

Foreign Ministry Spokesman in Response to the Developments of the Last Two Days in Syria, While Warning Against the Reactivation of Takfiri Terrorist Groups in Syria, Called for Decisive and Coordinated Action to Prevent the Spread of Terrorism in the Region

IRAN NEWS

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi and His Singaporean Counterpart Vivian Balakrishnan Have Exchanged Views on the Latest Developments Including the Issues of Mutual Interest And Called for Expanding Mutual Cooperation

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Iran Calls on EU to Change Self-Centered, Irresponsible Behavior



TEHRAN (PressTV) - An Iranian deputy foreign minister has urged the European Union to change its "self-centered and irresponsible" behavior toward Tehran as talks between Iranian and European diplomats are set to begin in Geneva.

Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs, provided a briefing on the Iranian delegation's Thursday meeting with Enrique Mora, Deputy Secretary General of the European External Action Service, in Geneva.

The Iranian delegation, he wrote on X on Friday, "had a frank discussion" with Mora on "a variety of issues, including the perspective of nuclear and sanctions lifting negotiations in light of recent developments."

"It was reaffirmed to him that EU should abandon its self-centered and irresponsible behaviour towards issues and challenges of this continent and international matters," he stressed.

"Europe should not project its own problems and mistakes onto others, including with regard to the conflict in Ukraine," he added.

Gharibabadi added that Europe "lack any moral ground" to lecture others on human rights given the complicity of the United Kingdom, France, and Germany in the ongoing Israeli genocidal war on Gaza, where more than 44,300 Palestinians have been killed since October last year by Western-backed Israeli regime.

Turning to Iran's nuclear program, the Iranian diplomat said "Europe has failed to be a serious player due to lack of self-confidence and responsibility. Europe is in need of self-recovery."

According to Esmail Baghaei, spokesperson for Iran's Foreign Ministry, deputy foreign ministers of Iran and the three European countries, also known as the E3, will meet on Friday.

He reaffirmed Iran's principled stance on interaction and cooperation with other countries based on dignity, wisdom and interests.

Baghaei explained that the upcoming meeting with the three European countries will be a continuation of the talks held with the trio in September on the sidelines of the annual session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

Iranian Forces Chased Away U.S. Troops in High Seas



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani has hailed his forces' achievements, saying they managed to repel US troops in the high seas.

"Without personnel and equipment, we approached the core of the Great Satan at the depth of the oceans and drove them away and cheered the name of Iran with authority," Irani said during Friday prayers in Tehran.

He also noted that the popular Islamic Republic of Iran Army has an effective presence worldwide relying on its high knowledge and capabilities.

Meanwhile, he referred to Operation Morvarid (Pearl) in November 1980, which resulted in a decisive victory for the Iranian Navy during the Iraqi-imposed war.

The operation, he added, permanently maintained Iran's authority in the Persian Gulf.

November 27 marks the Iranian Navy Day in remembrance of the bravery of the Iranian naval forces in the face of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

In another address to mark the day in Mashhad on Friday, Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, deputy chief of the Iranian Army for coordination, stressed Iran's capabilities to build its required naval equipment.

"We currently have the capability to build destroyers, missile-armed ships, and submarines within the country, and all existing equipment, weapons, and smart munitions in this field are domestically produced," he said, adding, "All naval equipment is indigenous, and we are at the cutting edge of maritime technology."



Tehran Dismisses Unfounded Allegation of Violating Chemical Weapons Convention

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran's permanent mission to the UN has roundly dismissed allegations that Tehran has violated the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), stressing that the Islamic Republic is itself a main victim of such munitions.

In a statement published on its official X account late on Thursday night, the mission described Iran as a victim of the chemical weapons that Western governments provided former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein with during its 1980s imposed war, emphasizing that the country stands fully committed to the CWC.

It added that not a single instance of Iranian violation of the treaty has been recorded over the past several decades.

A victim of Western-donated chemical weapons employed by the Saddam regime, Iran stands as a responsible member of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Over the past several decades, not a single instance of Iranian violation has been recorded. "The current unfounded reports are merely an outgrowth of psychological warfare propagated by the Zionist regime in the wake of its recent defeat on the Lebanese front," the statement read.

The Institute for the Study of War (ISW), citing a November 26 report by the Institute for Science and International Security, alleged that Iran had been focusing on how to produce and deliver pharmaceutical-based chemical agents (PBAs) for use in military attacks.

The allegations come as the impacts of chemical attacks against Iranian civilians still can be felt among the affected. During the 1980-88 war, the Iraqi army continuously employed chemical weapons against Iranian combatants and civilians, leaving tens of thousands dead on the spot and

many more suffering for years to come.

These attacks included the use of mustard gas and other chemical agents, provided by Western governments for former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's regime.

One of the most notable chemical attacks occurred in the Iranian city of Sardasht, a small city in Iran's West Azarbaijan Province. The attack killed at least 119 Iranian civilians and injured another 8,000, leaving some of them permanently disabled.

Iran, over the years, has slammed the Western governments for supplying chemical weapons to the former Iraqi dictator, while also calling on the international community to focus on the chemical activities of the Israeli regime.

Earlier on Wednesday, Kazem Gharibabadi, who serves as head of the Iranian Judiciary's High Council for Human Rights, urged the United Nations Security Council to impose sanctions on Israel over its use of banned chemical weapons against "defenseless people" in Palestine and Lebanon.

"We condemn the Zionist regime's use of chemical weapons and other hazardous materials, including white phosphorus and depleted uranium, against the defenseless people of Palestine and Lebanon," Gharibabadi said while addressing the 29th Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CSP-29) held in The Hague on Wednesday.

Last month, Lebanon's official National News Agency reported that Israeli forces had used internationally banned phosphorus munitions during a series of strikes on the outskirts of the southeastern Lebanese border town of Kfar Shuba.

Syrian Army Preemptive Strikes Foil Terrorist Onslaught in Aleppo

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) -

The Syrian army has reportedly thwarted large-scale terrorist operations in Aleppo province through a preemptive strike.

Four major terrorist operations, which were set to begin from the town of Anadan, 12 kilometers northwest of Aleppo, were foiled before they could start, Al-Mayadeen reported on Friday.

Intense clashes are still ongoing in the area between the Syrian armed forces and terrorist groups, mainly Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, formerly known as the Nusra Front, according to the report.

Reports on Friday said fierce battles are ongoing in western Aleppo. Syrian state media said artillery shelling killed four civilians at student housing in Aleppo.

"Four civilians were killed after terrorist organizations shelled the university dorms in Aleppo," the official news agency SANA said.

The Syrian army launched intensified missile attacks on terrorist positions that stretch from villages in western Aleppo to Mount Zawiya south of Idlib, according to the report.

Late on Thursday, the television network reported that four large-scale attacks launched from the city of Anadan, north of Aleppo, were foiled.

Meanwhile, the Syrian army has halted the advance of terrorists led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham in southeastern Idlib and launched a counterattack to regain ground.



The Syrian army on Thursday began a counterattack on positions held by the militants in the southeast of Idlib, regaining control over Jobsa village and forcing the militants to leave the villages of Dadikh and Kafir Battikh, east of Idlib.

Oleg Ignasyuk, the deputy head of the Russian Center for Reconciliation of the Opposing Parties in Syria, said that at least 400 terrorists affiliated to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, had been killed.

He stressed that the Syrian army "is fighting fiercely, amid the support of the Russian air force."

Russian and Syrian warplanes bombed militant-held areas in northwest Syria near the border with Turkey to push back the terrorists.

The Syrian army has said it had inflicted heavy losses on the terrorists who had attacked on a wide front, adding that it was cooperating with Russia and "friendly forces" to regain ground. Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since 2011 with Damascus blaming the Western countries and their regional allies for aiding the terrorist groups.

Russia, alongside Iran, has assisted Syrian forces in battles across the conflict-plagued country, mainly by providing aerial support to ground operations against foreign-backed terrorists.

FM Warns West of Debate in Iran on Changing Nuclear Doctrine



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has warned about an ongoing debate in Iran over whether to change the nuclear doctrine in the face of the West's continued sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

Last week, the EU and the UK announced fresh sanctions against Iran after a censure motion brought by Britain, France, Germany and the US was passed at the International Atomic Energy Agency's Board of Governors.

In response, Iran began injecting uranium gas into several thousand advanced centrifuges, making good on its promise if the West did not choose "the path of engagement and instead pursue confrontation and issue a resolution".

Speaking in Lisbon before a meeting between Iranian and European negotiators in Geneva on Friday, Araqchi said IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi had promised to prevent the censure motion after Iran proposed limiting its uranium enrichment to 60 percent purity and allowing four nuclear inspectors to visit its nuclear sites.

Grossi "failed because the Europeans had decided on the course of confrontation," he told reporters.

Iran subsequently "decided to introduce thousands of new, highly advanced machines into the system. And now they have started to feed them with gas. So this is the result of their pressure," he added.

Araqchi reiterated that Iran has remained within the confines of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, however, and still seeks cooperation.

"We have no intention to go further than 60 percent for the time being, and this is our determination right now. I would like to re-emphasize that we have chosen the line of cooperation in order to come to a dignified resolution of this problem," he stressed.

However, Araqchi said, Iran's engagement with the West on its nuclear program was not guaranteed.

Lebanon Truce Strategic, Humiliating Defeat for Israel



TEHRAN (IRIB) - The chief commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has congratulated Lebanon and its Hezbollah resistance movement for successfully imposing a ceasefire on Israel, hailing it as a "strategic and humiliating defeat" for the occupying regime.

Major General Hossein Salami made the remarks in a message sent to Hezbollah Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem on Thursday, a day after a truce deal took effect between Israel and Hezbollah following more than 14 months of fighting.

"The ceasefire on the Lebanese front is a strategic and humiliating defeat for the Zionist regime, which did not even come close to achieving any of its evil goals and ambitions in the war against Hezbollah," he said.

The truce, he added, "could even mark the beginning of a ceasefire to end the war on Gaza."

Salami also noted that Israel's acceptance of the ceasefire, as it was under the barrage of Hezbollah missiles targeting the regime's bases and strategic sites, had lessons for Tel Aviv and its supporters.

The usurping entity is on the decline and the crimes that it is committing in Gaza and Lebanon will strengthen the resistance, he emphasized.

The IRGC chief commander further said Hezbollah had clinched the victory by truly dissuading Israel from achieving its evil objectives in the northern front of the occupied territories and imposing a ceasefire on the fake regime.

"Undoubtedly, this great victory, which was secured thanks to the pure blood of martyrs, the patience and resilience of the Lebanese people, and the unwavering courage and sacrifices of the youth and Hezbollah, is considered a major development in the history of the Islamic Ummah's struggle against Zionists in West Asia."

IRAN NEWS



Iran Develops Super-Resolution Satellite Imaging Technology

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran's homegrown Khayyam satellite, which was launched into orbit in 2022, has captured super-resolution images, an official said.

Director of the Iranian Space Research Center Hassan Salariyeh announced on Friday that the super-resolution images taken by Khayyam satellite have been generated in cooperation with the domestic knowledge-based companies.

The advanced satellite imagery technology has allowed for the generation of images with 35 to 45 centimeter resolution, he noted. Describing the super-resolution images as a testimony to Iran's significant progress in the space industry, Salariyeh said the images have been produced with special computational techniques and modern processing methods without the need for auxiliary data.

Resurgence of Terrorism in Syria "American-Zionist Plot" After Failure in Lebanon



TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has called the resurgence of Takfiri terrorism in northern Syria the outcome of an American-Israeli project, noting that the development followed the Israeli regime's defeats against resistance in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories.

The top diplomat made the remarks during a telephone conversation with his Syria counterpart Bassam al-Sabbagh on Friday.

Araqchi described the unwelcome development as "an American-Zionist design" that had ensued the Israeli regime's defeats at the hands of resistance movements in Lebanon and throughout the Palestinian territories.

The comments echoed those made by the official in a Thursday phone call with his Lebanese counterpart Abdallah Bou Habib, during which the former had called the phenomenon a US-Israeli scenario aimed at destabilizing West Asia after failures of the Zionist regime in confronting Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement.

Araqchi also underlined that the menace of terrorism had been countered effectively by the Arab country.

He also underlined the Islamic Republic's continued support for the Syrian government, nation, and army towards fighting terrorism and protecting regional security and stability.

The comments reflected Tehran's acting as the first country to rush to the Arab nation's support in 2014, when foreign-backed terrorism and militancy swept large swathes of the country.

Damascus, however, managed to gradually reverse the tide with the help of its allies, regaining the lost territory and vanquishing Daesh, the most brutal of the terrorist outfits, in 2017.

Sabbagh, meanwhile, reported on the situation on the ground in northern Syria following the terrorist attacks.

Sanctions on Iran Cause Serious Harm to Maritime Safety and Security



TEHRAN - The Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) stated, "I believe sanctions cause significant harm to cooperation in maritime safety and security and participation in marine environmental protection efforts. The IMO does not recognize unilateral sanctions against its member states."

Farzaneh Sadegh, Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development, during a meeting with Arsenio Dominguez, Secretary-General of the IMO, said: "Experts affirm that the Islamic Republic of Iran has consistently played a decisive and effective role in ensuring maritime safety and security and protecting the marine environment."

Sadegh emphasized Iran's accession to IMO conventions and its active participation in the organization's technical committees. "The Ports and Maritime Organization has always been at the forefront of advancing and implementing IMO's programs and policies to enhance maritime safety and security," she added.

The minister also highlighted the 14th government's strategy to expand regional cooperation with neighboring countries, stating, "Unjust and unilateral sanctions against Iran's maritime transport harm friendly and cooperative relations both regionally and beyond."

Sadegh further referred to the government's focus on maritime-oriented development and economy, asserting: "One of the serious programs of the 14th government is the implementation of maritime development policies issued by the Supreme Leader. We aim to utilize IMO's experiences in this path."

She also called for expanding IMO's educational collaborations in Iran, emphasizing, "Education and training of Iranian experts and students in modern maritime knowledge is a pressing need for Iran."

Sadegh highlighted Iran's rich maritime history, noting, "A 7,000-year-old clay tablet found in Iran depicts a ship with cheerful and lively passengers and crew."

During the meeting, Arsenio Dominguez reiterated that IMO seeks to strengthen relations and collaboration with its member states in its new term. He said, "I believe sanctions severely harm cooperation in maritime safety and security as well as participation in marine environmental protection. The IMO does not recognize unilateral sanctions against its member states."

Dominguez also acknowledged Iran's active role in the IMO and expressed optimism about hosting significant IMO events in Iran.

The IMO Secretary-General emphasized that sanctions disrupt regular and standardized shipping operations, adding, "One of IMO's missions is to alleviate and address countries' concerns about commercial shipping and reduce them in the coming years."

He concluded by stating, "In the current regional circumstances, IMO supports all peace-promoting and cooperative measures."

Dominguez underscored that ensuring the well-being, health, and safety of crew members and seafarers remains the highest priority for the IMO in all situations and conditions.

Tehran-Baghdad Relations Unparalleled, Privileged in Region



TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Consular and Parliamentary Affairs Vahid Jalalzadeh described the amicable relations between Iran and Iraq as 'exemplary and privileged' in the region.

He made the remarks in his meeting with the Undersecretary of Iraq's Foreign Ministry for Bilateral Relations Mohammad Hussein Bahr Aaloom in Baghdad, emphasizing that the two neighboring states have established very amicable relations with each other in all fields.

During the meeting the two sides discussed ways to enhance bilateral relations between Iran and Iraq, stressing the importance of implementing the provisions of the agreements and memorandums of understanding signed between the two countries, especially those reached during the recent visit of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to Baghdad.

The Iranian and Iraqi officials condemned the heinous crimes committed by the criminal Zionist regime in the region and welcomed the ceasefire in Lebanon, calling it a victory for the Lebanese people and the Hezbollah Resistance Movement.

Iranian deputy foreign minister, for his part, described the relations between Iran and Iraq as a unique example in the region and stated that continuous visits and consultations of high-ranking officials of the two countries and several cooperation documents signed between the two countries at various levels indicate the depth of friendly relations between Tehran and Baghdad.

The first foreign trip of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to Iraq is a sign of the strategic depth of the relations between the two countries, Jalalzadeh stressed.

The undersecretary of Iraq's Foreign Ministry for Bilateral Relations termed the relations between Tehran and Baghdad 'exemplary' in the region and called for further promotion and strengthening of relations between the two neighboring countries.

This meeting comes within the framework of joint efforts to strengthen the partnership between Iraq and Iran and intensify cooperation in political, economic, and consular areas.

Iran Commemorates Int'l Day of Solidarity With Palestine



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The spokesperson for the Iranian Foreign Ministry commemorated the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, calling for collective support for the Palestinian's struggle for right to self-determination.

"Palestine, the most universal human cause, remains the most outstanding crisis of our humanity and symbolizes unrealized rights and unfulfilled promises," Esmail Baqaei said in a post on his X account on Friday.

"On International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we hail their epic resistance and resilience as they continue to endure extreme pain and suffering under long time brutal occupation and apartheid exacerbated by incessant genocidal attacks during the past 14 months. The 'colonial erasure' project is now violating Palestinians' basic right to life in the most brutal way," he stated.

"The world is legally and morally obliged to stand in solidarity, both in words and in action, with the Palestinian people in their just struggle for inalienable right of self-determination and to live in peace and dignity," the Iranian spokesman added.

In 1977, the UN General Assembly called for the annual observance of November 29 as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. On this day, in 1947, the Assembly adopted the resolution on the partition of Palestine.

In resolution 60/37 of December 1, 2005, the Assembly requested the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights, as part of the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on November 29, to continue to organize an annual exhibit on Palestinian rights or a cultural event in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the UN.

The resolution on the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People also encourages Member States to continue to give the widest support and publicity to the observance of the Day of Solidarity.

EU Not Enjoy Independent Political Personality



TEHRAN (MNA) - Tehran Provisional Friday Prayers Leader Hujjat al-Islam Mohammad Hassan Abu Torabi Fard says that the European Union (EU) does not have an independent political personality.

Speaking during this week's Friday Prayers in Tehran, the Hujjat al-Islam underlined that the Navy Force of the Islamic Republic of Iran has showcased the authority of the country and the Armed Forces in regional and extra-regional waters.

The Navy Force of the Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the pillars of the country's defense power, he emphasized.

The Friday prayers leader then pointed to the 10th of Azar (Nov. 30) which marks Parliament Day in Iran and stated that Martyr Modarres was a learned man who defended the rights of the nation.

He (Modarres) considered defending the rights of the Iranian nation as defending the teachings of Islam and termed the implementation of law as superior to the survival and durability of the government.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Hujjat al-Islam Mohammad Hassan Abu Torabi Fard referred to the relations between Iran and Europe and added the relationship between Iran and Europe has experienced many ups and downs since the victory of the Islamic Revolution in

1979.

Today, the European Union does not enjoy an independent political personality, he stated, noting that Europeans' interests have been victimized by the US's excessive demands.

He censured Europe's unconventional and hostile move in issuing the anti-Iranian statement regarding the trio islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa and stated that these irrational actions were met with Iran's rational action.

One cannot negotiate with a powerful Iran through the language of threat, he said.

The West can facilitate dialogue and reach an agreement with mutual respect and Iran has always been ready for honest and scientific dialogue, he stressed.

He congratulated the Lebanese people on their victory and pointed out that the Islamic Republic of Iran has been and will stand by the Lebanese people.

Reaching an agreement with Hezbollah means a complete defeat for the criminal Zionist regime and today, the power of Hezbollah and the Resistance Front have brought the Zionist enemy to its knees, the Friday prayers leader emphasized.

Iran to Expand Overseas Farming to 2m Hectares by 2029



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has set a target to expand its overseas farming to 2 million hectares (4.942 million acres) by 2028 amid efforts to ensure sufficient food supplies in the country.

An official in the Iranian Ministry of Agriculture and Jihad (MAJ) said on Wednesday that the target to expand overseas farming has been mentioned in a five-year vision plan that will end in the calendar year 1407 (ending March 2029).

Reza Fotouhi, who leads overseas farming projects in the MAJ, said expanding farming activity in other countries helps Iran reduce its reliance on food imports.

Fotouhi said that Iran is also required to rely on overseas farming for 10 million metric tons of food imports by 2031 based on the terms of a document outlining Iran's food security efforts.

He said that the country is currently using some 0.228 million hectares of land for farming in other countries.

The official added that lands used for corn farming in Brazil by Iranian companies had reached 50,000 hectares, adding that the country is also engaged in overseas farming of barley, oil seeds, and soybean in Kazakhstan and also in smaller projects in Belarus and Russia.

He said private Iranian companies have also launched overseas farming projects in Ghana, Armenia, and Pakistan.

Iran has introduced major plans to boost its agricultural output in recent years as it strives to keep pace with rising food demand.

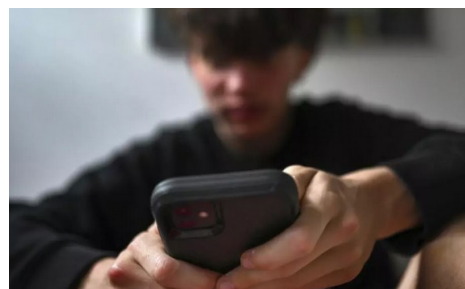
The country has a population of more than 85 million people and a rising demand for food which experts say could become the subject of threats like climate change and foreign sanctions in the future.

Australia Passes World's First Social Media Ban for Under-16s

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - A social media ban for children under 16 passed the Australian Senate Thursday and will soon become a world-first law. The law will make platforms including TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, Reddit, X and Instagram liable for fines of up to 50 million Australian dollars (\$33 million) for systemic failures to prevent children younger than 16 from holding accounts.

The Senate passed the bill 34 votes to 19. The House of Representatives on Wednesday overwhelmingly approved the legislation 102 votes to 13. The House has yet to endorse opposition amendments made in the Senate. But that is a formality since the government has already agreed they will pass. The platforms will have one year to work out how they could implement the ban before penalties are enforced.

The amendments bolster privacy protections. Platforms would not be allowed to compel users to provide government-issued identity documents including passports or driver's licenses, nor could they demand digital identification through a government system.



Georgia Postpones EU Bid Until 2028, Accusing Brussels of Blackmail



TBILISI (Dispatches) - Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze said Thursday that while Tbilisi remains committed to its goal of European Union membership, it will not pursue accession until 2028, accusing Brussels of "blackmail".

The announcement came hours after the European Parliament adopted a non-binding resolution rejecting the results of Georgia's October 26 parliamentary elections, alleging "significant irregularities".

The resolution called for new elections to be held within a year under international supervision and for sanctions to be imposed on top Georgian officials, including Kobakhidze.

Accusing the European Parliament and "some European politicians" of "blackmail," Kobakhidze said: "We have decided not to bring up the issue of joining the European Union on the agenda until the end of 2028."

But he pledged to continue implementing the necessary reforms, asserting that "by 2028, Georgia will be more prepared than any other candidate country to open accession talks with Brussels and become a member state in 2030".

The former Soviet country officially gained EU candidate status in December 2023. But Brussels has effectively frozen Georgia's accession process until Tbilisi takes concrete steps to address what it calls democratic backsliding.

Opposition lawmakers are boycotting the country's new parliament, alleging fraud in the October elections, in which the ruling Georgian Dream party held on to its majority. Pro-Western President Salome Zurbishvili - at loggerheads with Georgian Dream - has declared the ballot "unconstitutional" and is seeking to annul the election results through the Constitutional Court.

Following Kobakhidze's statement, street protests erupted outside the parliament building and the Georgian Dream headquarters in Tbilisi, as well as in several major cities across Georgia.

In the western city of Kutaisi, police detained several demonstrators, the independent Pirveli TV station reported.



BEIRUT (Dispatches) - The Israeli military said its air force struck a facility used by Hezbollah to store mid-range rockets in southern Lebanon on Thursday, after both sides accused each other of breaching a ceasefire that aims to halt over a year of fighting.

Israel said it also opened fire on Thursday towards what it called "suspects" with vehicles arriving at several areas in the southern zone, saying it was a breach of the truce with Iran-backed armed group Hezbollah, which came into effect on Wednesday.

Hezbollah lawmaker Hassan Fadlallah in turn accused Israel of violating the deal.

The exchange of accusations highlighted the fragility of the ceasefire, which was brokered by the United States and France to end the conflict, fought in parallel with the Gaza war. The truce lasts for 60 days in the hope of reaching a permanent cessation of hostilities.

Israel's airstrike on Thursday was the first since the truce took effect on Wednesday morning. Lebanese security sources and the Al Jazeera broadcaster said it took place near Baysariyah, north of the Litani River.

The ceasefire deal stipulates that unauthorized military facilities south of the Litani River should be dismantled, but does not mention military facilities north of the river.

Earlier, Israeli tank fire hit five towns and some agricultural fields in southern Lebanon, state media and Lebanese security

sources said, saying at least two people were wounded.

All the areas lie within 2 km (1.2 miles) of the Blue Line demarcating the border between Lebanon and Israel, in an area the Israeli military has announced as a no-go zone along the border, even after the deal was agreed.

The Israeli military said in a statement it had identified several suspicious activities that posed a threat and breached conditions of the ceasefire agreement.

"Any deviation from this agreement will be enforced with fire," said Chief of the General Staff Herzi Halevi.

Later on Thursday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he had directed the military to be prepared for intense fighting if the ceasefire is violated.

"We are enforcing powerfully," Netanyahu said in an interview with Israel's Channel 14. "But if needed I gave a directive to the IDF - be prepared in case there is a violation of the framework of the ceasefire, for an intense war."

Lebanese families displaced from their homes near the southern border have tried to return to check on their properties. But Israeli troops remain stationed within Lebanese territory in towns along the border and Reuters reporters heard surveillance drones flying over parts of southern Lebanon.

The Israeli military on Thursday renewed a curfew restricting the movement of residents of southern Lebanon south of the Litani river between 5 p.m. (1500 GMT) and 7 a.m.

The agreement, a rare diplomatic feat in a region racked by conflict, ended the deadliest confrontation between Israel and the Hezbollah militant group in years. But Israel is still fighting its other arch foe, the Palestinian militant group Hamas, in the Gaza Strip, in response to the deadly Hamas-led raid on southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023.

Romania's Top Court Orders Recount of Presidential First-Round Votes



BUCHAREST (Dispatches) - Romania's presidential election was thrown into chaos Thursday as a court ordered a recount of first-round results and security officials alleged that interference via TikTok had boosted a little-known far-right candidate.

The moves came as the country braces for legislative polls plus a run-off vote between a far-right admirer of Russian President Vladimir Putin and a pro-European centrist contender.

The Romanian presidency said security officials had detected "cyberattacks" intended to influence the outcome of Sunday's vote, which saw far-right candidate Calin Georgescu secure an unexpected first-round win.

Georgescu knocked Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu out of the race, setting up a second-round standoff on December 8 with centrist Elena Lasconi, who placed second.

Another far-right candidate meanwhile went after Lasconi, securing an order from the constitutional court on Thursday for the first-round votes to be recounted.

The unsuccessful far-right candidate, EU parliament member Cristian Terhes, accused Lasconi's Union Save Romania (USR) party of continuing to campaign online after the legal deadline.

Russia Hits Ukrainian Energy Facilities

KYIV (Dispatches) - Russia unleashed on Thursday its second big attack on Ukraine's energy infrastructure this month, triggering deep power cuts across the country.

President Vladimir Putin said Moscow had struck in response to Ukraine's strikes on Russian territory with U.S. medium-range ATACMS missiles. He said Russia's future targets could include "decision-making centres" in Kyiv.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Russia of a "despicable escalation", saying it had used cruise missiles with cluster munitions.

Later in his nightly video address, Zelenskyy said he was speaking to Western leaders, including NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, to forge a response to "Russia's attempt to make the situation more unbearable and drag out the war".

"Now is the time to strengthen our positions - the position of Ukraine and our partners," he said.

U.S. President Joe Biden condemned the Russian attack as "outrageous," saying in a statement that it serves as a "another reminder of the urgency and importance of supporting the Ukrainian people in their defense against Russian aggression."

Over 1 million people lost power in the immediate aftermath of the strikes, and millions more had their existing schedule of rolling power cuts intensified.

Ukraine's air force said Russia used 91 missiles and 97 drones in Thursday's attack. It said 12 of those had hit their targets, most of which were energy and fuel facilities.

"The enemy is using a large number of missiles and drones. Their massive use in certain areas often exceeds the number of means of (air defence) cover," the air force said in a statement.

Infrastructure facilities were damaged in nine regions, Ukraine's Interior Ministry said.

The attack reinforced fears of long power cuts during the winter months as temperatures hover around zero.

Officials said it was the 11th major strike on the energy system since March. Russia has knocked out about half Ukraine's available generating capacity during the war, damaged the distribution system and forced authorities to impose long blackouts.

The air force said it had shot down 79 missiles and downed 35 drones, while



62 drones were "lost", meaning it was likely they had been disrupted by electronic warfare.

A source in the energy sector said Ukraine had disconnected all nuclear power units from the grid before the attack to protect them. Ukraine gets more than half of its electricity from nuclear plants.

Ukraine's state grid operator Ukrenergo announced deep power cuts across the country because of damage from the attacks, warning of at least 12 hours without electricity for some consumers.

All missiles or drones aimed at the capital Kyiv were brought down, officials said.

The air force said Russia was using thermal and radar decoys to trick Ukrainian air defenses, and putting electronic warfare devices on its missiles.

"All this significantly complicates the operation of Soviet-made anti-aircraft missile systems ... Western systems work much more effectively in such conditions, but Ukraine does not have enough to reliably cover hundreds of critical infrastructure facilities," it said.

It said foggy weather conditions also made it harder for machine gunners to spot drones.

More than 33 months after Russia invaded Ukraine, Russian ground forces are advancing at their fastest pace in two years.

Russia fired a new hypersonic intermediate-range ballistic missile at Ukraine this month after the United States allowed Kyiv to strike Russian territory with advanced Western missiles.

"Putin does not want peace. We must force him into peace through strength," Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiba said, reiterating Kyiv's call for more air defence and long-range capabilities from Western allies.

In western Ukraine, Lviv regional governor Maksym Kozmitskyi said Thursday's Russian strikes had cut off electricity to about 523,000 people. Power was also cut to nearly 500,000 people in the Volyn and Rivne regions, their governors said, and disrupted in the Khmelnytskyi and Zhytomyr regions.

State oil and gas firm Naftogaz said its facilities had been attacked in the morning airstrikes.

Officials across Ukraine said they were turning on generators to ensure emergency heat and water supplies to hospitals, schools and other critical facilities during bitter winter weather.

Mexico President Touts Friendly Trump Call

MEXICO CITY (Dispatches) - Mexico's President Claudia Sheinbaum said on Thursday she and U.S. President-elect Donald Trump had agreed to maintain a good relationship in a friendly phone call that appeared to ease tensions between the top trading partners amid tariff threats.

Sheinbaum struck a more conciliatory tone a day after saying Mexico would retaliate if Trump carries out his pledge to impose a 25% tariff on Mexican and Canadian imports.

"It was a good conversation and we are going to keep having conversations," Sheinbaum told a morning press conference, in which she said the two had not directly discussed tariffs but talked about the reasons Trump gave for potentially implementing them - illegal migration and fentanyl trafficking.

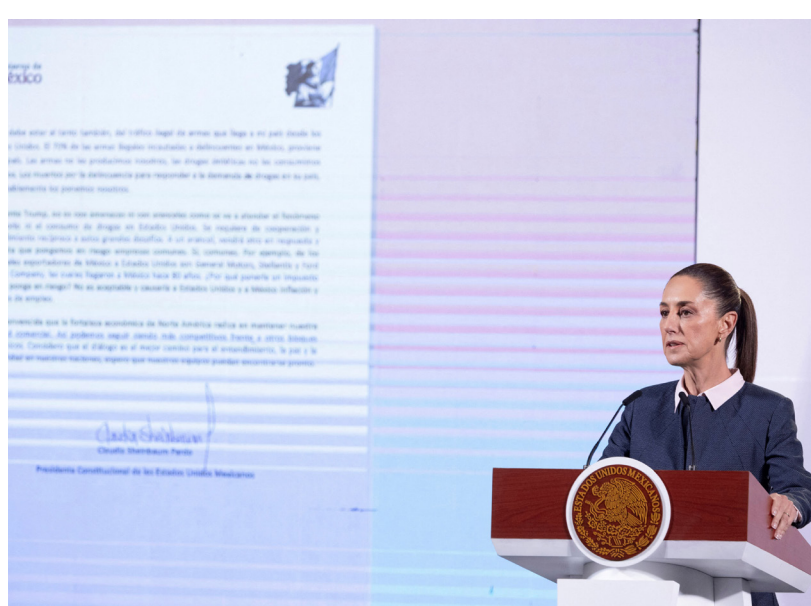
"It was a very friendly conversation," Sheinbaum added. "We agreed there would be a good relationship."

The Mexican peso strengthened close to 1% early on Thursday, after weakening in recent days.

Trump's proposed tariffs would appear to contravene the U.S.-Mexico-Canada free-trade pact, which Trump signed during his first term and is up for review in 2026.

Following Wednesday's call, Trump said on social-media platform Truth Social that Sheinbaum had "agreed to stop migration through Mexico, and into the United States, effectively closing our Southern Border."

Sheinbaum appeared to refute this on X, saying they had discussed Mexico's strategies to curtail migration into the U.S. but Mexico's policy was "not to close borders, but to build bridges between governments and their peoples."



Addressing the apparent discrepancy, Sheinbaum told reporters it came down to different communication styles.

"I can assure you we would never close the Mexico-U.S. border."

Mexico has in recent months increased enforcement significantly, helping keep down numbers of migrants arriving at the U.S. border.

Sheinbaum said Mexican authorities were attending to a caravan near Pijijiapan in southern Chiapas state, which immigration authorities estimate at some 800 people. "This caravan is not going to reach the north," she said.

Some analysts have said they believe the tariffs proposal - which they expect would push up U.S. consumer prices - is a negotiation tactic ahead of the USMCA review.

Mexico accounted for 15.9% of U.S. trade in the first nine months of this year, followed by Canada at 14.4% and China at 10.8%. Trump also suggested 25% tariffs on Canada and "an additional 10% tariff, above any additional tariffs" on China.

While Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has called for unity and work on the trade relationship, some Canadian officials reacted strongly to Trump's proposal.

"To compare us to Mexico is the most insulting thing I've ever heard from our friends and closest allies," Ontario Premier Doug Ford told media this week. "It's like a family member stabbed you right in the heart."

Mexican leaders have called for greater regional cooperation, dialogue and integration.

Earlier on Thursday, Mexican Economy Minister Marcelo Ebrard told reporters he did not believe it was likely the U.S. would impose the proposed tariffs as it would be costly on both sides of the border.



Man United Win, Spurs Draw With Roma

ROME (Dispatches) - Manchester United came from behind to beat Bodo/Glimt 3-2 in the Europa League on Thursday, Spurs conceded late to draw 2-2 with AS Roma and leaders Lazio were held to a scoreless draw by Ludogorets.

Athletic Bilbao enjoyed an easy win over Elfsborg and Eintracht Frankfurt beat Midtjylland to draw level on 13 points with Lazio as Galatasaray and Anderlecht were held to draws.

United, in manager Ruben Amorim's first game at Old Trafford, had the perfect start thanks to a howler from the Bodo goalkeeper in the first minute which allowed Alejandro Garnacho in for an easy goal.

The Norwegian side went ahead through Hakon Evjen's superb strike in the 19th minute and a goal from Philip Zinckernagel four minutes later, but United levelled just before the break through Rasmus Hojlund.

The Danish striker scored again five minutes after the break and United's second successive win moved them up to 12th in the standings on nine points.

Spurs also took an early lead at home, with Son Heung-min converting a penalty in the fifth minute but Roma drew level through Evan N'Dicka before Brennan Johnson put the home side back in front before halftime.

A dominant Spurs failed to put Roma away, however, and Mats Hummels' added-time goal meant the English side slipped to ninth on 10 points, with Roma 21st on six.

Lazio, who had won all four previous games, were held to a frustrating scoreless draw by a Bulgarian side who came to defend.

Bilbao eased to a 3-0 win over Swedish side Elfsborg thanks to goals from Adama Boiro, Benat Prados

Diaz and Gorka Guruzeta while Frankfurt beat Midtjylland 2-1, with Hugo Larsson putting them ahead early on and Omar Marmoush's penalty sealing the win.

Anderlecht were denied the chance to move level with Lazio by a 2-2 home draw with Porto, the Belgians twice coming from behind and Francis Amuzu netting four minutes from time to salvage a draw.

Galatasaray are also on 11 points after they were held to a 1-1 home draw by AZ Alkmaar. The Turkish side went ahead after two minutes through Sven Mijns but a Peer Koopmeiners own goal denied them the win.

Ajax Amsterdam remained on 10 points and are sixth in the standings after a 2-0 defeat at Real Sociedad, moving the Spanish side up to 16th on seven points.

Rangers moved into the top eight on 10 points with a 4-1 victory in France over Nice, with Hamza Igamane netting twice after Vaclav Cerny and Mohammed Diomande put the Scottish side two goals up. Nice are second from bottom on two points.

Lyon ran out 4-1 winners in Azerbaijan against Qarabag, Georges Mikautze opening and closing the scoring and they are also on 10 points in seventh place.

Maccabi Tel Aviv earned their first victory of the competition with a 3-1 win at Turkish side Besiktas, in a game played in Debrecen, Hungary for security reasons.

At 2-1 down Besiktas had a chance to level but Ciro Immobile's penalty was saved and Wesley Patai put the Israeli side out of sight 10 minutes from time.

Verstappen Looks to Rescue Red Bull's Constructors Race



DOHA (Dispatches) - Newly-crowned quadruple world champion Max Verstappen will switch his attention from the drivers' title race to the teams' contest this weekend when he leads Red Bull's unlikely bid to retain their crown at the Qatar Grand Prix.

Just five days after clinching his fourth championship with a measured drive to fifth at the Las Vegas Grand Prix, the 27-year-old Dutchman will return to the track hoping he can repeat his pole-to-flag triumph from last year.

Verstappen holds the lap record at the Lusail International Circuit, set in 2023, and should enjoy driving with freedom and confidence, but will face a robust challenge from all his rivals as McLaren, Ferrari and Mercedes seek success.

After falling away last weekend, in the drivers' title fight, Lando Norris and his McLaren team-mate Oscar Piastri will aim to add to their position as leaders on 608 points, 24 clear of Ferrari on 584 and Red Bull, on 555, with two Grands Prix, including a sprint in Qatar, remaining.

Verstappen won last year's race ahead of Norris and Piastri, who claimed victory in the sprint, suggesting that given more recent form it will be a weekend that may favour the vastly-improved McLaren team in the third Qatar event.

Mercedes' outgoing seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton, who leaves the team to join Ferrari after the season finale in Abu Dhabi next week, won the inaugural Qatar race in 2021. There was no race in 2022 when Qatar hosted the soccer World Cup final tournament.

Hawks Send Cavs to First Home Loss

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Trae Young recorded a career-high 22 assists to go along with 20 points, helping the Atlanta Hawks hand the Cleveland Cavaliers their first home loss of the season, 135-124.

Atlanta's De'Andre Hunter drained five 3-pointers to highlight his 26-point performance and Jalen Johnson collected 22 points, nine rebounds and seven assists.

Top overall draft pick Zaccharie Risacher joined Bogdan Bogdanovic by scoring 17 points apiece for the Hawks, who overcame an early 19-point deficit to snap a three-game losing streak.

Donovan Mitchell scored 30 points and Evan Mobley collected 22 points, 12 rebounds, five steals and three blocks for the Cavaliers, who fell to 10-1 at home.

Clippers 121, Wizards 96: James Harden scored 43 points, his most since March 2021, and Los Angeles sent host Washington to its 13th consecutive loss.

Ivica Zubac recorded his fifth consecutive double-double with 18 points (on 9-of-11 shooting from the floor) and 16 rebounds for the Clippers. Jordan Miller added 15 points off the bench.

Rookie Alexandre Sarr had his third straight double-figure-point scoring game for Washington, finishing with 13 points. Malcolm Brogdon and Jonas Valanciunas shared the Wizards' team high with 17 points.

Nets 127, Suns 117: Reserve Tyrese Martin established career highs of 30 points and eight 3-pointers to lead Brooklyn to a victory over host Phoenix.

Dennis Schroder added 29 points and Trendon Watford scored a season-best 18 points off the bench for Brooklyn. Ben Simmons made 7 of 8 shots while recording 14 points, nine rebounds and eight



assists as the Nets won their third consecutive game and their fourth in the past five.

Devin Booker scored 31 points and Kevin Durant added 30 points and eight rebounds as the Suns lost for the sixth time in seven games. Phoenix dropped to 9-2 when Durant plays. Bradley Beal had 17 points but missed the last 6:38 due to an ankle injury.

Heat 98, Hornets 94: Tyler Herro hit a 3-pointer with 28.4 seconds to play to help rescue Miami, which squandered a 20-point lead but regrouped for a victory at Charlotte.

Herro poured in 27 points and Duncan Robinson had 22 points for the Heat, who have won three of their past four games.

LaMelo Ball had 32 points, Brandon Miller added 21 points and Tidjane Salaun chipped in 17 points to pace the Hornets. With a chance to tie the game, Charlotte's Cody Martin missed two foul shots with 4.8 seconds left before two Kel'el Ware foul shots

clinched it.

Rockets 112, 76ers 115 (OT): Jalen Green scored a season-high 41 points and Alperen Sengun came up big in overtime as Houston posted a road win over Philadelphia.

Sengun (22 points, 14 rebounds) and Amen Thompson (19 and 13) each registered a double-double for Houston, which completed a sweep of its brief two-game trip after defeating the Minnesota Timberwolves in overtime on Tuesday.

Tyrese Maxey posted 39 points and 10 assists and Guerschon Yabusele chipped in 22 points for Philadelphia, which continued to play without Joel Embiid (knee), Paul George (knee) and Kyle Lowry (hip). Caleb Martin (back) also

sat out as the Sixers fell to 3-14 despite rallying from an eight-point deficit late in regulation.

Thunder 105, Warriors 101: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander made his team's only two field goals of the final 8:25 to cap a 35-point performance. Isaiah Hartenstein recorded a third consecutive double-double and Oklahoma City outlasted Stephen Curry-less Golden State in San Francisco.

Hartenstein finished with 14 points and a game-high 14 rebounds for the Thunder, who managed a third straight win despite losing Jalen Williams to an eye injury late in the first half.

With Curry watching from the bench as he dealt with sore knees, the Warriors got a team-high 19 points from Jonathan Kuminga and double-figure scoring from five others but couldn't escape a third straight defeat.

Mick Schumacher Leaves Mercedes, Bottas in Talks



DOHA (Dispatches) - Mercedes reserve Mick Schumacher will leave the Formula One team at the end of the season and Valtteri Bottas looks set to replace the German after deciding against making a full-time switch to IndyCar in 2025.

Mercedes said in a statement at the Qatar Grand Prix on Thursday that the 25-year-old son of seven-times world champion Michael Schumacher was leaving to pursue opportunities elsewhere.

Renault-owned Alpine later confirmed Schumacher would continue to race for them in the world endurance championship next year.

Bottas is looking for new opportunities after his contract with Swiss-based Sauber, who will become the Audi works team in 2026, runs out at the end of the season. Brazilian rookie Gabriel Bortoletto will replace him.

The Finn told reporters at the Lusail circuit that talks with Mercedes were going well and he would not be doing a full season anywhere else in 2025.

"Jumping into a full IndyCar season after 12 years of F1, I just feel like it comes a bit too quick," he added, confirming approaches from the U.S.-based series.

"I did get a solid offer for 2025, full season," he said. Bottas said he wanted to do one-off races, mentioning the Indianapolis 500, Australian V8s and rallying as areas of interest.

"My priority stays Formula One. If it's not to be Formula One in 2026 then it (IndyCar) is really interesting for me for the future," he added.

"I feel like I'm not done yet with this sport so to be around, to be able to do some testing etc, gives me a chance for 2026. In this sport you never know what happens," he added.

"There is also a new team joining which means two more seats."

Bottas and his Chinese team mate Zhou Guanyu have failed to score this season.

Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff hailed former F2 champion Schumacher, who has been reserve for the past two years, as "a racer of an incredibly high calibre and one that deserves to be competing in the very best championships".

Schumacher said it had been tough watching others race. "I want to get back to focusing 100% on racing. I want to be fully committed to the sporting side of motorsport," he added. "Ultimately, it is racing that you want to do as a driver, it is racing that gives you that feeling you love."

Under-Confident Mbappe Needs Time and Love

LIVERPOOL (Dispatches) - Striker Kylian Mbappe had another subdued and disappointing performance for Real Madrid on Wednesday, failing to seriously trouble Liverpool's defense and missing a penalty in their 2-0 Champions League defeat at Anfield.

The Frenchman has had a challenging start to life at Real after joining from Paris St Germain in June, with just one goal in five Champions League games for the Spanish club.

The World Cup winning forward has scored one goal in his last six games in all competitions but manager Carlo Ancelotti defended him after Wednesday's match as an "extraordinary" player who just needed support and patience to thrive in Spain.

"It's a difficult moment for him, we've got to support him and give him our love, he'll soon be fine," Ancelotti said.

"It could be a lack of confidence maybe. Sometimes you have moments when things aren't quite working out for you. But you get through these moments. People miss penalties, it happens a lot. You can't put too much grief on him for that.

"He works hard, he's got to keep working hard and fighting. You get through these moments. Things just aren't running for him at the moment. We've got to be patient. He's an extraordinary player."

Ancelotti said Liverpool deserved to win the game.

"I think that to be totally honest with you, it was a fair result," he



said. "They have a really good dynamic at the moment, they are switched on, they play with a high intensity."

Even though Real are 24th in the 36-team league, and in danger of missing out on the knockout phase, he was confident their form would pick up sufficiently.

"I think this game today wasn't a decisive game," he said. "We'll be there, we'll be competing in the knockout phase, like in previous years."

Real midfielder Jude Bellingham echoed his boss' remarks that Liverpool outplayed them.

"They were more up for it than us which is very disappointing. It is a bad result against the best-performing team in Europe," he said.

"We are disappointed at how we have performed and it is important that we win the next three games and give ourselves a chance to go through."

Bellingham was also supportive of Mbappe.

"He is a wonderful player but the pressure on him because of how good he is is huge. The penalty is not why we lost the game. They performed better than us. I know that he will produce many more moments that will be huge for this club," he said.