

Iran's Armed Forces General Staff Has Refuted Implications That the Crash That Killed Former Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's Last Year Was Not Due to Inclement Weather

IRAN NEWS

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei Has Expressed His Condolences Over the Martyrdom of Two High-Profile Iranian Judges in a Terrorist Attack in Tehran

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2 DOMESTIC



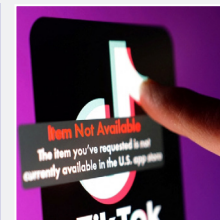
400 Foreign Investment Projects Active in Iran

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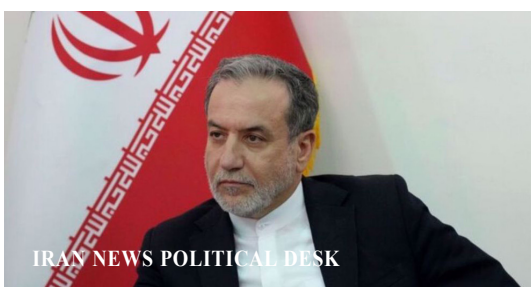
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TikTok Stops Working for 170m in U.S., Disappears From Apple, Google Stores

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Iran Hails Palestinians Unmatched Victory



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has commended Palestinians in the Gaza Strip for their achieving "unmatched victory" in the face of the Israeli regime, which has been waging a ferocious war of genocide against the coastal sliver for the past 15 months.

The top diplomat made the remarks during a phone call on Saturday with Secretary-General of Gaza's Islamic Jihad resistance movement, Ziad al-Nakala.

The former considered Palestinians' victorious resistance to have been behind the regime's recent approval of a ceasefire with Gaza's resistance groups.

The Israeli regime's so-called "security cabinet" approved the ceasefire deal between Tel Aviv and the Palestinian resistance movements in Gaza on Friday.

The cabinet lent its approval to the agreement, paving the way for its potential endorsement by the regime's full cabinet, which agreed to the deal on Saturday.

Upon initiation of its potential implementation on Sunday, the phased-out deal would begin with a six-week truce and could eventually end the brutal military onslaught that has so far claimed the lives of at least 46,788 Palestinians, mostly women and children.

The Gaza-based resistance movement Hamas has already approved the deal, hailing the Palestinian fighters and civilians for their overcoming the regime's aggression and prompting it to fail to achieve any of its wartime goals.

Araqchi also underlined the Islamic Republic's "principled and constant position" of rendering support for the Palestinian cause of liberation from Israeli occupation and aggression, and Palestinians' legitimate and legal right to stage resistance against Zionist occupiers.

For his part, Nakhala provided Araqchi with a report on the latest field developments in the Palestinian territory.

He also expressed gratitude towards Tehran for its "brave stances and instances of support."

The resistance official finally underscored Palestinians' insistence on keeping up serious resistance towards rehabilitating their human and legal rights, and realizing their right to self-determination.

IRGC Chief Unveils New Strategic Underground Storage Facility

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has unveiled a new strategic subterranean storage facility built on the shores of Iran's southern waters to house a large fleet of fast attack craft and other vessels.

IRGC Chief Commander Major General Hossein Salami and Commander of the IRGC Navy Rear Admiral Ali Reza Tangsiri unveiled the facility.

In a statement underscoring the continuous progress in the development of advanced naval equipment and systems, the Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Major General Hossein Salami, reassured the Iranian people that the country's young and capable forces are well-equipped to confront enemies with honor and victory.

Speaking at the unveiling ceremony of the IRGC Navy's new strategic naval base on Saturday evening, Salami emphasized the ongoing advancements in the naval defense sector. "The facility we visited today, alongside the Commander of the IRGC Navy, is one of the key maintenance hubs for the Navy's offensive vessels, missile systems, and mine-laying units," he said, referring to the base as an essential part of Iran's growing naval capabilities.

Salami acknowledged the significance of the facility but also emphasized that it represents only a small portion of the overall strength of the IRGC Navy. "Despite its importance, this facility is just a small piece of the larger power structure of the IRGC Navy," he stated.

The commander also highlighted the increasingly formidable combat readiness of the IRGC Navy, pointing to the advanced capabilities of its combat vessels and missile systems. "In addition to numerous combat vessels currently patrolling the waters of the Persian Gulf, we have a vast network of vessels, missile launchers, and defense systems stationed at various strategic locations across the region, including the islands and coasts of the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz," he added.

Salami noted that significant advancements had been made in both the quantity and quality of the Navy's offensive systems in recent years, citing improvements in the speed, range, and durability of naval vessels. He also praised the efforts of Iranian engineers and operational teams in enhancing these systems through collaboration between the Ministry of Defense, the IRGC Navy's Jihad and Self-Sufficiency Organization, and naval shipbuilding factories.

"The combat capabilities of our vessels and their missile systems have undergone a remarkable leap in terms of range, accuracy, and destructive power," Salami said. "Today, the IRGC Navy is capable of executing both close-range and long-range defensive and offensive strategies, ensuring

the protection of Iran's vital interests."

The IRGC commander further emphasized that the country's naval forces are continuously strengthening, with more advanced systems being added regularly. "We assure the great Iranian nation that the brave and skilled youth of this country are ready to face any adversary, big or small, in the seas, and will engage in honorable and victorious combat," he declared.

Salami also pointed out that despite the large number of maintenance facilities for naval vessels and missile systems, there is still a shortage of space to accommodate these growing capabilities. "We are facing space limitations in housing and consolidating these assets within our storage structures," he explained.

He concluded by reaffirming the IRGC's commitment to defending the nation's honor and sovereignty: "With unwavering determination and confidence in our forces, whenever we decide, under the leadership of the Supreme Leader, we will create historic moments and grand victories in the defense of our beloved nation."

Iranian Armed Forces, including the IRGC and the country's Army, have been continuously enhancing their military hardware and combat readiness in line with the directives of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

The forces have vowed to defend the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the face of the threats by the Iranian nation's enemies.

The Iranian naval defense industry hands over the first "signals-intelligence" ship of its own indigenous production to the country's Navy.

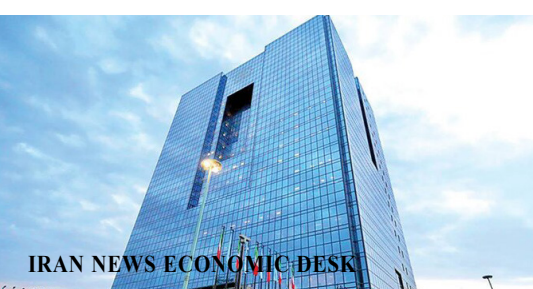
The Islamic Republic launched some 200 missiles at the Israeli entity's military, and espionage and intelligence bases all over the occupied territories on October 1 as part of Operation True Promise II.

The operation came in response to the regime's assassinations of senior leaders of the Palestinian and Lebanese resistance and a senior IRGC commander.

In the early hours of October 26, Israel targeted two Iranian border provinces, Ilam and Khuzestan, as well as Tehran. The country's integrated air defense system successfully intercepted and countered the aggression.

Iran has said it will respond to the recent Israeli act of aggression against the country and will not abandon its rights.

Commercial Currency Market to Replace NIMA System as of Today



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Starting today (Monday, February 1), the commercial currency market will take over the role of the NIMA system for meeting all foreign currency needs. This means that exporters' obligations will only be fulfilled if they offer their foreign currency in the commercial currency market, and all currency procurement for registered orders will also be fully conducted through this market at the Iranian Exchange Center.

The total volume of transactions in the commercial currency market has reached the equivalent of approximately \$1.1 billion since its launch.

Based on announcements from the Central Bank of Iran, starting tomorrow, the NIMA system will close its file for import currency provision, and companies exporting steel, non-ferrous metals, and petrochemical products will begin selling their foreign currency in the commercial currency market from February 1, fulfilling their export obligations.

Since the market's launch, the total transaction volume in the commercial currency market has amounted to \$1.073 billion, which is broken down as follows: 1.979 billion dirhams, 368 million dollars, 978 million yuan, and 30 million euros. During this period, 4,268 transactions were completed through 6,492 registered orders using the matching trading method.

Additionally, 2,472 traders have carried out their transactions through brokers or authorized banks during this period.

According to officials from the Central Bank and the Iranian Exchange Center for Currency and Gold, it is expected that the volume and depth of transactions in the commercial currency market will exceed \$100 million per day.

The increase in the volume and depth of daily transactions in the commercial currency market reflects the market's acceptance of the exchange rate determined by supply and demand, which will likely impact the unofficial market as well and send signals to it.

Iran's Struggles With Shipbuilding Amid Ongoing Sanctions



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's shipbuilding industry faces significant challenges due to ongoing international sanctions, preventing the country from developing its own modern ships. In an exclusive interview with ILNA, Masoud Daneshmand, a board member of the Association of Transport Institutes, discussed the difficulties Iranian shipbuilders encounter compared to international shipbuilding companies, including price and time discrepancies in construction.

Daneshmand explained that the shipbuilding process involves designing a ship's blueprint upon a customer's request, followed by certification by an inspection company such as Lloyd's Register. The construction of the ship proceeds under the supervision of the inspection body. However, due to sanctions, Lloyd's and other inspection firms do not work with Iranian shipyards. The sanctions also prevent Iran from importing essential components, including ship engines, generators, and marine welding electrodes.

He noted that Iran's domestic products also face difficulties in reaching international markets. "Due to the sanctions, Iranian ships cannot dock at foreign ports, and locally produced goods struggle to sell even within Iran itself," he said.

Despite this, local shipyards like ISOICO, Sadra, and Arvandan remain operational in Iran. Daneshmand mentioned that shipbuilding is not inherently complicated, noting that even Chinese shipyards source engines from Germany and purchase other necessary equipment from various suppliers before assembling and delivering the ship. "However, until Iran is free from sanctions, it will not be able to build ships on a global scale," he added.

He highlighted that all ship engines are registered with serial numbers, which makes it impossible to bypass sanctions through intermediaries. For example, it would be impossible for Oman to buy an engine and then sell it to Iran, as tracking mechanisms would prevent its installation on an Iranian ship.

Russia Involved in \$7.5b Worth of Oil Contracts in Iran



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's oil minister says Russian firms are carrying out \$7.5 billion worth of petroleum projects in Iran.

Russian contractors are currently involved in over \$7.5 billion worth of petroleum projects in Iran, according to Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad who says the two allied countries can further boost their cooperation on oil and gas projects.

Speaking in a gathering of Russian businesses in Moscow, Paknejad said that projects being carried out by Russian companies in Iran have made "considerable progress" in recent years.

"That has created an opportunity for Iranian and Russian companies to become active in the procurement and manufacturing of equipment," he said.

The minister made the remarks after the presidents of Iran and Russia signed off on a strategic partnership treaty that outlines the roadmap for cooperation between the two countries for the next 20 years.

Under the agreement signed on Friday, Iran and Russia will work on long-term joint projects to expand their energy, nuclear, trade, and security cooperation.

Experts say the agreement will allow Iran and Russia to deepen their relationship in all areas of mutual interest, including in the oil and gas sector where the two countries have world-class capabilities

Yemen Strikes Sensitive Israeli Targets; Hits U.S. Aircraft Carrier

SANAA (Dispatches) - Yemen's Armed Forces have successfully targeted two sensitive and strategic Israeli targets as well as the American aircraft carrier deployed off Yemen's shores, forcing the latter to flee the region.

Spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Saree made the announcement on Saturday after the Israeli regime's prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu alleged that Tel Aviv reserved the so-called "right" to resume its already-15-month-long genocidal war against the Gaza Strip any time it saw fit.

Netanyahu alleged that the regime could resort to fresh military aggression against the coastal sliver, despite likely implementation of a ceasefire deal between the regime and the territory's resistance movements.

"The Missile Force of the Yemeni Armed Forces conducted two military operations targeting two strategic sites belonging to the Israeli enemy in the Umm Al-Rashrash region of southern occupied Palestine," Saree said, referring to the vital port of Eilat and its surroundings that sit on the southernmost tip of the occupied territories.

"The first operation was carried out using a ballistic missile of the Thulfiqar type," the spokesman said, adding, "The second operation utilized a cruise missile."

"Both operations successfully hit their targets," Saree noted.

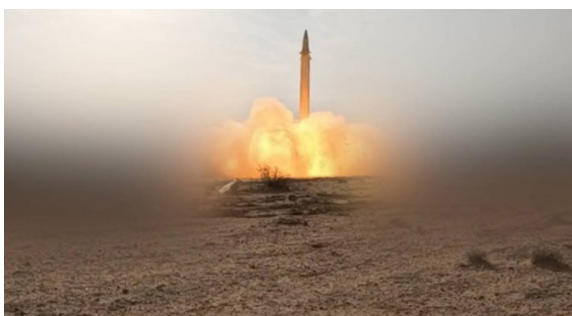
The spokesman noted that the forces' Air Force, Missile Force, and Naval Force had also conducted a joint military operation targeting the American aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman and several accompanying warships in the northern part of the Red Sea.

"This operation utilized several drones and cruise missiles and marks the eighth attack on the carrier since its arrival in the Red Sea," he asserted.

The operation successfully achieved its objectives, forcing the American vessel to leave the theater of operation.

"The Yemeni Armed Forces warn all hostile forces in the Red Sea against committing any aggression against our country during the Gaza ceasefire period. Any such aggression will be met with decisive and unprecedented military operations against these forces without limits or red lines."

According to the official, the series of strikes were carried out in support of the oppressed Palestinian people and their fighters, and in response to the recent massacres committed against



Palestinians in Gaza, he said.

He was pointing to the regime's stopping short of ceasing its deadly aggression, despite its full cabinet's recent approval of the deal.

The operations, Saree added, also came as part of the fifth phase of support in the battle of "the Promised Conquest and Holy Jihad (Struggle)."

He also underlined the forces' commitment to sustaining their strikes as long as the regime kept up the war and a suffocating siege that it has been deploying against the Palestinian territory simultaneously.

The Yemeni troops began launching their operations against Israeli targets in October 2023 in support of Gaza and Lebanon, which have respectively come under the genocidal war and escalated deadly assaults by the Israeli regime.

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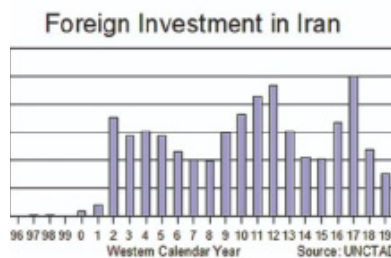
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IRAN NEWS



Iran Ready to Attract Foreign Investment

TEHRAN - Iran is prepared to welcome foreign investment across various sectors, including industry, technology, and renewable energy, according to the country's Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance, Abdolnasser Hemmati.

In a recent meeting with economic activists from the Russian Federation, Hemmati expressed Iran's openness to foreign investors and outlined the country's readiness to issue guarantees for exporters. Additionally, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, through the Organization for Investment and Economic and Technical Assistance, is fully prepared to assist and guide investors via a dedicated platform.

Highlighting the potential for investment in Iran's renewable energy sector, particularly solar energy, Hemmati emphasized the country's willingness to accept foreign investment in this area, offering all necessary guarantees for investors.

Details of the 20-Year Economic Treaty Between Iran and Russia



TEHRAN - A 20-year strategic agreement between Iran and the Russian Federation was signed on Friday, January 18, during a visit by Iran's president to Russia. The treaty is aimed at enhancing bilateral economic relations and includes a range of initiatives to boost joint investments, facilitate banking relations, support national currency transactions, and foster cooperation in the transportation and energy sectors. It also establishes a customs corridor for smoother trade between the two countries.

The comprehensive 20-year strategic agreement, signed in light of regional and international conditions, is regarded as a significant milestone in the economic relations between Iran and Russia, especially considering both countries' membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS.

Key Provisions of the Treaty:

- Strengthening Provincial Economic Ties:** Article 16 emphasizes the importance of fostering inter-provincial cooperation between Iran and Russia. It stipulates the creation of favorable conditions for direct relations between the provinces of both countries, promoting business trips, meetings, exhibitions, and other inter-provincial events to showcase investment opportunities and economic capacities.
- Facilitation of Joint Investments:** Article 18 outlines the development of joint business ventures, infrastructure funding, and collaborative mechanisms in trade, banking, and business processes. It also encourages joint investments in third countries through multilateral discussions and expert frameworks.
- Bilateral Payments in National Currencies:** Article 20 advocates for enhancing bilateral trade by encouraging the use of national currencies in transactions. The treaty outlines the expansion of cooperation between financial institutions, strengthening anti-money laundering frameworks, and boosting investment and trade in free economic zones between the two nations.

400 Foreign Investment Projects Active in Iran

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - In recent weeks, reports of foreign companies, such as Saudi Arabia's Savola Group, the UAE's Majid Al Futtaim, and the European company LLC, exiting the Iranian market have raised concerns. While some view these departures as indicative of Iran's struggles in retaining foreign investment, Hossein Salimi, head of the Iranian-Foreign Joint Investment Association (IFJIA), dismissed such claims in an interview with ILNA.

Salimi explained that, within Iran's Foreign Investment Promotion Organization, representatives from the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Central Bank, the Planning and Budget Organization, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Iranian Chamber of Commerce jointly approve all foreign investment entry and exit permits. He added that for the past two decades, between 600 and 700 foreign investment projects have been approved and operated in Iran. Every year, one to two companies request to exit, either selling their share of operations to another foreign company or withdrawing their entire investment. This, he noted, is a regular process, with no significant change in the departure pattern compared to previous years.

Salimi further clarified that some international media outlets have linked these exits to political events, such as the potential re-election of Donald Trump or energy and raw material supply challenges faced by industries worldwide. For instance, it was claimed that Savola's departure led to a shortage of cooking oil in Iran. However, Savola's contribution to oil production in the country accounted for only 25%, and other local producers continue to supply the market.

According to Salimi, Savola had filed for the withdrawal of its investment over a year ago, and its exit, which was officially approved several weeks ago, took longer due to procedural delays. Similarly, while Majid Al Futtaim's exit request has been approved, the company has not yet completed the transfer processes, which are expected to take about two months.

Salimi emphasized that the movement of foreign investors in and out of Iran

is a positive sign, as it shows that foreign companies have the freedom to enter and exit the market as they choose. He further explained that when a foreign company leaves, another usually takes its place, which would not happen if the investment climate in Iran were unfavorable. If conditions were poor, investments would become "locked" in the country, which would be detrimental to all parties.

He also pointed out that over 40 foreign companies currently have entry permits for investment in Iran, with approvals being reviewed each month by the relevant authorities. While the granting of permits does not guarantee the immediate arrival of foreign investments, it signals interest from companies in investing in Iran, provided the initial conditions are satisfactory.

Salimi added that the term "foreign investor" is used for any entity bringing capital from outside Iran. This includes Iranians residing abroad who invest in the country, as well as foreign nationals from countries like Afghanistan, who are required to invest at least \$100,000 in Iran to obtain a five-year residency permit.

Currently, approximately 400 foreign investment projects are active in Iran, with investors from countries such as the UK, Australia, and Canada involved. However, the UAE stands out as the leading investor in Iran due to its geographical proximity and ease of financial transactions.

Salimi noted that foreign investors can repatriate their annual profits from Iran in accordance with the law. The primary issue in the process of capital movement is financial transactions, as Iran is not a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Consequently, financial transfers must be conducted through currency exchange offices, and transactions are made in conventional currencies such as euros and dollars. Additionally, any technology, machinery, equipment, and raw materials brought into Iran by foreign investors are also recognized as part of foreign investment, and investors are allowed to export goods from Iran equal to the profits earned.

Iran-Afghanistan Trade Volume Increases by 84%



TEHRAN - The Commercial Counselor of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Afghanistan announced an 84% increase in trade and commercial exchanges between Iran and Afghanistan in 2024 compared to 2023, highlighting the ongoing growth in bilateral trade over the past two years.

Hossein Roustaei stated on Saturday that based on statistical reports from Afghanistan's Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the trade volume between Iran and Afghanistan reached \$3.197 billion in the previous year, reflecting an 84% value growth compared to 2023.

Roustaei noted that Afghanistan's imports from Iran in 2024 exceeded \$3.143 billion, a significant rise from \$1.714 billion in 2023, marking more than 83% growth in Iran's non-oil exports to Afghanistan.

He added that Afghanistan's exports to Iran also saw substantial growth, reaching \$54 million in 2024—a \$29 million increase, representing approximately 116% growth compared to 2023.

Key Iranian exports to Afghanistan during this period included light oils and petroleum products, petroleum gases, iron and steel billets, polyethylene compounds, natural gas, poultry eggs, non-velvet woven carpets, urea, light and heavy hydrocarbons, cement, aluminum cans, potatoes, shoes, preforms, tomatoes, various tiles and ceramics, tomato paste, apples, polyethylene types, powdered milk, bitumen, and agricultural tractors.

Roustaei also identified major Afghan exports to Iran as barley, animal feed corn, mineral stones, lead billets, iron or steel rolls, cocoa butter substitutes, aromatic plants for the perfume industry, sunflower seeds, cotton, wild rue, peanuts, dried fruits, chili peppers, mung beans, sesame seeds, turmeric, live sheep, and various legumes.

According to official statistics from Iran's Customs Administration, Afghanistan currently ranks as the fifth-largest destination for Iranian exports.

Iran and Russia's Agreements in Rail, Air, Sea, and Road Transport Sectors



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Minister of Roads and Urban Development outlined key aspects of agreements between the presidents of Iran and Russia, specifically in the fields of rail, air, sea, and road transport for both cargo and passengers.

Farzaneh Sadegh, who traveled to Moscow with the Iranian president and other ministers of the 14th government, discussed the comprehensive strategic partnership agreement between Iran and Russia that was signed by the two presidents. She emphasized that significant agreements were made in the sectors of rail, air, sea, and road transport, particularly for both cargo and passengers.

The comprehensive strategic partnership agreement between Iran and Russia reflects the two nations' determination to expand bilateral cooperation.

Masoud Pezeshkian, the president of Iran, expressed hope that the consultations with Russian economic stakeholders would mark the beginning of practical steps toward implementing the strategic agreement. He stressed Iran's commitment to expanding collaboration along the North-South and East-West corridors, as well as in maritime routes and ports.

On January 15, the fifth joint meeting was held via videoconference between Farzaneh Sadegh, Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development, and Roman Staravoyt, the Russian Minister of Transport. During this meeting, topics such as the preparation of a joint cooperation memorandum, the 2025 roadmap, the technical and executive details of the construction and development of the Rasht-Astara railway, and the upcoming trilateral Iran-Russia-Azerbaijan meeting on January 28 were discussed. The two sides also reviewed ways to maximize the potential of the eastern Caspian Sea with bilateral cooperation between Iran and Russia.

The Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development also stressed the importance of fully utilizing the Caspian Sea's capacity, particularly with the connection of Amirabad and Caspian ports to the railway network. She highlighted the need to commercialize the North-South corridor and further develop integrated transportation systems.

In conclusion, Roman Staravoyt, the Russian Minister of Transport, expressed his agreement with the topics discussed by his Iranian counterpart.

Mashhad, Lahore to Host Permanent Exhibition of Iranian and Pakistani Products

TEHRAN - Mashhad Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture, and the Governor of Punjab, Pakistan, have underscored the importance of enhancing trade relations between Iran and Pakistan. During a joint meeting, they discussed the necessity of establishing a permanent exhibition in both Mashhad and Lahore and emphasized the importance of hosting trade delegations to boost economic interactions.

Mohammadreza Tavakolizadeh, President of the Mashhad Chamber of Commerce, proposed the creation of a permanent exhibition of products in both cities to foster economic ties. He stated that such exhibitions, showcasing seasonally relevant products from both countries, would facilitate greater mutual understanding and economic collaboration.

"The establishment of permanent product exhibitions would not only enhance mutual knowledge about each other's manufacturing capabilities but also serve as a first step in strengthening economic, cultural, and social ties between the two nations," Tavakolizadeh explained.

Tavakolizadeh also highlighted the role of business delegations between Mashhad and Punjab in increasing trade between the two regions. He suggested that such exchanges would benefit both countries economically, reinforcing the longstanding friendly and brotherly relations between the Iranian and Pakistani peoples.

"Iran's Razavi Khorasan province, with its substantial industrial, tourism, service, agricultural, and mining capacities, is ready to introduce these strengths to Pakistani businessmen and industrialists through joint meetings. These meetings could serve as a pivotal step in boosting bilateral trade and economic cooperation," he added.

Governor of Punjab, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan, echoed the importance of economic cooperation, noting that current trade volumes between the two countries were below expectations. He called for increased economic exchanges, especially in the mining sector, where Iran possesses advanced knowledge and technology. The governor pointed out that Pakistan's Balochistan province has considerable potential in gold and copper, and the two countries could collaborate on knowledge exchange in these fields.

In a related development, it was agreed that specialized exhibitions for ceramic and tile products from Razavi Khorasan would be held in Lahore. In return, Pakistani traders would showcase their products,



including surgical equipment and textiles, in Mashhad.

The governor also stressed the importance of establishing border markets to further facilitate trade. He mentioned that the newly completed border market on the Pakistani side awaited completion of its Iranian counterpart to fully operationalize the cross-border exchange.

In response to concerns about delays in trucks at the Pakistan border, Haider Khan

assured that the necessary steps would be taken to resolve the issue, emphasizing the importance of these border crossings for Pakistan's fuel imports and other needs.

Mohammad Shahryar, Pakistan's Consul General in Mashhad, affirmed efforts to sign agreements between international exhibition centers in Lahore, Mashhad, and even Karachi. The agreements would enable both countries to display their products, particularly in the food industry.

"Pakistan is very capable of hosting international exhibitions, and every year we organize major trade events. A memorandum of understanding was previously signed between the two countries to hold exhibitions, and we hope for a new agreement between Punjab and Razavi Khorasan," Shahryar stated.

Hussein Mohammadian, Head of the Export Development Committee of the Razavi Khorasan Chamber of Commerce, provided insights into the trade status between the two regions. He revealed that, in the first eight months of this year, Razavi Khorasan had exported 69,000 tons worth \$49 million to Pakistan, ranking the country eighth in exports from the province. Similarly, Razavi Khorasan imported 13,000 tons worth \$13 million from Pakistan, ranking the country seventh among Iran's import partners.

However, Mohammadian acknowledged that, despite a 12% increase in the volume of exports to Pakistan, the value in rial terms had decreased by 7%. On the other hand, imports from Pakistan grew by 22% by volume, though the rial value experienced a slight drop of 1%.

"The trade volume between Iran and Pakistan remains low given the populations of 250 million in Pakistan and around 90 million in Iran. We expect the economic exchanges to grow, and the trade delegations could significantly help expand the level of relations," he concluded.

Path to Cultural, Social, and Political Development Lies in Economic Growth



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - A conference on strategies for expanding exports to Iraq was held by the Arak Chamber of Commerce with the participation of the Director General of the West Asia Office of the Trade Promotion Organization, the Secretary-General of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, and the Head of Iran's Trade Center in Iraq.

During the event, which attracted export-oriented producers, Naser Beiki, President of the Arak Chamber of Commerce, emphasized that the goal of the meeting was to exchange ideas and explore ways to increase exports to Iraq. He highlighted that by addressing challenges, the province of Markazi can strengthen its presence in neighboring markets, leveraging its production and export capabilities.

Beiki pointed out that despite being relatively arid, Markazi Province has significant agricultural and livestock production. For example, it produces 55,000 tons of chicken annually, while local consumption is only 34,000 tons, leaving a substantial surplus for export—with Iraq as a key market. Additionally, the province produces 400,000 tons of milk, far exceeding local consumption, making the surplus suitable for export.

With 90,000 active agricultural operators, Beiki noted that production continues despite water resource limitations. He highlighted Iraq's annual demand for 700,000 tons of chicken meat, with 250,000-300,000 tons supplied via imports. Iran currently supplies only 30,000-35,000 tons, signaling the need for strategic planning to increase its market share.

Beiki stated that export-oriented production is a priority for the private sector, achievable through collaboration and the removal of barriers. He stressed that cultural, social, and political development is closely linked to economic growth, requiring cooperation between the government and the private sector.

Governor of Markazi Province, Mehdi Zandieh Vakili, noted Iraq is one of Iran's top trade partners. Markazi, as an industrial hub, contributes significantly to this relationship. He revealed that the province generated over \$1 billion in export revenue, with \$249 million directed to Iraq in the first nine months of the year.

German Opposition Leader Vows to Build 50 Gas-Fired Power Plants

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Opposition leader Friedrich Merz, who is tipped to be Germany's next chancellor, has vowed to build 50 gas-fired power plants if his conservatives win the Feb. 23 snap election, the t-online news outlet reported on Sunday. "We need to build 50 gas-fired power plants in Germany as quickly as possible, which will be connected to the grid immediately," Merz, who heads the CDU/CSU conservative bloc, told t-online in an interview. Gas-fired electricity production in Germany jumped by a record 79% in November from the month before as utilities scrambled to offset a second straight month of sharply below-normal output from wind farms. Wind power output was 25% below year-prior levels in October and November due to slow wind speeds, depriving power firms of a key electricity source just as winter set in. Wind farms supplied 27% of German utility electricity in 2023.



Russian Drone, Missile Strikes Kill at Least Three in Kyiv



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia attacked Ukraine's capital with a barrage of drones and missiles, leaving at least three people dead, while industrial sites in Russia were set ablaze by Ukrainian strikes.

Russia launched 39 Shahed drones, other simulator drones and four ballistic missiles in the early hours of Saturday morning, according to Ukraine's Air Force. Ukrainian air defense forces shot down two missiles and 24 drones. A further 14 drone simulators were lost in location, the statement said.

The Kyiv City Military Administration said three people were killed and three more injured in the attack. A fourth victim had been assumed dead but the administration said later the case has yet to be confirmed. The known victims are two men aged 43 and 25, and a 41-year-old woman, officials said.

The office of Ukraine's general prosecutor said in a statement that the casualties included a security guard at a food establishment and people who were in a minibus on the street.

AP journalists at the scene saw a man lying dead amid the debris in a pool of blood. Water flooded the streets as firefighters put out the blaze from the attack.

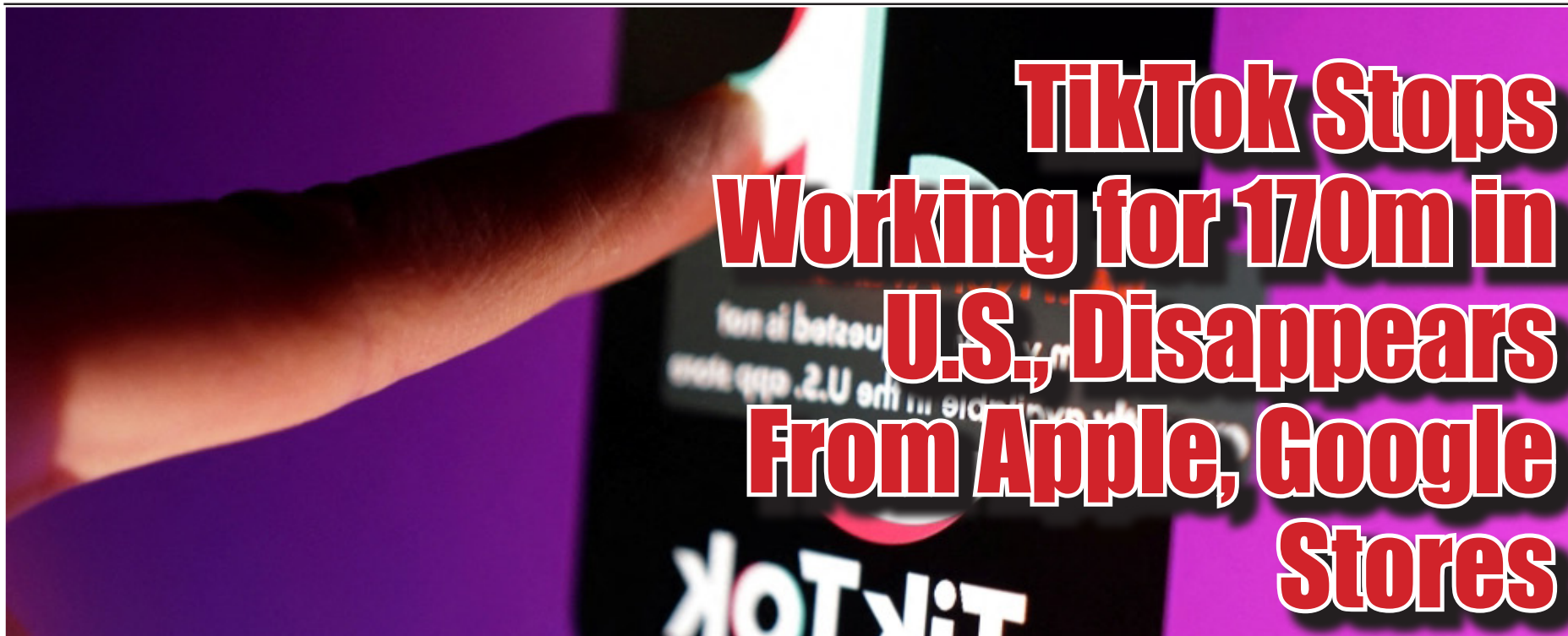
Kyiv's mayor, Vitali Klitschko, said windows were broken in the city's Shevchenkyi district, and there was smoke at the entrance of a residential building. A water supply pipeline was also damaged, he added. The Lukyanivska metro station was closed after the attacks damaged its glass entrance, but was later reopened.

Drones and missiles were also shot down across numerous regions in Ukraine, including Poltava, Sumy, Kharkiv, Cherkasy, Chernihiv, Kyiv, Khmelnytskyi, Zhytomyr, Kirovohrad, Dnipropetrovsk, Kherson and Donetsk.

Ten people were injured when a Russian missile struck the regional center of Zaporizhzhia, damaging residential buildings and private vehicles, local governor Ivan Fedorov said. Eight people aged between 28 to 69 were hospitalised, including a 48-year-old woman in a serious condition, he wrote in a statement.

Elsewhere, industrial sites in Russia's Kaluga and Tula regions were set ablaze by Ukrainian drone attacks, local officials said Saturday.

TikTok Stops Working for 170m in U.S., Disappears From Apple, Google Stores



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - TikTok stopped working in the United States late on Saturday and disappeared from Apple and Google app stores ahead of a law that takes effect Sunday requiring the shutdown of the app used by 170 million Americans.

President-elect Donald Trump said earlier in the day he would "most likely" give TikTok a 90-day reprieve from the ban after he takes office on Monday, a promise TikTok cited in a notice posted to users on the app.

TikTok, which is owned by China's ByteDance, told users attempting to use the app around 10:45 p.m. ET (0345 GMT): "A law banning TikTok has been enacted in the U.S. Unfortunately, that means you can't use TikTok for now. We are fortunate that President Trump has indicated that he will work with us on a solution to reinstate TikTok once he takes office. Please stay tuned."

Other apps owned by ByteDance, including video editing app Capcut and lifestyle social app Lemon8, were also offline and unavailable in U.S. app stores as of late Saturday.

"The 90-day extension is something that will be most likely done, because it's appropriate," Trump told NBC. "If I decide to do that, I'll probably announce it on Monday."

TikTok users logging on late on Saturday were met with a message that said the law would "force us to make our services temporarily unavailable. We're working to restore our service in the U.S. as soon as possible."

It was not clear if any U.S. users could still access the app, but it was no longer working for many users and people seeking

to access it through a web application were met with the same message that TikTok was no longer working.

The Chinese-owned app, which has captivated nearly half of all Americans, powered small businesses and shaped online culture, said on Friday it will go dark in the U.S. on Sunday unless President Joe Biden's administration provides assurances to companies such as Apple and Google that they will not face enforcement actions when a ban takes effect.

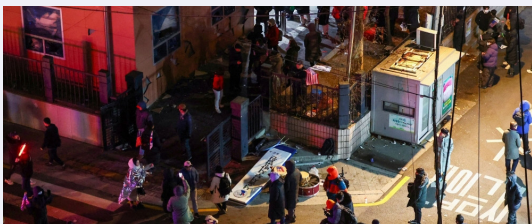
Under a law passed last year and upheld on Friday by a unanimous Supreme Court, the platform has until Sunday to cut ties with its China-based parent ByteDance or shut down its U.S. operation to resolve concerns it poses a threat to national security. The White House reiterated on Saturday that it was up to the incoming administration to take action, increasing the likelihood of a shutdown on Sunday.

"We see no reason for TikTok or other companies to take actions in the next few days before the Trump administration takes office on Monday," press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a statement.

TikTok did not respond to a request for comment on the new White House statement.

The Chinese embassy in Washington on Friday accused the U.S. of using unfair state power to suppress TikTok. "China will take all necessary measures to resolutely safeguard its legitimate rights and interests," a spokesperson said.

Violence Escalates in Seoul After Court Extends Impeached President's Detention



SEOUL (Dispatches) - Supporters of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol stormed a Seoul court Sunday after a judge extended the impeached leader's detention over his ill-fated attempt to impose martial law.

Tens of thousands of people had gathered outside the Seoul Western District Court on Saturday in a show of support for Yoon, who became South Korea's first sitting head of state to be arrested in a dawn raid this week.

After the court extended his detention around 3:00 am (1800 GMT Saturday), the president's supporters smashed windows and doors as they rushed inside the building.

AFP journalists saw hundreds of police officers charge into the court, with the force arresting dozens and denouncing an "intolerable illegal and violent incident".

The incident is the latest episode in South Korea's spiralling political crisis since December 3, when Yoon declared martial law and dispatched troops to parliament.

His attempt to suspend civilian rule lasted just six hours after lawmakers defied soldiers to vote it down. They later impeached the president, suspending him from duty.

Gaza Ceasefire and Hostage Release Set to Begin

CAIRO (Dispatches) - A ceasefire in Gaza between Israel and Hamas was set to come into effect on Sunday morning with a hostage release to follow hours later, opening the way to a possible end to a 15-month war that has upended the Middle East.

Israeli forces started withdrawing from areas in Gaza's Rafah to the Philadelphi corridor along the border between Egypt and Gaza, pro-Hamas media reported early on Sunday.

The ceasefire agreement followed months of on-off negotiations brokered by Egypt, Qatar and the United States, and came just ahead of the Jan. 20 inauguration of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump.

The three-stage ceasefire will come into effect at 0630 GMT on Sunday.

Its first stage will last six weeks, during which 33 of the remaining 98 hostages - women, children, men over 50, the ill and wounded - will be released in return for almost 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees.

They include 737 male, female and teen-aged prisoners, some of whom are members of militant groups convicted of attacks that killed dozens of Israelis, as well as hundreds of Palestinians from Gaza in detention since the start of the war.

Three female hostages are expected to be released on Sunday afternoon through the Red Cross, in return for 30 prisoners each.

After Sunday's hostage release, lead U.S. negotiator Brett McGurk said, the accord calls for four more female hostages to be freed after seven days, followed by the release of three further hostages every seven days thereafter.

During the first phase the Israeli army will pull back from some of its positions in Gaza and Palestinians displaced from areas in northern Gaza will be allowed to return.

U.S. President Joe Biden's team worked closely with Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff to push the deal over the line.



As his inauguration approached, Trump had repeated his demand that a deal be done swiftly, warning repeatedly that there would be "hell to pay" if the hostages were not released.

But what will come next in Gaza remains unclear in the absence of a comprehensive agreement on the postwar future of the enclave, which will require billions of dollars and years of work to rebuild.

And although the stated aim of the ceasefire is to end the war entirely, it could easily unravel.

Hamas, which has controlled Gaza for almost two decades, has survived despite losing its top leadership and thousands of fighters.

Israel has vowed it will not allow Hamas to return to power and has cleared large stretches of ground inside Gaza, in a step widely seen as a move towards creating a buffer zone that will allow its troops to act freely against threats in the enclave.

In Israel, the return of the hostages may ease some of the public anger against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his right-wing government over the Oct. 7 security failure that led to the deadliest single day in the country's history.

But hardliners in his government have already threatened to quit if war on Hamas is not resumed, leaving him pressed between Washington's desire to see the war end, and his far-right political allies at home.

And if war resumes, dozens of hostages could be left behind in Gaza.

Outside Gaza, the war sent shockwaves across the region, triggering a war with the Tehran-backed Lebanese Hezbollah movement and bringing Israel into direct conflict with its arch-foe Iran for the first time.

Israel has reacted with fury to both cases, rejecting the charges as politically motivated and accusing South Africa, which brought the original ICJ case as well as the countries that have joined it, of

antisemitism.

The war was triggered by Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on southern Israel in which 1,200 people were killed and more than 250 taken hostage, according to Israeli tallies. More than 400 Israeli soldiers have been killed in combat in Gaza since.

Israel's 15-month campaign in Gaza has killed nearly 47,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza health ministry figures, which do not distinguish between fighters and civilians, and left the narrow coastal enclave a wasteland of rubble.

Trump to Sign Record Number of Executive Orders on Day 1

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Donald Trump said he plans to sign a record number of executive orders after being sworn in as president, beginning "right after" he delivers his inaugural address.

Trump told NBC News the number of orders he will sign after taking office on Monday had not yet been determined but the figure will be "record-setting." Asked if it would exceed 100, Trump said "at least in that category."

The president-elect is expected to sign orders undoing many of the policies advanced during President Joe Biden's outgoing administration.

Trump's promises for Day 1 of his new term also include a mass deportation program. The expulsion of undocumented migrants will "begin very, very quickly," Trump told NBC.

"I can't say which cities because things are evolving. And I don't think we want to say what city. You'll see it firsthand," he said in the phone interview.

Recent inaugurations have been held on the steps of the US Capitol overlooking the National Mall, but Trump announced Friday the ceremony was moving indoors because of unusually cold weather forecast to hit Washington.

"I think we made the right decision," he said. "The weather was really looking bad in terms of the coldness, and I think it would have been dangerous for a lot of people."

Meanwhile thousands of people gathered in Washington on Saturday to protest President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration, as activists for women's rights, racial justice and other causes rallied against incoming policies they say will threaten their constitutional rights during the Republican's second term.

Some in the crowd wore the pink hats that marked the much-larger protest against Trump's first inauguration in 2017. They wound through downtown amid a light rain,



past the White House and toward the Lincoln Memorial along the National Mall for the "People's March."

Protests against Trump's inauguration are smaller this time, in part because the U.S. women's rights movement seems more fractured to many activists after Trump defeated Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris in November. Organizers predicted 50,000 would attend, while local police expected about 25,000. More than 300 other marches were planned nationwide.

Reproductive rights groups joined activists for civil rights, the environment and other causes in organizing the march against Trump. He is preparing to take office on Monday, having lost his first reelection bid in 2020 to President Joe Biden, a Democrat.

In both of his victories, Trump defeated candidates who each would have been the first female U.S. president: Hillary Clinton in 2016 and Harris last year. This time, Trump won all seven battleground states to secure the Electoral College needed for the presidency, and carried the popular vote in a first for Republicans in two decades.

Trump has vowed to make sweeping changes on day one, from immigration raids to dismantling parts of the federal government.

"A lot of people are disillusioned," said Olivia Hoffman, 26, who works at the California-based Young Women's Freedom Center, which supports impoverished women and transgender youth, and traveled with her mother to march in the nation's capital. "A lot of people feel like we've been fighting for the same things for so long."

Saturday's march attracted a wide range of causes from immigration and democracy to climate change and the Gaza war. At least one protester called out Trump's pressure on Canada, carrying a sign that read "We are not your 51st state."



Sinner Swats Aside Giron to Reach Australian Open Fourth Round

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Defending champion Jannik Sinner was not at his fluent best but still had too much firepower for unseeded American Marcos Giron as he sealed a 6-3 6-4 6-2 win and reached the fourth round of the Australian Open.

Sinner came into the contest on Rod Laver Arena having won all 13 of his previous Grand Slam meetings against players from the United States and the Italian made a quick start and never looked back as Giron's hopes faded with the setting sun.

"Every match has its own difficulties," said Sinner, who produced 35 winners but also had 37 unforced errors in a little over two hours of action.

"I struggled to return the first serve. I have room to improve but every win is great in these conditions. I'm happy to be in the next round."

The top seed saved a late break point and then served an ace to take the first set in only 34 minutes, before shrugging off a series of uncharacteristic errors on his forehand in the next to extend his lead in the match with a rasping winner.

World number 46 Giron pulled back a break early in the next set but a foot injury left him unable to move freely and Sinner got his nose in front again and closed out a comfortable victory on serve.

Sinner, who is aiming to extend his hardcourt Grand Slam dominance following spectacular triumphs in Melbourne and New York last year, takes on Serbian Miomir Kecmanovic or Danish 13th seed Holger Rune in the next round.

Meanwhile world number one Aryna Sabalenka brushed aside teenager Mirra Andreeva 6-1 6-2 to romp into the quarter-finals of the Australian Open and remain on course for a third straight title.

Andreeva, the 14th seed, was simply unable to get going in the fourth-round clash on Rod Laver Arena as Sabalenka raised her level a couple of notches to extend her winning streak at Melbourne Park to 18

matches.

Sabalenka, who was stunned in three sets by Andreeva in the quarter-finals of last year's French Open, ramped up her serve at any hint of a threat from the 17-year-old and wrapped up the victory in just over an hour with an unreturnable serve.

"Always tough matches against Andreeva, she's so young but playing such great tennis," the 26-year-old said on court.

"I'm super happy to get through this difficult match in straight sets."

Sabalenka will next face Donna Vekic or Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova in her 11th quarter-final in her last 13 Grand Slam campaigns.

The Belarusian had struggled with her serve in her third-round contest and said she was much happier playing in the hotter temperatures on Rod Laver Arena on Sunday.

"I'm super happy with my level today and I hope the conditions stay the same for the rest of the tournament," she added.

Neither player lost a point on their serve for the first three games but four straight forehand errors from Andreeva handed Sabalenka a break for 3-1.

The top seed never looked back from there, wrapping up the first set in 25 minutes and breaking again for 2-1 in the second on the back of a couple of double faults from Andreeva.

It was not all power from Sabalenka, who summoned up a couple of subtle drop shots as evidence of the wider repertoire she has been trying to add to her game.

Andreeva managed to put some pressure on Sabalenka's serve at 3-2 down but an ace and a drop shot helped the U.S. Open champion see off the only three break points she would face in the contest.

Lukaku Fires Napoli Six Points Clear at Atalanta



MILAN (Dispatches) - Romelu Lukaku fired Napoli six points clear at the top of Serie A with the decisive goal in the thrilling 3-2 win at title rivals Atalanta, as Juventus beat AC Milan 2-0 to move into the Champions League spots.

Belgium striker Lukaku nodded home his eighth Napoli goal from Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa's perfect cross in the 78th minute to give Antonio Conte's team a statement win in Bergamo.

Matteo Politano and Scott McTominay also scored for Napoli who have 50 points from 21 matches and have made it clear that they are now the team to beat in this year's title race after scoring three times from their only shots on target.

"I can't say whether it's my most important goal (for Napoli) but the win is important. We showed tonight that we're a top team," said Lukaku to Sky.

Napoli are gunning for a second Scudetto in three seasons and await the response from champions and closest challengers Inter Milan — who also have a game in hand — against struggling Empoli today.

A sixth straight win is the perfect boost Napoli need for another massive clash with Conte's old team Juventus, in Naples, this time next week.

"It's another test for us, to see where we are," added Lukaku.

"It's easy after a win like tonight's to get slack and not keep going. We can't do that, we need to continue playing the way we're playing."

Lukaku also dealt a blow to Atalanta's unprecedented title bid, as the provincial upstarts fell to their first league defeat since late September.

Frustrated Barca Fail to Capitalize on Atletico La Liga Slip



MADRID (Dispatches) - Barcelona could only muster a 1-1 draw at Getafe in La Liga as they were unable to recover ground on the top two in the Spanish title race.

Jules Kounde sent the visitors ahead early on but Mauro Arambarri levelled for Getafe in the first half and Barcelona could not break down Jose Bordalas' well-drilled side.

The draw leaves the third-place Catalans five points behind leaders Atletico Madrid, who lost 1-0 at Leganes earlier in the day, but Hansi Flick's side could not take advantage.

After a slump in the final weeks of 2024, Barcelona won the Spanish Super Cup last week and then thumped Real Betis in the Copa del Rey, indicating they were back to their best.

However they dropped two points on the road in their first league match of 2025 as Getafe, 16th, scrapped their way to a hard-fought point.

"It's not done yet, we still have some matches to play and as I said before, we will fight until the end," Flick told reporters.

"Today it's one point more, not two points less. We missed (out on) two points, but we have to look forwards and make it better next time."

Flick selected what has proven his strongest side in recent weeks to try and get a result at Getafe, against whom the Catalans failed to score on their previous four away visits.

The Blaugrana did not have to wait long to end that run, with Kounde finding the net in the ninth minute.

The French defender, who also scored in the Copa del Rey win against Real Betis in midweek, was cleverly fed by Pedri.

Although David Soria saved Kounde's first effort, he was able to turn the rebound home.

However after that Barcelona came up against the same old struggles they have often faced at the Coliseum.

Getafe dug deep and did not allow striker Robert Lewandowski, La Liga's top scorer, room to breathe.

The hosts pulled level after 34 minutes when Cobi's effort was parried by Barcelona goalkeeper Inaki Pena, but Arambarri pounced to nudge home.

Getafe maintained their typically tight set-up after the break and made life hard for Barcelona.

Raphinha should have struck for Barca in the final minutes but hit the side netting from close range after Lamine Yamal found him with a swirling cross.

"It was a shame, the match, we had control of the game and with one chance they scored one goal against us, it's a shame," Kounde told Movistar.

Antoine Griezmann missed a late penalty as leaders Atletico Madrid stumbled to a shock defeat at Leganes, ending a club record run of 15 consecutive victories.

Matija Nastasic nodded Leganes ahead early in the second half, with Griezmann dragging a poor penalty wide in the final stages to resign Atletico to a second defeat of the league season.

Wiggins Pours in 31 as Warriors Defeat Wizards

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Andrew Wiggins, Stephen Curry and Dennis Schroder combined for 77 points to overpower the brilliant solo act of Jordan Poole and lift the Golden State Warriors to a 122-114 victory over the visiting Washington Wizards.

Wiggins had a season-high 31 points, Curry 26 and Schroder 20 for the Warriors, who led just 104-103 after a Poole 3-pointer with 5:18 to go.

Opening a stretch of eight of nine at home, Golden State then scored the next six points, with Moses Moody dropping in a layup, Gary Payton II converting a three-point play and Wiggins making one of two free throws to open a seven-point gap with 3:32 remaining.

Poole, the game's leading scorer with 38 points, temporarily stopped the bleeding with two free throws, but Curry countered with a layup and a 3-pointer that finally gave the hosts breathing room at 115-105 with just 2:30 to play.

The 3-pointer was just Curry's fourth in 14 tries. He also found time for a team-high six assists.

Wiggins shot 12-for-22 and completed a double-double with 11 rebounds, while Schroder made seven of his 14 shots in his highest scoring game among 16 he's played since joining the Warriors in an in-season trade.

Warriors big men Trayce Jackson-Davis (six points, game-high 15 rebounds) and Kevon Looney (10 points, 13 rebounds) combined for 16 points and 28 rebounds in the absence of Draymond Green, who left the game for good after three minutes because of tightness in his left calf.

Moody finished with 13 points and Payton 10 off the bench for the



Warriors, who reached the midpoint of the season with a 21-20 record.

Poole's 38 points were his third-most this season. In just his second return to San Francisco since being traded to Washington, he had 23 of his points in the first half, during which the visitors built a 60-53 lead.

Poole drilled eight of his 15 3-point attempts, helping the Wizards outscore the hosts 66-42 from beyond the arc.

Kyle Kuzma had 22 points, Carlton Carrington 17, Alex Sarr 11 to go with a team-high nine rebounds and Corey Kispert 10 for the Wizards, who were opening a six-game Western swing.

Bilal Coulibaly was the game-leader in assists with seven to complement four points and six rebounds.

Meanwhile Trae Young had 28 points and 11 assists to help the visiting Atlanta Hawks extend their winning streak to three games by

defeating the Boston Celtics 119-115 in overtime.

Dyson Daniels added 23 points for the Hawks, who won despite shooting 9-for-37 from 3-point range and committing 18 turnovers. Atlanta received 19 points and 13 rebounds from Onyeka Okongwu and 14 points and 13 boards from Jalen Johnson.

Young, Johnson and De'Andre Hunter (16 points) all returned after missing time because of injuries.

Boston trailed by three in overtime when Jayson Tatum missed a 3-point attempt with 6.6 seconds to play. Tatum had 23 points, eight rebounds and seven assists in the loss.

Jaylen Brown led Boston with 24 points but went 9-for-27 from the floor. Derrick White added 21 points and eight rebounds.

The Celtics have a 3-4 record in their past seven games overall and have lost five of their past nine games at home.

Boston played without big men Kristaps Porzingis and Al Horford, who were held out since the Celtics were playing their second game in as many nights.

Atlanta was 0-for-5 from 3-point territory in the opening quarter and trailed 33-21 after 12 minutes of action, but two Bogdan Bogdanovic free throws capped a 21-7 run that put the Hawks in front 42-40 with 3:59 left in the second quarter. Atlanta outscored Boston 31-15 in the second and had a 52-48 halftime lead.

The Celtics shot 35.3 percent (18 of 51) from the field in the first half, when they missed 18 of their 23 3-point attempts.

Nunez Late Show Extends Liverpool's Lead

LONDON (Dispatches) - Darwin Nunez struck twice in stoppage time to earn Liverpool a 2-0 win at Brentford and a six-point Premier League lead over Arsenal, who blew a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 against Aston Villa.

Liverpool looked set to drop points for the third consecutive league game until the much-maligned Uruguayan doubled his tally of Premier League goals for the season in the dying seconds in west London.

Nunez swept home Trent Alexander-Arnold's cross before smashing in a second for a vital twist in the title race.

Liverpool had been wasteful in front of goal in a 1-1 draw at Nottingham Forest in midweek and Arne Slot's men nearly let another two points slip away.

On a rare quiet day for Mohamed Salah, Slot was forced to turn to Nunez to make an impact off the bench and he duly delivered.

The 25-year-old had not scored in the league since November but was in the right place to finish after a neat one-two between Harvey Elliott and Alexander-Arnold.

Substitute Elliott was the creator for the second, feeding Nunez to cut inside and fire past Mark Flekken.

"As a striker you get judged on goals, especially at a club like Liverpool," said the Reds' captain Virgil van Dijk. "Today he put his



mark on the game."

Liverpool also have a game in hand over injury-hit Arsenal, whose title challenge faltered once more at the Emirates.

Gabriel Martinelli gave the Gunners a deserved first-half lead when goalkeeper Emi Martinez failed to prevent his effort crossing the line.

It was a similar story for Arsenal's second as Martinez got a touch to Kai Havertz's shot but could not keep it out.

Just when Mikel Arteta's men seemed to be cruising, Villa hit back through a Youri Tielemans' header.

The Belgian midfielder then hit the post with the chance to level for Villa seconds later.

The visitors did equalise 22 minutes from time when Ollie Watkins cushioned in Matty Cash's cross off the underside of the crossbar.

"Today we cannot concede the two goals we did after everything we did," said Arteta. "That line is so thin. Credit to them as well."

Arsenal thought they had a late winner but Mikel Merino's effort deflected in off Havertz's hand and the goal was ruled out by a VAR review.