

**Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani Is Expected to Visit Tehran in the Coming Days for a Series of Negotiations and to Meet Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi**

# IRAN NEWS

**Iran's Intelligence Ministry in a Statement Announced the Arrest of 14 Daesh-Khorasan Terrorists in Four Provinces of Tehran, Alborz, Fars and Khuzestan Who Wanted to Carry Out Terrorist Operations**

**2 DOMESTIC**



## Tajikistan Envoy Calls for Boosting Trade With Iran

> SEE PAGE 2

**3 INTERNATIONAL**

## Russia, Ukraine Report Gains as Some Ukrainians Flee Strategic City



> SEE PAGE 3

### Borrell, German, Iraqi Foreign Ministers Congratulate Araqchi



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The European Union's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, and German and Iraqi foreign ministers have congratulated Abbas Araqchi on his appointment as the minister of foreign affairs of Iran.

Araqchi, a former nuclear negotiator, was appointed the nation's foreign minister by President Masoud Pezeshkian. On Wednesday, he won a vote of confidence from the parliament as the new Iranian foreign minister.

He secured 247 out of 288 votes from the attending members. Borrell congratulated Araqchi on his election during a phone call on Thursday.

He expressed hope that political discussions and consultations between Iran and the European Union will continue and expand during the new government.

Araqchi and Borrell also exchanged views on negotiations to lift sanctions against Iran and the latest developments related to the war and crimes committed by the Israeli regime in Gaza.

Earlier in the day, Araqchi announced Iran's willingness to manage tensions with the United States and restore relations with European countries, provided that they stop their hostility towards the Islamic Republic.

He explained that as a crucial step toward removing sanctions on Iran's economy and normalizing its trade with the international community, the Foreign Ministry will seek to manage tensions with Washington and rebuild ties with European states, but only if they abandon their "hostile approach" while aiming to revive the 2015 nuclear deal and lift the bans.

Germany's Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock also congratulated Araqchi on his appointment.

Baerbock expressed hope that Germany and the new Iranian government will expand relations by removing the problems and obstacles to relations.

Araqchi also thanked the German counterpart for the phone call and congratulated him, and pointed out the necessity of continuing political consultations between the two countries.

"Mutual respect and focus on common interests are necessary to maintain and strengthen relations in various fields," he said.

Foreign ministers of Iran and Germany also exchanged views on matters of common concern in the bilateral arena as well as regional and international developments and emphasized the determination of the two countries to resolve current problems through dialogue and the continuation of political consultations.

### World Countries Urge End to Israeli Violence in West Bank



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), including Algeria and China, have decried Israeli settler violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank that has increased since the start of the war on Gaza.

Algeria's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Amir Bendjama, warned of the risk of the war on Gaza spilling over into the occupied West Bank. "Gaza's tragedy may duplicate in the West Bank," he told a UN Security Council session on Palestine on Thursday.

He slammed the Israeli regime for "crushing any hope for an independent Palestinian state" and expanding settlements in violation of international law.

"Israeli authorities deny the establishment of the Palestinian state. They annex Palestinian lands. They expand settlements, and frequently they storm al-Aqsa Mosque. They enlarge settler terrorists in the West Bank," the Algerian envoy said.

Bendjama criticized the international community's response to the crisis in Gaza as inadequate.

China's envoy to the UN, Fu Cong, also criticized Israel's settlement expansion policy and the ongoing strikes on Gaza.

"Blind faith in achieving a total victory in Gaza through military means will only result in more civilian casualties."

He called on Israel to abide by its international obligations by opening all border crossings and end strikes to prevent further escalation.

"We urge countries with significant influence to demonstrate a sincere, impartial and responsible attitude in pushing Israel to cease its military operations in Gaza as soon as possible and to stop the killing of civilians," Fu said.

Meanwhile, Russian envoy Dmitry Polyanskiy stressed that "the provocative actions of the Israeli leadership in the occupied Palestinian territory are absolutely unacceptable," referring to Israeli minister Itamar Ben-Gvir's intrusion into the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in occupied East al-Quds earlier this month.



### Araqchi Announces Iran's Conditions for Rebuilding Relations With European States

TEHRAN - Iran's new Foreign Minister, in his first foreign interview, emphasized his focus on managing tensions with Washington and rebuilding relations with European countries based on a set of conditions.

Seyyed Abbas Araqchi, Iran's new Foreign Minister, in his first exclusive interview after receiving a vote of confidence from the Parliament, stated that his ministry aims to strengthen Tehran-Tokyo relations in all dimensions based on a comprehensive roadmap developed from his deep knowledge of Japan. He also mentioned collaborating with Tokyo to jointly address regional crises.

The former Iranian Ambassador to Japan told Kyodo News: "I am familiar with Japan's capacities and capabilities. Japan can have a more significant role in Iran's energy, oil, and economic sectors."

The Iranian Foreign Minister stated that Iran welcomes Japanese companies interested in working in the oil and energy sectors, adding that "Japan can return to Iran's oil fields and help develop its oil production."

Due to hundreds of unilateral sanctions imposed on Iran's economy, including banking and trade, which were enforced by the U.S. government over the past decade to limit Iran's nuclear activities, Japan had to abandon the Iranian market.

Araqchi believes that Iran and Japan, with their distinct yet complementary capabilities, have great potential to establish a beneficial and sustainable partnership across Asia.

He said: "In this context, expanding economic and trade relations between Iran and Japan is a natural and logical choice. We anticipate that this cooperation will continue to flourish along a path of fruitful collaboration."

Regarding Iran's future foreign policy priorities, Araqchi emphasized Japan's prominent position, stating that the new government considers the development of relations with East Asia a central objective.

In detailing his strategy for strengthening ties with Japan under the conditions of U.S. sanctions, which complicate normal relations with the world, he stated: "In the face of global uncertainties and rapid developments, opening new avenues for economic and trade cooperation is essential."

He added: "We must overcome obstacles that hinder mutual benefits and prioritize our critical needs. By thoroughly assessing the current landscape, we can establish a constructive partnership to advance the progress and prosperity of nations."

Concerning Japan's initiatives in relation to Tehran-Washington relations in 2019, Araqchi said: "Iran and Japan have forged a bond characterized by friendship, mutual understanding, respect, and trust. The leadership of both nations values this unwavering foundation."

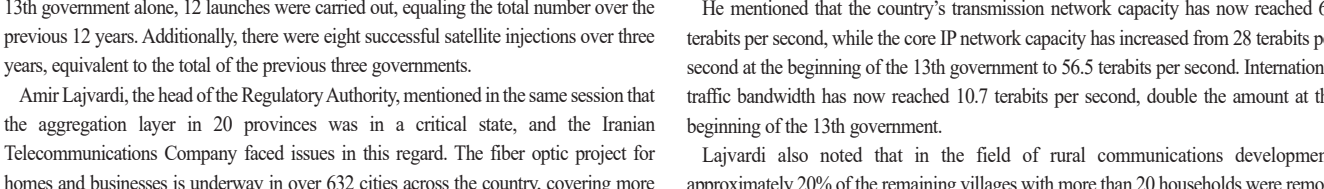
He continued: "This enables Iran and Japan to jointly address global and regional challenges with a constructive spirit and shared optimism. I believe there is always room for partnership in initiatives."

Araqchi, known for his friendly relations with Japan, served as Iran's ambassador to the country from 2008 to 2011. He played a crucial role during the visit of the late Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Tehran in 2019.

The Iranian Foreign Minister clarified that as a decisive step towards lifting Iran's economic sanctions and returning to normal trade relations in the international community, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will seek to manage tensions with Washington and rebuild relations with European countries. However, this will be conditional on the abandonment of their "hostile approach" and efforts to revive the 2015 nuclear deal and lift the sanctions.

Araqchi noted: "In my foreign policy speech to the Islamic Consultative Assembly, I emphasized the sensitive goal of lifting sanctions, particularly unilateral ones, through serious, focused, and time-bound negotiations, while adhering to the fundamental principles of the nation."

Araqchi, a veteran diplomat who has also served as ambassador to Finland and Estonia, played a crucial role as Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister and chief negotiator in finalizing the 2015 nuclear deal. In 2021, then-President Hassan Rouhani appointed him as Iran's chief negotiator to conduct negotiations aimed at reviving the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).



### 14 Satellites in the Queue for Launch

TEHRAN - The head of the Iranian Space Agency announced that 14 satellites are currently in the queue for launch, with an additional 30 satellites under construction. Of these, 20 are being developed by the private sector.

Hassan Salarieh, in a meeting attended by Sattar Hashemi on Thursday morning, reported on the ministry's performance to the Minister of Communications of the 14th government. He stated that during the 13th government alone, 12 launches were carried out, equaling the total number over the previous 12 years. Additionally, there were eight successful satellite injections over three years, equivalent to the total of the previous three governments.

Amir Lajvardi, the head of the Regulatory Authority, mentioned in the same session that the aggregation layer in 20 provinces was in a critical state, and the Iranian Telecommunications Company faced issues in this regard. The fiber optic project for homes and businesses is underway in over 632 cities across the country, covering more than eight million households.

He added that the fiber optic project is transparently available to the public, with three provinces fully covered, and Gilan expected to be completed soon.

Lajvardi noted that, according to global and domestic dashboards, there has been a 70% increase in mobile internet speed and a 60% increase in fixed internet speed. Significant progress has been made in electronic services, with over 95% of prescriptions now being issued electronically.

Lajvardi emphasized that in 2021, some claimed that electronic prescriptions were impossible due to a lack of infrastructure. However, field studies revealed that the issues were due to the lack of internet in pharmacies and problems unrelated to the infrastructure.

Lajvardi stated that efforts are being made to lift sanctions, including the launch of the

### Resistance Fighters to Continue Operations as Long as Israel Launches Strikes



TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has warned that the operations of the resistance axis will continue as long as the US-backed Israeli airstrikes on Gaza persist.

Deputy Commander of the IRGC's Quds Force Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Fallahzadeh on Thursday said that following the al-Aqsa Storm operation, the Israeli regime started bombing Gaza, which prompted resistance groups to join the anti-Tel Aviv combat from different areas of the region.

The resistance groups joined the battle field from different areas and hit the territories, where the United States and the Israeli regime had interests, Fallahzadeh added, asserting that their operations will "continue as long as the bombings and atrocities persist."

The IRGC commander emphasized that following the al-Aqsa Storm operation, the Israeli regime faced a significant downfall, prompting the United States to step in and take over control in a vain effort to stabilize the situation.

Commenting on Hezbollah's achievements, he further noted that Lebanon's resistance movement has grounded three Israeli military units, leaving them in a state of total disarray.

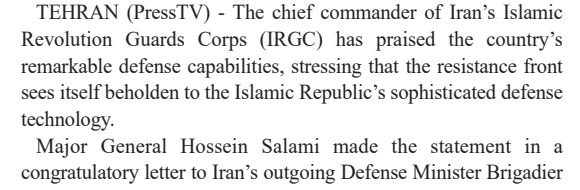
Fallahzadeh added that the Iraqi resistance movement has also intensified pressure on the US forces, launching 100 drone strikes against them to date.

Israel has been founded on terror, he said, noting that the Israeli regime has so far assassinated 280 resistance figures, with the most recent being the assassination of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran.

He went on to say that Israel has killed 40,000 Palestinians through relentless bombardments in Gaza, prompting accusations of a genocidal campaign aimed at dismantling family structures, while global awareness and outrage continue to grow against these actions.

Since the start of the Gaza war, the Tel Aviv regime has killed more than 40,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children.

### Resistance Front's Strength Anchored in Iran's Defense Industry



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The chief commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has praised the country's remarkable defense capabilities, stressing that the resistance front sees itself beholden to the Islamic Republic's sophisticated defense technology.

Major General Hossein Salami made the statement in a congratulatory letter to Iran's outgoing Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani on the occasion of Defense Technology Day.

Salami said the "smart architecture" of the country's defense technology has consolidated the privileged and powerful position of the Islamic Republic in the international arena, not least in the West Asia region, "in such a way that the foundations of the Resistance Front owe their glorious strength to it."

The IRGC chief lauded the Iranian Armed Forces' and the resistance front's acquisition of strategic capabilities, upgrading of equipment, weapons and infrastructure and promotion of combat readiness, which resulted in the anti-Israel Operation True Promise and the formation of a "new global and regional order" under the aegis of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Salami underlined that such achievements were gained despite "brutal pressure by the global arrogance" and their regional allies in various political, psychological, media, cultural, and economic dimensions as well as sanctions on the Islamic Republic in the fields of defense, security equipment and technologies.

On April 1, the Israeli regime carried out terrorist airstrikes on the consular section of Iran's embassy in the Syrian capital Damascus, which killed two IRGC generals, Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Zahedi and General Mohammad Hadi Haji Rahimi, as well as five of their accompanying officers.

In retaliation, the IRGC targeted the occupied territories on April 13 with a barrage of drones and missiles. The retaliatory strikes, dubbed Operation True Promise, inflicted heavy damage on Israeli military bases across the occupied Palestinian territories.

Iranian military experts and engineers have in recent years made notable progress in manufacturing a broad range of indigenous equipment, making the armed forces self-sufficient.

# IRAN NEWS



## Foreign Transit Reaches 9.6m Tons

TEHRAN (ILNA) - Mohammad Rezvani-Far, the Head of Iran's Customs Administration, announced that during this period, Parviz Khan Customs with 2.7 million tons, Shahid Rajaei Port Customs with 2.4 million tons, and Bashmaq Customs with 1.3 million tons were the top three origins for foreign transit through Iran.

Rezvani-Far stated that in the first five months of 1403 (Iranian calendar year), foreign transit from Parviz Khan Customs increased by 158%, from Shahid Rajaei Port Customs by 17%, and from Bashmaq Customs by 112%.

He added that following these three customs offices, the highest amounts of foreign transit through Iran originated from Piranshahr, Bazargan, Sarakhs, Bilesavar, Jolfa, Astara, and Lotfabad customs offices.

## 0.6% Increase in Iron and Steel Chain Exports



TEHRAN - According to statistics from the Steel Producers Association, the export data for the iron and steel chain during the first four months of this year indicates a 0.6% growth in total export volume, equivalent to 60,000 tons more compared to the first four months of the previous year.

As reported by ISNA, based on the data from the Iranian Steel Producers Association, from the beginning of this year until the end of July, a total of 10.171 million tons of the entire iron and steel chain were exported. This marks a 0.6% increase in exports compared to last year's total of 10.110 million tons for the same period.

During this time, 1.105 million tons of long steel products were exported, representing a 19.5% increase from the 925,000 tons exported during the same period last year. This sector recorded the highest increase in exports.

The 19.5% increase in long steel product exports comes at a time when most rolling mills' exports have shifted to domestic sales due to the requirement to return export earnings at the NIMA exchange rate.

In contrast, flat steel products saw the largest decrease in exports, recording a 27.6% decline.

In the first four months of this year, 114,000 tons of flat steel products were exported, a 27.6% decrease from the 157,000 tons exported during the same period last year.

From the beginning of this year until the end of July, 1.219 million tons of steel products were produced, representing a 12.7% increase in exports (137,000 tons) compared to the 1.082 million tons exported during the first four months of last year.

Exports of semi-finished steel and sponge iron during the first four months of this year each experienced a 23% decline compared to the same period last year. Semi-finished steel exports decreased from 2.761 million tons in the first four months of 2023 to 2.135 million tons in the same period this year. Sponge iron exports also fell from 580,000 tons to 449,000 tons.

The decline in sponge iron exports is particularly surprising, as this mineral product had consistently recorded significant growth in recent years.

According to the Iranian Steel Producers Association, the unusual 23% drop in sponge iron export volume occurred despite no buyers for this product on the commodity exchange due to electricity supply restrictions.

## Tajikistan Envoy Calls for Boosting Trade With Iran



TEHRAN - During a meeting between Tajikistan's Ambassador in Tehran and the economic activists of Hamadan, it was emphasized that Iran's share of Tajikistan's imports is only 1.9%. Both sides need to work towards developing stronger relations.

The President of Hamadan Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture, Rahim Mortazavi, pointed out the province's capabilities, stating that 1,800 companies operate in various sectors within the province, producing 209 exportable goods that can be exported to 154 countries worldwide.

In the meeting with Tajikistan's Ambassador in Tehran, Mortazavi highlighted Hamadan's potential in mining, industry, medical, and tourism sectors, stating that these resources could also benefit Tajikistan.

He further mentioned that 59 of the goods needed by Tajikistan are produced in Hamadan, and they are ready to export these items to Tajikistan.

Mortazavi emphasized the desire to strengthen ties between Hamadan and Dushanbe, particularly in cultural weeks held in Dushanbe, and proposed greater involvement in these events.

He officially invited the Tajikistan Chamber of Commerce to visit Hamadan to familiarize themselves with the province's economic potential.

Additionally, he requested the formation of a joint desk between Hamadan and Dushanbe or Kulob.

Mortazavi expressed the expectation that Tajikistan would share its list of traders with the Hamadan Chamber, which in turn will provide a similar list to Tajikistan.

He concluded his proposals by urging the ambassador to work on establishing a permanent policy-making council between Hamadan and Dushanbe, particularly focusing on creating joint mining companies.

A member of the Hamadan Chamber's Board, Ramin Rahimian, discussed Iran-Tajikistan economic relations, noting that Tajikistan's economy grew by 2.9% with an 8% inflation rate in 2021, marking the highest growth in 17 years, reflecting the hard work of economic activists and policymakers in the country.

Rahimian emphasized the increase in investment in Tajikistan's mining sector during this period and highlighted Hamadan's leading technical knowledge in this field, suggesting further collaboration.

He noted that Tajikistan's primary trade partners, based on financial and trade transactions, include Russia (21.3%), Kazakhstan (18.5%), Switzerland (14.4%),

China (13.2%), Turkey (6.1%), and Iran (1.9%), stressing that Iran's share is insufficient considering the existing potential and should be increased.

Rahimian highlighted Hamadan's capabilities in producing goods like foodstuffs, confectionery, pistachios, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, electrical appliances, and construction materials, all of which Tajikistan imports.

He mentioned that Hamadan's food producers already export to 30 countries and that the province hosts two major medical and pharmaceutical equipment companies.

He also pointed out the production of orthopedic and spinal equipment, cement, rail track sleepers, electrical goods, wire and cable with global standards, and large cement production companies in the province ready to export to Tajikistan.

Additionally, Hamadan is the largest producer of potatoes, high-quality garlic, and grape-based products (such as raisins), and it is also a leading producer of handicrafts, pottery, and furniture.

Rahimian emphasized that Hamadan's logistics and transport services, as the largest and primary ground transportation provider, could facilitate future trade exchanges.

He added that health services, student exchange, medical tourism, and technical and engineering services in the mining sector, supported by 1,200 experts, could further develop Hamadan's economic relations with Tajikistan.

Tajikistan's Ambassador in Tehran, Zahidi Nizamuddin Shamsuddinza, emphasized the strong political ties between the two countries, noting that the Tajik President has visited Iran 21 times in the past 17 years, with 18 reciprocal visits by Iranian Presidents, reflecting these robust relations.

He highlighted the unique advantage of a shared language but noted that the cultural relationship, despite the sister-city ties between Hamadan and Kulob, has weakened and needs reinforcement.

The ambassador mentioned the existence of a joint Chamber of Commerce in Tajikistan with active participation from Khorasan economic players, expressing a desire for Hamadan's Chamber to have a significant presence as well.

He underscored the availability of appropriate tools to strengthen economic ties between the two countries, such as a joint agreements follow-up committee, a joint Chamber of Commerce, and a joint policy-making council, urging both sides to work towards enhancing Hamadan-Tajikistan economic relations.

## Minister Promises to Upgrade the Country's Communication Infrastructure



TEHRAN (IRNA) - In his first meeting with the deputy ministers of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, the Minister of Communications stated: "We will upgrade the communication infrastructure in the country and resolve the existing challenges in this field."

Sattar Hashemi, the Minister of Communications and Information Technology of the Fourteenth Government, said after taking over the ministry from Isa Zarepour, during a meeting with the deputies of the Ministry of Communications: "During the time we served in the judiciary, the communication sector carried much of the burden for us. I want to take this opportunity to reflect on the perspective the President has had towards the cabinet. He has repeatedly emphasized in numerous meetings that we should move forward and pursue our work with a consensus-building and agreement-based approach. This is a new experience, and we intend to fully utilize the country's capacities in various specialized fields."

He added, "This is a new experience with its own unique challenges, but we will certainly strive to continue this path with the same perspective, using the maximum potential of the communications family."

Hashemi further stated, "Our plan is to advance the Seventh Development Plan, and we will utilize anyone who supports us on this path, extending a hand of cooperation to them. With the Seventh Development Plan, a new spirit has been infused into the Ministry of Communications. One of the key points in this plan is focusing on quantitative goals outlined in Article 64, which helps us to discuss and work together on a specific, numerical basis. In many cases, where we cannot speak in quantitative terms, gaps may arise, leading to divergence."

## 7m Cubic Meters to Be Added to National Gas Production Capacity



TEHRAN - With the drilling of a well at a depth of 4,200 meters in the South Pars gas field, it will be possible to compensate for a portion of the gas imbalance in the country.

Farrokh Alikhani emphasized that with the implementation of this project, not only will part of the gas imbalance be addressed, but it will also create significant job opportunities for various sectors of the industry, including manufacturers and drilling service companies.

The CEO of Petropars Group continued, predicting that this project, which is located in the SPD4, SPD1, SPD5, and SPD6 positions, will add 7 million cubic meters to the country's gas production capacity by drilling eight wells.

To address the gas imbalance in the country, the National Iranian Oil Company has prioritized "maximum development and production from shared gas fields," particularly the shared South Pars gas field. As part of this strategic initiative, the company has defined the commissioning of Phase 11 of South Pars, planning the construction of pressure-boosting facilities, and awarding contracts for the drilling and completion of infill wells.

Accordingly, the complete execution of the infill well drilling project in the South Pars shared field has been assigned to Petropars, Petroiran, Pasargad, and North Drilling companies. This initiative is expected to increase gas production capacity from this shared field by approximately 36 million cubic meters per day, helping to reduce the country's gas imbalance, support the development of the gas industry, maintain production levels from the shared field with Qatar, and contribute to the country's economic growth.

## Official Calls for Expansion of Iran-Uzbekistan Economic and Trade Relations

TEHRAN - Iran's commercial attaché in Uzbekistan highlighted the trade advantages of both Iran and Uzbekistan, announcing a target of \$1 billion in Iranian exports to Uzbekistan.

Rahmatollah Khormali referred to Uzbekistan as the most populous country in Central Asia and noted that Iran's exports to Uzbekistan grew by 10% in the first three months of this year. He mentioned that Uzbekistan ranks fifth among CIS countries in terms of Iranian export destinations.

While the trade volume between the two countries exceeded \$500 million last year, Khormali outlined the main products exported from Iran to Uzbekistan, including chemical industries (caustic soda, monoethylene glycol, polystyrene), agricultural products, apples, fish feed, pistachios, oranges, various polymer products (linear polyethylene and various polymer compounds), machinery, building materials, and steel.

Khormali announced the target of \$1 billion in Iranian exports to Uzbekistan and added that one of the key programs for both countries is finalizing the items of the Preferential Trade Agreement, which is hoped to be completed soon, leading to increased foreign trade growth.

He also mentioned the formation of the first joint transport committee between the deputy ministers of Roads and Urban Development and Uzbekistan's Ministry of Transport, stating that a roadmap has been developed for this purpose. With the formation of the new cabinet in Iran's 14th government, the groundwork for the finalization of this document will be prioritized. Additionally, the expansion of cooperation between the two countries in establishing joint transport companies in Iran's southern ports will play an important role in facilitating the movement of goods between the two nations.



Regarding Uzbekistan's advantages for Iran, Khormali stated that Uzbekistan's capacities can be considered complementary to Iran's economy. Uzbekistan is one of the top five gold-producing countries in the world, and its potential can be better utilized in completing the textile and agricultural product chains.

Moreover, special collaboration can be established in the mining and industrial sectors.

He emphasized Uzbekistan's strong position in mining, especially in products such as copper, molybdenum, and rare metals, and stated that Iran and Uzbekistan could define joint investments in the mining sector.

Khormali also mentioned Uzbekistan's seven-year strategy to increase its gross domestic product to \$160 billion by 2030. Uzbekistan has defined special strategies in various sectors, including energy, automotive, road construction, mining, agriculture, and chemical industries. Given Iran's strong capabilities in these areas, Iranian companies can participate through joint investments and multi-faceted partnerships with various Uzbek and foreign companies, thereby increasing their presence in this market.

He stressed that Iranian companies are primarily focused on simple import-export activities, whereas competitors have changed their approach. Since Uzbekistan's mindset has shifted in the past eight years with the arrival of its new president, the country is now focused on attracting investments.

Uzbekistan has established the Ministry of Investment and Trade Industry since around 2018, prioritizing investment attraction. If Iran can also focus part of its efforts on investment in Uzbekistan through foreign partners, the position of Iran in Uzbekistan's foreign trade profile will undoubtedly improve.



## Iran Will Resolutely Continue to Boost Defense Power

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran's Defense Chief Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh says the country will 'resolutely' continue to make more progress in the field of defense and deterrence.

"The path to promotion of defense [power] with the aim of active deterrence will strongly continue, and defense technologies will be used to overcome the existing stumbling blocks in the country," Nasirzadeh said.

He made the remarks on Thursday as he started his new mission as Iran's defense chief after garnering the most number of confidence votes in the history of the Islamic Revolution.

He stressed the need to accelerate defense activities in the light of existing threats facing the country.

Nasirzadeh highlighted the significance of Iran's defense industry and said concepts such as self-belief and self-reliance have been manifested in the defense industry, which can serve as a model for the promotion of all the other industries of the country.

In recent years, Iranian military experts and engineers have made remarkable breakthroughs in manufacturing a broad range of indigenous equipment, making the armed forces self-sufficient.

Iranian officials have underscored that the country will not hesitate to strengthen its military capabilities which are entirely meant for defense, and that Iran's defense capabilities will never be subject to negotiations.

### Volcano Erupts in Iceland, Sixth Since December

REYKJAVIK (Dispatches) - A new volcano erupted on the Reykjanes peninsula in southwestern Iceland late Thursday, spewing hot lava into the air in the sixth eruption to hit the region since December, authorities said.

Live video images showed orange lava bursting out of a long fissure, illuminating the billowing smoke rising up into the night sky.

"A volcanic eruption has begun. A fissure has opened east of Sylingarfell," the Icelandic Meteorological Office (IMO) said in a statement, adding that the eruption had started at 9:26 pm (2126 GMT) following a series of earthquakes.

The IMO initially estimated the length of the fissure at 1.4 kilometres (0.86 miles), adding in a later statement that it had extended to 3.9 kilometres in 40 minutes. It said that there was still "considerable seismic activity" at the northern end of the fissure more than an hour after the start of the eruption.

A 4.0-magnitude earthquake was recorded at 10:37 pm, according to the IMO.



### Taiwan President Rejects China's Rule for Freedom



KINMEN (Dispatches) - Taiwan wants to continue its free way of life and rejects being ruled by China's Communist Party, Taiwan President Lai Ching-te said on Friday, visiting a frontline island between the two sides to mark a key battle with Chinese forces.

China's military carried out another round of manoeuvres around Taiwan as Lai was making the comments, underscoring what Taiwan's government views as Beijing's ongoing efforts to undermine regional peace and stability.

Taiwan has controlled the Kinmen and Matsu islands, which lay just off the Chinese coast, since the defeated Republic of China government fled to Taipei in 1949 after losing a civil war with Mao Zedong's communists. No peace treaty or armistice has ever been signed.

The scene of on-off fighting during the height of the Cold War, China's coast guard has since February conducted regular patrols around Kinmen following the death of two Chinese people on a speedboat which Beijing blamed on Taipei.

On his first trip to Kinmen since assuming office in May, Lai laid a wreath and bowed his head in respect at a memorial park for the 66th anniversary of a clash with Chinese forces, known as the start of the second Taiwan Strait crisis.

Addressing veterans at a lunch and speaking off the cuff, Lai said he grew up with stories of the battle as his uncle served in Kinmen.

Taiwan must resist China's threats, Lai added.

"Our aim is that we hope for peaceful development across the Taiwan Strait. Taiwan is a country that ardently loves peace. Taiwan's people are kind," he said.

"We are no longer trying to retake the mainland. But we are also unwilling to be ruled by the communist party. We want to continue a life of democracy, freedom, human rights and rule of law. Right?" Lai added, to shouts of "yes!"

### Venezuela Supreme Court Validates Maduro's Re-Election

CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuela's Supreme Court, which observers say is loyal to the government of President Nicolas Maduro, on Thursday declared him the winner of the disputed July 28 election despite opposition claims of widespread vote fraud.

In its ruling, read by presiding judge Caryslia Rodriguez, the court said it had "indisputably certified election materials and validates the results of the July 28, 2024 presidential election issued by the National Electoral Council (CNE)," naming Maduro as the winner.

Minutes later, opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia responded to the ruling by posting an image to social media saying "void."

"The sovereignty of the people is not transferable," he said.

Maduro had asked the court earlier this month to weigh in on the election, in which he claims to have defeated Gonzalez Urrutia with 52 percent of ballots cast, according to the CNE.

The CNE did not provide a precinct-level breakdown of its results, saying it had been the victim of a cyber attack. The Supreme Court on Thursday said there was "evidence of a massive cyber attack against the electoral system."

Observers say the supposed hack is an excuse to not provide vote results.

The opposition's tally of polling station-level results -- which it has published online -- showed Gonzalez Urrutia, 74, had won more than two-thirds of votes. Maduro's party says the material is "forged."

"To the court's judges: no decision will replace the will of the people. The country and the world know about your bias and, as a result, your inability to resolve this conflict," Gonzalez Urrutia said in a post earlier Thursday.

## Russia, Ukraine Report Gains as Some Ukrainians Flee Strategic City

KYIV (Dispatches) - Russia and Ukraine both reported new battlefield gains on Thursday, with Kyiv hailing the capture of another village on Russian soil but hundreds of Ukrainians fleeing the eastern city of Pokrovsk as Russian forces advance on it.

Visiting the border area from where his troops entered the Kursk region in western Russia on Aug. 6, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced the seizure of a new village that he did not name, and said the incursion had helped reduce Russian shelling of the northeastern Sumy region.

Russian authorities said a Russian ferry sank after a Ukrainian attack that struck southern Russia's Port Kavkaz, which supplies fuel to the occupied peninsula of Crimea. Kyiv said it had mounted a drone strike on an air base in southern Russia and carried out a raid about 240 km (150 miles) from the site of its push into Kursk region.

After returning to Kyiv, Zelenskyy said the latest Ukrainian military action was part of an effort to put an end to the war on Ukraine's terms instead of Russia's.

"This is all our systematic defence path, the path to end this war on the terms of an independent Ukraine," he said in an address to veterans.

He said that to force Russian troops out of Ukrainian territory, the Ukrainian military should "create as many problems as possible" on Russian territory.

But although the incursion is an embarrassment for Russia, Moscow's forces have continued their gradual advances of the past few months against tired Ukrainian troops in eastern Ukraine worn down by 2-1/2 years of heavy fighting.

Moscow said its troops had taken control of the village of Mezhyve in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine, and that they had beaten back an attempt by a Ukrainian force to infiltrate its border in a different region to Kyiv's Aug. 6 incursion.

Ukrainian authorities say Russian troops are now just 10 km (six miles) outside Pokrovsk, an important transport hub in eastern Ukraine, and this week started evacuating elderly residents and children.

"Everyone is in panic, people are running away," Liudmyla Sydorenko told Reuters on Thursday as she packed a 94-year-old relative's belongings into plastic bags at their apartment so that she could be evacuated.

"I went outside and was shocked: people with paper boxes there, mass evacuation. We don't want to leave, but we have to. We thought we could stay here. It's very difficult."

Moscow's capture of Pokrovsk, which lies at an intersection of roads and a railway line, would give Russia options to advance in new directions and also cut supply routes used by the Ukrainian military in the Donetsk region.

Authorities in Kursk said they had begun installing concrete shelters to help protect civilians during the Ukrainian incursion.

President Vladimir Putin accused Ukraine of trying to strike Russia's Kursk nuclear power plant in an overnight attack and said Moscow had informed the U.N. nuclear safety watchdog about the situation.

But he provided no documentary evidence to back up his assertion and there was no immediate comment from Ukraine.

Reuters was unable to independently confirm the attack or reports from the battlefield.

Ukraine has closely guarded its main aims in the Kursk region but said it has carved out a buffer zone from an area that Russia has used to pound targets in Ukraine with cross-border strikes.

Military analysts say the incursion probably aims in part to divert Russian forces to ease pressure in the east, although there is no indication Russia has pulled troops from there.

The incursion has boosted morale among Ukrainians as they prepare to mark 33 years since independence from the Soviet Union on Saturday.

The U.S. Embassy in Kyiv, however, said there was a heightened risk of Russian missile and drone attacks throughout Ukraine in the coming days connected to Independence Day.

## Israeli Demands for Troops in Gaza Blocking Truce Deal

DOHA (Dispatches) - Disagreements over Israel's future military presence in Gaza and over Palestinian prisoner releases are obstructing a ceasefire and hostage deal, according to ten sources familiar with the round of U.S.-mediated talks that concluded last week.

The sources, who include two Hamas officials and three Western diplomats, told Reuters the disagreements stemmed from demands Israel has introduced since Hamas accepted a version of a ceasefire proposal unveiled by U.S. President Joe Biden in May.

All the sources said Hamas was especially concerned about the latest demand to keep troops deployed along the Netzarim Corridor, an east-west strip Israel cleared during the current war that prevents Palestinians' free movement between north and south Gaza, as well as in a narrow border strip between Gaza and Egypt known as the Philadelphi Corridor.

The sources asked not to be named to speak freely about sensitive matters.

Israel's current grip on the Philadelphi Corridor gives it control of Gaza's frontier with Egypt, the enclave's only crossing that does not border Israel.

Hamas sees Israel as having changed its conditions and parameters "last-minute," and worries any concessions it makes would be met by more demands, one of the sources, who is close to the talks, told Reuters.

The media office for the Palestinian militant group did not respond to requests for comment for this story. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's office did not respond to questions about the talks.

In a press statement on Sunday, Hamas said the proposal arising from last week's talks was too close to Netanyahu's recent positions setting new conditions. It urged the mediators



to stick to the implementation of a July version of the framework agreement, rather than starting new negotiations.

In a statement prior to the talks last week, Netanyahu's office denied making new demands, saying its position built on the previous proposal.

In the statement, the office said Israel's May proposal stated that only unarmed civilians would be allowed to return to the northern part of Gaza, crossing the Netzarim Corridor.

The office said Israel's new proposal, first presented at a meeting of mediators in Rome on July 27, was that an agreed-upon mechanism should be established to assure this, implying but not specifically mentioning an Israeli military presence at Netzarim to prevent the movement of Hamas fighters.

According to a second source close to the talks, Israel proposed that an agreement for the return of non-combatants to the north half of Gaza would be agreed upon "at a later date".

That was seen by some of the mediators and Hamas as Israel backtracking on a previous commitment to withdraw from the Netzarim corridor and allow free movement inside Gaza, the source said.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken concluded a whirlwind trip to the region on Tuesday, seeking a breakthrough. After meeting Netanyahu, Blinken said Israel had accepted a new U.S. proposal aimed at narrowing differences between Israel and Hamas' latest positions. He urged Hamas to do the same.

"Once that happens we also have to complete the detailed implementation agreements that go along with putting the ceasefire into effect," he said at a news conference on Tuesday.

The sides have not released what Blinken called a bridging proposal, and Reuters has not seen a copy.

## Harris Caps Convention With Call to End Gaza War, Fight Tyranny



CHICAGO (Dispatches) - Vice President Kamala Harris formally accepted the Democratic nomination for president on Thursday with a rousing call to end the war in Gaza and to fight tyranny around the world, drawing a sharp contrast with Republican Donald Trump.

"In the enduring struggle between democracy and tyranny, I know where I stand and I know where the United States belongs," Harris said, accusing Trump of bowing down to dictators.

On the final, and most anticipated, night of the four-day Chicago convention, Harris, 59, promised to chart a "New Way Forward" as she and Trump, 78, enter the final 11 weeks of the razor-close campaign.

Harris emerged as the Democratic candidate little more than a month ago when allies of President Joe Biden, 81, forced him to quit the race.

It was a forceful speech for a candidate who, during her brief campaign, had yet to articulate much of her vision for the country and faced a stream of personal attacks from Trump, who mocked her Black and South Asian heritage and called her weak on the foreign stage.

The speech laid out some broad policy principles, foreign and domestic, but left unsaid specific details which in weeks to come she could be pressured to provide. After days of protests from Palestinian supporters who were disappointed at not getting a speaking spot at the convention, Harris delivered a pledge to secure Israel, bring the hostages home from Gaza and end the war in the Palestinian enclave.

"Now is the time to get a hostage deal and a ceasefire deal done," she said to cheers. "And let me be clear, I will always stand up for Israel's right to defend itself and I will always ensure Israel has the ability to defend itself."

"What has happened in Gaza over the past 10 months is devastating. So many innocent lives lost, desperate hungry people fleeing for safety over and over again. The scale of suffering is heartbreaking," she said.

"President Biden and I are working to end this war such that Israel is secure, the hostages are released, the suffering in Gaza ends and the Palestinian people can realize their right to dignity, security, freedom and self-determination."

In some of her strongest foreign policy statements to date, Harris said she would take whatever action was necessary to defend U.S. interests against Iran and would not cozy up to tyrants and dictators.

She said such leaders, including North Korea's Kim Jong Un, "are rooting for Trump."

She vowed to stand with Ukraine in its war against Russia and with NATO allies.

If successful, Harris stands to make history as the first woman elected U.S. president.

She described the Nov. 5 election as a "precious, fleeting opportunity to move past the bitterness, cynicism and divisive battles of the past. A chance to chart a New Way Forward."

Harris drew a series of contrasts with Trump, accusing him of not fighting for the middle class, planning to enact a tax hike through his tariff proposals, and having set in motion the end of a constitutional right to abortion with his picks for the U.S. Supreme Court.

Harris noted the Supreme Court's recent ruling about presidential immunity and the risks that would engender if Trump gained power again.

"Just imagine Donald Trump with no guard rails," she said.

Trump, who had promised to respond to Harris' speech in real time, posted a series of messages on Truth Social as she spoke about him, including: "She stands for Incompetence and Weakness - Our Country is being laughed at all over the World!" and "She will never be respected by the Tyrants of the World!"



## Sinner Gets Tough U.S. Open Draw

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Top seed Jannik Sinner, whose doping case has dominated the lead-up to the U.S. Open, faces a tough road to the New York final while in-form Aryna Sabalenka will also be tested, according to the draw released on Thursday.

Sinner won in Cincinnati this week to claim his fifth title of a breakout season before the revelation that he avoided a ban over two positive tests in March as it was ruled the Italian bore no fault or negligence for the violations.

The Australian Open champion is projected to face 14th seed Tommy Paul in the fourth round, 2021 winner Daniil Medvedev (5) in the quarter-finals, Carlos Alcaraz (3) in the semis and defending champion Novak Djokovic (2) in the final.

Djokovic, who has not competed since winning the gold medal at the Paris Olympics, will begin against a qualifier and is expected to meet Andrey Rublev in the quarter-finals and fourth seed Alexander Zverev in the semis.

Reigning French Open and Wimbledon champion Alcaraz, who lost the opening match of his only U.S. Open tune-up event, will also start against a qualifier and could face Poland's Hubert Hurkacz in the quarter-finals.

Among the first-round matches to watch on the men's side is big-hitting Ben Shelton, who electrified the home crowds last year with a spirited run to the semis, against 2020 champion Dominic Thiem, who is retiring at the end of the year.

In the women's draw, top seed Iga Swiatek, a five-time Grand Slam winner who reached the fourth round last year, will start against a qualifier and faces a potential quarter-final clash against Canadian Open champion and Cincinnati runner-up Jessica Pegula.

Second seed Sabalenka, looking to go one further after finishing runner-up in New York last year, returns well-rested after a mid-year break to focus on her health. She will be confident about her chances after winning the tune-up event in Cincinnati.

Sabalenka's fortnight may include a third-round date with Ekaterina Alexandrova (29) followed by a fourth-round clash with Madison Keys (14), Zheng Qinwen (7) in the quarters, defending champion Coco Gauff (3) in the semis and Swiatek in the final.

Gauff, who last year became the first American to win a U.S. Open singles title since 2017, will begin her title defense against Frenchwoman Varvara Gracheva.

Among the more high-profile first-round women's matchups, four-times Grand Slam winner Naomi Osaka, in her first New York appearance since becoming a mother, will face Latvian 10th seed and former French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko.

Wimbledon and French Open runner-up Jasmine Paolini will face 2019 U.S. Open champion Bianca Andreescu for a third consecutive Grand Slam.

## Norris Says He Has Not Been Driving Like a Champion



ZANDVOORT (Dispatches) - McLaren's Lando Norris assessed his performance so far this season as not good enough for someone with Formula One championship aspirations.

The 24-year-old Briton is triple world champion Max Verstappen's closest rival in the standings after 14 of the season's 24 races but still 78 points behind the Red Bull driver.

"After the first half of the season I have not performed at the level of a world champion and it is as simple as that," he told reporters at the Dutch Grand Prix on Thursday.

"At certain times I have, and many races I have done but little things have let me down and I cannot afford that. I know that, and I am not happy with that, but that is because I am passionate and I want to win."

Norris took his first F1 win in Miami in May but has had four second places since then.

Most glaringly, Verstappen started last month's Belgian Grand Prix in 11th place after an engine penalty yet still finished the race and ahead of Norris, who had lined up fourth but ended up fifth.

Australian team mate Oscar Piastri has performed better in the last four races, with a first win in Hungary and two second places.

"There are plenty of things I have looked at, and worked on to come back stronger," said Norris.

"My opportunities have gone away from me at the starts. There have been strong moments, too, but they are always overshadowed by a bad start, a bad turn one, or trying to be too safe and stay out of trouble.

"I need to be perfect to compete against the guys we are competing against, and the smallest weakness or deficit can bite you easily."

## Chelsea Give Maresca First Win in Conference League

PARIS (Dispatches) - Chelsea secured their first victory under new coach Enzo Maresca with a 2-0 victory over Servette in their Conference League play-off round first leg on Thursday.

The hosts struggled to break down their opponents in the first half at Stamford Bridge before Christopher Nkunku put them in front with a 50th-minute penalty, just his fourth goal for the club.

Marc Guiu somehow contrived to miss an open goal a few minutes later, but Noni Madueke moved Chelsea closer to a group-stage place ahead of next week's second leg by firing home from Enzo Fernandez's pass.

Tiemoko Ouattara almost pulled one back for Swiss side Servette late on when his deflected strike hit the crossbar.

It was a welcome win for Chelsea after suffering a 2-0 loss in Maresca's debut game against Manchester City at the weekend.

The Blues are making their return to European competition after finishing sixth in the Premier League last season under Mauricio Pochettino.

"We are learning how to manage the game," said Maresca, who led Leicester to promotion to the Premier League last season.

"It was important to win the game with nine changes. There were many good things."



But there was a scare for Chelsea, as key player Cole Palmer went down the dug-out holding the back of his leg at full-time after coming on as a second-half substitute.

"Cole felt something but he looks fine. Hopefully it is no problem and he can be available for Sunday's game (against Wolves)," Maresca said.

Elsewhere, Greek club Panathinaikos suffered a 2-1 defeat at 10-man Lens in their first leg, with Wesley Said scoring what proved to be the winner for the Ligue 1 side.

Former Spain and Manchester United goalkeeper David de Gea endured a difficult debut as Fiorentina were held to a 3-3 home draw by Hungarians Puskas Akademia.

Irish club St Patrick's kept their hopes of qualifying for the group stage of a European tournament for the first time alive, drawing 0-0 with Istanbul Basaksehir.

In the Europa League play-offs, Dutch giants Ajax thrashed Jagiellonia 4-1 in Poland, with English forward Chuba Akpom scoring a hat-trick.

Besiktas blew a 3-1 lead to draw 3-3 with Lugano in Switzerland, while Scottish outfit Hearts lost 1-0 at Viktoria Plzen.

## Goalkeeper Courtois Not to Play for Belgium Under Tedesco's Management



BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - Real Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois announced on Thursday that he would no longer play for the Belgium national team under current coach Domenico Tedesco.

Courtois, widely regarded as one of the best keepers in the world, was left out of the Belgium squad for the European Championship following a row with Tedesco last year. He was replaced by Koen Casteels for the Euros.

"I feel privileged to have had the honour of wearing the national jersey. Not even in my wildest dreams could I have imagined being able to do so more than 100 times," Courtois posted in his social media accounts.

"Unfortunately, following the events with the coach and after much reflection, I have decided not to return to the Belgian national team under his management.

"In this matter, I accept my share of responsibility. However, looking forward, my lack of confidence in him would not contribute to maintaining the necessary atmosphere of cordiality."

The 32-year-old goalkeeper, who suffered an injury but recovered in time to help Real Madrid win the Champions League in June, added the Belgian FA has accepted his position and the reasons that led to the decision.

"I regret possibly disappointing some fans but I am convinced that this is the best course of action for Belgium, as it closes a debate and allows the team to focus on pursuing its goals. Thank you for your unwavering support, love, and understanding," Courtois said.

Tedesco's tactics raised questions about whether he was the right man for the job after Belgium were eliminated by France in the last 16 of the Euros.

The Italian-born German manager began his tenure in February 2023 and signed a contract extension before the start of the Euros.

## Ingebrigtsen Claims Revenge on Hocker in Lausanne 1500m

LAUSANNE (Dispatches) - Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen went some way to forgetting his Olympic blip in the 1500m when he beat American Cole Hocker in Thursday's Diamond League meet in Lausanne.

The Norwegian had been an odds-on favourite for Olympic gold in Paris, but misjudged his early pace, burning himself out to allow Hocker in for gold.

Ingebrigtsen eventually finished fourth as Britain's Josh Kerr and Yared Nuguse of the US also passed him in the closing metres.

Ingebrigtsen did, however, rebound to win the Olympic 5,000m title and took another big step to redemption over the shorter distance with a dominant victory.

"It's been almost two weeks since Paris so there was plenty of time to recover," Ingebrigtsen said.

"For me a lot of it has been mental including going home, taking some easy days and then getting back to work.

"Tonight's race gave me good answers and I'm looking forward to building on this for my next race on Sunday and the rest of the season."

Ingebrigtsen heads straight to Poland where he will attempt to break Daniel Komen's world record of 7:20.67 in the 3,000m at the Silesia Diamond League.



Slovenian Zan Rudolf set the early pace in Lausanne, Ingebrigtsen at the front of the pack.

Ireland's Luke McCann then took up the running and when he faded, the Norwegian accelerated to the front, Americans Hobbs Kessler and then Hocker on his coattails.

Ingebrigtsen led going through the bell for the final lap, the two Americans in his slipstream.

Hocker tried to respond at the 150m mark, but there was no catching the Norwegian.

Ingebrigtsen clocked a meet record of 3min 27.83sec for the win at packed Stade Olympique de la Pontaise in balmy conditions, with Hocker second in 3:29.85 and Kessler rounding out the podium (3:30.47).

Hocker had no complaints with his second place and embraced Ingebrigtsen after the race, the pair sharing a word before embracing again.

"It's my second best time ever, so I can't complain," the American said.

"Considering the overwhelming past two weeks, it was a solid race. Physically I felt comfortable, but mentally, it's a new challenge being announced as Olympic champion.

"I felt the pressure, but I'm excited about how things are shaping up. I was ready for whatever."