

Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy Has Confiscated a Tanker Carrying a Huge Amount of Smuggled Fuel in the Persian Gulf Waters as All 12 Crew Members With Indian and Sri Lankan Nationalities Were Also Arrested

# IRAN NEWS

Iran's President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian Will Be Sworn In Before the Parliament Next Tuesday at 4 p.m. Local as the Ninth President of the Islamic Republic in Presence of at Least Five Presidents and Ten Parliament Speakers

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### Pezeshkian Urges End to Israel's Genocidal Campaign in Gaza



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian says all capacities must be utilized to end Israel's genocidal campaign in the besieged Gaza Strip.

In a phone conversation with Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on Monday, Pezeshkian hailed Astana's support for a move by the UN General Assembly to endorse a resolution for the reconsideration of Palestine's bid for UN membership.

The resolution was spearheaded by the United Arab Emirates (on behalf of the Arab Group). It was adopted on May 10 by overwhelming consensus with 143 member states - including Kazakhstan - voting in favor, 9 against and 25 abstentions. Pezeshkian said the development of Iran's relations with Kazakhstan is among the priorities of the Islamic Republic's foreign policy. "The two countries have diverse and huge capacities to boost cooperation in the fields of transit, energy and technical-engineering." The Iranian president-elect said the country is the safest and most economical transit route to connect Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries to the high seas and global markets. "Iran and Kazakhstan have good capacities for regional and international cooperation as well as cooperation in the form of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union." Kazakhstan's president, for his part, said Kazakhstan was keen to promote cooperation with Iran in such sectors as transit, energy, technical and engineering services as well as financial, economic and commercial exchanges. Also on Monday, the Iranian president-elect and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida held a 20-minute phone conversation. Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that Prime Minister Kishida conveyed his intention to work together to further develop mutual ties based on the traditional friendly relationship with Iran. He said the two sides also exchanged views on the situation in the region with Kishida expressing his high hope for Iran to play a more constructive role toward regional peace and stability and to advance cooperation with the international community.

"Both sides also exchanged views on Iran's nuclear issue. Both sides concurred to continue to communicate with each other."

### Iran Ready to Collaborate in the Fight Against Drug Trafficking



TEHRAN - Regarding the second regional conference on combating drug trafficking held in Baghdad, Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi stated that Iran, as a leading country, is fully prepared to cooperate with regional and international institutions and structures to fight drug trafficking.

The Interior Minister detailed the discussions held during this meeting in a conversation with journalists on Tuesday evening. He mentioned that the participating delegations shared their views and perspectives on increasing convergence and cooperation, and a statement was read at the end of the meeting addressing advancements and the necessity for greater cooperation among neighboring countries to effectively combat drug trafficking in the region. Vahidi described the conference as a very good and effective initiative by the Iraqi Ministry of Interior and noted that the Iraqi Prime Minister also provided valuable insights on regional cooperation for combating drug trafficking. He reminded that the next regional conference will be held in Tehran next year. The Interior Minister also mentioned that during this meeting, an invitation was extended to Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani to visit Tehran for the inauguration ceremony of Iran's new President. Vahidi stated that the participating delegations discussed and exchanged views on continued mutual cooperation in various areas, including security issues, illegal arms transfers, and drug trafficking in the region. He added that the conference also expressed gratitude to the Iraqi nation and government for their hospitality and accommodation of Iranian pilgrims during the grand Arbaceen pilgrimage. Vahidi evaluated the discussions with the Iraqi side during this visit as positive and emphasized that, given the strong and positive relations between the two nations, many results and achievements have been attained for the development and progress of both friendly and brotherly countries. The Iranian Interior Minister, along with Iran's Ambassador to Iraq, Mohammad Kazem Al Sadegh, and Brigadier General Iraq Kakavand, head of the anti-drug police, participated in this conference.



TEHRAN - Reza Najafi, Deputy for Legal and International Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a press conference with domestic and foreign journalists, stated: "In the 13th government at the UN General Assembly, the President was martyred along with the active presence of the foreign policy team. The speeches given by Martyr Raisi at the UN, especially the moment he held up the photo of Martyr General Qassem Soleimani and the Quran, are among the lasting speeches that will be remembered."

He continued: "Martyr Amir-Abdollahian not only participated in the General Assembly but also attended other forums. He also attended the Security Council meetings."

The Deputy Minister for Legal and International Affairs emphasized: "In addition to our presence at the UN, we give special importance to regional organizations, especially the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). In recent months, the issue of Palestine has been at the forefront and the agenda of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We requested a special meeting of the OIC, initiated by Iran, which was held, and the summit in Riyadh also provided an opportunity for the Iranian President to meet with Saudi Crown Prince Bin Salman for the first time in years." He added: "We have pursued the use of the OIC's capacity to counter unilateralism." Najafi, referring to the recent advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, said: "Iran was one of the active countries in this regard. We expressed Iran's positions on Palestine and the current situation in Gaza, and our requests align with the advisory opinion issued." Najafi stated: "Currently, we do not have any frozen assets abroad that we cannot use at all." The liaison between the Ministry of Interior and the Parliament's committee for organizing the presidential inauguration ceremony noted: "Invitations have been prepared for the leaders of various countries, signed by Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, and sent

to the leaders of countries. The level of attendance and reception of foreign officials for the inauguration ceremony at the leadership level is much greater compared to 2021, which is natural considering that it was the post-COVID era." He continued: "This reception and presence of foreign officials is a good opportunity to start the work of the new government and to hold some initial meetings and have a good start for this government." Najafi noted: "Of course, we have meetings with Dr. Abbas Araqchi, as the liaison of the office of the elected president. Not at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but rather he is the secretary of the High Council of Foreign Relations, and the meetings are held at his office." Regarding the indirect negotiations between Iran and the US on the revival of the JCPOA in Oman, the Deputy Minister for Legal Affairs said: "In the nuclear negotiations, what is certain and definite is that Iran has adhered to the agreement from the beginning and implemented all its commitments. 15 reports by the Agency confirmed that we implemented our commitments. Trump illegally withdrew from the JCPOA and reinstated the sanctions." He continued: "In the new Democratic administration in the US, the 13th government continued the negotiations, and we saw that the negotiations were nearing a conclusion when misunderstandings arose among Western parties following the unrest in Iran. After the subsidence of that unrest, the Oman negotiations continued indirectly and have continued to this day."

Najafi emphasized: "The other side, due to internal issues and election discussions, is not ready to seriously engage in the negotiations. With the formation of the new government in Iran, these negotiations will continue. Given the recent developments in the US and Biden's withdrawal, we have to see what US policy will be. The Islamic Republic of Iran has never left the negotiating table and we are ready to continue the negotiations."

### Joining FATF Is Key to Sustainable Trade With Iraq



TEHRAN - Mohammad Mahdi Raeeszadeh, a member of the board of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, in an interview stated that the key to developing trade between Iran and Iraq is for Iran to exit the FATF blacklist. He further explained that Iran's geographical proximity to Iraq, with its long border and several border crossings, makes Iraq one of the main markets for Iranian exports. If a rail connection to the port of Faw in Basra is established, it will further facilitate and strengthen the flow of goods between the two countries. Raeeszadeh added that the cultural and religious closeness between Iranians and Iraqis increases Iran's chances in the Iraqi market compared to other competitors. Additionally, Iraq can act as an intermediary for Iran's trade with more distant markets amidst sanctions. However, Iran's inclusion in the FATF blacklist has posed challenges to financial exchanges with the rest of the world, and this issue is particularly pronounced in trade with Iraq due to its significance as a trading partner for Iran. He continued that Iranian products could have a stronger presence in Iraq, but according to Iranian traders in Iraq, until last year, they could circumvent sanctions and obtain dollars in exchange for exported goods. Given that a significant portion of global dollar transactions are in U.S. dollars, the U.S. can dominate in economic conflicts, even challenging large economies like China and Russia.

Raeeszadeh highlighted that since last year, U.S. influence in Iraq's economy and market has intensified, significantly increasing the cost of trade for Iranians with Iraq. Previously, Iranians could handle the exchange rate to the dollar with a tolerable margin, but with U.S. dominance over the Iraqi market, Iraqis have

become cautious in trading with Iranians, making it more difficult and costly for Iranians to exchange dinars to dollars. The gap between the official and black market dollar rates in Iraq is too wide for Iranian traders to cover, posing a threat to Iranian exports to Iraq and hindering export growth. He expressed hope that the new government will address the FATF issue to reduce the costs of money exchange, which sometimes amount to 20% of the total export value. Raeeszadeh noted that Iranians previously advanced trade with Iraq through barter, but now bartering is limited to a few food and pharmaceutical products. Bartering is effective only when both countries have goods that the other needs, and the values of exchanged items are balanced. In response to whether Iraq's commitment to developing and strengthening its domestic production poses a threat to Iranian exports, Raeeszadeh said that every country pursues its national interests, which include creating conditions for production enhancement through foreign investment and various financing methods. Iraq is no exception, and self-sufficiency is a current goal. However, the Iran-Iraq Chamber of Commerce sees that Iraqis welcome industrial cooperation with Iranians, with several Iranian industries already operating in Iraq, notably in the dairy sector. Therefore, strengthening Iraqi industries and achieving self-sufficiency is not a threat but an opportunity due to geographical and cultural proximity. However, even Iranian industries in Iraq are affected by Iran's presence on the FATF blacklist, linking any economic threat to FATF issues. Finally, he emphasized that Iraq's economy is not under sanctions, and its oil revenues exceed Iran's, given its smaller population.

### Tehran Relations With Washington Hinge on Change in U.S. Hostile Policies



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran says any potential improvement in its relations with the United States hinges on Washington's change of "hostile" policies irrespective of who becomes president.

"As we have previously said, the comings and goings of governments and individuals do not matter to us," spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, Nasser Kanaani, said at his weekly press conference on Monday in response to a question about the recent developments surrounding the US presidential election in November.

"The thing is the US government has always taken a hostile approach and a hostile policy on Iran over the past years, and what can change the atmosphere of relations is the change of the hostile behavior of the United States towards the Iranian nation."

Elsewhere in his briefing, Kanaani pointed to the crimes of Israel against the people of Palestine in the Gaza Strip. The regime has always posed a threat to regional peace and stability and spread insecurity, the Iranian official said. "Peace will return to the region when the international community stops the war machine of the Zionist regime."

Kanaani underscored the international community's responsibility to block Israel's destabilizing moves.

"As a full-fledged supporter of this regime, the US has a serious responsibility towards the Zionist regime's threatening moves and must prevent intensification of tension and crisis in the region."

Israel has killed over 39,000 Palestinians, most of them women, children, and adolescents, in Gaza since October.

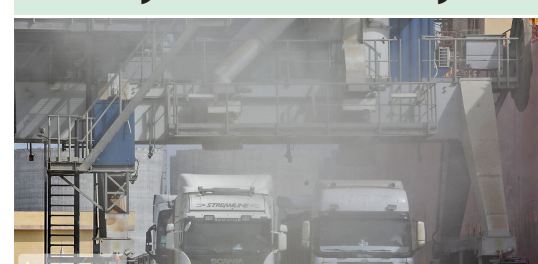
The regime launched the campaign of death, destruction and genocide after it was caught off-guard by Operation Al-Aqsa Storm into the occupied territories.

Kanaani said the current level of Iran's relations with European countries results from their miscalculation or pursuit of Washington's wrong policies.

"If Europe acts independently and based on its national interests, we will witness the improvement of relations between Iran and Europe."

"Based on its dynamic diplomacy, common interests and mutual respect, Iran is ready to develop relations with all countries that are interested in improving ties with Iran."

### Unload of 7.4m Tons of Essential Goods at Ports by the End of July



TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Ports and Maritime Organization announced that from the beginning of this year until the end of July, 7,453,720 tons of essential goods were discharged at the country's ports, reflecting a 14% increase compared to the same period last year.

According to IRNA from the Ports and Maritime Organization, the volume of essential goods discharged at the country's ports during the first four months of 2024 amounted to 7,453,720 tons. Among these, barley saw a 22% increase, corn a 25% increase, soybeans a 111% increase, sugar a 100% increase, and oil a 41% increase.

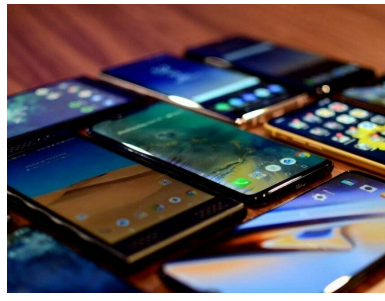
According to the report, the discharge of wheat in the first four months of this year was 327,926 tons, and barley was 761,162 tons, indicating a 22% increase in barley compared to the same period last year. The discharge of corn during this period was 3,650,483 tons, showing a 25% increase.

In addition, the discharge of soybeans in the first 120 days of this year was 1,936,825 tons, representing a 111% increase, while the discharge of rice during the same period was 14,114 tons.

The discharge of sugar in the first four months of this year was 336,273 tons, marking a 100% increase compared to the same period last year. The discharge of oil during the first four months of 2024 was 426,937 tons, reflecting a 41% increase.

The number of trucks and wagons allocated for the transportation of essential goods in the first four months of this year was 307,519 trucks and 10,696 wagons. Out of these, 36,902 trucks were used for direct transportation.

# IRAN NEWS



## Mobile Phone Imports Down by 27%

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Customs Administration of the Islamic Republic of Iran announced: In the first four months of the year 1403, 2,857,005 mobile phones worth 688 million dollars were imported into the country and cleared through customs in two ways: commercial and passenger. This shows a 27% decrease in terms of quantity. According to IRNA from Iran's Customs, the import of mobile phones in the first four months of this year has decreased by 27% in quantity and 17% in value compared to the same period last year. Based on this report, of the total imported mobile phones, 2,739,179 units worth 622 million dollars were imported commercially, and 117,826 units worth 65,662,000 dollars were imported by passengers. It is worth noting that the import statistics of mobile phones during this period include tariff code 85171390 for smartphones and tariff code 85171420 for mobile phones with non-touch keyboards.

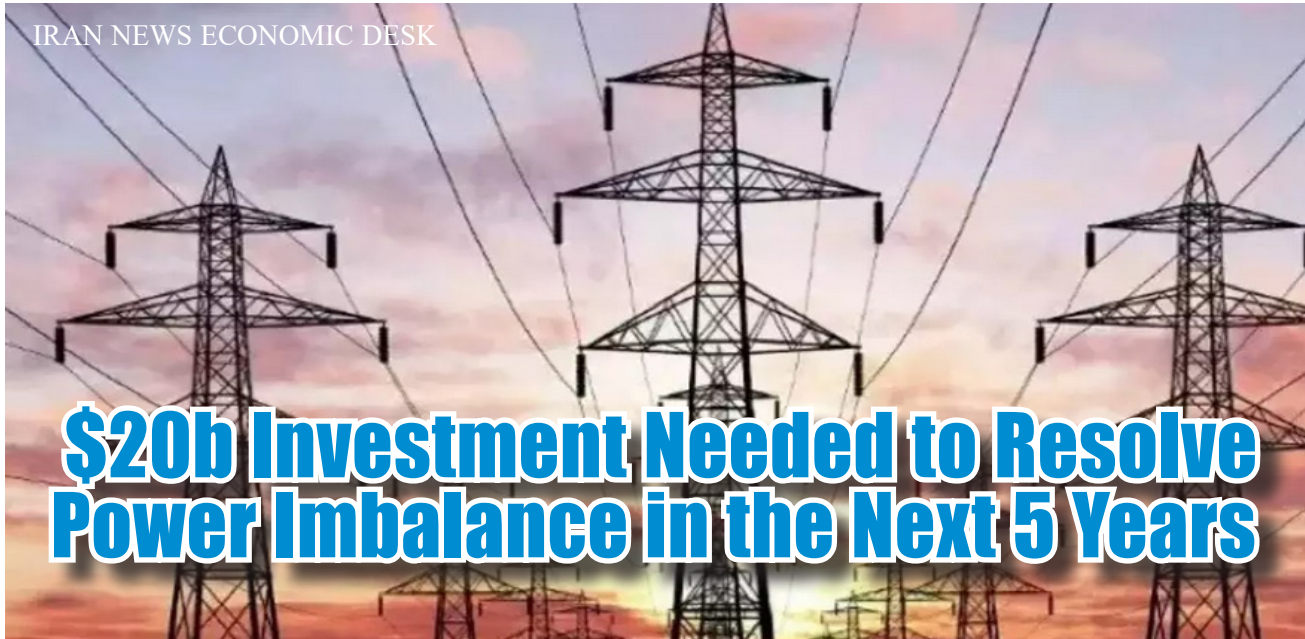
## Iran Exports to Qatar and Oman Grow in Q1



TEHRAN - The Director General of the West Asia Office of the Iran Trade Promotion Organization emphasized the increase in the volume of trade between Iran and neighboring countries and reported on the growth of trade with countries such as Qatar and Oman.

According to the Public Relations Department of the Iran Trade Promotion Organization, Abdolamir Rabihiavi stated that the exports of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Qatar in the first quarter of the year 1403 amounted to about \$30 million. He added that this export value indicates that the trade between the two countries experienced a 16% growth compared to the same period last year. Rabihiavi enumerated the main exported items to Qatar, which include tomatoes, livestock and poultry, protein products, bitumen, aquatic products, clinker, watermelons, machine-made carpets, pistachios, and saffron, representing the ten main export goods of Iran to Qatar. According to the Director General of the West Asia Office of the Iran Trade Promotion Organization, Iran's imports from Qatar in the first quarter of the year 1403 amounted to \$24 million, reflecting an 8% increase compared to the same period last year. Rabihiavi pointed out the major imported items from Qatar, which included inorganic chemical products, parts and spare parts, lighting industry products, detergents, wires and cables, other power drives, other chemical products, and other cellulose products. He also referred to the exports of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Oman, noting that in the first quarter of the year 1403, \$392 million worth of goods were exported to Oman, representing a 40% increase compared to the same period last year. He mentioned that the top ten export goods of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Oman during this period included petroleum bitumen, ingots of non-alloy iron and steel, other urea, compressed iron ore, iron products obtained by direct reduction, sponge iron products, other cyclic hydrocarbons, greenhouse tomatoes, other ingots, and hot-rolled bars of non-alloy iron or steel.

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



## \$20b Investment Needed to Resolve Power Imbalance in the Next 5 Years

TEHRAN - Hassan Ali Taghizadeh Landeh in a press conference stated that all policies and regulations over the past 10 years have resulted in a 17,000 MW power imbalance. He added that another policy that suppressed private sector investment in the power industry was government control and intervention. He explained that currently, private and state power plants must compete with each other, with the private sector being at a disadvantage. Private sector plants need to sell electricity at a profit to satisfy shareholders, whereas the government does not need to be profitable and prefers not to, to avoid paying taxes. The chairman of the board of the Electric Power Producers Syndicate said that the government currently produces 33% of the required electricity and buys the remaining 67%, meaning the government is both the producer, buyer, and regulator. He emphasized that unless the government stops its control and mediation, solving the power issue will remain a dream. The government must allow a transparent supply and demand mechanism and price discovery to occur for the problem to be resolved. Although the government does not sell electricity at a low price, for instance, it sells electricity at 2,000 toman per cubic meter to heavy consumers and 1,000 toman to industrial and commercial sectors. This means the process of price liberalization has started, but we are missing from this cycle as Tavanir sells electricity at a real rate but does not allow the real price to be set. He mentioned that according to the seventh plan, the goal is to increase capacity from 93,000 MW to 124,000 MW, requiring the construction of 31,000 MW of new power plants, with 10,000 MW renewable and 21,000 MW thermal. Half of these new plants are to be built by the private sector and half by industries. However, the actual capacity increase needed is 22,000 MW. Even if 100% of the increase mentioned over the five-year period, there will still be an imbalance. The chairman stated that 35,000 MW of new capacity is needed over five years. Annually, there is a 5% increase in consumption, which was reported to have increased by 7% compared to last year. To maintain the current balance, 4,500 MW must be added annually, and an additional 2,500 MW to resolve the imbalance, totaling 7,000 MW annually. He emphasized that to achieve 35,000 MW over five years,

\$4 billion in new investment is needed annually, totaling \$20 billion. Failure to resolve this imbalance will lead to serious economic, social, and even labor crises. He warned that if the current trend continues, by 1414 (2035), the power imbalance will reach 37,000 MW, one-third of the country's consumption, posing a significant risk. The readiness rate for power plants was 185 rials and remains the same today. In the continuation of the meeting, Mohammad Ali Vahdati stated: "No bank in the country has the capability to finance 250 million euros for the construction of a 500 MW power plant. The only place that can provide these financial resources is the National Development Fund." He added: "About 10 years ago, the National Development Fund, with the reasoning that power plants have rial income and might not be able to repay the foreign currency loans, did not provide loans. This continued until April 2015 when it was approved by the government cabinet that the Central Bank would receive rials from the power plants at the time of installments and provide them with foreign currency at the official exchange rate to repay the loans from the National Development Fund. After this, the National Development Fund started providing loans to the approved power plants." A member of the board of directors of the Syndicate of Electricity Producers stated that this process continued until 2018. He said: "In 2018, we faced a surge in the foreign exchange rate, and the Central Bank stopped the legal process it was conducting, causing problems for power plants in repaying the foreign currency loans received from the National Development Fund." Vahdati noted that power plants sell electricity to the government at regulated prices, which haven't been adjusted for inflation, leading to financial challenges and legal issues for many power plants.

This led to a lack of private investment in new power plants and severe power imbalances from 2021 onwards. Currently, there is a 15,000 to 17,000 MW power imbalance, leading to power outages and restrictions in supply to industries, with costs far exceeding the investment needed for new power plants. The cessation of private investment during the sixth development plan resulted in no new power plants being built by the private sector.

## Turkmenistan: An Attractive Market for Iran's Food Industry



TEHRAN - Turkmenistan is an attractive and important market for Iran's food industry. It appears that one of the pathways to entering the Turkmen market is through participation in specialized exhibitions and direct interaction with the traders and merchants of this country. To this end, and with the aim of gaining a larger share of the Turkmen food industry market, the specialized exhibition of agriculture and food products, halal products, printing and packaging equipment, and machinery (Iran Agrofood) will be held from August 27 to 29 with the authorization of the Iran Trade Promotion Organization in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan.

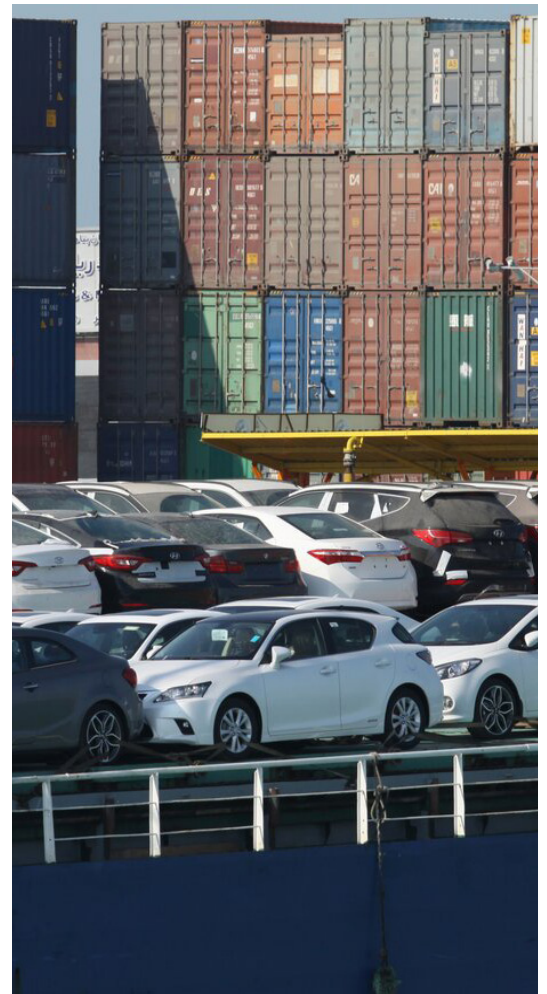
According to the Public Relations of the Iran Trade Promotion Organization, in this regard, Hassan Mortaji, the head of the Association of Foreign Exhibitions Organizers, said: The Agrofood Exhibition in Turkmenistan will be held from August 27 to 29 with the support of the Iranian Embassy in Ashgabat and the Iran Trade Promotion Organization.

He stated that with a population of approximately 6 million and 1200 kilometers of shared borders with Iran, Turkmenistan is a suitable target market for exports. According to statistics, the volume of Iran's exports to Turkmenistan from September 2021 to 2022 was 1.2 times higher than Russia's exports.

Mortaji pointed out the shared taste and food preferences of Turkmenistan's citizens with the Iranian people and stated that vegetables, greens, and fruits from Iran are abundantly exported to Turkmenistan, and the conditions for developing the food industry market and its infrastructure are favorable.

He added that this exhibition will be held from August 27 to 29 with the support of the Iranian Embassy in Ashgabat and the Iran Trade Promotion Organization.

## Car Imports Reach Nearly 10,000 Units



TEHRAN - The Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration announced that the import of new passenger cars, which have been definitively cleared from the country's customs, reached nearly 10,000 units in the first four months of this year.

According to IRNA, "Mohammad Rezvani-Far" stated that during this period, 9,592 new passenger cars, valued at \$192,028,000, were imported and definitively cleared from the country's customs.

Regarding the import of new passenger cars in the same period last year, he said that 439 new passenger cars, valued at 12 million USD, were imported into the country.

According to the Head of Iran Customs, during this period, the companies "Moein Khodro Iranian," "Kerman Motor," and Saipa were the main importers of new passenger cars, accounting for nearly 65% of the imports in terms of quantity.

## 50% Increase in Train Ticket Prices for Foreign Tourists



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Mohsen Fatehizadeh announced at a press conference a 30% increase in the ticket prices for 5-star trains.

He stated that after a three-year hiatus in price adjustments, a 30% increase in the ticket prices for 5-star trains has been approved this year. In the years 2021 and 2022, there was a 0% increase in 5-star train ticket prices, and last year, it saw a 10% increase, whereas the total inflation rate over these three years exceeded 100%.

He continued: "Initially, when 5-star trains were launched, the premise was that these trains would not be subject to mandated and approved prices, and the pricing system would be based on market supply and demand, but this was not implemented."

A member of the Railway Transport Companies Association stated that this price adjustment was made to develop the rail transport fleet, enhance quality and service diversity, and enable competition with other modes of transport. He noted that currently, 5-star trains constitute between 6 to 7 percent of the national rail fleet, with Fadak Company being the only one where all passenger wagons are 5-star. Out of 113 5-star wagons, 100 are operational, and the rest are undergoing refurbishment, which requires liquidity. Part of this liquidity is obtained through price adjustments.

In response to a question about the new ticket price for the Tehran-Mashhad 5-star train route after the 30% increase and the market's reception, Fatehizadeh said: "Currently, the price for a 5-star train ticket on the Tehran-Mashhad route is 970,000 Tomans. The demand can be assessed by the speed of purchase, and we observe that ticket availability drops to zero, with the train operating at 100% occupancy."

Additionally, Amin Shabani, a member of the Railway Transport Companies Association, mentioned at this press conference that alongside the 30% increase for 5-star train tickets, prices for foreign tourists' tickets have increased by up to 50%.

In response to a question on whether this 50% increase for foreigners also applies to foreign residents in Iran, Shabani emphasized: "This 50% increase does not apply to foreign residents in Iran; it only applies to those who purchase train tickets from outside Iran."

Shabani added that foreign tourists are usually from Iraq, traveling to southern regions, Mashhad, and Qom.

## Russia Exports Coal to India via Iran by Train for First Time

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Russia's coal has been exported to India through Iran's railway for the first time, Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (RAI) Miad Salehi said.

He wrote on his social media account on Saturday that seven freight wagons containing 9,500 tons of Russian coal were exported to India through Iran's railway track in the last 40 days for the first time in the history of the railway.

He also expressed hope that, according to President-Elect Masoud Pezeshkian's recent note and according to his emphasis on cooperation with neighbors, China and Russia, the country's transit would increase continuously.

Russia has for the first time sent two trains laden with coal to India via the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), which connects Russia to India via Iran, according to a statement by Russia's National Railway Company.

A multimodal route that includes a railway, roadway network, and seaports, the INSTC spans 7,200km (4,500 miles) from St. Petersburg to the port of Mumbai in India.

The coal will be shipped by sea along the final part of the route from Iran's port of Bandar Abbas to the Indian port of Mumbai.

The corridor is part of Russia's push to find new transport routes in light of Western sanctions, which have forced it to shift trade flows from Europe to Asia and the Middle East.

Construction of the INSTC started in the early 2000s, but developing it further has taken on a new impetus in light of Moscow's restrictions. New Delhi has also touted the route as an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative.

## Ukraine's Top Diplomat in Beijing for Talks on Ending War

CHINA (Dispatches) - Ukraine's foreign minister was in China Tuesday for talks on how officials there might help end the war with Russia, whose ties with Beijing have grown stronger since the conflict began. China presents itself as a neutral party in the war and says it is not sending lethal assistance to either side, unlike the United States and other Western nations. However, its deepening "no limits" partnership with Russia has led NATO members to brand it a "decisive enabler" of Moscow's war, which Beijing has never condemned. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba's visit until Friday is his first since the outbreak of the war in February 2022. Kyiv said Kuleba's visit would focus on "ways to stop Russian aggression" as well as "China's possible role in achieving a sustainable and just peace".



## Iraq Eyes Drawdown of U.S.-Led Forces Starting September



BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Iraq wants troops from a U.S.-led military coalition to begin withdrawing in September and to formally end the coalition's work by September 2025, four Iraqi sources said, with some U.S. forces likely to remain in a newly negotiated advisory capacity.

The Iraqi position is being discussed with U.S. officials in Washington this week at a security summit and there is no formal agreement on ending the coalition or any associated timetable yet, the Iraqi sources and U.S. officials said. U.S. State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller told a news briefing that both sides were meeting in Washington this week to determine how to transition the U.S.-led coalition's mission based on the threat posed by Islamic State, adding he had no further details. U.S.-led forces invaded Iraq in 2003, toppled former leader Saddam Hussein and then withdrew in 2011, only to return in 2014 to fight Islamic State at the head of the coalition. The U.S. currently has around 2,500 troops in Iraq at the head of a more than 80-member coalition that was formed in 2014 to repel Islamic State as it rampaged across Iraq and Syria. They are housed at three main bases, one in Baghdad, one in western Anbar province and another in the northern Kurdistan region. It is unclear how many troops would leave under a deal, with Iraqi sources saying they expected most to eventually depart but U.S. officials saying many may remain under a newly negotiated advise and assist mission.

U.S. officials are keen to have some military footprint in Iraq on a bilateral basis, in part to help support its presence across the border in Syria, where it has around 900 troops.



## Taiwan Curtails Annual War Games

HUALIEN (Dispatches) - Taiwan curtailed its annual Han Kuang war games on Tuesday as Typhoon Gaemi barreled towards the island and the government issued a land warning given the expected strong winds and torrential rain as it hits the coast. Gaemi, the first typhoon of the season to affect Taiwan, is expected to make landfall on the northeast coast between sometime on Wednesday night and the early hours of Thursday, according to the island's Central Weather Administration. Currently categorised as a medium strength typhoon by Taiwan, it is then likely to move across the Taiwan Strait and then hit the southeastern Chinese province of Fujian in the early hours of Friday. Taiwan's government issued a land warning for the typhoon, centred on Taiwan's east and northeast, meaning that is where it is most likely to make landfall. Taiwan's annual Han Kuang military drills taking place this week have been curtailed, including cancelling fighter jet exercises on the east coast, the defence ministry said. "The impact from the typhoon at present on the east coast is rather obvious," ministry spokesman Sun Li-fang told reporters at the Hualien air base. "So we will adjust some of the air and naval elements given the typhoon situation." Taiwan's transport ministry said all ferries to Green Island and Orchid Island, which lie off the southeast coast, were cancelled on Tuesday. Four domestic flights were cancelled, but there was no disruption to international services yet. Cities across Taiwan could also declare a typhoon holiday, which would shut financial markets, schools and offices, should they judge the risk from the bad weather to be severe. Gaemi passed by to the east of the Philippines but did not make landfall, though still brought heavy rain.

While typhoons can be highly destructive, Taiwan also relies on them to replenish reservoirs after the traditionally drier winter months, especially for the southern part of the island.

## Bangladesh PM Hasina Says Opposition to Blame for Deadly Unrest

DHAKA (Dispatches) - Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina blamed her political opponents for deadly violence that swept the country during recent student-led protests against quotas in government jobs, stating on Monday that a curfew would be lifted when the situation improved.

Her comments came a day after the South Asian country's top court agreed to scrap most quotas in a ruling on Sunday, following days of clashes between protesters and security forces that prompted the government to shut down internet services, impose a curfew and deploy the army. Hospital data showed at least 147 people were killed in one of the worst outbreaks of violence in recent years. Hasina, 76, won a fourth-straight term in power in January in a national election boycotted by the main opposition party. "When arson terrorism started, the protesting students said they were not involved in it," Hasina said in an address to business leaders in the capital Dhaka, her first comments since her government ordered a curfew late on Friday. "We were forced to impose a curfew to protect the lives and property of the citizens. I never wanted it," she said. "We will lift the curfew whenever the situation gets better." Hasina blamed the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami party and its student wing for the violence that started last week. The parties did not immediately respond to requests for comment but critics, including the BNP, have previously accused Hasina of authoritarianism, human rights violations and crackdowns on free speech and dissent - charges her government denies. The streets appeared calm in Dhaka on Monday, a day after the Supreme Court ruled in favour of an appeal from the government against a lower court order and directed that 93% of government jobs should be open to candidates on merit. The ruling scaled down quotas in state jobs previously reserved for groups including families of freedom fighters, women and so-called disadvantaged groups, cutting it to 7% from 56%. Experts have blamed the unrest on stagnant job growth in the private sector and high rates of youth unemployment that have made government jobs, with their regular wage hikes and other privileges, more attractive. Late on Sunday, protesters gave the government 48 hours to meet a string of new demands, but most appeared to be obeying the curfew on Monday in cities that had seen regular demonstrations after a high court

in June reinstated the old quotas. Thousands were injured in protests that turned violent last week, as security forces fired tear gas, rubber bullets and sound grenades to scatter the demonstrators.

Tanks were seen stationed at several places in Dhaka on Monday, while armed security patrols directed the few motorists who ventured out. There were no reports of violence in the country, officials said.

The new demands from protesters included a public apology from Hasina for the violence, restoration of internet connections and reopening of campuses. The Anti-Discrimination Student Movement also called for the resignation of some ministers and university officials and the dismissal of police officers deployed in the areas where students were killed. "We are giving an ultimatum to the government to fulfil our eight-point demand within 48 hours," one of the Movement's leaders, Hasnat Abdullah, told reporters. He did not say what would happen if the government did not meet the demands. The government did not immediately comment. Dhaka police said they had arrested 516 people for involvement in "destructive attacks". Police spokesperson Faruq Hossain said three policemen were killed in the violence and more than 1,000 injured. "Normalcy will return within one or two days," Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan told reporters. The government issued a notification that extended a public holiday declared over the last two days to Tuesday.

Protesters said some of their leaders were detained, including Nahid Islam, who told the media he was picked up by "20-30 people" claiming to be police early on Sunday morning and taken to a room where he said he was tortured until he lost consciousness.

"When I regained consciousness I found myself lying on the streets," he said. Dhaka police denied detaining him. Bangladesh's \$416 billion economy had been one of the fastest-growing in the world for years, but has faced struggles after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Costly energy imports after the war in Ukraine shrank its dollar reserves, which fanned inflation and pushed the government to seek a bailout from the International Monetary Fund.

## Harris Secures Delegates Needed to Become Democratic Nominee for President

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris secured support Monday from a majority of delegates to the Democratic National Convention, likely ensuring she will become the party's nominee for president next month, according to multiple sources. President Joe Biden threw his support behind Harris on Sunday when he withdrew from the race amid questions about his age and health. He pledged to remain in office as president until his term ends on Jan. 20, 2025. An Associated Press survey of delegates showed Harris had the support of 2,538 delegates, well beyond the 1,976 needed to win the delegates vote in the coming weeks. Democratic National Committee Chairman Jaime Harrison said on Monday the party will deliver a presidential nominee by Aug. 7. Delegates could still change their minds before Aug. 7, but nobody else received any votes in the AP survey, and 57 delegates said they were undecided. In Harris' first public appearance since the announcement, she rallied supporters on Monday with a debut campaign speech vowing to go after Republican nominee Donald Trump like the courtroom prosecutor she once was. "I took on perpetrators of all kinds. Predators who abused women, fraudsters who ripped off consumers, cheaters who broke the rules for their own gain," Harris told campaign workers 28 hours after President Joe Biden, 81, abandoned the 2024 White House race and endorsed her. "So hear me when I say I know Donald Trump's type. In this campaign, I will proudly, I will proudly put my record against his," said Harris, who was attorney general of California and a U.S. senator before serving as Biden's vice president. The Trump campaign responded to Harris' comments. "Kamala Harris is just as incompetent as Joe Biden and even more liberal," said Karoline Leavitt, the campaign's national press secretary. "Not only does Kamala need to defend her support of Joe Biden's failed agenda over the past four years, she also needs to answer for her own terrible weak-on-crime record in California."

Trump is due to be sentenced in September after having been found guilty of falsifying business



records to hide hush money payments to a porn star. He also faces criminal charges related to his efforts to overturn Biden's 2020 victory. He falsely claims he lost in 2020 because of election fraud. Recovering from COVID-19 at his home in Delaware, Biden called into Harris' campaign event. He sounded hoarse but appreciative of his vice president.

Biden said he thought he had made the right decision by dropping out. The oldest person ever to occupy the Oval Office, Biden said on Sunday he would remain in the presidency until his term ends on Jan. 20, 2025. Harris, 59, outlined a series of policies she promised to pursue including signing laws to protect abortion rights and ban assault rifles and said she would make rebuilding the middle class the focus of her presidency.

Within minutes of receiving Biden's backing on Sunday, Harris began consolidating Democratic support for her presidential bid, securing commitments from hundreds of convention delegates, announcing a massive fundraising haul and earning endorsements from top party figures, Reuters was first to report. These included former Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who has remained influential since stepping down as the party's House of Representatives leader in 2022. The AFL-CIO labor union federation, which represents 12.5 million workers, said on Monday it had also endorsed Harris for president. Harris' campaign said it raised \$81 million in the 24 hours following Biden's exit, the most for a single day in the 2024 campaign for either party. Virtually all of the prominent Democrats who had been seen as potential challengers to Harris have declared support for her, including Governors Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan, Gavin Newsom of California and Andy Beshear of Kentucky. Whitmer, in a post on X, on Monday said she would serve as co-chair of Harris' campaign. Biden's departure was the latest shock to a White House race that included his disastrous June 27 debate performance against former President Trump and the July 13 near-assassination of Trump by a gunman during a campaign stop.

## Israel Issues Evacuation Orders in south Gaza, Kills 16 Palestinians

GAZA (Dispatches) - Israeli tank shelling and airstrikes killed at least 16 Palestinians near Khan Younis, Gaza medics said today, after Israel issued new orders to evacuate some neighbourhoods following what it said were renewed attacks from those areas. To facilitate evacuations, the military said, it was adjusting the boundaries of a humanitarian zone in Al-Mawasi to keep the civilian population away from areas of combat with Hamas-led Palestinian militants. Palestinian health officials said at least 16 Palestinians were killed by Israeli tank salvos in the town of Bani Suhaila just east of the southern city of Khan Younis, with the area also bombed by air. The Gaza health ministry said the dead included six children and four women. It added that dozens of others were wounded by Israeli fire. Hamas media put the number of the dead at 26. The military statement said the new orders were due to renewed Palestinian militant attacks, including rockets launched from the targeted areas in eastern Khan Younis. The evacuation orders did not include health institutions, Palestinians said. The Palestinians, the United Nations and international relief agencies have said there is no safe place left in Gaza. Earlier in July, dozens of Palestinians were killed in separate Israeli attacks in the humanitarian-designated Al-Mawasi area. Israel said the attacks were aimed at armed militants, including some top Hamas military

commanders. Palestinian officials called those allegations false and said they were used to justify the attacks. Later today, health officials at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis urged residents to donate blood because of the large number of casualties being rushed into the medical center. Reuters footage showed casualties, including some women and children, arriving at Nasser Hospital in ambulances and others in private cars. "A family, including children, were all torn to pieces while they were sleeping," said a man who arrived in an ambulance bearing the bodies. The Palestinian Civil Emergency Service said it had reports of dozens of people killed by Israeli aerial and tank fire on the eastern outskirts of Khan Younis but teams could not reach them because of the intensity of the bombardment. Meanwhile, the Israeli military carried out air strikes on two houses in the Al-Bureij and Deir Al-Balah areas of the central Gaza Strip, wounding several people, medics said. Another air strike in Gaza City in the north of the densely populated enclave killed two other Palestinians, they added. Israel vowed to eradicate Hamas after militants killed 1,200 people and took more than 250 hostages in a cross-border assault on Oct. 7 last year, according to Israeli tallies. At least 38,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's retaliatory offensive since then, Gaza health authorities say.





## LeBron James Scores Final 11 Points in Win Over Germany

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - On Friday, LeBron James will carry the U.S. flag. But first, he carried the U.S. men's basketball team.

James scored the final 11 points for the Americans down the stretch, and the four-time reigning Olympic gold medalists held off World Cup champion Germany 92-88 in London on Monday night in their final tune-up before the Paris Games start later this week. Announced earlier in the day as the male flagbearer for the Americans in Friday night's opening ceremony down the River Seine — the female flagbearer will be revealed Tuesday — James came through time and time again down the stretch, just as he did over the weekend when his layup with 8 seconds left gave the U.S. a 101-100 win over upstart South Sudan. James had 20 points for the U.S., while Joel Embiid scored 15, Stephen Curry had 13 and Anthony Edwards finished with 11. "It was a good test for us. And I'm glad we were able to once again, you know, keep our composure, persevere like we did the other day versus South Sudan," James said. "It was a good win for us." Franz Wagner led Germany with 18 points. Andreas Obst — the hero of last year's German win over the U.S. in the World Cup semifinals — had 14, while Dennis Schroder had a 13-point, 10-assist night. Daniel Theis added 13 for Germany and Moritz Wagner scored 12. The Americans finished their exhibition slate 5-0, but there was only one game that was a true cakewalk. That was against Serbia, the team that'll face the U.S. on Sunday in the first Olympic game this summer for both teams. Canada gave the U.S. issues at times. Australia came from way back to make things interesting at the end, South Sudan nearly pulled off an upset as a 43.5-point underdog and the Germans had the lead over the U.S. with 4

minutes left on Monday. Then it was James' time. He outscored Germany 11-6 by himself in the final 3:57. And now, Paris awaits. The games start for real this weekend. "We've had every experience," Curry said. "Now it's obviously a matter of showing up when the lights are bright next week. I think we're ready. I think we're prepared. Now we have to perform." For the second consecutive game, the U.S. got outscored by 21 points from 3-point range. And it nearly burned the Americans again.

Germany was 13 for 45 from beyond the arc, the U.S. was 6 for 17, and that's a 39-18 difference in points from deep. South Sudan outscored the U.S. 42-21 from deep on Saturday. Also not helping the U.S. cause on Monday: it had 14 turnovers to Germany's seven. "I don't think we've played our best offensive game yet," Curry said. Theis had 26 points, while Schroder and Obst had 24 apiece in Germany's 113-111 win over the U.S. in the World Cup at Manila a year ago. That trio was fantastic again Monday, combining for 40 points. It should be noted that the loss to Germany last year was about when some players — James, for example — started seriously thinking about joining the U.S. program for this run to the Paris Games. Kevin Durant got some pregame shots up again, just as he did Saturday in London. And, again, that was the extent of his game-night action. The three-time gold medalist did not play while he continues to recover from the calf strain he suffered a few days before the U.S. convened for training camp in Las Vegas. Durant missed all five pre-Olympic games exhibitions, though he did practice this past weekend. He has not appeared in a real game since late April, when Phoenix was swept in a first-round NBA playoff series by Minnesota.

## Cavendish Confirms He Has Ridden His Last Tour



NICE (Dispatches) - British cyclist Mark Cavendish has confirmed that he has taken part in his last Tour de France, having finally broken the all-time record for most stage wins at the Tour.

Cavendish had been level on 34 stage wins with Eddy Merckx since 2021 but this year he sprinted to victory on stage five to make the record his own, and now the 39-year-old can bow out in style.

"I think now it's time. I've done 15 Tours de France and I've created some incredible memories of the Tour de France," Cavendish told Reuters.

"This race has given me a life I could only dream of. It's given me the highest of highs and the lowest of lows."

Cavendish was able to relax in Sunday's final stage, an individual time trial from Monaco to Nice, a change from the usual sprint finish in Paris due to the upcoming Olympics in the French capital.

"This year was a different finish to normal. Normally, Tour de France has this incredible finish on the Champs-Élysées in Paris and as a sprinter it's always pressure," Cavendish said.

"It's the world championships for sprinters on the Champs-Élysées so to get there you still have the pressure on the last day you still have to try and perform."

"A time trial is not something I have pressure for because I'm not going to win so I could really enjoy it. I was able to really enjoy the crowds and really enjoy, absorb what the Tour de France offers without any pressure on the last day."

Cavendish had announced his retirement last year but changed his mind in an attempt to go out the way he wanted having crashed at last year's Tour.

## Mensik, Cobolli Make Winning Starts in Umag

ZAGREB (Dispatches) - Czech teen Jakub Mensik continued his push towards a place at December's Next Gen ATP Finals presented by PIF with a convincing win over Alexei Popyrin at the Plava Laguna Croatia Open Umag Monday. Mensik, who reached the Doha final in February, improved to 13-10 on the season with a 6-3, 6-2 win over the Australian (13-13), who recently pushed Novak Djokovic to four sets at Wimbledon. In the pair's first Lexus ATP Head2Head meeting, 18-year-old Mensik saved all four break points he faced according to Infosys ATP Stats. Mensik, who is now 8-4 in first-round matches in his career, next faces the winner of fifth-seeded Italian Luciano Darderi and home hope Duje Ajdukovic, who last week pushed Rafael Nadal to three sets in the Bastad semi-finals. In another good result for the ATP's emerging stars Monday, 22-year-old Italian Flavio Cobolli upset sixth-seeded Argentine Mariano Navone 6-2, 6-3. The win lifted Cobolli to a career-high No. 46 in the PIF ATP Live Rankings. Brazilian Thiago Monteiro defeated seventh-seeded Czech Tomas Machac 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 to set a meeting with Hungarian Fabian Marozsan. Lorenzo Sonego denied 20-year-old Croatian Mili Poljacak his first tour-level with an exhausting 6-2, 6-7(1), 7-6(9) victory in three hours and 16 minutes, with the Italian fighting through cramps in the final set. He next will meet Frenchman Alexandre Muller. Meanwhile Laslo Djere continued his history of strong showings in



Kitzbühel on Monday, when the Serbian moved past qualifier Vit Kopriva to kick-start his 2024 campaign at the Generali Open. The eighth seed prevailed 7-6(6), 6-3 in the first-round clash at the clay-court ATP 250. Djere is a two-time semi-finalist in Kitzbühel, and he improved his record in the Austrian Alpine town to 8-4 by converting three of four break points he earned against Kopriva, according to Infosys ATP Stats. "I like the conditions here," said Djere in his post-match interview. "The balls are a bit faster due to the altitude, and I generally like faster conditions. It just really suits my game well." Djere will take on Thiago Seyboth Wild, a 6-2, 7-6(6) winner against #NextGenATP home favourite Joel Schwaerzler, in the second round. The Serbian defeated Seyboth Wild in the second round in Kitzbühel last year and holds a 3-0 lead overall in his Lexus ATP Head2Head series with the Brazilian. Yannick Hanfmann, Nicolas Moreno De Alboran and Sumit Nagal also registered first-round wins on Monday in Austria. The 2020 finalist Hanfmann defeated Jaume Munar 6-3, 6-4 and wild card Moreno De Alboran beat Andrea Collarini 6-4, 6-4. Nagal let slip six match points before finally overcoming Lukas Klein 6-4, 1-6, 7-6(3).

## Aguirre Returns as Mexico's Head Coach for a Third Time



MEXICO CITY (AP) - Javier Aguirre has been appointed head coach of Mexico's national team for the third time and will replace Jaime Lozano, the Mexican soccer federation confirmed Monday.

Rafael Marquez, who played in five World Cups for Mexico and was the coach of Barcelona's reserve team, will be Aguirre's main assistant.

The 65-year-old Aguirre led Mexico to the Round of 16 at the 2002 and 2010 World Cups. Mexico was knocked out in that round at every World Cup between 1994 and 2018, then was eliminated in the group stage in 2022.

"(Aguirre) is without a doubt the Mexican coach with the longest and most recognized career abroad and he also has in-depth knowledge of the processes in national teams," said Duilio Davino, director of national teams.

Davino said Marquez will be Aguirre's assistant for two years under a plan for him to take over as head coach for the 2030 World Cup.

"Rafa" is one of the most important players in Mexican history with a great national and international career who began his coaching career with an emblematic team. We have offered him to be the assistant until 2026 so that he can contribute his knowledge and then assume the leadership," Davino said.

Lozano was hired last year to replace Diego Cocca and led Mexico to the 2023 Gold Cup title. He was fired two weeks after Mexico's group-stage exit at the Copa America.

Aguirre is the only Mexican who has coached at the elite level in Europe. He has led six teams in Spain, including Atlético de Madrid and Mallorca, with which he reached the final of the Copa del Rey this past season.

He has also coached the national teams of Japan and Egypt.

Aguirre's first games back in charge will be in September when Mexico plays friendlies against New Zealand and Canada in the United States.

The 45-year-old Marquez played in his last World Cup in Russia in 2018. As a player, Marquez won four league titles and two Champions League titles with Barcelona.

He had coached Barcelona's reserve team the last two years.

## IOC Expects Paris Games to Be Spectacular in Ever-Divisive World



PARIS (Dispatches) - The Paris Olympics will be a spectacular event at a time of historic global disruptions and growing divisive forces, International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach said on Monday, four days before the Games opening ceremony. The Olympics in the French capital will see several firsts, with an opening ceremony on barges along the river Seine instead of the traditional ceremony in an Olympic stadium. The Games will also incorporate the city's major landmarks, including the Eiffel tower, into the competitions, many of which will be staged in urban areas across the city. It will also be the first Olympics to have gender parity, with equal numbers of men and women participating. "Like billions of people around the world we are awaiting with impatience the youngest, most inclusive, most urban and most sustainable Games," IOC President Thomas Bach said at the opening of his organization's session in the French capital. "We are convinced that together with the entire world we will experience spectacular Olympic Games," he said, with French President Emmanuel Macron in attendance. More than 10,500 athletes representing 206 national Olympic Committees will compete at the 16-day multi-sports event, 100 years since the last time the French capital staged them,

with more than 30,000 security officers on duty. Bach also highlighted the global sports body's challenges in what he called a new world order. "We are witnessing a new world order in the making," he said. "Historic disruptions are upending the system of international relations that has been in place since the second World War." "The trends are clear: decoupling of economies; beggar-thy-neighbour; narrow self-interests trumping the rule of law; 'Global South' vs 'Global North'. Everywhere you look, multilateralism is on the back foot." He said the IOC's focus on solidarity, which will be fuelled by increased revenues over the next years that are to be distributed to national Olympic committees, international federations and other stakeholders, was crucial. Bach said the IOC had already secured \$7.3 billion for the years 2025-28 and had raised \$6.2 billion in deals for the period 2029-2032. He said changing lifestyles of young people in a digital world risked alienating the Olympic movement from a young generation. "We can and we must change before we are being changed," Bach said. "For this change we need to change our mindset. We need the mindset of the digital natives. We have to go where the young people are, in the real world and the digital world." "If we want to remain relevant in their digital lives we must engage with this digitally native generation in their digital way of living," he said.