

The Supreme Leader on Wednesday Evening and on the X Account of His Official Website Khamenei has Issued a Message on the Birthday Anniversary of Jesus Christ

IRAN NEWS

President Masoud Pezeshkian Will Pay a Visit to Russia Next Month to Sign an Agreement on a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Between the Two Countries, the Iranian ambassador to Moscow Says

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“Hypersonic” Yemeni Missile Hits Tel Aviv After Israeli Airstrikes



SANAA (Dispatches) - Air raid sirens have sounded over a large part of the Israeli occupied territories following a missile attack from Yemen which targeted Tel Aviv early Friday and caused Ben Gurion airport to shut down.

Israel's emergency services reported that 18 settlers were injured in Tel Aviv while attempting to reach the safety of shelters.

Videos shared online showed Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system failing, as it attempted to intercept the incoming projectile.

The missile strike reportedly forced half of the occupied territories into lockdown, with Israeli outlets describing the incident as a failure of the regime's defensive measures.

In a statement, the Yemeni armed forces said they “carried out a specific military operation targeting Ben Gurion Airport in the occupied area of Yaffa [Tel Aviv] using a hypersonic ballistic missile of Palestine2 type”.

“The missile succeeded in reaching its target despite the enemy's censorship, and the operation resulted in casualties and the cessation of navigation at the airport,” it said.

Yemeni forces also carried out an operation targeting “a vital target of the Israeli enemy in the occupied area of Yaffa with a drone, and the operation achieved its goal successfully” it added.

“The UAV force also carried out a military operation targeting the ship (Santa Ursula) in the Arabian Sea east of Socotra Island with a number of drones, and the hit was direct.”

The ship, it said, was targeted “owing to the violation of ban decision of entry to the ports of occupied Palestine [Israel] by the company that owns the ship”.

It came hours after Israeli warplanes conducted airstrikes on Yemen's capital Sana'a, and the port city of Hudaydah.

Russia Urges IAEA to Uphold Impartiality in Monitoring Iran's Nuclear Facilities



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia has called on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to uphold impartiality in monitoring Iran's nuclear facilities and refrain from politicizing its nuclear case.

In a press conference, Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova made the call when commenting on provocative remarks by IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi who claimed that Tehran may develop nuclear weapons.

“We hope that the IAEA will be able to ensure the objectivity and impartiality of the monitoring within the framework of its technical mandate, without getting politicized, without succumbing to absolutely perverted tricks by the Western camp,” Zakharova stated.

“We see this as a necessary guarantee of constructive cooperation between the agency and Iran the strengthening of which we have invariably supported.”

Zakharova's remarks came after Grossi told the Italian news agency ANSA that Iran had “developed much stronger capabilities” regarding various aspects of its nuclear energy program, alleging, “It (the Islamic Republic) has uranium at 60% — 90% is military grade.”

He went as far as claiming that the Islamic Republic “is thus practically at the same level as nuclear-armed states.”

Elsewhere in her comments, Zakharova said “such manipulations counting on presenting the IAEA as an accomplice or even the initiator of political attacks on Tehran, always pursue a single goal - present Iran's nuclear program as the main threat in the Middle East which must be battled by any means.”

She also slammed Western governments for their attempts to “get away with gross violations” they have committed with regard to a UN Security Council resolution enshrining the 2015 international agreement on Iran's nuclear program, known as the JCPOA.



Strive for National Pride and Excellence, Says President

TEHRAN - The President emphasized that everyone, regardless of their position, must contribute to the growth, progress, and pride of the country. He declared that weakness will not be an acceptable excuse before God on the Day of Judgment.

Speaking on Thursday night during the final program of the National Unity Government's provincial trip to North Khorasan, at a planning and development council meeting with local officials, President Masoud Pezeshkian urged provincial leaders not to settle for the current situation. He called on them to make every effort for the province's growth and development.

“Competition is about striving for excellence and choosing the best options,” said the President. “As a Muslim, I find it unacceptable to be weaker or less advanced than others. We are no less capable than anyone else.”

Addressing the managers of North Khorasan, Pezeshkian added, “In Tehran, efforts will be made for this province, but it is you, as local leaders, who must solve your problems. If you believe in your ability to succeed, you will move forward and improve the situation at every moment.”

He continued, “A person who spends two consecutive days the same way has suffered a loss. Life is an opportunity for progress and improvement, and we must use this opportunity for growth, change, and development.”

The President underscored the importance of striving for national pride, stating, “We speak of an Iran that, by 2025, according to the Vision Document, should be a regional leader in economy, science, technology, and exemplary management. But why haven't we achieved this? Why aren't we the best? Why don't we manage in the best way possible and strive for betterment?”

Pezeshkian stressed that the drive for improvement and transformation must become ingrained in the nation's mindset. “With this belief, we will achieve the vision set by the Supreme Leader. Otherwise, after 20 years, we will find ourselves lagging behind.”

He noted, “Failing to achieve our rightful place means we have not adhered to the principles of our faith and beliefs. Do not be content with the current situation. If you are dissatisfied, strive to become the best. Avoid actions that take us backward.”

The President, emphasizing the role of faith, said, “As Muslims and followers of the Supreme Leader, we must always keep the vision in mind and strive for excellence, no matter our position or role. It doesn't matter whether we achieve it or not; what matters is that we put forth our utmost effort so that we can answer for our actions on the Day of Judgment.”

Citing verses from the Quran, Pezeshkian explained, “When the angel of death asks what you accomplished, you cannot say you were held back. Weakness is not an acceptable excuse. The Quran states that the fate of such individuals is Hell. It's not about merely performing prayers; prayers are meant to establish justice and righteousness. On Judgment Day, no weakness will be accepted from us.”

The President posed a critical question: “Have we adhered to the guidance and vision set forth by the Supreme Leader?”

He further remarked, “Life and competition are about making better choices. Wherever you are, create change for the better. We consume \$35 billion worth of gas annually, yet solving all the province's issues only requires \$1 billion. When we advocate for saving resources, it is sometimes met with objections.”

The President concluded by asserting that the nation's progress lies in its citizens' hands. “If our country falters, it is not because of America or foreign forces—it is because of us. We must change our perspective and take responsibility. No one else will change us; we must change ourselves. We shape the nation's growth, development, and future. I urge you to think differently, consume differently, and work towards higher efficiency and effectiveness in all areas.”

China Visit Marks New Chapter in Strategic Ties, Heralds Golden Era

TEHRAN - Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi says his visit to China will open a “new chapter” in strategic cooperation between the two countries and herald a “golden” era for bilateral relations.

Araqchi made the remarks in an article published by China's official People's Daily newspaper on Friday, before his arrival in Beijing, on the day that he was to head to Beijing at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi.

“The next golden 50 years of Iran-China relations will demonstrate that this visit marks the beginning of a new chapter of strategic cooperation between the two countries,” he wrote.

The top Iranian diplomat also noted that Iran and China have long engaged in “practical cooperation” to promote multilateralism and develop indigenous values, adding that both sides have defended each other's fundamental interests in international forums.

He also hailed “pragmatic” Iran-China ties, citing close political and defense coordination, exchange of high-level delegations, as well as cooperation in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the BRICS group of emerging economies, and the Beijing-brokered deal between Iran and Saudi Arabia in March 2023.

“Iran and China share common interests and concerns not only at bilateral and regional levels, but also at the trans-regional and international levels,” he emphasized.

“While firmly believing in the significance of multilateralism and the benefits of joint cooperation towards the prosperity of human society, both countries keep cooperating closely in multilateral mechanisms, including the SCO and the BRICS.”

China is Iran's largest trade partner. Both states are subject to different levels of illegal sanctions imposed by the US.



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

The two countries signed the long-term strategic partnership deal in March 2021 to reinforce their long-standing economic and political alliance.

In his article, Araqchi said that West Asia is facing numerous challenges, the core of which is the Palestine issue.

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza, caused by the Israeli genocide and supported by some world powers, has been exacerbated by the inaction of the international community and irresponsible behavior of some parties, he noted.

Iran and China believe that an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the delivery of humanitarian aid are now the most important priorities, he said.

The Iranian foreign minister further referred to the recent developments in Syria, urging respect for the country's unity, national sovereignty, and territorial integrity.

Tehran, he pointed out, believes that the Syrian people should decide the future of their country without destructive intervention or external imposition.

“We are witnessing unprecedented changes in the world that have simultaneously created complex “opportunities” and “challenges” and put countries at a historical crossroad, where they must choose between confrontation/cooperation, exclusion/inclusion, closeness/openness, chaos/peace,” he said.

“Some states are trying to restrict and force others to choose their desired values and interests by distorting the facts, falsely dividing the world into democratic and non-democratic, and resorting to sanctions, pressure and double standards. However, Iran and China will always stand on the right side of history and by the side of development, prosperity, cooperation, and friendship between the countries of the Global South in a bid to counter unilateralism and bullying.”

Syria: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow



By Hamidreza Naghashian

Syria's geopolitical significance in West Asia and its alignment with the Axis of Resistance cannot be analyzed solely within the framework of Syria itself. Since the Islamic Revolution in Iran, during the late President Hafez al-Assad's era, Syria tied itself to Iran in such a way that it often acted as a vanguard against Western policies, which at the time were implemented through Saddam Hussein.

During the eight-year Iran-Iraq War following the Islamic Revolution, Hafez al-Assad provided both military aid to Iran and openly opposed Saddam Hussein. This stance was so evident that it contradicted the Arab League's effort to portray the war as a Persian-Arab conflict. Assad single-handedly invalidated this political slogan and strategy. It's also important to note that even before the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Syria served as a refuge for those resisting the monarchy of Mohammad Reza Shah.

Syria provided a shortcut for Iranian fighters to Baalbek in Lebanon and facilitated their collaboration with Amal al-Mustazafin under the leadership of the martyred Imam Musa Sadr. This made Iran's Foreign Ministry under the Shah anxious and kept its relationship with Syria in a state of neither war nor peace. Beyond supporting Iranian resistance, Hafez al-Assad also offered refuge to displaced Palestinians, further defining Syria as opposed to the occupying regime.

To describe Syria under Hafez al-Assad until Bashar al-Assad's flight to Moscow, one must acknowledge that without Syria, the Resistance Front would not exist in its current form. In essence, Syria complemented Iran's role in shaping and advancing the Axis of Resistance.

While politically aligned with Moscow and often considered part of the Eastern Bloc, Syria pursued its independent path. For instance, when the former Soviet Union supported Saddam against Iran, Syria did not align with Soviet intentions. This independent stance occasionally drew criticism from Soviet officials.

After Hafez al-Assad's death, his chosen successor, Bashar al-Assad, secured Iran's support in his rivalry with his brother Rifaat al-Assad. With Iran's backing, Bashar exiled Rifaat to Switzerland, often admitting in meetings that without Iran's support, Syria would have been divided. Part of the country, under Rifaat's leadership, would have become Western-oriented. Bashar regarded Iran as both his and Syria's savior after his father's passing.

Today, it can be firmly stated that the strategy of forming the Axis of Resistance also owes its existence to a phenomenon Clinton's administration indirectly contributed to: the rise of ISIS. The danger posed by ISIS in Iraq and Syria was evident to the entire region, necessitating the creation of an intelligent paramilitary force to confront this threat.

The late Martyr Lieutenant General Qasem Soleimani utilized this opportunity to the fullest. Under the guidance of the IRGC Quds Force, he organized, trained, and led Syria's National Defense Forces and Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU). Throughout these efforts, Bashar al-Assad fully submitted to and complied with Iran's directives. Coordination with President Vladimir Putin of Russia to address ISIS was also entrusted to Soleimani.

However, after Martyr Soleimani's assassination, Bashar al-Assad made a series of misguided decisions out of fear for his rule. He dismantled the 120,000-strong National Defense Forces, integrating only 14,000 members into the Syrian army. This irrational fear and unwise move earned him accusations of being anti-people and ungrateful for the sacrifices made to keep him in power—actions Iran never endorsed.

This shift led Assad to seek membership in the Arab League, obtain financial aid, and create gaps in the Resistance strategy. As a result, he lost the trust of key Syrian military commanders, leading to the resignation of critical personnel and diminishing morale. This decline became evident when the Syrian army failed to resist Hayat Tahrir al-Sham's assault on Aleppo. Observing the army's non-intervention, the terrorists advanced through Hama and Homs, reaching Damascus and forcing Assad to flee.

Today, Syria is caught in the aftermath of Assad's misjudgments, his detachment from Iran, and the demoralization of his army. It is now in the hands of factions incapable of forming a unified government or stabilizing the country. It may take years for Syria to rise again as a nation. The political maturity of the Syrian people will likely prevent Syria from becoming fully Westernized.

Meanwhile, continuous attacks by the Zionist regime have destroyed Syria's Russian-built defense infrastructure. This means there is little hope for establishing a central government that can safeguard Syria's territorial integrity.

Most importantly, eschatological promises about the emergence of a savior have predicted many of the events occurring in the region. Sometimes, faith-based patience prevents the Shia community from taking immediate action, as they await the appearance of the Savior.

Wassalam

IRAN NEWS



Afghanistan-Iran Network Connection Agreement Signed

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Behzad Akbari, Deputy Minister of Communications and Information Technology and Chairman of the Board and CEO of the Infrastructure Communications Company, held a meeting with an Afghan delegation. During the meeting, an agreement was signed between the CEOs of Iran's Infrastructure Communications Company and Afghan Telecom to connect Afghanistan's network through Iran and facilitate the transit of Afghanistan's traffic via Iran. Akbari emphasized the importance of international cooperation and increasing transit communications among neighboring countries. He stated, "The 14th administration is committed to enhancing international interactions by boosting communication transit through Iranian territory."

Daily Truck Traffic at Shalamcheh Border Reduced to 400



TEHRAN - Majid Motourian-Pour, Vice President of the Khorramshahr Chamber of Commerce, highlighted the latest status of cargo and passenger transportation at the Shalamcheh border terminal. Speaking to ILNA, he stated that around 2,000 passengers travel daily between Shalamcheh and Basra, and approximately 400 trucks carrying commercial goods pass through the terminal. However, truck traffic has significantly declined in recent years. Previously, the daily number of trucks exceeded 1,200, but this downward trend began during the COVID-19 pandemic and continues.

He attributed this decline not only to the pandemic but also to flawed government policies. Sudden bans on exporting certain goods to Iraq over the years have cost Iranian exporters valuable opportunities. This has allowed competitors to dominate the Iraqi market, sidelining Iranian products.

Motourian-Pour also pointed out stricter cargo handling procedures imposed by Iraq at the Shalamcheh border, which are not observed at other border terminals. Iraqi authorities have not provided explanations for these practices, creating a lack of transparency regarding this crossing.

On the inspection process, he explained that while inspections are not slow, they rely on manual labor on the Iranian side as there is no X-ray equipment installed. Although Iraq utilizes such equipment, promises to equip the Iranian terminal with similar devices have yet to materialize.

He also raised concerns about security at the Shalamcheh cargo depot, citing thefts allegedly linked to workers. However, cargo owners face challenges in proving and claiming losses, compounding the issue. Despite this, he described the Shalamcheh-Khorramshahr road as secure due to the absence of stops along the route.



Iran Prepares to Link Eurasian Economic Union to Key Markets

TEHRAN - Minister of Industry, Mining, and Trade, Seyed Mohammad Atabak, announced Iran's readiness to facilitate the Eurasian Economic Union's (EAEU) connection to strategic global markets. His remarks came during the EAEU summit in St. Petersburg, Russia, where he highlighted the approval of a free trade agreement between Iran and the five EAEU member states, marking a significant step in economic cooperation.

Atabak expressed optimism that the establishment of a free trade zone between Iran and the EAEU members—Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia—would herald a new era of trade exchanges. He also underscored Iran's willingness to expand collaboration into other critical sectors such as transportation, transit, and energy security.

Welcoming the EAEU's decision to grant Iran observer status, Atabak affirmed that the summit could be a pivotal moment in Tehran's growing relations with the union. He emphasized Iran's resilience despite decades of sanctions, positioning itself as a reliable and influential partner in multilateral frameworks.

Highlighting successful cooperation with the EAEU over the past five years under a preferential trade agreement, Atabak noted the importance of such partnerships in countering the negative impacts of unilateral policies. He described U.S. unilateralism as a significant threat to both individual and collective national interests, advocating for greater unity among independent states through multilateral cooperation mechanisms.

Atabak stated that Iran is prepared to leverage its transit capacities to link the EAEU to major markets, including the Persian Gulf, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. He emphasized the mutual benefits of such collaboration, which would not only drive sustainable growth and prosperity for participating nations but also bolster their resilience against potential future economic shocks.

"The operationalization of the free trade agreement with the EAEU represents a transformative opportunity," Atabak remarked. "Iran is ready to provide its extensive capabilities to achieve shared objectives."

Beginning his address, Atabak condemned recent crimes by the Israeli regime

and its allies, criticizing global mechanisms for their inaction over the past 15 months. This statement reflects Iran's broader diplomatic stance on international issues, reinforcing its calls for accountability on the global stage.

During the summit, Atabak held discussions with Russian President Vladimir Putin, as well as other high-ranking officials, including Russia's Deputy Prime Minister, the head of the Eurasian Economic Commission's Executive Board, and Armenia's Deputy Prime Minister. These meetings underscored the importance of deepening bilateral and multilateral ties within the EAEU framework.

The summit concluded with the signing of an agreement granting Iran observer status within the EAEU. This position allows Iran to engage in the union's activities and access information without binding commitments.

The EAEU, founded in 2014, aims to promote economic integration among its member states. Observers currently include Uzbekistan, Moldova, and Cuba.

The recent summit also reaffirmed the implementation of a free trade agreement between Iran and the EAEU, initially signed last year in St. Petersburg. The agreement, now ratified by the parliaments of all five EAEU members and Iran's Islamic Consultative Assembly, is set to become operational within two months.

Under the agreement, approximately 87% of Iranian exports to EAEU member states will enjoy tariff-free access, reciprocally benefiting EAEU exports to Iran. This development is expected to significantly enhance trade volumes and foster economic integration among the participating nations.

Atabak emphasized the strategic importance of this agreement, noting its potential to unlock vast opportunities for all parties involved. As the free trade zone comes into effect, Iran and the EAEU are poised to strengthen their economic ties, paving the way for increased regional connectivity and shared prosperity.

With its strategic location and growing trade capabilities, Iran stands ready to play a pivotal role in linking the EAEU to key global markets, reinforcing its position as a critical partner in the region's economic landscape.

Funding Shortages, Sanctions, and Mismanagement Identified as Obstacles for Development



TEHRAN - Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadegh addressed key challenges during her visit to North Khorasan, engaging with local officials to discuss infrastructure issues and development plans.

During a coordination meeting, Sadegh highlighted the province's relative strengths in road infrastructure compared to other regions. However, she stressed the need for improved project execution, supervision, and management to achieve better outcomes.

Reflecting on her journey through the province, she observed both old and new roads in Bojnourd, praising past efforts but noting significant unmet public demands. "Some demands arise from unrealistic promises made by the government," Sadegh remarked, adding that others stem from core responsibilities neglected due to funding shortages, sanctions, and ineffective management.

The minister underscored the critical role of financial resources in accelerating progress but questioned whether available funds have always been utilized efficiently. "There have been times when funds were available, yet little was accomplished. This indicates that beyond financial constraints, management practices need reform," she asserted.

Regarding housing, Sadegh proposed expanding urban boundaries to meet demand. Drawing from her 23 years of urban planning experience, she advocated for well-planned land allocation and comprehensive urban development to address housing shortages.

Emphasizing community-centric development, Sadegh urged local officials to focus on revitalizing urban cores and upgrading infrastructure in older neighborhoods. She called for increased financial incentives to encourage renovation projects in these areas, which often possess essential amenities like schools, mosques, and road networks.

The minister also proposed the establishment of specialized industrial towns to enhance local economies and showcase provincial potential. She affirmed her ministry's readiness to support investors in such initiatives.

During her visit, Sadegh inspected the unpaved road from Bam to Fathabad, where residents have endured 20 years of unfinished work. She directed her team to prioritize its completion, acknowledging the resilience of locals facing longstanding challenges.

Iran and Iraq Explore Joint Science and Technology Park Initiative



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran has expressed readiness to collaborate with Iraq in establishing a joint science and technology park. This initiative was discussed during a meeting between Iran's Minister of Science, Research, and Technology, Hossein Simayi, and Iraq's Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Haidar Abdul-Zahd. Both sides emphasized their mutual interest in strengthening scientific ties in areas such as student exchange, research, and technology.

Minister Simayi highlighted Iran's eagerness to host more Iraqi students, particularly in border regions where significant universities are located. He added that Iran is prepared to collaborate on the establishment of a joint science and technology park but noted the importance of thorough planning and expert evaluation of the project.

Simayi also stressed Iran's willingness to admit talented Iraqi students into its top universities, underlining the necessity for students to study in Persian. He appreciated Iraq's support for this requirement, which aims to deepen cultural and intellectual connections between the two nations.

On the other hand, Iraq's Haidar Abdul-Zahd acknowledged Iran's successful experience in developing a robust technological ecosystem and expressed Iraq's interest in adopting similar models. He mentioned that Iraq's parliament has already approved legal frameworks to facilitate this collaboration.

Both sides agreed to finalize details of the joint project during the upcoming Iran-Iraq university summit in Karbala. Abdul-Zahd also reiterated Iraq's policy of encouraging its students to learn Persian to better connect with Iranian culture and values.

Additionally, Iraq has offered 100 scholarships to Iranian students and invited Iran's Minister of Science to participate in the Karbala summit. Simayi welcomed the prospect of Iranian students studying in Iraq and emphasized the importance of proper logistical preparations.

This meeting reflects a shared commitment to enhancing academic and technological collaboration, paving the way for deeper bilateral relations.

Iran Imports 300 Megawatts of Electricity From Turkmenistan



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

IRNA Ali Karimi

TEHRAN - Abbas Aliabadi, Minister of Energy, highlighted the importance of public cooperation in energy conservation during a meeting with the Administrative Council of Shirvan and Faruj counties on Wednesday. Stressing the significance of the TwoDegreesLess campaign, he urged citizens, particularly government employees, to save water, electricity, and energy.

Aliabadi stated that producing electricity requires a daily consumption of 230 million cubic meters of gas and equivalent fuel, a substantial figure. He noted that energy conservation not only benefits the environment but also helps preserve national wealth.

He emphasized the high electricity production capacity of power plants during winter but pointed out that a significant portion of Shirvan's power plant remains inactive due to gas supply imbalances.

The minister also underscored the need to create attractive investment opportunities for the private sector in electricity production. He mentioned that the government, especially the Ministry of Energy, aims to encourage private investment by supporting profitable projects, such as renewable energy initiatives.

Addressing water conservation challenges, Aliabadi stressed the importance of water recycling, given the scarcity of water resources. He also highlighted the necessity of securing national resources for developing wealth-generating projects.

"The cost of producing one kilowatt of electricity is around 8,000 toman, yet it is sold to the public at a very low price," Aliabadi said. "It is crucial for people to recognize the value of this service and adopt efficient consumption practices."

Regarding electricity imports, Aliabadi announced the procurement of 300 megawatts of electricity from Turkmenistan without any monetary payment. Instead, this agreement was achieved through Iranian engineering and technical services.

He also praised Iran's strong capabilities in constructing and maintaining power plants abroad. As part of the meeting, Aliabadi proposed the construction of a 1,000-megawatt solar farm in Shirvan, emphasizing its potential to support the country's development.

Meanwhile in a press briefing during the inauguration of water and energy industry projects in North Khorasan province, Minister Aliabadi emphasized the Ministry of Energy's serious commitment to water recycling and purification. He stressed the importance of meeting industrial water demands by utilizing treated wastewater.

He underscored the significance of public participation in advancing water and energy industries, noting, "We are working to complete the province's unfinished projects, which have already consumed national resources. However, prioritizing these projects is essential."

Growth in Khuzestan Port Operations



TEHRAN - Over the first nine months of this year, ports in Khuzestan Province recorded significant growth in cargo handling, with a total of 37.66 million tons of goods processed, marking a 2% increase compared to the same period last year.

Abutaleb Gerailo, Director General of Khuzestan Ports and Maritime Organization, stated in an interview on Friday that 2,970 vessels carrying various goods, including essential commodities, containers, minerals, chemicals, petroleum, and miscellaneous items, docked at the province's ports since the beginning of the year.

The major commercial hub, Imam Khomeini Port, accounted for 1,112 of these vessels, followed by Khorramshahr with 1,086 and Abadan with 309. Smaller ports such as Chavibdeh, Arvandkenar, Sojafi, and Shadegan collectively handled 463 vessels during the same period.

Gerailo highlighted that the cargo operations in Imam Khomeini Port reached 36 million tons, making it the largest contributor to the province's commercial activities. Khorramshahr handled 1.61 million tons, while smaller ports collectively managed 160,000 tons. One of the most notable achievements was the growth in petroleum cargo handling. In the special economic zone of Imam Khomeini Port alone, 16 million tons of goods were processed over the nine-month period. Khorramshahr and Abadan handled 26,000 tons and 27,000 tons, respectively.

Container operations also showed remarkable growth. Imam Khomeini Port processed over 69,000 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units), representing a 45% increase compared to last year, while Khorramshahr saw a 25% rise with 22,000 TEUs.

India's Former PM Manmohan Singh Dies Aged 92

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Manmohan Singh, the former Indian prime minister whose economic reforms made his country a global powerhouse, has died at the age of 92.

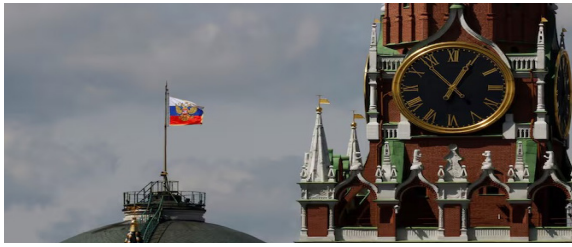
Singh, who held office from 2004 to 2014, was credited with having overseen an economic boom in Asia's fourth-largest economy in his first term, although slowing growth in later years marred his second stint.

India "mourns the loss of one of its most distinguished leaders", current Prime Minister Narendra Modi posted on social media platform X yesterday, shortly after news broke of Singh's passing.

"As our Prime Minister, he made extensive efforts to improve people's lives."



Russia Says It Foils Ukrainian Plots to Kill Senior Officers With Disguised Bombs



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia's Federal Security Service said on Thursday it had foiled several plots by Ukrainian intelligence services to kill high-ranking Russian officers and their families in Moscow using bombs disguised as power banks or document folders.

On Dec. 17, Ukraine's SBU intelligence service killed Lieutenant General Kirillov, chief of Russia's Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Protection Troops, in Moscow outside his apartment building by detonating a bomb attached to an electric scooter.

An SBU source confirmed to Reuters that the Ukrainian intelligence agency had been behind the hit. Russia said the killing was a terrorist attack by Ukraine, with which it has been at war since February 2022, and vowed revenge.

"The Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation has prevented a series of assassination attempts on high-ranking military personnel of the Defence Ministry," the FSB said.

"Four Russian citizens involved in the preparation of these attacks have been detained," it said in a statement.

Ukraine's SBU did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. The FSB, the main successor to the Soviet-era KGB, said that the Russian citizens had been recruited by the Ukrainian intelligence services.

One of the men retrieved a bomb disguised as a portable charger in Moscow that was to be attached with magnets to the car of one of the Defence Ministry's top officials, the FSB said.

Another Russian man was tasked with reconnaissance of senior Russian defence officials, it said, with one plot involving the delivery of a bomb disguised as a document folder.

"An explosive device disguised as a portable charger (power bank), with magnets attached, had to be placed under the official car of one of the senior leaders of the Russian Defence Ministry," it said.

The exact date of the planned attacks was unclear though one of the suspects said he had retrieved a bomb on Dec. 23, according to the FSB.

Russian Air-Defense System Downed Azerbaijan Plane



BAKU (Dispatches) - Russian air defenses downed an Azerbaijan Airlines plane that crashed in Kazakhstan, killing 38 people, four sources with knowledge of the preliminary findings of Azerbaijan's investigation into the disaster told Reuters on Thursday.

Flight J2-8243 crashed on Wednesday in a ball of fire near the city of Aktau in Kazakhstan after diverting from an area of southern Russia where Moscow has repeatedly used air defence systems against Ukrainian drone strikes.

The Embraer passenger jet had flown from Azerbaijan's capital Baku to Grozny, in Russia's southern Chechnya region, before veering off hundreds of miles across the Caspian Sea.

It crashed on the opposite shore of the Caspian after what Russia's aviation watchdog said was an emergency that may have been caused by a bird strike.

Officials did not explain why it had crossed the sea. The nearest Russian airport on the plane's flight path, Makhachkala, was closed on Wednesday morning.

One of the Azerbaijani sources familiar with Azerbaijan's investigation into the crash told Reuters that preliminary results showed the plane was struck by a Russian Pantsir-S air defence system. Its communications were paralysed by electronic warfare systems on the approach into Grozny, the source said.

"No one claims that it was done on purpose. However, taking into account the established facts, Baku expects the Russian side to confess to the shooting down of the Azerbaijani aircraft," the source said.

Three other sources confirmed that the Azeri investigation had come to the same preliminary conclusion. Russia's Defence Ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

A U.S. official told Reuters on Thursday there were early indications a Russian anti-aircraft system may have struck the plane. Canada said it was deeply concerned by reports that Russian air defence may have struck the aircraft.

"We call on Russia to allow for an open and transparent investigation into the incident and to accept its findings," the Canadian foreign ministry said in a statement on X.

Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister Qanat Bozymbaev said he could neither confirm nor deny the thesis that Russian air defences downed the plane.

Asked about the possibility that Russian air defences shot at the plane, the Kazakh transport prosecutor for the region where the plane came down said the investigation had yet to reach a firm conclusion.

The Kremlin, asked before the Reuters report about the idea that the aircraft had been shot at by Russian air defences, said it would be improper to comment until the inquiry was concluded.

"It is wrong to build hypotheses before the conclusions of the investigation," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

A map showing the path a passengers jet took from Azerbaijan to Russia, including a length stretch where the exact path was unknown before it crashed.

Footage shot by passengers on the plane before it crashed showed oxygen masks down and people wearing life vests. Later footage showed bloodied and bruised passengers climbing out of the plane. There were 29 survivors.

Pictures of the plane wreckage showed what appeared to be shrapnel damage to the tail section of the plane.

Aviation security firm Osprey Flight Solutions said in an alert to airlines on Wednesday that footage of the wreckage and the circumstances around the air space in southwest Russia indicated the possibility that the airliner was hit by some form of anti-aircraft fire.

Ukrainian military drones have repeatedly targeted Russia's southern regions in recent months, triggering Russian air defences. Russia and Ukraine have been at war since Moscow's invasion of its neighbour in February 2022.

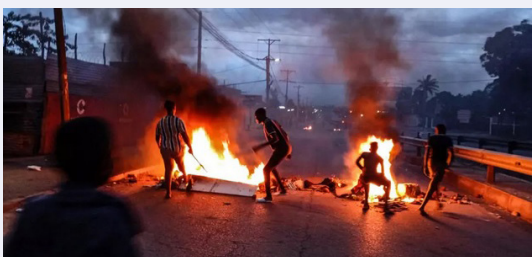
Earlier on Wednesday, the Russian Defence Ministry had reported the downing of 59 Ukrainian drones over several regions.

Some were reportedly shot down in closed air space over regions bordering Ukraine, including the Sea of Azov. Flight operations were reportedly temporarily suspended at Russia's Kazan Airport due to the activity.

In addition, publicly available ADS-B flight tracking data shows that the Azerbaijani aircraft experienced GPS jamming throughout its flight over southwest Russia, the alert said.

Russia uses advanced electronic jamming equipment to confuse Ukrainian drone location and communication systems and a large number of air defence systems have been deployed to shoot down the drones.

Over 6,000 Inmates Escape From Mozambique Prison



PARIS (Dispatches) - At least 6,000 inmates escaped from a high-security prison in Mozambique's capital on Christmas Day after a rebellion, the country's police chief said, as widespread post-election riots and violence are roiling the country.

Police chief Bernardino Rafael said 33 prisoners died and 15 others were injured during a confrontation with the security forces.

The prisoners fled during violent protests that have seen police cars, stations and infrastructure destroyed after the country's Constitutional Council confirmed the ruling Frelimo party as the winner of the Oct. 9 elections.

The escape from the Maputo Central Prison, located 14 kilometers (9 miles) southwest of the capital, started around midday on Wednesday after "agitation" by a "group of subversive protesters" nearby, Rafael said.

Some of the prisoners at the facility snatched weapons from the guards and started freeing other detainees.

"A curious fact is that in that prison we had 29 convicted terrorists, who they released. We are worried, as a country, as Mozambicans, as members of the defense and security forces," said Rafael.

"They (protesters) were making noise, demanding that they be able to remove the prisoners who are there serving their sentences", said Rafael, adding that the protests led to the collapse of a wall, allowing the prisoners to flee.

He called on the escaped prisoners to surrender to authorities and for the population to be informed about the fugitives.

Israeli Strikes Kill Dozens in Gaza, Including Hospital Staff and Journalists

GAZA (Dispatches)- Palestinian sources said that Israeli strikes in Gaza on Thursday killed at least 45 people including hospital workers and journalists for a militant-linked broadcaster.

Five staff at one of northern Gaza's last functioning hospitals were among those killed, the facility's director said, more than two months into an Israeli operation in the area.

Hossam Abu Safiya, head of the Kamal Adwan hospital in Beit Lahia, said "an Israeli strike resulted in five martyrs among the hospital staff" -- a pediatrician, a lab technician, two ambulance workers and a member of maintenance staff. The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Israel has been pressing a major offensive in northern Gaza since October 6, saying it aims to prevent Hamas militants from regrouping.

At the other end of the Palestinian territory, the chief paediatric doctor at the Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis said three babies had died from a "severe temperature drop" this week as winter cold set in.

Doctor Ahmed al-Farra said the most recent case was a three-week-old girl who was "brought to the emergency room with a severe temperature drop, which led to her death".

A three-day-old baby and another "less than a month old" died on Tuesday, he said.

Meanwhile, in central Gaza, a Palestinian TV channel affiliated with a militant group said five of its journalists were killed on Thursday in an Israeli strike on their vehicle in Gaza, with Israel's military saying it had targeted a "terrorist cell".

Witnesses said a missile struck the van while it was parked outside Al-Awda



Hospital in Nuseirat.

The three-week-old girl, Sila al-Faseeh, was living in a tent in Al-Mawasi, an area designated a humanitarian safe zone by the Israeli military that is home to huge numbers of displaced Palestinians.

"The tents do not protect from the cold, and it gets very cold at night, with no way to keep warm," said Farra.

He said many mothers were suffering from malnutrition which affected the quality of their breast milk and compounded the risks to newborns.

Sila's father Mahmoud al-Faseeh said it was "extremely cold, and the tent is not suitable for living. The children are always sick."

The United Nations and other organisations have repeatedly decried the worsening humanitarian conditions in Gaza, particularly in the north, since Israel began its latest military offensive in early October.

Also on Thursday, Gaza's civil defence agency said tens of other people were killed by Israeli strikes in Gaza, including 13 in a house that was home to "numerous displaced families" in the west of Gaza City.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military said two soldiers aged 27 and 35 were killed in the Gaza Strip. That brought to 391 the number of Israeli soldiers killed since the start of ground operations in the Palestinian territory.

The journalists' employer Al-Quds Today said in a statement that a missile hit their broadcast van while it was parked in the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza.

The channel is affiliated with Islamic Jihad, whose militants have fought alongside Hamas in the Gaza Strip and took part in the October 7, 2023 attack on Israel that sparked the war.

The station identified the five staffers as Faisal Abu al-Qumsan, Ayman al-Jadi, Ibrahim al-Sheikh Khalil, Fadi Hassouna and Mohammed al-Ladaa.

They were killed "while performing their journalistic and humanitarian duty", the statement said.

The Israeli military said it had conducted a "precise strike" and that those killed "were Islamic Jihad operatives posing as journalists".

The Committee to Protect Journalists' Middle East arm said in a statement it was "devastated by the reports".

"Journalists are civilians and must always be protected," it added.

The Gaza war was triggered by the Hamas-led October 7 attack last year, which resulted in 1,208 deaths, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of Israeli official figures.

Syria's New Rulers Warn Against Incitement as Tensions Brew

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) - Syria's new authorities on Thursday launched a security crackdown in a coastal region where 14 policemen were killed a day before, vowing to pursue "remnants" of the ousted Bashar al-Assad government accused of the attack, state media reported.

The violence in Tartous province, part of the coastal region that is home to many members of Assad's Alawite sect, has marked the deadliest challenge yet to the Sunni Islamist-led authorities which swept him from power on Dec. 8.

Members of the Alawite minority, an offshoot of Shi'ite Islam, wielded huge sway in Assad-led Syria, dominating security forces he used against his opponents during the 13-year-long civil war, and to crush dissent during decades of bloody oppression by his police state.

The security forces launched the Tartous operation to "control security, stability, and civil peace, and to pursue the remnants of Assad's militias in the woods and hills", state news agency SANA reported.

The crackdown was announced as the Damascus authorities warned of an attempt to incite sectarian strife, after a video dating from late November circulated on social media showing a fire inside an Alawite shrine in Aleppo. The interior ministry said unknown groups perpetrated the violence and that its forces were working "night and day" to protect religious sites.

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the former al Qaeda affiliate which led the rebel campaign that toppled Assad, has repeatedly vowed to protect minority groups, who fear



the new rulers could seek to impose an Islamist government. Many members of minority groups, including Christians, are worried.

In a predominantly Alawite neighbourhood of Damascus, Alawite sheikh Ali Darcere said that homes had been vandalised and people beaten on the basis of their religious identity, despite HTS promises the sect would be treated with respect. He blamed "a third party" trying to incite discord.

Darcere told Reuters that the community had extended its hand to the new government but there "have been many violations", citing multiple accounts of people being beaten at a checkpoint.

An HTS fighter in the area said there had been an incident on Thursday in which Alawites were taken off a bus and beaten because of their religion, but denied that HTS was responsible.

"This is a matter of sedition, and we don't want to be dragged into it," Darcere said. "Thousands of people are filled with resentment, anxiety, and their dignity is offended," he said. "However, we must remain committed to peace."

Taher Dawwa, a 38-year-old Alawite who was a military volunteer under Assad, said the "burden of all mistakes" should not be placed on one sect. "We don't want division."

The Syrian war took on sectarian dimensions as Assad drew on Shi'ite militias from across the Middle East, mobilised to battle the insurgency dominated by members of the Sunni Muslim majority.



Liverpool Power Seven Points Clear, Man Utd Crash at Wolves

LONDON (Dispatches) - Liverpool powered seven points clear at the top of the Premier League as the title favourites survived a scare in their 3-1 win against Leicester, while Bruno Fernandes was sent off in Manchester United's dismal 2-0 defeat at lowly Wolves.

Erling Haaland missed a penalty as crisis-torn Manchester City failed to end their dismal run with a 1-1 draw against Everton, but it was United's travails and Liverpool's remarkable run that took centre-stage yesterday.

Arne Slot's side were shocked by Jordan Ayew's early strike at Anfield, but the leaders recovered their composure to equalise just before the interval through Cody Gakpo.

England midfielder Jones marked his 100th top-flight appearance with the second goal soon after half-time.

Mohamed Salah's 19th goal this term wrapped up Liverpool's 11th win in their last 13 games in all competitions.

"We created enough, but because we went 1-0 down it was a game," Liverpool manager Slot said.

"Then you saw how good we are and Leicester didn't want to come back into the game."

Liverpool's comeback lifted them well clear of second-placed Chelsea, who were defeated 2-1 by Fulham earlier in the day.

United suffered a third successive loss in all competitions to leave new boss Ruben Amorim with five defeats in his first 10 games.

Fernandes was dismissed two minutes into the second half at Molineux for a second bookable offence. United's 10 men cracked in the 58th minute when Matheus Cunha's corner went straight in as goalkeeper Andre Onana flapped under pressure.

Hwang Hee-chan compounded Amorim's misery when he tapped in with just seconds left. Losing to fourth-bottom Wolves was another bitter blow for United, who endured a humiliating 3-0 defeat by Bournemouth at Old Trafford last weekend after losing 4-3 in the League Cup at Tottenham.

With their team marooned in 14th place — just eight points above the relegation zone — Amorim's woes might not be over, with United facing in-form Newcastle on Monday before travelling to Liverpool in their first game of 2025.

"It's so tough to win games in this league with 11 men. With 10 men, it's more difficult," Amorim said.

Champions Manchester City have just one victory in their last 13 games in all competitions as their Christmas schedule started in disappointing fashion.

Bernardo Silva put City in front early on before Ilman Ndiaye salvaged a point for Everton.

Seven minutes into the second half, Haaland had the chance to end his longest goal drought at the Etihad but Jordan Pickford denied him.

City are languishing in seventh place and sit five points adrift of the top four, with their astonishing decline showing no sign of ending.

"Of course we need results and we didn't get it. The team played really good again in all departments and unfortunately could not win," said City boss Pep Guardiola.

At Stamford Bridge, Chelsea were stunned by Fulham's late fightback in a dramatic west London derby. It was Chelsea's first home defeat against Fulham since 1979.

Cole Palmer put Chelsea ahead after 16 minutes, the England forward drilling home from the edge of the area after weaving through the Fulham defence in dazzling style.

FIFA Museum in Switzerland Preserves Football's Iconic Legacy



ZURICH (Dispatches) - Football fans have a unique opportunity to explore the game's iconic moments, see legendary players' shirts and boots, and view World Cup memorabilia in the FIFA Museum, which opened in 2016 in Zurich, Anadolu Agency (AA) reported.

The museum in the Swiss city offers guests the chance to see the signed football jerseys of legendary players such as former Argentina superstar Diego Armando Maradona and former Brazil forward Pele.

They can also watch a video of former Dutch star Johan Cruyff's famous dribbles and Turkish forward Ilhan Mansiz's golden goal against Senegal in the 2002 FIFA World Cup quarterfinals, which was one of the biggest moments in World Cup history.

The men's and women's FIFA World Cup trophies in the museum's exhibition area are very popular as the guests flock to see them.

Fans can also see memorabilia from the men's inaugural World Cup finals in Uruguay in 1930 to the latest one in Qatar in 2022.

Lionel Messi-led Argentina won the 2022 FIFA World Cup, while Spain were crowned the women's World Cup champions in 2023, which was co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand.

Moreover, this venue also displays the original football shirts of all 211 countries, as well as World Cup footballs from previous tournaments.

Green, Whitmore Propel Rockets Past Lowly Pelicans

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Jalen Green scored 30 points, Cam Whitmore added 27 off the bench and the visiting Houston Rockets never trailed during a 128-111 rout of the New Orleans Pelicans on Thursday night.

Fred VanVleet netted 25 points, Alperen Sengun added 10 points, 13 rebounds and six assists, and Jae'Sean Tate scored 10 points off the bench for the Rockets, who won their fourth straight in a streak that began with a 133-113 rout of the visiting Pelicans one week earlier.

Trey Murphy III scored 21 points, Dejounte Murray and Brandon Boston had 17 each, CJ McCollum scored 13, Javonte Green added 11 and Herbert Jones had 10 for the Pelicans, who lost their eighth consecutive game.

Jalen Green, who scored 34 points in the earlier win against New Orleans, made a 3-pointer to start the third-quarter scoring and increase Houston's lead to 21 points. The Rockets pushed the margin to 24 before Murphy made three 3-pointers and Murray made one to pull the Pelicans within 83-66 midway through the quarter.

VanVleet answered with a triple, Jalen Green added another later on and Houston expanded the lead to 102-74 at the end of third quarter. New Orleans made just one field goal in the final four minutes of the third.

Jalen Green scored the Rockets' first five points of the game and VanVleet added eight as Houston opened a 19-12 lead. The Pelicans



were within five points until Whitmore and Jalen Green connected from deep to power a 14-2 run that left the Rockets with a 39-22 lead at the end of the period.

Jalen Green (16 points) and VanVleet (10) combined to outscore New Orleans in the first quarter. Houston made 5 of 10 3-pointers in the first period, while the Pelicans missed all seven of their shots from beyond the arc.

Meanwhile Jaren Jackson Jr. and rookie Zach Edey each posted a 21-plus double-doubles and the Memphis Grizzlies set a franchise record for points in a game with a 155-126 victory over the visiting Toronto Raptors on Thursday.

Memphis, the NBA's top-scoring team, won for the seventh time in nine games while sending Toronto to its ninth loss in a row.

Edey grabbed 16 rebounds while Jackson pulled down 11 boards.

Eight Grizzlies scored in double figures, including each of the starters. Desmond Bane had 19 points, Jaylen Wells had 17 and Ja Morant added 15 points and nine assists. Reserves Scotty Pippen Jr. and Luke Kennard also had 15 points, and Brandon Clarke contributed 11.

Toronto, which fell to 1-14 on the road, was led by RJ Barrett, who finished with 27 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds. Scottie Barnes added 26 points and eight assists for the Raptors, who were outrebounded 63-40.

Ahead by eight at the half, the Grizzlies quickly built a double-digit lead that grew to 22 late in the quarter. Memphis led 121-100 at the end of the third.

Toronto coach Darko Rajakovic, a former Memphis assistant, was ejected with 10:29 to go in the fourth quarter. He had to be restrained by several Raptors assistants from going after the officials.

Following Rajakovic's departure, the Grizzlies eventually extended their lead to 32.

The Grizzlies rushed out to a 19-point lead midway through the first quarter but couldn't sustain the momentum. Toronto eventually rallied to tie the game twice late in the second quarter before trailing 78-70 at the break.

Gasperini's Fairytale of Atalanta Under Threat From Napoli and Inter



ROME (Dispatches) - Atalanta's winning run and top spot are at risk when the Serie A leaders take on fourth-placed Lazio this weekend, with Napoli and Inter Milan ready to pounce should Gian Piero Gasperini's side finally slip up.

Atalanta appear unstoppable, with a club record 11 successive league victories sending them soaring up the table to what seemed an unlikely position earlier this season.

They slumped to three defeats in their opening five games, including a 4-0 thumping at Inter, but a remarkable upturn in form has their fans dreaming of a first-ever league title.

Gasperini led Atalanta to their first European trophy last season, ending Bayer Leverkusen's 51 match unbeaten run to win the Europa League, the Bergamo club's second major trophy in their 117-year history.

That was Gasperini's first-ever trophy win, a just reward for his loyalty and work put in at Atalanta since joining in 2016.

Gasperini helped turn a club which had bounced between the top two tiers into a side consistently competing in European football, but his reign could easily have ended prematurely.

In his first season, Atalanta lost four of their opening five games, but the club kept faith and finished fourth, their highest ever finish in the top flight at that stage.

Atalanta's success has been built, not on high-spending, but rather an exceptional youth academy and scouting programme, along with Gasperini's aggressive, attacking playing style and an ability to get the best out of players.

The club sells big - in the last three seasons Teun Koopmeiners joined Juventus, Rasmus Hojlund signed for Manchester United and Cristian Romero went to Tottenham Hotspur - while new signings arrive for much less, often having failed elsewhere.

Gianluca Scamacca lasted one season at West Ham United, before scoring 12 league goals and six in the Europa League last season with Atalanta.

After the striker's anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injury in pre-season the club bought Mateo Retegui from Genoa, where he scored seven league goals last season. He already has 12 this campaign, topping the Serie A scoring charts.

Charles De Ketelaere failed to find the net in his debut season at AC Milan. Atalanta took him on loan last season and he scored 10 league goals before joining on a permanent move.

Ademola Lookman rarely impressed at the likes of Everton and RB Leipzig, but was recently named African Footballer of the Year, and scored a hat-trick in the Europa League final.

Lazio beat Napoli twice this month, knocking them out of the Coppa Italia, and off the top spot, before suffering a 6-0 hammering at home to Inter, but a win on Saturday would move them back to within three points of Atalanta.

Napoli and defending champions Inter both take on teams in the relegation zone.

Dominant Defensive Effort Sends Seahawks Past Bears

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Jason Myers kicked two field goals and Seattle's defense did the rest as the Seahawks kept their slim playoff hopes alive with a 6-3 victory against the host Chicago Bears on a rainy Thursday night at Soldier Field.

The Seahawks (9-7) pulled within a half-game of the NFC West-leading Los Angeles Rams (9-6). Seattle, which has already been eliminated from wild-card contention, is rooting for the Rams to lose to the visiting Arizona Cardinals on Saturday night. That would set up a winner-take-all finale between the Seahawks and Rams next weekend at SoFi Stadium.

Seattle sacked Bears quarterback Caleb Williams seven times, allowed just 179 total yards and grabbed a game-clinching interception in the final seconds.

Myers kicked a 27-yard field goal on the game's opening drive and added a 50-yarder with 21 seconds left in the first half to make it 6-3.

The Bears' Cairo Santos booted a 42-yard field goal with 2:32 left in the second quarter to tie the score at 3-all.

The Seahawks were without starting running back Kenneth Walker III (ankle), who was placed on injured reserve earlier in the day. Zach Charbonnet rushed for a game-high 57 yards on 15 carries in his place, and Kenny McIntosh added 46 yards on seven attempts.

Seattle quarterback Geno Smith, hobbled by a knee injury, completed 17 of 23 passes for 160 yards and didn't commit a turnover.

The Bears (4-12) took their 10th consecutive loss, a streak that began when they allowed a Hail Mary on the last play in an 18-15



loss to the host Washington Commanders on Oct. 27.

Williams finished 16 of 28 for 122 yards and the one pick. D'Andre Swift rushed for 53 yards on 12 attempts, and DJ Moore made six catches for 54 yards.

It appeared Williams might lead the Bears to a late score, as he converted a pair of mid-range passes in the final 2:15.

Facing an all-out blitz, he hit Moore for 14 yards on fourth-and-5 from Chicago's 35, then scrambled and found Rome Odunze between three defenders for a 15-yard gain on third-and-14.

Facing fourth-and-10 with 20 seconds left from Seattle's 40, the Bears eschewed a potential tying 57-yard field-goal try, and Williams' wobbly pass under pressure from Coby Bryant's cornerback blitz was intercepted by Riq Woolen to seal the outcome.

The fans at Soldier Field got one chance to cheer late in the third quarter.

Cornerback Kyler Gordon dragged down Seattle tight end Pharaoh Brown after a 4-yard reception, got up with the ball and jogged 62 yards to the end zone with seemingly all the Seahawks thinking the play was over. Referee Scott Novak announced the call on the field was the ball came loose and raised his hands above his head to signal a touchdown, sending the fans into a frenzy, but a video review determined Gordon was down by contact after recovering the fumble.