

Figures by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Show That the Country's Money Supply Grew by Nearly a Third in the Year to Late January as the Entire Money Supply Within the Iranian Economy Had Reached a Total of 97,233.0 Trillion Rials (over \$104.5b)

IRAN NEWS

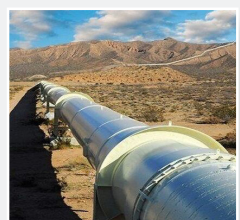
Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi Has Traveled to Geneva to Take Part in the 58th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council and the 2025 Session of the Conference on Disarmament

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FM Slams Israeli Violation of Lebanese Sovereignty



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has denounced Israeli jets low flyby over a Lebanese stadium, where a funeral ceremony for martyred Hezbollah leaders was taking place, as an "act of terror" meant to terrify mourners.

On Sunday, hundreds of thousands of people packed into the Camille Chamoun Sports City Stadium in Beirut and the streets outside for the funeral of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah and Sayyed Hashem Safieddine.

Israeli war minister Israel Katz said in a statement that the regime's fighter jets buzzed over the funeral procession to "convey a clear message" to Hezbollah.

The flyover triggered chants of "Death to Israel!", "Death to America" and "At your service, Nasrallah!" by the mourners.

Araqchi, who had attended the funeral, said in an X post on Sunday that he was a witness to the Israeli violation of Lebanon's sovereignty.

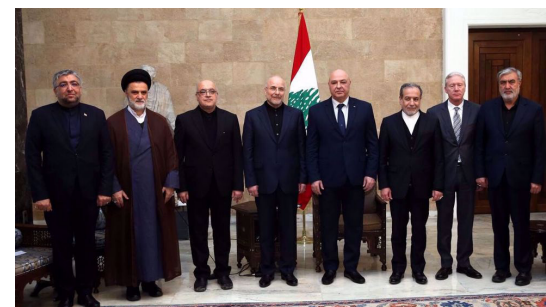
"I also witnessed, with my own eyes, the violation of Lebanon's sovereignty by Israeli jets that flew close above our heads, in a pitiful attempt to terrify people who gathered only to mourn. If that is not an act of terror, then what is?" he added.

"The violation only emboldened people in the stadium to shout against Israel even stronger and louder. Israelis never learn their lesson."

The top Iranian diplomat also noted that he was "honored" to have joined the mourners in Beirut.

Using US-supplied bunker-busting bombs, Israel assassinated Nasrallah, the longtime leader of Hezbollah, in an airstrike on southern Beirut in September 2024. The following month, the criminal regime assassinated Safieddine, the head of Hezbollah's Executive Council, in a similar attack.

Lebanese President, Top Iranian Officials Meet



BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and a high-ranking Iranian delegation have discussed the latest developments in the region, particularly in Palestine and Lebanon.

The Iranian delegation, comprising Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, was in Beirut on Sunday to take part in the funeral ceremonies of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, the martyred leader of the Hezbollah resistance movement, and his deputy and appointed successor Sayyed Hashem Safieddine.

During the meeting, Aoun stressed the importance of fostering unity and supporting the Palestinian cause.

The Lebanese president highlighted his country's significant sacrifices for the Palestinian cause.

Qalibaf, for his part, affirmed Iran's support for Lebanon's decisions free from external interference.

He said Iran is keen to collaborate with Arab and Muslim countries in the reconstruction of areas destroyed by the Israeli regime's aggression.

The Iranian foreign minister and his Lebanese counterpart Youssef Rajji as well as Iran's Ambassador to Beirut Mojtaba Amani were also present at the meeting.

Using U.S.-supplied bunker-busting bombs, Israel assassinated Nasrallah, the longtime leader of Hezbollah, in an airstrike on southern Beirut in September 2024.

The following month, the criminal regime assassinated Safieddine, the head of Hezbollah's Executive Council, in a similar attack.

Hezbollah postponed funeral ceremonies for both leaders due to fears of Israeli attacks on the ceremony.

Nasrallah Funeral "Global Resonance of Resistance"

TEHRAN - The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah and resistance will resolutely continue the path of ending the occupation.

It came a day after the funeral ceremony of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, the late leader of Hezbollah, and his deputy and appointed successor Sayyed Hashem Safieddine in Beirut, where massive crowds from various regions of Lebanon and around the world converged to bid farewell to the two resistance leaders. In a statement on Monday, the IRGC said the funeral, held amid the threatening moves by the Israeli regime's fighter jets, has turned into a "global echo of anti-Zionist resistance."

This great historical event in the Muslim world and in Beirut demonstrated that Hezbollah, the heroic and victorious Resistance of Lebanon, and the Islamic Ummah continue to move forward with vitality, strength, and determination to dismantle the occupation of al-Quds al-Sharif and Islamic lands," the statement read.

It described the "glorious and epic" funeral procession for the two Hezbollah icons in Beirut as a manifestation of the vitality of Hezbollah and the doctrine of anti-Zionist resistance of the Islamic Ummah.

The ceremony, which was attended by millions of enthusiastic mourners, amid the humiliating and threatening actions of the Israeli fighter jets, became a manifestation of Islam's power and Lebanon's comprehensive national unity as well as globalization of anti-Zionist resistance contrary to the enemies' wishes and evil desires, the statement emphasized.

It said huge crowds of mourners from different countries with diverse religions, ethnicities and political parties renewed their allegiance to the martyrs of resistance and gave a strong response to the enemies of the Axis of Resistance.

The IRGC warned the "leaders of the criminal, child-killing, racist, and terrorist Zionist regime" that there is no escape from the inevitable and difficult fate that awaits them.

In a message that was read out during the funeral ceremonies of the two Hezbollah martyrs, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei warned the enemy that the enduring resistance against oppression and arrogance will continue until it achieves its ultimate objective.

Using US-supplied bunker-busting bombs, Israel assassinated Nasrallah, the longtime leader of Hezbollah, in an airstrike on southern Beirut in September 2024. The following month, the criminal regime assassinated Safieddine, the head of Hezbollah's Executive Council, in a similar attack.

On Sunday, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei warned the enemy that the enduring resistance against oppression and arrogance will continue until it achieves its ultimate objective.

Ayatollah Khamenei made the declaration in a message that was read out during the funeral ceremonies of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, the late leader of the Hezbollah resistance movement, and his deputy and appointed successor Sayyed Hashem Safieddine, held in Beirut on Sunday.

"Let the enemy be aware that resistance against usurpation, oppression, and arrogance will never end and will continue until the ultimate goal is reached, by the will of God," the Leader said in his



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message.

The Leader described martyred Nasrallah as the leading commander of the resistance in the region, saying he is now at the "height of honor."

Nasrallah's spirit and path will shine more gloriously each day, illuminating the way for his followers, Ayatollah Khamenei said.

The Leader also said the good name and radiant countenance of Safieddine, a close companion and inseparable part of the resistance's leadership in Lebanon, is also a "shining star in this region's history."

Ayatollah Khamenei wished God's grace and His righteous servants would be upon the two honorable figures and on other courageous, self-sacrificing fighters, who have recently attained martyrdom and upon all the martyrs of Islam.

The Leader also sent a special greeting to the

Lebanese children and the valiant youths.

Meanwhile Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei described martyred Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah and his deputy and appointed successor Sayyed Hashem Safieddine as symbols of resistance.

Baghaei said on Sunday their steadfastness in support of the oppressed people of Palestine will always be remembered.

The spokesman made the remarks in a post on X as the funeral ceremonies of Nasrallah and Safieddine were being held in the Lebanese capital, Beirut, on Sunday.

"Nasrallah and Safieddine devoted their whole life to the cause of humanity and dignity by standing up against brutal occupation, oppression and injustice," Baghaei said.

He went on to say that these two great men "symbolize graceful resistance" against occupation, aggression and support for the Palestinian people to achieve their fundamental right to self-determination.

"So let those fight in the way of Allah who exchange the life of this world for the Hereafter. And whoever fights in the way of Allah and is killed or victorious - We will give him a great reward."

"They are immortal now; every Muslim, and indeed every man/woman of a good conscience, will always remember and exalt these devout heroes for their exemplary steadfastness, bravery and sacrifice in support of their fellow Muslims in occupied Palestine and for their patriotism and love of their homeland," the spokesman said.

Baghaei further noted that today, peace-loving people across the globe and West Asia, alongside Muslims and the Lebanese people, will pay tribute to these two great martyrs.

"So let those fight in the way of Allah who exchange the life of this world for the Hereafter. And whoever fights in the way of Allah and is killed or victorious - We will give him a great reward," he said.

Nasrallah, the iconic leader of the Lebanese resistance, was assassinated in Israel's strikes on southern Beirut on September 27, 2024, following the regime's week-long bombing campaign that hit many areas from the country's south to the capital.

Safieddine was also assassinated in an Israeli attack on October 3, 2024.

Hezbollah postponed funeral ceremonies for both leaders due to fears of Israeli attacks on the ceremony.

Iran Must Stand Against Enemy's Economic, Media, and Cyber Warfare

TEHRAN - Major General Seyyed Yahya Safavi, a senior aide and advisor to Iran's Supreme Commander-in-Chief, emphasized the urgent need for national unity to counter what he described as a hybrid war waged by enemies through economic sanctions, media campaigns, and cyberspace attacks.

Speaking at a seminar on "People's Mobilization and National Resources in the Sacred Defense" held at Malek Ashtar University of Technology, Safavi called for a unified national effort reminiscent of the mobilization during Iran's eight-year war with Iraq.

Safavi highlighted recent regional developments, noting the "majestic farewell ceremony" held the previous day for Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, which he described as a historic event that stunned Israel. "The Zionist regime's scrap metal watched in disbelief as Lebanon's people, with their chants of 'Allahu Akbar,' ignored their presence," he said. "Today, the resistance front has infuriated the Zionist regime."

Reflecting on the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), Safavi underscored its enduring lessons. "The message of this revolution and the eight-year Sacred Defense is the presence of motivated Basij fighters confronting oppression, tyranny, and global arrogance—an effort that threatens the so-called new world order," he argued. He argued that the anti-oppression spirit of the resistance front terrifies the "arrogant powers."

Safavi provided a detailed account of the war's origins and outcomes. "The Ba'athist regime's aggression began in September 1980, escalating into an eight-year full-scale war," he said. "It ended with UN Resolution 598 on July 19, 1988, accepted by Imam Khomeini. On December 9, 1991, the UN Secretary-General officially designated Iraq as the aggressor."

He noted Iraq's significant financial and military advantages during the conflict. "At the war's outset, Iraq had \$35 billion in foreign reserves and received \$80-100 billion in grants from regional countries," Safavi explained. "They started with 360 warplanes, ending with 600, and their tank fleet grew from 4,000 to 6,000, which they later used to invade Kuwait."

In contrast, Iran suffered immense losses. "The total cost of the war and reconstruction for Iran was \$1.27 trillion," Safavi said. "Per capita income dropped to less than half by the war's



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end. The UN estimated our damages at just \$100 billion, while it assessed Kuwait's losses from Saddam's invasion at \$240 billion—a clear sign of the UN's discriminatory behavior toward Iran." He added that Saddam's fate—defeat in the war and his regime's collapse in 2003 at the hands of the United States—served as a cautionary tale.

Safavi warned of a "combined war" currently targeting Iran, involving economic sanctions, media propaganda, and cyberattacks. "The political landscape has shifted," he observed. "The Soviet Union, once a backer of Saddam, is now our ally with a 20-year agreement. We're part of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS. Yet, the U.S., Zionists, NATO, and some Arab states oppose the resistance front."

To overcome these challenges, Safavi advocated for a strategy rooted in national mobilization. "We must stand united against this hybrid war—economic, media, and virtual—just as we did with the Basij during the Sacred Defense," he urged.

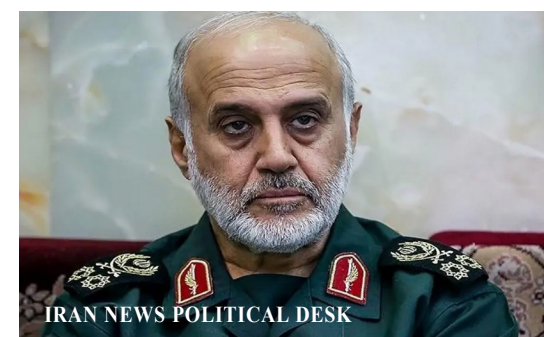
He stressed the need for a stronger presence in cyberspace. "We must be far more assertive online, especially students and influencers," Safavi said. "During the war, unity and cohesion drove victory. Today, we need that same solidarity behind the government's three branches and armed forces to leverage our national resources, overcome current hardships, and make Iran a model of progress and security for Islamic nations."

Safavi, a political geography scholar, pointed to the demographic advantage surrounding Israel. "I've calculated over 450 million Muslims live in the region—from Egypt to Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Iran," he said. "These 450 million could rally to liberate Al-Quds and expel the Zionist regime from West Asia, provided we articulate this vision effectively."

In closing, Safavi reiterated the necessity of national cohesion. "Today, we must mobilize the people to stand against the enemy's economic, media, and cyber warfare," he concluded. "A Basij-like movement is essential for Iran to become a regional exemplar."

The seminar underscored Iran's ongoing efforts to frame its current challenges within the legacy of the Sacred Defense, rallying public support amid heightened regional tensions.

Major General Issues Warning to the U.S. and Israel: "Do Not Miscalculate!"



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TEHRAN - Major General Gholamali Rashid, Commander of the Khatam-al-Abniya Central Headquarters, issued a stern warning to the United States and Israel, stating that any threat from the Zionist regime against the interests of the Iranian nation will be met with decisive action from Iran's armed forces. He emphasized that such threats are evaluated as being fully backed by the United States, and Iran will respond accordingly.

Speaking to commanders during the joint Zulfikar military exercise of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Army in the Third Naval Zone of Konarak, General Rashid outlined the strategic importance of Iran's annual military drills. "The exercises organized by the armed forces and their various branches are designed and approved each year with a transformative approach, in line with the directives of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief," he said. "On average, 30 large-scale exercises and dozens of specialized drills are planned annually by the General Staff and the Headquarters and assigned to the relevant organizations."

He added that in the current year, particularly in the second half, 27 major exercises—both branch-specific and joint operations between the Army and the Revolutionary Guard—have been conducted. "Some of these have not been and will not be publicized," he noted. General Rashid explained that the exercises follow the "iceberg model," where commanders are permitted to showcase only a small portion of their capabilities across various units and advanced weaponry, while the bulk of the operations remain concealed. "These drills are a true test of the armed forces' combat readiness," he stated.

General Rashid underscored that Iranian commanders approach these exercises as "war before war," requiring meticulous planning, seriousness, and creativity in setting objectives. "One of the key goals of these exercises is to influence the mindset, beliefs, and resolve of the enemy," he said.

Iran Army's Hovercrafts Fitted With Advanced Long-Range Missiles



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The commander of Iran's Navy has announced that the force's hovercraft fleet has been equipped with long-range missiles and that the domestically developed Piroozan-class hovercraft would soon join operational naval units.

Speaking during the Army's Zolfikar 1403 joint military exercises in southern Iran on Sunday, Rear Admiral Shahram Irani said the Iranian hovercrafts, amphibious crafts, which have been outfitted with the advanced projectiles, had conducted live-fire tests during the maneuvers.

The official emphasized Iran's pioneering role in the development and execution of amphibious operations, saying, "The honor of innovating, executing, and maintaining amphibious operations belongs to the Iranian people. He also noted the complexity of such missions in terms of specialization, training, and equipment.

Irani said that unmanned aerial and subsea systems played a crucial role in the amphibious operations, which were being conducted during the drills.

The official, meanwhile, reported that the exercises had featured "successful deployment of state-of-the-art naval equipment and munitions, including paratrooper jumps from F-27 aircraft, which are primarily used for maritime patrol missions."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the commander said, "Iran's defense industry has successfully designed and produced heavy hovercraft, named 'Piroozan,' which will soon be integrated into the Navy's combat structure."

On Saturday, the commander had stressed that Iran maintained dominance across various naval domains, including subsea, surface, and aerial units, with a strong emphasis on unmanned technology.

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Seminar on Iran-Sri Lanka Trade Opportunities Set for March 9 in Ahvaz

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The Ahvaz Chamber of Commerce, in collaboration with the Iran-Sri Lanka Joint Committee, will host a seminar titled "Exploring Trade Opportunities and Capacities Between Iran and Sri Lanka" on Thursday, March 9. The event, aimed at fostering economic ties between the two nations, will take place at the Ahvaz Chamber of Commerce's conference hall. Organized with the support of the joint commerce committee, the seminar seeks to capitalize on the significant potential for cooperation and shared economic strengths between Iran and Sri Lanka. The initiative reflects growing interest in expanding bilateral trade, particularly as both countries look to diversify their economic partnerships amid global shifts. Iran and Sri Lanka have maintained diplomatic relations since 1962, with trade historically centered around commodities like tea, rubber, and petroleum products. In recent years, efforts to deepen ties have gained momentum, with Iranian businesses eyeing Sri Lanka's strategic location in South Asia and its access to Indian Ocean markets, while Sri Lanka seeks to leverage Iran's energy resources and industrial capabilities.

Iran and Russia Form Joint Committee to Boost Mining Cooperation



TEHRAN - The head of Iran's Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), Mohammad Aghajani, announced the formation of a joint committee between Iran and Russia to implement a cooperation agreement on mining and mineral industries. The committee will include representatives from Iran's Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade, IMIDRO, the Geological Survey and Mineral Exploration Organization of Iran, as well as Russia's Zarubezhgeologia company.

In a meeting between IMIDRO and Zarubezhgeologia, Aghajani stated that the committee will oversee the execution of the cooperation document's programs, with Iranian and Russian representatives managing implementation while the agreement's supervisory and decision-making bodies remain in place.

"The historical ties between Iran and Russia in mining cooperation have a proven track record, leading to the activation of highly productive mines in Iran," Aghajani remarked. He highlighted past exchanges of expertise in exploration, coal, and mine safety between the two nations, expressing hope for continued collaboration.

The deputy minister of industry, mine, and trade added that final revisions to the signed mining and underground exploration agreement should be completed to move toward practical implementation. He noted that both countries possess significant experience in the steel supply chain and other metal products. For instance, Iran's PERED direct reduction technology has emerged as a competitor to the MIDREX method, showcasing Iran's growing capacity to execute related projects—expertise that Russia could tap into.

Aghajani further emphasized that, under the memorandum of understanding, Iran's Mineral Production and Supply Company and its Russian counterpart should take steps to transfer knowledge on deep reserve exploration and the design and extraction of underground mines. He also pledged to provide the necessary facilities and equipment in Iran for training programs in this field.

Iran Exports Oil Without Hormuz Strait Dependency Through Gureh-Jask Pipeline



TEHRAN - In a significant milestone for Iran's oil industry, the CEO of the Pars Oil and Gas Company, Touraj Dehghani, announced that the Gureh-Jask crude oil pipeline project has enabled Iran to export oil without relying on the strategic Strait of Hormuz. Speaking at the third PetroTech conference on Sunday, Dehghani highlighted the project's technological achievements and its potential as a benchmark for future endeavors.

According to a report by IRNA, Dehghani emphasized that the \$2 billion Gureh-Jask pipeline, capable of transferring one million barrels of crude oil daily, was completed despite international sanctions and the absence of foreign contracts. "More than 50 first-time manufactured items were produced by our colleagues in the oil industry for this project," he stated, underscoring Iran's growing self-reliance. "This showcases the capabilities of our oil sector and should serve as a standard for evaluating future projects."

The project, spanning 1,000 kilometers with a 42-inch sour service pipeline, includes five 25-megawatt pumping stations, loading facilities, nearly 300 kilometers of power transmission lines, and 11 40-kilometer electrical substations. Dehghani noted that its completion in less than two years—reaching 90% progress by July 2021—set a record for the swift execution of major oil projects. "Starting in mid-2019, we delivered oil to the coast by July 2021, creating an initial capacity of 350,000 barrels in the first phase," he added.

Dehghani explained that foreign companies refused to supply critical components, particularly pipes, due to sanctions. "We deployed our workforce and linked various parts of the supply chain, connecting Mobarakeh Steel Company in Isfahan to the oil industry," he said. This collaboration led to a technological leap, including the first sour service steel casting in Iran in early 2019. Over 95% of the project's equipment and materials were sourced domestically, boosting local industries and reducing dependency on imports.

"This project not only utilized internal capabilities but also fostered greater integration of domestic resources," Dehghani remarked. He highlighted its most groundbreaking achievement: enabling Iran to export up to one million

barrels of oil daily without navigating the Strait of Hormuz, a chokepoint often subject to geopolitical tensions.

Dehghani stressed that the Gureh-Jask pipeline demonstrates how large-scale projects can drive technological development and economic growth. "It directly contributes to GDP growth, yet we've failed to promote this success adequately," he lamented, pointing to a lack of clear evaluation metrics. He urged that the project's accomplishments be used as a model to maximize technological exploitation in future initiatives.

Despite its success, Dehghani acknowledged broader economic challenges. "According to Iran's 20-year vision, we should lead the region in the oil industry, but we've fallen short," he said. He argued that with defined annual growth targets, Iran's economy could have surpassed \$1.5 trillion, citing the need for better resource management, investment, and flexibility in decision-making. "Global economies grow sustainably through the right mix of resources, technology, capital, and management—areas where government control has created obstacles here," he noted.

Dehghani identified the oil industry's high investment demands as a key hurdle. "With 123 years of history, Iran's oil sector is among the world's largest, requiring \$20-30 billion annually to reach optimal productivity," he said. While the Gureh-Jask project overcame challenges like steel dependency through domestic production, broader issues—such as complex decision-making processes and inflexible policies—continue to hinder progress. "Regulatory bottlenecks have cost us critical opportunities," he admitted.

Nevertheless, experts believe that even under economic constraints, focusing on internal strengths can accelerate growth. Dehghani concluded optimistically: "This project proves that with proper planning and reliance on domestic production, we can overcome many barriers. The efforts of Iranian engineers have even elevated our steel industry to meet oil sector needs."

The Gureh-Jask pipeline stands as a testament to Iran's resilience and innovation, offering a pathway to energy independence and economic advancement—if its lessons are heeded.

Iran and Philippines Aim to Boost Agricultural Trade



TEHRAN - The head of Iran's Plant Protection Organization announced that Iran and the Philippines are keen to facilitate trade in agricultural products, a move expected to enhance agricultural cooperation between the two nations.

According to a report by the Iranian Plant Protection Organization, Maryam Jalili Moghaddam, the organization's president, made the statement during a meeting with Zamzamin Ampatuan, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture of the Philippines. The meeting took place on the occasion of the 61st anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of the Philippines. Jalili Moghaddam emphasized the importance of expanding ties in the areas of plant quarantine and protection, stating that the goal is to increase interactions and trade volume between the two countries.

She highlighted the strong bilateral relationship and the significant potential for producing and exchanging agricultural goods, noting that both nations have substantial opportunities to deepen their agricultural collaboration. "Given the existing opportunities, we must leverage them to expand agricultural cooperation between Iran and the Philippines," she said.

Regarding the export of apples to the Philippines, Jalili Moghaddam noted that the requested information has been prepared and will be provided to the Philippine side. Additionally, efforts are underway to gather further data required for pest risk analysis related to the export of dates to the Philippines, which will also be submitted soon.

She added that Iran is open to importing products like mangoes from the Philippines, but this would require Iranian experts to conduct a pest risk analysis, perform additional assessments, and verify the facilities used for hot water treatment to disinfect mangoes.

Zamzamin Ampatuan, the Philippine Deputy Minister of Agriculture, expressed optimism about the strong ties between the two nations and hoped that expanding trade relations in agriculture would foster a lasting partnership. He stressed the need to follow up on previous discussions and urged for accelerated efforts to export Philippine agricultural products—such as bananas, mangoes, and coconuts—to Iran, while also importing Iranian products, including apples, kiwis, citrus fruits, dates, and dried fruits, to the Philippines.

Iran's Economy Suffers from Unpredictability, Urgently Needs Attention



TEHRAN - The President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Mahmoud Najafi Arab, warned that the greatest challenge facing Iran's economy is its unpredictability, a factor crippling the business environment and stalling progress. Speaking at the ninth Amin-al-Zarb Entrepreneurship Ceremony, Najafi Arab stressed that Iran's economy requires immediate attention to address deteriorating conditions and safeguard livelihoods.

Najafi Arab emphasized the private sector's unwavering commitment to the nation, stating, "Iran's private sector has never distanced itself from the people or the political and economic system. Every step we take is aimed at advancing this land, and our critiques come from a place of genuine concern." He framed his remarks to the government as constructive solutions rather than mere complaints.

Najafi Arab highlighted widespread dissatisfaction among business leaders, attributing it to an unfavorable economic climate. "Why have some nations achieved development, economic growth, and prosperity, while others remain mired in poverty and inequality?" he asked, citing economist Daron Acemoglu's view that effective governance—not culture or geography—paves the way for economic success. He pointed to Iran's shift from being an electricity exporter to facing shortages as a stark example of governance failures.

He criticized the executive branch for clinging to state control under the guise of ensuring justice and market regulation, a practice he said has derailed privatization efforts. "This has left Iranian business owners grappling with despair and lethargy, placing the nation in a dire situation," Najafi Arab remarked. He urged policymakers to study the lives of entrepreneurs, noting that for years, expert forums like the Chamber of Commerce have called on governments to prioritize lawmaking over interference.

Drawing a comparison to China's economic rise through its open-door policy, he credited trust in the private sector as a key driver. "Isn't it time we learn from these experiences and take action for ourselves instead of watching our neighbors advance?" he questioned.

Iran Plans to Boost Oil Production by 400,000 Barrels by Next Summer

TEHRAN - The CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), Hamid Bord, announced an ambitious plan to increase oil production by 400,000 barrels per day by September 2025. Speaking at the third PetroTech Conference, Bord urged knowledge-based companies to contribute to enhanced oil recovery projects, emphasizing the integration of modern technology into the oil and gas sector.

Bord outlined two key technological strategies driving NIOC's efforts: leveraging cutting-edge technology and utilizing artificial intelligence (AI) to stay ahead of challenges. "We've devised several programs based on these strategies," he said, highlighting AI's role in reservoir management as a flagship initiative. He revealed that a recent meeting with an Iranian expert has sparked collaborations in this domain.

Bord noted that NIOC has launched pilot projects using AI for enhanced oil recovery and drilling operations. "In a neighboring country, AI has boosted production by 10% across 25% of its fields," he cited as an example of the technology's potential. He also called on knowledge-based firms to join efforts to increase output, with the 400,000-barrel target set for next summer.

The NIOC chief reported significant progress over the past six months, stating, "We've achieved strong figures in both production and exports." He added that gas production records were broken multiple times during the 14th government, peaking at 1.115 billion cubic meters. However, he expressed concern over soaring gas consumption, describing it as rising "relentlessly." Despite the capacity to produce one billion cubic meters—a substantial figure—demand continues to outpace supply.

Under the Seventh Development Plan, NIOC aims to elevate gas production to



1.35 billion cubic meters, but Bord cautioned that even this target may not resolve the supply-demand imbalance. "Current consumption has already reached the level we've set as our goal," he explained.

Bord highlighted NIOC's push toward digitalization and smart technologies, with implementation expected soon. Over the past six months, the company held more than 15 meetings with technologists, elites, and young talent, yielding promising results from its research and engineering divisions. He invited experts and tech firms to submit proposals, announcing an

upcoming formal call for collaboration with knowledge-based companies.

Addressing challenges, Bord noted that while many tech firms offer valuable innovations, operational execution often falters. To bridge this gap, NIOC plans to oversee the deployment of these technologies in oil fields and operational labs. He also emphasized improving recovery rates, pointing out that southern Iran's fields average a 25% extraction rate—a figure that could rise with technological advancements.

Bord underscored the need for broader industry-tech collaboration, welcoming any ideas that could enhance efficiency. He revealed an ongoing partnership with an Austrian university to adopt state-of-the-art technologies. "Beyond smart machinery management, we need new innovations to boost productivity and support the economy," he said, crediting NIOC staff for strong oil and gas output despite sanctions and undisclosed challenges over the past six months.

Iran's oil exports have also remained robust during this period, Bord added, signaling a positive outlook as the country pursues its production goals.

End of Report

Yazd Awaits Title of World Jewelry City



TEHRAN - In a bid to be recognized as the "World Jewelry City," Yazd is positioning itself as a global leader in traditional jewelry craftsmanship. A key meeting of the World Crafts Council evaluators took place at the Kowsar Hall of the Yazd Governorate, attended by the Deputy of Handicrafts and Traditional Arts of Iran, the Governor of Yazd, provincial officials, and prominent figures in the traditional jewelry sector. The discussion centered on designating Yazd as the 66th city globally celebrated for its handicrafts, with a focus on traditional jewelry.

According to the Public Relations Office of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Maryam Jalali, Iran's Deputy of Handicrafts and Traditional Arts, emphasized the city's rich legacy. "Yazd, much like it has kept its cultural heritage alive through its historic architecture, follows a similar path in the realm of traditional jewelry," she stated during the session. She highlighted that one of the primary goals in advancing the handicrafts sector is to connect an "identity-based economy" with global markets.

Jalali praised Yazd's skilled artisans and veterans who have passed down their expertise through generations, ensuring the preservation of the city's cultural heritage. "Yazd has kept history alive with its valuable human capital," she said, noting that development in this field balances modernization with deep-rooted cultural traditions. She credited the unity between private and public sectors, as well as the collective harmony in Yazd, as vital assets for expanding the industry and accessing international markets.

The deputy also pointed out the innovative strides in Yazd's handicrafts, particularly in traditional jewelry. "These crafts have not only thrived through historical artistry and skills but are now leveraging modern tools like digital economies, blockchain, and artificial intelligence," Jalali explained. She underscored how this blend of tradition and technology bridges the past with the future, a legacy preserved over 2,000 years.

Sudan's Army Makes Key Advances

DUBAI (Dispatches) - Sudan's army said on Sunday it had seized back control of the town of el-Gitaina, just south of the capital, from the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and broken the paramilitary group's siege on the strategic city of el-Obeid to the west. Last week, activists said three days of RSF attacks had left more than 200 dead near Gitaina, in White Nile state, which has emerged as a key battleground as the army regains territory in central Sudan.

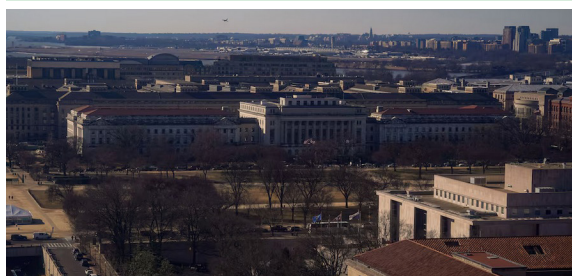
The war that erupted from a power struggle between the RSF and the army in April 2023 has killed tens of thousands of people, displaced 12 million and spread acute hunger and disease.

The army's gains on Sunday came hours after the RSF signed a political charter to establish a breakaway government with allied political and armed group leaders, primarily from western regions.



IRAN NEWS

U.S. Agencies Urge Workers Not to Reply to His Email



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Multiple U.S. agencies have told employees not to respond immediately to a demand by President Donald Trump's adviser Elon Musk to list their accomplishments in the past week or be fired, as a chaotic campaign to cull the federal workforce pushes forward.

Trump administration-appointed officials at the FBI and State Department sent their staff emails telling them not to respond outside their chains of command - a possible sign of tension between members of the Republican administration and the world's richest person in his campaign to slash the 2.3 million-strong federal civilian workforce.

"The FBI, through the office of the director, is in charge of all our review processes," said FBI Director Kash Patel, a Trump appointee, in an email to staff seen by Reuters.

Musk leads the so-called Department of Government Efficiency, which in the first weeks of Trump's administration has laid off more than 20,000 workers and offered buyouts to another 75,000, across wide swaths of the government from the Defense Department - long a top Republican priority - to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, where all staff members have been ordered to halt work.

The frantic pace has led the federal government in some cases to rush to rehire workers who perform critical functions like securing the nation's nuclear arsenal and trying to fight the worsening bird flu outbreak, which has caused egg prices to spike.

While there is bipartisan agreement that the U.S. government, which carries \$36 trillion in debt, would benefit from reform, Musk's tumultuous approach has drawn widespread criticism, including from voters in some Republican-dominated areas.

Federal workers on Saturday evening received an email instructing them to detail the work they did during the previous week by 11:59 pm ET on Monday (0459 GMT on Tuesday), shortly after Musk posted on his X social media site that failing to respond would be taken as a resignation.

The subject of the email read, "What did you do last week?" and came from a human resources address in the Office of Personnel Management, but did not include Musk's threat of termination.

Beijing Accuses Australia of "Hyping" China Naval Live-Fire Drills



BEIJING (Dispatches) - Beijing said Canberra had "deliberately hyped" recent Chinese naval exercises near the Australian coast and confirmed its forces had used live fire in an incident that rattled Australian policymakers.

Authorities in Australia and close ally New Zealand have been monitoring three Chinese navy vessels spotted in recent days in international waters of the nearby Tasman Sea.

Canberra said it had not yet received a satisfactory explanation from Beijing for Friday's drill, which saw the Chinese ships broadcast a live-fire warning that caused commercial planes to change course.

China's defense ministry hit back today, saying the "relevant remarks of the Australian side are completely inconsistent with facts," while also confirming the use of live ammunition.

"During the period, China organized live-fire training of naval guns toward the sea on the basis of repeatedly issuing prior safety notices," Wu Qian, a spokesman for the defense ministry, said in a statement.

Wu added that China's actions were "in full compliance with international law and international practices, with no impact on aviation flight safety."

"Australia, while well aware of this, made unreasonable accusations against China and deliberately hyped it up," said Wu, adding that Beijing was "astonished and strongly dissatisfied."



Germany's Conservatives Win Parliamentary Elections

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany's conservative CDU/CSU alliance led by Friedrich Merz won Sunday's elections with 28.9 percent of the vote, according to updated exit polls.

The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) followed in second place with 19.7 percent, roughly doubling its result in the last election in 2021, based on initial figures from public broadcasters ARD and ZDF.

The surge of the anti-immigration AfD was fuelled by public fears over immigration and security after a spate of deadly attacks blamed on migrants and worries about the ailing economy.

Despite the strong result, the AfD is set to stay out of power for now, because its possible coalition partners refuse all cooperation with the far right.

If the exit polls are confirmed in the final count, Merz looks near certain to become the next chancellor of Europe's top economy.

But in order to build a majority in parliament, he would have to team up with one or more parties, potentially the Social Democrats (SPD) of outgoing Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

The SPD recorded what was likely to be their worst result in the history of Germany's post-war democracy, with between 16.1 percent.

The Greens, another possible partner for the CDU/CSU, had 13.2 percent of the votes according to the exit polls.

But the exact opportunities could depend on the final result for smaller parties. The far-left Linke looked to have cleared the five-percent hurdle to enter the Bundestag, with 8.6 percent.

The pro-business Free Democrats (FDP), who were in government until recently, were right around the five-percent threshold (4.9 percent), as was another far-left party, newcomer the BSW (4.8 percent).

Meanwhile Merz, set to become Germany's next chancellor after his opposition conservatives won the national election on Sunday, vowed to help give Europe "real independence" from the U.S. as he prepared to cobble together a government.

Merz, 69, faces complex and lengthy coalition negotiations after the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) surged to a

historic second place in a fractured vote after the collapse of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's unloved three-way alliance.

Mainstream parties rule out working with the AfD which enjoyed the endorsement of prominent U.S. figures including Elon Musk, the tech billionaire and ally of President Donald Trump.

Merz, who has no previous experience in office, is set to become chancellor with Europe's largest economy ailing, its society split over migration and its security caught between a confrontational U.S. and an assertive Russia and China.

Merz took aim at the U.S. in blunt remarks after his victory, criticizing the "ultimately outrageous" comments flowing from Washington during the campaign, comparing them to hostile interventions from Russia.

"So we are under such massive pressure from two sides that my absolute priority now is to achieve unity in Europe. It is possible to create unity in Europe," he told a roundtable with other leaders.

Merz's broadside against the U.S. came despite President Donald Trump welcoming the election outcome.

"Much like the USA, the people of Germany got tired of the no common sense agenda, especially on energy and immigration, that has prevailed for so many years," Trump wrote on Truth Social.

Hitherto seen as an atlanticist, Merz said Trump had shown his administration to be "largely indifferent to the fate of Europe".

Merz's "absolute priority will be to strengthen Europe as quickly as possible so that we can achieve real independence from the USA step by step," he added.

He even ventured to ask whether the next summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which has underpinned Europe's security for decades, would still see "NATO in its current form".

Following a campaign roiled by violent attacks for which people of migrant background were arrested, the conservative CDU/CSU bloc won 28.5% of the vote, followed by the AfD with 20.5%, said a projection published late on Sunday by ZDF broadcaster.

The AfD, which looks set to double its score from the previous vote, saw Sunday's result as only a beginning.

No More Talks With Israel Unless Palestinian Prisoners Released as Agreed

GAZA (Dispatches) - Talks with Israel through mediators on further steps in a ceasefire agreement are conditional on Palestinian prisoners being released as agreed, Hamas official Basem Naim said on Sunday.

Israel said on Sunday it was delaying the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners it had planned to free the day before until militant group Hamas met its conditions.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said that Israel was waiting to deliver the 620 Palestinian prisoners and detainees "until the release of the next hostages has been assured, and without the humiliating ceremonies."

That was a reference to recent handovers by Hamas that UN officials said went against international law because they were not respectful.

The White House on Sunday backed Israel's decision to delay releasing the Palestinian prisoners, citing the "barbaric treatment" of Israeli hostages by Hamas. The delay was an "appropriate response" to the Palestinian militant group's treatment of the hostages, a statement from National Security Council spokesman Brian Hughes said.

President Donald Trump is prepared to support Israel in "whatever course of action it chooses regarding Hamas," he added.

Hamas has made hostages appear on stage in front of crowds and sometimes speak before they were handed over. Coffins with hostage remains have also



been carried through crowds.

"Any talks with the enemy through mediators regarding any upcoming steps are conditional on the release of the 620 Palestinian prisoners agreed upon in exchange for the four bodies and the six Israeli captives who were freed on Saturday," Naim, a member of the Hamas political bureau, told Reuters.

"The mediators must ensure that the enemy adheres to the terms of the agreement as stated in the agreed-upon text."

The Palestinian Prisoner's Society, a local group that supports Palestinian prisoners, said Israel is practicing "state-terrorism against the prisoners and their families".

Ghasan Washahi, whose brother was set to be released on Saturday, said his family was disappointed with the delay.

"Every time there was a list of prisoners set to be released, we would wait, hoping Islam's name would be among them, but it was never there," he said, referring to his brother.

"My mother even started losing hope that he would be freed in the deal. And when his name finally appeared, Israel halted the deal."

Israel and Hamas have frequently accused each other of violations since the ceasefire started on January 19 but it has so far continued to hold. Hamas at one stage said it would stop handing over hostages because of alleged Israeli breaches.

The ceasefire has brought a pause in the fighting, but prospects of a definitive end to the war remain unclear.

Both sides have said they intend to start talks on a second stage, which mediators say aims to agree the return of all remaining hostages and the full withdrawal of Israeli troops.

The war started when Hamas-led militants launched a cross-border attack on Israeli communities on October 7, 2023, that killed 1,200 and resulted in 251 people being taken hostage, according to Israeli tallies.

The Israeli retaliatory offensive has killed at least 48,000 people, Palestinian health authorities say, and reduced much of the enclave to rubble, leaving some hundreds of thousands in makeshift shelters and dependent on aid trucks.

Zelensky Willing to Resign If Ukraine Gains NATO Membership

KYIV (Dispatches) - Volodymyr Zelensky said on Sunday — the eve of the third anniversary of Russia's invasion — that he was ready to quit as Ukraine's president if it meant Kyiv would be admitted to the Nato military alliance.

Zelensky, who has faced fierce criticism from the new US administration, also said he wanted to meet Donald Trump before the U.S. president meets his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin.

Zelensky has been calling for Ukraine to be given NATO membership as part of any deal to end the war, but the Washington-led alliance has been reluctant to commit.

"If there is peace for Ukraine, if you really need me to leave my post, I am ready," Zelensky told a Kyiv news conference. "I can exchange it for NATO."

Zelensky and Trump have been engaged in a war of words since US and Russian officials met last week in Saudi Arabia for their first high-level talks in three years. The move undermined the West's policy of isolating the Kremlin and infuriated Ukrainian and European leaders, excluded from the meeting.

In recent days, Trump has branded Zelensky a "dictator", falsely claimed Ukraine "started" the war, and claimed, contrary to independent opinion polls, that the Ukrainian leader was unpopular at home.

Zelensky said he was not "offended" by Trump's comments and was ready to test his popularity in elections once martial law ends in Ukraine.

"I very much want from Trump an understanding of each other," he told journalists,



adding that "security guarantees" from the US president were "much needed".

The Ukrainian leader also called for Trump to meet him before any summit with Putin. There had been "progress", he added, on a deal to give the United States preferential access to Ukraine's critical resources.

European leaders were adjusting yesterday to the changing geopolitical realities. Germany's conservative election winner Friedrich Merz said yesterday his priority was to boost Europe's defense capabilities.

"After Donald Trump's statements in the last week, it is clear that the Americans are largely indifferent to the fate of Europe," he said, hours after exit polls announced his party's clear win.

NATO chief Mark Rutte said in a post on X that he was looking forward to working with Merz "in this crucial moment for our shared security."

"It's vital that Europe step up on defence spending and your leadership will be key," he added.

French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer will travel to Washington this week to make the case for supporting Ukraine.

In Brussels, the head of the European Council, Antonio Costa, announced a special European summit on the Ukraine war for March 6.

"We are living a defining moment for Ukraine and European security," Costa wrote in a post on X.

Cavs Fend Off Grizzlies, Stretch Win Streak to 7



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Donovan Mitchell scored 31 points as the Cleveland Cavaliers won their seventh straight game, beating the visiting Memphis Grizzlies 129-123.

Sixth man Ty Jerome added 26 points, including 15 in the fourth quarter, and Evan Mobley posted 25 points and 13 rebounds.

Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 22 points for Memphis, Ja Morant paired 20 points with 10 assists and Luke Kennard contributed 19 points off the bench.

The Cavaliers led for most of the evening before their 11-point fourth-quarter advantage was sliced to 124-121 with 42 seconds remaining.

Jackson missed a pair of free throws with 23 seconds left, before Mitchell and Max Strus iced it from the foul line for Cleveland.

The Cavaliers, who were without guard Darius Garland with a left hip contusion, misfired with 2 of 15 3-pointers in the first quarter but a 21-7 rebounding advantage saw them lead 33-29 heading into the second frame.

Cleveland had 10 offensive rebounds for the period and outscored Memphis 10-0 on second-chance points, with Mobley particularly active on the glass.

The Grizzlies scored the first seven points of the second quarter before the Cavs rallied through Mitchell, who had 22 first-half points.

Strus's bomb on the halftime horn was the first successful three from 10 attempts by any Cleveland player other than Mitchell, and gave the Cavaliers a 62-56 buffer.

Rookie Jaylen Wells knocked down his first four 3-point attempts and the Grizzlies inched into the lead before Mitchell, Mobley and Isaac Okoro restored order for the home side.

A loose-ball wrestle at ground level between Mitchell and Desmond Bane resulted in offsetting double technicals. Those two players were penalized, as were Morant and Cleveland's Tristan Thompson for getting involved.

The Cavaliers' 12-5 third-quarter rebounding advantage helped them lead 93-88 going into the fourth. Jerome caught fire with 14 of Cleveland's first 17 points of the final period as the Cavs' advantage grew

to double digits.

Meanwhile Zion Williamson scored 22 points, Kelly Olynyk had a double-double and the host New Orleans Pelicans defeated the San Antonio Spurs 114-96.

Olynyk, playing just his second game with the Pelicans since being acquired in a trade with Toronto, finished with 14 points and a season-high 15 rebounds. Karlo Matkovic scored a season-high 19 points, Trey Murphy III had 15, CJ McCollum and Jose Alvarado added 12 each and Jordan Hawkins scored 10 for the Pelicans.

Keldon Johnson and Julian Champagnie scored 18 each for the Spurs. De'Aaron Fox and Harrison Barnes had 13 each and Bismack Biyombo added 10 points and 10 rebounds for the Spurs, who were outscored 74-43 in the second half.

Barnes made two 3-pointers, Chris Paul made one and the Spurs extended their lead to 64-47 early in the third quarter.

Then Murphy made a 3-pointer and Olynyk added four free throws during a 13-0 run that pulled the Pelicans within four points.

San Antonio scored the next six points and led by as many as 11 before New Orleans made another push. Matkovic and Murphy had two field goals each and the Pelicans got within 79-75 at the end of the third quarter.

Williamson scored six points and Alvarado had four during New Orleans' 13-0 run to start the fourth quarter, which produced an 88-79 lead. Barnes made a layup for the Spurs' first points nearly five minutes into the period, but the Pelicans scored the next four points for a 92-81 lead and cruised the rest of the way.

Champagnie made three 3-pointers, the last of which beat the quarter buzzer, and San Antonio held a 30-26 lead at the end of the first period. Champagnie made another 3-pointer to start the second-quarter scoring and the Spurs scored the first eight points of the period.

Alvarado made a 3-pointer for the Pelicans' first points before Champagnie made a 3-pointer, Biyombo converted a three-point play and Barnes added a 3-pointer as San Antonio expanded the lead to 17 points. McCollum scored New Orleans' last five points as it trimmed the lead to 53-40 at halftime.

Djokovic to Play at Indian Wells After Injury Worries



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic will play at Indian Wells, the ATP 1000-level tournament confirmed on social media, as the Serbian shakes off injury concerns and resumes his hunt for a 100th singles title.

The 24-times Grand Slam winner retired from his Australian Open semi-final against Alexander Zverev with a hamstring issue last month, and lost in the Qatar Open first round last week.

The 37-year-old said that he "played without pain" in Doha, but his disappointing display raised concerns among fans that he would not play in the Southern California event.

"A legend returns to the desert," the tournament wrote on X on Saturday, quieting concerns about whether he would play.

Five-times Indian Wells winner Djokovic will aim to become the third man to claim 100 singles titles in the professional era behind Jimmy Connors (109) and Roger Federer (103).

Meanwhile former world number one Venus Williams will not compete at next month's Indian Wells tournament despite the WTA 1000 event giving the 44-year-old American a wild card.

Williams, who played only two tournaments last season, said at a speaking event in Denmark that she had not been told of the wildcard before the tournament announced it on Wednesday and added that she was unable to compete due to prior commitments.

"I found the announcement super amusing because, I don't know, people seem to be happy, so I was like, 'Maybe I'll just go with it, I don't know,'" Williams said at the event in the city of Naestved.

"I'm actually not going. I'm going to be overseas."

Tournament director Tommy Haas later released a statement confirming that Williams would not be playing at the March 2-16 event in Southern California.

Real Beat Girona 2-0 to Move Level on Points With Leaders Barcelona



MADRID (Dispatches) - Real Madrid eased to a 2-0 home victory over Girona thanks to a blistering first-half volley by Luka Modric and a late Vinicius Jr strike as they snapped a three-game winless run and moved up to second place in LaLiga behind Barcelona.

Reigning champions Real took a while to settle into the match but gradually began to exert control before a clearance from a corner fell to Modric, whose sublime long-range volley arched into the top corner in the 41st minute.

The home side's forwards combined for the second goal in the 83rd when Kylian Mbappe played through Vinicius, who poked his shot under goalkeeper Paulo Gazzaniga.

Real, fresh from a 6-3 aggregate win over Manchester City in the Champions League knockout phase playoffs that took them into the last 16, are on 54 points after 25 games.

They are level with Barca, who beat Las Palmas 2-0 away on Saturday, but trail on the head-to-head count. Atletico Madrid are third with 53 after winning 3-0 at Valencia on Saturday.

It was Real's first LaLiga win since they beat Real Valladolid last month and Modric enjoyed his goal.

"I was on my own, I controlled the ball, I hit it well and it went in. I don't know if it's one of the most spectacular goals (I've scored). It's nice. It's always special to score at the Bernabeu," Modric told Real Madrid TV.

"A very important victory, we have to stay in the fight," he added. "We played a very good game after the great night the other evening, it's not easy after so much wear and tear to get our heads up but we did it."

"We know we have to do it every night we play and keep growing as a team. It's a very important win and we're still in the fight."

Real's attacking quartet of Mbappe, Brahim Diaz, Rodrygo and Vinicius kept Girona's defence busy throughout the contest but their final ball was often lacking at crucial moments.

Vinicius, who has 24 goals in 39 games all competitions this season, wasted a bagful of chances to net his first league goal since November.

The Brazilian international rattled the crossbar with a shot from distance in the 58th minute, before firing over from close range in the 74th.

India's Kohli Roars Back Into Form With Match-Winning Hundred

DUBAI (Dispatches) - Virat Kohli proved he is not a spent force yet as India's batting stalwart produced a match-winning hundred in a Champions Trophy humdinger against arch-rivals Pakistan on Sunday.

A modern day batting great, Kohli's unbeaten 100 helped India pull off a potentially tricky chase of 242 to register their second successive win of the tournament and inch closer to a semi-final berth.

During the course of his 51st ODI hundred, Kohli also became only the third player - after compatriot Sachin Tendulkar and Sri Lankan Kumar Sangakkara - to complete 14,000 runs in this format taking fewer innings than both.

"It feels good to be able to back in that manner in an important game where we wanted to (effectively) seal our qualification into the semis," Kohli said after his 51st ODI hundred fetched him player-of-the-match award.

"My job was pretty clear - to control the middle overs, to try and go after the seam bowlers and not take too many risks against the spinners but keep rotating strike."

After India lost captain Rohit Sharma in the fifth over, Kohli steadied the innings first with Shubman Gill (46) and then with Shreyas Iyer (56).



"Once we strung in a nice partnership, towards the end, Shreyas accelerated and I got a few boundaries away as well. "It was more or less the way I play ODI cricket. So I was happy with the template."

Kohli quit T20 Internationals immediately after India won the 20-overs World Cup last year but has struggled for runs in test cricket.

In a high-pressure game against arch-rivals Pakistan, Kohli was back in his elements anchoring a successful chase with a well-crafted hundred.

"I have a decent understanding of my game over the years," the top order batter said.

India face New Zealand in their next match on March 2 and Kohli welcomed the week-long break.

"To be honest, at 36, it's very good... I just need to put my feet up for two days," he said with a smile.

"It takes a lot out of me now to be putting that kind of effort on the field, and I'm just thankful we have a bit of time off."

Rohit said they were not surprised to see Kohli back among runs.

"That is what he is known for," Rohit said of his teammate.

"People sitting inside the dressing room are not surprised with what he has done."

Milestone man Kohli anchored a tricky chase with an unbeaten hundred as India put one foot in the semi-finals of the Champions Trophy with a six-wicket victory against Pakistan in a high-octane Group A match between the arch-rivals on Sunday.

An architect of countless successful chases, Kohli made 100 not out as India overwhelmed the 242-run target with 7.3 overs to spare to register their second successive victory of the tournament.

Salah Revels in His Favorite Season With Win at Man City

MANCHESTER (Dispatches) - Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah continued to make the case that this is his greatest season ever as he broke records in their 2-0 Premier League win at Manchester City on Sunday and the talisman said the campaign was his personal favorite.

Salah scored Liverpool's first goal -- his 25th in the league this term -- and set up the second by Dominik Szoboszlai as they moved 11 points clear at the top, putting his name alongside a couple of more records in the process.

Among them Salah has become the first player in Premier League history to be involved in 40-plus goals in two different seasons, with 25 goals and 15 assists in this campaign after 32 goals and 10 assists in 2017-18.

"I don't know," Salah said, when asked if he was playing at his best ever level. "It is opinion. Maybe people prefer my first seasons or now but I prefer now because (closing on) winning the league, helping the young players, it is special."



"We need another title. Me and the big guys in the team, we need another title."

Salah only has four months left on his Liverpool contract, with no hint of an extension so far forthcoming from the club, but any potential distraction has not shown on the field.

His 241 goals in all competitions since joining Liverpool in 2017 have made him joint-third on the Anfield side's all-time list, with Gordon Hodgson (1926-35). Ian Rush tops the club's scoring chart with 346 ahead of second-placed Roger Hunt (285).

He has now scored and assisted in 11 league matches this season, the most by a player in one campaign in Europe's big five leagues since Lionel Messi's 11 for Barcelona in 2014-15.

The 32-year-old's 16 away league goals is a joint-record in the competition's history with Kevin Phillips (1999-2000) and Harry Kane (2022-23).

Egypt forward Salah is a huge thorn in City boss Pep Guardiola's side.

He is the first player in Premier League history to score and assist in both games against the reigning champions in a season. His nine goals and six assists against Guardiola's teams are the most in the Spaniard's top-flight managerial career.

Salah's season is drawing praise from teammates and fans.