

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Esmail Baghaei Has Denounced the Israeli Regime's New Crime in Targeting Lebanese Citizens Returning Home After a Fragile Ceasefire Deal

# IRAN NEWS

The Iranian Foreign Minister and the Acting Defense Minister of Afghanistan Coordinated Efforts by the Two Neighbors to Maintain Security Along the Common Border and Fight Against Terrorism

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2 DOMESTIC



## Call for Expansion of Tehran-Ankara Relations and Cooperation

> SEE PAGE 2

3 INTERNATIONAL

## Thousands of Palestinians Return to North Gaza After Hostage Breakthrough



> SEE PAGE 3

## “Nice Words” Not Enough to Buy Iran’s Confidence



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi says it would take a lot more than “nice words” by the new US administration to convince Tehran to begin negotiations with Washington toward reaching a new agreement.

In an interview with Sky News published on Tuesday, Araqchi pointed to the U.S. withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal during the first time U.S. President Donald Trump was in office, saying lots of things should be done by the other side to “buy our confidence.”

In May 2018, the U.S. unilaterally pulled out of the 2015 deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and pursued a “maximum pressure” policy toward the Islamic Republic.

The withdrawal came despite Iran’s full compliance with the JCPOA, as repeatedly certified by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), prompting Tehran to expand its civilian nuclear activities, which the deal had restricted.

Trump has suggested that he would prefer a diplomatic solution, saying a new deal with Iran would be “nice.”

“The situation is different and much more difficult than the previous time,” Araqchi said. “We haven’t heard anything but the ‘nice’ word, and this is obviously not enough.”

The foreign minister also warned that Israel and the U.S. would be “crazy” to attack Iran’s nuclear facilities, adding it would be faced with an “immediate and decisive response.”

“We have made it clear,” he said, “that any attack to our nuclear facilities would be faced with an immediate and decisive response. But I don’t think they will do that crazy thing. This is really crazy. And this would turn the whole region into a very bad disaster.”

Araqchi also dismissed Trump’s call for Gaza to be cleaned out of Palestinians, which sparked outrage across the region and the world.

“My suggestion is something else,” he said mockingly. “Instead of Palestinians, try to expel Israelis, take them to Greenland so they can kill two birds with one stone.”

## Lebanon Won’t Forget Iranian, Iraqi Support During Israeli War



BEIRUT (Dispatches) - The secretary general of Lebanon’s Hezbollah resistance movement says the Lebanese people will not forget the unflinching support that the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq offered them during the intense Israeli air and ground onslaught against their homeland.

Sheikh Naim Qassem made the remarks in a televised speech aired live from the Lebanese capital Beirut on Monday evening.

“Victory in Gaza belongs to Palestinian people, the regional nations who supported them as well as all freedom-seeking people across the globe.”

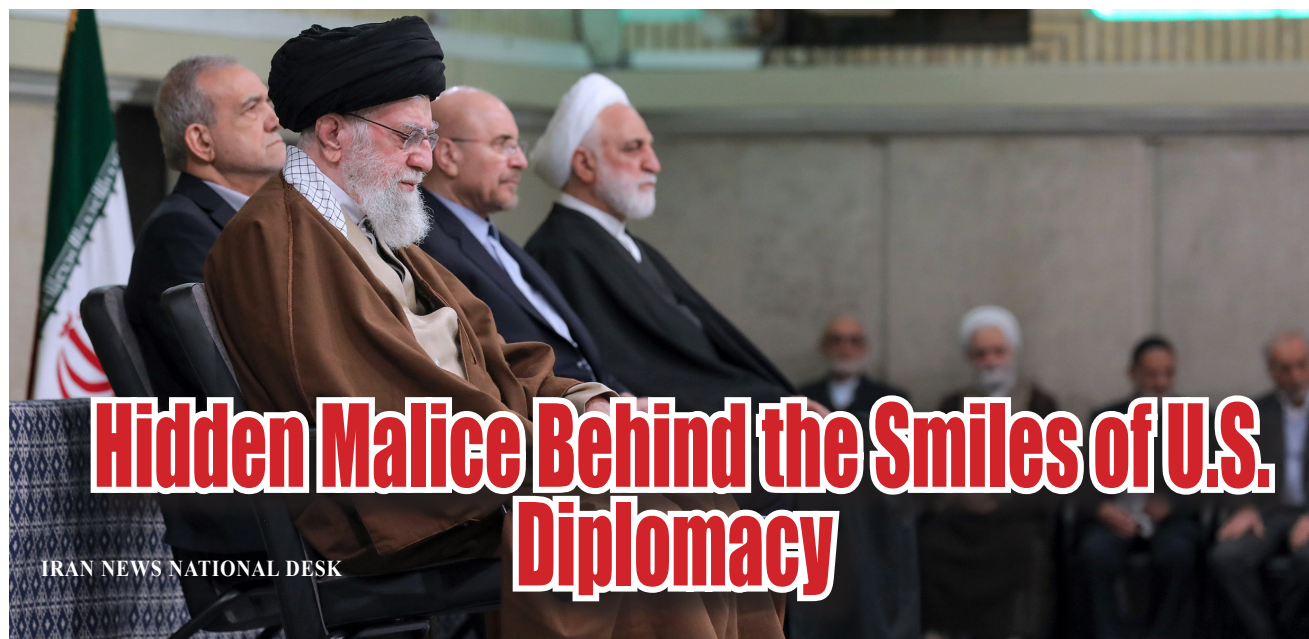
The Hezbollah chief went on to say that the Israeli plot aimed at the destruction of the Gaza-based Palestinian Hamas resistance movement failed dismally, and exposed the Tel Aviv regime’s weakness. “The Zionist enemy would not have lasted a week without the unqualified American support,” he said.

Sheikh Qassem emphasized that resistance is a political, national and humanitarian option to confront the Israeli occupation and liberate occupied lands.

He stated that the objectives behind the unprecedentedly large-scale Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, launched by Gaza-based resistance groups against the usurping regime on October 7, 2023, have been achieved.

“The Israeli enemy failed the test of honor and humanity, and turned out to be a criminal entity working to exterminate human beings. Israel emerged as a war criminal and could not recover its captives by any means other than an agreement with Hamas,” the Hezbollah leader underscored.

Sheikh Qassem described the Israeli onslaughts on Lebanon and the Gaza Strip as acts of aggression unconditionally supported by the US and certain Western governments.



## Hidden Malice Behind the Smiles of U.S. Diplomacy

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei urged vigilance in dealing with the United States, emphasizing that beneath the facade of diplomatic smiles lies malice, hostility, and deep-seated animosity. He called on Iranians to remain aware of the true nature of their adversaries when engaging in dialogue and agreements.

This statement was made during a gathering on Tuesday, coinciding with the anniversary of the Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) Mabaath (mission). The event was attended by the heads of Iran’s three branches of government, ambassadors from Islamic nations, and a cross-section of Iranian citizens.

In his remarks, Ayatollah Khamenei described the Prophet’s mission as an enduring and transformative process. He highlighted the central lesson for humanity, particularly Muslims: using reason and faith to inspire intellectual and societal change. He asserted that the “Resistance Movement,” which began with the Islamic Revolution, reflects the spirit of the Prophet’s mission. This movement, he noted, has awakened not only Muslims but also others worldwide, enabling them to stand against oppression. As an example, he cited how the Zionist regime has been forced to confront the resilience of Gaza and Lebanon.

Extending greetings to the Iranian nation, the global Muslim community, and freedom seekers everywhere, Ayatollah Khamenei underscored the importance of the Prophet’s mission as one of the greatest events in human history. It brought about unparalleled intellectual and spiritual transformation, which continues to influence societies today.

The Supreme Leader emphasized the tools used by prophets—reason and faith—to guide humanity toward growth and righteousness. He highlighted the Quran’s repeated calls for reflection and reasoning, pointing to their role in fostering human development. Furthermore, he characterized faith and its cornerstone, monotheism, as the foundations of Islamic worldview and the building blocks of an Islamic society.

Ayatollah Khamenei called on Muslim leaders and nations to internalize one key message of the Prophet’s mission: recognizing dignity as a divine gift. He argued that embracing this divine dignity shields nations from external threats and negative influences.

Reflecting on the colonial history of the world, he outlined three stages of exploitation: the

plundering of natural resources, the erosion of authentic cultures, and the destruction of national and religious identities. He warned that these stages of exploitation continue to this day, orchestrated by powerful entities aiming to subjugate nations.

The Supreme Leader identified the United States as the primary driver of modern colonialism, controlled by influential financial powers. He accused these entities of relentless schemes to alter national identities and expand their influence. Citing Quranic verses, he warned that enemies harbor greater hatred and malice than they openly express.

To illustrate the duplicity of U.S. diplomacy, Ayatollah Khamenei cited examples such as American lawmakers applauding individuals responsible for heinous crimes or awarding medals to military officers involved in acts of violence against innocent civilians. These instances, he argued, reveal the “evil nature” hidden behind their diplomatic smiles. He called on Iranians to remain vigilant, avoid naivety, and not seek clandestine friendships with such adversaries.

Ayatollah Khamenei highlighted the current “Resistance Movement” as a modern-day manifestation of the Prophet’s mission, rooted in the Islamic Revolution. He pointed to the recent victory of Gaza as an extraordinary example of how a small and constrained region could forcefully confront a heavily armed Zionist regime backed by the U.S. This success, he stated, is a testament to the power of reason, faith, reliance on God, and belief in divine dignity.

He also praised Hezbollah’s resilience, even after suffering significant losses, including the martyrdom of key figures. Despite such challenges, he noted, Hezbollah has continued to resist with even greater determination, demonstrating the enduring strength of the resistance movement. Earlier in the gathering, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian emphasized the mission of prophets as a call for justice and unity to resolve disputes and conflicts. He highlighted the Prophet Muhammad’s first action in Medina: forging a pact of brotherhood among rival tribes. Today, he stressed, Iran, the Muslim world, and all nations must adhere to this vision of unity.

The President concluded by condemning the crimes of global powers, which have shed the blood of Muslims and children under various pretexts. He asserted that unity and cohesion among Muslims could pave the way for justice and disrupt the ambitions of oppressors seeking to prolong war and bloodshed.

## Private Sector Enters Iran’s Nuclear Technology

TEHRAN - Mohammad Eslami, the head of Iran’s Atomic Energy Organization, announced during a meeting of the Energy Commission at Iran’s Chamber of Commerce that fossil fuels are depleting and are not a sustainable resource. He emphasized the importance of nuclear power as a stable and necessary energy source, stating that 20,000 megawatts of nuclear power must be added to the grid. However, he pointed out that Iran cannot achieve this goal without international cooperation.

Eslami highlighted Iran’s efforts to leverage its capabilities and knowledge-based industries to pursue an open-door policy within the Atomic Energy Organization. He noted that the organization, previously considered closed, is now embracing transparency and innovation to achieve the target of producing 20,000 megawatts of nuclear electricity.

The Vice President stressed that value creation lies in productivity and technology, both of which are essential for a thriving economy. He stated that nuclear energy can enhance these aspects simultaneously.

Eslami also revealed that geological surveys have been conducted up to a depth of 15,000 meters and have been submitted to the Ministry of Petroleum. He described this as a milestone for the country, emphasizing the need to utilize existing resources to benefit the national value chain. He explained that the strategic aspect of nuclear development is handled by the Atomic Energy Organization, while the private sector plays a crucial role in the non-strategic aspects, enabling further progress in the field.

He noted that companies involved in nuclear technology production could participate in the supply chain, with 80% of industrial and operational work in nuclear projects being carried out by Iranian companies. Furthermore, he highlighted the potential of nuclear technology to address environmental challenges, such as water scarcity.



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

Eslami concluded by saying that the private sector is free to engage in all aspects of the nuclear industry, except in areas that are not commercially viable. However, he emphasized the organization’s responsibility to protect future generations and the environment from radiation exposure.

Regarding the organization’s mineral exploration efforts, Eslami mentioned that in 2023, exploration activities expanded from 10 to over 70 sites. He reaffirmed the organization’s commitment to continuing this path and announced plans to increase nuclear power generation to 22% by 2041. Despite facing external obstacles in building nuclear power

plants, he stressed the need for self-reliance in equipment production.

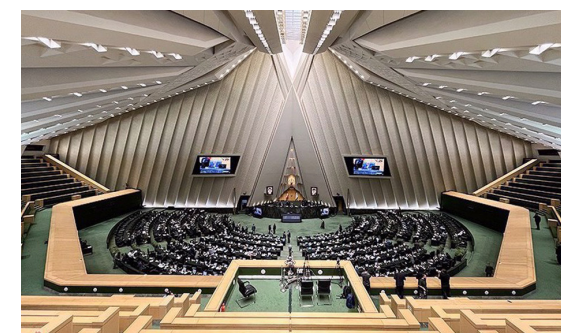
During the same meeting, Ghadir Ghiyafeh, a board member of Iran’s Chamber of Commerce, praised the country’s progress in nuclear technology, noting that despite past negative perceptions, nuclear energy has various applications. He called for increased public awareness and support for the peaceful development of this technology.

Ghiyafeh emphasized that the development of nuclear science and industry is crucial for the growth of Iran’s economy and industry. He advocated for greater transparency to change public perceptions and proposed that everyone should act as ambassadors for peaceful nuclear advancements.

He further highlighted the country’s underground reserves, valued at \$27 trillion, and suggested that nuclear technology could aid in their exploration. He noted that radioactive minerals could be identified and processed by the Atomic Energy Organization, which would help unlock currently unused resources.

In conclusion, Ghiyafeh proposed the creation of a comprehensive geological database in collaboration with the private sector, the Atomic Energy Organization, the Ministry of Petroleum, and the Geological Survey of Iran. This initiative, he argued, could provide an accurate assessment of Iran’s underground wealth.

## MPs Slam European Parliament’s Anti-Iran Resolution



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian lawmakers have strongly condemned the recent European Parliament’s “interventionist and biased” resolution against the Islamic Republic.

The majority of the Iranian lawmakers issued a statement on Monday, saying the recent European Parliament’s resolution was in line with the union’s meddlesome and biased approaches.

On January 23, the European Parliament adopted a resolution, condemning what it alleged was a systemic violation of human rights and “hostage diplomacy” by Iran. It called for a comprehensive European response.

The resolution was passed with 556 votes in favor, 6 against, and 42 abstentions. It also called on the Council to designate Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) a terrorist organization and to extend EU sanctions to all those responsible for human rights violations.

In the statement, the Iranian MPs said they believe that the resolution is a manifestation of interventionist and biased approaches.

They added that the attack on the judiciary and the IRGC exposes the opponents’ plans to undermine Iran’s might.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran is committed to respecting human rights and ensuring justice for all its citizens based on domestic laws and principles of international law,” the statement read.

“At a time when two high-ranking Iranian judges have been martyred in a terrorist act, the European Parliament has clearly intervened in Iran’s internal affairs by distorting the realities and showing its support for terrorist groups,” it added.

The judges – identified as Ali Razini, head of Branch 39 of the Supreme Court, and Mohammad Moqiseh, head of Branch 53 – were assassinated at the Supreme Court building in downtown Tehran on January 18. They worked on cases fighting crimes against national security, espionage, and terrorism.

## Israel Failed to Sell Misguided Notion of Victory Over Resistance



TEHRAN (Dispatches) – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf felicitates Hamas and other resistance forces across the region on their victory over Israel, stressing that the occupying Zionist regime failed in its attempts to sell the notion it had overcome the Axis of Resistance.

Addressing an open parliamentary session in the capital Tehran on Monday, Qalibaf pointed to the Israeli regime’s defeat in cognitive warfare against resistance fighters, and its bids to propagate the idea that occupation forces had emerged triumphant in Palestinian territories and Lebanon.

“It has become obvious today that Hamas is alive and flourishing. Resistance is going on with a determination much stronger than before, and is humiliating the enemy,” the top Iranian parliamentarian emphasized.

He stated that the Palestinian nation’s resilience in the face of over 15 months of Israeli genocidal war and atrocities will be completed following total withdrawal of Zionists from the Gaza Strip and the return of displaced people to their homes.

Qalibaf also paid tribute to the late head of the political bureau of Hamas, Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, secretary-general of the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, head of Hezbollah’s Executive Council Hashem Safieddine, and all those who scarified their lives in the sacred battle against the Zionist regime as the most vicious enemy of humanity.

Tens of thousands of Palestinians on Monday began to return to their homes in the northern side of the battered Gaza Strip after 15 months of being forcibly displaced.

For days, they had sat out in the streets or on a beach with their mattresses, belongings, and water tanks, waiting for the checkpoint to open under the terms of a deal reached between Hamas and Israel over exchange of Israeli captives and Palestinian prisoners.

Gazans describe the return as historic, saying this is a victorious day.



# IRAN NEWS



## Direct Flight From Gorgan to Aktau, Kazakhstan Launched

TEHRAN (IRNA) - In line with the expansion of Qeshm Air's international routes, a direct flight from Gorgan to Aktau, Kazakhstan, has been established.

According to a report from Qeshm Air, the direct flights between Gorgan and Aktau have been introduced following efforts by Golestan province officials to enhance political and economic relations between Iranian and Kazakh traders and to promote tourism in the beautiful province of Golestan.

It is noteworthy that these flights are scheduled to operate every Tuesday.

The aim of this service is to provide a comfortable, safe, and internationally compliant travel experience for passengers.

## 12% Increase in Iranian Exports to France



TEHRAN - According to the reports, the Iranian Embassy in France has released the details of Iran-France trade exchanges for the year 2024. The report indicates that in the 12 months leading up to November 2024, France's exports to Iran decreased by 7.4% compared to the previous year, amounting to €261 million. Meanwhile, Iran's exports to France saw a 12% increase, reaching €46 million.

Iran currently ranks as the 104th trading partner of France, being its 87th largest customer and 124th supplier.

The report highlights that France's exports to Iran mainly consist of pharmaceutical products (29.5%), medical equipment (21.3%), and chemical materials (13.3%). On the other hand, Iran primarily exports agricultural products (16.3%), food items (19.8%), and pharmaceuticals (14.8%) to France. Despite the increase in Iranian exports, France continues to enjoy a trade surplus of €215 million, reflecting a significant gap between imports and exports.

U.S. sanctions remain the biggest obstacle to expanding trade relations between the two countries. Additionally, uncertainties surrounding diplomatic relations and the future of the nuclear deal have led to cautious investment and long-term cooperation hesitations.

Economic variables such as inflation and exchange rates in Iran, along with domestic economic conditions in France, have also impacted the stability of trade between the two nations.

## Air Taxis to Take Off for the First Time



TEHRAN - Air taxis, despite having a long history in the country and the potential to offer numerous benefits to various regions, have not received much attention for development over the years. According to the head of the Civil Aviation Organization, there are currently about 12 aircraft with a capacity of fewer than 19 passengers in the country. Efforts are underway to activate the necessary infrastructure, with plans to launch an air taxi service between Zanjan and Alborz by the end of the year. Following this, a similar service is planned for the Kish-Hendorabi islands.

According to ISNA, air taxis—also known as flying taxis or "Air Taxi"—are small, lightweight, and ultra-light aircraft designed for short and urgent trips. These planes do not have fixed flight schedules and can operate with minimal capacity, similar to a taxi or bus, transporting passengers at high speeds. Experts state that these aircraft, with their low weight and high maneuverability, can take off and land at many small airports.

Historical accounts suggest that air taxi companies were active in Iran during the 1970s. However, after the revolution, regulatory changes led to the merging of these companies, culminating in the establishment of Aseman Airlines. The original goal of founding this airline was to create an air taxi service across the country, but this vision was never fully realized.

Despite growth in the aviation industry over the years, air taxi companies have not expanded, and although discussions have occurred in some regions, continuous and sustained operations have not materialized.

Hussein Pourfarzaneh, head of the Civil Aviation Organization, told ISNA that the organization plans to launch air taxi services between Zanjan and Payam Airport in Alborz province. Additionally, launching flights between Kish and Hendorabi islands is under consideration.

He emphasized that no routes have been officially launched yet, as the necessary infrastructure—such as dedicated terminals and gateways for small aircraft with fewer than 19 seats—is still being developed. Coordination is required for airport operations, flight security, and pricing, with guidelines currently being drafted.

Pourfarzaneh expressed hope that the Zanjan-Alborz air taxi service will be operational before the New Year. He highlighted that the primary customers for these flights would be business professionals and traders seeking quick and efficient travel between cities.

The Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development noted that air taxis will benefit the general public indirectly. While only a small percentage of the population directly uses air travel, the industry provides broader benefits such as the transportation of food, medicine, and other essential goods.

He concluded by stating that currently, there are around 10 to 12 small aircraft with a capacity of fewer than 19 passengers in the country.

## Call for Expansion of Tehran-Ankara Relations and Cooperation



TEHRAN - The Turkish Minister of Trade has emphasized the expansion of relations and cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey.

Omer Bolat, during a joint press conference with Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development on Monday, highlighted the 29th meeting of the Iran-Turkey Joint Economic Commission and the signing of the commission's memorandum of understanding. He also referred to the target of achieving \$30 billion in trade between the two countries and noted that trade between Iran and Turkey has increased in 2024, with Turkish companies investing approximately \$2 billion in Iran.

The Turkish trade minister also pointed out key topics such as the reconstruction and modernization of border crossings on the Turkish side and efforts to operationalize them. He further discussed facilitating and streamlining transportation between the two countries, as well as enhancing trade, transport, and transit relations. According to him, both sides have reached agreements on these matters.

Iran's Minister of Roads Farzaneh Sadegh, heading a delegation, traveled to Ankara today (Monday, January 29) to participate in a bilateral meeting with the Turkish ministers of transport and trade.

On the sidelines of the event, Iranian Minister announced the formation of a joint committee aimed at addressing transportation issues between Iran and Turkey. She stated that these efforts will lead to progress in the agreements made, according to the roadmap set for 2025.

Sadegh made these remarks, during a one-day visit to Turkey. The visit was aimed at attending bilateral meetings with Turkey's Ministers of Trade and Transport.

Following his meeting with Turkish Minister of Trade, Bolat, Sadegh

congratulated the Iranian nation on the occasion of Eid al-Mab'ath and highlighted the achievements of the visit. He noted that less than a month ago, after several years, Iran hosted the Iran-Turkey Joint Economic Commission meeting.

He added that during the meeting, agreements were signed not only in the transportation sector but also in areas such as currency exchange, energy, customs, agriculture, and other mutual interests.

Sadegh stated that, given the seriousness of both parties in implementing the signed agreements, he traveled to Ankara, Turkey's capital, and first met with the Turkish Minister of Trade.

The Minister of Roads and Urban Development further emphasized that one of the key issues discussed was facilitating transportation across the borders of both countries. He noted that due to the deep cultural and historical ties between Iran and Turkey, as well as their strategic position in transit, both countries benefit from bilateral cooperation.

He pointed out that discussions were held today on facilitating transit and customs procedures between the two countries, and significant decisions were made in these areas.

Sadegh announced the formation of a joint committee to follow up on transportation-related issues between the two countries, emphasizing that these efforts will lead to progress in the agreed terms as per the roadmap for 2025.

On December 12 of this year, a memorandum of understanding on Iran-Turkey trade cooperation was signed in the presence of Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development and Turkey's Minister of Trade. Both sides reiterated their commitment to boosting bilateral trade to \$30 billion over the next five years.

## Iran and Sierra Leone Traders Seek to Exchange Business Information

TEHRAN - The President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture has stated that the current trade volume between Iran and Sierra Leone is not satisfactory given the potential of both countries. He emphasized the need for the private sectors of Iran and Sierra Leone to update business information and better understand each other's economic capacities.

In a meeting with Sierra Leone's newly appointed ambassador to Iran, Samad Hassanzadeh said that Iranian traders require more information about Sierra Leone's economic programs and trade advantages. Conversely, Iran is keen to provide economic data and plans to Sierra Leone's private sector. He highlighted the significant role embassies can play in this regard.

Hassanzadeh noted that the Iran Chamber, with its specialized, provincial, and international capacities, is interested in enhancing cooperation with the Sierra Leone Chamber. He also welcomed the establishment of a joint chamber of commerce between the two countries.

Referring to Sierra Leone's rich reserves of zinc, cobalt, manganese, and gold, he pointed out that Iran's private sector possesses the technical expertise and capabilities to engage in mining development projects in Sierra Leone.

He further stated that Iran requires imports of iron ore, raw wood, and cocoa. Iranian private sector companies have significant capabilities in various fields, including oil refinery construction, power plant development, automobile and industrial machinery manufacturing, construction materials production, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, food industries, export of technical and engineering services, infrastructure development, handicrafts, and carpets. Both sides can engage in barter-based economic cooperation.

Hassanzadeh highlighted Iran's capacities in medical services and suggested that the two countries could collaborate effectively in the



field of health tourism.

During the meeting, Sierra Leone's new ambassador to Iran, Salamo Koroma, emphasized the need to enhance cooperation between the chambers of commerce of both countries. He acknowledged that Sierra Leone is relatively unknown in Iran, and Iranian traders have limited information about its economic potential.

Koroma highlighted Sierra Leone's abundant natural resources, vast lands, and youthful population, which create opportunities for overseas agricultural cooperation. However, he admitted that despite the country's potential, it

struggles to meet its food supply needs due to traditional farming methods.

He stressed that mechanized and modern agriculture, particularly rice production, is a government priority, and Sierra Leone is interested in collaborating with Iran in this sector.

Koroma also pointed out that Sierra Leone suffers from inadequate road transport infrastructure and expressed interest in collaborating on infrastructure development, road and bridge construction, power plants, electricity supply, education, technology, and medical services.

The ambassador underscored the importance of establishing direct flights between Iran and Sierra Leone, stating that it would facilitate interactions and boost tourism.

He affirmed that the Sierra Leone embassy is ready to cooperate with the Iran Chamber to increase trade volumes between the two countries.

The Iran Chamber president also pointed out Iran's capabilities in agriculture and energy, stating that Iranian engineers have high expertise in building solar, wind, and hydroelectric power plants. He suggested that through government agreements, Iran could provide valuable services to the people of Sierra Leone.

## Tehran and Riyadh Emphasize the Need to Expand Relations Across Various Sectors



TEHRAN - The Minister of Communications and Information Technology of the Islamic Republic of Iran, during a meeting with the Saudi ambassador to Tehran, emphasized the necessity of expanding bilateral relations across various sectors, particularly in the field of communications and information technology.

Seyed Sattar Hashemi met with Abdullah bin Saud Al Anzi, the newly appointed Saudi ambassador to Tehran, to discuss and outline areas of mutual cooperation, with a focus on the communications and IT sector.

Hashemi highlighted that cooperation in data transit from Iran to Saudi Arabia and from Saudi Arabia to the Mediterranean and Africa, as well as data transit from Saudi Arabia to Iran and then to Afghanistan, Central Asia, China, and the Caucasus region, could be a key agenda item for both countries.

He further identified the development of communication infrastructure, cybersecurity, platform-based services, and e-government as additional areas where the two nations could collaborate effectively.

The Iranian minister also expressed Iran's readiness to share scientific and technical expertise, emphasizing the importance of exchanging delegations and experts in the field of communications and information technology.

In response, Abdullah bin Saud Al Anzi, the Saudi ambassador to Tehran, underscored the importance of strengthening bilateral relations and affirmed Saudi Arabia's willingness to expand cooperation across various fields.

## 15% of Iran's Water Supply Wasted



TEHRAN - Ali Seyedzadeh discussed Iran's water wastage issue and the steps being taken to address it. He highlighted that approximately 15% of the country's water supply is lost due to physical leakage in distribution networks, with total non-revenue water reaching 32%. However, not all of this loss stems from leaks; illegal consumption and meter inaccuracies also contribute to the issue.

Seyedzadeh noted that in Tehran, non-revenue water accounts for 22% of the total supply, with around 10 to 11% resulting from physical leaks within the city's distribution network.

Reducing water loss by just 1% on a national scale requires a significant investment of roughly 220 trillion rials. Seyedzadeh, who serves as the Director General of Consumption Management, Customer Services, and Water Loss Reduction at the National Water and Wastewater Engineering Company, acknowledged the financial challenge.

To address this, funds for the upcoming year will be sourced from national budgets, subscription fees, and tariff adjustments. The private sector is also expected to play a key role in utilizing domestic resources to implement water conservation strategies.

At present, there is no external financial support for these initiatives. Seyedzadeh expressed hope that changes in foreign policy could open doors to international investment opportunities.

Given declining rainfall and mounting water challenges, authorities have ramped up efforts to mitigate losses. Key measures include: Upgrading outdated water infrastructure, Fixing malfunctioning meters, Introducing smart metering systems, Conducting leak detection and repair operations, Standardizing water pressure in high-pressure areas.

Additional measures being introduced include network simulations, drilling new wells, and separating drinking water from irrigation water.

As part of short, medium, and long-term strategies, efforts are underway to replace industrial water usage with treated wastewater and non-potable water, particularly during peak summer demand.

Seyedzadeh emphasized that easing sanctions could greatly benefit water conservation efforts by attracting foreign investment and advanced technologies, fostering collaboration with local stakeholders.



## Trump Orders Planning for "Iron Dome" Missile Shield for U.S.

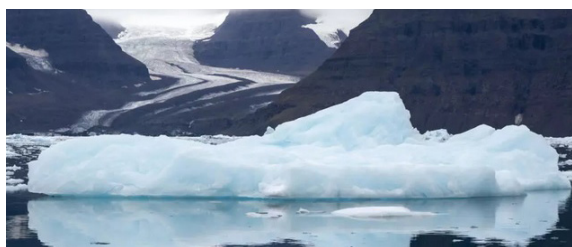
MIAMI (Dispatches) - President Donald Trump on Monday signed an executive order to start planning for an "Iron Dome" air defense system for the United States, like the one that Israel has used to intercept thousands of rockets.

Trump ordered the defense secretary to submit within 60 days an implementation plan for the "next-generation missile defense shield" designed to guard against ballistic, hypersonic and advanced cruise missiles, including by the development of space-based interceptors.

During the 2024 election campaign Trump repeatedly promised to build a version of Israel's Iron Dome system for the United States. But he ignored the fact that the system is designed for short-range threats, making it ill-suited to defending against intercontinental missiles that are the main danger to the United States.



## Denmark Launches \$2b Arctic Security Plan, Seeks EU Unity on Greenland



COPENHAGEN (Dispatches) - "We must face the fact that there are serious challenges regarding security and defence in the Arctic and North Atlantic," Denmark's Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen said in a statement.

His announcement came ahead of a visit by the country's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen to Berlin, Paris and Brussels this week to shore up "European unity" on Greenland.

Greenland is already part of a power struggle in the Arctic. As its ice melts due to global warming, the battle for its natural resources is also heating up - enormous oil and gas deposits are believed to lie under its seas. Russia and China have already increased their Arctic mining activities and military presence, and the region may soon offer new shipping routes between the US and Europe.

"Europe is facing a serious situation. With war on the continent and shifts in the geopolitical reality. In moments like this, unity is crucial," Frederiksen said in a statement.

She said she would be meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz as well as with Mark Rutte, secretary general of the NATO transatlantic defence alliance.

"Denmark is a small country with strong allies. And it is part of a strong European community where together we can meet the challenges we face," Frederiksen said.

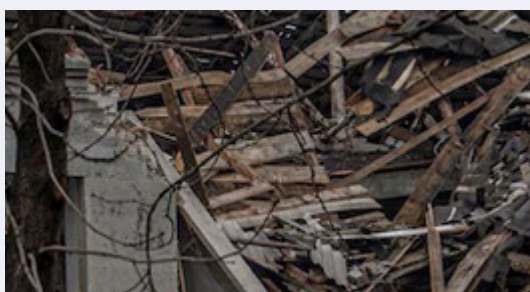
The announcement and visit come after Trump earlier this month expressed interest in controlling Greenland and the Panama Canal and refused to rule out using military force to do so.

"We need Greenland for national security purposes," he said.

EU's foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas on Monday said the European Union is "not negotiating" on Greenland following Trump's claims.

"We are not negotiating on Greenland. Of course we are supporting our member state, Denmark, and its autonomous region, Greenland, but we shouldn't also go into speculation about what-ifs because this is not the situation right now," Kallas told reporters after an EU foreign ministers' meeting.

## Ukraine Replaces Commander of Eastern Front



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy replaced the commander of the eastern front, the most heated battlefield of the Ukraine war, after Russian forces captured another strategic town there.

Brigadier-General Andriy Hnatov was replaced as the battlefield commander in the east by Major General Mykhailo Drapatyi, overall commander of ground forces, who will keep his previous duties. Hnatov was given a role overseeing training and communications.

In his nightly video address late on Sunday, Zelenskyy said the aim was to strengthen the command of troops in the Donetsk region. Donetsk, a battlefield since 2014 and one of four provinces Russia claims to have annexed since its 2022 full-scale invasion, has been the main focus of fighting for more than a year.

The Ukrainian military confirmed on Monday that it had withdrawn from the Donetsk region town of Velyka Novosilka, a day after Russia said it had captured it. Viktor Trehubov, a military spokesperson for Ukraine's eastern front, confirmed that Russian troops had entered the town but said fighting continued on the outskirts.

Russian forces have been slowly but steadily advancing in eastern Ukraine for more than a year in relentless ground combat that has caused massive military losses on both sides. Kyiv, for its part, has managed to capture and hold a pocket of territory inside Russia over the past six months.

The new eastern commander, Drapatyi, 42, is well respected in the army, where he is credited with stopping a Russian offensive in the northeastern Kharkiv region last year.

## Thousands of Palestinians Return to North Gaza After Hostage Breakthrough



NUSEIRAT (Dispatches) - Thousands of displaced Palestinians were returning to the north of war-ravaged Gaza after Israel and Hamas reached a deal for the release of another six hostages.

The Israeli government said that eight of the hostages held in Gaza who were due for release in the truce's first phase are dead.

The fragile ceasefire and hostage release deal between Israel and Hamas is intended to bring an end to more than 15 months of war that began with Hamas's Oct 7, 2023 attack on Israel.

Israel had prevented Palestinians from returning to northern Gaza, accusing Hamas of violating the terms of the truce, but Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said late Sunday they would be allowed to pass after a new agreement was reached.

Hamas had said blocking the returns amounted to a truce violation.

Large crowds of people moved through the now-open Netzarim Corridor into the north, watched over by Israeli tanks. Some pulled carts weighed down with mattresses and other essentials. Others carried what belongings they could.

Late on Monday, the Hamas government in Gaza said "more than 300,000 displaced" had returned during the day "to the governorates of the north", an area of Gaza severely battered by the war.

After reaching the area, men embraced each other.

"Welcome to Gaza," read a newly erected banner hanging above a dirt road in front of a collapsed building in Gaza City.

"This is the happiest day of my life," said Lamees al-Iwady, a 22-year-old who returned to Gaza City after being displaced several times.

"I feel as though my soul and life have returned to me," she said. "We will rebuild our homes, even if it's with mud and sand." With the joy of return came shock at the extent of destruction wrought by more than a year of war.

According to the Hamas-run government's media office, 135,000 tents and caravans are needed in Gaza City and the north to shelter returning families.

Still, Hamas called the return "a victory" for Palestinians that "signals the failure and defeat of the plans for occupation and displacement".

The comments came after US President Donald Trump floated an idea to "clean out" Gaza and resettle Palestinians in Jordan and Egypt, drawing condemnation from regional leaders.

President Mahmud Abbas, whose Palestinian Authority is based in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, issued a "strong rejection and condemnation of any projects" aimed at displacing Palestinians from Gaza, his office said.

Speaking to reporters on Air Force One yesterday, Trump reiterated his desire to move Palestinians from Gaza, which he described as "hell for so many years", to "safer" locations such as Egypt or Jordan.

"I wish he would take some (Palestinians)," Trump said of Egypt's president, adding, "I think the king of Jordan would do it too".

For Palestinians, any attempts to force them from Gaza would evoke dark memories of what the Arab world calls the "Nakba", or catastrophe - the mass displacement of Palestinians during Israel's creation in 1948.

"We say to Trump and the whole world: we will not leave Palestine or Gaza, no matter what happens," said displaced Gazan Rashad al-Naji.

Moving Gaza's 2.4 million people could be done "temporarily or could be long term", Trump said on Saturday.

Israel's far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich called Trump's suggestion "a great idea".

The Arab League warned against "attempts to uproot the Palestinian people from their land", and Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi issued a "firm" rejection of Palestinian displacement.

"Jordan is for Jordanians and Palestine is for Palestinians," Safadi said.

Egypt's foreign ministry said it rejected any infringement of Palestinians' "inalienable rights".

Israel had said it would prevent Palestinians' passage to the north until the release of Arbel Yehud, a civilian woman hostage who it maintained should have been freed on Saturday.

But Netanyahu's office later said a deal had been reached for the release of three hostages on Thursday, including Yehud, as well as another three on Saturday.

Hamas confirmed the agreement in its own statement.

Later, another Gaza militant group, Islamic Jihad, released video footage of a visibly distressed Yehud.

She called on Netanyahu to do everything in his power to secure the release of the remaining hostages.

In southern Gaza, the European Union agreed yesterday to restart a monitoring mission at the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt. Italy said the main aim "is to coordinate and facilitate the daily transit of up to 300 wounded and sick".

During the first phase of the truce, which began on January 19, 33 hostages are supposed to be freed in staggered releases over six weeks in exchange for around 1,900 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

The second such swap, on Saturday, saw four Israeli women hostages, all soldiers, exchanged for 200 prisoners, all Palestinians except for one Jordanian.

## India and China Agree to Resume Air Travel, Facilitate Exchange of Journalists

BEIJING (Dispatches) - India and China have agreed to resume direct air services after nearly five years, India's foreign ministry said on Monday, signalling a thaw in relations between the neighbors after a deadly 2020 military clash on their disputed Himalayan border.

Both sides will negotiate a framework on the flights in a meeting that will be held at an "early date", the ministry said after a meeting between India's top diplomat and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

China's foreign ministry confirmed this on Tuesday, adding that another meeting between officials at the vice-ministerial level agreed to facilitate the exchange of journalists between the two countries.

Tensions soured between the two nations after the 2020 clash, following which India made it difficult for Chinese companies to invest in the country, banned hundreds of popular apps and severed passenger routes, although direct cargo flights continued to operate between the countries.

Relations have improved over the past four months with several high-level meetings, including talks between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Russia in October.

On Monday, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri in Beijing that the two countries should work in the same direction, explore more substantive measures and commit to mutual understanding.

"Specific concerns in the economic and trade areas were discussed with a view to resolving these issues and promoting long-term policy transparency and predictability," the Indian foreign ministry statement said in a statement.

Their meeting was the latest between the two Asian powers following a milestone agreement in October seeking to ease friction along their frontier.

Reuters reported in June that China's government and airlines had asked India's civil aviation authorities to re-establish direct air links, but New Delhi resisted as the border dispute continued to weigh on ties.



In October, two Indian government sources told Reuters that India would consider reopening the skies and launch fast-tracking visa approvals.

Both nations have also agreed to resume dialogue for functional exchanges step by step and with an early meeting of the India-China Expert Level Mechanism, India's foreign ministry said.

China and India should commit to "mutual support and mutual achievement" rather than "suspicion" and "alienation," Wang said during the two officials' meeting, according to the Chinese foreign ministry's readout.

But just as relations began stabilising, China's approval of the construction of a hydropower dam in Tibet, in the lower reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo river, raised eyebrows in India.

Chinese officials said that hydropower projects in Tibet will not have a major impact on the environment or on downstream water supplies but India and Bangladesh have nevertheless raised concerns about the dam.

The dam, largest of its kind in the world, with an estimated capacity of 300 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, will be located on the river that flows into India as the Brahmaputra, a key water resource for millions.

India has urged China to be transparent and consultative in its plans, underscoring that interests of downstream states not be harmed.

China said during the vice-ministerial meeting on Monday that both sides had agreed to continue cooperation on "cross-border rivers" and work to hold a new round of meetings on this matter at an early date, according to a statement published on the Chinese foreign ministry's website.

Moreover, China and India agreed to push for the resumption of pilgrimages by Indian pilgrims to Tibet's sacred mountains and lakes in 2025, the ministry said.

## Colombia Avoids Trade War With U.S.

BOGOTA (Dispatches) - Colombia's President Gustavo Petro averted an economic disaster at the 11th hour after diplomats from his government and the U.S. reached a deal on deportation flights, but the Colombian business community on Monday called for cooler heads to prevail as Colombians bemoaned canceled U.S. visa appointments.

U.S. President Donald Trump had threatened tariffs and sanctions to punish Colombia for refusing to accept military flights carrying deportees, part of his sweeping immigration crackdown.

But in a statement late on Sunday, the White House said Colombia had agreed to accept the migrants after all and Washington would not impose the penalties. Colombia's Foreign Minister Luis Gilberto Murillo said separately the country's presidential plane was ready to carry deportees.

Colombia's ambassador to the U.S., Daniel Garcia-Pena, a long-time diplomat and former peace commissioner, was key to the late-night resolution of the dispute, a Colombian foreign office source said, after "very tense" discussions.

Garcia-Pena sought to paint the late-night reversal as a victory for Colombia.

"There was a win-win here. The United States withdrew the threat of tariffs and Colombia was able to get the United States to accept that the treatment given to our citizens should be dignified," Garcia-Pena told local television channel Caracol.



Asked if Trump had used Petro as an example to other countries, a White House source with knowledge of the matter said "absolutely. Yes. Countries have an obligation to accept repatriation flights."

"The United States is simply sending back the criminals that Colombia sent to the United States," the source added.

Petro's condemnation of the use of military planes, saying deportees were being treated like criminals and that his administration is "the opposite of the Nazis", seemed to rile Trump more than similar spats with Mexico and Brazil.

The showdown between Petro and Trump, who has been in office a week, played out through verbose posts on social media, with Petro on X and Trump on the Truth Social platform.

The measures announced by Trump, including a 25% tariff on all Colombian goods that was set to rise to 50% in a week and emergency treasury, banking and financial sanctions, would have had an "immense impact" on the Colombian economy, said Bruce Mac Master, president of business association ANDI.

"It was very worrying how the president (Petro) approached the problem because he was not conscious about all the consequences that it would have for the country," Mac Master told Reuters.





HOUSTON (Dispatches) - Amen Thompson made a game-winning floater with 1.3 seconds remaining to polish off a career night, lifting the visiting Houston Rockets to a 114-112 victory over the short-handed Boston Celtics.

The bucket in the lane gave Thompson a career-high 33 points. He also finished with nine rebounds and four assists to help Houston get a win in coach Ime Udoka's return to Boston, where he was at the helm during the 2021-22 season.

Payton Pritchard had one last chance to win the game for the Celtics, but his full-court heave at the buzzer only found the top of the backboard.

Dillon Brooks drilled a career-high 10 3-pointers en route to a game-high 36 points for the Rockets, who won despite once trailing by 12 points in the fourth quarter. Jaylen Brown put up 28 points for the Celtics, who were without Derrick White (shin), Sam Hauser (hip) and Al Horford (toe).

Lakers 112, Hornets 107: Anthony Davis set season highs with 42 points and 23 rebounds to help Los Angeles win against host Charlotte.

LeBron James racked up 22 points, seven rebounds and eight assists for the Lakers, who have won four straight games and six of their past seven.

Miles Bridges tallied 26 points and eight rebounds to lead the Hornets, who have lost three of their past four games. Charlotte played most of the game without LaMelo Ball, who exited in the second quarter due to a left ankle sprain. He scored seven points in nine minutes.

Heat 125, Magic 119 (2OT): Tyler Herro scored 30 points and had a season-high 12 assists, leading host Miami to a double-overtime win over Orlando.

Miami's Bam Adebayo added 26 points -- including six in the second OT -- plus 10 rebounds and nine assists. Prior to the game, the Heat suspended Jimmy Butler for the third time this season -- all for conduct detrimental to the team. Butler's latest ban has him out indefinitely.

Franz Wagner led the Magic with 29 points. With 33.5 seconds to go in regulation, Nikola Jovic lobbed a pass for Kel'el Ware to dunk, putting Miami on top 108-106. Five seconds later, Wagner beat a double team by banking in a shot, tying the score and forcing overtime.

Cavaliers 110, Pistons 91: Darius Garland scored 22 points and Donovan Mitchell added 21 as Cleveland snapped a season-worst three-game losing streak with a win over visiting Detroit.

Jarrett Allen recorded his 25th double-double of the season with 15 points and 11 rebounds for the Eastern Conference-leading Cavaliers, who never trailed and improved to 22-3 at home.

Cade Cunningham led Detroit with 22 points on 9-of-26 shooting. Malik Beasley scored 19 points off the bench, Jalen Duren had 12 points and 16 rebounds and Marcus Sasser chipped in 11 points.

Kings 110, Nets 96: De'Aaron Fox scored 16 of his 30 points in the third quarter as Sacramento erased a nine-point deficit and pulled away down the stretch for a victory over Brooklyn in New York.

The Nets took their seventh consecutive defeat overall and saw their home losing streak reach 11 games. Domantas Sabonis logged 21 points, 22 rebounds and 10 assists for the Kings, his seventh triple-double of the season.

D'Angelo Russell scored 19 points for the Nets, who fell to 1-12 in their past 13 games. Tosan Evbuomwan and Jalen Wilson added 15 points apiece.

Knicks 143, Grizzlies 106: Karl-Anthony Towns posted another double-double and had 16 points during a strong third quarter that helped New York pull away for its most decisive win of the season, a rout of visiting Memphis.

Towns finished with 24 points and 11 rebounds for his 37th double-double of the season. Mikal Bridges scored a game-high 28 points to lead seven scorers in double figures for the Knicks.

Raptors 113, Pelicans 104: Jakob Poeltl had 21 points, 14 rebounds and three blocks as Toronto defeated visiting New Orleans to stretch its winning streak to four games.

Scottie Barnes added 21 points, 11 rebounds, eight assists and three steals for the Raptors, who have won six of their past seven games.

Bulls 129, Nuggets 121: Zach LaVine scored 21 points and Nikola Vucevic produced 20 points and 10 rebounds to lift Chicago to a victory against visiting Denver.

Seven players scored in double figures for Chicago, which shot 45.3 percent (24-for-53) from long range and overcame a triple-double from Denver's Nikola Jokic. Lonzo Ball contributed 18 points for the Bulls.

## Neymar Leaves Al-Hilal by Mutual Agreement



RIYADH (Dispatches) - Neymar has parted ways with Al-Hilal by mutual consent, the Saudi Pro League champions said on Monday, after a disappointing spell at the club for Brazil's all-time top scorer.

The 32-year-old sustained a knee injury in Brazil's World Cup qualifier against Uruguay in October 2023 and has struggled to get back to his best.

"Al-Hilal Club Company and Neymar Jr. have agreed to terminate their contractual relationship by mutual consent" The Saudi club posted on X.

Neymar has played only seven games for Al-Hilal since moving from Paris St Germain for a reported fee of around 90 million euros (\$98 million) in August 2023.

Brazilian media have reported that Neymar, who has scored 79 goals for the national team, will return to his childhood club Santos after leaving in 2013 to join Barcelona.

He moved to PSG from Barca for a world record fee of 222 million euros in August 2017.

Meanwhile Juventus have signed Portugal defender Renato Veiga on loan from Chelsea until the end of the season, the Serie A club said on Monday.

Veiga joined Chelsea from FC Basel on a seven-year deal in July for a reported 14 million euros (\$14.68 million) but has started only one Premier League match this season.

The versatile 21-year-old made his debut for Portugal in October last year against Poland in a Nations League game and has played in two more internationals.

## Late Martinez Strike Earns Man Utd Much-Needed Victory at Fulham



LONDON (Dispatches) - A deflected late strike from Lisandro Martinez earned Manchester United a much-needed 1-0 victory at Fulham in the Premier League.

Looking for just their fourth league win since coach Ruben Amorim succeeded Erik ten Hag in November, United created very few openings in a poor first half at Craven Cottage.

The visitors did improve after the break and got the bit of good fortune they needed to grab victory, with Argentine defender Martinez's long-range winner taking a huge deflection before finding the net in the 78th minute.

A timely goal-line clearance from young United substitute Toby Collyer late on helped see the visitors home, with the victory moving Amorim's side up to 12th in the standings, four points behind 10th-placed Fulham.

"I think I was lucky, but an important win," Martinez told TNT Sports. "I am happy with the way we won the game. It doesn't matter who scores -- the most important is the three points."

"It means a lot. Not only to the fans, but for us because we have suffered a lot. It is a hard win, at this club the pressure is hard, but we are here. We know how difficult it is. Even a game like today we have to win and be humble after winning."

It has not gone well for Amorim in England thus far. Coming into Sunday's contest, United had lost six of their previous nine league matches.

In such poor form, the visitors looked short of ideas in a disappointing first half. Emile Smith Rowe has the best opportunity of the opening period for the hosts, but he could not get his shot away.

United skipper Bruno Fernandes' clever free-kick almost handed the visitors a lead early in the second half, but they needed that slice of fortune to see their first and only shot on target in the match find the net.

Collyer's intervention to prevent Joachim Andersen's header finding the net was pivotal, with Fulham substitute Rodrigo Muniz wasting two golden chances to equalise in the final stages.

Amad Diallo did have the ball in the net in stoppage time as the Ivorian thought he had sealed the three points, but he was adjudged to be offside following a VAR review.

An eighth successive league victory at Fulham meant United have now won four of their last five matches in all competitions.

"One shot on target from Man Utd -- a lucky deflection," Fulham coach Marco Silva said.

## Sinner Downs Zverev to Retain Australian Open Title

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Jannik Sinner retained his Australian Open title with an emphatic 6-3 7-6(4) 6-3 win over Alexander Zverev, breaking new ground for Italian tennis and leaving his German rival smarting after a third Grand Slam final defeat.

The world number one became Italy's first player to win three Grand Slam crowns, moving past Nicola Pietrangeli who won back-to-back men's titles at Roland Garros in 1959-60.

A year after mowing down Daniil Medvedev in five sets for his first major trophy, Sinner sapped his second Melbourne Park final of all drama as he wore down Zverev with suffocating pressure and claimed the match with clinical execution.

The one-sided win in the floodlit Rod Laver Arena underlined the 23-year-old's status as the game's pre-eminent hardcourt player, if robbing fans of a proper contest.

"It was an amazing performance from my side," he said. "I want to enjoy this one. This one has a different feeling (and) means so much to me."

For all Sinner's joy, a long-standing doping case continues to hang over his head.

Though cleared to play by tennis authorities, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) is seeking a ban which could derail his French Open plans. A hearing is set for April.

A ban may be the only way to stop Sinner, given how impervious he has been to the distractions.



Sunday's win extended the U.S. Open champion's winning streak to 21 matches.

"Many, many things happen off the court, what you maybe don't know," he said.

"When I go on the court, even if sometimes it's very difficult to block these kind of things, I have the team and people who are close to me who trust me."

For Zverev, the result was another bitter blow , his third defeat in

three Grand Slam finals leaving him in tears.

His miserable night was compounded by a heckler in the crowd who made reference to domestic violence allegations he faced in recent years.

"First of all, it sucks standing here next to this thing and not being able to touch it," the red-eyed German said of the winner's Norman Brookes Challenge Cup.

"Congrats to Jannik, you're the best player in the world by far. I was hoping that I could be more of a competitor today but you're too good."

"I don't know if I'll ever be able to lift the trophy but I'll keep coming back, I'll keep trying."

The match was all but over when Zverev dropped serve in the sixth game of the third set.

Arguably, the German's spirit was broken before that by an unlucky net cord that turned the second-set tiebreak in Sinner's favour.

It was 4-4 in the tiebreak when Sinner fired into the net-cord and saw the ball dribble over.

Sinner thumped down a huge serve to raise two set points and converted the first, going for broke from the baseline with a furious forehand that kissed the line.

A gutted Zverev smashed his racket as he returned to his chair with the match slipping away.

There would be no last stand from him, nor any wobble from Sinner who did not cough up a single break point in the match.

## Chiefs Hold Off Bills in AFC Championship Game

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Kansas City quarterback Patrick Mahomes ran in two touchdowns and threw for another as the Chiefs beat the Buffalo Bills 32-29 in the AFC Championship game to advance to a Super Bowl match-up against the Philadelphia Eagles.

The Chiefs will make their fifth trip to the NFL title decider in six years and could become the first team to hoist the Vince Lombardi Trophy three years in a row if they beat the Eagles, who thrashed Washington in the NFC Championship game.

The Super Bowl in New Orleans on Feb. 9 will be a rematch of the NFL Championship game in 2023 when the Chiefs defeated the Eagles 38-35.

The Bills have not won a road playoff game since 1993 and while they staged an inspired second-half fightback they eventually buckled under the deafening roar of the Kansas City fans at Arrowhead Stadium in the final moments.

"I'm just so proud of my teammates and how they responded," Mahomes said. "I'm just at a loss for words - excited for New Orleans."

Buffalo trailed 21-16 at the half but came alive in the third



quarter after running back James Cook made a flying leap into the end zone on fourth and goal, stretching his arm to get the ball over the line.

Mahomes, who threw for 245 yards and a touchdown, answered with a 10-yard scramble into the end zone five minutes into a nerve-searing fourth quarter and converted on a two-point attempt to take the lead back.

Bills quarterback Josh Allen leveled it four minutes later, converting on fourth and goal with a four-yard pass to Curtis Samuel, but the momentum flipped yet again as Chiefs kicker Harrison Butker made a 35-yard field goal on the next possession.

The Chiefs defense then amped up the pressure on Allen on the Bills' final drive, with a deep pass to Dalton Kincaid slipping through the tight end's hands.

"It's not about one guy, it's not about a couple guys, it's about the whole entire team," said Mahomes. "When we needed the defense to get stops, they got stops. Offense, we made plays. That's why we're so special - it was a team effort."