

Iran's Exports of Non-Oil Goods and Commodities Rose Significantly in the Calendar Month to Late October Amid a Major Surge in Shipments Delivered to Neighboring Iraq

# IRAN NEWS

Iran Remains Steadfast in Its Commitment to Hold Accountable the Perpetrators of the Assassination of Lieutenant General Qasem Soleimani, an Iranian Informed Source Says

VOL. XXIX, No. 8133 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

MONDAY NOVEMBER 18, 2024 ABAN 28, 1403

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### Gaza and Lebanon's Resistance: A Testament to the IRGC's Legacy



TEHRAN - In a ceremony honoring the appointment of a new commander for the Imam Hussein Officer and Guard Training University, Major General Hossein Salami, Commander-in-Chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), emphasized the critical role of the IRGC in shaping the Islamic world's resistance movements.

Speaking at the event, Salami stated, "The IRGC shoulders a significant mission, contributing to the unfolding history of Islam in contemporary times through its active engagements."

He likened the rise of Islam to the emergence of a radiant sun from oppressive darkness, highlighting its enduring influence on historical trajectories.

Salami elaborated on the strategic vision of Iran's leadership, saying, "The Supreme Leader redirected the battlegrounds from Iran to territories under enemy control. This monumental shift was achieved by men of unwavering faith, who drew strength from divine inspiration."

Referring to the legacy of Qassem Soleimani, Salami remarked, "The journey of Martyr Soleimani's body from Lebanon, through Syria and Iraq, to Iran, symbolizes the IRGC's expansive impact under the Supreme Leader's guidance."

Salami noted that the effects of the IRGC's efforts are evident in the current confrontation between Islamic and adversarial forces. He praised the unyielding resolve of faithful individuals who remain steadfast against superior firepower.

Highlighting the fierce ongoing struggles, he said, "This intense conflict, particularly in Gaza and Lebanon, showcases the IRGC's influence. The steadfastness of Gaza's people, who prepare themselves even in death with dignity, reflects their faith and resilience. Children in Gaza frequently recite the Shahada, embodying a blend of strength and resistance."

Salami described the Imam Hussein University as a "cradle for nurturing resolute and responsible individuals," underscoring its pivotal role in the IRGC's mission. He also praised outgoing university commander Brigadier General Nouman Gholami for his transformative efforts and service during critical times, such as aiding impoverished regions like Sistan and Baluchestan.

The newly appointed commander, Brigadier General Mohammad Karami, was similarly lauded for his impactful contributions, particularly in addressing challenges in Sistan and Baluchestan. Despite opportunities to serve in other roles, Karami chose to continue his work within the IRGC.

The ceremony concluded with a call to action for continued dedication in fostering a culture of resistance and sacrifice in the face of adversity.

### Syria Plays Strategic Role in Iranian Foreign Policy



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Azizi Nasirzadeh, who is on a visit to Syria, has said that the Arab country plays a strategic role in Iran's foreign policy.

Ties between Tehran and Damascus are developing, and they support each other in critical times, Nasirzadeh told reporters on Saturday night.

He made the comments upon arrival in the Syrian capital Damascus at the start of his official visit which he said is taking place at the invitation of his counterpart Ali Mahmoud Abbas.

"Syria plays a strategic role in Iran's foreign policy", the Iranian defense minister further said, adding that he will meet with senior officials for talks on strengthening defense and security ties.

Nasirzadeh is heading a high-ranking delegation during his visit to Syria where he is due to hold talks with President Bashar al-Assad and his Syrian counterpart, according to a press release by the Iranian Defense Ministry.

It said that the talks will cover a host of issues including Tehran-Damascus defense ties and bilateral cooperation on fighting terrorism, as well as the ongoing developments in the region.

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK



### FM Warns Israel of Israel Aware of Consequences of Attacking Iran's Nuclear Sites

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi warns the Israeli regime about the consequences of launching further aggression against Iran, including the country's nuclear facilities.

"Whenever the Zionist regime takes an action against the Islamic Republic, we will respond with comparable and proportionate measures," the top diplomat said during a televised interview.

"In fact, they know what will happen if they carry out an attack against our nuclear installations," he added.

The official reminded that the regime has issued a number of threats against the Islamic Republic's nuclear sites, which Tehran has duly reported to the United Nations nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Araqchi, meanwhile, pointed to the back-to-back regional trips that he made earlier this year, noting that the visits came amid intensified deadly aggression by the regime against various countries and resistance groups in the region.

In such context, the trips, the official said, served to both convey Iran's continued support for the resistance, besides indicating the Islamic Republic's ongoing strength and the country's refusal to back down from its objectives and ideals.

The visits also helped to neutralize the propagandist efforts that had been made by the regime and its allies to tarnish the image of the resistance and its capabilities, Araqchi said.

He said, in response to the campaign, he travelled to various regional countries, including Iraq and Lebanon, to witness the situation on the ground in person and reaffirm that the Axis of Resistance was in favorable conditions and had retained its social status.

The trips also contributed to formation of a common understanding among regional nations concerning the threats that were posed to the region by the regime, whose warlike ambitions exceeded the Gaza Strip and Lebanon, which have been subject to extensive Israeli aggression for more than a year, Araqchi said.

He said he warned the nations during the trips that the regime "harbors bigger ambitions and seeks to drag the entire region into war and conflagration."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Araqchi pointed to the likelihood of the IAEA Board of Governors' issuance of a resolution against Iran targeting the country's nuclear energy program.

He warned that such resolution would be met with "new actions" on the part of the Islamic Republic, "which they would surely not be happy about."

The official reminded that the IAEA was a technical organization bound by its relevant duties, which it had to perform by refraining from politicizing its decisions.

"It looks like there is a political approach in this area, [as part of which] the Westerners are trying to force the agency's Director General [Rafael Grossi] into complicating the situation," the top diplomat stated.

He, however, asserted that "our attitude towards the IAEA is a completely professional attitude," adding, "As long as the agency acts on its professional duties, Iran will cooperate with it too."

Araqchi said the IAEA's recourse to a technical approach to its standing differences with Iran would help resolve the differences.

### Flares Fired at Netanyahu's Home in Caesarea; Three Arrested

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Israeli police forces have arrested several people after a pair of flares were fired at prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's private residence in the coastal city of Caesarea in the northern part of the occupied territories, and landed by the house in the yard.

Police and Israel's so-called internal security service, Shin Bet, said in a joint statement that no damage or casualties were reported in the Saturday incident.

"The prime minister and his family were not in the house at the time of the incident," they added.

"An investigation has been opened. This is a serious incident and a dangerous escalation."

The Israel Police later said three people were arrested in the early hours of Sunday morning in connection with the firing of flares.

Figures across the Israeli political spectrum condemned the incident as unacceptable.

Netanyahu's political rivals and opposition leaders Yair Lapid and Benny Gantz issued statements, condemning the incident and calling for law enforcement to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Israeli president Isaac Herzog also issued a strong condemnation, and labeled the attack "a highly dangerous incident."

Herzog said he spoke with Shin Bet chief Ronen Bar and emphasized "the urgent need to investigate and deal with those responsible for the incident as soon as possible."

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



The incident comes after a drone attack targeted the same residence on October 19, which was later claimed by the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement.

"The Islamic Resistance claims responsibility for the Caesarea operation and targeting Netanyahu's home," the head of Hezbollah's media office, Mohammad Afif, said at a news conference at the Ghobeiry area in the southern suburbs of the Lebanese capital Beirut on October 22.

Affif said at the time that if in the previous attack, Netanyahu was not hurt, "the coming days and nights and [the battle] fields are between us."

Affif appeared to suggest that Hezbollah might carry out similar attempts in the future.

Hezbollah opened a "support front" on October 8 last year in response to the Israeli regime's genocidal war against the Gaza Strip which was launched a day before, carrying out daily operations in the regions north of the Israeli-occupied territories.

The Israeli regime has so far killed close to 43,800 Palestinians in the besieged territory.

Since September 23, the Israeli army has been launching unprecedented air attacks on Lebanon in a dangerous escalation with Hezbollah.

### Iran's Low-Carbon Initiatives Praised at COP29 Climate Conference



TEHRAN - The Chair of Iran's Parliamentary Environmental Caucus, Somayeh Rafiei, highlighted Iran's commendable efforts in advancing low-carbon industries despite significant challenges at the 29th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29).

Speaking at the parliamentary session of COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, Rafiei emphasized Iran's commitment to addressing climate change through legislative measures. Representing Iran, home to Asia's oldest parliament with 118 years of history, she noted that the country has enacted pivotal environmental laws, including Article 50 of the Iranian Constitution, which criminalizes environmental degradation.

Rafiei credited Iran's Supreme Leader as a driving force behind the nation's green policies. "The Supreme Leader has mandated the expansion of a green economy and introduced mechanisms for accountability, including green auditing," she stated. These policies have paved the way for low-carbon industrial development, she added.

Iran has incorporated climate adaptation measures into its Seventh Development Plan (2023-2027), focusing on energy diversification and renewable energy. Rafiei highlighted the target of generating 30 gigawatts of renewable energy as part of these efforts. Despite facing extensive international sanctions, which have barred Iran from accessing resources like the Climate Change Fund, the country has made significant strides toward sustainability, she said.

"Iran's achievements in fostering low-carbon industries amid these difficulties deserve international recognition," Rafiei asserted. She also extended an offer to share Iran's expertise with other nations, proposing joint task forces to collaboratively promote global sustainability.

The COP29 conference, taking place from November 11 to 22, 2024, in Baku, brings together global leaders, policymakers, and experts to address pressing climate issues. Rafiei reaffirmed Iran's readiness to contribute to collective efforts for a better future.

### Iran to Set Up Pavilion at Pakistan's Largest International Defense Exhibition



TEHRAN - For the first time, the Islamic Republic of Iran will establish a pavilion at Pakistan's largest international defense exhibition. The event will showcase Iran's military achievements, including indigenous advancements in defense, aerospace, and electronic warfare industries.

According to an IRNA report on Sunday, the 12th edition of the International Defense Exhibition and Seminar (IDEAS 2024) will be held over four days, starting November 19, in Karachi, the capital of Sindh province in southern Pakistan.

Iran's pavilion will debut with a large, dedicated space at the exhibition. The opening ceremony, scheduled for Tuesday, will be attended by Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

A delegation representing Iran's Armed Forces General Staff and the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics will participate in the event, coinciding with the establishment of the Iranian pavilion in Karachi.

This year's IDEAS exhibition is themed "Arms for Peace" and is organized by Pakistan's Defense Export Promotion Organization (DEPO). The event will attract key participants from countries prominent in defense and military equipment production.

As part of its deterrence policy, Iran will display aspects of its defense industry capabilities at IDEAS 2024, including innovations from the Ministry of Defense and Iranian knowledge-based companies.

During a press conference in Karachi, Brigadier General Ali Adil, Director of Coordination at Pakistan's Defense Export Promotion Organization, stated that over 300 foreign exhibitors from 55 countries will participate in the international event.

The biennial exhibition was last held in 2022, as the 2020 event was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The first IDEAS exhibition took place in 2000.

The 11th edition of the exhibition, held in November 2022, hosted delegations from 64 countries, including representatives from Iran's Armed Forces General Staff.

# IRAN NEWS



## Official Denies Iranian Delegation Searched at Beirut Airport

TEHRAN (IRNA) - A member of the delegation accompanying Ali Larijani, an advisor to Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, to Lebanon has rejected media reports that they were searched by security at Beirut airport. The official told Al-Mayadeen on Saturday that the Iranian delegation was received by Lebanese officials in accordance with standard diplomatic protocols.

He emphasized that reports from certain Arab-language media outlets suggesting that the Iranian delegation were searched by security staff at Beirut Airport are unfounded. "Some media are attempting to create mischief regarding Larijani's successful visit," he added. These remarks come in response to claims from various Arabic media sources suggesting that upon Larijani's arrival, airport security personnel requested that he and his team open their bags for inspection and pass through scanners.

## Efforts to Pressure Iran Escalate



TEHRAN - Ali Aghamohammadi, Head of the Economic Affairs Office in the Supreme Leader's Office and a member of the Expediency Discernment Council, addressed the ongoing claims by the UAE over ownership of Iranian islands. Speaking to ILNA, he discussed policies aimed at developing and revitalizing the Iranian island of Abu Musa, with the goal of increasing the population and leveraging its strategic potential.

"Our aim from the start has been to utilize these islands based on their capacities, and we need to increase investment in these areas," Aghamohammadi stated. He added, "It's not just these islands; there are 32 islands between Qeshm and Kish that require substantial investment, but so far, little has been done in this regard."

Referring to Iran's Vision 1430 (2051), he noted that comprehensive plans have been outlined for the three disputed islands, the 32 others in the region, and additional Iranian islands that have not seen significant development or utilization over the years.

Regarding the UAE's repeated claims of ownership over Abu Musa and the other two disputed islands, Aghamohammadi dismissed them as baseless. "These claims are irrelevant. We shouldn't respond to every unfounded statement. Every time there is an effort to pressure Iran, they try to stir up such controversies. This is neither the first time nor will it be the last," he emphasized.

He further highlighted the strategic potential of Abu Musa, remarking that as Iran shifts its focus from central regions to its islands, Abu Musa stands out as an area poised for significant development in the coming years.

According to ILNA, Iran has already begun implementing infrastructure projects on Abu Musa. Late last month, the Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development announced plans to construct 110 housing units on the island, part of a government initiative to provide homes for current and prospective residents. The project's legal framework has been finalized, and the groundbreaking ceremony, led by the Minister of Roads and Urban Development, officially launched the construction phase earlier this month.



TEHRAN - The President of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture emphasized the importance of strengthening trade ties with Japan by focusing on non-sanctioned sectors, particularly pharmaceuticals.

In a meeting with the board of the Iran-Japan Joint Chamber of Commerce, Samad Hassanzadeh highlighted that cooperation with production companies, particularly through joint investments, could advance these efforts. "Key activities such as pharmaceuticals, hospital equipment, tourism, education, and food products, including dried fruits, are not subject to sanctions. These areas, where both Iran and Japan have advantages, should be prioritized," he said.

Hassanzadeh acknowledged that sanctions have created a gap in Iran-Japan relations but expressed hope that the joint chamber could foster closer ties. He also noted the significance of Iran's participation in the upcoming Expo 2025 Osaka, voicing support for the Iran-Japan Joint Chamber's presence to ensure a dignified Iranian pavilion. He proposed involving 20 well-known Iranian companies in sectors like food and dried fruits to strengthen sustainable trade relations.

Hossein Salah Varzi, President of the Iran-Japan Joint Chamber of Commerce, emphasized Japan's importance as a technological and economic partner. "Japan remains a critical partner for meeting Iran's technological needs," he stated, adding that the chamber plans to leverage Japan's expertise in productivity and management by organizing educational and scientific programs.

Salah Varzi also highlighted the chamber's plans to actively participate in Expo 2025 and use this platform for public diplomacy to encourage Japan to resume its mediatory role in easing tensions.

Bahram Shakouri, a board member, pointed out the longstanding ties between Iran and Japan and suggested that, in the event of sanctions being

lifted, Japan could meet most of Iran's needs, potentially replacing European and American suppliers. He proposed targeting Japan's small and medium enterprises (SMEs) for partnerships, as they are less exposed to U.S. sanctions. Additionally, he advocated using the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for humanitarian and environmental initiatives.

Kamyar Montaser, another board member, stressed that resolving Iran's inclusion on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) blacklist is essential for fostering trade, even in non-sanctioned areas like food and medicine. Without banking solutions, trade relationships will remain limited.

Several board members highlighted the significance of Expo 2025 as a platform for revitalizing Iran-Japan trade relations. Hamidreza Nabizadeh called international exhibitions a missing link in Iran's foreign trade strategy, urging the chamber to take a proactive role in organizing such events. Hamed Asgari, Deputy for International Affairs at the Iran Chamber, described the Expo as a prime opportunity for the private sector to enhance ties with Japan, despite challenges like disrupted logistics and deteriorating infrastructure.

Hassan Pirmoazen, Vice President of the Iran Chamber, concluded by underlining that Expo 2025 is more than just a trade fair; it is a cultural, social, and political event. He called for coordinated efforts between the government and private sector to present a strong, strategic plan for Iran's participation in the expo. "The chamber is ready to allocate a budget based on the joint chamber's proposals and ensure an impactful presence at the event," he said.

The meeting underscored the necessity of innovation, collaboration, and targeted efforts to strengthen Iran-Japan relations, particularly in non-sanctioned sectors and through international platforms like Expo 2025 Osaka.

## Iran's Carpet Exports Plunge to \$40m



TEHRAN - Morteza Haji Aghamiri, Head of the Carpet, Art, and Handicrafts Commission at the Iran Chamber of Commerce, highlighted the challenges faced by Iran's carpet industry. He attributed the sharp decline in exports to international sanctions and flawed domestic policies.

Aghamiri noted that the imposition of foreign exchange repatriation requirements has been particularly damaging. In 2017, the year before the reintroduction of U.S. sanctions, Iran's carpet exports were valued at \$426 million. However, by 2023, this figure had plummeted to \$39.7 million. This is a stark contrast to 1994, when carpets accounted for 44% of Iran's non-oil exports.

He explained that under the foreign exchange repatriation policy, exporters are required to return the revenue from unsold carpets to Iran, disrupting the natural process of marketing and selling these products internationally. This policy, combined with the inability to reimport unsold carpets for refurbishment and resale, has crippled the industry. The result has been a significant decline in employment, affecting 2 million workers in the handwoven carpet sector.

Additionally, Aghamiri lamented the lack of social insurance for carpet weavers, further undermining their livelihood.

Iranian carpets have been directly targeted by U.S. sanctions three times since the Islamic Revolution. Despite these restrictions, the industry once relied on informal financial networks to continue exports. However, in 2018, the Central Bank of Iran severed these connections, further isolating the industry.

Aghamiri pointed out that India has taken full advantage of this vacuum, capturing 44% of the global carpet market, including the lucrative U.S. market. Indian manufacturers have adapted to American consumer preferences, making it challenging for Iran to regain its position, even if sanctions were lifted.

"India has tailored its products to the U.S. market, which now dominates global carpet demand. Re-entering this market would require enormous resources and time," he stated.

Aghamiri also identified Afghanistan and Turkey as key competitors. Afghan carpets, often smuggled into Iran, are sold at lower prices, adding to the domestic industry's woes. He noted that U.S. investment in Afghanistan's carpet industry during its military presence there further boosted its production capabilities.

In conclusion, Aghamiri urged Iranian policymakers to address these challenges strategically and expressed the private sector's willingness to collaborate on solutions. However, he remained cautious about any immediate improvements, given the geopolitical complexities between Iran and the U.S.

## Iran Boasts World's Richest Genetic Resources



TEHRAN - The Director General of the Tropical and Subtropical Fruits Office at Iran's Ministry of Agriculture, Zahra Jalili-Moghadam, has announced a forecast of 1.344 million tons of pomegranate production in the country. She highlighted that Iran possesses the richest genetic reserves of pomegranate globally.

Once unique to Iran, pomegranate cultivation has spread worldwide, from the Himalayas in northern India to countries like China, Turkey, Egypt, the USA, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Morocco, Iraq, Pakistan, Tunisia, Syria, Algeria, and Spain. While most countries cultivate three or four commercial varieties, Iran has officially registered 10 commercial varieties.

According to international reports, India leads global pomegranate production with 3 million tons, followed by China with 1.69 million tons. Iran ranks third, producing 1.3 million tons last year across 95,500 hectares of orchards.

Jalili-Moghadam noted that Iran is home to over 800 pomegranate genotypes, making it a vital source and origin of this fruit worldwide. In 2021, the country produced 1.281 million tons on 96,636 hectares of orchards. The key producing provinces include Fars, Markazi, Khorasan Razavi, Yazd, Semnan, Isfahan, Lorestan, and Qom.

Iranians consume an average of 10 kilograms of pomegranates per person annually. While a significant portion is eaten fresh, the fruit is also processed into products like pomegranate juice, paste, vinegar, seed oil, dried leaves, and concentrate. The average yield is 13.97 tons per hectare, with Fars province contributing 33% of the country's production.

Iran exported 36,948 tons of pomegranates worth \$17 million last year. With surplus production exceeding domestic demand, Iranian pomegranates reached markets in Iraq, Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, Germany, the UAE, Pakistan, the UK, and South Korea.

Given challenges such as climate change, prolonged droughts, water shortages, and pest outbreaks, Jalili-Moghadam emphasized the need to replace traditional farming methods with modern practices. Plans include rejuvenating over 25,000 hectares of orchards and introducing commercial varieties on 8,900 hectares over the next five years.

She also underscored the importance of implementing irrigation management techniques and enhancing soil conditions to improve production sustainability and resilience to environmental stresses.

Prominent Iranian pomegranate varieties include Malas Saveh, Shisheh Kap Ferdows, Rababe Fars, and Naderi Badroud, which are major contributors to the country's export portfolio.

## Shutdown of SAIPA's Factory in Syria



TEHRAN - Saeid Aref, Secretary-General of the Iran-Syria Joint Chamber of Commerce, discussed the approval of the amended Free Trade Agreement between Iran and Syria in an interview with ILNA.

He explained: The free trade agreement between Iran and Syria was signed in 2014 during President Ahmadinejad's administration but was never implemented. Consequently, a 4% tariff was imposed on 2,000 items eligible for export. However, 88 of these items, primarily essential goods like wheat, faced higher tariffs to restrict their export. Now, the tariff on other goods is reduced from 4% to zero, limiting export costs between the two countries to transportation expenses only.

When asked why the agreement's implementation faced delays despite strong bilateral relations, Aref stated: While political relations between Iran and Syria are robust, trade between the two countries has remained modest, not exceeding \$350 million annually in recent years. In fact, this figure dropped to \$124 million last year. This is despite Syria's total annual imports being valued at \$5 billion. The trade imbalance, where Iranian exports dominate at a 10:1 ratio, is unfavorable for Syria, as Iran's share of Syria's total imports is less than 2%.

Aref explained that this imbalance arises because importing Syrian

goods into Iran is difficult. Syrian exports either duplicate products already available in Iran or lack demand there. This asymmetry has made free trade agreements more appealing to Iran than Syria, which has shown less enthusiasm. A similar imbalance exists in trade between Iran and Iraq.

Responding to why Iraq remains one of Iran's primary export markets, Aref noted that trade between Iran and Iraq has consistently declined over the past five years, partly due to this same trade imbalance.

Aref pointed out that challenges in trade with Syria extend beyond imbalances, including: Delays in approving and implementing the free trade agreement; Credit lines from Iran being restricted to semi-state and government sectors; Inadequate infrastructure for financial transactions and overland transportation between the two countries; Limited presence of Iranian state-owned entities in Syria's market due to strategic considerations; Lack of involvement of the private sector in agreements; Low shipping volume due to trade imbalances; Absence of export insurance for trade with Syria in Iran.

He added currency control laws in Syria, which prevent the use of the Syrian lira in Iran, where it is neither traded nor exchanged at exchange offices.

## Achieving 8% Economic Growth Requires Foreign Investment



TEHRAN - The President of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture, Samad Hassanzadeh, emphasized the need for increased foreign investment to achieve the targeted 8% economic growth outlined in the Seventh Development Plan. Despite interest from many European companies in investing in Iran, regulatory barriers have slowed progress, he noted.

During a meeting with the heads of the Chamber's 20 specialized commissions, Hassanzadeh highlighted the readiness of the Iran Chamber of Commerce to collaborate with officials and conduct specialized research to address economic challenges. "We are committed to leveraging the Chamber's extensive expertise to improve the country's economy, address investment obstacles, and enhance Iran's economic position," he said.

Hassanzadeh acknowledged the vital role of the Chamber's commissions, describing them as invaluable advisors to the government. He urged the removal of barriers to encourage Iranians to keep their investments within the country.

He also noted that foreign companies' interest in investing in Iran could accelerate if existing regulatory challenges were addressed. Recent discussions with officials from the Central Bank, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, and the Planning and Budget Organization have resulted in progress toward guaranteeing foreign investments in Iran, he added.

## IMF, Pakistan Wrap Up Unscheduled Talks on \$7b Bailout

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said it held constructive talks with authorities in Pakistan on economic policy and reform efforts to reduce vulnerabilities during an unscheduled staff visit.

The unusual visit from Nov 12 to Nov 15 discussed a \$7-billion bailout within six weeks of its approval by the IMF board, but came too early for the first review of the Extended Fund Facility (EFF), due in the first quarter of 2025.

"We are encouraged by the authorities' reaffirmed commitment to the economic reforms supported by the 2024 EFF," Nathan Porter, the chief of the IMF's Pakistan mission, who led the talks, said in a statement.

The constructive discussions on economic policy and reform efforts to reduce vulnerabilities would help to lay the basis for stronger and sustainable growth, he added. The mission did not state the weaknesses, but sources in Pakistan's finance ministry have said some major lapses prompted the IMF to intervene.



# IRAN NEWS

## Japanese Troops to Train With Australia, U.S. Militaries in Darwin



SYDNEY (Reuters) - Japanese troops will begin regular deployments in northern Australia as part of military cooperation with Australia and the U.S., Australia's Defense Minister Richard Marles said on Sunday.

Around 2,000 U.S. Marines are already hosted in Darwin, the capital of the Northern Territory, for six months of the year amid growing concern among Washington and its allies about China's growing military power in the Indo Pacific region.

"Today we are announcing that there will be regular deployments of Japan's amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade to Australia," Marles said at a televised press conference in Darwin, alongside U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Japanese Defense Minister Gen Nakatani.

"Having a more forward leaning opportunity for greater training with Japan and the U.S. together is a really fantastic opportunity for our defence," Marles told Sky News on Sunday, according to a transcript.

The deployment has special significance given Darwin was a major base for Allied forces in World War Two and was heavily bombed by Japanese forces. The wartime air raids on the port city are sometimes described as Australia's Pearl Harbour.

Austin said on Sunday he was confident the U.S. will provide the capabilities set out in the AUKUS deal, which will see Australia buy U.S. nuclear submarines and develop a new class of nuclear-powered submarines with the U.S. and Britain.

The U.S. Defense Department was focused "on a smooth and effective transition" to the incoming administration of President-elect Donald Trump, Austin said.

"I'm really proud of the things that this administration has accomplished over the last four years, in terms of what we've done in this region to strengthen alliances and to work with countries that share the vision of a free and open Indo Pacific," Austin added.

Sunday's trilateral meeting between Australia, the U.S. and Japan in Darwin is the 14th meeting of its kind between the three allies.



LIMA (Dispatches) - U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed yesterday that human beings and not artificial intelligence should make decisions over the use of nuclear weapons, according to the White House.

"The two leaders affirmed the need to maintain human control over the decision to use nuclear weapons," the White House said in a statement. "The two leaders also stressed the need to consider carefully the potential risks and develop AI technology in the military field in a prudent and responsible manner."

The Chinese foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

It was not clear whether the statement would lead to further talks or action on the issue. But it nonetheless marks a first-of-its-kind step between the two countries in the discussion of two issues on which progress has been elusive: nuclear arms and artificial intelligence.

Washington has been pushing Beijing for months to break a longstanding resistance to nuclear arms talks.

The two countries briefly resumed official-level talks over nuclear arms in November but those negotiations have since stalled, with a top US official publicly expressing frustration regarding China's responsiveness.

Formal nuclear arms control negotiations have not been expected any time soon, despite US concerns about China's rapid nuclear weapons build-up, even though semi-official exchanges have resumed.

On artificial intelligence, China and the United States launched their first formal bilateral talks on the issue in May in Geneva, but those talks are not believed to have touched on nuclear weapons decision-making.

The US defense department estimated last year that Beijing has 500 operational nuclear warheads and will probably field more than 1,000 by 2030.

That compares to 1,770 and 1,710 operational warheads deployed by the United States and Russia, respectively. The Pentagon said that by 2030, much of Beijing's weapons would probably be held at higher levels of readiness.

Since 2020, China has also modernized its nuclear program, starting production of its next-generation ballistic missile submarine, testing hypersonic glide vehicle warheads and holding regular nuclear-armed sea patrols.

Weapons on land, in the air and at sea give China the "nuclear triad" - a hallmark of a major nuclear power.

China has not formally detailed its arsenal but officially maintains a policy of no first use and maintaining a modern nuclear deterrence that is minimal. Officials this year urged other powers to adopt the same stance.

In recent semi-official exchanges with US scholars and retired officials, Chinese academics said its policies remained unchanged and described Western assessments as "exaggerations."

The Biden administration updated classified nuclear guidance this year, and a White House spokesperson previously said the update was "not a response to any single entity, country, nor threat," despite oft-expressed concern about the nuclear arsenals of China, North Korea and Russia.

## UN Climate Chief Asks G20 Leaders for Boost as COP29 Finance Talks Lag



BAKU (Dispatches) - The U.N.'s climate chief called on leaders of the world's biggest economies to send a signal of support for global climate finance efforts when they meet in Rio de Janeiro next week, to help trigger a deal at COP29 talks.

The plea, made in a letter to G20 leaders from top U.N. climate official Simon Stiell, comes as negotiators at the COP29 conference in Baku struggle for a deal intended to scale up money to address the worsening impacts of global warming.

"Next week's summit must send crystal-clear global signals," Stiell, executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, said in the letter.

He said they should support an increase in grants and loans, along with debt relief, so vulnerable countries "are not hamstrung by debt servicing costs that make bolder climate actions all but impossible".

Business leaders echoed Stiell's plea, saying they were concerned about the "lack of progress and focus in Baku".

"We call on governments, led by the G20, to meet the moment and deliver the policies for an accelerated shift from fossil fuels to a clean energy future, to unlock the essential private sector investment needed," a coalition of business groups said in a separate letter.

## The Contradictory Path of the PTM

The Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) has gained notoriety for its inflammatory rhetoric and controversial activities, which have sparked widespread debate within Pakistan and beyond. While the movement claims to champion the rights of the Pashtun people, a closer analysis of their actions reveals a deeply deceptive narrative, often inciting rebellion against state institutions. This discourse would be deemed unacceptable even in the most liberal Western democracies. The PTM's provocative narrative not only undermines national security efforts but also threatens the fragile peace within Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the merged tribal districts.

At the core of the PTM's message lies a narrative that questions the legitimacy and actions of Pakistan's security forces. The movement frequently accuses the state of being responsible for terrorism and targeted killings in the region. These allegations, however, are not substantiated with credible evidence and serve to delegitimize the sacrifices made by security personnel who have fought to restore peace and combat terrorism. By inciting mistrust against the military, the PTM disregards the state's ongoing efforts to dismantle terrorist networks that once plagued the region.

In most democratic countries, including those in the West, calls for insurrection against national security forces are met with legal action. The PTM's provocative discourse not only pushes the boundaries of free speech but also fosters unrest among local communities. Rather than addressing the root causes of underdevelopment or offering constructive solutions, the movement's inflammatory rhetoric misleads the youth, diverting their energy from productive pursuits to destructive agendas.

While the PTM presents itself as a peaceful grassroots movement, internal conflicts and rivalries within its ranks tell a different story. These power struggles have led to violent outcomes, undermining the movement's claim to pacifism. Notable examples include the killing of Gilman Wazir, reportedly due to personal enmity, and the murder of Arif Wazir by his cousin Ali Wazir over a personal dispute. Such incidents expose the volatile nature of the PTM's internal dynamics and reflect the lack of unity and coherent leadership within the organization.

These violent disputes also reveal that the PTM's leaders are often more focused on personal vendettas and political ambitions than on genuine social reform. The movement's failure to manage internal discord reflects a deeper issue: its inability to provide a credible and constructive vision for the Pashtun community. This disunity further alienates the broader population, diminishing the PTM's influence and social support.



Despite presenting itself as an advocate for human rights, the PTM has resorted to undemocratic practices, including hate speech and ethnic bias. Its rhetoric often vilifies the state and security forces, fostering a divisive narrative that isolates Pashtuns from the rest of Pakistan. This manipulation of ethnic sentiments exacerbates social tensions and obstructs national unity. Rather than promoting inclusivity, the PTM's discourse creates a toxic environment that perpetuates resentment and mistrust.

Moreover, the PTM's reluctance to condemn acts of terrorism committed by extremist elements, such as the banned group Fitna-al-Khawarij, further exposes the contradictions in its claims of pacifism. While the movement demands accountability from the state, it remains silent on the atrocities committed by such extremist factions, raising questions about its commitment to peace and justice.

The PTM's activities align disturbingly with the agenda of extremist groups like Fitna-al-Khawarij, which seek to destabilize the region through violence

and unrest. The movement's rhetoric, which incites rebellion and undermines state authority, serves the interests of these banned outfits by creating an environment conducive to chaos.

This alignment poses a significant threat to the safety of innocent citizens, who become collateral damage in the struggle between the state and extremist elements.

It is essential to recognize that the PTM's actions are not just a challenge to the state but also a betrayal of the Pashtun people's interests. By provoking unrest, the movement jeopardizes the region's development and obstructs efforts to improve the quality of life for its inhabitants. The PTM's leaders, including Manzoor Pashteen, Mohsin Dawar, and Ali Wazir, appear more interested in pursuing personal political gains than in addressing the real issues faced by the community.

Pakistan's security forces remain steadfast in their commitment to eliminating terrorism and restoring peace in the region. Their efforts, supported by the sacrifices of soldiers and civilians alike, have paved the way for a safer and more stable future. It is imperative that the youth of the region channel their energies into constructive pursuits that contribute to national development rather than becoming pawns in violent political games.

The people of Pakistan, including the Pashtun community, must reject divisive narratives that sow discord and undermine the state's efforts to combat terrorism. Instead, they should focus on fostering unity and cooperation, recognizing that the fight against extremism is a shared responsibility. The path to progress lies in dialogue, development, and a collective commitment to peace.

The deceptive discourse of the PTM serves as a reminder of the dangers posed by movements that manipulate ethnic sentiments and incite violence under the guise of social activism. While the movement claims to advocate for human rights, its actions reveal a pattern of undemocratic practices, hate speech, and alliances with extremist elements. The state's resolve to combat terrorism remains unshaken, and with the support of the public, the menace of extremism and its enablers will be eradicated.

Pakistan stands at a crucial juncture in its fight against terrorism, and the unity of its people is essential to overcome the challenges ahead. The nation must reject divisive narratives and reaffirm its commitment to peace, progress, and national unity. With courage and determination, the people of Pakistan will continue to resist the forces of terror and build a brighter future for generations to come.

## Russia Cuts Gas to Austria in Payment Dispute

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia halted gas supplies to Austria in a dispute over payments but was still pumping steady volumes to Europe via Ukraine after remaining buyers asked for more gas.

Russia, which before the Ukraine war was the biggest single supplier of natural gas to Europe, has lost almost all of its European customers as the EU tries to reduce its dependence and after the Nord Stream pipeline to Germany was blown up in 2022.

Now one of the last main Russian gas routes to Europe - the Soviet-era Urengoy-Pomary-Uzhgorod pipeline via Ukraine - is due to shut at the end of this year, as Kyiv does not want to extend a five-year transit agreement which brings northern Siberian gas to Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Austria.

Austria said on Friday that Moscow had informed it that the gas would be shut off following an arbitration award to OMV, Austria's biggest energy supplier, over unfulfilled supplies to its German unit by Russia's state firm Gazprom.

On Saturday, Austria's energy regulator E-Control said Gazprom's deliveries to OMV had stopped at 6 a.m. (0500 GMT), adding that prices and supplies to Austrian customers were steady.

OMV is seeking to recover the 230 million euro (\$242 million) damages, awarded during arbitration, from Gazprom by offsetting the claim against invoices for deliveries to Austria -

essentially stopping some payments for gas supplied via Ukraine.

Gazprom declined to comment on the suspension of flows to Austria, but the Russian company said it would send 42.4 million cubic metres of gas to Europe via Ukraine on Saturday, the same volume as on Friday and during every other day in recent months.

Slovak state-owned firm SPP said it was still receiving gas from Russia and added others were buying more.

"The situation when a large consumer stopped taking gas from the east, but the same volume flows through the territory of Ukraine, shows that there is still great interest in this gas in Europe," SPP said in a statement, without naming the other buyers.

OMV usually accounts for around 40% of Russian gas flows via Ukraine, or some 17 mcm per day.

Austrian grid operator AGGM said it was not currently substituting imports from Germany or Italy. Austria said earlier it had plentiful stocks to cover the shortfall.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz spoke to President Vladimir Putin on Friday for the first time in nearly two years, as European leaders wait to hear Donald Trump's ideas on ending the biggest land war in Europe since World War Two.



According to the Kremlin, Putin told Scholz that Russia had always fulfilled its contractual obligations for energy supplies and was "ready for mutually beneficial cooperation if the German side shows interest in this".

Soviet and post-Soviet leaders spent half a century from the discovery of major Siberian gas deposits in the post-WW2 years building up an energy business which linked the Soviet Union, then Russia, and Germany, by far Europe's biggest economy.

War, and explosions, have destroyed that link, damaging the economies of both countries.



## Super Sinner Sets Up ATP Finals Decider With Fritz

TURIN (Dispatches) - Imperious home favorite and world number one Jannik Sinner outclassed Norway's Casper Ruud to set up an ATP Finals title decider against Taylor Fritz on Saturday. Sinner was unstoppable as he dispatched Ruud 6-1 6-2 in the evening session at a packed Inalpi Arena and will be favourite to become Italy's first winner of the prestigious year-end.

The second semi-final was a stark contrast to the first in which Fritz and world number two Alexander Zverev were involved in a ferocious slug fest, the American winning 6-3 3-6 7-6(3). Fritz is the first American to reach the final since James Blake in 2006 and will hope to become the first American to lift the trophy since Pete Sampras in 1999.

Sinner's stupendous year may have been clouded by an anti-doping controversy but on the court he is finishing the season like an express train and has won 25 of his last 26 matches.

The 23-year-old was razor-sharp against Ruud and was in complete control after breaking serve in the second game. He has reached the final without dropping a set.

"I raised my level and I was intense with each shot," Sinner, who beat Fritz in the U.S. Open final and also in the group stage in Turin, said on court.

"It's a similar circumstance to last year. I'll just try to play my best tomorrow and hopefully it'll be a good day."

Sinner lost in the final to Novak Djokovic last year having beaten the Serb in an earlier group match. "I've grown a lot as a player," added Sinner, who struck 23 winners in a one-sided contest.

Zverev, who won the Paris Masters in the build-up to Turin, looked like the biggest threat to Sinner's title hopes.

The 27-year-old German, twice a winner of the year-end, had not reckoned on an inspired Fritz however.

Fritz had won his previous three matches against Zverev and played what he described as a "perfect first set" to move ahead.

Zverev hit back though to set up a deciding set and had enough chances to have taken the win.

Fritz got ahead in the tiebreak and admirably held his nerve, clinching the win with a thumping forehand winner.

"I found myself in some tough spots in the third, both of us really started to get on each other's serve even more, said Fritz, who will end the year at a career-high world number four.

"I told myself just to give him nothing from the back."

Zverev did not find the level he achieved during the group phase but still looked the favourite in a third set full of lengthy rallies from the baseline.

Fritz looked in big trouble on serve at 2-2 when some errors looked like proving costly but he managed to hold serve from 0-40. Zverev then found himself in a big hole at 3-4 down as he went 15-40 but fought off the break points and then another one after a double fault to stay level.

Matching Zverev from the baseline throughout an enthralling match, Fritz showed great resilience towards the end and once he reached the tiebreak, the odds swung in his favour as his opponent began to run out of steam.

"I've been playing the top guys at the big events a lot lately," Fritz, who lost to Sinner in the U.S. Open final, said. "I'm getting more comfortable and confident in those moments."

In the doubles El Salvador's Marcelo Arevalo and Croatia's Mate Pavic, the top seeds, beat seventh seeds Harri Heliövaara (Finland) and Henry Patten (Britain) 7-6(1) 7-6(4) to set up a final against German duo Kevin Krawietz and Tim Puetz.

## Tyson Says "No Regrets" Over Loss for Fighting "One Last Time"



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Former world heavyweight champion Mike Tyson said he has no regrets over losing to Jake Paul in their heavyweight boxing matchup after climbing into the ring "one last time."

The 58-year-old legend dropped a unanimous decision yesterday to 27-year-old Youtube fighter Paul at AT&T Stadium, the home of the Dallas Cowboys, before 72,300 fans and 60 million more households worldwide, according to telecaster Netflix.

"This is one of those situations when you lost but still won," Tyson posted Saturday on X. "I'm grateful for last night. No regrets to get in ring one last time."

Tyson, who said he nearly died in June over health issues, had left open chances for another ring return in comments shortly after the defeat.

He said it was a victory simply to fight—detailing medical issues that forced the fight to be postponed from July after he had a medical scare on a flight from Miami to Los Angeles in May where he vomited blood.

"I almost died in June," Tyson said. "Had 8 blood transfusions. Lost half my blood and 25lbs in hospital and had to fight to get healthy to fight so I won."

"To have my children see me stand toe to toe and finish 8 rounds with a talented fighter half my age in front of a packed Dallas Cowboy stadium is an experience that no man has the right to ask for."

At the time, Tyson dismissed his health issues as an "ulcer flare-up" and was positive about fighting Paul at some stage.

## Mavs Come to Life in Third Quarter to Pound Spurs



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Kyrie Irving and reserve Daniel Gafford each scored 22 points and the Dallas Mavericks pulled away in the third quarter for a 110-93 win over the visiting San Antonio Spurs.

The Mavericks had dropped four straight games by a combined eight points but were on cruise control against San Antonio. Dallas led by four at halftime and by 24 after a rousing third quarter before coasting to the finish.

Luka Dončić hit for 16 points, six rebounds and six assists for the Mavericks, while Jaden Hardy added 12 points.

Zach Collins finished with a season-high 20 points for the Spurs, with Sandro Mamukelashvili adding 14, Julian Champagnie scoring 13 and Stephon Castle posting 12. San Antonio has dropped two straight games.

San Antonio was without star center Victor Wembanyama because of a knee contusion and guard Devin Vassell, who sat out with what the team called right foot injury management.

That didn't stop the Spurs from shrugging off an early seven-point deficit to take a 28-23 lead after one quarter, as Champagnie canned 2 of 3 free throws with 0.2 seconds remaining in the opening period.

San Antonio was up by as many as eight points early in the second quarter before the Mavericks swept to the front. Down 40-35 after a pair of free throws by Collins with 6:31 to play in the first half, Dallas rallied to tie the game at 47 with 3:12 left on Gafford's running layup. The hosts' run continued with a bucket from Naji Marshall followed by 3-pointers from Irving and Dončić.

The Spurs scored the final four points of the frame to pull within 55-51 at the break.

After an early third-quarter spurt by Dallas, the Spurs got within six points on two free throws from Collins with 8:03 remaining. The Mavericks then took charge for good, reeling off a 12-3 run that was capped by Irving's tip-in layup to push their advantage to 78-63.

Meanwhile Anthony Davis had 31 points and 14 rebounds and the visiting Los Angeles Lakers won their fifth straight game by defeating the New Orleans Pelicans 104-99.

LeBron James failed to extend his career-best streak of four consecutive triple-doubles, but he had 21 points, including consecutive clutch 3-pointers in the final two minutes. Rookie Dalton Knecht scored 27 and Austin Reaves added 10.

Brandon Ingram scored 32, Jaylen Nowell had 16 off the bench, Brandon Boston Jr. had 12 and Jeremiah Robinson-Earl 10 for the Pelicans.

## Netherlands Defeat Hungary; German Pulverize Bosnia

AMSTERDAM (Dispatches) -- Two first half penalties and two quality strikes in the second half handed the Netherlands a 4-0 win over Hungary on Saturday and a place in the Nations League quarter-finals in March as they guaranteed themselves a top two finish in Group A3.

Wout Weghorst and Cody Gakpo both scored from the spot while Denzel Dumfries and the returning Teun Koopmeiners added two more after the break.

The game at the Johan Cruyff Stadium was halted after seven minutes when Hungary assistant coach Adam Szalai suffered what looked to be a seizure on the bench.

His legs could be seen kicking as he lay on the ground, quickly surrounded by staff members and substitutes.

It led to a 13-minute stoppage while he was being treated and it was only after a discussion among the players on the field that the Hungarian team agreed to play on.

But they had to face a penalty immediately as



a VAR check found that defender Tamas Nikitscher had handled the ball trying to clear a Gakpo cross in the last action before the game was halted.

Weghorst tucked the ball away to give the Dutch the lead and they won a second penalty in stoppage time at the end of the first half when Donyell Malen was tripped by Zsolt Nagy.

This time Gakpo took the kick and, like Weghorst, sent Denes Dibusz the wrong way.

The Hungary goalkeeper made several excellent stops in the first half to keep the score down to only 2-0, notably tipping Tijjani Reijnders' goal-bound header over the bar.

But in the 64th minute, there was little he could do as Dumfries laced a volleyed shot into the net from an angle after a half clearance fell to him unmarked on the right of the attack.

## Swiatek Leads Poland to Historic Win Over Czech Republic

MALAGA (Dispatches) - Poland will face Italy in their first ever Billie Jean King Cup semi-finals after beating the Czech Republic 2-1 in a hard-fought tie that ended in the early hours of Sunday.

Czech Marie Bouzkova won the opener against Magdalena Frech 6-1 4-6 6-4, and it was up to Swiatek to keep Poland's chances alive to reach the tournament's semi-finals for the first time.

The world number two, undefeated in Billie Jean King Cup in the last five years, did just that but was well tested by teenager Linda Noskova, whom she beat 7-6(4) 4-6 7-5 in a tight encounter that lasted two hours and 39 minutes.

Swiatek broke to take a 3-1 lead in the final set before Noskova, who knocked her out of the Australian Open in January, broke back and pulled level at 4-4.

The Pole took the match to even the tie 1-1 before returning on court with Katarzyna Kawa for the decider against doubles world number one Katerina Siniakova and Bouzkova.

Swiatek and Kawa then sealed a stunning 6-1 6-4 victory over the Czechs in one hour and 11 minutes.

"I'm so happy to play with Iga and that we made it. I mean, it's



really great day, the start of the great day," Kawa said as she began her 31st birthday celebrations on Sunday.

The five-time Grand Slam winner Swiatek added: "In 20 minutes I'll be dead! It was an exhausting day, but everything worked. We did a great job, we won."

Italy became the first nation through to the last four after they beat Japan 2-1 with a deciding straight sets doubles victory by Jasmine Paolini and Sara Errani over Shuko Aoyama and Eri Hozumi earlier on Saturday.

The tie was locked at 1-1 after French Open and Wimbledon runner-up Paolini beat 56th-ranked Moyuka Uchijima 6-3 6-4 in the second singles match to put the Italians on the board.

While the opening set of that match was all one-way traffic, the second was level at 4-4 before world number four Paolini pulled away with the win in little over one hour.

Paolini returned for the doubles with Errani, who has five doubles Grand Slam titles to her name. The pair, who won gold at the Paris Olympics, dominated to beat the Japanese duo 6-3 6-4.