

Spokesman for the Iranian Police Forces Announced that 190,000 Policemen Are on Standby to Ensure the Security of the Upcoming Elections, Saying That Police Confirmed the Qualifications of 48,000 Election Candidates

# IRAN NEWS

The Head of Islamic World Science & Technology Monitoring and Citation Institute (ISC) Said the Islamic Republic of Iran Stood in the First Place Among Islamic Countries in Terms of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Technologies

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INTERNATIONAL

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## Iranians Proved No Alien Supposed to Make Decision for Them



TEHRAN (IP) - Guardian Council Spokesman said during his presser on Tuesday that although enemies made efforts, to set the situation so that Iran's process would be blocked with zero improvement, Iranians have proven that no one from outside the country is going to make decisions for us. Attending a press brief, the Guardian Council Spokesman Hadi Tahan-Nazif emphasized: "Our enemies do not want people to have a strong presence in Iran's major decision-making process, yet failed to get what they want." He further stated: "We must note that the future parliament if it is strong, can solve people's problems so the stage is ready for the participation of all political parties." Earlier in February, the Council approved 14,200 candidates for the March 1 parliamentary election. Tahan-Nazif, further stated that a comprehensive evaluation process resulted in the qualification of a total of 14,200 candidates for parliament, with the final week focusing on scrutinizing appeal files. He also stated that the number of candidates for the Assembly of Experts election increased to 144 people. Tahan-Nazif emphasized that the names of these qualified candidates were promptly communicated to the Interior Minister, and the Constitutional Council concluded its evaluation on February 8. In addition to the parliamentary candidates, Tahan-Nazif had addressed the ongoing evaluation of Assembly of Experts candidates, indicating that their appeals were assessed on February 7.

## Era of U.S., Allies' Control of International Waters "Over"



SANAA (Dispatches) - Yemen's defense minister has hailed the ongoing naval operations by the country's military against Israeli-linked ships in the Red Sea in protest against the war on Gaza, stressing that the era of "hegemonic influence" of the United States and its allies on international waters is over. "The United States, Britain and Israel must realize that the policies of demarcation and assertion of hegemonic influence on international waters are obsolete and no more favorable," Major General Mohammed al-Atifi stated at a graduation ceremony of Yemeni cadets in the country's western coastal city of Hudaydah on Sunday. He underscored that the Yemeni Armed Forces could properly redefine maritime security in the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea following their decision to block the passage of ships of any nationality heading towards ports in the 1948 Israeli-occupied territories. Atifi further noted that Yemeni naval units could also restore the identity of the two seas, which had been hijacked by the occupying Tel Aviv regime. "We reaffirm that the Yemeni Armed Forces won't target any ships, which are neither affiliated to the Zionist enemy nor serving its interests. Marine navigation for vessels through the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea is safe," the Yemeni defense chief said. Atifi emphasized that the Sana'a-based National Salvation Government stands fully committed to all international treaties and conventions, as well as pacts that neither undermine Yemen's dignity and national sovereignty nor impose particular will. "As long as the Zionists' atrocities continue in Gaza, we will continue our operations against the usurping entity. Washington has aided and abetted the Zionist entity to forge ahead with its genocidal war on our Palestinian brethren and sisters," he said.

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK



## ICRC Hails Iran's Efforts at Gaza Peace

TEHRAN - The president of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) praised Iran for its political efforts to address the crisis in Gaza and relieve the pains of Palestinians. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and ICRC President Mirjana Spoljaric Egger held a meeting on the sidelines of the 55th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva on Monday. Lauding Iran's diplomatic efforts to help end the war on Gaza, Spoljaric Egger expressed deep concern about the dire humanitarian situation in the Palestinian enclave. Highlighting the ICRC's attempts to mobilize humanitarian supports for Gaza, she said the international community has unfortunately failed to fulfill its humanitarian duties in this regard. She then stressed the need for the urgent delivery of aids to Gaza, voiced concern about the critical conditions in Rafah, and noted that the ICRC will make every effort to avert a humanitarian catastrophe there. For his part, Amir-Abdollahian expressed gratitude to the ICRC for its responsible efforts to settle the "complicated and worrying" situation in Palestine. "Unfortunately, the wrong political attitudes have so far rendered the political efforts to end the Gaza crisis futile," the Iranian foreign minister deplored. He also took a swipe at the U.S. for raising the idea of reducing, not ending, the war on Gaza. Dismissing the U.S. officials' comments about the post-war conditions in Gaza, Amir-Abdollahian said the leaders of the Palestinian leaders have agreed on democratic ways and reached a political

consensus on administering Gaza after the war. He also reaffirmed Iran's commitment to the continuation of efforts at ending the Israeli war on Gaza. Amir-Abdollahian arrived in Geneva, Switzerland, to attend the 55th regular session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) and the high-level segment of the Conference on Disarmament. Heading a diplomatic delegation, Amir-Abdollahian arrived in Geneva early on Monday. He is scheduled to deliver speeches at the two high-level meetings and outline Iran's stance on the issues. The top Iranian diplomat will also take part in a UN-sponsored meeting on Palestine to elaborate on the country's position regarding Israel's genocidal war against the people of Palestine in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, which started in October. Meanwhile on Monday Amir-Abdollahian met with his Vietnamese counterpart Bui Thanh Son and the two sides agreed to further enhance bilateral cooperation in various fields, particularly in trade and investment. In the meeting Amir-Abdollahian said the UK and U.S.'s policies in the Red Sea and their attack on Yemen are the cause of the escalation of the crisis in the region. In this meeting, the two sides discussed and exchanged views on bilateral and international issues and the situation in Palestine and the Gaza crisis. Considering the fifty years of diplomatic relations between Iran and Vietnam as a valuable asset for both countries, Amir-Abdollahian emphasized the desire of Iran to continue these mutually beneficial cooperation.

## Qomi Asks Afghan Immigrants to Return to Their Country



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The Iranian ambassador and special representative to Afghanistan, Hassan Kazemi Qomi, asked Afghan immigrants to return to their country. In an interview with Iranian media, Qomi asked Afghan immigrants to contribute to the economic growth of Afghanistan by returning to their country. Referring to the US's presence in Afghanistan, he said that the Afghan migration crisis was caused by the United States' approach in Afghanistan. "We have more than six million Afghan brothers and sisters here," he said. Meanwhile, the Islamic Emirate's spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said that the forced deportation and detention of immigrants by some countries had led to a strain in the relations between the countries. Mujahid asked all host countries to treat Afghan immigrants in accordance with international laws. "What creates mistrust between the two nations is when migrants are mistreated, detained or forcibly deported. In this regard, we want Iran's interaction, that they should maintain the normal situation and not use pressure against the immigrants," the spokesman said. "The host countries of Afghan migrants, especially neighboring countries and Turkey, have adopted strict policies towards migrants," said Mohammad Khan Talebi, an expert on migrant affairs. "Most immigrants in Iran are facing unemployment, and those immigrants who do not have legal documents to live in Iran are deprived of citizenship rights such as owning a house, going to school, and traveling freely," said Mirwais, another Afghan immigrant in Iran. According to data from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, in a single day, more than 1,500 immigrants from the Islam were sent back to their country.

## More Than 440 Rare Diseases Identified in Iran

Rare DISEASE DAY



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - A total of 442 rare diseases have been identified in the country according to a recent report by the Rare Disease Foundation. The incidence of rare diseases is very low to the extent that maybe one or two people with a certain rare disease are present in the country. Some rare diseases such as 'butterfly skin or EB', 'Spinal muscular atrophy (SMA)', 'Metabolic diseases', 'Autism', and 'Dystrophies' are among the most common cases in the country. In this regard, the National Rare Disease Day is held annually on the eighth day of Esfand (the last Iranian calendar month), which falls on February 26, to raise awareness and generate support for individuals with rare diseases and their families. The Day was approved to be designated as the national day of rare disease in the national calendar in May 2021. Rare diseases are associated with a high psychological burden for the patient but they can also have a major impact on a patient's family. In addition to the health burden on patients, few of these diseases have effective drug treatment available. According to WHO, rare diseases are often serious, chronic, and life-threatening. The European Union (EU) definition of a rare disease affects fewer than 5 in 10,000 people. Around 80 percent of rare diseases are genetic disorders and half of them occur during childhood. Out of a thousand population, 2 people get a rare disease, while the prevalence can be curbed by changing people's culture, screening, identifying, preventing births, and raising awareness. Since it takes approximately eight years for a rare disease patient to receive an accurate diagnosis, the medical houses and medical science universities have been provided with a book on rare diseases to help them diagnose people affected by rare diseases or those suspected of having one.

## OIC Censures Israel's Systematic Genocide of Civilians in Gaza

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - The information ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states have condemned Israel's "systematic oppression, massacre, and genocide of Palestinian civilians" in Gaza and the occupied West Bank. In a communique issued after an extraordinary session held in the Turkish port city of Istanbul, the information ministers of the member states called for an "unconditional ceasefire" to halt further loss of life in the besieged Palestinian strip. "The ongoing military aggression launched by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people as well as its systematic oppression, massacre, and genocide of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip since Oct. 7, 2023, and in the occupied West Bank including al-Quds Al-Sharif, and call for an unconditional cease-fire to prevent further loss of life," the ministers said. They also criticized Israel's misinformation campaigns, accusing it of spreading false and misleading information to cover up its actions. The IOC ministers condemned the Israeli forces' "deliberate and systematic" targeting of Palestinian journalists, and stressed that this is part of a campaign to "silence the voices of truth-tellers". The communique also condemned the Israeli forces for the telecommunication system in the Gaza Strip, calling on the international community to open an "immediate investigation" into these crimes and to hold the Israeli occupying authorities accountable. Elsewhere in the community, the ministers reiterated that the "only path to peace and security in the region is through the realization of the Palestinian people's inalienable rights, including national independence and sovereignty with East al-Quds as its capital". The US-Israeli genocidal war on Gaza is on its 142nd day, with continued massive aerial and artillery strikes on the besieged strip. According to the Health Ministry in Gaza, Israeli attacks have killed at least 86 Palestinians in the last 24 hours. Israeli warplanes bombed a residential block in Beit Lahia, north of Gaza, killing and injuring several civilians. Meanwhile, the Israeli army carried out multiple aerial and artillery attacks on the al-Zeitoun neighborhood in the south of Gaza City, with numerous victims remaining trapped under the rubble. Nearly 30,000 people have been killed in Israeli attacks in Gaza since October 7. Most of them are women and children. The unrestrained Israeli genocide has created painful moments for Palestinians that no one outside Gaza can even imagine. Meanwhile, figures show Israel has been exploiting the global attention on the genocide in Gaza to ramp up the demolition of Palestinian homes in occupied al-Quds. During the first nine months of last year, Israel demolished 97 Palestinian homes on the east side of the city. But since launching its deadly onslaught on Gaza in early October, Israel has bulldozed 87 homes. Those figures are according to Ir Amim, a local non-profit organization that monitors home demolitions in al-Quds. Activists say Israel is trying to drive more Palestinians out of East al-Quds.





# IRAN NEWS



## Some 205 idle Units Revived in Tehran Industrial Parks

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The deputy managing director of Tehran province's Industrial Parks Company announced that 205 idle production units have been revived in the industrial parks and zones of the province during the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21, 2023). Ali Khoda-Panahlou said, "From the beginning, our mission was to set up and complete the infrastructure, and currently we are witnessing the operation of 18 industrial parks and zones consisting of 6,000 units in Tehran province, and contracts have been concluded with more than 10,000 industrial units." In mid-January, the deputy head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) said that 50 knowledge-based production units have been established in the country's industrial parks and zones since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year. According to Tahmourth Lahouti, currently, 780 knowledge-based production units are based in the industrial parks and zones of the country and 420 units are also in various stages of establishment. "Also, 2,869 industrial units capable of becoming knowledge-based have been identified in the industrial parks and zones of the country, of which 179 have been identified in the first half of this year," Lahouti said. "So far, we have helped 1,123 industrial units to become knowledge-based," the official added. In late January, ISIPO Head Farshad Moghimi said the government has put it on the agenda to help increase the production capacity of 3,300 industrial units across the country in the next Iranian calendar year (begins on March 20).

## Afghanistan Wants to Expand Trade With Iran



CHABAHAH (IRNA) - A senior official at the Taliban-ruled Ministry of Industry and Commerce in Afghanistan says that his country intends to develop trade relations with Iran. Muhammadullah Bakhtiar, the ministry official in charge of international transit, made the comment on Sunday in the port city of Chabahar located in Sistan and Baluchistan Province, southeast Iran. He said that he and his accompanying delegation have traveled to Chabahar to explore ways to remove obstacles in the way of businessmen and investors in an effort to help develop trade relations with Iran. He said that they also seek to get familiar with the investment potential in Chabahar so that relations can be expanded further, "because Iran is a good neighbor and friend for us". Since Afghanistan is a landlocked country, it can use Chabahar, which has access to the Indian Ocean, to export its goods to other parts of the world, Bakhtiar explained, expressing satisfaction that local officials in the Iranian port city support the facilitation of trade.

## Iran Non-Oil Exports to Russia Exceed \$2b in 2023



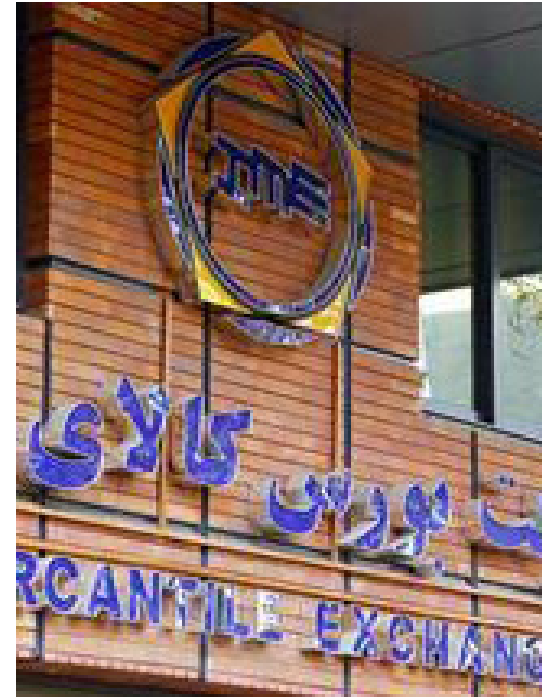
IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's ambassador to Russia said the country's export of non-oil products to the Russian Federation topped \$2 billion in 2023. According to the latest statistics, Iran's export of non-oil goods to the Russian Federation exceeded \$2 billion in 2023, showing a considerable hike compared to the previous years, Kazem Jalali stated. Russia's export of non-oil products to Iran, meanwhile, decreased last year, the envoy added. Turning to the banking and monetary exchanges between Tehran and Moscow, he noted that the banking transactions between the two countries will be carried out in a more facilitated way in the next Iranian calendar year (to start March 21, 2024). The officials of the two countries are determined to boost cooperation in the monetary and banking fields, he noted. Elsewhere in his remarks, Jalali pointed to the signing of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Iran and five member states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) late in 2023 and termed it a great achievement for the two sides.

After signing this agreement, the governments of Iran and the five EAEU member states (Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) will submit it to their respective parliaments for final approval. Once the

agreement is put into effect, the customs tariff of more than 90 percent of the goods will be minimized to zero level, he said, expressing hope that this agreement will be approved by the parliaments of the countries as soon as possible because launching the FTA would play a leading role in boosting bilateral trade. Once the FTA is put into operation, Iran's export of products to the member states of the union will significantly increase, he added. The free trade agreement between the EAEU and Iran was signed during the EAEU summit in St. Petersburg on December 25. Meanwhile yesterday, expert meetings of the 17th Iran-Russia Joint Economic Commission was held in Tehran. The National Iranian Oil Company's Kushk Hall Center hosted the meetings, during which working groups comprising the two countries' experts exchanged views on bilateral cooperation in the fields of oil, gas, and petrochemical; monetary and banking; transport; housing; agriculture; standards; telecommunications and information technology; industry, mine, and trade; customs; sciences; electricity and renewable energies; water and the environment; nuclear energy; tourism; sports and youth; free zones; health and sanitation; cooperatives; labor and social welfare; and arts, culture, and media.

## 2.9m Tons of Commodities Traded on IME Last Week



TEHRAN - Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 2,981,570 tons of commodities and 17 vehicles with a total trading value of more than \$659m on its physical market. According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor, trade of 2,338,612 tons of commodities and 17 vehicles valued at more than \$384m. On this floor the IME sold 1,300,208 tons of cement, 334,594 tons of steel, 587,500 tons of iron ore, 98,500 tons of sponge iron, 8,725 tons of copper, 7,460 tons of aluminum, 1,375 tons of zinc, 250 tons of molybdenum concentrate and 17 vehicles. Moreover, the exchange saw trade of 570,288 tons of commodities worth almost 261 million USD on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor. Items traded on this floor included 156,500 tons of vacuum bottom, 108,772 tons of polymeric products, 45,762 tons of chemicals, 35,500 tons of lube cut, 4,797 tons of oil, 4,275 tons of sulfur, 460 tons of feedstocks and 250 tons of bitumen. Last was the IME's side market on which the exchange traded 22,670 tons of goods.

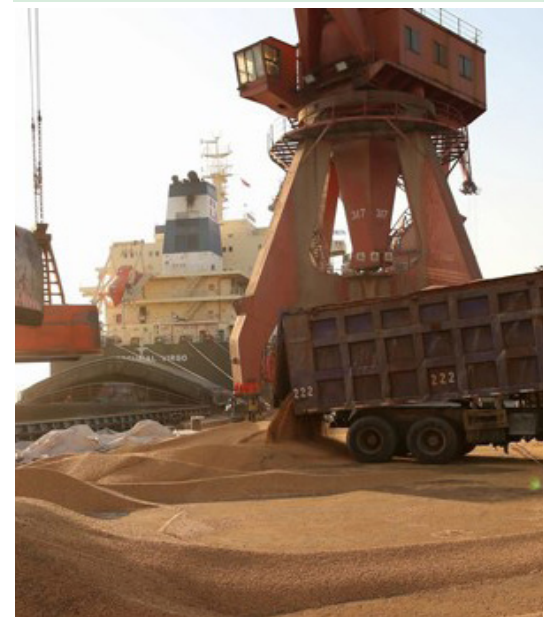
## Over 1m Cars Manufactured in 11 Months

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The head of Iran's Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade for Auto Industries Office said about 1.230 million cars were manufactured in the country in the 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2023). Mehrdad Khosravi stated that about 1.4 million passenger cars were manufactured in Iran from March 21, 2023, to February 22, 2024, showing a 6% hike compared to last year's corresponding period. He put the number of passenger cars produced in the country from March 21, 2022, to February 22, 2023, at 980,000. He further

pointed out that 152,000 pickups were manufactured in the country from March 21, 2023, to February 22, 2024, registering a 34% growth compared to the same period last year. About 34,000 different types of heavy vehicles (trucks, mini-trucks and tractor-trailers) were manufactured in the 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year, showing a 10% hike compared to last year's corresponding period, Khosravi added. The official noted that about 280,000 vehicles were manufactured by the private sector from March 21, 2023, to February 22, 2024.



## Basic Goods Imports at Around 23m mt in 11 Months



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran has imported some 22.88 million metric tons (mt) of essential goods worth \$17.8 billion in eleven calendar months to February 19, according to a recent update by the country's customs administration (IRICA).

The IRICA report said that the Iranian imports of essential goods in this period shows a 1.3% increase in terms of tonnage while declining 5% in terms of value.

It added that corn was the top essential commodity imported into Iran with \$3.5 billion worth of imports in the mentioned period. It was followed by edible oils, different types of oil seeds, rice and wheat with 2.28, 2.47, 1.21 and 1 billion dollars worth of imports respectively.

Iran's imports of corn, edible oils and oil seeds have grown by 16%, 0.32% and 5% in the timespan while the country's imports of rice and wheat have registered declines of 45% and 39% respectively.

Iran's imports of tea, rice, wheat, unprocessed sugar, beans and barley posted the highest declines in Iran's imports of basic goods in the aforementioned period.

## Lake Urmia Witnesses Significant Water Surge

TEHRAN (IFP) - In a positive turn of events, the water input to Lake Urmia, in northwestern Iran, has tripled, with the lake's level reaching 1270.2 meters and its volume surpassing 1.4 billion cubic meters.

That is according to the Head of Aras river basin. This boost is attributed to the release of 10 million cubic meters of water from different dams in a carefully planned effort.

Despite this improvement, Lake Urmia, a globally significant saltwater lake in Iran's West

Azerbaijan Province, continues to face challenges. The increase in water input signals progress, but the lake's dryness in recent years has been attributed to various factors such as climate change, excessive water usage, and agricultural practices.

The international community closely watches Lake Urmia due to its ecological importance and impact on regional biodiversity.



## Sudan Authorities Block Cross-Border Aid to Darfur

PORT SUDAN (Dispatches) - Authorities loyal to the army in war-ravaged Sudan have blocked cross-border aid to the western Darfur region, a move decried by aid workers and the United States. The vast Darfur region, bordering Chad, has been one of the hardest hit parts of Sudan since war began 10 months ago between the Sudanese Armed Forces and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). RSF are descendants of the Janjaweed militia which began a scorched earth campaign in Darfur more than two decades ago. In their current battle against the army, which started last April, the RSF have taken over four out of the five Darfur state capitals. More than 694,000 people have fled over the border to Chad, according to the International Organization for Migration, but many more remain trapped in Darfur and in need of assistance. The United Nations has had to limit its work in Darfur to cross-border operations from Chad, but last week the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) country director Eddie Rowe told reporters that "authorities have restricted the Chad cross-border operation".



## Ukraine Needs Western Aid to Win War After Setbacks



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said his country's victory "depends" on support from the West and expressed hope the United States would approve a critical package of military aid. In a rare acknowledgement of setbacks, Zelensky said 31,000 Ukrainian soldiers had been killed in the war and that plans for last summer's failed counteroffensive had been leaked to Russia. He appealed to the West to boost Ukraine's war chances, at a forum marking the second anniversary of Russia's invasion. "Whether Ukraine will lose, whether it will be very difficult for us, and whether there will be a large number of casualties depends on you, on our partners, on the Western world," Zelensky said. Ukraine has in recent weeks been weakened by an ammunition shortage, with a vital US\$60-billion US aid package blocked by political wrangling in the US Congress. The Ukrainian president said that "there is hope for Congress, and I am sure that it is going to be positive." Ukraine has for months said that Western aid is too slow coming and that the hold-ups have real consequences as the war against Russia enters its third year. Zelensky for the first time suggested that Russia had prior information on the country's much-anticipated but unsuccessful counteroffensive last summer. "Action plans were on the Kremlin's table before the counteroffensive actions began," said the president, who this month sacked the army's commander-in-chief Valery Zaluzhny. Zelensky said that Ukraine's war losses were nevertheless much lower than Russia has claimed. He said: "31,000 Ukrainian soldiers have died in this war. Not 300,000 or 150,000, or whatever Putin and his lying circle are saying." In December, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said 383,000 Ukrainian soldiers had been killed or injured. The second anniversary of the war was marked around the world with moving tributes. During a Sunday service in the Vatican, Pope Francis called for intensified efforts to find a "just and lasting peace" to the conflict. "There have been so many victims, so many wounded, so much destruction, so much anguish and so many tears over what has become a terribly long period — the end of which we cannot yet foresee," he said.

## S. Korea Gives Protesting Doctors End-February Deadline to Return to Work



SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korea's government told young doctors they had until the end of February to return to work or risk being punished for staging a week-long protest that has disrupted services for patients at several major hospitals. Two-thirds of the nation's residents and intern doctors had walked off the job to protest a government plan to increase the number of students admitted to medical school in a bid to address what authorities say is a shortage of doctors that is set to worsen in one of the world's fastest ageing societies. The protest has forced hospitals to turn away patients and cancel procedures. "Considering the gravity of the situation, the government issues the last plea," safety minister Lee Sang-min said at the opening of a task-force meeting, adding that chaos was mounting in hospitals and emergency services had reached a "dangerous situation". "If you return to the hospital you left behind by Feb. 29, you won't be held responsible for what has already happened," he said. "We urge you to remember your voice will be heard loudly and most effectively when you are by the side of patients." The government has previously warned that it could take legal action against doctors who do not comply with a back-to-work order, including prosecution, possible arrest and stripping them of their medical licences. The young doctors who are protesting say the government should first address pay and working conditions before trying to increase the number of physicians. Vice health minister Park Min-soo said those who did not return by March 1 will face a minimum three-month suspension of their medical licence among other legal action.



## Thousands of Brazilians Pour Into Streets to Denounce Coup Probe Against Bolsonaro

BRASILIA (Dispatches) - Thousands of Brazilians poured into the streets of Sao Paulo on Sunday as ex-president Jair Bolsonaro flexed his political muscle and hit out at an election ban that has seen him barred from seeking office for eight years. Addressing a massive crowd of supporters in the economic capital, Bolsonaro again denied charges he plotted a coup to stay in power after losing an election in October 2022. "What is a coup? Tanks in the streets, weapons, conspiracy. None of that happened in Brazil," said Bolsonaro, who has had his passport seized by police as he and his inner circle are investigated. "We cannot accept that an authority can eliminate whoever it may be from the political scene, unless it is for a fair reason," he said. In June, the electoral tribunal barred Bolsonaro from running for office until 2030 over his attacks on the election system. Bolsonaro also called for "an amnesty for those poor wretched souls who are imprisoned in Brasilia" after the invasion of the presidential palace, Congress and Supreme Court in January 2023 by his followers, who demanded the military intervene in what they said had been a stolen election. The 68-year-old former army officer called Sunday's protest for a show of support as his legal woes pile up a little over a year since he left office after losing a deeply divisive election to President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. Dressed in the green and yellow of Brazil's flag, which Bolsonaro claimed as a symbol while in office, his supporters thronged Paulista Avenue, one of the main arteries in the country's economic capital. The former leader reiterated that he was being "persecuted" after his 2019-2022 rule. "I'm looking for pacification, to erase the past and find a way for us to live in peace," he said. On February 8, investigators launched "Operation Tempus Veritatis" -- "Hour of Truth," in Latin -- in which police carried out

dozens of search and seizure raids and arrested several Bolsonaro allies. Investigators allege months of anti-democratic maneuvers by Bolsonaro, including a plan to discredit Brazil's electronic voting system with a "disinformation" campaign ahead of the elections to "legitimise a military intervention" if he lost. Police say Bolsonaro edited a draft presidential decree that would have declared a state of emergency, called new elections and ordered the arrest of Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, the head of Brazil's Superior Electoral Tribunal. They also released a video of a July 2022 meeting where a shouting, swearing Bolsonaro ordered cabinet ministers to help him discredit the election system. The far-right former president Bolsonaro has denied the accusations and he refused to answer questions during a half-hour interrogation Thursday at federal police headquarters in Brasilia. Gleisi Hoffmann, the president of Lula's Workers' Party (PT), wrote on X that the rally was "one more threat from Bolsonaro to the institutions and a challenge to the judiciary, to which he is close to having to be held accountable." Bolsonaro is facing several other investigations, such as the falsification of Covid-19 vaccination certificates, or the alleged misappropriation of gifts received from other nations, such as jewelry offered by Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, Bolsonaro is still considered the leader of the opposition and is adored by his fervent supporters. "Bolsonaro is an honest person, a victim of persecution," said 63-year-old builder Wilson Aseka, who travelled 700 kilometers (430 miles) from the state of Minas Gerais to attend the protest. "It is important to support him, because he represents God, country and family," he added, repeating the former president's motto with a Brazilian flag hanging on his shoulders.

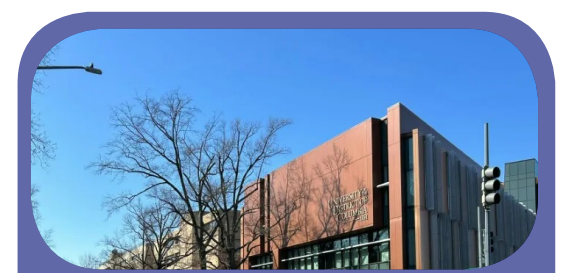


## Israeli Military Proposes Plan for Evacuating Gaza Civilians

GAZA STRIP (Dispatches) - Israel's military proposed a plan for evacuating civilians from "areas of fighting" in Gaza, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office announced Monday, after he said a ground invasion of the Palestinian territory's southern city Rafah was necessary. Foreign governments and aid organisations have repeatedly expressed fears that an invasion of Rafah would inflict mass civilian casualties. More than 1.4 million Palestinians -- most of them displaced from elsewhere -- have converged on the last Gaza city untouched by Israel's ground troops. It is also the entry point for desperately needed aid, brought in via neighbouring Egypt. Israel's military "presented the War Cabinet with a plan for evacuating the population from areas of fighting in the Gaza Strip, and with the upcoming operational plan", a statement in Hebrew from Netanyahu's office said Monday. The statement did not give any details about how or where the civilians would be moved. The announcement comes after Egyptian, Qatari and US "experts" met in Doha for talks also attended by Israeli and Hamas representatives, state-linked Egyptian media reported, the latest effort to secure a truce before the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Israel's ally the United States said ongoing mediation efforts produced "an understanding" towards a ceasefire and hostage release, while a Hamas source said the group insisted on the withdrawal of Israeli forces. But Netanyahu -- who has dismissed the withdrawal demand as "delusional" -- said a

ground invasion of Rafah would put Israel within weeks of "total victory" over Hamas, whose October 7 attack triggered the war. "If we have a (truce) deal, it will be delayed somewhat, but it will happen," he said of the ground invasion in an interview with CBS Sunday. "It has to be done because total victory is our goal and total victory is within reach -- not months away, weeks away, once we begin the operation." Amid a spiralling humanitarian crisis, the main UN aid agency for Palestinians urged political action to avert famine in Gaza. "Famine can still be avoided through genuine political will to grant access and protection to meaningful assistance." The UN has said it faces restrictions, particularly on aid deliveries to northern Gaza. Nearly five months into the war, desperate families in Gaza's north have been forced to scavenge for something to eat. "We have no food or drink for ourselves or our children," Omar al-Kahlout told AFP, as he waited near Gaza City for aid trucks to arrive. "We are trapped in the north and there is no aid reaching us -- the situation is extremely difficult." Hundreds of Palestinians headed south whichever way they could, walking down garbage-strewn roads between the blackened shells of bombed-out buildings, said an AFP correspondent.

Israeli forces have continued striking targets across the Palestinian territory, with the Hamas-run health ministry saying early Monday that 92 people were killed overnight.



## U.S. Airman Sets Himself on Fire Outside Israeli Embassy in Washington

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - An active member of the US Air Force set himself on fire outside the Israeli embassy in Washington on Sunday, officials said, as media reported he was protesting the war in Gaza. Emergency responders rushed to the scene just before 1:00 pm (1800 GMT) in response to a "call for person on fire outside the Israeli Embassy," according to a message on X, formerly Twitter, by the capital's fire department. They arrived to find that officers from the Secret Service -- the US law enforcement agency tasked with protecting US political leaders, visiting heads of state and others -- had already extinguished the fire. The man was transported to hospital with "critical life threatening injuries," the fire department said. An Air Force spokesperson confirmed to AFP that he was an active member of the Air Force, but gave no further details. A spokesperson for the Israeli embassy said no staff were injured in the incident, and that the man was "unknown" to them. US media reported that the man apparently livestreamed himself on Twitch, wearing fatigues and declaring he will "not be complicit in genocide" before dousing himself in liquid. He then lit himself on fire while yelling "Free Palestine!" until he fell on the ground. AFP has been unable to immediately verify the footage, with the New York Times reporting that it was removed from Twitch. The shocking act came as protests are increasing across the United States against Israel's actions in Gaza, where it is waging a retaliatory war for an attack on October 7 by Hamas militants. With the death toll in Gaza nearing 30,000, according to the Hamas-run health ministry there, international pressure has been increasing on the United States to rein its ally Israel in and call for a ceasefire.

## Indonesia President Congratulates Poll Winner Prabowo

JAKARTA (Dispatches) - Indonesia's President Joko Widodo said he had congratulated Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto after unofficial counts showed the ex-special forces commander winning this week's presidential election in a single round of voting. "I have, in person last night," the president, popularly known as Jokowi, told reporters when asked if he had congratulated Prabowo and his running mate. Prabowo's running mate is Jokowi's eldest son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, who is set to be the youngest vice president in Indonesia's history. Prabowo, 72, declared a "victory for all Indonesians" before jubilant supporters late on Wednesday, after so-called quick ballot counts by independent pollsters - accurate in past elections - showed he had won nearly 60% of votes. Indonesian markets cheered the clear-cut count and rallied on Prabowo's promise to follow Widodo's policies in Southeast Asia's largest economy. The country's stock market rose as much as 2.2%, while the rupiah strengthened 0.3% to its strongest in a month before paring back gains. Spokespersons for Prabowo's rivals, ex-governors Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo, who trailed at least 33 points behind in quick counts, have said they would probe allegations of "systematic and massive fraud", but have not provided evidence. Second-place Anies, who got 25% of the vote, has said his team would wait for the official results and respect the people's decision. Independent analysts have said there were no signs of systematic electoral fraud. The U.S. State Department said the election was "a testament to the durability and strength of the Indonesian people's commitment to the democratic process and electoral institutions". A preliminary tally by the General Election Commission with about 40% of votes counted put Prabowo in the lead with around 56%.

It is expected to announce official results by March 20 and, if confirmed, the new president and vice president will take office in October. Jokowi did not explicitly endorse any candidate, but the days leading up to the vote were marred by protests against him. He was criticized for alleged political interference after making highly publicised appearances with Prabowo, and after a last-minute court ruling tweaked eligibility criteria, enabling his son to join the leading ticket. Jokowi and his allies have denied he meddled. Prabowo has pledged to continue Jokowi's efforts to position the resource-rich G20 economy as an electric-vehicle hub, extend a massive infrastructure and social assistance push, and create millions of jobs. Prabowo has long been dogged by accusations of past misdeeds including involvement in the kidnapping of student activists in 1998 and human rights abuses in Papua and East Timor. The allegations are unproven, and he has always denied any responsibility. During his campaign, he transformed his image from a hot-tempered nationalist and military hardliner to a cuddly, cat-loving grandfatherly figure, attracting a huge youth following on social media in a country where more than half of the nearly 205 million electorate are under 40. Still, while his supporters celebrated Prabowo's apparent sweeping victory on his third attempt, the reaction of others in Indonesia ranged from caution to dismay. In an opinion piece entitled "Finally a Win", the Jakarta Post noted Prabowo's expected victory had come following a public outcry over alleged improper conduct by Jokowi in the election. "The next step for Prabowo... will be to prove his critics wrong, that instead of an anti-democratic politician, he can be a consensus builder and a compassionate leader with a stable character," the newspaper said.







## Liverpool Win League Cup as Van Dijk Strikes Late to Sink Chelsea

LONDON (Dispatches) - Liverpool won the League Cup in dramatic fashion as Virgil van Dijk sealed a 1-0 win against Chelsea at Wembley. Jurgen Klopp's injury-hit side finished a gruelling clash with a host of raw youngsters on the pitch, but it was their experienced captain who clinched the club's 10th League Cup triumph. Van Dijk earlier had a goal controversially disallowed by VAR, but the Dutch defender pounced to nod home with just two minutes left. It was Liverpool's first trophy following Klopp's bombshell announcement that he will step down at the end of this season. "What happened here today is absolutely insane. These things are not possible besides a team, squad, academy full of character," Klopp said. "The craziest thing is we deserved it. I couldn't be prouder of them. Wow! It was really cool. I'm sure we brought on all the kids! We needed fresh legs. They were very young, but they did the job." Klopp has now won seven major trophies in his nine-year Anfield reign. The German will hope Liverpool's first silverware since the 2022 FA Cup will be the springboard for an incredible farewell tour. Quadruple-chasing Liverpool sit top of the Premier League, face Southampton in the FA Cup fifth round on Wednesday and take on Sparta Prague in the Europa League last 16. It was another bitter Wembley experience for Chelsea, who lost the 2022 League Cup and FA Cup finals against Liverpool. Blues boss Mauricio Pochettino has asked Chelsea fans not to judge him on "winning titles" in the midst of a troubled first season in charge. But

Chelsea remain without domestic silverware since the 2018 FA Cup and had only themselves to blame after missing a host of chances in normal time. "That was the key. We created four, five or six big chances and we didn't score. In a game like this, whoever scores first will have a big advantage," said Pochettino, who is still to win a trophy in English football. "We felt the disappointment of not winning in normal time. We didn't have the energy in extra-time. They scored in the last minutes and it was difficult to react." Ravaged by injuries to 11 players, Liverpool's list of star absentees included Mohamed Salah, Trent Alexander-Arnold, Alisson Becker, Darwin Nunez, Diogo Jota and Dominik Szoboszlai. That meant starts for 20-year-olds Conor Bradley and Harvey Elliott, while Bobby Clark (19), James McConnell (19), Jarell Quansah (21) and Jayden Danns (18) all came off the bench. Despite their youthful line-up, Liverpool settled quickly as Luis Diaz led the charge. Taking advantage of Chelsea's hesitant defending, Diaz advanced into the area for a fierce strike that forced a good save from Djordje Petrovic. Against the run of play, Chelsea should have taken the lead with their first incisive raid. Conor Gallagher's cross deflected to Cole Palmer just six yards out, but his strike produced a superb save from Caoimhin Kelleher. Ryan Gravenberch joined Liverpool's ever-growing injury list when he was stretchered off after the midfielder's leg twisted awkwardly in a challenge with Moises Caicedo.

## Baez Sweeps to Rio Title



RIO DE JANEIRO (Dispatches) - Sebastian Baez eased past Argentine compatriot Mariano Navone in straight sets to win the Rio ATP clay-court tournament for his fifth title. Baez, 23, defeated the 113th-ranked Navone, who came through qualifying, 6-2, 6-1 and will rise to a career-high 21 in the world. "All week I felt so good here. I said before, I compare it to home because of the crowd, the people, everything," Baez said. "In the pre-season I did one week here, so I know this place, I know the people and I enjoyed my time inside and outside the court." Navone hadn't won a match on the main tour before the Rio tournament but made the final in style by defeating defending champion Cameron Norrie in the semi-finals. However, he never settled on Sunday, quickly slipping a double break down to trail 4-0 on his way to defeat in 83 minutes. Baez converted six of his 14 break points. "I think it's so important because in your first final you'll be more nervous," added Baez. "I think I did so well in the start in both sets, so I think that was the key." Despite the defeat, Navone will have the consolation of breaking the top 100 for the first time when he will rise to 60 in the world. Meanwhile No. 2 seed Karen Khachanov defeated Czech teenager Jakub Mensik 7-6 (12), 6-4 to win his sixth career title at the Qatar ExxonMobil Open in Doha. The 27-year-old Russian did not drop a set all week, a record he kept intact by fighting off four set points in the opening-set tiebreak. Khachanov prevailed on the 26th point of the tiebreak by crushing a forehand return on Mensik's big serve, then collected the only break of the match in the opening game of the second set.

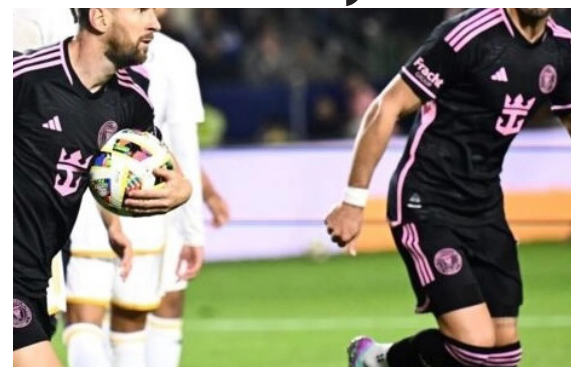
## Hornets Notch First Road Win Over Blazers Since 2008

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Nick Richards recorded 21 points, 10 rebounds and three blocks and the Charlotte Hornets broke a 15-game skid in Portland with a 93-80 victory over the Trail Blazers. Miles Bridges added 18 points and 10 rebounds and Brandon Miller scored 17 points as Charlotte defeated the Trail Blazers in Portland for the first time since March 29, 2008. The franchise was known as the Bobcats when it last won in the Rose City. Cody Martin had 11 points and 10 assists and Vasilije Micic also scored 11 points as the Hornets won for the fifth time in their past six games. Deandre Ayton recorded 26 points and 19 rebounds for Portland, which lost its eighth consecutive game. Jerami Grant added 15 points and Anfernee Simons had 10 but was just 4 of 21 from the field. Charlotte shot 49.3 percent from the field, including 7 of 24 from 3-point range. The Trail Blazers connected on just 34.7 percent of their attempts and were a measly 3 of 32 (9.4 percent) from behind the arc. Simons missed all eight of his 3-point attempts. Portland trailed most of the game but crept within 73-68 on a basket by Bridges with 4:46 left. But the Trail Blazers were more than five minutes without scoreless while the Hornets rattled off 16 straight points. Bridges had six points during the run, including the basket to cap it and make it 89-68 with 3:47 remaining en route to sealing the long-awaited victory. Charlotte led 62-46 after a basket by Bridges with 4:46 left in the third quarter. Portland responded with a 13-5 run and moved within eight on Jabari Walker's top-in with 1:16 left in the period. The Hornets led 70-59 entering the final stanza. Miller scored 11 first-half points and Bridges had 10 as Charlotte led 47-34 at the break. Ayton tallied 12 in the half and Grant added 11 for Portland, which shot just 26 percent from the field. Simons made just 1 of 13 shots while scoring four first-half points. The Hornets scored the final seven points of the opening quarter to hold a 24-18 lead. Charlotte scored 16 of the first 22 points in the second quarter to open up a 40-24 lead on Martin's layup with 3:58 left in the half. Meanwhile Nikola Jokic posted his 18th triple double of the season to lead reigning NBA champion Denver's 119-103 victory at Golden State. The 29-year-old Serbian center, a two-time NBA Most Valuable Player, had 32 points, 16 rebounds and 16 assists plus four steals while Jamal Murray added 27 points

for the Nuggets. Klay Thompson came off the bench to lead the Warriors with 23 points, but none in the second half, while Stephen Curry added 20 in the matchup of the past two NBA title winners. It was Jokic's third career game with at least 30 points, 15 rebounds and 15 assists -- passing Wilt Chamberlain for the second most in NBA history behind Oscar Robertson. It was Jokic's sixth career game with 15 rebounds and 15 assists to pass Magic Johnson for fourth on the all-time list. Jokic, who hit 13-of-24 shots from the floor, also became the first NBA player with 14 rebounds and 14 assists in three consecutive games. It was Denver's seventh consecutive triumph in games against Golden State (29-27) and 10th in their past 11 matchups. At Philadelphia, Greek star Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 30 points, grabbed 12 rebounds and passed off nine assists to lead Milwaukee's 119-98 rout. New Bucks coach Doc Rivers collected a victory over his former club, the 76ers having fired Rivers last May after three seasons guiding the franchise. Milwaukee hired Rivers last month to replace fired Adrian Griffin.



## Messi Grabs Late Leveler for Miami at Galaxy



LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Lionel Messi scored a last-gasp stoppage time equalizer as Inter Miami escaped with a 1-1 draw at the Los Angeles Galaxy in Major League Soccer. The Galaxy dominated for long stretches of the game and had taken the lead in the 75th minute through Dejan Joveljic. But the home side ended the game with ten men after midfielder Mark Delgado was sent off for a second yellow card in the 87th minute. Jordi Alba then combined with Messi down the left, the Spaniard delivering a killer pull-back into the path of Messi who, at full stretch, found the target with the outside of his left foot. It was a rare moment of impact from Messi who had been mostly ineffective in the game where Miami, with seven starters over the age of 30, struggled with Galaxy's tempo. Miami had all four of their former Barcelona stars in their starting line-up with Alba, Sergio Busquets and Luis Suarez alongside Messi. But it was the Galaxy's former Barca player, 24-year-old Spaniard Riqui Puig, who was the dominant player on the field, especially in the first half when the California side had a series of chances. Confident on the ball and incisive in his passing, Puig was dictating play but he should have given the home side the lead in the 13th minute from the penalty spot. The lively Joseph Paintsil, a recent signing from Genk in Belgium, had been pulled down in the box by Busquets but Puig's low free-kick was well-saved by Drake Callender. The Miami keeper then produced fine saves to keep out efforts from Paintsil and Puig and apart from a deflected Messi effort which was parried by Galaxy keeper John McCarthy, Miami created little. Busquets and Suarez looked particularly off the pace and with their contributions limited, Messi received little space or service. It was better after the break as Miami pushed into a more offensive shape but McCarthy did well to keep out two good efforts from Gomez and deal with routine shot from distance from Messi. The Galaxy finally got their reward when Paintsil burst at the creaking Miami back-line, Puig's shot was parried by Callender and Delgado squared to Joveljic who tapped home. After Delgado's dismissal, Alba found Messi whose first time shot flashed just wide, an effort which proved to be a dress rehearsal for the equalizer. Miami have four points after winning Wednesday's season opener against Real Salt Lake 2-0.

## Ronaldo Criticized for Appearing to Make Obscene Gesture

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Cristiano Ronaldo faced a flurry of criticism after appearing to make an obscene gesture following the end of Al Nassr's 3-2 win over Al Shabab in an exciting Saudi Pro League game. The Portugal forward opened the scoring with a 21st-minute penalty but Al Nassr needed a late goal from Brazilian Talisca, who struck twice, to settle the game with four minutes left. After the final whistle, social media videos captured Ronaldo cupping his ear before repeatedly pumping his hand forward in front of his pelvic area. The action appeared to be directed at the rival Al Shabab supporters. In the background, chants of "Messi" could be heard, referencing Ronaldo's long-term football rival from Argentina. The incident was not caught on television cameras, but some Saudi pundits said Ronaldo should be sanctioned. There has been no official response but Saudi newspaper Asharq al-Awsat said the national football federation (SAFF) had opened an investigation into the incident. "The disciplinary committee is facing the biggest test. We will wait and see," Waleed Al Farraj, a prominent Saudi writer and television host, said on social media platform X. "Everything has its limits, no matter how famous you are. This is how the major leagues are." Al Nassr were not immediately available to comment. The 39-year-old Ronaldo has faced similar criticism in the past. In April last

year, he appeared to grab his genitals while on his way to the dugout following the end of a league game against Al Hilal, which Al Nassr lost 2-0. Earlier this month, he picked up an Al Hilal scarf thrown at him from the stands, put it in his shorts and then threw it away as he walked towards the tunnel after Al

Nassr lost 2-0 in the Riyadh Season Cup final. Ronaldo, who joined Al Nassr as a free agent in late 2022, tops the Saudi league scoring charts with 22 goals in 20 appearances so far this season. Al Nassr are second in the table with 52 points, four behind Al Hilal, who have a game in hand.

