

Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi Says That the Tehran Dialogue Forum Is an Important Initiative Aimed at Bringing Together Thinkers From Different States in Tehran on May 18-19 to Discuss Regional and International Challenges

# IRAN NEWS

By Officially Signing the Global Treaty on Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge, Iran Has Joined the Group of Countries Signing This International Document

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### President Says Our Success Disheartens the Enemy



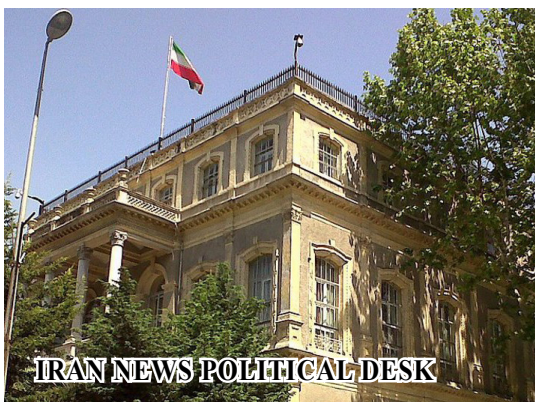
TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian stated that the main goal of Iran's adversaries is to sow division and a sense of incapacity within the country. However, he emphasized that Iran's achievements and advancements in various fields continue to disappoint and demoralize its enemies.

Speaking on Saturday morning at a ceremony marking the second anniversary of the return of the 86th naval fleet of the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy, Pezeshkian honored the memory of those who died in service. He highlighted Iran's growing self-reliance in military and defense capabilities as a source of national pride, emphasizing the country's ability to meet its defense needs independently.

Referring to recent remarks made by former U.S. President Donald Trump during his regional visit, Pezeshkian criticized the contradictory nature of Trump's statements. "No one but Trump himself believes his words against the Iranian nation," he said. "He talks about peace while simultaneously threatening people with the most advanced weapons of destruction, sending mixed messages of peace, violence, and insecurity."

The president stressed that Iran does not seek war and favors negotiation and dialogue, but he asserted that the country will not be intimidated by threats nor retreat from its legal rights.

### Iran, E3 Resolved to Sustain, Optimally Use Diplomacy



TEHRAN - Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi says Iran and the European trio of Britain, France, and Germany (E3) are resolute on making optimal use of diplomacy over Tehran's nuclear program.

Gharibabadi made the remark in a post on his X account on Friday following his meeting with representatives of the three European members of the 2015 nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in the Turkish city of Istanbul. Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Majid Takht-Ravanchi was also present in the meeting.

He said the Iranian representatives and E3 political directors exchanged views and discussed the latest status of indirect nuclear talks between Iran and the United States and the lifting of sanctions.

"Iran and the E3 are determined to sustain and make best use of diplomacy," Gharibabadi wrote.

He noted that Iran and the E3 would meet again, if necessary, to continue discussions.

In an op-ed in the French magazine Le Point, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said Iran and the E3 held "preliminary discussions at the deputy foreign minister level—a fragile but promising beginning."

"But time is running out. How we respond at this pivotal moment will define the future of Iran-Europe relations far more profoundly than many may anticipate. Iran stands ready to turn the page. We hope our European partners are, too," he wrote.



### Leader Condemns U.S. Use of Power in Gaza; Stresses Role of Teachers in Nation-Building

TEHRAN - In a gathering of teachers and education officials held on Saturday in Tehran, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei issued a strong condemnation of the United States, accusing it of using its power not to promote peace, but to commit atrocities in Gaza. His remarks came during an annual event recognizing educators from across the country, held at the Imam Khomeini Hosseiniyeh.

Ayatollah Khamenei began the meeting by praising the current Iranian government's commitment to education, expressing appreciation for the late President Ebrahim Raisi's administration and the Minister of Education for prioritizing educational reforms. "Any investment in education is not a cost but a return-bearing investment," he stated. "Fortunately, this belief is shared by the current president, and the minister of education is among the most capable in the field."

The Supreme Leader placed particular emphasis on improving the public image of teachers. He called for a national cultural campaign using media and the arts to portray teachers as vibrant, capable, and proud individuals. "A teacher must be seen as an active, respected, and inspiring figure," he said. "We must change the perception so that young people would willingly choose teaching as a profession, not see it as a last resort."

To achieve this, Ayatollah Khamenei urged the production of films, novels, and animated content that depict teachers as heroic and beloved figures. "Just as we create books that make readers fall in love with a martyr, we should create novels that make readers admire teachers," he suggested, tasking organizations like the Ministry of Culture, national broadcasters, and other cultural institutions with leading this effort.

Reaffirming the importance of public education, the Leader rejected any move to privatize aspects of the educational system, warning against the fragmentation of responsibilities within the sector. "Education is a fundamental duty of an Islamic government," he stated, "and every child must be nurtured with knowledge, skills, and faith until at least the end of high school."

He criticized suggestions, even from within the Ministry of Education, to delegate portions of educational responsibilities to private or semi-private entities, calling such ideas "meaningless" and potentially harmful to the unity and quality of the educational system.

Ayatollah Khamenei also addressed the importance of textbooks in shaping the educational experience. He criticized the current design and content of schoolbooks, calling for improvements both in terms of academic engagement and visual appeal. "Textbooks must be aesthetically pleasing and align with the principles of beauty," he said. "Content must be delivered in an engaging way, even the most complex subjects can be taught with clarity and joy."

He emphasized that the books' form and content need a major overhaul to become more attractive and effective for students of all ages, from elementary to high school.

Toward the end of his address, Ayatollah Khamenei condemned recent remarks by American officials, particularly those made during the U.S. president's recent visit to the region. While he dismissed most of the statements as unworthy of a response due to their "low level," he took specific aim at the claim that U.S. power is used to promote peace.

"Trump once said he would use power for peace. That was a lie," the Leader said. "The United States has used its power for slaughter in Gaza, for war-mongering, and for supporting its proxies wherever possible. They provided ten-ton bombs to the Zionist regime to be dropped on Gaza's children, hospitals, and civilian homes."

He contrasted this with Iran's own strategy, asserting that while power can and should be used for peace and security, the U.S. has instead chosen the path of violence. "In defiance of our enemies, we will continue to strengthen our national power every day," he said.

The gathering closed with expressions of solidarity and support for teachers across Iran, reaffirming the government's focus on education as a pillar of national development, while also using the occasion to deliver pointed critiques of international powers.

### Iran Has Received No Written U.S. Proposal, Directly Or Indirectly



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has denied claims about receiving a written message from the United States for a nuclear deal, saying the Islamic Republic's right to peaceful enrichment remains in place.

"Iran has not received any written proposal from the United States, whether directly or indirectly," Araqchi said in a post on his X account on Friday.

The post comes after U.S. President Donald Trump claimed that Iran had received an alleged proposal from his administration and cautioned about what he referred to as Tehran's not heeding the urgency of a response.

"Yeah they have a proposal, but more importantly, they know they have to move quickly or something bad, something bad is going to happen," Trump told reporters.

In his post, Araqchi said Iran and the world continue to receive "confusing and contradictory" messaging.

"Iran nonetheless remains determined and straightforward: Respect our rights and terminate your sanctions, and we have a deal," the top Iranian diplomat stated.

Throughout his previous tenure as the US president from 2017 to 2021, and his incumbency now, Trump has rarely abandoned his adversarial language concerning Iran.

He has maintained the discourse, although the two sides have been engaged in indirect talks since April.

Araqchi also responded to reports about Iran's acceptance of temporary restrictions on how much uranium it enriches and to what level.

"Mark my words: there is no scenario in which Iran abandons its hard-earned right to enrichment for peaceful purposes."

Enrichment, the Iranian foreign minister stated, is a right afforded to all other signatories to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), too.

Araqchi said the great Iranian nation has shown its "power and fortitude" in the face of those who have attempted imposition.

"We ALWAYS welcome dialogue based on mutual respect and ALWAYS reject any diktat."

### Eurasian Union Opens \$30b Export Opportunity for Iran



TEHRAN - Iran's free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has created a potential \$30 billion export capacity for the country, a senior Iranian trade official announced.

Mirhadi Seyyedi, Advisor for International Affairs and Trade Agreements at Iran's Trade Promotion Organization, told IRNA that the implementation of the free trade agreement between Iran and the EAEU has eliminated customs tariffs on Iranian exports and significantly expanded the range of goods eligible for export. He noted that the agreement now covers over 80% of trade goods.

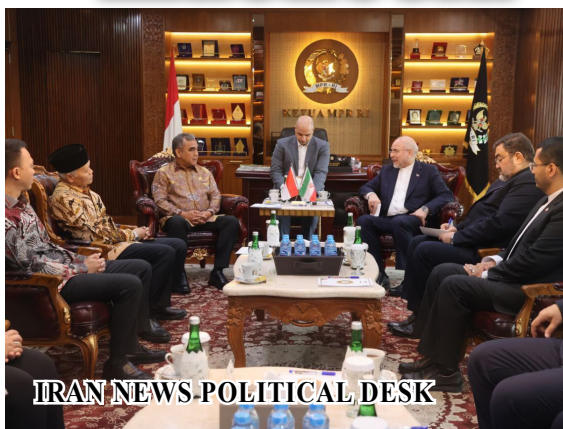
Seyyedi emphasized that customs duties on both agricultural and industrial goods have been reduced to zero. "According to existing studies, even without any new investment, Iran's membership in the EAEU could unlock an export potential of up to \$30 billion," he said.

Last year alone, Iranian exporters paid \$50 million in customs duties to EAEU member states. With the new agreement eliminating these duties, Seyyedi believes this will provide strong incentives for Iranian traders to increase their presence in the large Eurasian market.

Highlighting the scale of the opportunity, Seyyedi pointed out that the annual import volume of EAEU member states exceeds \$400 billion. "Iran can and should claim a significant share of this market," he added.

The advisor also stressed the importance of facilitating trade, noting that global trade agreements have accounted for more than half of the world's trade volume over the past three decades. "This shows that making trade easier is now an unavoidable duty of governments," he said.

## Iran Ready to Facilitate Expansion of Ties with Indonesia



TEHRAN — Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, declared that Iran's parliament is fully prepared to facilitate the development of relations with Indonesia in areas of public and parliamentary diplomacy, as well as in economic and trade cooperation through legislative support.

Qalibaf made the statement during a meeting with Ahmad Muzani, Speaker of Indonesia's People's Consultative Assembly, on Friday. The Iranian delegation is currently in Jakarta to attend the 19th Conference of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC).

At the start of the meeting, Qalibaf expressed gratitude to the Indonesian government for its warm hospitality and praised the successful hosting of the PUIC conference, calling it a significant achievement for Indonesia's peace-seeking government, parliament, and people.

Marking the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties between Iran and Indonesia, he emphasized the importance Iran places on enhancing diplomatic and political relations at all levels—governmental, parliamentary, and public. He described Indonesia as the largest Muslim-majority country and a civilized nation that shares longstanding friendly and brotherly ties with Iran.

He also congratulated Indonesia on assuming the rotating presidency of the PUIC and expressed hope that during Indonesia's term, the organization would take practical steps in support of Palestine. He praised Indonesia for maintaining no relations with the Israeli regime, calling this stance a point of pride for the country's leaders and people.

Referring to the situation in Gaza, Qalibaf condemned the ongoing violence, stating: "The Prophet Muhammad was a messenger of peace and mercy, yet today the people of Palestine—especially in Gaza—are enduring injustice. From both Islamic and humanitarian perspectives, we are obligated to seek justice for a people deprived of even their most basic rights, while a brutal genocide is underway."

He affirmed that Iran, as a member of the PUIC, would stand with Indonesia in supporting the Palestinian cause and work together to end the atrocities against Muslims in Palestine and Lebanon.

Reiterating Iran's commitment, Qalibaf said, "The Iranian parliament is ready to assist in all areas of cooperation—public diplomacy, parliamentary cooperation, and economic and trade relations—through legislative action."

Criticizing the current low volume of trade between the two countries, Qalibaf highlighted untapped opportunities in tourism, health, science, and technology. He called for building on the 11 agreements signed between the two nations during the late President Ebrahim Raisi's visit, urging both sides to enhance cooperation.

He also stressed the importance of mutual support in international forums such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Non-Aligned Movement, the D-8 Organization, and BRICS, to help both nations achieve shared development goals.

In response, Indonesian parliamentary speaker Ahmad Muzani welcomed Qalibaf and the Iranian delegation, calling the visit a meaningful step toward deepening bilateral ties rooted in history and mutual respect.

Muzani noted the strengthening of Iran-Indonesia relations not only at the governmental and parliamentary levels but also among their peoples. He said the visit could contribute significantly to expanding collaboration between the two nations.

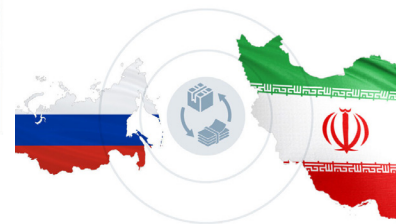
Highlighting shared perspectives, Muzani emphasized both countries' continued support for Palestinian liberation and complete independence. He warned that extremist actions, often associated with Islam, pose a threat to the broader Islamic world, making strategic bilateral relations even more critical.

Muzani also reaffirmed Indonesia's commitment to using its full capacity to promote peace and stability in Southeast Asia, paving the way for long-term cooperation with other countries.

The meeting was also attended by Iranian MPs Rouhollah Motefakker-Azad and Mohsen Zanganeh, as well as Abolfazl Amouei, special assistant to the parliament speaker for international affairs.



# IRAN NEWS



## Iran and Russia Sign Mapping Cooperation Agreement at Kazan Forum

TEHRAN (IRNA) - A memorandum of understanding (MoU) for cooperation was signed between Iran's National Cartographic Center and Russia's Federal Service for State Registration, Cadastre, and Cartography (Rosreestr) on the sidelines of the 16th Russia-Islamic World: Kazan Forum, held in the city of Kazan.

According to a statement released Friday by the Iranian Cartographic Center, the agreement aims to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the exchange of mapping technologies, the development of geospatial infrastructure, and the implementation of joint geomatics projects. This agreement marks a significant step toward deepening technical and scientific relations between the two countries in the field of cartography.

## Iran Could Surpass Qatar in Gas Production if Sanctions Are Lifted



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The CEO of Pars Oil and Gas Company has confirmed a decline in gas pressure in several blocks of the South Pars gas field, stressing the urgent need to launch pressure-boosting projects to maintain production levels. He emphasized that delays in earlier actions have made the situation more challenging and called for swift implementation of development plans.

In an interview with ILNA, Touraj Dehghani, CEO of Pars Oil and Gas Company, stated that the South Pars field has entered the second half of its lifecycle, and pressure decline is now observable in several blocks.

"Despite having the world's second-largest gas reserves and being the third-largest gas producer, Iran is also the fourth-largest consumer of gas. This imbalance has become a serious challenge for the country," Dehghani explained.

He noted that the country should have started maintenance and enhanced recovery operations years ago, but such efforts were delayed. "Now we must compensate for the delay with urgent pressure enhancement in South Pars. Each hub must progress based on a clear schedule and a \$2.4 billion budget to ensure timely completion."

Dehghani also addressed the potential impact of ongoing international negotiations on the development of South Pars and the pressure enhancement projects. "The country is in a difficult situation, and our diplomatic apparatus is working hard to resolve international issues through negotiations. Naturally, if sanctions are eased, our operations will proceed faster and more efficiently."

He emphasized that their strategic plans for the oil and gas industry are not solely dependent on the outcome of sanctions or negotiations. "We are not waiting for external developments to start critical work. However, a more favorable international climate would accelerate our activities."

# Iran to Slash Import Tariffs on Eurasian Economic Union Goods to 4.5%

TEHRAN - Iran has announced a significant reduction in customs tariffs on goods imported from member states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), lowering rates from 20% to 4.5% under a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement set to take effect on May 15, 2025.

According to a statement from Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), the new agreement replaces a temporary trade deal that has been in place since 2019 and only covered a limited range of products. The new full-scale agreement offers extensive tariff cuts and is expected to dramatically boost trade volumes and economic cooperation between Iran and the EAEU's five member states: Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia.

The agreement was signed in December 2023 and has since been ratified by all member states and Iran. According to the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC), the average tariff rate on goods imported from the EAEU to Iran will now fall to just 4.5%, paving the way for more competitive pricing and easier market access.

EEC Minister of Trade Andrey Slepnev confirmed that preparations are underway for the first joint committee meeting between Iran and the EAEU, scheduled for the second half of 2025. The committee will focus on expanding economic cooperation, facilitating trade, and ensuring effective implementation of the agreement's terms.

The scope of the new agreement is considerably broader than its predecessor. It covers around 90% of tradable goods, offers reciprocal commitments to preferential treatment, and introduces a detailed regulatory framework designed to eliminate trade barriers.

Experts suggest that this deal could double the trade volume between Iran and the EAEU, raising it to approximately \$12 billion in the medium term. Russian officials, cited by Interfax, highlighted the strategic importance of this move, noting that Iran is now opening its domestic market to third-party countries for the first time in a meaningful way—marking a shift from its previous import-protection policies aimed at supporting domestic industries.



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

According to the Eurasian Economic Commission, annual savings on customs duties for EAEU suppliers could reach up to \$380 million.

The EAEU is an international economic union aimed at enhancing economic integration among its member states. It facilitates the free movement of goods, services, capital, and labor, while also aligning member nations' economic policies.

Kazakhstan ranked third among EAEU members in terms of economic growth in 2024. Additionally, the bloc is launching new financial support mechanisms for farmers.

Annual customs duty savings for EAEU exporters are projected to

reach \$380 million, offering substantial cost reductions for suppliers in key sectors such as agriculture, energy, and industrial goods.

The agreement is also expected to enhance transit traffic along the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a multi-modal route linking India, Iran, Central Asia, and Russia. As Iran seeks to position itself as a regional logistics and energy hub, smoother trade flows and improved connectivity through the EAEU could offer both economic and geopolitical advantages.

The Eurasian Economic Union, formed in 2015, is an international economic bloc that facilitates the free movement of goods, services, capital, and labor among member states, while aligning economic policies. It serves as a key player in regional economic integration and aims to promote deeper cooperation between former Soviet economies.

Kazakhstan, which recorded the third-highest economic growth rate among EAEU members in 2024, is a major player in the bloc. Additionally, the EAEU recently announced new financial support mechanisms for farmers across member states, indicating a broader economic development agenda tied to the trade agreement.

As both sides continue finalizing the operational aspects of the deal, observers say this could mark a turning point in Iran's trade diplomacy, signaling a pivot toward greater integration with Eastern markets amid ongoing sanctions and global economic realignments.

## Iran's Exit from FATF Blacklist Hinges on Ratifying Palermo and CFT Conventions



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's Financial Intelligence Center has announced that the ratification of the bills to join the Palermo Convention and the Countering the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) Convention is essential for the country's removal from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) blacklist and for the suspension of FATF's countermeasures against Iranian financial activities — particularly those involving exporters, producers, and investors.

In a statement issued following the ratification of Iran's accession to the Palermo Convention and the initiation of the CFT bill review by the Expediency Discernment Council, the Financial Intelligence Center emphasized the importance of this step.

The statement, signed by Hadi Khani, Deputy Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance and Head of the Financial Intelligence Center, commended the Expediency Council for its objective and expert-driven review of the Palermo Convention, free from political and factional biases. The center also expressed readiness to provide technical and expert support in the ongoing review of the CFT bill.

The statement reads: "The Expediency Discernment Council has conducted a thorough and expert review of Iran's accession to the Palermo Convention, steering clear of partisan and subjective perspectives. We express our gratitude to the Council's leadership and members for their professional approach."

## Health Minister to Attend 78th World Health Assembly in Switzerland



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Minister of Health, Treatment and Medical Education, Dr. Mohammad Reza Zafarghandi, is set to participate in the 78th World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva, Switzerland, in line with the annual program of the World Health Organization (WHO).

Dr. Alireza Biglari, Special Assistant to the Minister and Director General of International Cooperation at the Ministry, announced that key global health priorities will be presented and reviewed in the form of documents during the assembly, with member states offering their feedback on each issue.

Biglari noted that Iran's Ministry of Health will submit official statements on 35 technical documents related to the country's critical health system areas. These include 29 documents under the jurisdiction of the Health Deputy and 6 from other departments and the Directorate General of International Cooperation.

In addition to health-specific matters, the assembly will also address broader issues such as budgeting, membership status, audit topics, and matters raised in WHO's Executive Board, all to be discussed in specialized committees.

He highlighted that the ongoing budgetary challenges faced by WHO, particularly following the United States' withdrawal from the organization, will be a key focus.

Biglari added that across the 77th and 78th sessions of the WHA, a total of 56 documents and initiatives will be reviewed.

On the sidelines of the assembly, Minister Zafarghandi is expected to hold bilateral meetings with his counterparts from Switzerland, Italy, Qatar, Oman, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, India, and Cuba, as well as the WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, to discuss strengthening collaboration. He will also attend and deliver a speech at the BRICS Health Ministers' Meeting, hosted by Brazil.

The 78th World Health Assembly, held under the theme "One World for Health", is taking place in Geneva from Monday, May 20 to Tuesday, May 28, 2025. A high-ranking delegation from Iran's health sector, led by the Minister, will be in attendance.

# With Iran's Tourism Potential, There's No Need for Foreign Travel

TEHRAN - Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Seyed Reza Salehi Amiri, stated that around 10 million Iranians travel abroad for tourism every year. He emphasized the importance of introducing Iran's vast tourism potential, asserting that the country's rich natural and historical resources make foreign travel unnecessary.

Speaking at the 6th Annual Gathering of Sahandabad and Hashtroud Residents, Salehi Amiri highlighted the deep cultural and civilizational roots of the Azerbaijan region, calling it one of Iran's civilizational centers. He specifically pointed to Zakhak Castle in Hashtroud as a symbol of Iranian identity and heritage. He stressed the importance of investing in such historic and religious sites, suggesting that these investments would yield significant returns.

The Minister underlined that preserving and restoring historical sites is a national duty, and called for continued archaeological exploration at Zakhak Castle to uncover more of its ancient features. "By advancing excavations, we can offer a richer image of our heritage to both Iran and the world," he said.

Salehi Amiri further stated that Iran must showcase Azerbaijan's tourism potential on the global stage, as the region boasts significant historical and natural assets. He emphasized that global registration of Iran's cultural treasures is a key mission, noting that ancient artifacts and sites are uncovered almost everywhere in Iran during excavation, especially in regions like Hashtroud and Azerbaijan, which remain largely unexplored.

He affirmed the Ministry's commitment to listening to the people and serving them fully. Referring to the natural and cultural blessings of Hashtroud, he said the region is currently on the verge of growth thanks to social unity and collective efforts.

According to the Minister, Iran holds nearly one million historical and cultural artifacts, and these divine endowments are unique to this land. He reiterated the importance of preserving these sites and ensuring they are protected from damage. Importantly, he called for linking historical sites to people's livelihoods, as part of the government's efforts to improve public welfare. "Our motto is to make historical sites part of people's daily lives," he said.

He again described Zakhak Castle as a reflection of a nation's identity and character, urging the public to value this heritage and educate their children about it. Promoting Iran's historical potential, he added, will help grow the tourism industry. He called for national media to regularly highlight the cultural and touristic richness of the Azerbaijan region.



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

Salehi Amiri also mentioned ongoing discussions with Azerbaijan (the neighboring country) to ease border crossings and encourage more tourism exchange. He said developments in this area are expected soon. "Tourism boosts employment and supports household incomes," he added.

He also noted that the ministry is negotiating with investors to build a suspension bridge and that funding has been allocated for restoring the Grand Mosque of Hashtroud. He emphasized that archaeological work at Zakhak Castle should continue around the clock to accelerate discoveries and global promotion.

Zafar Mohammadi, Deputy Governor of East Azerbaijan Province for Urban Development, called for UNESCO World Heritage status for Zakhak Castle, stating that investments in the site will help promote Hashtroud's development. He praised the community's involvement in cultural and tourism initiatives and stressed the importance of addressing sports and tourism development as a path to broader societal progress.

He pledged to provide infrastructure for tourism in both Hashtroud and Charuymaq counties, in line with national development goals.

Ebrahim Hassani, the Governor of Hashtroud, highlighted the region's significant capacities in cultural heritage, handicrafts, and agriculture, all of which can play a major role in local economic and social development. He expressed hope that, with the support of both people and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, the region will see increased prosperity.

He emphasized the need to foster local handicrafts and sustainable development, calling for increased focus on these potentials.

Mohammad Alizadeh, head of Hashtroud's Agricultural Department, said the exhibition features locally made products such as honey, dairy items, and handicrafts, aimed at promoting them to the public. He expressed hope that the event would be a step toward economic development in the region.

According to IRNA, the event not only celebrated investment opportunities but also aimed to strengthen cultural ties and promote local economic innovation. It featured eight major development initiatives and focused on creative projects in cultural heritage and tourism.

Zakhak Castle, a rock fortress with unique architecture, symbolic carvings, and stunning landscapes, has long attracted both researchers and tourists. The site represents a significant opportunity for cultural tourism expansion and heritage-based investment in Iran.

## Tehran Talks: A Platform to Strengthen the Role of the Persian Gulf Region in the Int'l Order



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Tehran Dialogue Forum represents a vital opportunity to enhance the position of the Persian Gulf region within the global order, emphasized Behrouz Kamalvandi, Deputy Head of International, Legal, and Parliamentary Affairs at Iran's Atomic Energy Organization.

Speaking about a meeting between Iran's Foreign Minister and the head of the Atomic Energy Organization with members of the international Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs, Kamalvandi stated that this gathering served as a precursor to the upcoming Tehran Dialogue Forum, which is set to take place over the next two days.

Initiated in 2018, the Tehran Dialogue Forum has, over the past seven years, convened prominent figures from various countries and the region to engage in discussions. Kamalvandi underlined that the core objective of the dialogues is to ensure that the Persian Gulf region secures its rightful place in international frameworks, particularly given its strategic importance in political, cultural, security, and economic affairs on the global stage.

Kamalvandi also revealed that the 2025 forum will feature 40 panels covering a broad spectrum of topics — political, cultural, economic, and security-related — with active participation from regional officials and thought leaders.

He highlighted the necessity for regional cooperation, stating that the nations of the region must work together cohesively to assert a meaningful presence internationally. In this spirit, Minister Eslami invited both the Iranian Foreign Minister and Pugwash officials for discussions about Iran's most significant achievements in the nuclear field.

Praising Pugwash as a science-based, human-centered institution, Kamalvandi noted that its mission aligns with the values of peace and international cooperation. Founded in 1955 by Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein, the Pugwash Conferences aim to address global challenges through scientific dialogue and promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Kamalvandi also touched on the politicization of Iran's nuclear program, emphasizing the need for international efforts to support the peaceful advancement of nuclear science and technology. He stressed that disarmament and non-proliferation must go hand-in-hand with promoting the peaceful use of nuclear knowledge.



## Bolivia Police Teargas Morales Supporters Protesting Electoral Ban

LA PAZ (Dispatches) - Tensions flared in Bolivia's administrative capital La Paz on Friday as supporters of former President Evo Morales gathered outside the electoral court, demanding his reinstatement as a candidate in this year's presidential race. Bolivia's constitutional court this week upheld a lower court ruling banning presidents from serving more than two terms, in effect blocking Morales from running for what would be his fourth term.

Clashes erupted between protesters and police, who deployed tear gas and paintballs to disperse the crowd. "Look at what they are doing to us," said protester Jorge Aduviri. "There are kids here, elderly people, pregnant women." Among the demonstrators, Indigenous women kneeled in defiance, while others chanted slogans against the current government.



## APEC Warns of Fragile Global Trade Amid Unease Over U.S. Tariffs



JEJU (Dispatches) - The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation group said that it was "concerned" over the challenges to global trade, as ministers from APEC countries met in South Korea in the shadow of growing woes from U.S. tariffs.

Trade ministers from the top economies that make up APEC are meeting on South Korea's Jeju Island amid concerns for the global trading system since US President Donald Trump unveiled bombshell levies on most partners.

The United States is a key APEC member and was represented by Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, who held a series of bilateral meetings with nations eager to soften the blow of Washington's tariffs.

"We are concerned with the fundamental challenges faced by the global trading system," trade ministers from the 21-member group, which includes China, said in a joint statement.

They urged greater cooperation, saying they "remain committed" to APEC as a means of "bringing us together to address the economic challenges facing our region".

South Korea's Minister for Trade, Cheong In-Kyo, said the joint statement was hard-won, with "significant differences" in positions clear early on in the talks.

But at the last minute, the countries "dramatically" reached an agreement, he said, with the APEC emphasising the importance of global trading mechanisms such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as sustainable supply chains.

This "sends a highly positive signal to global markets", he said, adding that "APEC members can work together to navigate the current highly uncertain global trade environment effectively".

## Poland's Pro-EU Future Hangs in the Balance as Presidential Vote Threatens to Paralyze Gov't



WARSAW (Dispatches) - The future of Poland's pro-EU government is riding on the country's presidential elections, which come at a fraught moment for Europe, analysts said ahead of the first round of voting on Sunday.

The electoral campaign in the European Union and Nato member largely revolved around foreign policy, showcasing a clash of philosophies over Poland's engagement with the EU and the United States.

"It was a kind of identity campaign," said Marcin Zaborowski, a fellow at think tank Globsec.

"There was Ukraine, the attitude towards the European Union, towards migration, towards the United States," he told AFP.

The job of Polish president is sometimes dismissed as a ceremonial post, but it comes with some real power.

And that has often stymied Prime Minister Donald Tusk, a former European Council chief whose centrist Civic Coalition (KO) has clashed on multiple fronts with conservative President Andrzej Duda since coming to power in 2023.

Tusk's KO is supporting pro-EU Warsaw mayor Rafal Trzaskowski for president.

# Ukraine Calls on Allies to Keep Pressure on Russia After Talks Yield No Ceasefire

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Ukraine rallied support from its Western allies on Friday after Kyiv and Moscow failed to agree to a ceasefire at their first direct talks in more than three years, with Russia presenting conditions that a Ukrainian source described as "non-starters".

Under pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump to end the bloodiest conflict in Europe since World War Two, delegates from the warring countries met for the first time since March 2022, the month after Russia invaded its neighbor.

The talks in an Istanbul palace lasted well under two hours. Russia expressed satisfaction with the meeting and said it was ready to continue contacts. Both countries said they had agreed to trade 1,000 prisoners of war each in what would be the biggest such exchange yet.

But Kyiv, which wants the West to impose tighter sanctions unless Moscow accepts a proposal from Trump for a 30-day ceasefire, immediately began rallying its allies for tougher action.

As soon as the talks ended, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy held a phone call with Trump and the leaders of France, Germany and Poland, his spokesperson said.

Zelenskyy said robust sanctions should follow if Russia rejected a ceasefire.

Russia's demands were "detached from reality and go far beyond anything that was previously discussed," a source in the Ukrainian delegation told Reuters.

The source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Moscow had issued ultimatums for Ukraine to withdraw from parts of its own territory in order to obtain a ceasefire "and other non-starters and non-constructive conditions".

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the Russian position was "clearly unacceptable" and that European leaders, Ukraine and the U.S. were "closely aligning" their responses.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the EU was working on a new package of sanctions against Moscow.

Russia's lead negotiator, Vladimir Medinsky, told reporters his team had "taken note" of the Ukrainians' request for direct talks between Zelenskyy and President Vladimir Putin. Putin, after proposing the direct talks, had spurned a challenge from the Ukrainian leader to meet him personally in Istanbul.

"We have agreed that each side will present its vision of a possible future ceasefire and spell it out in detail. After such a vision has been presented, we believe it would be appropriate, as also agreed, to continue our negotiations," Medinsky said.

Crediting efforts by Trump and other U.S. officials, Kirill Dmitriev, Putin's investment envoy, said on X the talks produced "good results...1. Largest POW exchange, 2. Ceasefire options that may work 3. Understanding of positions and continued dialogue."

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha wrote on X that he and EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas agreed that "pressure on Moscow must be strengthened to achieve a full and durable ceasefire".



A Turkish official said afterwards the atmosphere had been calm. No concrete timetable or location was agreed for the next talks, the official said, with both sides needing to debrief their leaders first.

The Ukrainian source said the Ukrainians spoke in their own language, through an interpreter, although Russian is widely spoken in Ukraine.

A Ukrainian and a European source said Russia rejected a Ukrainian request for U.S. representatives to be in the room.

Two sources familiar with the talks said Medinsky said Russia was ready to keep fighting for as long as necessary, drawing a parallel with the wars of Tsar Peter the Great against Sweden that lasted 21 years in the early 1700s.

"We do not want war, but we are ready to fight for a year, two, three — as long as you want," one of the sources quoted him as saying.

Russia said on Friday it captured another village in its slow, grinding advance in eastern Ukraine. Minutes before the start of the Istanbul meeting, Ukrainian media reported an air alert and explosions in the city of Dnipro.

Russia says it sees the talks as a continuation of negotiations, also in Istanbul, weeks after the 2022 invasion.

But the terms under discussion then, when Ukraine was still reeling from Russia's invasion, would be deeply disadvantageous to Kyiv now. They included a demand by Moscow for large cuts to Ukraine's military.

With Russian forces in control of about a fifth of Ukraine, Putin has insisted Kyiv cede territory, abandon NATO membership ambitions and become a neutral country.

Ukraine rejects these terms as tantamount to capitulation, and is seeking guarantees of its future security from world powers, especially the United States.

# More Than 250 Killed in Israeli Strikes on Gaza

GAZA (Dispatches) - Israeli strikes on Gaza have killed more than 250 people since Thursday morning, local health authorities said on Friday, one of the deadliest phases of bombardment since a truce collapsed in March and with a new ground offensive expected soon.

The air and artillery strikes were focused on the northern section of the tiny, crowded enclave, where dozens of people including women and children were killed overnight, said Gaza Health Ministry spokesman Khalil al-Deqrar.

Israel has intensified its bombardment and built up armour along the border despite growing international pressure for it to resume ceasefire talks and end its blockade of Gaza, where an international hunger monitor has warned of famine.

U.S. President Donald Trump on Friday backed aid for the Palestinians, saying people in Gaza are starving and adding that he expected "a lot of good things" in the next month.

Asked whether he supported Israeli plans to expand the war in Gaza, Trump told reporters: "I think a lot of good things are going to happen over the next month, and we're going to see. We have to help also out the Palestinians. You know, a lot of people are starving on Gaza, so we have to look at both sides."

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on May 5 that Israel was planning an expanded and intensive offensive against Hamas as his security cabinet approved plans that could involve seizing the entire Gaza Strip and controlling aid.

An Israeli defense official said at the time that the operation would not be launched before Trump concluded his visit to the Middle East, which is



expected to end on Friday.

Israel's declared goal in Gaza is the elimination of Hamas, which attacked Israeli communities on October 7, 2023, killing around 1,200 people and seizing about 250 hostages.

Its military campaign has devastated the enclave, pushing nearly all inhabitants from their homes and killing more than 53,000 people according to Gaza health authorities, while aid agencies say its blockade has caused a humanitarian crisis.

Heavy strikes on Friday were reported in the northern town of Beit Lahiya and in the Jabalia refugee camp, where Palestinian emergency services said

many bodies were still buried in the rubble.

Israel's military said its air force had struck more than 150 targets across Gaza, saying these included anti-tank missile posts, terrorist cells, military structures and operational centres.

In Jabalia camp in the northern Gaza Strip, men picked through a sea of rubble following the night's strikes, pulling out sheets of metal as small children clambered through the debris.

Around 10 bodies draped in white sheets were lined up on the ground before being taken to hospital. Women sat crying nearby and one lifted a corner of a sheet to gaze at the dead person's face.

Ismail, a man from Gaza City who gave only his first name, described a night of horror. "The non-stop explosions resulting from the air strikes and tank shelling reminded us of the early days of the war. The ground didn't stop shaking underneath our feet," Ismail told Reuters via a chat app.

"We thought Trump arrived to save us, but it seems Netanyahu doesn't care, neither does Trump," he added.

Israel has faced increasing international isolation over its campaign in Gaza, with even the United States, its staunchest ally, expressing unease over the scale of the destruction and the dire situation caused by its blockade on the delivery of food and other vital aid.

On Thursday, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Washington was "troubled" by the humanitarian situation in the enclave.

Netanyahu has dispatched a team to Doha to take part in ceasefire talks with Qatari mediators but he has ruled out concessions, saying Israel remains committed to defeating Hamas.

# U.S. Loses Last Triple-A Credit Rating as Moody's Cuts Over Gov't Debt

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States lost its last triple-A credit rating from a major agency Friday as Moody's announced a downgrade, citing rising levels of government debt and dealing a blow to Donald Trump's narrative of economic strength and prosperity.

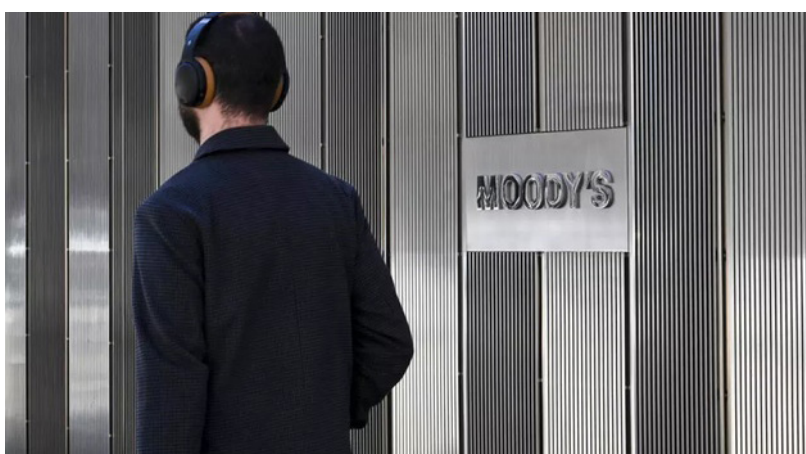
The downgrade to Aa1 from Aaa adds to the bad news for the US president, coming on the same day his flagship spending bill failed to pass a key vote in Congress due to opposition from several Republican fiscal hawks.

Explaining its decision, the ratings agency noted "the increase over more than a decade in government debt and interest payment ratios to levels that are significantly higher than similarly rated sovereigns."

Moody's warned it expects federal deficits to widen to almost nine percent of economic output by 2035, up from 6.4 percent last year, "driven mainly by increased interest payments on debt, rising entitlement spending, and relatively low revenue generation."

As a result, it expects the federal debt burden to increase to about 134 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2035, compared to 98 percent last year.

The White House took to X to push back, with communications director Steven Cheung singling out the chief economist of Moody's Analytics, Mark Zandi, for



criticism.

"Nobody takes his 'analysis' seriously. He has been proven wrong time and time again," Cheung posted.

Moody's decision to downgrade the United States from its top credit rating mirrors similar decisions from the two other major US ratings agencies, S&P and Fitch.

S&P was the first to cut its rating for the United States back in 2011, during Barack Obama's first term in office, citing its concerns that a debt management plan "would be necessary to stabilize the government's medium-term debt dynamics."

Twelve years later, Fitch followed suit, warning of "a steady deterioration in standards of governance over the last 20 years, including on fiscal and debt matters."

Moody's echoed its peers in its decision Friday, noting in a statement that "successive US administrations and Congress have failed to agree on measures to reverse the trend of large annual fiscal deficits and growing interest costs."

"We do not believe that material multi-year reductions in mandatory spending and deficits will result from current fiscal proposals under consideration," it added, flagging that it expected larger deficits to continue over the next decade.





## Chelsea Beat Man United to Stay on Course for Champions League

LONDON (Dispatches) - Chelsea stayed in the hunt for a Champions League place next season with a nervy 1-0 victory over Manchester United on Friday, courtesy of a second-half goal from Marc Cucurella. The Spain full back headed home from close range, turning in a cross from captain Reece James, who bamboozled the United defence with a twist and turn in the 71st minute.

"I knew I had space and time. I knew I put the ball in a good area, this guy was always arriving," James told Sky Sports, standing alongside Cucurella. James had hit the post in the first half with a stinging shot shortly after United defender Harry Maguire had the ball in the Chelsea net, only for VAR to rule it marginally offside.

United had few other chances, and Chelsea were tense but dominant for most of the match.

The result lifted Chelsea to fourth in the Premier League above Aston Villa, who earlier beat Tottenham Hotspur 2-0, with one game left in the season for both sides.

"The Champions League is where the club belongs, competing in the best competitions," James said. The top five in the table qualify for the Champions League, which has been Chelsea's target since Enzo Maresca took over as coach at the start of the season.

Relieved Maresca and his bench as well players and fans celebrated wildly at the final whistle.

It was the last home game of the season for Chelsea whose form has run hot and cold under since the Italian took over, and they circled the ground with a lap of honour before leaving the pitch. Their last game is away to Nottingham Forest, who lie seventh and are still chasing qualification, next weekend.

United, whose target after a woeful season, is winning the Europa League final against Tottenham next Wednesday, are 16th.

Meanwhile high-flying Aston Villa comfortably dispatched Tottenham Hotspur 2-0 in the Premier League on Friday to keep up their quest for more Champions League football and leave their wounded visitors focused on next week's Europa League final.

With Villa dominating possession in a party atmosphere for their final home game of the season, the breakthrough came in the 59th minute when center-back Ezri Konsa whipped home after Ollie Watkins headed the ball into his path from a corner.

Midfielder Boubacar Kamara rifled home Villa's second in the 73rd minute to end the tepid resistance of Spurs, who hope to salvage an otherwise miserable season in Bilbao next week if they can beat Manchester United to lift the Europa League.

With one fixture left, Villa are on 66 points and fifth in the Premier League - the last qualifying berth for the Champions League. Chelsea are above them on goal difference after beating Manchester United also on Friday.

Manchester City are sixth on 65 points but with two games left.

Villa goalscorer Konsa said his goal came from a corner routine the team had worked on during the week, setting them on their way for a remarkable eighth consecutive home win.

"I'm just glad that we managed to get the win on our last home game and give the fans something to cheer for," he said.

## Salah Slams Liverpool Fans' Treatment of Alexander-Arnold After Anfield Boos



LONDON (Dispatches) - Mohamed Salah has slammed "harsh" Liverpool fans for booing Trent Alexander-Arnold in his first appearance after announcing he will leave the Premier League champions at the end of the season.

Alexander-Arnold is widely expected to join Real Madrid once his contract expires in June.

The England right-back, who revealed his decision to quit his boyhood club last week, was jeered by Liverpool supporters when he came on as a second-half substitute in Sunday's 2-2 draw against Arsenal at Anfield.

Salah said yesterday that he was saddened by the taunts aimed at Alexander-Arnold, who has two games left as a Liverpool player against Brighton on Monday and Crystal Palace on May 25.

"Absolutely. I was surprised because this is not how we act as Liverpool fans," the Egypt forward told Gary Neville in a Sky Sports interview.

"I think somehow the fans were being harsh with him. I think he didn't deserve it at the time, he deserved the fans to treat him the best way possible because he gave it all to the fans."

Salah was also involved in a prolonged contract saga this season, but eventually committed his future to the Reds by signing a new two-year deal.

Calling for Liverpool fans to give Alexander-Arnold a more respectful farewell in his last two games, Salah said: "Imagine someone who gives you his all for 20 years. It's shouldn't be like this.

"I hope that will change next game, against Brighton or in the last game of the season, because he deserves the farewell."

Liverpool-born Alexander-Arnold, who made his first-team debut in 2016, has made 353 senior appearances for Liverpool in all competitions, scoring 23 goals.

The 26-year-old has won two Premier League titles, the Champions League, the FA Cup and the League Cup with the Reds.

Salah admitted it will be emotional to say goodbye to one of his close friends when the season ends.

## Sinner Fights Back to Set Up Italian Open Final With Alcaraz

ROME (Dispatches) - World number one Jannik Sinner produced a sublime semi-final display as he fought back from a set down to beat American Tommy Paul 1-6 6-0 6-3 to set up an Italian Open final showdown with Carlos Alcaraz.

Sinner ended a 47-year wait for an Italian to reach the men's singles final in Rome after Adriano Panatta lost the title match to Bjorn Borg in 1978.

Serving first, 11th seed Paul stunned the crowd and went up 5-0 in the first set against Sinner, who approached the clash on a career-best 25-match winning streak.

But the Italian top seed, making his comeback this week after serving a three-month doping ban, kept his cool and orchestrated a stunning comeback in the second. He delivered a bagel, giving his rival no chance when forcing a decider.

Sinner, who is playing in his first tournament since capturing Australian Open title, was up 3-0 in the final set before marching on to reach his seventh ATP Masters 1000 final.

"The conditions were completely different, it's much colder today and the ball is a bit heavier. I struggled with that a bit," said Sinner.

"He broke me straight away so that's a straight punch in my



face. But I tried to stay there mentally. Trying to understand what might work better. I stayed there in the first set. Winning that one game for me was very important."

The 23-year-old will face world number three Alcaraz on Sunday, the last player who beat him when the pair met in the China Open final in October before Sinner embarked on his now 26-match winning run.

"If I want to win Sunday, I have to play some of my best tennis," Sinner added. "Carlos played some incredible tennis today. Let's see what's coming."

Alcaraz reached the Rome final for the first time after a thrilling 6-3 7-6(4) win over local hope Lorenzo Musetti earlier.

Musetti, eager to avenge his loss to Alcaraz in last month's Monte Carlo final, started the match with high intensity but the Spaniard took the lead with a double break in the first set.

As Alcaraz powered through to take the opening set, a frustrated Musetti smashed his racquet and even slapped himself before the home crowd came to his rescue.

Musetti took the lead in the second set and was 4-2 before the Spaniard fought back to level the set. The Italian saved a match point and forced a tiebreak but Alcaraz cruised to victory.

"Today was a really difficult day with the conditions, the wind was tough to play with," Alcaraz said.

"It wasn't about playing brilliant, spectacular tennis. It was about playing smart tennis, playing solid, going to the point when you can, and waiting for the chance to play aggressively. I think I did that pretty well."

## Warriors Face Big Offseason Decisions After Playoff Defeat

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - With Stephen Curry watching from the bench, the Warriors season came to a close with a 121-110 Game Five loss to the Timberwolves, leaving the franchise to now decide how to proceed with an aging core thirsty for one more taste of glory.

The second-round playoff series changed completely when Curry strained his left hamstring in Golden State's Game One win. The team never recovered, losing four straight games to the younger and more athletic Minnesota squad.

Warriors players and coaches were quick to credit the Wolves for sending them on early vacation, but the unmistakable reality was that without Curry, the Warriors lacked sufficient firepower to compete.

"I don't want to take anything away from what Minnesota just accomplished, so there's no sense in even talking about Steph," head coach Steve Kerr told reporters after the game.



Kerr, under whose leadership the Warriors became an NBA dynasty with titles in 2015, 2017, 2018 and 2022, said it was "a hell of a run" after the acquisition of Jimmy Butler at the trade deadline revived their postseason hopes.

"Jimmy changed our season, flipped everything for us and gave us a chance," Kerr said.

"We became one of the best teams in the league."

But that league, especially the stacked Western Conference, continues to get better, and the Warriors also have to contend with Father Time.

Curry, who was likely to play in Game Six of the series had the Warriors been able to extend it, is 37. The team's emotional leader, Draymond Green, and Butler are both 35.

## Messi Returns to Argentina's World Cup Qualifiers



BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - Forward Lionel Messi was named in Argentina's 28-player preliminary squad for next month's World Cup qualifiers yesterday, after an injury forced him to miss the fixtures against Uruguay and Brazil in March.

Defending champions Argentina, who are set to play Chile and Colombia in June, have already secured their place at the 2026 World Cup in Messi's absence following a 1-0 win over Uruguay in March, before thrashing rivals Brazil 4-1.

"It's a shame to miss these two very special matches with the national team against Uruguay and Brazil," Messi wrote in an Instagram story after he was forced to withdraw with a groin strain.

"As always, I wanted to be there, but at the last moment, a not-so-serious injury that forces me to rest for a while before returning to play kept me out."

Messi returned to action for Inter Miami later in the month and has scored six goals in all competitions for the club since then.

The 37-year-old is also set to play in the Club World Cup, where Miami kick off their campaign on June 14, four days after Argentina play Colombia.

Coach Lionel Scaloni has also included Nottingham Forest midfielder Nicolas Dominguez, who last appeared for Argentina in 2021.

Defender Valentin Barco and attacker Valentin Castellanos, who have not played for Argentina since last year, have also been named in the list.