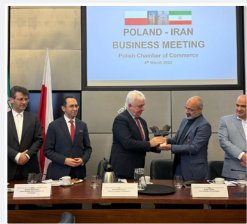


Iran Autism Association (IAA) Says the West's Threats and Cruel Sanctions Against the Country Have Imposed Severe Restrictions on Patients Suffering the Disease

IRAN NEWS

Iran's Army Ground Force Commander Brigadier General Kiumars Heidari Says His Forces Are Completely Ready to Give a Decisive Response to Any Possible Act of Aggression Against the Country

2 DOMESTIC

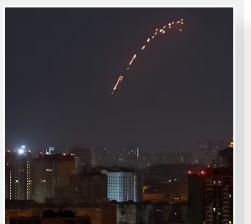


Iranian Trade Delegation Visits Poland to Forge Sustainable Business Ties

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3 INTERNATIONAL

Ukraine's Biggest Drone Attack on Moscow Kills One



> SEE PAGE 3

Afghans Face No Restrictions for Legal Entries to Iran



TEHRAN - Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Amir Saeed Irvani, announced that legal Afghan migrants in Iran face no restrictions, with Iranian consulates issuing 5,000 visas daily.

Speaking at a UN Security Council meeting on Afghanistan on Monday, Irvani emphasized Iran's unwavering humanitarian policy toward Afghan refugees, despite the increased burden following the United States' abrupt withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021.

According to Irvani, Iran has hosted millions of Afghans for over four decades, shouldering a significant responsibility that intensified after the U.S. exit. "Legal Afghan migrants in Iran face no limitations, and our consulates issue 5,000 visas each day," he stated. However, he noted that those deported had entered the country illegally. Citing security concerns, including terrorist threats, Iran will continue to deport individuals crossing its borders without authorization.

The ambassador's remarks came during a broader discussion on Afghanistan's ongoing challenges, as outlined in the latest UN Secretary-General's report (S/2025/109). The report highlights a worsening humanitarian crisis, with over 22.9 million Afghans requiring urgent aid, alongside persistent human rights violations—particularly against women and girls—and escalating security threats from groups like ISIS-Khorasan. Irvani called for unconditional humanitarian assistance and urged donors to step up funding for the \$2.42 billion 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, which remains severely underfunded.

Irvani also criticized the freezing of Afghan assets, arguing that their unconditional release is essential for economic recovery. He condemned policies like reducing aid or returning military equipment as unrealistic and detrimental, exacerbating tensions and suffering. On security, he urged Afghanistan's de facto authorities to prioritize counterterrorism and dismantle terrorist networks, warning that the country must not become a safe haven for extremism.

New Maritime Powers Present in High Seas



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Amid military drills jointly held by the Iranian, Chinese and Russian navies in the northern part of the Indian Ocean, Iran Navy chief says the number of maritime powers enjoying naval capabilities and power is growing.

These countries, Rear Admiral Shahram Irani said on Monday, can have a presence at high seas relying on their knowledge and industry.

Irani made the remark in reaction to US President Donald Trump's claim that he is "not at all" worried about the joint naval exercises involving Iran, China, and Russia in Iran's territorial waters.

"We are witnessing many illusions in the world that some people maintain," the Iranian Navy commander said.

He said the three countries' participation in the large-scale Security Belt-2025 joint naval exercise is different in that their presence boosts security.

"Those who speak against and are deluded have never brought security and peace to any part of the world and have always caused significant insecurity and posed a threat to humanity," the Iranian commander stated.

Irani said the members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS group of emerging countries have the capability to play a positive role in the maritime economy in the best manner.

Earlier on Monday, flotillas of Russian and Chinese military vessels arrived in Iran's southeastern Chabahar Port to take part in the exercise.

Iranian Official Rejects Imposed Demands, Criticizes Human Rights Hypocrisy

TEHRAN - Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs, declared yesterday that Iran is a nation that will not bow to external pressure or imposed demands. Speaking at the opening ceremony of an exhibition showcasing the achievements and capabilities of Iranian women, he emphasized, "We are an independent country, and we do not yield to any demands under pressure—this is part of Iran's history."

The event took place at Tehran's Permanent Exhibition Center and was attended by the Vice President for Women and Family Affairs, Behrouz Azar, along with several ambassadors and diplomats residing in Tehran. Gharibabadi highlighted the accomplishments of women in the Islamic Republic of Iran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. He also took aim at self-proclaimed human rights advocates, asserting that their credibility has been undermined by their support for Israel amid the atrocities committed in Gaza.

"After the disasters and crimes perpetrated by the Zionist regime in Gaza, those who claim to champion human rights—while being the primary backers of that regime—can no longer lecture others or accuse them of human rights violations," Gharibabadi stated. He accused these nations of being the "greatest violators" of the Iranian people's rights, pointing to unilateral sanctions that threaten the lives and well-being of millions of Iranians.

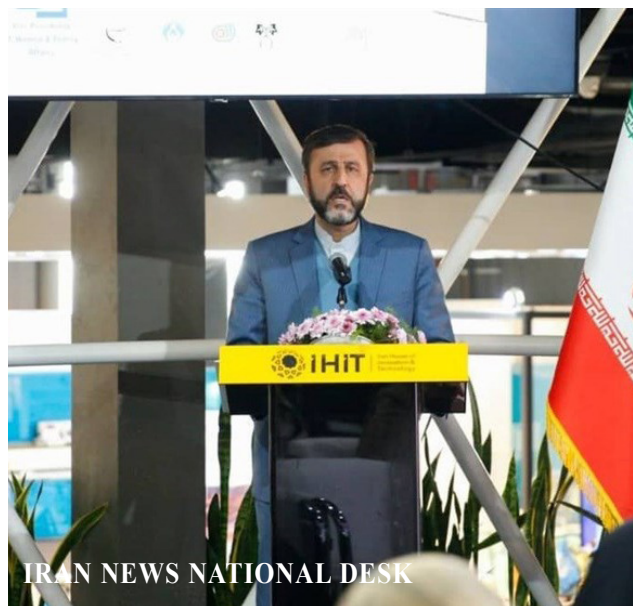
The deputy minister challenged these countries' sincerity: "If they truly care about the human rights of the Iranian people, they should lift the unilateral sanctions imposed on them."

In his address, Gharibabadi thanked Vice President Behrouz Azar and her team for organizing the exhibition, which he described as a glimpse into the achievements of Iranian women. He also praised a report presented on the progress of women in the Islamic Republic.

"Iran is deeply committed to supporting and advancing human rights," he said. "In 1979, we staged a revolution to rid ourselves of a dictatorial regime. Before the revolution, there were no free elections, no free media, no freedom of expression, and no social participation—especially for women—in running the country. After the revolution, democratic institutions were established under our constitution, with elections being a clear symbol of this. On average, we hold an election every year."

He rooted Iran's human rights stance in Islamic principles and national laws, stating, "Our belief in human rights stems from divine religions and revelation. Islam emphasizes human dignity. We have always strived to uphold what our people deserve in this regard."

Gharibabadi criticized Western nations for their hypocrisy, noting their silence on human rights



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during Iran's pre-revolution dictatorship contrasted with their current accusations against the Islamic Republic. "After the Gaza massacres, there's no need to debate whether human rights have become politicized. Over 50,000 innocent people—mostly women and children—were slaughtered, yet human rights bodies and their so-called champions did nothing. Instead, they supported Israel politically, financially, and militarily."

He pointed to the United States and other Western nations as the primary suppliers of weapons to Israel, questioning their moral authority: "Do these countries, which claim to have the best way of life and urge us to adopt their standards, truly believe in human rights? If they did, we wouldn't be witnessing these atrocities in Gaza."

The deputy minister also addressed sanctions, calling them a direct violation of Iranians' rights to life and welfare. "Those who pass resolutions against Iran in the UN Human Rights Council or General Assembly are the same ones imposing these sanctions. If they cared about our people,

why endanger millions with these measures?"

Highlighting Iran's resilience, Gharibabadi noted, "We are a country that has suffered from terrorism, with over 23,000 Iranian men, women, and children martyred by terrorists—many of whom now reside in Western countries, the supposed safe havens of human rights defenders."

He emphasized Iran's independence: "We face these challenges because we choose to remain an independent nation. With a 7,000-year civilization history and deep-rooted religious values, Iran will never submit to threats or sanctions. Any other country facing just 10% of the sanctions we endure would have collapsed by now."

Gharibabadi urged the attending diplomats to report the realities they witness in Iran to their capitals: "You see the presence of women in our society. Denying this would be unfair. Should we take lessons on human rights from those who violate our people's rights? If they're serious about supporting Iranians, let them lift the sanctions."

He concluded by asserting Iran's strength and the awakening of global public opinion: "Sanctions affect our people's lives, but they will never achieve their goals. After Gaza, these nations can no longer pose as human rights leaders. The world's people are awake now—they've taken to the streets, even in the U.S. and Europe, to protest their governments' support for Israel."

During the ceremony, Vice President Behrouz Azar delivered a speech outlining the most significant achievements of Iranian women and their roles across various sectors. Following the speeches, she joined the foreign ambassadors and diplomats in touring the exhibition's booths.

Iran Asserts Independence in Nuclear Policy, Rejects External Directives

TEHRAN - In a firm declaration of sovereignty, Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref emphasized that the country neither consults nor takes orders from any external entity regarding its nuclear program.

Speaking at a ceremony honoring outgoing Iranology Foundation President Mohammad Hossein Rajabi Davani and welcoming his successor, Ali Akbar Salehi, Aref underscored that Iran's nuclear policies are guided by its supreme leader's religious decree, which has been incorporated into the nation's highest directives.

Aref's remarks came during an event that also highlighted Iran's cultural and diplomatic priorities. He stressed the need to revive the historical prominence of the Persian language, which for centuries held a special status across the region. "Persian language and Iran are inseparable," Aref said, noting its widespread use in ancient and religious sites throughout neighboring countries. He argued that this shared heritage fosters pride among regional populations and called for countering "Iranophobia," which he described as an injustice to human civilization perpetuated by Western powers.

Aref contrasted the achievements of Iranian civilization with what he termed the "horrific crimes" of Western culture, pointing to the ongoing violence in Gaza as evidence of the latter's failures. He asserted that Iranian-Islamic culture, which he views as indivisible, stands as a beacon of humanity and peace. "Wherever we travel in the world, we take pride in being Iranian," he said, accusing Western nations of fabricating fears about Iran despite its rich cultural legacy.

Addressing misconceptions about Iran's nuclear ambitions, Aref dismissed inquiries from even friendly Islamic nations about whether Iran seeks nuclear weapons. He cited a religious



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fatwa from Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei banning such arms, emphasizing that Iran's nuclear technology is intended solely for peaceful purposes to benefit humanity. "We neither consult nor take instructions on this matter," he reiterated, adding that Iran's advancements in nuclear and other technologies are meant to be shared globally, in line with its cultural ethos of pursuing knowledge worldwide.

The vice president also outlined the foreign policy priorities of Iran's 14th administration, which include strengthening ties with Eurasian and regional nations while pursuing specialized diplomacy, such as "Iranology diplomacy." He tasked the Iranology Foundation, now under Salehi's leadership, with promoting Persian language and culture globally as a means of fostering peace and countering hostility. Aref urged Western countries to heed Iran's official documents, which reflect both governmental and religious commitments to peaceful nuclear development.

On the domestic front, Aref acknowledged challenges faced by Iranian elites, including economic hardships and lack of resources, which have driven some to emigrate. He assured that the government is working to address these issues, while noting that expatriate Iranians often retain a deep connection to their homeland. He called for greater recognition of the nation's intellectual capital, which he sees as Iran's true strength.

In closing, Aref praised Salehi's appointment, citing his scientific expertise and diplomatic experience as assets to advance Iran's cultural and academic standing. The government, he pledged, would support the Iranology Foundation in its mission to elevate Iran's global influence, a goal he described as integral to regional stability and progress.

U.S. Decision to Revoke Iraq Waiver Extremely Deplorable



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has slammed the new U.S. administration's decision to revoke Iraq's sanctions waiver for importing electricity from Iran.

On Monday, Araqchi described the Trump administration's decision as "extremely deplorable."

He noted that the U.S. administration has decided to target the innocent people of Iraq "by attempting to deprive them of access to basic services such as electricity, especially ahead of the coming hot months of the year."

Iran's top diplomat reaffirmed the Islamic Republic's continued support for the Iraqi people.

He added that Iran remains firm on its commitment to the Iraqi government to repel unlawful US actions.

It is extremely deplorable that the US administration has decided to target the innocent people of Iraq by attempting to deprive them of access to basic services such as electricity, especially ahead of the coming hot months of the year.

Araqchi's remarks came after the U.S. announced it has revoked a waiver from Iran sanctions that allowed Iraq to import electricity from its eastern neighbor.

In reaction, the chairman of the Iraqi parliament's finance committee warned that any move by Washington to restrict power imports from Iran would cause Iraq's electrical grid to collapse.

US National Security Council Spokesman James Hewitt said on Sunday that the decision to let Iraq's waiver lapse upon its expiration is in line with the so-called National Security Presidential Memorandum 2, which seeks to drive Iran's crude oil exports down to zero.

The spokesperson asserted that Washington will not allow Tehran any degree of economic or financial relief.

He claimed the US president's maximum pressure campaign is designed to end Iran's nuclear activities, curtail its ballistic missile program, and stop it from supporting anti-Israel resistance groups.

Hewitt went on to urge the Iraqi government to eliminate its dependence on Iranian sources of energy as soon as possible.

Iran Rejects Talks Aimed at Dismantling Peaceful Nuclear Program



TEHRAN - Iran's Permanent Mission to the United Nations has declared that negotiations aimed at addressing concerns over the potential militarization of Iran's nuclear program could be considered. However, any talks intended to dismantle Iran's peaceful nuclear activities will never take shape, according to a statement released on Sunday, local time.

The mission clarified Iran's stance: "If the purpose of negotiations is to alleviate concerns about the militarization of Iran's nuclear program, that is open to review. But if the goal is to dismantle Iran's peaceful nuclear program—to claim a victory where Obama failed—such negotiations will never happen."

This statement comes amid reports that U.S. President Donald Trump has reached out to Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, proposing talks on the nuclear issue. In a Friday interview with Fox Business on March 7, 2025, Trump revealed he had sent a letter to Khamenei requesting dialogue. The Axios news outlet reported that Trump emphasized his desire to reach an agreement on Iran's nuclear program, marking the first significant interaction between the U.S. and Iran since his administration took office.

Trump reiterated his position in the interview, stating, "Something must be done because Iran cannot have nuclear weapons." Axios noted that the letter, disclosed during Trump's conversation with Fox Business host Maria Bartiromo, underscores his push for a new nuclear deal.

In response, Ayatollah Khamenei addressed the issue on Saturday, during a meeting with Iranian officials and managers. Expressing satisfaction with the Foreign Ministry's active diplomacy and efforts to strengthen ties with neighbors and beyond, he criticized foreign powers pressuring Iran to negotiate. "Some bullying governments and figures insist on talks, but their aim isn't to resolve issues—it's to dominate and impose their demands," he said. "If the other side agrees, fine; if not, they stir controversy and accuse us of abandoning negotiations."

IRAN NEWS



Tehran-Ankara Train Proposal Under Consideration by Iran Railways

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways, Jabbarali Zakeri, announced that a Tehran-Ankara train service could be launched if the recently resumed Tehran-Van route sees strong public demand. The statement signals a potential expansion of rail connectivity between Iran and Turkey, aimed at boosting tourism and travel.

Zakeri highlighted the revival of the Tehran-Van train after a five-year hiatus, a move made possible through an agreement between Iranian and Turkish railway authorities. "Given the demand from travelers heading to Turkey, we've restarted this service," he said. The train, which began operations following years of interruption, consists of seven passenger cars, a generator-equipped dining car, and a locomotive, with a capacity to carry approximately 280 passengers.

Iran to Boost Agricultural Trade With Africa



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TEHRAN - Minister of Agriculture, Gholamreza Nouri Ghezleh, announced plans to expand agricultural trade with Africa, particularly its eastern regions, as part of a broader strategy to enhance food security and economic resilience. Speaking at the 11th Annual Conference on Resistance Economy, Nouri revealed that over the past six months, the government has prioritized Africa as a key trade partner, with coordinated efforts now paving the way for smoother commerce.

Nouri emphasized that food security, a top national priority underscored by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, remains central to Iran's resistance economy framework. "Despite all challenges, we are determined to elevate food security with God's help, and the Leader's support inspires us to press forward," he said. He stressed that achieving this goal hinges on leveraging science, technology, and knowledge-based approaches to boost agricultural productivity—a target he described as attainable.

Far from being insular, Nouri clarified that the resistance economy looks outward, albeit with necessary safeguards. A key focus of this outward approach is Africa, where trade routes are being streamlined under the 14th government. "The groundwork has been laid, and we're facilitating agricultural trade with Africa, especially in the east," he noted. Northern neighboring countries were also highlighted as vital export markets.

The minister reported significant progress in trade metrics, with Iran's negative trade balance shrinking over the past year. The commercial balance has shifted toward a positive \$3.5 billion, driven by a 36% surge in exports. This reflects a deliberate push to bolster economic resilience through international engagement.

Nouri also outlined the government's commitment to supporting producers in the 14th administration. "We're working to strengthen this support by reducing the farm-to-table price gap," he said, aiming to narrow the disparity between producer and consumer costs—a move he tied to the principles of the resistance economy. By cutting these margins, the government seeks to make food more affordable while ensuring farmers benefit.

The initiative signals Iran's intent to deepen ties with Africa, harnessing agriculture to drive economic growth and stability both at home and abroad.

Iranian Trade Delegation Visits Poland to Forge Sustainable Business Ties

TEHRAN - A high-level Iranian trade delegation, led by Gadir Ghiafeh, Vice President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA), concluded a significant visit to Poland aimed at strengthening economic ties between the two nations.

The delegation, which included Abdollah Mohajer Darabi, a member of ICCIMA's board, as well as the leadership of the Iran-Poland Joint Chamber, traveled to Warsaw to explore opportunities for bilateral trade, attract joint investments, and address barriers to commerce.

The visit underscored a shared commitment to designing a platform for developing commercial and logistical relations between Iran and Poland. Ghiafeh, in separate meetings with Polish counterparts, emphasized the urgent need to eliminate tariff obstacles and streamline the issuance of commercial visas for businesspeople from both countries—a sentiment echoed by Polish officials eager to deepen economic collaboration.

The Iranian delegation comprised a diverse group of business leaders and entrepreneurs representing sectors such as information technology, food and grain industries, veterinary pharmaceuticals, management consulting, and knowledge-based enterprises. Their mission: to foster sustainable communication channels between the private sectors of Iran and Poland, boost trade, and lay the groundwork for innovative partnerships.

During the visit, Ghiafeh met with the President of the Polish National Chamber, where discussions centered on expanding trade interactions, promoting joint investments, and establishing reliable frameworks for private-sector cooperation. The Polish side highlighted Iran's economic potential and expressed readiness to facilitate administrative processes for Iranian traders, enhance goods and services exchanges, and broaden commercial ties.

In a key meeting attended by Ghiafeh, the Vice President of the Polish National Chamber, and leaders of the Iran-Poland Joint Chamber, both sides underscored the importance of collaboration in cutting-edge fields like knowledge-based industries and technology transfer. Agriculture, food industries, and technical consulting also emerged as priority areas. The talks repeatedly circled back to the need for tariff relief and simplified visa procedures to unlock the full potential of these partnerships.

The delegation also engaged with senior officials from Poland's Ministry of Economy and Technology in a session attended by Iran's Ambassador and Economic Attaché to Poland. The focus was on designing a robust platform to enhance trade and logistics coordination—a move seen as a cornerstone for future economic relations.

A series of business-to-business (B2B) meetings brought Iranian and Polish companies together to explore concrete opportunities. In the tech sector, Iranian firms specializing in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and software

development held talks with Polish counterparts about technology transfers and joint ventures. These discussions hinted at a burgeoning tech alliance between the two nations.

In the food and grain sector, negotiations focused on the import and export of agricultural products, food processing, and packaging. Iranian companies pitched solutions to integrate their products into Poland's supply chain, aiming to secure a foothold in the European market. Meanwhile, in veterinary pharmaceuticals, Iranian firms proposed supplying Poland's livestock industry with essential drugs and co-producing veterinary medicines—a proposal met with keen interest.

Knowledge-based companies also made strides, discussing the creation of joint R&D centers, tech startup collaborations, and knowledge exchanges between Iranian and Polish specialists. These talks underscored a mutual desire to leverage innovation for economic growth.

The visit yielded several notable outcomes. Initial memoranda of understanding were signed to advance economic cooperation between Iranian and Polish firms. Poland signaled its willingness to reduce trade barriers and ease visa restrictions for Iranian businesspeople—an encouraging step toward smoother commerce. Both sides explored the feasibility of establishing joint ventures in technology, agriculture, and pharmaceuticals, with agreements to boost Iranian exports—particularly food, grains, and veterinary drugs—to Poland.

A formal invitation was extended to Polish trade delegations to visit Iran and assess investment opportunities firsthand, setting the stage for reciprocal engagement. These achievements mark a pivotal moment in Iran-Poland relations, with the potential to reshape their economic landscape.

The Iranian delegation's visit to Warsaw reflects a broader ambition to integrate Iran's private sector into global markets while offering Polish businesses access to a dynamic and resource-rich partner. By addressing logistical hurdles and fostering trust, both nations are laying the groundwork for a sustainable economic partnership.

As the two countries move forward, the proposed trade and logistics platform could serve as a blueprint for collaboration, bridging geographical and bureaucratic divides. With innovation, agriculture, and trade at the forefront, Iran and Poland are poised to turn shared goals into tangible results, benefiting businesses and consumers alike.

This visit, rich with dialogue and deal-making, signals a new chapter in bilateral relations—one defined by pragmatism, mutual benefit, and a commitment to overcoming obstacles. For now, the focus remains on implementation, as both sides work to transform promises into progress.



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

Uncertainty Over Tabriz-Tbilisi Direct Flights Hinders Bilateral Trade



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The third Georgia Desk meeting at the Tabriz Chamber of Commerce highlighted several obstacles hampering trade with Georgia, including a ban on bitumen exports, special privileges for Turkish goods, and the unresolved status of direct flights between Tabriz and Tbilisi. These issues were flagged as critical barriers to strengthening economic ties between the two regions.

Seyyed Shahbazi, the International Affairs Officer at the Tabriz Chamber, emphasized Georgia's importance as the province's fourth-largest export destination, trailing only Turkey, Armenia, and Iraq. He noted that Georgia had recently surpassed Azerbaijan in this ranking, underscoring its growing significance to Iran's economic interests. However, Shahbazi pointed out persistent challenges, including Georgia's ban on bitumen exports from Iran, preferential treatment for Turkish goods, and the lack of clarity on establishing a direct Tabriz-Tbilisi flight route.

Held to follow up on previous discussions and propose specialized solutions, the meeting identified additional trade hurdles. Shahbazi cited Turkey's refusal to allow the transit of live livestock from Georgia to Iran, Georgia's export tariffs on Iranian steel, and the poor condition of the land route from Iran to Georgia as pressing concerns. He urged the Iranian Foreign Ministry to investigate the reasons behind Georgia's restrictions on cement, clinker, and bitumen exports, noting that despite the ban, \$3.5 million worth of bitumen had been exported to Georgia through unconventional means.

Progress was reported on some fronts. Shahbazi announced that the unsuitable land border route via Armenia had been addressed, with no significant issues remaining at the Armenia-Georgia crossing. Efforts to resolve steel export tariffs are also underway. However, the absence of direct flights between Tabriz and Tbilisi remains a sticking point, complicating logistics and trade efficiency.

Iran, Uzbekistan Eye Stronger Economic, Tourism Ties With Proposed Sister City Pact

TEHRAN - In a significant step toward deepening bilateral relations, the President of the Kerman Chamber of Commerce, Seyyed Mehdi Tabibzadeh, met with Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Tehran, Fariddin Nasriev, to discuss expanding economic, cultural, and tourism cooperation between Iran and Uzbekistan. A key highlight of the meeting was the proposal to establish a sister-city relationship between Kerman, a historic city in southeastern Iran, and Samarkand, one of Uzbekistan's most iconic cultural hubs.

The talks, held in Tehran, underscored a mutual desire to leverage shared historical and cultural ties to boost collaboration across multiple sectors. Both sides expressed enthusiasm for enhancing trade, promoting knowledge-based production, and fostering tourism—a sector seen as a natural bridge given the rich heritage of both nations.

Tabibzadeh emphasized the potential for economic growth through stronger ties with Uzbekistan, pointing to opportunities in trade and joint ventures. He highlighted Kerman's strategic position and economic strengths, suggesting that a partnership with Uzbekistan could unlock new markets and investment prospects for both countries.

Ambassador Nasriev reciprocated the sentiment, welcoming the idea of increased commercial exchanges and innovation-driven projects. He stressed that the deep historical and cultural connections between Iran and Uzbekistan provide a solid foundation for expanding relations. "Our shared heritage is a powerful catalyst for collaboration," Nasriev remarked, signaling Uzbekistan's openness to initiatives that strengthen people-to-people and business-to-business links.

A standout proposal from the meeting was the idea of twinning Kerman and Samarkand as sister cities. This arrangement would formalize cultural and economic exchanges, fostering closer ties between the two regions. Kerman, known for its ancient bazaars and desert landscapes, and Samarkand, a UNESCO World Heritage site famed for its Silk Road legacy, share a historical resonance that could make them ideal partners.

The discussions also zeroed in on tourism as a key area for growth. Both parties explored the creation of joint tourism packages linking Kerman with Uzbekistan's historic cities, such as Samarkand, Bukhara, and Tashkent. These tours could attract travelers eager to explore the intertwined histories of Persian and Central Asian civilizations, while boosting local economies. "Tourism can serve as a gateway to deeper understanding and cooperation," Tabibzadeh noted, envisioning a future where Iranian and Uzbek travelers



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

seamlessly visit each other's cultural landmarks.

The meeting, attended by the Vice President of the Kerman Chamber of Commerce and the Mayor of Kerman, reflected broad local support for the initiative. Their presence underscored the importance of this dialogue in laying the groundwork for actionable outcomes. The participation of municipal leadership also hinted at the potential for city-level projects to complement national efforts.

By the end of the session, a concrete plan emerged: a delegation comprising Iranian business leaders, cultural representatives, and travel agency officials will soon visit Uzbekistan. This trip aims to build on the momentum of the Tehran talks, identifying specific opportunities for trade, cultural exchange, and tourism development. The delegation's agenda will likely include meetings with Uzbek counterparts to finalize details of the sister-city proposal and explore joint ventures.

The Tehran meeting aligns with a growing trend of Iran seeking to strengthen ties with Central Asian neighbors. Uzbekistan, with its strategic location and burgeoning economy, represents a promising partner. For Iran, enhancing relations with Tashkent could open doors to regional markets, while Uzbekistan stands to benefit from Iran's industrial capabilities and access to the Persian Gulf.

The emphasis on knowledge-based production also reflects a forward-looking approach. Both nations are keen to move beyond traditional trade, tapping into innovation and technology to drive growth. This could pave the way for collaborations in fields like renewable energy, agriculture, and digital infrastructure—sectors where Iran and Uzbekistan have complementary strengths.

The proposed sister-city pact between Kerman and Samarkand symbolizes more than a ceremonial link; it's a stepping stone to practical cooperation. If realized, it could inspire similar initiatives across Iran and Uzbekistan, creating a network of interconnected cities that amplify economic and cultural ties.

For now, the focus is on the upcoming delegation to Uzbekistan. Its success could determine the pace and scope of this budding partnership. As Tabibzadeh and Nasriev concluded their talks, the mood was optimistic—a shared belief that history, when paired with ambition, can chart a prosperous future for both nations.

This meeting marks a promising chapter in Iran-Uzbekistan relations, one that blends heritage with opportunity. With tourism and trade as catalysts, and a sister-city vision on the horizon, the two countries are poised to turn dialogue into results.

20th Int'l Auto Parts Exhibition to Kick Off in Tehran



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TEHRAN - The 20th International Exhibition of Auto Parts, Accessories, and Vehicle Components is set to take place from May 28 to May 31, 2025, at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds, spotlighting Iran's automotive industry and its global connections. Organized by the Iran International Exhibitions Company, the event promises to be a major platform for showcasing innovation and fostering trade.

Sadif Beikzadeh, CEO of the Iran International Exhibitions Company, announced the exhibition's significance during a Monday press conference, ranking it among Iran's top three trade shows. "The auto exhibition draws substantial participation, reflecting its importance," he said, noting that over 700 foreign companies from nine countries and 500 domestic firms will attend. Dedicated halls for knowledge-based and innovative companies highlight Iran's push toward technological advancement.

Beikzadeh tied the event to national economic goals, stating that achieving the 8% growth target in the Seventh Development Plan requires tapping export markets like BRICS and Eurasia. He added that the plan aims for a 23% export increase, encompassing industries such as manufacturing, mining, and agriculture. "Marketing, both domestically and internationally, is vital for economic growth, and this exhibition is a key driver," he said, recalling how sanctions targeted Iran's auto sector to disrupt related industries like steel and petrochemicals. He emphasized the sector's role in employment and industrial interdependence.

Masoumeh Aghapour, Presidential Advisor on Economic Cooperation, underscored the infrastructure already in place for non-oil exports. "We must shift toward this direction, learning from foreign export models and leveraging target markets," she said. Praising auto parts manufacturers as "national champions" for their resilience under tough conditions, she highlighted the critical role of knowledge-based firms. Aghapour predicted the exhibition would yield significant contracts and showcase achievements.

African and Asian Nations Show Strong Demand for Iranian Auto Parts



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Mohammadreza Najafi-Manesh, President of Iran's Homogeneous Powertrain and Auto Parts Manufacturers Association, revealed that numerous African and Asian countries, including Uzbekistan and Russia, are key customers for Iranian automotive components. Speaking at a press conference for the 20th International Auto Parts, Accessories, and Vehicle Components Exhibition, scheduled for May 28 to May 31, 2025, he urged the industry to capitalize on this demand.

Najafi-Manesh highlighted Uzbekistan's interest in boosting production and investing in auto parts manufacturing as an opportunity for collaboration. "Many countries are eager to partner with us, and we must leverage their potential," he said. He noted that offering discounted spare parts could unlock lucrative export markets, enhancing Iran's global footprint.

Najafi-Manesh pointed out that Iran's auto parts manufacturers are currently operating at half capacity. To address this, he proposed a policy of importing vehicles in exchange for exporting parts, arguing it would stimulate production and trade. "Facilitating exports is essential to tap into diverse markets," he stressed, calling for streamlined regulations.

Reflecting on recent reforms, he praised the transfer of a state-owned company's management to the private sector after nearly 50 years, though ownership remains government-held. "The private sector has immense production capabilities that must be harnessed, especially in an industry like automotive that needs support," he said.

Najafi-Manesh urged the use of exhibitions as export hubs, noting that foreign companies attending such events often seek imports. "We should turn their interest into export opportunities," he said. He advocated for robust promotion of the upcoming exhibition to attract both domestic and international visitors, showcasing Iran's automotive advancements.

He also took a swipe at critics, including lawmakers, who disparage the industry. "They should visit the exhibition and see the technological progress firsthand," he challenged, suggesting greater awareness could shift perceptions.

The event promises to spotlight Iran's auto parts sector, which is poised to meet rising demand from Africa and Asia while pushing for policies to boost production and exports.

Only Seven Countries Met WHO Air Quality Standards in 2024

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - Only seven countries met World Health Organization (WHO) air quality standards last year, data showed on Tuesday, as researchers warned that the war on smog would only get harder after the United States shut down its global monitoring efforts.

Chad and Bangladesh were the world's most polluted countries in 2024, with average smog levels more than 15 times higher than WHO guidelines, according to figures compiled by Swiss air quality monitoring firm IQAir.

Only Australia, New Zealand, the Bahamas, Barbados, Grenada, Estonia and Iceland made the grade, IQAir said.



Greenland Holds Legislative Elections, Eyes Independence Amid U.S. Interest



PARIS (Dispatches) - Greenland, the Danish self-governing territory coveted by U.S. President Donald Trump, voted Tuesday in legislative elections that could yield a timeline for independence, which is supported by a majority of the population.

Trump, determined to get his hands on the vast Arctic island "one way or the other", tried until the last minute to influence the election, sparking astonishment, rejection, and, to a small degree, enthusiasm among the 57,000 Greenlanders.

"He puts the focus of Greenland back in international relations, like everyone's focusing on it. So in that way, it's good," said Hans Kaali Davidsen, a resident of Nuuk, the capital, under a glacial rainfall.

But, he stressed, "Trump himself, the way he's been handling his own politics and his own country and how everything's shaping up in the US -- no, we don't want him."

The lead-up of the election to choose the 31-seat parliament, called the Inatsisartut, was mostly marked by a debate on issues such as healthcare, education, and future ties with Denmark, which still controls foreign, defense and monetary policy.

Greenland's inhabitants -- almost 90 percent of whom are Inuits -- say they are tired of being treated like second-class citizens by their former colonial power.

All the main political parties favour independence, but they disagree on the timeframe.

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The election result will define the balance of power between those who want to independence quickly -- such as the nationalist Naleraq party, the main opposition faction -- and those who prefer to wait until the island is financially independent, such as the two parties who make up the outgoing coalition, the left-green Inuit Ataqatigiit (IA) and social democratic Siumut.

Israel's Halt to Food and Aid Deliveries Worsens Gaza Conditions



CAIRO (Dispatches) - Israel's suspension of goods entering Gaza is taking a toll on the Palestinian enclave, with some bakeries closing and food prices rising, while a cut in the electricity supply could deprive people of clean water, Palestinian officials said.

The suspension, which Israel said was aimed at pressuring militant group Hamas in ceasefire talks, applies to food, medicine and fuel imports.

The U.N. Palestinian refugees agency UNRWA said the decision to halt humanitarian aid threatens the lives of civilians exhausted by 17 months of "brutal" war. Most of Gaza's 2.3 million people were dependent on aid, it said.

Hamas describes the measure as "collective punishment" and insisted it will not be pushed into making concessions.

Abdel-Nasser Al-Ajrami, head of the Gaza bakers' union, told Reuters that six out of the 22 bakeries still able to operate in the enclave had already shut after they ran out of cooking gas.

"The remaining bakeries may close down in a week or so should they run out of diesel or flour, unless the crossing is reopened to allow the goods to flow," he said.

The bakeries were already unable to meet the needs of the people, he said.

Israel last week blocked the entry of goods into the territory in a standoff over a truce that has halted fighting for the past seven weeks. The move has led to a hike in prices of essential foods as well as of fuel, forcing many to ration their meals.

Displaced from her destroyed house and living in a tent in Khan Younis, 40-year-old Ghada al-Rakab said she is struggling to secure basic needs. The mother of six bakes some goods for her family and neighbours, sometimes renting out a clay makeshift oven.

Ukraine's Biggest Drone Attack on Moscow Kills One



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine targeted Moscow early on Tuesday in what seemed its biggest drone attack of the war on the Russian capital, killing at least one person, sparking fires and suspending air and train transport in the region, authorities said.

"Today at 4 a.m. a massive drone attack began on Moscow and the Moscow region," Moscow Region Governor Andrei Vorobyov said in a post on the Telegram messaging app. "At the moment, one person is known to have died and three were injured."

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanyin said that at least 69 drones were destroyed that approached the city in several waves. Moscow and its surrounding region, with a population of at least 21 million, is one of the biggest metropolitan areas in Europe, alongside Istanbul.

Russia's aviation watchdog said flights were suspended at all four of Moscow's airports to ensure air safety after the attacks. Two other airports, in the Yaroslavl and Nizhny Novgorod regions, both east of Moscow, were also closed.

Vorobyov said that at least seven apartments were damaged and residents forced to evacuate in a multi-storey building in the Ramenskoye district of the Moscow region, about 50 km (31 miles) southeast of the Kremlin.

Rail infrastructure at the train station in the Domodedovo district, about 35 km south of Moscow, was damaged as result of falling drone debris, RIA news agency reported.

Baza, a news Telegram channel that is close to Russia's security services, and other Russian news telegram channels posted videos of several residential fires around Moscow that they said were sparked by the attacks.

The strikes came as the United States is pushing for an end to the three-year war that Russia started with its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. On Tuesday, U.S. and Ukrainian teams are scheduled to meet for peace talks in Saudi Arabia.

Governors of Ryazan region, just southeast of the Moscow region, and the Belgorod region on border with Ukraine, also said that their regions were under drone attacks. Several settlements in the Belgorod region were left without power, the regional governor said.

A November drone attack on Moscow, the largest in the war at that point, led to the destruction of at least 34 drones. At least one civilian was killed and dozens of homes wrecked around the capital.

Kyiv has often said that its strikes inside Russia are aimed at destroying infrastructure key to Moscow's overall war efforts and are in response to Russia's continued bombing of Ukraine.

Both sides deny targeting civilians in the attacks, but thousands of them have died in the conflict so far, the vast majority of them Ukrainian.

Syria's Gov't Signs Deal With Kurdish-Led Authorities in the Northeast

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) - The Syrian presidency announced on Monday an agreement with the head of the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to integrate the institutions of the autonomous Kurdish administration in the northeast into the national government.

Syria's new authorities under interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa have sought to disband armed groups and establish government control over the entirety of the country since ousting long-time leader Bashar al-Assad in December after more than 13 years of civil war.

The new accord, which is expected to be implemented by the end of the year, comes after days of violence in the heartland of Syria's Alawite minority that has posed the most serious threat yet to the country's stability since Assad's fall.

The presidency published a statement on Monday signed by both parties laying out the agreement on "the integration of all the civilian and military institutions of the northeast of Syria within the administration of the Syrian state, including border posts, the airport, and the oil and gas fields".

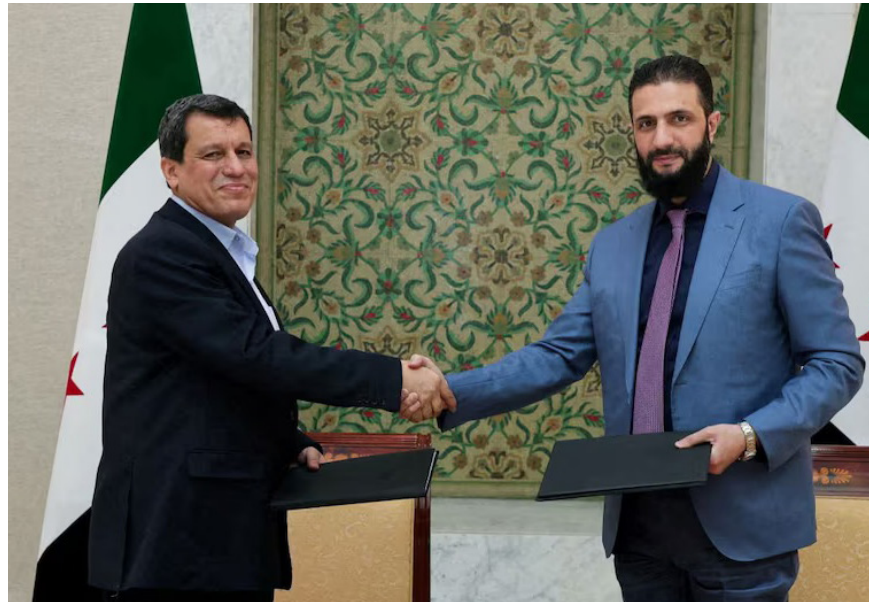
State media released a photo of Sharaa shaking hands with SDF leader Mazloum Abdi following the signing of the agreement.

The statement said "the Kurdish community is an essential component of the Syrian state", which "guarantees its right to citizenship and all of its constitutional rights".

It also rejected "calls for division, hate speech and attempts to sow discord" between different segments of Syrian society.

The SDF did not immediately respond to a request for comment by AFP.

The SDF serves as the de facto army of the de facto autonomous Kurdish administration that controls large swathes of northern and eastern Syria, including most of the country's oil and gas fields, which may prove a crucial resource for the new authorities as they seek to rebuild the country.



The new agreement also references "supporting the Syrian state in its fight against Assad's remnants and all threats to (the country's) security and unity".

Syria's new authorities announced on Monday the end of an operation against loyalists of Assad that the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said had killed at least 1,068 civilians, most of them members of the Alawite minority who were executed by the security forces or allied groups.

The violence in the coastal heartland of the Alawite community, to which Assad belongs, broke out on Thursday after gunmen loyal to the deposed president attacked Syria's new security forces.

The fighting has also killed 231 security personnel and 250 pro-Assad fighters, according to the Britain-based Observatory.

Marginalised and repressed during decades of Assad family rule, the Kurds were deprived of the right to speak their language and celebrate their holidays and, in many cases, of Syrian nationality.

The SDF took advantage of the withdrawal of government forces during the civil war which broke out in 2011 to establish de facto autonomy in the north and northeast.

The US-backed SDF played a key role in the fight against the Islamic State group, which was defeated in its last territorial stronghold in 2019.

Since Assad's overthrow, the Kurds have shown a degree of willingness to engage with the new authorities, but they were excluded from a recent national dialogue conference over their refusal to disarm.

The agreement comes nearly two weeks after a historic call by jailed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) founder Abdullah Ocalan for the militant group to lay down its weapons and disband.

The SDF maintains it is independent from the PKK, which has waged a decades-long insurgency against the Turkish government.

It is dominated, however, by the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), which Ankara views as an offshoot of the PKK.

The Turkish government, which is close to Syria's new authorities, has designated the PKK a terrorist organization, as have the United States and the European Union.

The Turkish army, which has troops deployed in northern Syria, regularly carries out strikes on areas controlled by Kurdish forces, and Turkish-backed groups have been attacking SDF-held areas of northern Syria since November.

Former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte Arrested on ICC Warrant

MANILA (Dispatches) - Former Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte was arrested Tuesday in Manila by police acting on an International Criminal Court (ICC) warrant citing crimes against humanity tied to his deadly war on drugs.

The 79-year-old faces a charge of "the crime against humanity of murder", according to the ICC, for a crackdown in which rights groups estimate tens of thousands of mostly poor men were killed by officers and vigilantes, often without proof they were linked to drugs.

"Early in the morning, Interpol Manila received the official copy of the warrant of the arrest from the ICC," the presidential palace said in a statement.

"As of now, he is under the custody of authorities."

The statement added that "the former president and his group are in good health and are being checked by government doctors".

Duterte was arrested after landing at Manila's international airport following a brief trip to Hong Kong.

Speaking to thousands of overseas Filipino workers there on Sunday, the former



president decried the investigation, labelling ICC investigators "sons of whores" while saying he would "accept it" if an arrest were to be his fate.

The Philippines quit the ICC in 2019 on Duterte's instructions, but the tribunal maintained it had jurisdiction over killings before the pullout, as well as killings in the southern city of Davao when Duterte was mayor there, years before he became president.

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It launched a formal inquiry in September 2021, only to suspend it two months later after Manila said it was re-examining several hundred cases of drug operations that led to deaths at the hands of police, hitmen and vigilantes.

The case resumed in July 2023 after a five-judge panel rejected the Philippines' objection that the court lacked jurisdiction.

Since then, the government of President Ferdinand Marcos has on numerous instances said it would not cooperate with the investigation.

Strong Defense Carries Rockets Past Magic



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Jabari Smith Jr. scored a team-high 20 points, Alperen Sengun and Steven Adams recorded double-doubles, and the Houston Rockets turned a stifling defensive performance into a 97-84 victory over the visiting Orlando Magic on Monday.

Smith nailed five 3-pointers and grabbed seven rebounds. He stroked a pair of 3s early in the third quarter to lift Houston to a double-digit lead and later delivered a dazzling defensive play to stifle the Magic for good, blocking a breakaway dunk attempt from Trevelin Queen that resulted in a Dillon Brooks 3-pointer that extended the Houston lead to 92-77 with 3:38 to play.

Sengun (14 points, 14 rebounds) added a 3-pointer on the ensuing possession to seal the victory. Adams paired 11 points with a season-high 17 rebounds off the bench while Jeff Green added nine points and three 3-pointers also in reserve.

Brooks produced 17 points. Jalen Green totaled 15 points, seven rebounds and eight assists for the Rockets, missing Fred VanVleet and Amen Thompson, both sidelined by ankle injuries.

Paolo Banchero scored a game-high 25 points for the Magic, who shot just 32.6 percent and were unable to fully capitalize on forcing 20 turnovers. Franz Wagner joined Banchero in double figures with 15 points, but he missed 11 of 17 shot attempts.

Orlando capitalized on the Rockets' early issues with ball security, turning four turnovers into five points and a five-point lead that eventually swelled to 19-10 on a Banchero 10-footer at the 4:20 mark of the first period.

But the Rockets closed that frame on a 13-0 run ignited by a Jalen Green 3-pointer and bolstered by two Adams baskets in the paint. Houston thrived on crisp ball movement and unselfish play, with Sengun and Jalen Green producing three assists apiece in the period.

The Magic fashioned a reply in the second quarter via 3-pointers from Jonathan Isaac and Gary Harris. Orlando seized a 39-35 lead when Wendell Carter Jr. turned a second-chance basket into a three-point play. However, the Rockets responded with a 14-2 rally keyed by pull-up jumpers from Brooks and Jalen Green and carried a 51-46 lead into the intermission.

Ja Morant scored 29 points and added 12 assists to lead the injury-depleted Memphis Grizzlies past

visiting Phoenix, 120-118, Monday.

Kevin Durant had an opportunity to win the game at the buzzer, but missed a deep 3-pointer.

The Grizzlies won their third straight and swept the season series against the Suns.

Reserve guard Cam Spencer scored 16 points for the Grizzlies. GG Jackson and Jay Huff scored 14 each while Lamar Stevens and Scotty Pippen Jr. chipped in 13 apiece.

Durant scored a game-high 35 for the Suns, who also got 26 points, nine rebounds and six assists from Devin Booker. Tyus Jones added 12 points plus seven assists and Nick Richards contributed 10 points and 12 boards.

Memphis led 120-115 with 14.4 seconds to go, but the Suns didn't go away. Durant dropped a 3-pointer -- his seventh in eight attempts -- with 9.1 seconds left. When Grizzlies guard Desmond Bane threw the ensuing inbound pass away, Durant had one final chance but failed to convert.

The Grizzlies, who trailed by as many as 16 in the first half, grabbed their first lead early in the third quarter and built the advantage to nine points (88-79) late in the third on a 3-pointer by Stevens. The trey capped a 12-3 run that included a basket by Morant intended as a lob for Marvin Bagley III.

Memphis led 95-90 after three, but the quarter closed with a flareup involving Durant and Grizzlies guard Spencer. After Spencer drained a corner 3 in the closing seconds, he taunted Durant, who responded with a finger pointed at Spencer's face from close range. Both players received technical fouls. Spencer had a spirited exchange with Durant earlier in the game after fouling the Suns' superstar.

Memphis was missing six rotation players, including regular starters Jaren Jackson Jr. (sprained left ankle) and Zach Edey (right ankle soreness). GG Jackson made his first start of the season for the Grizzlies and center Jay Huff made his second career NBA start. The Suns played without Bradley Beal, who missed the game with a left calf injury.

Phoenix led 59-57 at halftime behind Durant's 20 points.

The Suns are making a late run at the 10th seed in the Western Conference, which would earn them the final spot in the play-in tournament. Following the loss, Phoenix is 2 1/2 games behind the 10th-place Dallas Mavericks.

Alex de Minaur Dominant in March to Indian Wells Last 16

INDIAN WELLS (Dispatches) - Australia's top-ranked tennis player Alex de Minaur cruised into the fourth round of the BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells. The world No 10, who is seeded ninth for the ATP 1000 event in the California desert, scored an impressive 6-4, 6-0 win over Hubert Hurkacz.

The spoils had been shared at one win apiece in previous meetings, with the Pole taking out their last clash back in 2019 on the red clay in Madrid.

After a first-round bye and straight-sets victory over Belgian veteran David Goffin, De Minaur broke for the first time in the seventh game of the opening set, before taking it with his only set point.

The second stanza was all De Minaur, breaking the No 21 seed again in the first, third and fifth games to seal the contest in just 74 minutes.

De Minaur, 26, is the only remaining Australian left in the draw after compatriots Nick Kyrgios, Jordan Thompson, Chris O'Connell, Alexei Popyrin, Alexander Vukic, Rinky Hijikata, Li Tu and Adam Walton were eliminated earlier in the week.

The nine-time tour winner will next face 25th seed Francisco Cerundolo, after the Argentine beat Dutchman Botic van de Zandschulp 7-5, 6-4.



Meanwhile Americans Coco Gauff, Madison Keys, Taylor Fritz and Ben Shelton gave the home fans at Indian Wells plenty to cheer about on Monday, taming wind-whipped conditions in the California desert to reach the fourth round.

Third seed Gauff overcame late nerves to beat Greek Maria Sakkari 7-6(1) 6-2, getting over the finish line even as she produced six double faults in the final game before closing it out on her sixth match point with a forehand winner.

"Except the last game I thought I played a great match. Just trying to look at the positives," said Gauff, who had revenge on her mind after losing to Sakkari in the semi-final last year.

"Obviously I was a bit disappointed with the last game but that's just the perfectionist in me." She will next play Swiss Belinda Bencic.

Australian Open champion Keys saved 12 of the 15 break points she faced to beat Belgian Elise Mertens 6-2, 6-7(8), 6-4, securing her 14th straight match victory.

The fifth seed, who lost to Mertens in their two previous meetings, fired five aces to set up a fourth-round meeting with the winner of a match between compatriot Emma Navarro and Croatian Donna Vekic.

The 2022 winner Fritz overcame a slow start to beat Chilean Alejandro Tabilo 4-6 6-3 6-1 and said he expects a tough fight against Briton Jack Draper, who dimmed the Americans' joy as he beat home hope Jenson Brooksby in straight sets.

"It's going to be a tough match. I think it's a tough draw to get him in the round of 16 as a top-4 seed. He's a very good player," said Fritz. "I think he's probably better than his ranking is, and yeah, we have had some tight ones."

India Captain Rohit Heads Off Retirement Rumors



DUBAI (Dispatches) - India captain Rohit Sharma has no plans to quit the 50-overs format anytime soon, the opener said after guiding the team to the Champions Trophy title in Dubai.

Rohit quit Twenty20 Internationals immediately after leading India to their second 20-overs World Cup title in West Indies last year.

Speculation was rife that the opener, who turns 38 next month, might do likewise after India beat New Zealand in the 50-overs final on Sunday.

Though not asked about retirement plans, Rohit headed off speculation by ending his post-match press conference saying, "One more thing, I'm not going to retire from this format, just to make sure that no rumours are spread moving forward."

Sunday's win marked India's second successive title in a global tournament organised by the International Cricket Council.

Under Rohit, India have lost just one match - the final of the home 50-overs World Cup in 2023 to Australia - in their last three ICC events.

Like in the T20 World Cup last year, India were unbeaten throughout the tournament and Rohit saved his best for the final when he smashed a match-winning 76 in a low-scoring contest.

"I know how important it is to score runs in the powerplay, because we saw in all five games that after 10 overs, it becomes very difficult (to score) when the field spreads and spinners come in," India's test and one-day international captain said.

"It becomes a little tough because the pitch is already slow and we're batting second."

Rohit, who scored a record five hundreds in a single ODI World Cup in 2019 - even though India crashed out in the semi-finals - said team success gave him more joy than personal milestones.

"I contributed a lot in the 2019 World Cup, but we didn't win. It wasn't fun.

"Even if you score 30-40 runs and win the match, you get more satisfaction and happiness."

Man United Owner Ratcliffe Blasts Big-Money Flops, Backs Amorim



LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester United co-owner Sir Jim Ratcliffe has blasted some of his troubled club's stars as "not good enough" and "probably overpaid".

Ratcliffe made his scathing assessment after enduring a dismal start to his reign at Old Trafford since taking charge of football operations in February last year.

The British billionaire named Rasmus Hojlund, Andre Onana and Casemiro, Jadon Sancho and Antony as the chief causes of his frustration.

Sancho and Antony are currently on loan at Chelsea and Real Betis respectively after underachieving with United.

In reference to United still paying instalments of transfer fees on several players, Ratcliffe, who shares ownership with the US-based Glazer family, told the BBC in an interview broadcast yesterday: "If you look at the players we are buying this summer, that we didn't buy, we're buying Antony, we're buying Casemiro, we're buying Onana, we're buying Hojlund, we're buying Sancho.

"These are all things from the past, whether we like it or not, we've inherited those things and have to sort that out.

"For Sancho, who now plays for Chelsea and we pay half his wages, we're paying £17 million to buy him in the summer."

Asked if he was suggesting those players were not good enough for United, Ratcliffe said: "Some are not good enough and some probably are overpaid, but for us to mould the squad that we are fully responsible for, and accountable for, will take time."

After United finished eighth in the Premier League last season and won the FA Cup, Ratcliffe and his United advisors opted to stick with boss Erik ten Hag.

Newcastle Stun West Ham to Boost Champions League Hopes

LONDON (Dispatches) - Newcastle reignited their bid to qualify for the Champions League as Bruno Guimaraes sealed a controversial 1-0 win at West Ham.

Brazil midfielder Guimaraes struck in the second half as West Ham's claims for a foul in the build-up were ignored.

Eddie Howe's side are up to sixth place in the Premier League, level on points with fifth-placed Manchester City and two points behind fourth-placed Chelsea.

A top four berth will guarantee Newcastle return to the Champions League after missing out this season.

Even finishing fifth could be enough to ensure qualification for Europe's elite club competition depending on the results of the remaining English clubs in continental action.

After losing three of their last four matches, the Magpies'



restorative victory was perfectly timed ahead of their second League Cup final appearance in three seasons.

Newcastle, beaten by Manchester United in the League Cup showpiece in 2023, face Premier League leaders Liverpool in the final at Wembley on Sunday.

The Tyneside club are aiming to win their first major trophy since the 1969 Inter-Cities Fairs Cup and their first domestic prize since the 1955 FA Cup.

"One of our best wins of the season, not in terms of performance but desire and heart," Howe said.

"I felt we were in need of a win to go into the final with a real boost. It will do us the world of good. Also for our league table position today was vital."