokesman in the Strongest Terms Condemned the Horrendous Crime Committed by the Zionist Regime in Gaza

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## 2 DOMESTIC



### Tehran Strikes Deal to Construct Part of INSTC in Armenia

> SEE PAGE 2

## 3 INTERNATIONAL

### Erdogan Submits Sweden's NATO Bid to Parliament for Ratification

> SEE PAGE 3



## Foreign Investment in Iran Reaches 9b Euros



TEHRAN – Economy Minister said that foreign investment attraction in the last two years was equal to the previous five years, which is equal to 8 billion and eight hundred million euros. Seyyed Ehsan Khandouzi, in a press conference on Tuesday, and in response to the question of Iran Press reporter, said: “The investments are mainly in the areas of infrastructure supply, water, and sewage, various industries, and services. Khandouzi added: “These investments were mainly funded from Russia, United Arab Emirates, China, Hong Kong, Iraq, India, and Iranians living abroad.” He emphasized that the incumbent administration’s focus has been on economic diplomacy with an emphasis on neighboring countries in order to increase business opportunities. He said: “There has been an effort to weaken the effect of sanctions in this way and increase the bargaining power at the international arena, an opportunity that had previously been left pending to JCPOA negotiations.” While referring to the president’s emphasis on activating the capacity of neighboring countries and externalizing the economy, Khandouzi said: “Today, we are witnessing the growth of both diplomacy and the economy.”

## Iran Pillar of Security, Stability in the Region



TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Nasser Kanaani says that the Islamic Republic of Iran is the pillar of security and stability in the region. While the United States and some of its allies are intensifying war-mongering, instability, and insecurity in the region with the full support of the Zionist regime, Tehran was hosting the second 3+3 Format meeting, Kanaani said. “Iran is the pillar and anchor of stability and security in the region based on the indigenous collective security doctrine,” he said, adding that the country believes in the capacity and effective power of the regional countries to solve problems and ensure security and stability. “Pursuing this strategy everywhere in the region can provide the interests of countries and the sustainable development of our region without the profit-seeking interventions of extra-regional actors,” the senior Iranian diplomat stressed.



## 3+3 Stresses Respect for Territorial Integrity in Caucasus

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

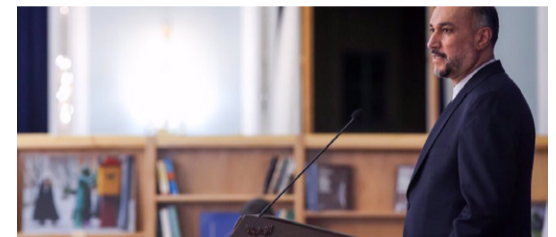
TEHRAN - The participating foreign ministers in the 3+3 Regional Platform in Tehran in a statement have underlined respect for the territorial integrity of the Caucasus countries. The meeting themed “time for peace, cooperation, and progress in the South Caucasus” was focused on the developments going on in the Caucasus region, as well as peace talks between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Foreign ministers of Iran, Russia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Armenia attended the meeting. The main objective of forming this format is to combine efforts of regional countries to resolve intra-regional challenges and boost mutual cooperation. The full text of the Joint Communiqué of the Second Meeting of the “3+3” Regional Platform is as follows: Upon the invitation of H.E. Mr. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and in presence of H.E. Mr. Ararat Mirzoyan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, H.E. Mr. Sergey Lavrov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and H.E. Mr. Hakan Fidan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, the Second Meeting of the “3+3” Regional Platform was held on 23 October 2023 in Tehran. The Ministers: 1. Taking into account the importance of developing friendly relations between countries based on mutual interests and good neighborliness, emphasized in this regard the importance of peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity, inviolability of internationally recognized borders, non-interference in internal affairs, prohibition on the threat or use of force and respect for human rights based on all the principles of the United Nations Charter. 2. While expressing their views on various international issues, discussed the most significant issues in the region and emphasized the importance of platforms like the Consultative Regional Platform “3+3” in providing opportunities for constructive dialogue and establishing mutually beneficial cooperation between the countries of the region that have the primary role in this regard. 3. Highlighted the positive impact of economic cooperation on strengthening mutual trust, the well-being of nations, and the stability of the region. 4. Emphasizing the importance of cultural cooperation, people-to-people contacts, and joint projects in the fields of education, science, tourism, culture, and sports. 5. In order to enhance lasting peace and economic development of the region, they will strengthen bilateral and multilateral consultation and interaction. 6. Welcoming the ongoing processes of normalization and development of relations between all the countries of the region. 7. While positively evaluating the results of this meeting, they reaffirmed the openness of this Platform for equal participation of Georgia. 8. The Ministers also exchanged views on the situation in Gaza. They emphasized the need for immediate termination of targeting innocent civilians. 9. The Foreign Ministers of the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Turkey, and the Russian Federation thanked the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the good reception and successful holding of this meeting. With an assessment of the regular meetings of the “3+3” Regional Platform in expanding and strengthening the environment of trust and cooperation in the region, they agreed that the next meeting will be held in the Republic of Turkey on a date that will be coordinated through diplomatic channels.

## U.S., West Directly Supporting Israel's Horrendous Crimes in Gaza

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi has strongly condemned the United States and other Western countries over their unbridled support for the Israeli regime’s atrocities in the besieged Gaza Strip. Raisi made the remark in a Monday meeting with visiting Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who was in Tehran to take part in the second meeting of the 3+3 regional platform, which includes the three South Caucasus countries of Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan plus Russia, Turkey, and Iran. “What is happening in Gaza is a horrendous crime against defenseless and innocent women and children, which is being committed with the direct and official support of the United States and other Western countries,” the Iranian president said. During the meeting, Raisi also pointed to recent remarks made by US President Joe Biden during his visit to the occupied territories earlier this month, when he noted, “I have long said: If Israel didn’t exist, we would have to invent it.” “These remarks [by the U.S. president] mean that the Americans are prepared to trample upon the blood of women and children, and the rubble of the Palestinian people’s homes in order to meet their [own] interests,” the Iranian president said. He then pointed to underway efforts by Washington to have the United Nations Security Council pass a resolution that would try to portray Israel’s actions as an instance of “self-defense.” “Today, the United States is trying to pursue through a UN Security Council resolution what it has not been able to achieve in the field with regards to supporting the Zionist regime and meeting its own racist interests,” Raisi said. Iran’s president added, “Therefore, all nations and free-thinking people of the world hope that in view of its position and effective presence in the Security Council and on the international level, Russia would be able to prevent the Americans from achieving their goal.” For his part, the Russian foreign minister laid emphasis on Moscow’s commitment to implementation of all of the country’s agreements with Iran in economic, commercial, transport, energy, and cultural fields. Lavrov said his participation in the meeting of the 3+3 regional platform was a manifestation of growing regional cooperation between Iran and Russia.

## U.S. Fanning Flames of war on Gaza by Offering Full Support to Israel



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's foreign minister says despite duplicitous messages sent by the leaders of the United States, Washington is fanning the flames of Israel's ongoing genocidal war on the Gaza Strip by sending arms consignments to the occupying regime. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian made the remark in a late Monday press conference following the conclusion of the second 3+3 regional platform meeting, dubbed “Time for Peace, Cooperation, and Progress in the South Caucasus.” The platform was established to resolve the existing problems in Caucasus through inclusion of regional countries and exclusion of extra-regional and Western states. Its first meeting was held in Moscow in December 2021 at the level of deputy foreign ministers and without the presence of Georgia. “One of the important issues raised during today’s meeting was the issue of Palestine” and the ongoing Israeli war on Gaza, Amir-Abdollahian said, noting that his Turkish and Russian counterparts had taken “strong positions in favor of cessation of the war.” The Iranian top diplomat was referring to the devastating war that Israel has been waging against the besieged Gaza Strip since October 7, after the Gaza-based Palestinian resistance groups staged Operation al-Aqsa Storm, a surprise attack into the occupied territories, in response to the Israeli regime’s intensified crimes against the Palestinian people. According to the Palestinian Health Ministry, the Israeli onslaught has so far killed over 5,000 Palestinians, including 2,055 children and 1,119 women, while more than 15,000 people have been injured. “Unfortunately, the United States has been offering its one-sided and full support to the Zionist regime,” Amir-Abdollahian said, adding, “Today, the American security apparatus is managing” Israel’s war on Gaza. “The administrative and political system in the occupied territories has completely fallen apart, but under direct supervision of American military personnel, the regime’s war machine is trying to save the collapsed [Israeli] regime from crisis,” he added. The Iranian foreign minister also pointed to American officials’ frequent visits to the occupied territories and their underway efforts to have the United Nations Security Council pass a resolution to portray Israel’s genocidal crimes as an instance of “self-defense.” Amir-Abdollahian said he has brought up this issue with his Russian and Chinese counterparts during the Tehran meeting, noting, “All of our efforts are aimed at preventing a resolution from being issued against [the resistance movements in] Palestine.” Iran’s foreign minister then touched on the United States’ direct involvement in the Israeli war on Gaza and the Tel Aviv regime’s efforts to prevent humanitarian aid from reaching the coastal territory. “The al-Quds occupying regime is trying to eliminate the resistance from [political equations in] Gaza and they also seek forced displacement of the residents of Gaza,” Amir-Abdollahian said. He confirmed that American officials have been sending messages to all parties involved in Palestine’s developments, including Iran, adding, “Their messages contain two main points. Firstly, [they allege that] they are not interested in further spread of the war, and secondly, they call on Iran to show self-restraint.” “Despite their claims [about being opposed to further spread of war], the Americans have been fanning the flames of war on Gaza during the past two weeks by sending thousands of arms consignments [to Israel] and supporting the regime,” Iran’s foreign minister said. “Therefore, we warn all the countries that have been involved in the recent escalation [in Gaza], including the United States and the Zionist regime, to stop the massacre [of Palestinian people] before it is too late,” Amir-Abdollahian concluded.

## Enemies Wary of Iran's Severe Response to Wrong Acts



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The adversaries have realized that any mistaken move against Iran will draw a harsh reaction, which is why they have opted for unknown threats against the Islamic Republic, Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani said. During a visit to a research organization of the Defense Ministry on Tuesday, General Ashtiani said the enemies are well aware that Iran is capable of detecting, tracking and thwarting all conventional threats. “The enemies know that if they make any mistake, they will face the Islamic Republic of Iran’s firm and decisive reaction. Thus, they have opted for unknown and new threats in their new plots against the Islamic Republic of Iran,” the defense minister added. In comments on October 9, the spokesperson for the Iranian Foreign Ministry cautioned the Zionist regime that any act of aggression against the Islamic Republic would trigger a devastating response. “The parties that issue threats (against Iran) must be mindful of their legal responsibilities. Such remarks result in accountability and they should bear in mind that Iran is never constricted in defending its rights,” the spokesman underlined, noting that Iran’s responses have always made the aggressors regret their move.



## Iran Foils 10 Major Cyberattacks

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The head of the Civil Defense Organization of Iran said ten serious cyberattacks on the country have been thwarted during the past year. Speaking at a press conference, Brigadier General Gholam Reza Jalali said his organization has detected and repelled ten major cyberattacks in cooperation with the Intelligence Ministry and the Intelligence Department of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) since last year. He said the Civil Defense Organization of Iran took 16 necessary operational measures in a short period of time after receiving reports about an imminent cyberattack on the country's electricity dispatch center and managed to thwart the attack. The general noted that ten major cyberattacks were subsequently detected and repelled by repeating that operational pattern.

# Tehran Strikes Deal to Construct Part of INSTC in Armenia



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran and Armenia have signed a contract for the construction of the Agarak-Kajaran route as part of Tranche 4 of the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC) in the Armenian territory. As reported, based on the deal, which was signed in the presence of Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister Mehrdad Bazrpash and Armenia's Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures Gnel Sanosyan, Iranian companies are to construct the mentioned road. According to Bazrpash, the Armenian side is going to fund the project which is worth \$210 million. The contract was signed during a visit of an Iranian delegation headed by the country's transport minister to Armenia. During this visit, Bazrpash met and held talks with several high-ranking Armenian officials including the country's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. In this meeting, the two sides announced a decision to increase the value of annual trade between the two countries to \$3.0 billion. Referring to the bilateral relations between Tehran and Yerevan, Bazrpash said that economic exchanges between the two countries can be increased to three times the current level which is about \$1.0 billion. He announced Iran's readiness to build a second border bridge in the Nordouz region and welcomed the presence of Armenian investment companies in Iran. The official also expressed the

country's readiness for the export of technical and engineering services to Armenia. In early September, ARMENPRESS reported that Armenia is seeking to export its goods through Iran to the Arab countries of the region and India, as the country is trying to also increase trade with the Islamic Republic. "Armenia and Iran attach great importance to the prospect of carrying out shipments through the Persian Gulf-Black Sea logistic route, and the Armenian side is maximally seeking to support the implementation of this megaproject, attaching great importance to the use of its own territory. The option of exporting Armenian goods through Iranian territory to Arab countries and India is also under discussion, and in this context, the parties have decided to find solutions through joint efforts and simplify the procedures applied from both sides on that road," Armenia's commercial attaché to Iran Vardan Kostanyan told ARMENPRESS. "We are now looking into the untapped potential and opportunities to utilize them in bilateral cooperation. On the other hand, our neighbor is still under sanctions, therefore while carrying out economic policy we are unconditionally taking into consideration this fact. Iran provides state support and protection to companies investing in its economy," Kostanyan said, highlighting direct meetings between business representatives.

## Iranian VP Pays a Visit to Russia



MOSCOW (IranPress) - Iranian Vice President for Science, Technology, and Knowledge-Based Economy traveled to Moscow, the capital of Russia, to meet with Russian science and technology officials. Ruhollah Dehghani Firouzabadi arrived in Moscow on Tuesday welcomed by Iran's Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali at Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport. Iran's Vice President noted that technological cooperation, nanotechnology and the aviation industry will be discussed and negotiated during the two-day trip to Russia. The Vice President of Science, Technology and Knowledge-based Economy emphasized that due to the expansion of relations between Iran and Russia, opportunities for cooperation between Iranian and Russian companies have been developed and this trip will bring achievements for Iranian knowledge-based companies. He stated that the Russian Science Foundation cooperates with the Iranian Science Foundation and the joint research program is being pursued during the trip to Russia. The high-ranking Iranian official was to meet with Andrei Fursenko, the senior assistant of the President of Russia for Science and Technology Affairs, on Tuesday evening.



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

## Agriculture Ministry to Help Boost Investment in FZs

TEHRAN – Iranian Agriculture Minister Mohammad-Ali Nikbakht has said his ministry will take all the necessary measures for increasing investment in the country's free and special economic zones, Freena reported. Speaking in a meeting with Secretary of the Free Zones High Council Hojatollah Abdolmaleki on Tuesday, Nikbakht referred to the appropriate strategy of the Free Zones High Council in internationalization and jump in investment and export in the country's free zones, and announced the complete readiness of his ministry to solve the issues related to the Agriculture Ministry in such zones. Abdolmaleki for his part mentioned some of the potentials and capacities of the free and special economic zones, saying: "These zones play a key role in the country's economy by accounting for more than 70 percent of the country's sea transit and more than 30 percent of non-oil exports." In late August, Abdolmaleki had announced that 850 packages for investment in the country's free zones were ready to be presented to the investors.



## FZs Have Great Potential to Accelerate Economic Development

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - A parliament member has said that the country's free and special economic zones have great potentials to accelerate economic development and the government should take the necessary measures to support the Free Zones High Council in this regard. "Commercial-industrial free zones in the country are a special shortcut to increase the speed of the country's development, which should be given special attention," Ruhollah Izadkhan said. He praised the performance of Secretary of the Free Zones High Council Hojatollah Abdolmaleki in the current government, saying that during his tenure the council has managed to implement very positive projects in the country's free zones. The establishment of free trade zones (FTZs) in Iran dates back to the Iranian calendar year 1368 (March 1989 - March 1990) following the fall in the country's oil income in the

preceding year which prompted the government to promote non-oil exports. The first two free trade zones of Iran were established in the south of the country. The first one was Kish Free Trade Zone established in 1368 on Kish Island in the Persian Gulf and the second one was Qeshm Free Trade Zone established the year after on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz. Some five other free trade zones have been also established in the country since then, including Chabahar in southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan Province, Arvand in southwestern Khuzestan Province, Anzali in northern Gilan Province, Aras in East-Azerbaijan Province and Maku in West-Azerbaijan Province, both in the northwest of the country. The development of existing free trade zones and the establishment of new FTZs has become one of the major economic approaches of the Iranian government.

## Iran Parliamentary Delegation Leaves IPU Meeting Over Anti-Palestinian Remarks



Inter-Parliamentary Union

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The parliamentary delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as many Islamic countries, left the opening ceremony of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) after the head of the union spoke against the Palestinian nation. Iran's Deputy Parliament Speaker Mojtaba Zonnouri is leading a delegation to the 147th assembly of the IPU, which is being held in Luanda, Angola, from October 23 to 27. During the opening ceremony on Monday evening, IPU President Duarte Pacheco gave a speech in which he took a unilateral position in favor of the Zionist regime and called the Palestinian resistance movement a terrorist group. Reacting to Pacheco's remarks, the Iranian parliamentary delegation and many other delegations from Islamic countries, left the ceremony in protest. The parliamentary delegations returned to the ceremony after the speech and showed their strong reactions to the positions adopted against the Palestinian resistance. Israel waged a brutal war on the Gaza Strip on October 7 after the Palestinian resistance movement launched Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, a surprise attack into the occupied territories in retaliation for the Israeli regime's intensified crimes against the Palestinian people. According to the Palestinian Health Ministry, the Israeli onslaught on Gaza has so far killed more than 5,087 Palestinians, including 2,055 children, and injured 15,273 others.

## Tehran Voices Readiness to Boost Ties With Bangkok



TEHRAN (MNA) – Receiving the credential of Thailand's new ambassador, president Raisi emphasized the efforts to further improve the level of relations between the two states. "What has been displayed today in Iranian science and technology parks and knowledge-based complexes shows the fact that young Iranian scientists have created brilliant opportunities for progress from the sanctions," Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi said in a meeting with the Kingdom of Thailand's new Ambassador to Tehran Pichit Boonsud on Tuesday. Thailand's new envoy also announced in this ceremony that his country's foreign policy is focused on the development of relations in order to provide mutual benefits and said, "As the ambassador of Thailand, I will use all my efforts to promote the friendly relations between the two countries to higher levels." Stating that the Islamic Republic of Iran has made significant progress and achievements in the scientific and knowledge-based fields, especially in the field of medicine and medical equipment production, he expressed hope that the Islamic Republic of Iran would be interested in exchanging its capabilities in the scientific and economic fields with Thailand.

## World Failing on Pledge to Halt and Reverse Deforestation by 2030

PARIS (Dispatches) - The world is "failing" on a pledge to halt and reverse deforestation by 2030, with global losses increasing last year, a group of NGOs and researchers warned Tuesday. In 2021, leaders from over 100 countries and territories – representing the vast majority of the world's forests – pledged to stop and reverse forest loss by 2030. But an annual assessment released Tuesday found global deforestation actually increased by four percent last year, and the world remains well off track to meet the 2030 commitment. "That 2030 goal is not just nice to have, it's essential for maintaining a livable climate for humanity," warned Erin Matson, a lead author of the Forest Declaration Assessment. Forests are not only key habitats for animal life but serve as important regulators of the global climate and carbon sponges that suck in the emissions human activity belches out.



## UN Concerned About Atmosphere of Mutual Suspicion in Kosovo



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The United Nations on Monday expressed concern over the "atmosphere of mutual suspicion" in Kosovo, calling for "critical" de-escalatory measures between it and Serbia. Tensions between Pristina and Belgrade have been heightened since a police officer was killed last month in an ambush in Kosovo's restive north, allegedly by a paramilitary unit made up of Kosovo Serbs. "The major events on 24th of September exacerbated an already deteriorating security environment characterized by an atmosphere of mutual suspicion... touching much of the population, especially in northern Kosovo and among Kosovo-Serb communities," Caroline Ziaeh, head of the UN's mission Kosovo, told the UN Security Council. Animosity between Kosovo and Serbia has persisted since a war between Serbian forces and ethnic Albanian insurgents in the late 1990s that drew NATO intervention against Belgrade. Kosovo, which counts 120,000 Serbs among its 1.8 million people, declared its independence from Serbia in 2008, in a move Belgrade has never recognized. But existing tensions have been heightened in Kosovo's north for months. Protests flared earlier this year among Kosovo's ethnic Serbs in April after the authorities installed Pristina-allied mayors following widely boycotted local elections in four predominantly Serb northern municipalities. "The current political impasse, with its impact on the security and well-being of the population, can only be overcome through compromise," Ziaeh said. "De-escalatory measures are critical to reduce tensions," she said, adding she hoped that recent EU- and US-organized meetings with officials in Pristina and Belgrade would help "place the dialogue back on a forward path." Plans to establish an association of majority-Serb municipalities in Kosovo that would operate with some autonomy "should begin without delay or preconditions," Ziaeh said. Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabic meanwhile blamed Kosovo for the police killing, with Brnabic telling the Security Council last month's unrest was "a logical consequence, unfortunately, of the reign of fear and terror that Pristina decided to enforce despite clear demands for de-escalation from the international community." Kosovo President Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu responded by accusing Belgrade of "ethnic cleansing through administrative means." Serbia is making "every possible effort to take our region back to the 90s," she said. "What happened on September 24 was not just an attack on Kosovo, it was a plan to destabilize the entire Western Balkans."



## Erdogan Submits Sweden's NATO Bid to Parliament for Ratification

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan submitted a bill approving Sweden's NATO membership bid to parliament for ratification, his office said, a move welcomed by Stockholm as it clears the way for it to join the Western defence alliance. Erdogan pleased his NATO allies at a summit in July by promising to send the legislation to parliament when it reopened on Oct. 1, having previously raised objections over Sweden's alleged harbouring of individuals who Turkey says are members of terrorist groups. Since parliament reopened, however, Turkish officials have repeatedly said Stockholm needed to take more concrete steps to clamp down on the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militia before Ankara could ratify its membership bid. The PKK is deemed a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the European Union and the United States. On Monday the bill on approving Sweden finally moved forward. "The Protocol on Sweden's NATO Accession was signed by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on October 23, 2023 and referred to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey," the presidency said on social media platform X without elaborating. Sweden's Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson welcomed the move. "Now it remains for the parliament to deal with the question," Kristersson said on X. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said he was looking forward to a "speedy vote" in the Turkish parliament and to welcoming Sweden as an ally "very soon." In a note to NATO members on their next foreign ministers'

meeting on Nov. 28 and 29, Stoltenberg raised the prospect that Sweden could join the alliance at the meeting, according to a European diplomat. Hungary's parliament will also have to ratify Sweden's NATO application before it can become a member. "Hungary has said several times it does not want to be last in this process," Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billstrom told Swedish news agency TT. "Now that the ratification process has started in Ankara, we assume that the same will happen soon in Budapest." The United States also welcomed Turkey's move, with State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller saying the U.S. looked forward to the bill passing in the Turkish parliament as soon as possible. Turkey, which has NATO's second-biggest army, has long been seeking U.S. congressional approval for a \$20 billion sale of F-16 jets and modernisation kits. Erdogan has previously linked Sweden's NATO bid to U.S. support for its request. Turkey, however, has not set a timeframe for ratification. The bill will be put on the agenda of parliament's foreign affairs commission, which will have to pass it before it can be sent to the general assembly for ratification. Analysts say the bill is expected to be passed in parliament once it is submitted to the general assembly, but it is unclear when Ankara will schedule the vote. Erdogan's AK Party, along with its nationalist and Islamist partners, holds 322 out of the 600 seats in parliament. The main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) has previously voiced support for Sweden's membership.

## Armed Attacks in Mexico Leave at Least 16 Dead



MEXICO CITY (Dispatches) - Two armed attacks on Monday left at least 16 people dead, including a dozen police officers, in regions of Mexico plagued by violence related to drug trafficking, authorities said. In the southern state of Guerrero, unidentified attackers targeted a security patrol in the municipality of Coyuca de Benitez, prosecutor Alejandro Hernandez said. According to preliminary information, 11 members of the municipal police force were killed, he said, adding that the motive for the massacre was being investigated. A senior state security official was traveling in the convoy when it was attacked, authorities said, without confirming media reports that he was murdered along with police bodyguards. Security forces were later seen patrolling the area – where several lifeless bodies lay on the ground – as a police helicopter flew overhead. The second attack, in the neighboring western state of Michoacan, left five civilians dead and two more injured, authorities said. A group of gunmen attacked a brother of the mayor of the town of Tacambaro, according to the state prosecutor's office. A restaurant worker and a member of the police force were among those killed, while the mayor's brother was wounded, it said. In a video posted on social media, gunmen were seen opening fire before fleeing in several vehicles. Mexico is plagued by cartel-related bloodshed that has seen more than 420,000 people murdered since the government deployed the military in its war on drugs in 2006. Since then, the country's murder rate has tripled to 25 per 100,000 inhabitants. Mexico has also registered more than 110,000 disappearances since 1962, most attributed to criminal organizations. Guerrero and Michoacan are among the country's most violent areas, due to confrontations between rival drug traffickers and security forces. Although it is home to the famed coastal resort of Acapulco, Guerrero is one of Mexico's poorest states. Violence – particularly targeting low-level officials – often escalates across the country in the run-up to elections. Presidential and parliamentary polls are set to be held next year. Since taking office in 2018, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has championed a "hugs not bullets" strategy to tackle violent crime at its roots by fighting poverty and inequality with social programs, rather than with the army.



## Russian Forces Apply Pressure on Ukraine's Avdiivka, Kupiansk

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian forces pressed their attacks on two frontline areas of eastern Ukraine, seeking to sever the sole supply route into the devastated city of Avdiivka and advance on the key town of Kupiansk farther north. The General Staff of Ukraine's armed forces said its troops had repelled about 10 Russian advances on Avdiivka. Vitaly Barabash, head of Avdiivka's military administration, said there were round-the-clock strikes on Avdiivka's town centre and on the sole road used to bring in supplies, with 22 km (15 miles) of road constantly under fire, day and night. "This complicates evacuation and delivery of aid. The enemy is trying to cut it off. Any movement is a signal to open fire," Barabash said roughly 1,600 residents remained in the town, down from a pre-war population of about 30,000. Most of those remaining had no wish to leave, he said. Avdiivka has become a symbol of Ukrainian resistance after months of attacks. It was briefly captured in 2014 by Russian-backed separatists who overran large stretches of territory in the east, and Ukrainian forces have erected solid fortifications in the intervening nine years. President Volodymyr Zelenskiy paid tribute to those defending the town in his nightly video message, saying: "Their resilience is the strength for all Ukraine now." General Oleksandr Syrskiy, commander of Ukrainian ground forces, described conditions along the entire 1,000-km (600-mile) front as "challenging". He singled out Bakhmut, seized by Russia in May after months of battles, and Kupiansk, both northeast of Avdiivka, for facing the greatest difficulties. "The enemy is sustaining significant losses, primarily in terms of personnel, but is constantly replenishing its forces by bringing in reserves, including from Russia," Syrskiy told the UNIAN news agency. Local officials also said Russian forces had again shelled areas in the southern Kherson region that are under Kyiv's control. Mandatory evacuation orders have been issued for more than 800 children, they said. Russia has focused on gaining control of the eastern Donbas region, made up of Donetsk and Luhansk cities and surrounding areas, since failing to move on Kyiv in the early days of its February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Moscow calls the war in Ukraine a "special military operation". Ukraine launched a counteroffensive in June this year in both the east and south, making much slower progress however than a lightning advance through the northeast a year ago. Russian accounts of the fighting on Monday made no mention of Avdiivka for the third straight day. It said Russian forces had repelled three attacks outside Kupiansk and a further 10 near Bakhmut.

## Outlaw Militias Torch 35 Buses in Rio

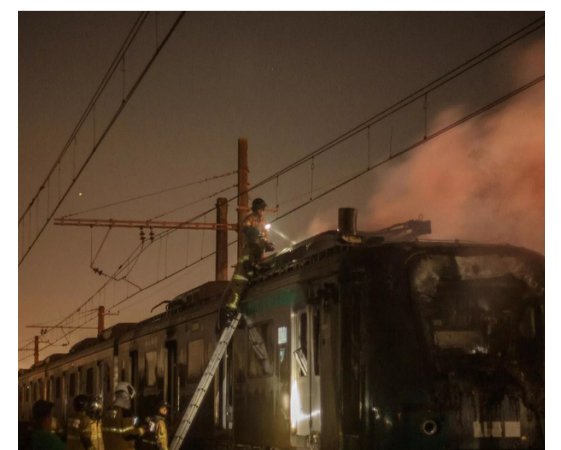
BRASILIA (Dispatches) - Suspected paramilitary militia members torched 35 buses and a train drivers' cabin in Rio de Janeiro Monday, paralyzing parts of the scenic Brazilian city after one of their leaders was killed in a police operation, officials said. The chaotic scenes erupted after an operation that state Governor Claudio Castro said killed the nephew and right-hand-man of a militia boss known as "Zinho." Castro said the police had delivered a "hard blow to one of the largest militias in the west" of Rio, describing the nephew, who goes by the alias "Faustao" as a "known warlord." Police subsequently arrested 12 people for suspected "terrorist actions" and city hall declared a level-three alert on its five-level scale, warning residents and tourists of possible "high-impact incidents." Rio Mayor Eduardo Paes called the militia members "idiots as well as criminals," in a post on X, formerly Twitter. "Militia members on the west side are burning public buses paid for with public money to protest against a police operation," he wrote. Public bus operators' association Rio Onibus said 35 buses had been set on fire – the most in a single day in the city's history. They included five buses used on special rapid-transit lines launched for the Rio Olympics in 2016. The

Supervia train operators' organization said a train cab was also set on fire after the driver was ordered out. Public transport in the city was partly suspended. Police operations against heavily armed criminal gangs are common in Rio, where poor favela neighborhoods are often caught in the crossfire. Paramilitary militia groups control more than half the city's territory, installing a reign of terror in poor neighborhoods that are home to more than two million people, according to a 2020 study by a consortium of universities, online watchdog platforms and a government anti-crime hotline. Militia members are often former police officers. They initially formed as neighborhood watch groups to protect residents from drug gangs in the city known for its picturesque beaches but also its violent crime. The militias, however, soon evolved into organized crime groups themselves, controlling sectors including internet service, cable TV, transportation and construction. The latest violence comes after three doctors visiting Rio for a conference were gunned down at a beachside bar in an upscale neighborhood three weeks ago. Investigators said they appeared to have been targeted by mistake by criminals who mistook one doctor for a militia member.



## China's Top Diplomat to Pay Rare U.S. Visit

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - China's top diplomat will pay a rare visit to Washington this week, the United States announced Monday, paving the way for a potential visit by President Xi Jinping aimed at keeping tensions in check. Foreign Minister Wang Yi, the highest-ranking Chinese official in the US capital in nearly five years, will visit from Thursday through Saturday against a backdrop of friction over trade, Ukraine, the Middle East, Taiwan and China's assertive actions at sea near the Philippines. A senior U.S. official said the trip was part of efforts between the world's two largest economies to "responsibly manage our competition." "We continue to believe that direct face-to-face diplomacy is the best way to raise challenging issues, address misperception and miscommunication, and explore working with the Chinese where our interests intersect," he said on customary condition of anonymity. Wang will be returning a visit in June to Beijing by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who was the highest-ranking US official to travel to China since 2018.



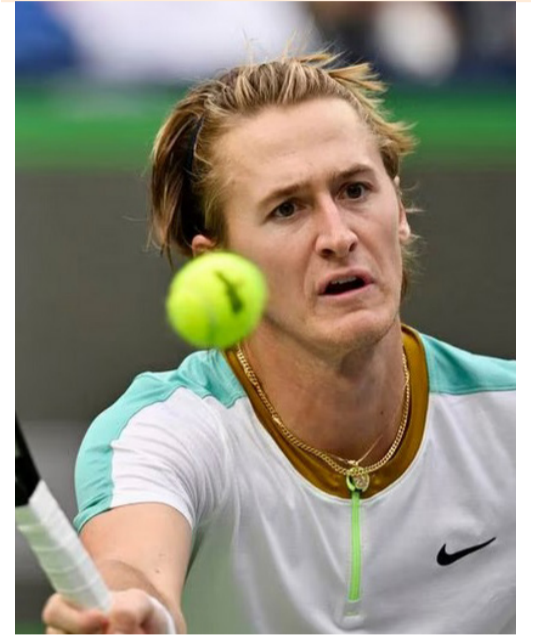
## Spurs Go Top of English Premier League



LONDON (Dispatches) - Tottenham surged to the top of the Premier League as Son Heung-min and James Maddison sealed a 2-0 win against Fulham on Monday. Ange Postecoglou's side extended their unbeaten start to nine league games thanks to Son's opener and Maddison's first goal at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium since his close-season move from Leicester. Tottenham leapfrogged Manchester City, Arsenal and Liverpool to go two points clear at the top of the table. Fulham are the only team to beat Tottenham this season, knocking them out of the League Cup on penalties in August. But they avenged that loss by recording a third successive league victory to strengthen their unexpected title challenge. Saluting Son and Maddison, Postecoglou said: "They are both quality players. They are both leaders at the club. They work hard for the team and it is a credit to them." The north Londoners' superb start to Postecoglou's debut season have awoken dreams of the club's first top-flight title since Bill Nicholson's 1961 double winners. While that ambitious target may yet prove beyond Tottenham, who haven't won a major trophy since 2008, the Australian has undoubtedly had a huge impact on a club that was in turmoil when he arrived from Celtic. A toxic combination of Tottenham's poor results and dour displays under Antonio Conte last term, combined with Harry Kane's close-season move to Bayern Munich, left many expecting another year of turmoil. Yet Postecoglou has astutely guided Tottenham to calmer waters, winning over doubters with his down-to-earth personality and attacking game-plan. "It was a good result against a tough opponent. We maintained our patience and our pressing was really strong," Postecoglou said. "Both our goals came from our press to be honest. Our work off the ball was excellent. It has been first rate all year and that is what got us the result." Monday's victory gave Postecoglou the

record for most points gained by a new manager in their first nine Premier League matches, with his 23 surpassing the mark previously held by Mike Walker and Guus Hiddink. Postecoglou's next challenge is ensuring his players are ready for a quick turnaround, with their London derby at Crystal Palace scheduled for Friday. In keeping with their vibrant form under Postecoglou, Tottenham made an enterprising start and Son was denied an early goal by Bernd Leno's smart save from his close-range shot. Heading into this weekend, no player had provided more assists in the competition this term than Maddison's five. The playmaker nearly added to that tally when his free-kick was volleyed over by Micky van de Ven. Fulham almost snatched a shock lead through Joao Palhinha, whose header was brilliantly clawed to safety by Guglielmo Vicario. Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg tested Leno with a fierce strike before Richarlison side-footed just wide from the edge of the area. Tottenham's pressure was rewarded in the 36th minute as Calvin Bassey carelessly surrendered possession and Richarlison flicked a pass to Son on the edge of the area. Son's deft touch took him away from two flat-footed Fulham defenders, giving him time to curl a fine finish into the far corner for his seventh goal this season. Dejan Kulusevski's goal-bound strike was deflected wide for a corner as Tottenham pushed for a second. They had to wait just nine minutes after half-time before delivering the knockout blow, with a hearty assist from Fulham's lacklustre defence. Kane's departure was expected to destabilise Tottenham, but Son and Maddison have formed a dynamic duo almost as effective as the South Korean's prolific partnership with the England captain. Hojbjerg intercepted a miscued Bassey clearance and picked out Son, who laid a composed pass into Maddison to apply the finishing touch with a low strike from 10 yards.

## Korda Sent Packing Early in Basel



BASEL (Dispatches) - Tomas Martin Etcheverry of Argentina took down eighth-seeded American Sebastian Korda 6-3, 1-6, 6-3 in the first round of the Swiss Indoors Basel. Korda fired eight aces to Etcheverry's two and won 33 of 39 first-serve points (84.6 percent), but Etcheverry moved on after saving four of six break points and breaking Korda twice in three opportunities. Each player won exactly 50 percent of the total points (79 of 158). Dutch qualifier Botic van de Zandschulp beat Spaniard Roberto Bautista Agut 7-5, 6-7 (3), 6-2 in three hours, three minutes. Andy Murray of Great Britain got past Germany's Yannick Hanfmann 7-5, 6-4. Argentina's Sebastian Baez and Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff also won their opening matches. No. 5 seed Alexander Zverev of Germany made quick work of Austrian wild card Sebastian Ofner, winning 6-4, 6-1 in the first round in Vienna. Ofner had five aces and just one double fault, but he could not stop Zverev on his first serve (23 of 26 points, 88.5 percent). Zverev never faced break point en route to the 78-minute victory. No. 8 seed Karen Khachanov defeated Roman Safiullin 6-4, 6-4 in a match between Russians. Cameron Norrie of Great Britain, Matteo Amaldi of Italy and Jiri Lehecka of the Czech Republic also advanced.

## Top Order Fire Afghanistan to Famous Win Against Pakistan

CHENNAI (Dispatches) - Afghanistan pulled off their second giant-killing act of the ongoing 50-over World Cup with a memorable eight-wicket victory against 1992 champions Pakistan. Afghanistan's top three batters smashed fifties and skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi made an unbeaten 48 at number four in their successful pursuit of a 283-run victory target that they accomplished with one over to spare. It was Afghanistan's first ODI victory against Pakistan in eight attempts and the outcome leaves defending champions England at the bottom of the points table. It was a clinical chase by Shahidi's men, who had stunned England earlier in the tournament, after Pakistan posted 282-7 riding on half-centuries by skipper Babar Azam and opener Abdullah Shafique. "This win tastes nice," a beaming Shahidi said after their second victory in five matches. "The way we chased today was very professional." Babar won the toss and elected to bat against a spin-heavy Afghan attack, which kept things tight in the first 10 powerplay overs. Afghanistan packed in four spinners in their playing XI but it was pacer Azmatullah Omarzai who drew first blood by dismissing Imam-ul-Haq for 17. Teenage spinner Noor Ahmad (3-49) dismissed Abdullah Shafique (58) and Mohammad Rizwan (eight) in his successive overs in his memorable World Cup debut. Babar (74) fell to Noor as well trying to accelerate the scoring, leaving it to Iftikhar Ahmed and Shadab Khan to provide the late flourish. Iftikhar clobbered four sixes in his belligerent 40, while Shadab contributed as many runs before falling to the last ball of the innings. Afghanistan raced to the 100-mark in the 16th over with openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz (65) and player-of-the-match Ibrahim Zadran (87) combining in a breakneck opening stand of 130. They made Pakistan's bowling look pedestrian and Babar's men did not help their cause with sloppy fielding. Shaheen Afridi returned to break the burgeoning stand, dismissing Gurbaz, but Zadran and Rahmat Shah, who made 77 not out,

continued the good work. Hasan Ali ended Zadran's gallant knock but Shah and Shahidi milked the Pakistan attack with consummate ease during their unbroken 96-run stand to seal a memorable victory over their neighbours. "That really hurt us," a dejected Babar said after Pakistan's third defeat in five matches left their semi-final hopes in the balance. "We got a good total but our bowling was not up to the mark. In World Cups you need all three departments firing and we haven't done that."



## Jackson Banned Four Games After Second Ejection



LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Denver Broncos safety Kareem Jackson was handed a four-game suspension by the NFL on Monday after being ejected for the second time this season. Jackson was tossed from Sunday's victory over the Green Bay Packers after a brutal helmet hit on Packers tight end Luke Musgrave early in the fourth quarter. Announcing Jackson's suspension, NFL vice president of football operations Jon Runyan released a letter that had been sent to the player explaining why he was being banned. "On the play in question, you delivered a forceful blow to the head/neck area of a defenseless receiver, when you had the time and space to avoid such contact," Runyan wrote. "You could have made contact with your opponent within the rules, yet you chose not to."

## Nadal Turns Motivational Speaker for Children

MADRID (Dispatches) - On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of Movistar Estudiantes, over 800 students of the basketball youth team got the opportunity to be addressed by Spanish tennis icon Rafael Nadal. In Madrid, celebrations for the diamond jubilee of the Movistar Estudiantes youth club were underway at the Movistar Academy Magariños. The Mayor of Madrid, José Luis Martínez-Almeida, was also in attendance as the 22-time Grand Slam champion delivered a motivational speech directed at the students of the Madrid basketball youth squad. The former World No. 1 took to social media to share his experience and photos of the occasion with his followers on X (previously Twitter). Nadal participated in a motivational talk with the students, where he outlined the importance and values of sports. "Last Thursday, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of Movistar Estudiantes, I had the opportunity to participate in a motivational talk explaining the values of sport and I was able to answer the questions of the children from the quarry. It was an experience that I really liked and I hope it was useful for the children and other people present," the Spaniard posted on X. In a recent interview, Rafael Nadal expressed his



amazement at Novak Djokovic's remarkable achievements. While the Spaniard had anticipated the World No. 1 winning a Grand Slam this season, he confessed that he had not envisioned the Serb clinching three Majors in 2023. Djokovic commenced his year triumphantly at the Australian Open, securing his 22nd Grand Slam title to match Nadal's record. He continued his historic run by defeating Norway's Casper Ruud in the Roland Garros final, becoming the first man in the Open Era to claim 23 Major titles and achieving the Triple Career Grand Slam. After the disappointment at the Wimbledon Championships, where he lost a demanding five-set final to World No. 2 Carlos Alcaraz, the 36-year-old quickly bounced back at the 2023 US Open. Djokovic's victory over Daniil Medvedev at Flushing Meadows marked a historic achievement, making him the first player, regardless of gender, to claim 24 Grand Slam titles in the Open Era. Speaking with Agencia EFE, the former World No. 1 praised Novak Djokovic's historic achievements and congratulated him. The Spaniard also anticipated that the younger generation, including Carlos Alcaraz, would pose formidable challenges for the Serb in the future.

## Saudi Arabia Launches Esports World Cup



RIYADH (Dispatches) - Saudi Arabia said on Monday it was launching an annual Esports World Cup, which will include the most popular games in the world and have the largest prize pool in Esports history. The competition will be held annually in Riyadh starting summer 2024, a statement from Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said. Clubs will compete across games from various genres to become the ultimate Esports World Cup champion, the statement said. Sports, Esports and gaming have been part of the crown prince's transformation plan, known as Vision 2030, in which the government is pouring hundreds of billions of dollars to diversify the kingdom's economy and reduce its reliance on oil. Saudi Arabia's Savvy Games Group, owned by sovereign wealth fund PIF, said last year it will invest 142 billion riyals (\$37.8 billion) in initiatives aimed at making Saudi Arabia a global hub for gaming. Under the plan, the kingdom aims to set up 250 games companies locally, which will create 39,000 jobs, and raise the sector's contribution to Saudi GDP to 50 billion riyals by 2030. "The Esports World Cup is the natural next step in Saudi Arabia's journey to become the premier global hub for gaming and Esports, offering an unmatched Esports experience that pushes the boundaries of the industry," the crown prince was quoted in the statement as saying. The competition will help achieving Vision 2030 objectives by boosting tourism, creating jobs and providing entertainment for residents and visitors, he added.