

According to the Announcement of the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade, the “Ban on the Import of Foreign Goods That have Iranian-Made Equivalents” Has Been Lifted

IRAN NEWS

Iran Has Posted a Trade Surplus of \$86m for the First Month of the Current Calendar Year, Although Its Exports and Imports Fell Compared to the Same Month Last Year

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Iran, Russia Emphasize Determination to Deepen Strategic Ties



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The presidents of Iran and Russia have emphasized their shared resolve to deepen strategic cooperation and fully implement the comprehensive cooperation agreement recently signed by the two states.

In a phone conversation that addressed bilateral ties as well as regional and global developments, Masoud Pezeshkian and Vladimir Putin of Russia assessed the progress of joint projects, particularly in the monetary and banking sector, rail and road transport, and energy.

According to the Iranian presidency's website, the two presidents described the signing of the Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation Agreement as a clear indication of the depth of Tehran-Moscow relations and a milestone in strengthening political, economic, trade, and security cooperation between the two countries.

They underscored the high-level authorities' determination on both sides to fully implement this agreement.

Putin wished success for the indirect nuclear talks between Iran and the United States and announced Russia's readiness to provide the necessary technical assistance in this regard.

Iran and Russia, as two close and strategic allies, have over the past years deepened relations in various fields, despite heavy Western sanctions.

Putin signed a bill in April, ratifying the strategic partnership treaty with Iran, which had been inked in January.

Enemies Covet Iran's Power



TEHRAN - The Commander of the Iranian Army Ground Forces stated that Iran's enemies covet the strength and influence of the Islamic Republic, but the country's armed forces, including the Army and its Ground Forces, remain fully prepared and will deliver a decisive and regretful response to any enemy miscalculation.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony for a new operating room and emergency department at Sina 557 Military Hospital in Hamedan, Brigadier General Kioumars Heydari declared: "Our finger is on the trigger and our ears await the command of the Supreme Leader. If the enemy acts foolishly, we will make them regret it in a fraction of a second."

General Heydari emphasized that the enemy seeks to undermine the power established by the martyrs of the Islamic Republic. "By reviewing the history of the Sacred Defense [Iran-Iraq war], we understand Hamedan's vital role in resisting the Iraqi invasion. When Iraqi forces advanced from Qasr-e Shirin, three main groups confronted them," he noted.

He detailed that the Abouzar Brigade of Sarpol-e Zahab resisted the Baathist army bravely but with limited support, while "Bani Sadr, despite witnessing our sons being martyred under tanks and shellfire, did nothing." He added that IRGC fighters from Hamedan also stood against the Baathist forces, many of whom were martyred in the battles of Qasr-e Shirin and Sarpol-e Zahab. Later, Army Aviation (Havanirooz) forces from Kermanshah joined the defense, and together, these three groups protected Iran's western regions from further enemy incursions.

Qom Seminary's Key Duty is Paving the Way for a New Islamic Civilization

TEHRAN - In a significant address marking the centennial of the re-establishment of the Qom Seminary, Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, outlined the institution's pivotal role in shaping a "progressive and exemplary" religious establishment. His message, delivered via a statement to an international conference, emphasized the seminary's responsibility to foster a modern Islamic civilization through innovation, intellectual rigor, and revolutionary identity.

Ayatollah Khamenei described the re-emergence of the Qom Seminary in the early 20th century as a "unique phenomenon" that unfolded amid regional turmoil. He recounted the oppressive interventions by colonial powers following World War I, which destabilized West Asia. These powers, he noted, imposed puppet regimes, suppressed local resistance, and sowed division across Iraq, Syria, Palestine, and Iran. In Iran, the rise of Reza Shah, a figure backed by foreign interests, led to brutal crackdowns on religious scholars and nationalist movements, plunging the nation into despair.

Against this backdrop, the Qom Seminary was revitalized by Ayatollah Abdolkarim Haeri, a revered scholar whose foresight and courage breathed new life into a dormant institution. Khamenei highlighted Haeri's establishment of the seminary as a divine act, planting a "blessed sapling" near the shrine of Fatimah Masumah, which grew despite relentless persecution under Reza Shah's regime. This resilience, he said, laid the groundwork for the seminary's transformative impact, culminating in the 1979 Islamic Revolution led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, a product of Qom's scholarly tradition.

Khamenei articulated a vision for a "progressive and exemplary" seminary, one that is innovative, responsive to contemporary challenges, and capable of designing systems to govern society. He stressed that the seminary's foremost duty is "clear proclamation" (blagh mubin), which involves delineating the principles of a new Islamic civilization, promoting its values, and embedding them in society. This civilization, he argued, stands in stark contrast to the materialistic Western model, which he criticized for its roots in colonialism, exploitation, and moral decay.

The Supreme Leader outlined five key dimensions of the seminary's mission. First, as a scientific center, it must advance Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) to address modern complexities, such as governance and social justice, while integrating insights from contemporary human sciences. Second, it should train ethical and capable scholars to guide society, emphasizing education and moral refinement to counter misinformation and cultural erosion. Third, the



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seminary must act as a frontline defender against ideological threats, continuing its historical role in leading resistance against oppression, as seen in movements like the Constitutional Revolution and anti-colonial struggles.

Fourth, the seminary is tasked with developing Islamic social systems, from governance to economics, drawing on fiqh's rich framework to meet modern needs. Khamenei urged collaboration with universities to refine these systems, ensuring they align with Islamic principles while engaging with global knowledge. Finally, he called for the seminary to spearhead civilizational innovation, crafting a global Islamic model rooted in justice, human dignity, and spiritual growth—a direct challenge to the "corrupt" Western paradigm.

Reflecting on the seminary's history, Khamenei praised its growth into a vibrant hub of thousands of scholars, producing extensive research and global outreach. The proliferation of Quranic studies, ethical teachings, and women's seminars, alongside the active role of Qom's scholars in the Islamic Revolution and Iran's defense, were cited as milestones. However, he acknowledged gaps between the current state and the ideal of a "progressive and exemplary" institution, urging reforms to keep pace with modern demands.

To bridge this gap, Khamenei proposed several measures. He advocated for updated curricula that prioritize responsive fiqh, socially engaged philosophy, and persuasive theology, all grounded in Quranic insight. He emphasized the need for closer ties with the public, countering narratives that discourage young seminarians, and fostering optimism about Islam's global standing. Additionally, he recommended that the seminary independently award academic credentials, aligning them with international standards like bachelor's or doctoral degrees.

Khamenei concluded by invoking divine support for the seminary's mission, expressing hope that it would continue to strengthen Islam's global presence and Iran's progress. His message underscored the Qom Seminary's enduring legacy and its critical role in shaping a future where Islamic values guide humanity toward justice and prosperity.

The address has sparked discussions among Iran's religious and intellectual circles, with many viewing it as a call to reinvigorate the seminary's global influence. As the institution enters its second century, its ability to balance tradition with innovation will likely define its contribution to Iran's vision of a new Islamic civilization.

FM Calls for Respect for Rights of Iranians Arrested in UK



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's foreign minister has called on the UK to respect the rights of Iranians arrested in Britain, underscoring Tehran's readiness to assist investigations in the incident.

Abbas Araqchi made the call in a post on his X social media account on Tuesday, after the British media said seven Iranian nationals had been arrested in two major "counter-terrorism operations" across the country.

"Disturbed to learn that Iranian citizens have reportedly been arrested by UK security services," Araqchi wrote.

"If credible allegations of misconduct are established, Iran stands ready to assist investigations. We call on UK to ensure respect for our citizens' rights and afford them due process."

Disturbed to learn that Iranian citizens have reportedly been arrested by UK security services.

The Metropolitan Police said five men, four of them Iranian nationals, were arrested on Saturday in one operation and three other Iranians in another, without disclosing their names.

Those arrested were part of a "pre-planned" investigation into an alleged plot to "target a specific premises," the Metropolitan Police said, adding that the "affected site" was made aware and is being supported by police.

Four of the five men arrested at locations across England — two aged 29, one aged 40 and another aged 46 — are Iranian nationals. Police said the nationality and age of the fifth were still being established.

The men were arrested in Swindon, west London, Stockport, Rochdale and Manchester, and remain in police custody.

As part of a separate investigation led by the Met, three other Iranian men were arrested in London on Saturday.

The Met said three men — aged 39, 44 and 55 — were arrested under section 27 the National Security Act at separate addresses in north-west and west London, and had been taken into custody while searches continued.

Commander Dominic Murphy, the CTC's head, stressed that they were not treating the two investigations into "separate incidents" as linked.

Book: The Supreme Cultural Power of Iran



TEHRAN - The Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance of Iran described books as the "supreme cultural power of Iran" during the opening ceremony of the 36th Tehran International Book Fair, emphasizing their vital role in national development and resilience against external threats.

Speaking at the ceremony on Wednesday, Seyyed Abbas Salehi stated: "If we seek development, a brighter future, and the thwarting of our enemies, we must think more and more about books and work toward expanding this powerful cultural foundation of Iran."

He highlighted the central role of books in the formation of civilizations throughout history, referencing Greek civilization with its theatrical and philosophical literature, as well as the cultural legacies of China and India—all of which thrived on the foundation of written works.

"In ancient Iran and throughout Islamic civilization, books played a crucial role," Salehi said. "Islamic civilization was built and propelled on the wings of mosques and libraries."

He further noted that without the creation of the Shahnameh after the advent of Islam, the Persian language might not have endured. "If a civilization wants to emerge and remain strong, it needs books," he asserted. "Books are cohesive thoughts—not fast-food, fleeting ideas that cannot truly be called thought. If a society wants to preserve itself and avoid being absorbed by rival ideologies, only books can give it that lasting power."

Culture Is the Key Indicator of National Progress

TEHRAN – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf emphasized that culture is the primary benchmark for national advancement, stating that in the Islamic system, books and reading embody the essence and wisdom of humanity.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the 36th Tehran International Book Fair on Wednesday, Qalibaf highlighted the central role of education and character-building in all cultures, particularly within Islamic tradition. "Education is the foundation of the world," he said. "If human development is mishandled, its consequences are more damaging than any evil."

He asserted that proper and meaningful education is more impactful than anything else on individuals and society. "Culture is the most important indicator of growth.

Even in today's economy—our top national priority—cultural factors play a decisive role," he added.

Qalibaf noted that many of Iran's current economic challenges, such as the energy imbalance, are rooted in deeper cultural issues, including work ethics, productivity, and consumption habits. "In times of sanctions and limited foreign investment, the only path to efficient economic growth lies in culture-based economic thinking," he argued. "This approach allows for material growth with minimal time and cost."

He further stressed that public culture is closely tied to the practice of reading, particularly within families. "In our legislative efforts, especially within the Seventh Development Plan, our focus is on strengthening the family unit," Qalibaf said. "Books and reading habits within families—especially among women and mothers, who are the core pillars of the household—have the most profound impact."

Qalibaf emphasized the Islamic government's mission to expand knowledge and encourage critical thinking. He cited the Nahj al-Balagha, a collection of sermons and writings attributed to Imam Ali, as an enduring source of wisdom, echoing calls by the Supreme Leader to promote such texts.



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"Books offer a gateway to creativity and innovation," he said. "The miracle of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH), the Qur'an, was revealed in the form of a book—guidance for both this world and the hereafter."

Recalling his tenure as Tehran's mayor, Qalibaf said cultural development was always a priority, leading to the construction of 300 new public libraries. He reaffirmed his commitment to supporting authors and publishers, and announced plans to create a nationwide digital library for basic sciences accessible to all students and academics.

However, he acknowledged the challenges facing the publishing industry, including low print runs, economic barriers, and censorship delays. "We must solve the economic issues first," he stated. "Unclear and prolonged censorship processes, as well as violations of copyright laws, also need legal solutions."

Qalibaf called attention to the declining rate of reading in the country and distribution issues within the book market. "In today's economic climate, books are just as vital in households as food, healthcare, and livelihoods," he said.

He concluded by thanking everyone involved in organizing the annual book fair, praising the hard work of publishers and authors in bringing the event to life.

Qalibaf also marked the first anniversary of the martyrdom of President Ebrahim Raisi, who died in a helicopter crash. "I had known him since 1977, before the revolution," he said. "Throughout all these years, I only saw in him sacrifice, honesty, and dedicated service. As president, he was always active and present in the field."

The 36th Tehran International Book Fair opened on Wednesday, May 7, under the theme "Let's Read for Iran." The event, which will run for 11 days, features participation from numerous publishers and authors who will present their works to a wide audience. Both the Parliament Speaker and the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance visited the exhibition and spoke with exhibitors.



Tehran-Baku Direct Flights to Launch Soon

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Direct flights between Tehran and Baku are set to begin in the near future, according to the Head of the International Affairs Center at Iran's Ministry of Roads and Urban Development.

Amin Tarfa, advisor to the minister and head of the ministry's international affairs department, announced that following efforts led by Farzaneh Sadegh, Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development and head of the Iranian side of the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Economic Cooperation Commission, an agreement was reached with her Azerbaijani counterpart during the Iranian president's recent visit to Baku.

Under the agreement, flights from Tehran to Baku will operate four times a week, while flights from Tabriz to Baku will run twice a week.

Iran's Foreign Trade Reaches \$5.8b in First Month of the Year



TEHRAN - Iran's non-oil foreign trade in the first month of the Iranian calendar year 1404 (March 20 - April 19, 2025) reached 10.756 million tons, valued at \$5.798 billion, according to a new report.

The data shows a 12% decrease in trade volume and a 3% drop in value compared to the same period last year.

Of the total trade volume, exports accounted for 8.957 million tons worth \$2.942 billion, while imports amounted to 1.799 million tons valued at \$2.856 billion.

The report further highlights that non-oil exports dropped by 8.3% in volume and 8% in value year-on-year. Meanwhile, imports saw a 26.4% decline in weight but experienced a 2.3% increase in value.

The average customs value per ton of exported goods was \$328, marking a slight 0.47% increase from the previous year. On the other hand, the average value of imported goods surged 39% to \$1,587 per ton.

Petrochemical products made up a significant portion of Iran's export portfolio in April, comprising 15% of the total export volume and 20.6% of export value.

The top five exported goods during this period were: Liquefied propane (\$189 million); Petroleum bitumen (\$182 million); Liquefied butane (\$154 million); Iron and steel billets (\$120 million); and methanol (\$110 million).

China remained Iran's largest export destination, receiving \$997 million worth of goods, followed by: Iraq (\$401 million); UAE (\$395 million); Turkey (\$189 million); Afghanistan (\$143 million); Oman (\$140 million); and Pakistan (\$124 million).

These seven countries collectively accounted for 80% of the export weight and 81% of the export value.

Iranian Investment in Turkey Loses Appeal



TEHRAN - Iranian investment in Turkey has significantly declined, with Iranians no longer finding the country as attractive a destination for capital as in previous years, according to the head of the Iran-Turkey Joint Chamber of Commerce. One of the most popular sectors for Iranian investors—real estate—has lost its former appeal, and other sectors have seen little to no new investment activity.

The president of the Iran-Turkey Joint Chamber noted that although trade volume and value between the two countries increased in 1403 (March 2024-March 2025) compared to the previous year, the current trade levels still fall short of their full potential. He stressed that realizing this potential requires a transition from preferential trade agreements to a full free trade agreement.

"Right now, we have a preferential trade agreement with Turkey, but it's not being implemented effectively," he said. "In the most recent Iran-Turkey Joint Commission meeting, no new agreements on preferential trade were reached."

The official pointed to Iran's recent success in establishing a free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union—a feat that once seemed out of reach—as evidence that a similar agreement with Turkey is possible, provided the Iranian Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade gives the issue due attention.

He emphasized that free trade is the only viable path to expanding bilateral commerce with Turkey, which has already signed free trade agreements with numerous countries. "Iran could and should be added to that list," he stated.

Discussions between the two nations also touched on the potential to expand the number of border crossings. However, Turkish authorities reportedly opposed increasing the number of checkpoints, instead advocating for upgrading and optimizing the existing ones using new technologies.

The head of the chamber further cited sanctions and unresolved banking issues between the two countries as major obstacles to joint investment efforts. "The lack of banking exchanges between Iran and Turkey remains a significant hurdle. This is a basic requirement for free trade, and it would also improve transparency in trade statistics," he added.

Despite these issues, the movement of freight trucks across the border remains smooth and currently poses no logistical problems, he noted.

Iran Unveils Comprehensive Roadmap to Transform Islamic World Relations Through Tourism

TEHRAN - Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Seyyed Reza Salehi Amiri, presented a comprehensive roadmap aimed at transforming relations within the Islamic world through tourism, positioning Iran as a pioneer in smart governance, cultural diplomacy, and civilizational investment during the D-8 Ministerial Meeting on Tourism in Cairo.

According to the Ministry's public relations office, Salehi Amiri addressed high-ranking officials from D-8 member countries on Tuesday at the summit hosted by Egypt. In his speech, he offered a strategic analysis of the current state of tourism across the Islamic world and called for redefining tourism as the "third pillar" of civilizational diplomacy, a driver of sustainable development, and a tool for generating social capital.

He emphasized the importance of forming a new global order grounded in Islamic rationality, Eastern wisdom, and technological innovation in light of geopolitical shifts and transformative technologies like artificial intelligence. "The future world will be a battlefield of concepts, narratives, and civilizations," he said, stressing that nations able to leverage soft power tools such as tourism will succeed in strengthening identity, promoting unity, and accurately presenting themselves to the world.

Salehi Amiri outlined Iran's shift from traditional to development-oriented, tech-driven, and economic approaches to tourism. Highlighting Iran's rich tangible and intangible heritage, he said the country is moving toward becoming a regional hub for health tourism, reviving historical routes, expanding smart infrastructure, and attracting international investment. Key initiatives include the creation of a national tourism investment center and the launch of Iran's first artificial intelligence unit in the tourism sector.

The Iranian minister also highlighted Iran's active role in the upcoming UAE Investment Meeting (AIM2025), emphasizing the country's potential to present a fresh image of the Islamic world. He noted that nations can compete globally when they tell their stories using the language of economy, culture, and



technology—not just politics.

Salehi Amiri stressed that governance over emerging technologies like AI must be ethical, just, and human-centered. "Development must not come at the cost of ethnic identities, local community authenticity, or cultural justice," he warned, adding that the digital divide must not lead to cultural marginalization or the erasure of decentralized heritage.

He also unveiled an initiative titled "Crescent Moon" as a strategic roadmap to boost practical collaboration, enhance intra-civilizational coherence, and strengthen economic diplomacy among D-8 members.

Salehi Amiri proposed an annual international tourism and investment expo for D-8 countries, announcing that the first edition will be hosted in Tehran in February 2026.

To facilitate tourism among Islamic nations, the Iranian minister called for reciprocal visa waivers among D-8 countries. He also proposed creating a joint tourism investment fund to finance large-scale regional projects.

Further initiatives include establishing a comprehensive investment opportunity database, conducting multi-country tour packages to encourage longer tourist stays, setting up regional tourism offices, increasing direct and multi-destination flight routes, and offering specialized training in digital marketing, destination management, and smart heritage conservation.

Expressing solidarity with the people of Palestine, Salehi Amiri condemned the war crimes committed by the Israeli regime in Gaza. "If we consider tourism a platform for civilizational dialogue and human peace, remaining silent in the face of atrocities is a betrayal of this ideal," he stated. He urged the international community to use cultural tools and soft diplomacy to amplify the voices of the oppressed.

Salehi Amiri concluded by asserting that the future belongs to nations bold enough to dream and decisive enough to act strategically. "D-8 can be the architect of a new tourism order for the Islamic world by leveraging civilizational assets, human capital, and emerging technologies. The future must be built—it won't arrive on its own," he said.

Iran, Tajikistan Begin Expanding Industrial and Trade Cooperation

TEHRAN - The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Tajikistan have officially begun expanding their industrial and trade cooperation, marking a new chapter in the bilateral relationship between the two nations.

Iran's Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi emphasized the growing strength of economic and cultural ties between the two countries. Speaking on the sidelines of the 17th Joint Commission on Iran-Tajikistan Cooperation, held in the cultural city of Shiraz, Aliabadi stated, "Iran and Tajikistan are essentially two parts of one nation that have been separated. Our foremost goal is to deepen cultural cooperation, and that is why we chose to begin this commission in Shiraz."

Highlighting the wide-ranging potential for collaboration, Aliabadi noted that both nations have significant technical and commercial capacities. "Iran has notable expertise in dam and tunnel construction, and Tajikistan has expressed strong interest in partnering in these areas," he said.

He added that the future of bilateral relations looks "bright and promising," with both sides fully prepared to leverage their capabilities and raise the level of engagement. The next round of the commission is scheduled to take place in Khujand, another historic and cultural city, reflecting the shared desire to strengthen cultural ties.

On the economic front, Aliabadi announced that industrial and trade relations between Iran and Tajikistan are already underway. During the commission meetings, several Iranian contractors signed key agreements with Tajik partners, laying the groundwork for expanded collaboration.

To date, over 250 memorandums of understanding (MoUs) have been signed between the two countries. Aliabadi noted that the commission plays a vital role in facilitating the implementation of these agreements.

A new MoU signed during the current session is being hailed as a milestone in bilateral relations. "Iran and Tajikistan share extensive



experience in the development of hydroelectric power plants. Tajikistan is eager to benefit from Iran's expertise in power plant construction and electricity market management," Aliabadi said.

He concluded by stressing the importance of increasing economic exchanges, while also encouraging growth in tourism and cultural exchange to further solidify the bond between the two nations.

Meanwhile the Minister of Water and Energy of Tajikistan described the shared language and culture as the foundation for broader cooperation between Iran and Tajikistan, stating that Iranian companies active in the water and electricity sectors have the opportunity to continue and expand their investments in Tajikistan.

"Daler Juma," on the sidelines of the closing ceremony of the 17th Iran-Tajikistan Joint Cooperation Summit in the city of Shiraz, emphasized the importance of bilateral cooperation, saying: the Iran-Tajikistan Joint Commission is exploring new ways to expand trade cooperation.

He added: Under this memorandum of understanding, Iranian companies active in the water and electricity sectors will have the opportunity to continue and develop their investments in Tajikistan. The shared language and culture of the two countries have also provided a suitable basis for utilizing Iran's experience in these sectors.

Daler Juma, referring to the bright outlook of the cooperation, stated: It is anticipated that the level of cooperation will increase to half a billion dollars. In addition, the exchange of information and the export of technical and engineering services from Iran will expand under this agreement.

The Tajik Minister of Energy also announced plans to increase direct flights and eliminate visas between the two countries, saying: "Nowruz is our shared celebration, and we should use the cultural capacities of both countries to promote it more effectively."

Turkey Bypasses Iran in Caspian Gas Plans



TEHRAN - Turkey is moving forward with plans to import natural gas from Turkmenistan via a new pipeline across the Caspian Sea, bypassing Iran and raising concerns about Tehran's shrinking role in regional energy corridors.

Seyed Mehdi Hosseini, former Deputy Minister of International Affairs at Iran's Oil Ministry, stated in an interview with ILNA that Ankara intends to build a pipeline through the northern, shallower parts of the Caspian to reduce costs, despite marine pipelines generally being more expensive than land routes.

Hosseini expressed concern over Iran's exclusion from major regional infrastructure projects, pointing to China's Belt and Road Initiative that stretches from China to Pakistan's Gwadar Port and into Central Asia and the Caspian region. "Even Chabahar Port is not included in the route," he said. "Despite the 25-year cooperation agreement with China, the largest road and rail corridor projects in the region are moving forward without Iran."

He emphasized that Turkmenistan, once reliant solely on Russia's gas network, had previously shown interest in exporting gas to Iran due to Tehran's ability to pay cash. Hosseini had once proposed importing all of Turkmenistan's gas and connecting it to Azerbaijan, creating both a strategic export corridor and a cheaper supply route for northern Iran. "But the proposal was ignored, and now we are facing supply imbalances," he said.

The former official noted that Azerbaijan has also become increasingly active in regional energy transport, citing the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline that moves Caspian oil through Turkey and the Dardanelles to Europe. Azerbaijan is extracting gas from four Caspian fields as well as from the Shah Deniz field, in which Iran holds a 10% stake. The gas reaches Europe with Turkey's assistance.

Kerman, Bukhara Propose Joint Carpet Market



TEHRAN - In a bid to revive the global recognition of two historic carpet-producing cities, Kerman and Bukhara, a joint market for their traditional handwoven rugs is being proposed. Seyed Mehdi Tabibzadeh, head of the Kerman Chamber of Commerce, emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts between the two cities to restore the reputation of Kerman and Bukhara carpets, which are currently being produced and marketed under these names by third-party countries.

Speaking during a meeting with the Mayor of Bukhara, Tabibzadeh noted the long-standing heritage of both cities in the carpet industry, stating that while their traditional position has faded, there is an opportunity to rebuild it through a shared value chain for production, processing, and export of handmade carpets. He proposed the creation of a joint Kerman-Bukhara Carpet Market aimed at reviving the historical identity and increasing global trade in authentic handmade rugs.

He added that a thorough review of cooperation areas between Kerman and Bukhara should be undertaken. Highlighting the cultural ties between the two cities, he suggested tourism could benefit from this relationship, as Kerman offers numerous attractions likely to appeal to Uzbek visitors.

Tabibzadeh also proposed health tourism as a mutual opportunity, citing Kerman's skilled medical professionals and advanced healthcare infrastructure. Given that many Uzbek citizens currently travel to countries such as India, Pakistan, and Turkey for treatment, he argued that promoting medical tourism to Kerman could be highly beneficial.

Mining was another common ground identified. Tabibzadeh proposed forming a joint team to explore new mineral resources such as cobalt, nickel, and lithium, and called on high-tech and knowledge-based companies to collaborate in this field. He also mentioned agricultural cooperation, including overseas farming projects and skilled labor exchange as additional areas for partnership.

Houthis Have Capitulated on Ship Attacks

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – U.S. President Donald Trump said Yemen’s Houthis have agreed to halt their attacks on shipping and that Washington would in turn stop carrying out strikes on the Iran-backed rebels. The Houthis began targeting vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden in late 2023, claiming solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza, which has been devastated by Israel’s military after a shock Hamas attack that year. “The Houthis have announced... that they don’t want to fight anymore. They just don’t want to fight. And we will honour that, and we will stop the bombings, and they have capitulated,” Trump told reporters at an Oval Office meeting with Canada’s new prime minister, Mark Carney.



Conservative Merz Elected German Chancellor After Initial Debacle



BERLIN (Dispatches) - German conservative leader Friedrich Merz was elected chancellor by parliament on Tuesday in a second round of voting after an unprecedented defeat on the first attempt got his coalition government off to a wobbly start. Merz, 69, who led his conservatives to a federal election victory in February and signed a coalition deal with the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD), won 325 votes, nine more than needed for an absolute majority, in the secret ballot. He had secured just 310 votes in the first round of voting, meaning at least 18 coalition lawmakers failed to back him. The debacle will likely heighten mistrust between coalition partners, political analysts said, indicating a far-from-stable union at a time when Europe needs strong leadership from Germany, its largest economy. “The whole of Europe looked to Berlin today in the hope that Germany would reassert itself as an anchor of stability and a pro-European powerhouse,” said Jana Puglierin, head of the Berlin office of the European Council on Foreign Relations think-tank. “That hope has been dashed.” Merz said he preferred to simply get down to work rather than puzzle over the motives of those who failed to back him in the first round. “I have no doubt, after today, that we will work together in this coalition with mutual trust,” he told state broadcaster ARD, adding his top priorities were to secure the country’s freedom and restore its economic competitiveness.

China Eases Monetary Policy to Boost Ailing Economy



BEIJING (Dispatches) - The country’s leaders are battling to reignite growth, which has not fully recovered since the Covid-19 pandemic, crippled by sluggish domestic demand and a protracted property sector crisis. That has been compounded by a punishing trade standoff that has seen the US president impose tariffs reaching 145 percent on many Chinese products and Beijing retaliate with 125 percent duties on imports from the United States. On Wednesday, the head of China’s central bank Pan Gongsheng told a news conference that Beijing would cut a key interest rate and lower the amount banks must hold in reserve in order to boost lending. He said Beijing’s policies aimed “to support technological innovation, boost consumption, and promote inclusive finance, among other areas.” A persistent crisis in the property sector -- once a key driver of growth -- also remains a drag on the economy. In an effort to boost demand, Pan also said the bank would cut the rate for first-time home purchases with loan terms over five years to 2.6 percent, from 2.85 percent. The moves represent some of China’s most sweeping steps to boost the economy since September.

India Precision Strikes Pakistan Killing at Least Eight

MUZAFFARABAD (Dispatches) - India fired missiles at Pakistani territory early Tuesday, killing at least eight people, according to Pakistan, which said it had begun retaliating in a major escalation between the nuclear-armed rivals. The Indian government said it had carried out “precision strikes at terrorist camps” at nine sites in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, days after it blamed Islamabad for a deadly attack on the Indian-run side of the disputed region. The Indian army, in a video posted on X after the strikes, said “justice is served”, with New Delhi adding that its actions “have been focused, measured and non-escalatory in nature”. Pakistan reported eight civilians — including one child — killed in the strikes, which hit at least six locations. The country’s Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif told AFP: “The retaliation has already started. We won’t take long to settle the score.” He accused Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi of launching the strikes to “shore up” his domestic popularity. Earlier, Pakistan’s military said three locations in Pakistan-administered Kashmir had been hit along with two — Bahawalpur and Mirdke — in the country’s most populous province of Punjab. AFP correspondents in Pakistani-run Kashmir and Punjab heard several loud explosions. Shortly after, India accused Pakistan of firing artillery across the Line of Control (LoC), the de facto border in Kashmir, which could also be heard by AFP correspondents in the region. India had been widely expected to respond militarily to the April 22 attack on tourists in Indian-administered Kashmir by gunmen it said were from Pakistan-based group Lashkar-e-Taiba, a UN-designated terrorist organisation. That assault left 26 people dead, mainly Hindu men, in the tourist hotspot of Pahalgam. No group has claimed responsibility. New Delhi has blamed Islamabad for backing the attack, sparking a series of heated threats and diplomatic tit-for-tat measures. Pakistan rejects the accusations, and the two sides have exchanged nightly gunfire since April 24 along the LoC, according to the Indian army. Pakistan also said it has held two missile tests. The strikes are a dangerous heightening of friction between the South Asian neighbours, who have fought multiple wars since they gained independence from the British in 1947.

For days the international community has piled pressure on Pakistan and India to step back from the brink of war. “The world cannot afford a military confrontation between India and Pakistan,” the spokesman for UN chief Antonio Guterres, Stephane Dujarric, said in a statement, adding that Guterres called for “maximum restraint.” Asked about the strikes, US President Donald Trump told reporters in Washington he hopes the fighting “ends very quickly”. India’s embassy in Washington said New Delhi’s National Security Advisor Ajit Doval had briefed US Secretary of State Marco Rubio after the strikes. Rubio also spoke with Pakistan’s national security advisor, Lt General Asim Malik, a senior Pakistani military official told AFP. “I am monitoring the situation between India and Pakistan closely,” Rubio said on X, adding that he will “continue to engage both Indian and Pakistani leadership towards a peaceful resolution”. India’s army said it had “demonstrated considerable restraint in selection of targets and method of execution”, adding that “no Pakistani military facilities have been targeted”. Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, calling the Indian attack “unprovoked” and “cowardly”, said the “heinous act of aggression will not go unpunished.” Indian fighter jets could be heard flying over Srinagar, the capital of Indian-administered Kashmir. Loud explosions could also be heard in the town of Poonch, only about 10 miles (16 kilometres) from the LoC. Rebels in Indian-administered Kashmir have waged an insurgency since 1989, seeking independence or a merger with Pakistan. India regularly blames its neighbour for backing armed groups fighting its forces in Kashmir, a charge that Islamabad denies. The strikes came just hours after Modi said that water flowing across India’s borders would be stopped. Pakistan had warned that tampering with the rivers that flow from India into its territory would be an “act of war”. Modi did not mention Islamabad specifically, but his speech came after New Delhi suspended its part of the 65-year-old Indus Waters Treaty, which governs water critical to Pakistan for consumption and agriculture.

80 Years Since Victory in Europe: A Time to Remember and Reflect

TEHRAN – Embassy of Poland in Tehran in its twitter account and on the occasion of the anniversary of the end of the World War II published a statement to mark the day. The story reads “Today, May 8, marks 80 years since the end of World War II in Europe — a victory made possible by the united resolve of the Allied powers. Together, they overcame the brutal machinery of Nazi totalitarianism and brought liberation to millions across the continent.” “Their mission was clear: to halt tyranny and restore freedom to the nations under occupation.” “Yet amid the heroism of many, one regime pursued



a different goal. The Soviet Union — today’s Russia — fought not to uphold liberty, but to expand its empire.” “Under the guise of liberation, the Soviet regime replaced one form of oppression with another. For much of Central and Eastern Europe, May 8, 1945, brought not lasting freedom, but the beginning of decades of Soviet domination.” “Then, the Kremlin cloaked its ambitions in the language of “liberation” and “independence.” But history reminds us that these words have too often been used to justify control, exploitation, and aggression.” “As we honor the courage and sacrifice of all who fought against tyranny, we must also remain vigilant — for peace and freedom must be protected, not presumed.”

Israel Faces Global Criticism as Minister Calls for Gaza to Be Entirely Destroyed

GAZA CITY (Dispatches) - Israel drew international condemnation over its plans for an expanded Gaza offensive, as the country’s far-right finance minister called yesterday for the Palestinian territory to be “destroyed”. Israel’s military had called up tens of thousands of reservists for its planned expanded offensive in the Gaza Strip, which an official said would entail the “conquest” of the Palestinian territory. European Union top diplomat Kaja Kallas yesterday told her Israeli counterpart in a call that the situation was “untenable”, urging the resumption of the flow of aid to Gaza, where famine looms. Nearly all of the Palestinian territory’s 2.4 million people have been displaced at least once during the war, sparked by Hamas’s October 7, 2023 attack on Israel. A two-month Israeli blockade since early March has worsened the humanitarian crisis. China said it opposed Israel’s military actions and was “highly concerned” by



plans for a broader assault. Beijing also called on Israel and Hamas to “effectively implement” the terms of a ceasefire which fell apart on March 18. French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said Paris “very strongly” condemned Israel’s planned offensive, calling it “unacceptable” and adding that its government was “in violation of humanitarian law”. Britain’s Middle East minister Hamish Falconer said London opposed the expansion of Israel’s operations, adding that “any attempt to annex land in Gaza would be unacceptable”. Germany’s new Chancellor Friedrich Merz voiced “considerable concern” and said he would send his foreign minister to Israel this weekend. It came after Israel’s far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said that the Gaza Strip should be “entirely destroyed” and called for its inhabitants to “leave in great numbers to third countries” after the war.



Frattesi's Extra-Time Winner Sends Inter Milan Into Champions League Final

MILAN (Dispatches) - Inter Milan substitute Davide Frattesi struck an extra-time winner to send his side into the Champions League final following a sensational 4-3 victory over Barcelona yesterday after Francesco Acerbi had rescued them from the brink of elimination with a stunning equaliser deep in added time.

Frattesi's goal and a string of superb saves by goalkeeper Yann Sommer secured Inter a rip-roaring 7-6 aggregate victory in a semi-final for the ages.

The Italian side will face either Paris St Germain or Arsenal in the Munich final later this month, with the French team taking a 1-0 lead into today's semi-final second leg.

Following a breathtaking first leg in Barcelona that had everything from early drama, late chaos, and dazzling moments from 17-year-old Lamine Yamal, the return encounter in Milan was even more dramatic, a rollercoaster ride that will live long in the memory.

It was a tale of two halves as Inter dominated the first 45 minutes and opened a two-goal lead thanks to a Lautaro Martinez goal on the counter in the 21st minute before Hakan Calhanoglu extended their advantage with a penalty right before the break.

The penalty was awarded after the VAR spotted a foul by Pau Cubarsi on Martinez in the box that had looked like a well-timed challenge on first viewing.

However, Barca woke up in the second half with Eric Garcia and Dani Olmo netting within six minutes to level the scoring and, even though Sommer worked his magic to help keep the hosts alive, the Catalans thought they had scored the winner through Raphinha, who struck from close range in the 87th minute.

But as Inter made a desperate run for an equaliser, Denzel Dumfries found 37-year-old Acerbi inside the box and he fired a first-time effort into the net to score his first European goal in his 20th season and take the game to extra time.

In the 99th minute, Marcus Thuram made a brilliant run from the right and played the ball into the area for Frattesi, who set himself before neatly guiding a curling shot into the bottom corner to send the delighted home fans into raptures.

Sommer made two world-class saves from Yamal, who also hit the post with another stunning strike deep in added time, as Inter moved a step closer to their fourth Champions League title and their first in 15 years after losing to Manchester City in the final two years ago.

"I'm lucky to have finished the game, I screamed so much that I saw everything black," Frattesi, who also came off the bench to score the winner in the first leg of their quarter-final at Bayern Munich, told Sky Sport.

"I have to thank the physiotherapists because in recent days I was not well, I dedicate the victory to them. It's incredible, I don't know what to say. Tonight the incredible happened."

Barca were chasing a treble after winning the Copa del Rey, but will now turn their focus to LaLiga, where they top the table and on Sunday host rivals Real Madrid, who trail them by four points with four games to go.

The five-time winners were hoping to reach their first Champions League final in a decade, but were left licking their wounds ahead of Sunday's clash.

Unbeaten domestically since late December, Barcelona will try to grab a fourth consecutive victory over Real this season.

"Football has been very cruel to us," Barca defender Eric Garcia told Movistar Plus. "We were down 2-0 again and the character this team showed was remarkable."

"We are a team full of young players and this has been a great year. We still have the (Spanish) league to play for."

Ronaldo Jr Earns First Portugal U-15 Call-Up, Dad Celebrates



LISBON (Dispatches) - The next chapter of the Ronaldo legacy began yesterday when Cristiano Jr received his first call-up to Portugal's Under-15 squad, marking the start of what could become football's most compelling father-son succession story.

The 14-year-old forward, currently developing at Al-Nassr's youth academy in Saudi Arabia, will join Portugal for a tournament in Croatia this month, facing Japan, Greece and England in his first taste of international football.

"Proud of you, son," wrote 40-year-old Portugal captain Ronaldo on social media, sharing the squad announcement.

The five-times Ballon d'Or winner, who led Portugal to the 2016 European Championship title, has scored a world record 136 goals in 219 internationals and will watch with parental pride as his eldest son looks to tread a similar path.

Ronaldo Jr has already followed in his father's footsteps at club level, having played in the youth teams of the Portugal great's former clubs Real Madrid, Juventus and Manchester United, before moving to Saudi Arabia with his family.

The teenager reportedly netted 58 goals during his stint in Italy, while clips of Ronaldo Jr mimicking his father's trademark 'Siu' celebration at Al-Nassr have gone viral.

In 2022, Ronaldo said his son was eager to one day share the pitch with him. "My son tells me, 'Dad, hold on a few more years, I want to play with you!'" he revealed at the time.

Despite Ronaldo Jr being born in the US and spending much of his early childhood in Spain — granting him eligibility for three nations — his call-up by Portugal is likely an indication of his future international allegiance.

For a country whose modern football identity has been shaped by his father's remarkable two-decade reign, Ronaldo Jr's inclusion in Portugal's under-15 squad could be the first step in a generational succession that will capture headlines.

Pacers Finish Off Game 2 Comeback vs. Cavs

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Tyrese Haliburton grabbed his own missed free throw and buried a 3-pointer with 1.1 seconds remaining, giving the visiting Indiana Pacers a 120-119 win over the short-handed Cleveland Cavaliers in Game 2 of the Eastern Conference semifinals, taking a commanding lead in the series.

The Pacers scored the final eight points after Donovan Mitchell made two free throws to push Cleveland's lead to 119-112 with 57 seconds left. Baskets by Aaron Nesmith and Pascal Siakam made it a one-possession game, and Andrew Nembhard stole the subsequent inbound pass from Max Strus.

Haliburton drew a foul with 12.4 ticks remaining, making his first free throw to make it 119-117, then grabbed his miss on the second. He dribbled beyond the arc before calming then making the 3-pointer to complete Indiana's comeback from 20 points down.

"Obviously, we got lucky," said Pacers head coach Rick Carlisle. "Ty hit another amazing shot to win the game. You don't see this very often, let alone twice in one week. Tyrese, he came through again. We're very fortunate."

"I'm at peace with my game," said Haliburton. "I understand that I'm trusted in these moments. ... It's a special feeling. I get paid a lot



of money to play a kids game and I'm having a lot of fun doing it."

Mitchell amassed 48 points, nine assists, five rebounds and four steals for the top-seeded Cavaliers, who were without NBA Defensive Player of the Year Evan Mobley (left ankle sprain), All-Star point guard Darius Garland (left big toe sprain) and key reserve De'Andre Hunter (right thumb sprain).

Cleveland lost the first two games of a series at home for the first time since 1996, when it was swept by the Knicks in a best-of-three matchup. The Cavaliers have won just 7 of 13 home games during their current three-year playoff streak.

"We outplayed them for most of the game, but we ran out of gas," said Cavaliers head coach Kenny Atkinson. "We couldn't separate ourselves. Every possession, they just upped their physicality."

"It's hard to put all this in words," said Carlisle. "Cleveland hit us with a hellacious punch early in the game. In the fourth, we just hung on. We maintained enough energy to get it done. Give the guys credit, they somehow found a way."

Nesmith and Myles Turner each scored 23 points and Haliburton had 11 of his 19 points in the fourth quarter. Benedict Mathurin added 19 points and Nembhard collected 13 points, 13 assists and seven rebounds, along with eight turnovers, for fourth-seeded Indiana.

Mitchell, a six-time All-Star, scored 12 points in the first, 15 in the third and 12 in the fourth in an electrifying performance. He made 15 of 30 field goal attempts and was 17-of-21 on free throws, setting career highs in free throws made and attempted.

"Mitchell had a heroic game," said Carlisle. "But right now, we're deeper than them. I think we wore them down."

Swiatek Defends Coach, Psychologist Despite Disappointing Results

LONDON (Dispatches) - Iga Swiatek has failed to win a tournament in almost a year, but the Polish world number two has defended her coach and psychologist despite the poor run of results and losing her place at the top of the world rankings in a difficult period.

Swiatek parted ways with her coach Tomasz Wiktorowski in October after three years, adding Belgian Wim Fissette to her team and in November accepted a one-month suspension after testing positive for banned substance trimetazidine.

The five-time Grand Slam winner has drawn a blank since winning last year's French Open, and her latest result saw Swiatek lose her Madrid Open title in a crushing 6-1 6-1 semi-final defeat to Coco Gauff last week.

"Sometimes I'm not happy with the way I play. It's natural, especially with my perfectionism. This can be seen on the court," Swiatek told Polish media outlet SportoweFakty in an interview.

"However, when I come off it, I can look at the season from a broader perspective.



"Then I find a lot of positives. Reaching the quarter-finals or semi-finals is a good result. Again, I am the most even player of the whole season."

Swiatek was asked if new coach Fissette was responsible for the lack of success.

"No, this is a very harsh and unfair statement," Swiatek said.

"I can only look at the coach from my own perspective, which is the only right one for me, that is, what our work looks like every day."

"The worse results coincided with many other challenges in recent months, also in family life. I found myself at a stage of my career where I had to reformulate my thinking about myself."

Swiatek believes others have improved rather than her regressing.

"The level of tennis in the world is getting higher and higher. The girls got to know my game, they developed themselves," Swiatek said.

"Coco Gauff, who has always been a great talent, is older today and has more experience. Aryna (Sabalenka) managed to make it through the semi-finals and began to win titles."

Italy's Football Infrastructure Is Terrible



ROME (Dispatches) - UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin has described Italian soccer's infrastructure as terrible and by far the worst among Europe's top five leagues.

In an interview with SportMediaset published on Tuesday, Ceferin was asked about the San Siro Stadium's rejected bid to host the Champions League final and the ongoing discussions about plans for a new stadium in Milan.

"Italy's football infrastructure is a shame. You are one of the biggest footballing countries, you've won many World Cups, Euros, Champions Leagues. At the same time among the big countries you have by far the worst infrastructure," Ceferin said.

"To be honest, I'm a bit tired of these Italian discussions about infrastructure, because all we see is discussions," the Slovenian added.

"The clubs need help from the government, they need help from municipalities. Private investors will invest. It's time to do something, because the infrastructure is terrible."

Milan's San Siro is set to stage the opening ceremony of the 2026 Winter Olympics in February. Italy will co-host the 2032 men's European Championship with Turkey.

"I'm not worried yet (about the Euros). I think that now, the government has understood that it has to do something," Ceferin said.

"I have a lot of confidence in Gabriele Gravina, who is my first vice-President. He will do everything he can to close the gap."