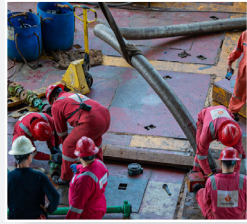


British Minister for West Asia Hamish Falconer Says the United Kingdom, Along With France and Germany, Supports Settlement of Iran's Nuclear Issue Through Diplomacy

# IRAN NEWS

Rafael Grossi, the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Says He Will Pay a Visit to Tehran Soon for Talks With Iranian Officials Over Iran's Nuclear Program Activities

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### Russian Missiles Strike Ukrainian City, Killing 34



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### Supreme Leader Emphasizes Ongoing Maximum Readiness



TEHRAN - In a meeting with senior commanders and officials of the Iranian Armed Forces held on Sunday, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei stressed the importance of continuously enhancing the nation's maximum readiness—both in military hardware and software—and described the armed forces as the shield of the country and the refuge of the people against any form of aggression.

"The country's advancements have angered and frustrated the enemies of Iran," the Supreme Leader stated, while also acknowledging the existence of certain weaknesses in areas such as the economy, which he said must be addressed through ongoing effort.

Ayatollah Khamenei highlighted the need for constant strengthening of the armed forces' hardware—such as military capabilities, organizational structure, and living conditions of personnel. He added that beyond physical readiness, "software readiness"—faith in the mission, belief in the righteousness of the cause, and spiritual motivation—was equally crucial and is currently under deliberate attack by hostile forces.

He pointed out that the Islamic and independent nature of the Iranian system is what provokes enmity from global powers—not simply the name "Islamic Republic," but Iran's determination to remain Muslim, independent, and dignified without relying on foreign powers.

Referring to the double standards of global superpowers, the Leader said, "Those who arm themselves with the deadliest weapons in the world seek to deny other nations the right to even develop defensive capabilities." He emphasized that Iran's armed forces must embody certainty, faith, resolve, courage, and trust in God—traits that have historically determined the failure or success of military powers.

Ayatollah Khamenei also called on national media and cultural institutions to contribute to strengthening the country's "software readiness." He noted that Iran today is not only significantly more advanced militarily than in the past, but also stronger spiritually—evidenced by the passionate eagerness of countless young, faithful, and motivated Iranians willing to serve in critical and challenging areas.

### Hopes for a Win-Win Outcome in U.S. Negotiations



TEHRAN - Mohammad Jafar Qaem Panah, the Executive Vice President of Iran and acting head of the Presidential Office, expressed optimism that the ongoing negotiations between Iran and the United States—guided by the principles of dignity, wisdom, and national interest as emphasized by the Supreme Leader—will conclude successfully in a win-win outcome.

Speaking on Monday at a gathering of economic stakeholders in Kermanshah Province, Qaem Panah praised the Supreme Leader for maintaining national dignity during the negotiations and called for recognition of his leadership in shaping the dialogue.

He added that in the near future, a more prominent presence of Iran on the international stage is expected, which will accelerate the country's development, alleviate economic hardships, and create new opportunities for the business community.

Qaem Panah emphasized the importance of enhancing foreign relations and urged a more open approach to international tourism.

The Vice President identified poverty, inflation, and unemployment as the three major enemies of the Iranian people, noting that investors, entrepreneurs, and merchants are at the forefront of fighting these challenges. He said Iran's development is tied to the private sector's active involvement.

## Iran Rejects Simultaneous Negotiations and Threats

TEHRAN - In a comprehensive press briefing, Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Ismail Baghaei, addressed a range of international developments, including the ongoing negotiations with the United States, regional conflicts, and Tehran's diplomatic efforts. His key message: Iran does not accept negotiations under the shadow of threats and sanctions.

Speaking to the press, Baghaei reiterated Iran's firm stance on the ongoing diplomatic engagement with the United States. "You cannot claim to support negotiations while simultaneously continuing with policies of pressure, sanctions, and threats," he said, calling such a dual approach unacceptable.

He emphasized that Iran's position is clear and has been conveyed directly to all parties involved, particularly during recent indirect talks held in Muscat. These negotiations, the first of their kind in the current phase, focused on the U.S. sanctions and Iran's nuclear activities.

Addressing speculation about the format and location of future talks, Baghaei clarified that Iran continues to reject the idea of direct negotiations with the U.S. "Direct talks are neither beneficial nor acceptable to us," he stated. The current method—indirect talks mediated by Oman—remains unchanged and, according to Baghaei, has proven effective based on past experiences.

He added that discussions are ongoing regarding the location of the next round of talks, which may not be held in Oman.

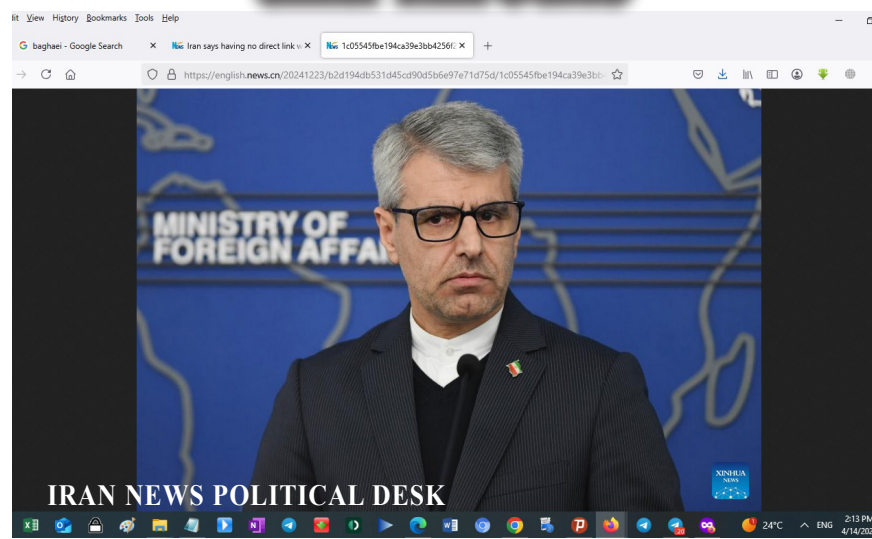
Baghaei underscored that the primary issue for Iran in all these diplomatic engagements remains the lifting of what Tehran considers "unjust and decades-long sanctions." He called for not just promises, but tangible and effective results, stressing that any easing of sanctions must be felt in practice—not just on paper.

Turning to regional issues, Baghaei condemned Israel's continued military actions in Gaza and the West Bank, describing them as genocide and systematic violations of international law. He criticized the international community, particularly Western nations, for their silence and alleged complicity through inaction.

He also noted renewed attacks in Lebanon and Yemen, stating that Iran condemns all forms of aggression in the region.

Baghaei confirmed that a strategic cooperation agreement between Iran and Russia has been approved by Moscow and is now undergoing internal ratification in Tehran. He highlighted the importance of this agreement for Iran's foreign policy and said that steps toward implementation are already underway.

He also addressed Iran's longstanding grievances regarding Germany's alleged role in supplying chemical weapons to Saddam Hussein's regime during the Iran-Iraq war. Iran has proposed the



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

creation of a fact-finding mechanism to examine the involvement of German companies. Tehran expects Berlin to respond positively if it is acting in good faith.

Regarding current bilateral ties, Baghaei expressed disappointment over deteriorating relations due to what he termed as "extremist behavior" by German authorities, including the closure of Iranian centers in Germany.

Baghaei stressed that supporting the people of Gaza remains a central theme in Iran's diplomatic efforts. He condemned the silence of many European countries

regarding the Israeli offensive and called for stronger action to halt what he described as war crimes.

He also commented on diplomatic moves involving regional actors such as Egypt, Qatar, the UAE, and Kuwait, noting that Iran is keeping these nations informed of developments in the indirect U.S. talks.

Baghaei confirmed an upcoming visit by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief to Tehran. He described the visit as pre-planned and part of regular interactions with the IAEA.

In response to claims about American companies operating in Iran, Baghaei stated that Iran has never opposed economic cooperation, and any restrictions are the result of U.S. policies, not Iran's. Iran considers recent European sanctions "unconstructive and illegal." Baghaei criticized what he called the West's double standards regarding human rights and legal norms.

He expressed concern over the detention of an Iranian woman in France, reportedly over her support for Gaza. Iran has requested consular access.

An Iranian commercial delegation recently visited Afghanistan to explore opportunities for industrial and economic cooperation.

On relations with Egypt, Baghaei said that continuous communications between the two countries reflect a gradual improvement in bilateral ties.

Iran is following up on the case of an Iranian woman whose body was found in Canada, despite the lack of diplomatic ties. Tehran is seeking more information from Canadian authorities.

Baghaei concluded by reiterating that there is no change in the structure of ongoing negotiations between Iran and the United States. All talks remain indirect and are focused solely on nuclear issues and sanctions relief. He dismissed rumors of expanded agendas and emphasized that diplomacy remains a key pillar of Iran's foreign policy.

In sum, Iran's message to the international community remains firm: dialogue cannot be effective under pressure, and the only acceptable outcome is the full and verifiable lifting of sanctions.

### More Regional States Hail Iran-U.S. Talks



TEHRAN (PresTV) - More regional states have expressed support for the indirect negotiations that were held between Iran and the United States in the Omani capital Muscat, calling for the continuation.

Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani conveyed Doha's approval of the process, while voicing the country's readiness to support the diplomatic track during a phone conversation with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi on Sunday.

Qatar's potential contribution to the process, Al Thani said, would be aimed at resolving outstanding issues between Tehran and Washington.

Araqchi, for his part, outlined the objectives and framework of the Muscat talks, stressing the Islamic Republic's commitment to utilize all diplomatic tools towards unraveling existing complications.

In a separate phone call with Araqchi, Emirati Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan expressed his appreciation for Iran's decision to pursue dialogue with the U.S.

He described the move as a positive diplomatic step and voiced hope that the process would yield constructive outcomes for the broader region.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelaty welcomed the negotiations during a phone conversation with the top Iranian diplomat, referencing a previous official statement by Cairo that had endorsed the Muscat process.

Abdelaty expressed hope that the dialogue would lead to a "favorable outcome."

Araqchi thanked Egypt for its supportive stance and elaborated on Tehran's outlook regarding the future of diplomacy with Washington.

### Yemeni Armed Forces Shoot Down 19th American Drone



SANAA (Dispatches) - The Yemeni army says it has shot down another advanced American MQ-9 drone over the country's airspace.

The UAV force of the Yemeni Armed Forces announced in a statement on Sunday the downing of the drone, which came on Sunday.

The downing, the statement said, is a response to the ongoing American aggression against Yemen and its horrific massacres against the Yemeni people.

The average unit cost of an MQ-9 is estimated at \$33 million, which means the American loss from the downing of the drones in Yemen is already more than \$600 million.

Earlier, Yemeni forces struck vital Israeli targets in the occupied territories. During those operations, Yemen fired two ballistic missiles, including a hypersonic one, at an Israeli military base and Ben Gurion Airport.

A Yemeni drone also hit a vital Israeli target in the occupied lands.

"By the grace of Allah, both operations have successfully achieved their objectives, shutting down Ben Gurion Airport for about an hour, causing panic and confusion among the settlers, forcing millions of them to enter shelters," the Yemeni forces said.

Yemen has vowed that operations against American and Israeli targets will continue as long as the genocide in Gaza and US aggression against Yemen persist.

"The Israeli enemy, along with the Americans, must realize that beloved Yemen—its leadership, people, and army—will not back down from its steadfast position in supporting and backing the oppressed Palestinian people, nor will it abandon its religious, moral, and humanitarian duties, regardless of the repercussions and the outcomes," the Yemeni forces added.

The latest strike came shortly after the United States carried out a new wave of airstrikes targeting Yemen's central province of al-Bayda and the provinces of Sa'ada and Hudaydah.

## Smart Strategies Essential in Countering Cognitive Warfare



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Commander of Iran's Army Air Force emphasized the urgent need for comprehensive and intelligent strategies to combat cognitive warfare, stressing that responsible and effective use of cyberspace can boost public awareness, strengthen social cohesion, and preserve national security.

Speaking at the second festival honoring content creators in the virtual space of the Air Force, Brigadier General Hamid Vahedi stated on Monday that modern warfare has shifted from traditional battlefields to targeting human cognition. "The Supreme Leader has pointed out that dominating minds is more valuable to the enemy than conquering territories. The enemy's vulnerability lies in your awareness—stay vigilant," he remarked.

General Vahedi outlined the core tactics of cognitive warfare waged through cyberspace. These include the dissemination of fake news to polarize public perception, erode trust, and replace certainty with doubt; spreading distrust via unregulated digital platforms; and fostering psychological insecurity, all of which contribute to societal, generational, and identity fractures.

He further highlighted that cyberspace has become the primary battlefield in this new form of warfare. "The Supreme Leader has said media today are more effective than missiles, drones, or aircraft in repelling enemies, as they influence hearts and minds," he noted, adding that success hinges on owning powerful media tools.

Describing the internet as the broadest media network of our time, General Vahedi stressed the importance of strategic planning and digital governance. "Content production must align with a deep understanding of virtual space and cater to diverse age groups, preferences, and needs," he said.

"In today's world, a simple click can determine victory or defeat," he continued. "If we don't

produce content, the enemy will—and they do it with skill and purpose. Cyberspace has redefined the nature of war and now presents both opportunities and threats. Utilizing it wisely is a national necessity."

He concluded by calling for persistent efforts in the virtual domain. "Every investment in cyberspace is a safeguard for our nation. Alongside missile and aerial defenses, we must also take cyberspace seriously."

Also speaking at the event, Hojjatolleslam Abbas Mohammad-Hassani, head of the Army's Ideological and Political Organization, underscored the need to establish authority over cyberspace.

"We must govern this domain—it's where our target audience resides," he declared. "No one is absent from this space unless they're physically incapacitated."

Acknowledging that the enemy currently dominates the digital arena, he said it's critical for Iran to have a visible and effective presence. "Cyberspace is like a grand marketplace where everyone has a booth. We need to enrich our own spaces to meet audience demands."

He stressed that digital platforms must not lack content that addresses real user needs, advocating for a problem-solving approach to online engagement.

"We need defenders in cyberspace just as in the real world, because we are under attack," Mohammad-Hassani said. "Cyber defense must be timely, intelligent, and collective. Everyone has a role to play, and we must train skilled individuals for this mission."

He concluded by warning that cyberspace affects everyone—except those with the digital literacy to navigate it safely.

The festival, hosted by the Army Air Force, took place Monday morning and featured the presence of senior military and media officials. At the conclusion, outstanding digital content creators were honored with certificates of recognition.

# IRAN NEWS



## Agriculture Minister Leaves for Brazil to Attend BRICS Summit

TEHRAN (ILNA) - Minister of Agriculture, Jihad Gholamreza Nouri Ghezjeljeh, has traveled to Brazil to participate in the 15th BRICS Ministers of Agriculture Meeting.

Minister Nouri Ghezjeljeh is leading an economic delegation to the Brazilian capital, Brasilia, where key topics on the summit's agenda include food security and nutrition, sustainability, agricultural innovation and financing, and international agricultural trade.

A significant outcome of this year's summit will be the approval of the BRICS Action Plan for Agricultural Cooperation for the 2025-2028 period.

Iran officially became a member of BRICS in 2024, joining the founding members—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—alongside Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates, who also joined in January 2024.

## Iran Expo 2025 to Welcome 2,700 Economic Figures from 101 Countries



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - In line with the national motto for this year, "Investment for Production," Iran is preparing to host Iran Expo 2025, a major international exhibition showcasing the country's export capabilities. The event has attracted significant interest from political dignitaries, economic players, and foreign investors across the globe, with 2,700 participants from 101 countries expected to attend.

First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref, speaking at the Policy Council meeting for the 7th Exhibition of Export Capabilities of the Islamic Republic of Iran, emphasized that the exhibition is a strategic initiative aligned with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei's guidance. The event aims to highlight two critical national strategies: investment and production. Aref noted that the widespread participation demonstrates the global interest in Iran's scientific, technological, and export potential.

Ministers of cultural heritage, industry, mining, trade, communications, along with Tehran's mayor and senior officials, were also present at the planning session. Aref called for a comprehensive evaluation immediately following the event, focusing on performance review, increased participation, and future strategies.

Aref also praised the collaborative efforts behind the exhibition's organization, emphasizing that Iran Expo 2025 is not only a showcase of national strength but also a platform to enhance Iran's regional and international standing.

Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade, Seyed Mohammad Atabak, highlighted the surge in foreign participation this year, crediting ongoing efforts by the Vice President. He noted that the number of invited foreign delegates has seen a "significant leap" compared to previous years—an indication of growing international business interest in Iran. He also reported that non-oil exports have grown by 18% compared to the same period last year, reflecting the government's commitment to expanding trade.

Mohammad Ali Dehghan Dehnavi, head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization, reported that representatives from five continents have registered for the event. Over 2,700 economic players including investors and traders will attend, and all available exhibition space has been allocated to domestic and international companies.

Dehnavi outlined that the exhibition will feature six key product groups: Food industry; Agriculture and fisheries; Industry and construction; Hand-woven carpets and handicrafts; Pharmaceuticals and medical equipment; and Petrochemicals and cosmetics.

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



## Time to Assemble Iran's Oil Negotiation Teams

TEHRAN - With diplomatic efforts underway between Iran and Oman, former CEO of Iran's Gas Export Company, Mehran Amirmaeini, stressed the urgent need for Iran to prepare specialized oil negotiation teams. He emphasized that if talks yield positive outcomes, the country must be ready to finalize contracts and launch projects swiftly.

Amirmaeini pointed out in an interview with ILNA that over the past one to two decades, Iran's oil and gas industry has suffered from a severe lack of meaningful investment. This stagnation has reached a point where even domestic energy needs are difficult to meet — let alone expanding exports. He stated that the core challenge facing both the economy and the energy sector is investment, and any progress in the diplomatic talks could pave the way for foreign investors to return.

He added that beyond financing, Iran also needs modern project management and access to new technologies. Success at the negotiation table, he said, would allow Iran to mobilize all necessary production factors, helping stabilize and increase production in the oil, gas, and refining sectors.

Amirmaeini underscored that while various political groups have made claims about advancing the energy sector, the reality is that sanctions have been a significant obstacle. "Only the lifting of sanctions can resolve these deep-rooted problems," he said.

Looking ahead, he explained that should sanctions be lifted, Iran must focus on identifying attractive projects for foreign investors and offering them under suitable contractual frameworks. But just having model contracts is not enough. What's crucial, he said, is having agile and skilled negotiation teams to accelerate investment opportunities in the oil sector.

"If the Oman negotiations bear fruit, we must be ready to act quickly. Legal frameworks are especially critical, and we must be prepared to finalize agreements and commence projects in the shortest time possible," Amirmaeini

noted.

Regarding exports, he cautioned against expecting an immediate return to traditional or new markets. "We must re-enter the global market gradually. Many countries are keen to diversify their energy suppliers and reduce dependence on limited sources, and Iran can certainly fill that gap. However, due to high domestic consumption—particularly of gasoline, diesel, gas, and electricity—initial investments should prioritize domestic supply."

He also highlighted Iran's potential gas export opportunities, pointing to Pakistan as a promising market, contingent on sanctions being lifted. "We could revive the long-stalled pipeline project. Additionally, we can broaden talks with Turkey and Iraq, invest in LNG infrastructure, and target more distant global markets. The LNG market is growing rapidly, and we need to focus our attention there," he said.

Currently, the bulk of Iran's oil exports go to China. Still, Amirmaeini expressed confidence that new markets can be found, especially as countries seek to diversify their energy sources.

He acknowledged that some oil producers may not welcome Iran's return to the market but said the overall market could absorb Iran's share. "Even with OPEC and OPEC+ managing oversupply to maintain price stability, all players stand to benefit in the long run," he stated.

On potential collaboration with American oil companies, Amirmaeini noted that while Iran hasn't worked with U.S. firms since the 1979 revolution, American companies played a significant role in developing Iran's oil sector beforehand. "If the political climate allows it, U.S. firms could compete with their European counterparts to invest in Iran. They hold advanced technology and expertise, especially in shale oil, and though our fields don't require cutting-edge tech, any company that brings strong technical, financial, and legal capabilities will have an edge."

## Iranophobia, Main Reason Behind Drop in Tourist Arrivals



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The head of the Iranian Tour Operators Association, Mostafa Shafiei Shakib, has called out persistent fear and misinformation as the biggest obstacles to reviving Iran's tourism sector. Speaking to IRNA, he stressed that exaggerated portrayals of Iran in international media have deterred both foreign tourists and Iranian expatriates from visiting—a challenge that requires collective effort to overcome.

Shakib identified what he called "Iranophobia" as the main reason behind the steep drop in tourist arrivals. He explained that fear—often rooted in distorted narratives or politically motivated stories—has discouraged not only foreigners but also Iranian dual nationals, who fear arrest or becoming entangled in political disputes. "This fear is often unfounded but deeply rooted," he said. "It even affects people coming back for personal reasons, like funerals."

He shared a personal story to illustrate the intensity of this anxiety: after his sister passed away, her daughter, a U.S. resident for over 15 years, was hesitant to return for the funeral. "She was terrified—worried about getting detained or what might happen to her family," he said. Despite reassurances, she remained anxious throughout her stay, though she encountered no issues during her visit.

While Shakib acknowledged that international media has played a major role in shaping this fear-driven image of Iran, he didn't shy away from criticizing domestic shortcomings. He pointed to internal mismanagement and certain actions that have provided ammunition for critics abroad. "We've made mistakes that contribute to the narrative," he admitted. "And sadly, some of our own nationals living outside the country have helped amplify these negative perceptions."

## Golden Opportunity for International Cooperation at Tehran Oil Exhibition



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Deputy Minister of Oil for International Affairs and Trade has highlighted the vital role of energy diplomacy, describing the upcoming Tehran International Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition as an unparalleled opportunity to enhance international cooperation within the energy sector.

Seyed Ali-Mohammad Mousavi made these remarks on Sunday (April 13) during a briefing session for the 29th edition of the exhibition. The event, scheduled to take place from May 7 to 10, 2025, was introduced to ambassadors, delegates, and economic attachés. Mousavi emphasized the exhibition's historic status, noting that it is not only the largest energy trade platform in West Asia, but also serves as a hub for exchanging ideas and shaping the future of the global energy landscape.

Mousavi stated that the exhibition has served as a cornerstone of energy diplomacy over the past three decades, facilitating practical collaborations and political dialogue. He affirmed Iran's readiness—as one of the leading nations in oil and gas reserves—to attract foreign investment and modernize its energy infrastructure.

Highlighting the Ministry of Oil's recent efforts to adopt advanced technologies across upstream, midstream, and downstream sectors, the Deputy Minister said the goal is to establish a transparent and stable environment for international investors. This includes implementing key projects—such as the development of oil and gas fields—through modern financial frameworks like IPC (Iranian Petroleum Contracts).

Mousavi introduced a series of specialized forums that will be held during the exhibition, stressing their importance in presenting investment strategies and technical collaboration opportunities. He pointed to the Conference on Investment Transformation and Project Financing by the National Iranian Oil Company as a major platform offering unique prospects for joint ventures and technical partnerships.

He concluded by emphasizing Iran's role as a reliable partner in the global energy market.

## Investment Opportunities from the U.S. to Iran



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Chairman of the Investment and Financing Commission of the Iran Chamber of Commerce has outlined new potential avenues for attracting American investment to Iran, highlighting sectors ranging from energy and aviation to healthcare, tourism, and infrastructure.

In an interview with ILNA, Farshid Shokrkhodaei emphasized that sustained diplomatic agreements between Iran and the United States could pave the way for meaningful American investment in Iran. One immediate area of interest, he noted, is the leasing and acquisition of aircraft. Shokrkhodaei explained that leasing arrangements, financed through revenue generated by the planes, represent a practical form of foreign investment and could extend beyond aviation into broader transport and infrastructure sectors.

"The volume of domestic and international air travel in Iran makes leasing attractive to American finance companies," he said, suggesting they would be open to funding Iranian airlines.

Shokrkhodaei also pointed to Iran's vast energy sector—particularly oil, gas, and electricity generation—as a major opportunity for foreign investment. He noted that U.S. companies specializing in energy finance could potentially fund projects carried out by energy firms in Iran, with the output remaining within the country.

He drew a parallel with France's Total, which engaged in a long-term joint venture in Iran's South Pars gas field, emphasizing that similar models could span the full energy value chain—from exploration and drilling to refining and production. With Iran ranking first globally in combined oil and gas reserves, he described the opportunity as "enormous."

## Iraqi Chamber of Commerce Heads Emphasize Expanding Economic Ties with Qazvin Province

TEHRAN - In a joint meeting between the Chambers of Commerce from Qazvin and Ilam and several Iraqi provinces, Iraqi representatives underscored their commitment to enhancing economic cooperation with Iran—particularly with Qazvin Province.

The meeting brought together officials from Qazvin and Ilam chambers along with delegates from the Chambers of Commerce of Karbala, Samawah, Diwaniyah, Babylon, Kut, and Diyala in Iraq. Provincial authorities and members of the Iranian parliament were also in attendance. The session focused on streamlining trade procedures, increasing commercial exchanges, and creating joint investment opportunities.

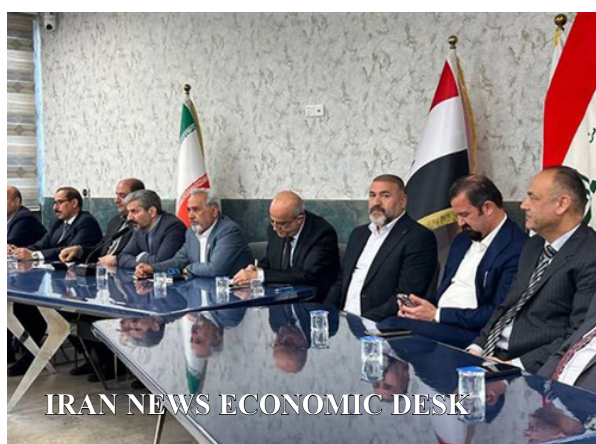
Alireza Pazouki, a board member of the Qazvin Chamber of Commerce, highlighted the trade volume between Iran and Iraq in 2023, noting it had reached \$11 billion. He stated that the two countries aim to increase this figure to \$20 billion, a goal that relies heavily on active participation from both sides' business communities.

Pazouki also emphasized Qazvin's significant industrial and agricultural potential. "Despite its limited geographic size, Qazvin is a major producer in the detergent, food, and industrial sectors and can play a vital role in meeting the needs of the Iraqi market," he said. He invited Iraqi business delegates to visit the province's factories and industrial sites.

Throughout the session, both sides stressed the importance of strengthening bilateral cooperation, enhancing private sector interactions, and expanding economic exchanges.

Mousavi, head of the Babylon Chamber of Commerce, expressed optimism about strengthening economic relations with Iran, especially Qazvin. "This province's industrial and agricultural capabilities can effectively meet Babylon's market demands. We hope these engagements will lead to actionable agreements," he said.

Al-Aifi, head of the Diwaniyah Chamber of Commerce, stated that



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

Diwaniyah has vast agricultural capacity and is seeking complementary technologies and products from Iran. "Our visit to Qazvin's production facilities introduced us to new opportunities. Strengthening commercial ties is a priority for us," he added.

Tamimi, head of the Diyala Chamber of Commerce, mentioned that Diyala is interested in joint ventures in the food and pharmaceutical industries. "Exploring Qazvin's capabilities was extremely valuable. These visits are a prelude to future joint investments," he said.

Sajed, head of the Kut Chamber of Commerce, welcomed cooperation with Iranian traders, especially in packaging, detergents, and food products. "Qazvin has shown it can be a reliable partner in supplying the Iraqi market. This relationship should continue," he noted.

The head of the Karbala Chamber of Commerce also spoke at the meeting, saying, "Karbala has always been a gateway for trade with Iran. Collaborating with provinces like Qazvin, which possess strong industrial and export capacities, can help spur regional economic growth. We are ready to establish sustainable trade routes."

At the end of the official sessions, the Qazvin Chamber of Commerce honored the visiting Iraqi delegations with symbolic cultural gifts as a gesture of appreciation. Mousavi (Babylon), Al-Aifi (Diwaniyah), Tamimi (Diyala), Sajed (Kut), and the head of the Karbala Chamber were all formally recognized.

This friendly and cordial exchange demonstrated the shared commitment of both sides to expanding economic and commercial partnerships between the Iranian and Iraqi private sectors.

The program concluded with a series of expert panels focusing on agriculture, food industries, construction, and leather goods (especially bags and shoes). These sessions took the form of B2B meetings, enabling direct interaction among traders, producers, and economic actors, and laying the groundwork for future collaborations.

## Bangladesh Puts Except Israel Back on Passports Amid Gaza Anger

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Bangladesh has reintroduced the phrase "Except Israel" in its passports to bar travel to the Jewish state. Bangladeshi passports used to have the text "This passport is valid for all countries of the world except Israel" but dropped the last two words, "except Israel," from new electronic passports in 2021.

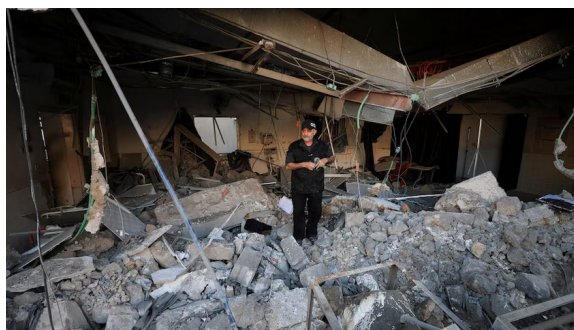
However, Bangladesh continued to maintain the ban on travel to the Jewish state.

The Home Ministry has issued a directive asking the passport and immigration department to reinstate that clause, state news agency Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) reported on Sunday.

"We issued the letter (directive) on April 7," the ministry's security services division's deputy secretary, Nilima Afroze, said.



## Israel Strikes Hospital in Northern Gaza, Forcing Evacuations



GAZA (Dispatches) - Israel struck a hospital in northern Gaza early Sunday, forcing patients to evacuate as attacks intensified.

The pre-dawn strike hit Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City, after Israel issued an evacuation warning, according to Gaza's ministry of health.

The head of the World Health Organisation said that a child died during the evacuation.

"A child died due to disruption of care," WHO director general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a post on X. "The emergency room, laboratory, emergency room X-ray machines and the pharmacy were destroyed," he added, quoting information from the director of Gaza's Al-Ahli hospital.

"The hospital was forced to move 50 patients to other hospitals. 40 critical patients couldn't be moved," he said "Hospitals are protected under international humanitarian law. Attacks on health care must stop."

The hospital, run by the Diocese of Jerusalem, was attacked on Palm Sunday, which commemorates Jesus's entry into Jerusalem.

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Hours later, a separate strike on a car in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza, killed at least seven people – six brothers and their friend – according to staff at the morgue of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, which received the bodies.

Israel said it struck a command and control centre used by Hamas at the hospital to plan and execute attacks against Israeli civilians and soldiers, without providing evidence. It said prior to the strike, steps were taken to mitigate harm, including issuing warnings, and using precise munitions and aerial surveillance.

## Russian Missiles Strike Ukrainian City, Killing 34

SUMY (Dispatches) - A Russian missile strike on Sunday on the Ukrainian city of Sumy killed at least 34 people, authorities said as European and U.S. leaders condemned one of the deadliest attacks in months.

Two ballistic missiles hit the center of the north-eastern city, close to the Russian border, on Sunday morning, Ukrainian authorities said.

People ran for cover amid burning cars and bodies were left strewn in the street. President Volodymyr Zelensky stressed that the attack occurred on Palm Sunday, a major Christian feast.

"Only completely deranged scum can do something like this," he said in his evening address.

Emergency services said the missiles killed 34 people, including two children, and wounded 117, including 15 children.

The dead were seen covered in silver sheets at the scene of the strike where rescuers worked through the rubble of a building near a destroyed trolleybus.

Zelensky said eight of the 68 injured in hospitals were in serious condition.

"In addition to the university, the strike damaged five apartment buildings, cafes, shops, and the district court. In total, the Russian attack damaged 20 buildings," said Zelensky.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was "deeply alarmed and shocked" by the strike, which highlighted a "devastating pattern of similar assaults on Ukrainian cities and towns in recent weeks," his spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

US President Donald Trump's special envoy to Ukraine, retired lieutenant general Keith Kellogg, said on X that Russia's attack on civilian targets "crosses any line of decency".

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio expressed condolences to the victims of the "horrifying Russian missile attack on Sumy".

"This is a tragic reminder of why President Trump and his administration are putting so much time and effort into trying to end this war and achieve durable peace," Rubio added in a statement later echoed by US National Security Council spokesman Brian Hughes.

The strike came two days after US presidential envoy Steve Witkoff travelled to Russia to meet President Vladimir Putin and push Trump's efforts to end the war.

Zelensky on Sunday urged the US president to visit his country to better understand the devastation wrought by Russia's invasion.

"Please, before any kind of decisions, any kind of forms of negotiations, come to see people, civilians, warriors, hospitals, churches, children destroyed or dead," he said according to a transcript of an interview to be broadcast on CBS.

## Hungarian Opposition Leader Pledges to Unlock EU Funds If Elected



BUDAPEST (Dispatches) - Hungarian opposition leader Peter Magyar vowed to unlock billions of euros of suspended European Union funding to revive the economy if elected next year, and to hold a referendum on whether Ukraine should join the 27-member bloc.

Standard & Poor's cut Hungary's credit rating outlook to negative from stable late on Friday amid growing risks to fiscal stability from trade wars, lower EU fund inflows and high debt servicing costs amid budget loosening ahead of a 2026 election.

In power since 2010, right-wing Prime Minister Viktor Orban has been locked in a series of running battles with the EU on rule-of-law reforms, which has led to a suspension of funding, hitting the economy weighed down by years of high inflation.

Some surveys show Magyar's centre-right Tisza Party has overtaken Orban's nationalist Fidesz in opinion polls after two years of near-stagnation and new risks to Hungary's export-reliant economy from U.S. tariffs on imports from the EU.

## Trump Vows Tariffs for All, Signals China Exemptions Will Be Short-Lived

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Donald Trump warned Sunday that no country would be "getting off the hook" on tariffs, as his administration suggested exemptions seen as favoring China would be short-lived.

The world's two largest economies have been locked in a fast-moving, high-stakes game of brinkmanship since Trump launched a global tariff assault that particularly targeted Chinese imports.

Tit-for-tat exchanges have seen US levies imposed on China rise to 145 percent, and Beijing setting a retaliatory 125 percent band on US imports.

The US side had appeared to dial down the pressure slightly on Friday, listing tariff exemptions for smartphones, laptops, semiconductors and other electronic products for which China is a major source.

Trump and some of his top aides said Sunday that the exemptions had been misconstrued and would only be temporary as his team pursued fresh tariffs against many items on the list.

"NOBODY is getting 'off the hook'... especially not China which, by far, treats us the worst!" he posted on his Truth Social platform.

Earlier, Beijing's Commerce Ministry had said Friday's move only "represents a small step" and insisted that the Trump administration should "completely cancel" the whole tariff strategy.

Chinese President Xi Jinping warned Monday -- as he kicked off a tour of Southeast Asia with a visit to manufacturing powerhouse Vietnam -- that protectionism "will lead nowhere".

Writing in an article published in a Vietnamese newspaper, Xi urged the two countries to "resolutely safeguard the multilateral trading system, stable global industrial and supply chains, and open and cooperative international environment."

He also reiterated Beijing's line that a "trade war and tariff war will produce no winner."

Asian stock markets rose Monday after Trump's announcement of the



tariff exemptions.

Washington's new exemptions will benefit US tech companies such as Nvidia and Dell as well as Apple, which makes iPhones and other premium products in China.

The relief could, however, be short-lived with some of the exempted consumer electronics targeted for upcoming sector-specific tariffs on goods deemed key to US national defense networks.

On Air Force One Sunday, Trump said tariffs on the semiconductors -- which powers any major technology from e-vehicles and iPhones to missile systems -- "will be in place in the not distant future."

"Like we did with steel, like we did with automobiles, like we did with aluminum... we'll be doing that with semiconductors, with chips and numerous other things," he said.

"We want to make our chips and semiconductors and other things in our country," Trump reiterated, adding that he would do the same with "drugs and pharmaceuticals."

The US president said he would announce tariff rates for semiconductors "over the next week," while his commerce secretary, Howard Lutnick, said they would likely be in place "in a month or two."

The US president sent financial markets into a tailspin earlier this month by announcing sweeping import taxes on dozens of trade partners, only to abruptly announce a 90-day pause for most of them.

China was excluded from the reprieve.

The White House says Trump remains optimistic about securing a deal with China, although administration officials have made it clear they expect Beijing to reach out first.

Trump's trade representative Jamieson Greer told CBS "Face the Nation" on Sunday that "we don't have any plans" for talks between the US president and his Chinese counterpart Xi.

China has sought to present itself as a stable alternative to an erratic Washington, courting countries spooked by the global economic storm.

Besides Vietnam, Xi will also visit Malaysia and Cambodia, seeking to tighten regional trade ties and with plans to meet his three Southeast Asian counterparts.

The fallout from Trump's tariffs -- and subsequent whiplash policy reversals -- has sent particular shockwaves through the US economy, with investors dumping government bonds, the dollar tumbling and consumer confidence plunging.

Adding to the pressure on Trump, Wall Street billionaires -- including a number of his own supporters -- have openly criticised the tariff strategy as damaging and counterproductive.

The White House insists the aggressive policy is bearing fruit, saying dozens of countries have already opened trade negotiations to secure a deal before the 90-day pause ends.

"We're working around the clock, day and night, sharing paper, receiving offers and giving feedback to these countries," Greer told CBS.

## Ecuador's Noboa Wins Re-Election, Voters Back Iron Fist on Cartel Violence

QUITO (Dispatches) - Incumbent President Daniel Noboa claimed a runaway victory in Ecuador's presidential election Sunday, with voters endorsing his "iron fist" approach to rampant cartel violence.

With 90 percent of the votes counted, the National Election Council said Noboa had an unassailable lead over his charismatic leftist rival Luisa Gonzalez.

Official results showed the 37-year-old president with 56 percent of the vote against Gonzalez's 44 percent.

Shocked by a weaker-than-expected showing, Gonzalez said she would call for a recount.

"I refuse to believe that the people prefer lies over the truth," she said.

Noboa claimed an "historic" victory. "There is no doubt who is the winner," he told jubilant supporters.

Noboa narrowly won February's first round, but not by enough to avoid another duel against a Gonzalez, who was bidding to become Ecuador's first woman president.

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The campaigns were dominated by anger over the lackluster economy and cartel violence that has transformed Ecuador from one of the safest countries in Latin America into the most deadly.

In the volcano-ringed capital Quito, voters wrapped up against the Andean chill and flocked to the polling stations.

"I think Ecuador is divided, but I think we all understand we are in a situation where we have to unite, whoever is leading the government," said 21-year-old architecture student Camila Medina.

In total, about 13.7 million Ecuadorans were obliged to vote.

On the eve of the ballot, Noboa declared a 60-day state of emergency in the capital and several provinces, underscoring the tense state of affairs.

This once-peaceful nation averaged a killing every hour at the start of the year, as cartels vied for control over cocaine routes that pass through Ecuador's ports.

Noboa, the guitar-strumming son of a billionaire banana magnate, has staked his political fortunes on "iron fist" security policies designed to snuff out the gangs.

He has deployed the military to the streets, captured drug capos and invited the United States to send special forces.

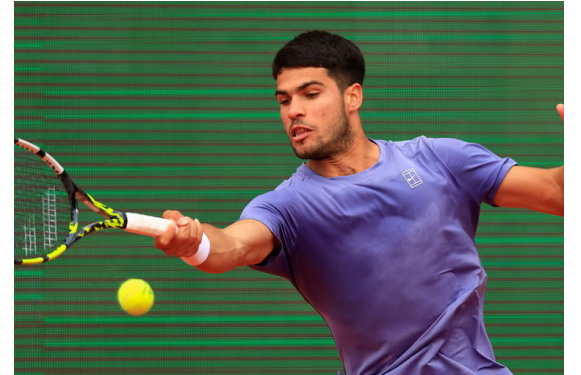


## Piastri Triumphs in Bahrain to Cap McLaren's Rise

SAKHIR (Dispatches) - Oscar Piastri wrapped up a dream weekend in Bahrain to leave McLaren with their two drivers atop the drivers standings. The Australian bossed practice and qualifying, and then produced a controlled drive under floodlights in Sakhir to follow up his success in China last month. Teammate Lando Norris was being characteristically hard on himself after a qualifying session that left him starting in sixth. A brilliant start in Sunday's nocturnal dust-up in the desert jumped him up to third, and despite a five-second penalty for positioning his car out of place on the grid, he secured a valiant third, with only George Russell's Mercedes denying a famous McLaren 1-2. The result lengthened McLaren's lead in the constructors' championship. In the drivers' title race, Norris leads his teammate by only three points, with Max Verstappen slipping to third, a further four points away. Red Bull left Bahrain looking for answers on their problematic car after Verstappen had to settle for sixth. McLaren face a welcome but nonetheless potentially complex question of how to deal with two talented teammates battling for the same prize. McLaren chief principal Andrea Stella's man-management skills could be tested to the full over the next 20 races. For now, the papaya team owned by Bahrain's sovereign wealth fund, are enjoying the moment, not that Piastri plans to overindulge in the celebrations. "I'm sure there's going to be a hell of a party! I'm not going to get involved, because I've got to race again next week (in Saudi Arabia)" said the man from Melbourne. "I'm very proud of what I've done this weekend and proud to do it here in Bahrain as well. It's

obviously a very important race for us, given our ownership. "It's never been a track that's been kind to us, so it's great to finally get the first win for the team in Bahrain," he said after McLaren finally clicked in the Gulf kingdom at their 21st attempt. Norris was more measured. "An up and down race today," he said. "Some frustrating mistakes but still plenty of positives to take away with a strong points finish for the team in Bahrain." "It was a really good race throughout, everyone pushing hard, right on the limit, which is always fun to be part of. "Congratulations to Oscar and the whole team for today's result. I'll now keep my head down and work hard as we head to Saudi Arabia next weekend." Stella praised the backing the team has received from Bahrain - through good times and bad. "When we were building the team and not achieving the results we are seeing now, they were patient and gave us the resources we needed to set out on our current trajectory," he said. "Oscar drove pretty much the perfect weekend. He was very solid in each session, every situation, and took the car to a deserved victory. "Lando, starting P6, was always going to have to work hard this evening, and a five-second penalty made his job even harder - but he put in a very strong performance and ensured we get to celebrate a double podium finish, which is important for both Championships. "I hope everyone will be enjoying the victory this evening." Everyone except Piastri, who if he is true to his word will be getting some shut eye in preparation for Jeddah's Corniche circuit on the Red Sea next week.

## Alcaraz Comes From Behind to Claim Maiden Monte Carlo Title



MONTE CARLOS (Dispatches) - Carlos Alcaraz recovered from a sluggish start to overpower Lorenzo Musetti 3-6, 6-1, 6-0 and claim his first Monte Carlo Masters title, his biggest win since lifting the Wimbledon trophy in 2024. After a disappointing North American swing in March, where he lost early in Miami and fell in the semi-finals at Indian Wells, the 21-year-old Spaniard roared back to form on clay, clinching his sixth Masters 1000 crown and 10th major title overall including four Grand Slams. "I am really happy to win Monte Carlo for the first time. It has been a really difficult week with a lot of difficult situations," Alcaraz said. "I am proud with how I dealt with everything. It has been a difficult month for me, so coming here and seeing the hard work pay off makes me happy." On a grey afternoon on Court Rainier III overlooking the Mediterranean sea, Alcaraz initially appeared out of sorts. Musetti broke twice early and capitalised on 11 unforced errors from Alcaraz's forehand to take the opening set. The Italian's variety and court craft gave him the edge against a hesitant opponent struggling to find his rhythm. But momentum shifted in the second set. Alcaraz began to strike with more authority and cleaned up his ground strokes, breaking twice to bag five consecutive games, completely flipping the script. Musetti, who had played several long matches earlier in the week, began to fade physically under the Spaniard's relentless pace, poise and power. The final set was a one-sided affair. Alcaraz broke in the opening game and raced to a 3-0 lead, at which point Musetti received a medical timeout for treatment on his right thigh. From there, the Spaniard did not look back, closing out the match with clinical efficiency with Musetti managing just eight points in the final set.

## Liverpool Win as Man United Lose Again

NEWCASTLE (Dispatches) - Liverpool moved to within two wins of the Premier League title with a 2-1 victory over West Ham United on Sunday, while Manchester United's miserable season continued as they were beaten 4-1 at Newcastle United. Chelsea were held to a 2-2 draw at home against relegation-bound Ipswich Town, while an error-strewn performance by Tottenham Hotspur led to a 4-2 away defeat by Wolverhampton Wanderers. Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah broke the record for most goal involvements in a season, to celebrate signing his new contract, and Virgil van Dijk scored a late winner as Arne Slot's team moved 13 points clear at the top of the standings. Salah created the opener for Luis Diaz in the first half and after West Ham had scored an equaliser in the 86th minute, skipper Van Dijk settled the tight contest three minutes later to leave West Ham 17th on 35 points. Van Dijk scored his 24th Premier League goal; the most of any centre back since his debut in the competition in September 2015. "It felt beautiful for multiple reasons," Van Dijk told the BBC. "It was the winner, quite late in the game but also a set-piece and we've been struggling a little bit with scoring from set-pieces which is something I feel responsibility for. "We got it done, we got the three points and now we move on, take what we did well - especially in the first half and focus on Leicester



(City) next." There was less positivity among Manchester United supporters as they trudged home from St James' Park. The visitors slipped to their 14th league defeat of the season - their joint-most losses in a single campaign since 1989-90 - with Newcastle's rampant 4-1 success taking them above champions Manchester City and up to fourth in the standings on 56 points. With coach Eddie Howe missing the contest as he remains in hospital due to illness, in-form Newcastle did not lose any of their recent momentum, racing into a 24th-minute lead through a fine Sandro Tonali volley.

The visitors responded well, however, scoring a superb goal of their own on the break, finished off by Argentine forward Alejandro Garnacho in the 37th minute, but Harvey Barnes restored Newcastle's lead early in the second half. Barnes added a third in the 64th minute, before an error from league debutant Altay Bayindir in the away goal, starting in place of first-choice stopper Andre Onana, gifted Bruno Guimaraes a fourth to cap a fifth successive win in all competitions for Newcastle. "When we suffer the second goal in the beginning of the second half we went down and we need to be better in these moments," coach Ruben Amorim told reporters. "They are already a really, really good team but the mistakes we made during the game helped the team. "We need to improve in a lot of things and our position is a reflection of our performances this season." Tottenham's fourth loss in six league games deepened coach Ange Postecoglou's crisis while easing the hosts' relegation worries. Wolves made the most of West Ham's loss away to Liverpool to go 16th in the standings on 35 points, ahead of the Hammers on goal difference and 14 points clear of 18th-placed Ipswich with six games to play. Spurs were skittish and individual mistakes were at the root of all four goals as they slumped to a defeat that leaves them two points ahead of their hosts in 15th.

## Clippers Win to Earn No. 5 Seed



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - James Harden had 12 of his game-high 39 points in overtime, delivering the Los Angeles Clippers a 124-119 win over the Golden State Warriors in San Francisco that will send the Clippers directly into the NBA playoffs while relegating the Warriors to the play-in bracket. Kawhi Leonard contributed 33 points, seven assists, six rebounds and three steals, and Ivica Zubac logged 22 points and a game-high 17 rebounds, helping the Clippers (50-32) secure the fifth seed in the Western playoffs and an opening-round matchup with the No. 4 Denver Nuggets. Stephen Curry bombed in 36 points, 21 coming on 3-pointers, for the Warriors (48-34), who dropped to seventh place in the West, where they will face the No. 8 Memphis Grizzlies in a play-in game Tuesday night in San Francisco. The winner will advance as the seventh seed and meet the No. 2 Houston Rockets in the playoffs. Harden gave the Clippers the lead for good in the five-minute overtime with a 3-pointer 69 seconds into the session. He later added another 3-pointer, two free throws, a floater in the lane and two more clinching foul shots with 3.0 seconds left to secure Los Angeles' eighth consecutive win. The Warriors had two chances to tie late in the overtime, but Draymond Green missed a layup with 26.1 seconds remaining when Golden State was down just two, and Buddy Hield misfired on a 3-point attempt with 5.1 seconds left that also could have drawn the hosts even. The extra session followed a tight finish to regulation during which Curry had 18 points in the final 7:52. But the final shot belonged to Leonard, who was harassed by Warriors defensive ace Green into an off-line 20-footer.

## McIlroy Completes Career Grand Slam With Emotional Masters Playoff Win

AUGUSTA (Dispatches) - Rory McIlroy completed golf's career Grand Slam with a tearful Masters victory, sinking a tense four-foot birdie putt on the first hole of a sudden death playoff to defeat Justin Rose. World number two McIlroy snapped an 11-year major win drought despite squandering the lead three times in the final round, weeping as he finally captured the green jacket that so long eluded him. "It feels incredible," McIlroy said. "This is my 17th time here. I was wondering if it would ever be my time. I'm thrilled and so proud to be able to call myself a Masters champion." McIlroy joined Jack Nicklaus, Tiger Woods, Gary Player, Gene Sarazen and Ben Hogan as the only players to win all four majors. Needing a par on the 72nd hole to win, McIlroy plunked his approach at the par-4 18th into a greenside bunker, blasted out to five feet but then missed a tension-packed par putt for



history, the ball going left of the hole as the crowd groaned. That set up the playoff at the 18th, which Rose had birdied from 20 feet in regulation. Rose dropped his approach 15 feet from the hole but McIlroy then landed his second shot four feet from the pin. Tension built as Rose missed right of the hole and tapped in for par, leaving McIlroy a second chance to win and make history. This time, McIlroy's stroke was true and the emotions exploded after 10 prior failed attempts to complete a career Slam at Augusta National. As the crowd roared, McIlroy grabbed his head, sank to his knees and put his head down on the 18th green and began crying. "There was a lot of pent up emotion that came out on that 18th green," McIlroy said. "It's a moment like that that makes all the close calls worth it."