

IRAN NEWS

Iran's Government Spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani Has Emphasized That the Three Persian Gulf Islands of Abu Mousa, Greater Tunb, and Lesser Tunb Are Integral Parts of Great Iran.

Majlis Dismissed Media Stories About the Views Expressed by Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf in an Interview With French Newspaper Le Figaro on How a Ceasefire Should Be Established in Lebanon

2 DOMESTIC



10,000 Historical Coins Donated to Azerbaijan Museum

> SEE PAGE 2

3 INTERNATIONAL

Hezbollah to Escalate War With Israel After Hamas Leader Assassinated



> SEE PAGE 3

FM in Turkey for More Important Than Ever Talks



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran's Foreign Minister says the regional countries share concerns about the possible spillover of the Israeli war on Gaza and Lebanon into West Asia.

Upon his arrival to Turkey on Friday, Abbas Araqchi noted that he addressed escalating tensions during his regional tour that saw him in Jordan and Egypt earlier this week.

"Considering the current situation in the region and the Zionist regime's attacks on Lebanon that followed the attacks on Gaza, and the dangerous circumstances that exist in the region, we have held talks with the regional countries," he told reporters.

Referring to his recent trips to Jordan and Egypt, Araqchi said "Now, we have come to Turkey to continue the talks."

"Currently, there is a common understanding of the danger of the conflict in Gaza and Lebanon, the displaced people, and the issue of the possible expansion of the war into the region. And in fact, it is a dominant concern," he said.

Araqchi noted that he will meet with Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and the country's foreign minister, Hakan Fidan during his current trip to Istanbul.

Referring to Iran-Turkey good ties and their previous talks on regional issues, he said, "Due to the current developments in the region and the dangers that threaten the region..., today's talks will be more important than ever."

After his meetings with Egyptian officials on Thursday, Araqchi said his talks with Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi on the situation in the region were "very frank and direct."

He noted that the two sides agreed on the de-escalation of regional tensions and preventing the spread of the war to the region.

Araqchi also noted that bilateral issues between the two countries were also discussed, adding, "I think that there is a better perspective now."

"We have common concerns and interests and it's natural that there are also disputed issues. Today's talks were very productive."

U.S., Germany Main Apologists of Israeli Crimes



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry says the United States and Germany are the main apologists of Israel's crimes and its biggest supplier of lethal weapons.

Esmail Baghaei criticized Washington and Berlin in a post on his X account on Thursday on the occasion of the first anniversary of the Israeli regime's airstrike on the Mamdani Hospital, also known as Ahli Arab Hospital, in the besieged Gaza Strip.

On October 17, 2023, Israel massacred more than 500 Palestinians, including injured women and children, during its airstrike against the hospital. Many of the victims were taking shelter there from days of ruthless Israeli bombardment of the blockaded territory.

"The people of Palestine, region and beyond will not forget that #US and #Germany, as the main apologists of Israeli crimes, are the regime's biggest supplier of lethal weapons as well," Baghaei said.

He added that there is no limit to cruelty, "if accompanied with ideological narcissism and impunity."

He noted that the innocent people of Gaza were brutally slaughtered during Israel's attack, the regime's first case of war crime in Gaza in the first days of its genocidal war "which drew unanimous global condemnation."

The Iranian spokesman held the US and some European countries responsible for Israel's persistence of its carnage in Gaza and wider war against Palestinians across their occupied homeland, citing "full impunity" provided to Tel Aviv by them.

"Complicity in atrocity is as repulsive as the actual atrocity," Baghaei emphasized.

Israel has killed over 2,300 people and injured nearly 11,000 in Lebanon since October 8, 2023, according to Lebanon's Public Health Ministry.



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's UN ambassador has strongly rejected Israel's claims that Tehran has violated international law and the United Nations Charter and said that ready to defend its sovereignty against the regime's aggression.

Amir Sa'ed Iravani said that Iran does not seek war, but is fully prepared to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity against any aggression.

He said a regime that is notorious for persistent and blatant violations of international law lacks the moral authority to accuse other nations.

He made the remarks in a letter to the UN chief and the Security Council's president on Thursday.

"I am writing to you in response to the unfounded accusations made by the representative of the Israeli regime in the letter dated 8 October 2024 (S/2024/721), which falsely claims that the Islamic Republic of Iran has violated international law and the United Nations Charter," Iravani said.

"In the letter, the representative of the terrorist and occupying regime of Israel, as always, resorts to false narratives, disinformation, and blatant lies to deflect attention from the regime's ongoing genocide and war crimes against the people of Palestine and Lebanon and to invert the roles of culprit and victim," he wrote.

"Yet, the truth starkly contrasts these fabrications, and the undeniable facts speak for themselves," he added.

Iravani defended Iran's support for resistance groups as entirely legitimate under international law.

He said resistance groups are engaged in a lawful struggle against Israel's brutal occupation and Iran will continue to support them.

The Iranian diplomat asserted that Israel's actions are indisputable war crimes. He said the regime poses a grave threat to international peace and security while pushing the entire region to the brink of war.

Iravani stressed that the time has come for the international community, and the Security Council in particular, to hold the Israeli regime accountable.

On October 1, Iran responded to the Israeli assassination of Hamas political bureau chief Ismail Haniyeh, Hezbollah Secretary General Seyed Hassan Nasrallah, and IRGC general Abbas Nilfourosan by launching as many as 200 ballistic missiles toward the occupying regime's military and intelligence bases all over the occupied Palestinian territories.

Dubbed Operation True Promise II, the retaliatory strike dealt a severe blow to the illegal regime all the more ruinous than its prequel in April, with Tel Aviv having so far declined to reveal the extent of loss it suffered despite vowing to respond on several occasions.

While the Israeli regime has threatened to retaliate, Iranian officials have warned that Tehran is "ready" to respond to any adventurism.

The regime has since October last year brought Gaza under a genocidal war and intensified its deadly attacks against Lebanon. The war and the escalation have so far claimed the lives of more than 42,400 Palestinians and upwards of 2,300 Lebanese people.

Houthi Vows No Letup in Anti-Israeli Operations After U.S., UK Bomb Yemen

SANAA (Dispatches) - The leader of the Ansarullah resistance movement says Yemen will continue its operations against Israel and its allies in support of the Palestinian and Lebanese nations.

Abul-Malik al-Houthi's remarks in a televised speech on Thursday came after U.S. and British warplanes bombed capital Sana'a and several other areas, with the Pentagon saying it used "B-2 stealth bombers for the 1st time in airstrikes on Yemen".

He said Washington is seeking to enable the Tel Aviv regime to dominate the entire West Asia region, either directly or through political and economic aspects.

Houthi said Israel's expansionist goals pose a great danger not only to Arab countries but the entire region.

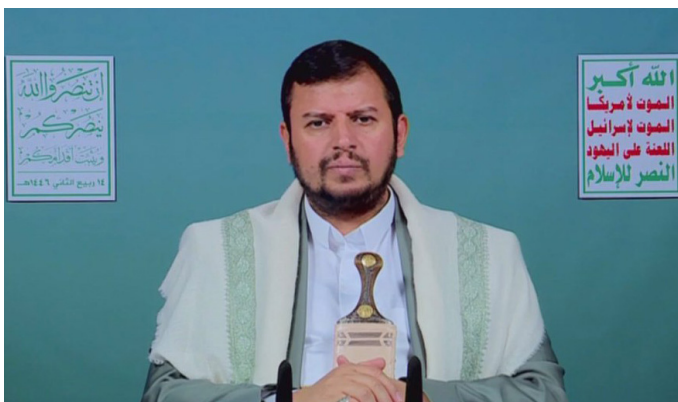
The Ansarullah chief called on the Yemenis to take to the streets on Friday to showcase their strong solidarity with the Palestinians and the Lebanese people.

Houthi condemned US complicity in Israeli atrocities against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the Lebanese people.

"The US is a partner in every sense of the word with the Zionist regime in its crimes, brutalities as well as acts of aggression and tyranny," he said.

"Without American partnership and support, the Israeli enemy would not have been able to continue the Gaza war and Lebanon conflict this long, with such high intensity of cruelty and criminality," he added.

The Israeli military is practicing the same methods of aggression in Lebanon as it does in the Gaza Strip, he said, adding Israeli forces are targeting unarmed Lebanese civilians indiscriminately.



"The scenes of atrocities in Gaza provide sufficient evidence for the level of Zionists' viciousness. Lack of awareness about the danger being posed by the Zionists will reinforce their belief that Arabs and Muslims are ignorant and uninterested in the unfolding developments," the Ansarullah leader said.

Houthi said Israel has perpetrated the most heinous crimes ever since its creation in 1948, adding the atrocities show the Zionist regime is devoid of all human values and principles, and has committed acts of violence at the worst level.

"It has become clear to everyone that neither can the United Nations nor international bodies avert the danger of the Zionist enemy. Only the rise of the Muslim Ummah can do so," he said.

"The Zionist enemy has resorted to mass killing and assassination of innocent people, whilst it has failed on the battlefield. Genocide continues in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli enemy brutally targets all refugees in Gaza as well as school-turned-shelters for displaced Palestinians with destructive and incendiary bombs provided by the US."

The Ansarullah leader said the Israeli military is trying to prevent the entry of food and water into northern Gaza to starve the local population there.

"Hospitals and medical centers that had just resumed their operations were targeted by the enemy again, and are not functional anymore."

He also lashed out at some Arab regimes for failing to provide the Palestinian nation with firm support and practical assistance, emphasizing that the situation would have been distinctly different if these things had been offered.

Operation True Promise II just Warning to Israel



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami says Operation True Promise II served just as a warning to Israel, stressing that it was only a small part of Iran's power.

Salami made the remarks at the mass funeral ceremony of Brigadier General Abbas Nilfourosan in the central city of Isfahan on Thursday, less than three weeks after the former IRGC senior commander was assassinated in an Israeli aggression on Lebanon.

"Operation True Promise II was a magnificent display of the power of a great nation whose art lies in creating unparalleled epics, showing no fear, and never backing down. We warn Israel that Operation True Promise II was a warning and alert. It was the smallest scale of action we could take, demonstrating only a small portion of our power," Salami said.

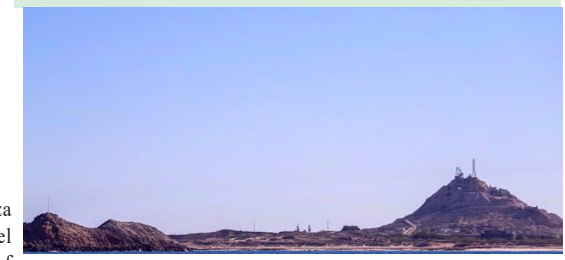
On October 1, IRGC launched hundreds of supersonic ballistic missiles toward the Israeli entity's military, espionage and intelligence bases all over the occupied territories, inflicting damage on them.

"We carried out Operation True Promise II to refine your calculations and make it clear that if you attack our interests, we will strike back. We acted to show you that if our national sovereignty is violated, we will target you in your own land without hesitation," Salami warned, addressing Israel.

"We wanted to convey that relying on missile defense alone won't be enough, we will surpass it. Our goal was to demonstrate through action that you must adjust your behavior. And now we are telling you once again, as you know, when we say something, we follow through. Be careful not to make another mistake. If you misstep or attack any of our targets, whether in the region or inside Iran, we will strike you again and it will be painful."

The operation - dubbed Operation True Promise II - came in response to the regime's assassinations of Hamas' chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, Hezbollah's leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, and Nilfourosan, an Iranian military advisory in Lebanon.

Europe Embarking on Misguided, Perilous Path



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's permanent mission to the United Nations has denounced a joint statement of the EU and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) about three Persian Gulf Iranian islands, stating that Europe is embarking on a misguided and perilous path vis-à-vis the Islamic Republic.

In a post published on its official X account on Thursday, the mission stated that while European leaders acknowledged during high-level negotiations with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on the sidelines of the 79th annual session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York that mutual concerns could be resolved through dialogue, they have surrendered to baseless allegations regarding Iran's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

"Europe is currently embarking on a misguided and perilous path vis-à-vis Iran. During the high-level week in New York and in a forward-looking approach, seven European leaders—in individual meetings with the President of Iran—acknowledged that the concerns of both parties could be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy," the mission said.

"Yet, in Brussels, they have recklessly ignored international law and the UN Charter, allowing themselves to become pawns of unfounded claims regarding Iran's sovereignty and territorial integrity," the post read.

Earlier, Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi strongly condemned the irrelevant and meddling EU-GCC statement against Iran, stating it carries many messages.

IRAN NEWS



Let's Begin Free Trade with Neighbors

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Samad Hasanzadeh, President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, spoke to ILNA reporters about the potential for free trade between Iran and neighboring countries. He stated, "Our country can engage in free trade with certain countries, and some countries' banks are cooperating well with Iranians to transfer money. However, currency and money transfers remain our biggest challenge in this area." He added, "Banking officials and relevant organizations have provided facilities for Iranian traders in this regard." Hasanzadeh emphasized, "We need to initiate free trade in the country, especially with neighboring countries, and focus particularly on Eurasian countries." He pointed out, "Free trade of goods that are not under sanctions can be a strong point in this field. Medicines, medical goods, and equipment are examples of such products that, even under sanctions, can be used to begin expanding free trade."

European Peace Ambassadors Tour Highlights Iran's Security



TEHRAN - A group of European tourists, including 16 motorcyclists from countries like Spain, Italy, and Portugal, embarked on a 50-day tour promoting global peace and arrived in Iran on October 12, according to Iran's Public Relations of the Tourism Deputy. The tour is aligned with the United Nations World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) 2024 theme of "Tourism and Peace."

Starting in Barcelona, Spain, and set to conclude in Kathmandu, Nepal, the group entered Iran through the Turkish border. During their stay, the tourists visited several cities, including Urmia, Marivan, Oramanat Takht, Paveh, and Kermanshah, before continuing through Lorestan, Dorud, Khansar, and the historic city of Isfahan. An official reception was held in Isfahan's Naqsh-e Jahan Square to welcome the peace ambassadors.

From Isfahan, the group is set to travel to Kerman and Bam, and will eventually exit Iran through the Taftan border into Pakistan.

According to Moslem Shojaei, Director-General of Foreign Tourism Marketing and Development, this 12,000-kilometer journey symbolizes global peace and offers Iran an opportunity to demonstrate its hospitality and security. Despite international media often portraying Iran as unsafe, the successful hosting of these European tourists sends a strong message to the world that Iran is a secure and welcoming destination for travelers.

The tourists' journey across the country showcases Iran's high level of safety and presents the country as a peaceful and inviting place for international visitors.

This tour aims to break stereotypes and promote tourism by highlighting Iran's readiness to welcome tourists from around the world.



Iranian Investments in Afghan Mines Increase

TEHRAN - Ghadir Ghiyafeh, Vice President of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, has announced that economic activists from Zanjan are investing in Afghanistan's zinc mines. He also mentioned that Afghan officials have recently proposed to Iranians to participate in the exploitation of the Hajigak iron ore mine.

Ghiyafeh discussed Iran's interest in Afghanistan's mineral reserves, explaining that many Iranian mining companies are eager to collaborate with Afghanistan, given the country's significant mineral resources. He added that Afghanistan recently extended an invitation to Iranians for involvement in the Hajigak iron ore mine project.

He further highlighted that the Chinese are not far behind in the competition. China has a significant presence in Afghanistan, particularly at the Aynak copper mine. The Chinese have even proposed building a power plant to facilitate the processing of extracted minerals within Afghanistan.

However, Ghiyafeh pointed out that moving Iranian capital to Afghanistan for mining projects is a challenging task. He emphasized that there is still untapped mining potential in Iran itself, which should be addressed. Despite this, the limitations on Iran's iron ore reserves mean that Iran must look beyond its borders to source raw materials for its steel production chain. Afghanistan, being a neighboring country, offers a promising solution.

Ghiyafeh revealed that a consortium of Iranian companies has already been formed to engage in mining activities in Afghanistan. He noted that Afghanistan's mineral reserves are not limited to iron ore, but also include copper, gold, zinc, and chromite, all of which have the potential to attract Iranian investors. He mentioned that investors from Zanjan are currently working with Afghan partners on zinc extraction projects.

He also remarked that Iranians were keen on investing in Afghan mines even before the Taliban took control, but faced significant challenges. He recalled an incident from years ago when an Iranian industrial company tried to invest in Afghanistan's mines but was blocked by the then-government due to U.S. pressure.



By: F. Taherpoor

TABRIZ - In a significant cultural event, 10,000 historical coins were officially donated to the Azerbaijan Museum in Tabriz. This donation, which aims to preserve and highlight the rich heritage of the region, was celebrated in a special unveiling ceremony attended by Seyed Reza Salehi Amiri, the Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, along with local officials and tourism investors.

During the event, Salehi Amiri praised the Ministry's role in safeguarding historical artifacts and emphasized the importance of preserving cultural heritage. He ceremonially handed over 1,000 of the donated coins to the Azerbaijan Museum as a symbolic gesture of the larger donation, marking the beginning of a new era for the museum's collection.

"This significant contribution enriches our national heritage and demonstrates our commitment to preserving the country's historical treasures," Salehi Amiri said at the unveiling. He went on to underscore the role of heritage in shaping national identity and its potential for boosting tourism, particularly in regions like Tabriz, which has a deep cultural and historical background.

Earlier in the day, the Minister held meetings with local investors and tourism organizations in East Azerbaijan Province, where he discussed the region's potential as a tourism hub. Tabriz, often regarded as the "gem of Iranian tourism," was highlighted as a city that holds all 20 key indicators of tourism capacity, including its historical significance, cultural landmarks, and strategic location.

"Tabriz has all the potential to become a leading tourism destination in the country," Salehi Amiri stated. "By activating its unique capacities, we can not only boost local tourism but also contribute significantly to the nation's economy."

He stressed the importance of investment—both domestic and foreign—in transforming the city's tourism landscape. "The country's progress depends on the active participation of private investors. We need to shift our approach towards investment and increase the involvement of the private sector to overcome obstacles in tourism development," he added.

Salehi Amiri pointed out that empowering non-governmental organizations and local governments could greatly enhance tourism infrastructure. He praised countries like Georgia, which with a population of just 3.5 million, attracts millions of tourists annually, and emphasized that Tabriz has comparable potential if its capacities are fully utilized.

As part of his broader vision for the tourism sector, the Minister announced steps toward decentralizing governmental powers to provincial authorities. "We have transferred 25 responsibilities from Tehran to provincial offices, and we plan to continue delegating more authority to local governors, mayors, and provincial planning councils," he said.

Increase in Gasoline Production on the Agenda

TEHRAN - The CEO of the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) announced that one of the key objectives of the Seventh Development Plan is to raise daily gasoline production to 129 million liters. He emphasized that the company is focused on enhancing the production of high-quality oil products by utilizing existing refinery capacities and completing priority projects that are nearing completion.

Mohammad Sadegh Azimifar stated that in the first seven months of this year, liquid fuel supplied to power plants increased by 38% compared to the same period last year. Additionally, gasoline consumption rose by 7% (1.6 billion liters), which was met through stable utilization of current distribution and transportation capacities.

Azimifar highlighted efforts to ensure stable fuel distribution to power plants this winter. He emphasized the need for effective planning in production to secure a stable supply of liquid fuel during the cold season. The company managed to increase gasoline, diesel, and fuel oil production at refineries in October by addressing bottlenecks and improving refinery feedstock.

He also mentioned that the imminent commissioning of the second Bandar Abbas-Rafsanjan pipeline would significantly boost the capacity to transport oil products from southern regions to central and northern parts of the country.

Azimifar stressed the need for increasing liquid fuel delivery to power plants this winter, particularly through the use of new pipeline networks, expansion of road and rail tankers, and ensuring higher fuel delivery volumes compared to last year to prevent any disruption in the country's fuel supply.



Addressing energy imbalances in the country, he noted that delays in timely decision-making are a major contributor. He called for a shared understanding among various institutions of the factors behind these imbalances and urged all sectors to take responsibility for resolving the issue.

The deputy minister reiterated that increasing daily gasoline production to 129 million liters is a key target for NIORDC, which will be achieved through prioritizing and maximizing the use of available resources. The focus remains on improving production quality by leveraging the capabilities of existing refineries and completing high-priority projects.

Azimifar explained that increasing production would require improved efficiency at refineries and a focus on high-progress projects. Diversifying the country's fuel mix is another priority, as compressed natural gas (CNG) consumption has dropped from 24 million cubic meters per day to 19 million in recent years, signaling a missed opportunity to capitalize on this resource.

He also stressed the importance of maintaining and developing energy transmission and storage infrastructure, pointing out that current infrastructure cannot support the stable transfer of such high volumes of oil products.

Regarding the transportation sector, Azimifar highlighted that over 50% of the country's transportation fleet is outdated, consuming three times the global fuel consumption average. Additionally, new fleets sometimes fail to meet global standards, leading to excessive fuel consumption. The lack of development in public transportation infrastructure has also forced many people to rely on private cars.

Target Set for Transporting One Million Tons of Cargo Through Astara Railway Border



TEHRAN - In a recent joint meeting between Roshan Rustamov, the President of the Azerbaijan Railways, and Jabbarali Zakeri, Managing Director of the Iran Railways, discussions were held regarding the progress of the Astara-Astara railway connection and loading station project. Highlighting the good relations and cooperation between Iran and Azerbaijan, Rustamov called for an increase in the rail collaborations between the two countries.

Rustamov emphasized the significance of the Astara-Astara railway connection and its cargo terminal in enhancing freight transit along the North-South corridor. He noted that Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development, during a recent visit to the Azerbaijan-Nakhchivan connection through Iran, confirmed that this project would have both rail and road components. The Azerbaijan Railways president expressed a keen interest in completing the Astara railway project as soon as possible. He noted that the current capacity of the railway line from Baku to the Russian border stands at 15 million tons. Once the ongoing construction projects are completed, this capacity is expected to rise to 40 million tons.

Rustamov also reported on the development of railway projects along the southern section of the route, from Baku to Astara, stating that once these projects are finished, the capacity of this route will increase to 15 million tons.

He commended the efforts of Iran Railways' management in inviting rail transport companies to expedite cargo movement, stating that these efforts will likely result in increased freight volume along the route.

Rustamov further emphasized Azerbaijan Railways' responsibility in cargo transportation, adding that they are particularly interested in using the western branch of the corridor. He explained that the infrastructure in Azerbaijan is superior to that of the eastern branch, which is one of the reasons why Russia prefers to transport its cargo via this route. The Azerbaijan Railways president also suggested holding a joint meeting between Iran, Russia, and Azerbaijan, proposing that this meeting be hosted in Astara. Such a meeting, he argued, would allow all parties to better understand the potential of this route and explore ways to expand its capacity.

Hope for Finalization of Iran-Eurasia Free Trade Agreement



TEHRAN - In a recent statement, the Deputy for International Business Development at Iran's Trade Development Organization expressed optimism regarding the finalization of the free trade agreement between Iran and Eurasia. The agreement is currently under review in the Iranian parliament, and officials hope it will be finalized and ratified before January.

According to reports from the Trade Development Organization, Mohammad Sadegh Ghanadzadeh elaborated on the timeline for the approval of the agreement, emphasizing that the free trade pact is presently being considered by the legislature. He reiterated the expectation that the agreement would be finalized and communicated to the relevant authorities before January.

Ghanadzadeh noted that the member countries of the Eurasian Economic Union have a combined annual import volume of \$400 billion. He mentioned that upon the implementation of this agreement, 87% of goods traded among the member countries of the Eurasian Union will be subject to free trade.

He further highlighted the complementary nature of the economies of Iran and the Eurasian member countries, indicating that Iran's imports from these nations primarily consist of raw materials and essential goods, while the exports to the union are generally high-value-added products.

The Deputy for International Business Development emphasized the importance of logistics, transport fleet development, port modernization, and adherence to customs standards as critical factors for expanding trade relations with Eurasia.

It is noteworthy that a temporary preferential trade agreement between Iran and five Eurasian countries was signed in 2016. In December of the previous year, a free trade agreement was signed, pending approval from the parliaments of the five member countries and the Iranian Parliament. So far, three countries of the union have ratified the agreement, while Iran's parliament is in the final stages of its approval process.

North Korea's Kim Leader Says South Korea Is a Foreign, Hostile Country

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said South Korea is a foreign and hostile country, state media KCNA said on Friday. The remarks come a day after KCNA said North Korea's national assembly amended the constitution to designate South Korea a "hostile state", in line with Kim's vow to drop unification of the two Koreas as a national goal. Kim also said the changed nature of the South Korea/U.S. alliance, and their different, more developed military maneuvers highlight the importance of a stronger North Korean nuclear deterrent. As for North Korea's military blasting road and rail links with South Korea this week, Kim said it means "not only the physical closure but also the end of the evil relationship with Seoul" as well as "the complete removal of the useless awareness about fellow countrymen and unreasonable idea of reunification."



Trump Blames Ukraine's Zelenskiy for Starting War With Russia



WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Donald Trump on Thursday blamed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy for helping start that nation's war with Russia, a comment that further suggests Trump is likely to radically shift U.S. policy toward Ukraine if he wins the Nov. 5 election.

The Republican former president has frequently criticized Zelenskiy on the campaign trail, repeatedly calling him "the greatest salesman on Earth" for having solicited and received billions of dollars of U.S. military aid since the war broke out in 2022.

Trump has also slammed the Ukrainian leader for failing to seek peace with Moscow, and he has suggested Ukraine may have to cede some of its land to Russia to make a peace deal, a concession Kyiv considers unacceptable.

Trump's comments on the PBD Podcast on Thursday with Patrick Bet-David went a step further than his previous criticisms. He said Zelenskiy was to blame not just for failing to end the war, but for helping start it, even though the conflict broke out when Russia invaded Ukrainian sovereign territory.

"That doesn't mean I don't want to help him because I feel very badly for those people. But he should never have let that war start. The war's a loser," Trump said. Zelenskiy presented his "victory plan" to end the war to Trump during a meeting in New York in September, an encounter both leaders described as cordial.

Trump's public comments, however, suggest he could seek to wind down aid for Ukraine if he defeats Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic nominee, on Nov. 5. He has repeatedly said he could end the conflict before he takes office in January, but he has not said how.

Hezbollah to Escalate War With Israel After Hamas Leader Assassinated

CAIRO (Reuters) - Lebanon's Hezbollah group said on Friday it was moving to a new and escalating phase in its war against Israel while Iran said "the spirit of resistance will be strengthened" after the killing of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar.

Sinwar, a mastermind of the Oct. 7, 2023, attack that triggered the Gaza war, was killed during an operation by Israeli soldiers in the Palestinian enclave on Wednesday, a pivotal event in the year-long conflict.

Western leaders said his death offered an opportunity for the conflict to end, but Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the war would go on until the hostages seized by Hamas militants were returned.

Sinwar, who was named as Hamas' overall leader following the assassination of political chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran in July, was believed to have been hiding in the warren of tunnels Hamas has built under Gaza over the past two decades.

He was killed during a gun battle in southern Gaza on Wednesday by Israeli troops who were initially unaware that they had caught their country's number one enemy, Israeli officials said.

The military released drone video of what it said was Sinwar, sitting on an armchair and covered in dust inside a destroyed building.

Hamas has not made any comment itself, but sources within the group have said the indications they have seen suggest Sinwar was indeed killed by Israeli troops.

Despite Western hopes of a ceasefire, Sinwar's death could dial up hostilities in the Middle East where the prospect of an even wider conflict has grown.

Israel has launched a ground campaign in Lebanon over the past month and is now planning a response to an Oct. 1 missile attack carried out by Iran, ally of Hamas and Lebanon's Hezbollah.

But the demise of Sinwar could also help push forward stalled efforts to end the war in which Israel has killed more than

42,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza health authorities.

U.S. President Joe Biden, who spoke to Netanyahu by phone to congratulate him, said Sinwar's death provided a chance for the conflict in Gaza to finally end and for Israeli hostages to be brought home.

The U.S. wants to kick-start talks on a proposal to achieve a ceasefire and secure the release of hostages, U.S. State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said, calling Sinwar the "chief obstacle" to ending the war.

"That obstacle has obviously been removed. Can't predict that that means whoever replaces (Sinwar) will agree to a ceasefire, but it does remove what has been in recent months the chief obstacle to getting one," he said. In recent weeks, Sinwar had refused to negotiate at all, Miller said.

Iran indicated no sign the killing would shift its support. "The spirit of resistance will be strengthened" following the death of Sinwar, its mission to the United Nations said.

Hezbollah was also defiant, announcing "the transition to a new and escalating phase in the confrontation with Israel".

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken held separate phone calls on Thursday with leaders in Saudi Arabia and Qatar aimed at ending the conflict in the Middle East, the State Department said.

Families of Israeli hostages said that while the killing of Sinwar was a significant achievement, it would not be complete while hostages are still in Gaza.

In Khan Younis in the south of the Gaza Strip, a displaced Palestinian named Thabet Amour told Reuters the Palestinian fight would continue.

"This is resistance that does not disappear when men disappear," he said. "The assassination of Sinwar will not lead to the end of the resistance or to a compromise or surrender and raising the white flag."

Bolsonaro's Party Set on Running Him for Brazil Presidency in 2026



BRASILIA (Reuters) - The leader of Brazil's biggest right-wing party cannot speak to his candidate for the 2026 presidential election by court order, even though his office is across the corridor.

Valdemar Costa Neto, head of the conservative Liberal Party (PL), has to call up when arriving at party headquarters to avoid bumping into former far-right President Jair Bolsonaro in the lift. That makes it hard to plan campaign strategy.

Still, Costa Neto is banking on Congress passing a constitutional amendment that would overturn the court order banning Bolsonaro from running for office until 2030.

"Bolsonaro's charisma is amazing. People turn out in droves. Some cry when he appears in public," he said in an interview.

Brazil's electoral authority declared Bolsonaro ineligible for eight years due to his baseless attacks on the country's electronic voting system. He is also under investigation for allegedly plotting a coup after he lost the 2022 election to leftist President Luis Inacio Lula de Silva, which he denies.

To prevent witness tampering in that probe, which federal police are working to conclude next month, the Supreme Court has barred conversations between Bolsonaro and Costa Neto.

The PL became the largest party in the lower house of Congress riding Bolsonaro's coattails after Brazil's electorate shifted to the right in 2018.

EU Leaders Agree Migration Is a Pressing Concern

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - EU leaders called Thursday for urgent new legislation to increase and speed up migrant returns on Thursday, after a summit in Brussels that crystallized a rightward shift in the bloc's rhetoric.

The heads of the bloc's 27 nations said that day-long talks saw "in-depth" discussions on migration - an issue that has shot up the political agenda following hard-right gains in several countries.

"The European Council calls for determined action at all levels to facilitate, increase and speed up returns from the European Union," the leaders wrote in conclusions to their summit, asking the European Commission to submit new legislation to that effect.

New ways to prevent and counter irregular migration should also be considered, the text read, in an apparent reference to a much-discussed proposal to create return centers outside the European Union, which did not get an outright mention.

"We recognize that we need to think out of the box in order to address this pressing concern," Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis told reporters before the talks.

Italy's hard-right Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni hosted a mini-summit just ahead of the main event to discuss a common approach with 10 like-minded countries, including Denmark, the Netherlands, Hungary and Greece.

In a nod to the growing influence of immigration hawks, EU chief Ursula von der Leyen was also present.

But divisions remained on the next steps, with no concrete plans laid out in the final text.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz dismissed the idea of return centers, saying they were not a viable answer to the migration challenges of a large country.

"If we all followed the rules we have together, we would already be much further ahead," he said.

Germany is among nations that want an early implementation of a landmark migration pact struck this year, which hardens border procedures and requires countries to take in asylum seekers from "frontline" states or provide money and resources.

But others say the package, set to come into force in June 2026, falls short.

The call to speed up returns echoed a proposal backed by a majority of states that earlier this year called for the EU to explore "innovative solutions" to deal



with migration, as Meloni posted on X on Thursday.

That was followed by a letter from von der Leyen this week that promised action and said the bloc will draw lessons from a deal Italy struck with Albania to send some migrants there.

Yet some countries, including Spain, poured cold water on the more radical ideas, also noting the need for regular immigration routes amid a workforce shortage and an ageing population, a diplomatic source said.

"Safe and legal pathways" were "key for regular and orderly migration", the final statement said.

Disagreements caused a previous effort to overhaul migrant return rules to fail in 2018.

"All these solutions of 'migration hubs', as they are called, have never shown in the past to be very effective, and they are always very expensive," Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo told reporters.

The general hardening in tone comes despite a drop in detected irregular border crossings into the European Union, which fell by more than 40 percent this year after reaching an almost 10-year peak in 2023.

"There is a new wind blowing in Europe," said Dutch politician Geert Wilders, whose nationalist populist party came top in general elections in the Netherlands last year.

Wilders was in Brussels to attend another event: a meeting of the far-right Patriots for Europe group in the European Parliament.

Hard-right parties often riding anti-immigrant sentiment performed strongly in European Parliament elections in June, and have topped recent national and regional votes in Austria and Germany.

France also tilted to the right after a snap parliamentary election this summer.

Germany tightened border controls in September in response to several suspected Islamist attacks.

And this month Poland said it would partially suspend asylum rights, accusing Russia and Belarus of pushing migrants over the border to destabilise the country.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy also attended Thursday's meeting to present Kyiv's "victory plan" to defeat Russia, and EU leaders discussed other topics, including the conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon.

China Sees Slowest Growth in More Than a Year

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China posted its slowest growth in a year and a half on Friday, as Beijing struggles to steady an economy shaken by sluggish spending and persistent property sector woes.

Officials have in recent weeks unveiled a string of measures to reignite the world's number-two economy, with an eye to achieving five percent annual growth.

But after a blistering market rally fuelled by hopes for a long-awaited "bazooka stimulus", optimism has tapered as authorities refrained from providing a specific figure for the bailout or detailing any of the pledges.

On Friday, Beijing's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said the economy expanded 4.6 percent year on year in the third quarter, down from 4.7 in the previous three months and the slowest since early 2023, when China was emerging from its strict zero-Covid policy.

Still, it was slightly better than the 4.5 percent predicted by analysts surveyed by AFP. Ahead of the figures, state media said the country's top banks had cut interest rates on yuan deposits for the second time this year.

Beijing has said it has "full confidence" in achieving its annual growth goal, but economists say more direct fiscal stimulus is needed to revive activity and restore business confidence.

Recent weeks have seen authorities unveil a raft of measures to funnel cash into the economy including a string of rate cuts and loosened restrictions on home-buying.



But investors are clamouring for more specifics on how Beijing will shift its economy towards a consumption-driven model that can sustain long-term growth.

A major headache has been a prolonged crisis in the property sector, which has long been a key driver of growth but is now mired in debt.

On Thursday, officials said they would boost credit available for unfinished housing projects to more than \$500 billion.

Authorities also promised to facilitate the renovation of a million homes, a move intended to boost activity in the property sector.

But as with a slew of much-touted briefings in the past week, Thursday's news conference failed to impress with its lack of big-ticket financial pledges.

Beijing is "trying to talk the talk, with more noise about stabilising the property market", Stephen Innes, managing partner at SPI Asset Management, said in a note.

"As the briefing rolled on, it was clear: traders were not thrilled," he said. "Let's be honest, though -- China's property mess isn't something that can be patched up with a few speeches and half-baked measures," Innes added.

A number of major cities have in recent months eased house-buying restrictions -- this week in Chengdu, the capital of southwestern province of Sichuan and the northern port city of Tianjin.

China's economic growth is also being hindered by sluggish domestic spending, with consumer wariness threatening to plunge the country into deflation.

Tiafoe Gets Past Evans in Almaty



ALMATY (Dispatches) - No. 1 seed Frances Tiafoe smashed 21 aces without a double fault to defeat British qualifier Daniel Evans 6-7 (10), 7-6 (4), 6-3 in two hours and 39 minutes in the second round of the Almaty Open in Kazakhstan.

The American charged back from a 4-1 deficit in the first-set tiebreaker and served for set point twice, but Evans pushed him aside and won the set on his fourth attempt. The second set played out in a similar way until Tiafoe scored the final four points of the tiebreaker. From there, Tiafoe finally broke Evans' serve twice in a 4-0 start to the third set.

Tiafoe's quarterfinal opponent will be Australian Aleksandar Vukic, who knocked out eighth seed Adrian Mannarino of France 7-6 (4), 6-3.

No. 3 seed Karen Khachanov of Russia snuck past Finland's Otto Virtanen 7-6 (2), 7-6 (3). Kazakh wild card Beibit Zhukayev also moved on when his second-round opponent, Czech fifth seed Tomas Machac, retired down 3-1 in the first set of their match.

No. 1 seed Andrey Rublev of Russia cruised to a 6-4, 6-1 win over Frenchman Alexandre Muller in 64 minutes in the second round in Stockholm.

Rublev is set for a showdown with Stan Wawrinka, the 39-year-old Swiss wild card who battled past Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 6-4, 3-6, 7-5. It marked Wawrinka's first back-to-back tour-level wins of the year and pushed him a step closer to his first ATP Tour title since 2017.

No. 3 seed Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria beat France's Quentin Halys 7-6 (1), 6-3, and Serbia's Miomir Kecmanovic upset fifth seed Nicolas Jarry of Chile 6-4, 4-6, 7-6 (2).

Greek second seed Stefanos Tsitsipas survived a 7-6 (5), 4-6, 7-5 win over Brazilian qualifier Thiago Seyboth Wild to move on to the quarterfinals in Antwerp, Belgium.

Tsitsipas won despite hitting six double faults to just five aces while Seyboth Wild fired 14 aces. Seyboth Wild also finished with a 37-35 edge in winners, but Tsitsipas won the 12th game of the third set for the only service break of the set.

Next, Tsitsipas will face Czech fifth seed Jiri Lehecka, who was a 6-4, 6-3 winner over Germany's Daniel Altmaier. American eighth seed Marcos Giron edged past Arthur Rinderknech of France 7-6 (6), 7-6 (4), while Belgium's Zizou Bergs enjoyed some home cooking as he took down No. 4 seed Sebastian Baez of Argentina 6-3, 6-4.

Verstappen Aims to Break F1 Victory Drought in Texas



AUSTIN (Dispatches) - Max Verstappen will seek to reboot his title defense and end an eight-race winless streak this weekend when he locks horns with title rival Lando Norris at the United States Grand Prix.

Four weeks on from finishing second behind him in Singapore, Red Bull's three-time world champion and series leader hopes recent upgrades to his car will be enough for him to reel in the McLaren driver and repeat his 2023 triumph at the Circuit of the Americas.

"The car felt better in Singapore," said Verstappen. "It was already a good step for us in Baku and I think we are going in the right direction now, but it takes time. You can't change something like this in one or two weeks."

The Dutchman admitted that Red Bull struggled to match the speed of their main competitors, McLaren, Ferrari and Red Bull, during much of the mid-part of the 24-race season, but with six races remaining, three including additional sprints, he hopes his 52-point lead will be enough for him to hang on.

Verstappen has won all three sprints this season so far and Norris, despite some inconsistency, has beaten him in the last five races, igniting a late bid for the drivers' title to add to McLaren's takeover of the constructors' championship.

An extra eight points are on offer this weekend thanks to last Saturday's sprint as the F1 circus begins a triple-header with races in Austin, Mexico and Brazil on successive weekends before the final events in Las Vegas, Qatar and Abu Dhabi.

In all, a total of 180 points are still available to be won and the various permutations all end up suggesting that Norris needs to stay on top and hope Verstappen has a few low or non-scoring races.

"It's going to be incredibly busy, but also exciting, in the next two months," said Norris. "I'm ready to get back in the car, so let's show Texas what we can do."

Verstappen has won all three sprints this season so far and will hope he can continue that vein of form to make the difference as the season moves to a rousing finale.

His Austrian sprint win was his last success and he said he hopes further updates for Austin will "suit this circuit and see if we are more competitive when we head out on track."

Tuchel Vows to End England's 58-Year Trophy Drought

LONDON (Dispatches) - Thomas Tuchel said he must rise to the challenge of ending England's wait for a first major trophy since 1966 as the German was unveiled as the new manager of the Three Lions.

Former Chelsea boss Tuchel will start his new job from January 1, 2025, on an 18-month deal to the conclusion of the 2026 World Cup.

The 51-year-old, who has been out of work since leaving Bayern Munich at the end of last season, succeeds Gareth Southgate as permanent coach and becomes the third foreign England manager after Sven-Goran Eriksson and Fabio Capello.

"I know that there are some trophies missing in the federation and, of course, I want to help to make it happen," he told a press conference at Wembley.

Tuchel, who has also coached Borussia Dortmund and Paris Saint-Germain, has the trophy-winning pedigree that the FA is seeking to help end a 58-year wait to win a major tournament since the 1966 World Cup on home soil.

The highlight of the German's career to date came during his spell in English football when he won the Champions League with Chelsea in 2021.

However, the FA's move has drawn criticism over their unwillingness to trust an Englishman with its top job, overseeing a richly-talented generation of players including Jude Bellingham who will be among the favourites for the 2026 World Cup.

"There are some serious questions for the FA to answer in respect of English coaching," said former Manchester United captain and England defender Gary Neville.

Southgate resigned shortly after losing the Euro 2024



final to Spain in July, following an eight-year reign that made England a force again on the international stage.

"We will build on everything that Gareth and the FA built and hopefully we can add a little bit of extra to get it over the line," added Tuchel.

"We will try to install values and principles and rules as quickly as possible to make the dream come true."

Tuchel will be assisted by English coach Anthony Barry, who worked alongside him at Bayern.

FA CEO Mark Bullingham said English candidates were among 10 interviewees but that Tuchel represented the best chance of delivering success.

"We wanted the very best person for the job and we feel like we owe it to the players and the country to give them that support, that leadership in tournaments that will help to get them over the line," said Bullingham.

"Thomas gives us the best chance of winning a trophy in the men's World Cup, so we feel we've done that."

Tuchel won league titles at PSG and Bayern and the German Cup with Dortmund, but his greatest success came during his time at Chelsea.

On top of leading the Blues to Champions League glory just months after taking charge, he also won the UEFA Super Cup and Club World Cup with the London club.

But he was sacked in September 2022 in a bold early move by Chelsea's new ownership group that did not pay off.

Just six months later he was appointed Bayern boss and led them to an 11th consecutive Bundesliga title.

However, Tuchel also oversaw the demise of Bayern's dominance of German football in a first trophyless campaign for 12 years last season.

Pogba Eyes Juventus Comeback



ROME (Dispatches) - Paul Pogba is adamant that he wishes to return from his reduced doping ban with Juventus even if it means accepting a pay cut, the French World Cup winner told La Gazzetta dello Sport in an interview.

"I'm willing to give up money to be able to play again with Juve, I want to come back with this club," said Pogba in an interview published on the Italian sports daily's website.

"The reality is that I am a Juve player and I am preparing to play for Juve."

Pogba's contract with the Italian giants expires in June 2026 and is currently worth eight million euros (US\$8.684 million) a year.

During his ongoing suspension, the midfielder receives only the minimum salary stipulated in the Serie A collective agreement—just over EUR2,000 a month.

However, since Pogba's ban was reduced, Italian press have reported that Juventus are nonetheless seeking to terminate his contract.

"It will be a new Pogba, a hungrier, wiser and stronger one... I just want to play football," added the former Manchester United star.

"I want to be ready to train and play for Juve, I'm a Juve player, in my mind, that's all there is at the moment."

Pogba had his four-year ban for doping reduced to 18 months earlier in October by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) and can return to action from March 11 next year, four days before his 32nd birthday.

Pogba tested positive for testosterone in August 2023 after a match between Juventus and Udinese in Italy.

He was provisionally suspended in September of the same year, and then banned for four years by the Italian National Anti-Doping Tribunal the following February.

Pogba's representatives said the testosterone came from a food supplement prescribed by a doctor he consulted in the United States.

Nadal Defeated by Alcaraz in Saudi Arabia as Career Nears End

SAUDI ARABIA (Dispatches) - Rafael Nadal admitted his fitness level was well off the tour's top players after falling Thursday in straight sets to fellow Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz, who described the exhibition match as "a little bit sad".

The 38-year-old Nadal, who announced last week he would retire from tennis after the Davis Cup Finals in Malaga next month, lost 6-3, 6-3 to 21-year-old Alcaraz in the semi-finals of the "Six Kings Slam" event in Saudi Arabia.

Afterwards he described Alcaraz, winner of the French Open and Wimbledon this year, as an "animal" and acknowledged he was not competing at the highest level.

"I have not much pressure here. I'm just trying to have fun," he told a post-match press conference.

"I know I'm going to play against players that... are in much better shape than me because they are on the professional tour and winning tournaments."

Alcaraz said he knew the Saudi crowd was against him but wanted to let Nadal, winner of 22 Grand Slams including 14 French Open titles, bask in the support.

"It's a little bit sad... It was not a really comfortable moment for me. Obviously I really wanted to win," said Alcaraz.

"Once you step on the court it's no friends, no



idols" but "I think this is his moment right now," he added.

Prior to the match Nadal had made his last singles appearance at the Olympic Games in Paris where his campaign was cut short by old rival Novak Djokovic in the second round.

He had also teamed-up with Alcaraz in men's doubles at the Games and may reprise that role at the Davis Cup Finals.

Nadal will play Djokovic again on Saturday after the Serbian great lost a much tighter match to Australian Open and US Open champion Jannik Sinner, who prevailed 6-2, 6-7 (0/7), 6-4 and will take on Alcaraz in the final.

"Having Novak in front, it's like a nostalgic thing," Nadal said, looking ahead to their battle for third place in the Saudi exhibition.

"We faced each other plenty of times, so it's going to be good fun to play each other again one more time in this match."

As for the Davis Cup Finals next month, Nadal said he was unclear what his form would be.

"Emotionally I'm sure I will be ready. In terms of physically, in terms of tennis level, I mean (there) remains a month" to prepare, he said, adding that he would not hesitate to speak up if he thought he could not compete well in singles.