

President Masoud Pezeshkian, During Meeting With Head of National Iraqi Alliance Ammar al-Hakim, Cautioned Islamic Nations to Be Careful and Vigilant About the Enemies' plots and Conspiracies to Sow Discord Among Muslims

# IRAN NEWS

Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, Esmail Baghaei, Described Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi's Meeting With High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas as Useful

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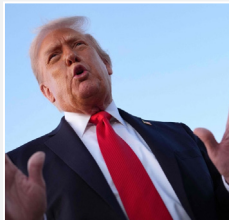
## Iran in Talks With CIS Countries on Port Investment

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INTERNATIONAL

## Trump Issues Ultimatum Over Hostages, Hamas Says Ready to Negotiate



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## Iran to Launch 20 Satellites Next Year; Iranian Flag to Reach the Moon



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The head of the Iranian Space Agency announced that in the year 1405 in the Iranian calendar (2026–2027), the country's primary focus will be on satellite launches, with around 20 satellites planned to be placed into orbit. He also revealed that, through participation in China's "Chang 8" project, Iran's research payload will be sent to the Moon via a Chinese launcher.

Hassan Salarieh detailed the latest developments in Iran's space program, including infrastructure expansion, new satellite launches, and international collaborations. He also disclosed plans to increase the number of ground stations operated by the Iranian Space Agency.

Salarieh delivered encouraging news to aerospace enthusiasts, emphasizing that the main focus for next year will be satellite launches, with a target of placing 20 satellites into orbit.

The full interview, conducted during the lunar eclipse at the Khayyam Observatory of the Iranian Space Agency, is as follows:

Discussing the "Martyr Soleimani" satellite project, the Deputy Minister of Communications said: "The contract for this project was signed in 1402 (2023–2024). It involves creating a narrowband satellite constellation, with about 20 satellites planned in the first phase."

He explained that narrowband satellites transmit small amounts of data, but when used as a constellation, they can transfer data from one point in Iran to another in a very short time—sometimes in less than half an hour.

## Foreign Ministry spokesperson terms Araghchi's meeting with EU foreign policy chief as 'useful'



Tehran, IRNA – Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei has described Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi's meeting with High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas as useful.

"We see it a duty to take advantage of every opportunity to advance the country's interests, express our demands, and warn about the consequences of the three European countries' misuse of the Snapback Mechanism to reinstate the terminated UN Security Council resolutions," Baghaei told IRNA addressing his regular press conference on Monday.

He expressed hope that the Europeans will revise their approaches by properly understanding the consequences of a confrontational stance.

IAEA acknowledges the need to consider Iran's views Commenting on Iran's stance toward the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report, Baghaei said that Iran has reviewed the report and will convey its positions to the body and the member states of the Board of Governors in a note.

"We expected a fair report that would take into account the facts on the ground," he stressed

He clarified that the fact on the ground is nothing but the illegal and aggressive attack by the Israeli regime and the United States on Iran's peaceful nuclear facilities.

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



## Supreme Leader Calls for Unity, Urges Support for Hardworking President

TEHRAN - Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Sunday emphasized the necessity of preserving and strengthening national unity, warning that foreign adversaries now seek to create divisions within the country after failing to subdue Iran through military confrontation. He called on the Iranian people to support public servants, particularly the nation's "hardworking and tireless president."

Speaking before thousands of people gathered to commemorate the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Reza (AS), the eighth Shia Imam, Khamenei highlighted the enduring spiritual and social legacy of the Imam's journey to Khorasan. He said the Imam's presence in the region elevated the role of the Ahl al-Bayt's teachings, brought the tragedy of Karbala to the forefront of Islamic consciousness, and instilled a spirit of resistance against injustice that has endured through generations.

In addressing current political challenges, the Supreme Leader praised the Iranian nation's steadfastness during recent conflicts, which he described as a "second imposed war." This resilience, he said, had enhanced Iran's dignity in the eyes of the world.

He then posed a rhetorical question: "Why has the United States maintained its hostility toward Iran for the past 45 years?" The answer, he argued, was no longer disguised. While previous U.S. administrations cited human rights, democracy, or other issues, the current American leadership had openly admitted that Washington's core demand is for Iran to "listen to us" and follow U.S. dictates.

"This is their true objective," Khamenei said. "They want this great nation, with its history and honor, to obey America's commands. But the Iranian people will never accept such an insult." He dismissed calls for direct negotiations with the U.S. as superficial, noting that the underlying problem is not policy differences but Washington's insistence on dominance.

Khamenei said that Israel's recent military campaign, supported by the U.S., aimed to deal a decisive blow to the Islamic Republic but ultimately failed. He revealed that some Iranian dissidents abroad even convened a meeting in Europe to discuss a "post-Islamic Republic government" only one day after hostilities began, underscoring what he called their "delusional" confidence.

"Shame on any Iranian who works against his own country for the benefit of Zionism and America," he declared.

The Supreme Leader noted that Iran's armed forces' strength had changed the course of events and warned that adversaries now recognize they cannot defeat Iran militarily. Instead, he said, their new strategy is to sow discord inside the country.

Khamenei warned that enemies are trying to undermine what he described as the "sacred shield

of national unity." He pointed to internal agents, careless commentators, and divisive rhetoric as tools used to fracture solidarity.

"Despite political and social differences of opinion, the Iranian people today remain united in defending the country and the Islamic system," he said. "This unity prevents enemy aggression, and that is precisely why they want to destroy it."

Maintaining this solidarity, Khamenei stressed, is a duty shared by all—ordinary citizens, intellectuals, media figures, and state officials alike. He particularly urged the leaders of the three branches of government to safeguard their cooperation, adding that they are currently working together with "full unity and harmony."

The Supreme Leader underscored the importance of public backing for state officials, especially those who work tirelessly.

"The people must support their servants, including the president, who is diligent, active, and persistent," he said. "Such individuals deserve recognition and gratitude."

He further explained that while diverse opinions and constructive criticism are welcome, destructive attacks on the foundations of the Islamic Republic only serve enemy interests.

Turning to regional developments, Khamenei condemned Israel as "the most hated regime in the world." He cited reports of children being killed through starvation, thirst, or gunfire while waiting for food aid, calling such acts "unprecedented in human history."

While Western governments such as Britain and France have begun to voice criticism of Israel, Khamenei dismissed their statements as "empty words." True resistance, he said, requires concrete action, citing Yemenis who have worked to block aid routes to Israel as an example.

He reiterated Iran's readiness to take any possible steps in support of the Palestinian cause, expressing hope that divine blessings would help uproot what he called the "malignant cancer" of Zionism and unite the Muslim world against oppression.

Khamenei began his speech by reminding the audience of the spiritual impact of Imam Reza's legacy, linking the struggles of early Islam with contemporary challenges facing the Islamic Republic. He said the spirit of Karbala—resisting injustice and rejecting corrupt rulers—remains central to Iran's resilience today.

"After 45 years of hostility, the Islamic Republic is stronger than ever," he declared, emphasizing that Iran's endurance, unity, and faith would continue to frustrate the ambitions of its enemies.

The ceremony concluded with recitations and elegies by noted religious chanters Hamid Dadavandi and Majid Bani Fateh, as mourners observed the anniversary of Imam Reza's martyrdom.

## China: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

The grand parade in Beijing marking the 70th anniversary of victory in the war against Japan and victory in World War II was formalized and recognized in 2015.

It was a very important and symbolic military ceremony held at Beijing's Tiananmen Square. This parade was organized to commemorate China's victory in the eight-year war of resistance against Japan (1937–1945).

This year, Masoud Pezeshkian was also invited and participated in this magnificent parade.

The parade was designed with clear symbols to honor the history and sacrifices of the Chinese people during the war, as well as to demonstrate China's commitment to global peace. The main slogan of the event was: "Remember history, honor heroes, commemorate peace, and look to the future."

Military units from other countries (including Russia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and several others) participated in the parade, reflecting the international approach of the event.

A large number of China's newest and most advanced weapons and defense systems were displayed during the parade. Intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) such as the DF-21D (known as the "carrier killer") and DF-31A, as well as fifth-generation fighter jets like the J-15 and advanced helicopters, were shown.

Various other tanks, armored vehicles, and air defense systems were also displayed. However, unlike typical parades that showcase the sheer power of the armed forces, this parade was deliberately held on a smaller scale. The number of soldiers and equipment was reduced to emphasize the aspects of "remembrance" and "peace" over "militarism."

This parade sent multiple messages and had significant impacts both domestically and internationally for China:

For example, strengthening national pride:

The event stirred a wave of patriotic sentiment and national pride among the Chinese people, reminding them that their country has transformed from a difficult past into a global superpower.

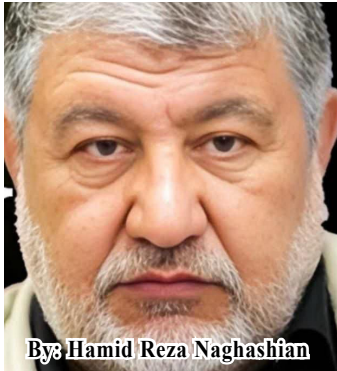
The Chinese Communist Party used this event to strengthen its legitimacy and display strong and united leadership in the country. The parade was a powerful showcase of the achievements of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) modernization program, demonstrating that China has transformed from an infantry-based army into a force equipped with advanced technologies.

The parade clearly signaled to the world—especially to regional and global rivals like the United States and its allies—that China is an advanced and modern military power capable of defending its interests.

And of course, while China's official message emphasized "peace", the display of advanced weaponry, particularly anti-ship missiles, intensified existing concerns about China's military development objectives and their impact on regional stability (especially in the South and East China Seas).

The parade also symbolized the strengthening of China's hegemony compared to forty years ago and its new solidarity with India, covering nearly a third of the world's population, while Russia and Iran also demonstrated a type of alignment with China to the world.

Under these circumstances, Asia is moving along a path of challenging the West, asserting itself in strengthening multilateralism, shifting the balance of power, and positioning itself to impose these ambitions on the world.



By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

## Division Among Muslims Encourages Zionists to Commit Atrocities

TEHRAN - Emphasizing the necessity for Muslims to act as a single, united front, President Masoud Pezeshkian stated that if Muslims remain united and free from internal divisions, Zionists would never be able to carry out atrocities in Gaza or other regional countries.

Speaking at the 39th International Islamic Unity Conference, Pezeshkian described unity as the key to Muslim success. He said, "The Prophet of Islam emphasized cohesion and solidarity. The very first action he took was to establish bonds of brotherhood among tribes, ethnic groups, and clans. As followers of the Prophet, we must ensure that the ruthless Zionist regime cannot commit crimes before the eyes of Muslims and the world."

Honoring the memory of Iran's martyrs, especially those from the government and the Sacred Defense era, Pezeshkian expressed hope that gatherings like this would strengthen unity and cohesion. "The Prophet's first act after migrating to Medina was to reconcile tribes and communities that had been long-standing enemies, establishing bonds of brotherhood among them. This peace-building was the foundation of his success," he said.

Referring to the conquest of Mecca, Pezeshkian noted, "After destroying the idols, Prophet Muhammad declared that Muslims are brothers and should act as one hand. Are we truly followers of the Prophet? If so, why are we divided into seventy-two nations? Why does the brutal Zionist regime fragment Muslims, cutting off water, food, and livelihood?"

Expressing regret over divisions among Muslims, he continued, "If the Islamic community were united, neither Israel nor the U.S. would dare to challenge or oppress us. Our main problem is internal division, not Israel or America. We must start with ourselves and implement the unity and cohesion taught by the Prophet in practice."

Pezeshkian criticized the West for misrepresenting any small action taken by the Islamic community, saying, "They accuse us of violating human rights while showing no mercy to children, women, or the elderly and engaging in acts of genocide. The problem lies in our disunity, which they exploit to sell arms to Islamic countries."

The President added, "They plunder our oil and resources while fomenting disputes among us. We will not engage in conflict with any Muslim country. We are fully committed to the unity and



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cohesion of the Islamic community."

Emphasizing that Muslims must act as a "single hand," Pezeshkian cited Imam Ali's advice: "You fast and pray, yet remain divided. Even if we pray daily, it is useless if we are divided. True Muslims are those who maintain unity. Only then can we uphold justice and rights in society, making us impervious to any power."

He stressed that people are the true capital of a society and government, saying, "Our duty is to serve all citizens fairly, regardless of religion, ethnicity, gender, or race."

Addressing the conference participants, he urged, "As religious leaders, convey the Prophet's message and the teachings of the Quran: all Muslims, regardless of beliefs or sects, are brothers. Our religious actions should aim to establish unity, justice, and truth; failing to do so breeds division and enmity."

Pezeshkian affirmed, "We are brothers with Iraqis, Palestinians, Egyptians, and all Muslims worldwide. We commit to brotherhood in action, not just words. If we uphold this, neither America nor Israel can sow division among Islamic societies."

Recalling the 12-day war launched by Israel and the U.S. against Iran, he said, "They failed because we were united. While our armed forces struck decisively, it was the unity and cohesion of our Islamic society that truly defeated them and frustrated their plans."

He noted that the enemy had hoped to exploit internal divisions in Iran, but the people resisted. "Our citizens will never bow to oppression or aggression, sending a clear message to our enemies." Pezeshkian expressed gratitude to Muslim countries that condemned Israel's crimes but stressed that stronger, more unified action is required. "We have a heavy responsibility, including you religious scholars, to ensure the dignity and honor of the Islamic community."

Concluding, he said, "The challenge lies in our actions. If we act with piety and justice, no opponent can confront us. This gathering marks the beginning of breaking the walls of division and promoting the unity and brotherhood that the Prophet established in Mecca and Medina. May God grant us the strength to spread the message of justice and fairness against aggression, cruelty, and barbarism masked as civilization."

## Iran's Largest Exporter and Supplier of Raw Materials



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Secretary-General of the Iranian Petrochemical Employers' Association, Ahmad Mahdavi, emphasized that today the petrochemical industry is the country's largest exporter, producer, and supplier of raw materials for downstream industries, and economic logic calls for strong support of this sector.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the 19th IranPlast Exhibition on Monday, Mahdavi noted that despite a 12-day conflict, the exhibition is being held more splendidly than last year, with significant participation from both domestic and international companies. "We hope the outcomes of this event will contribute to the national economy and industrial development," he said.

Mahdavi highlighted the global importance of the petrochemical and polymer industries, noting that "all sectors and daily necessities are directly linked to polymer products. In Iran, thanks to our hydrocarbon resources, various products and goods are produced using polymers and integrated into the daily lives of the public."





## Iran's Exports to Belgium Fall 54% in Two Years

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The International Affairs Department of Iran Chamber of Commerce has reported that Iran's share of the Belgian market remains under 0.1 percent, with Iranian exports to Belgium falling nearly 54 percent over the past two years. According to the report, Belgium's imports from Iran dropped steadily from \$78 million in 2022 to \$42 million in 2024, largely due to international sanctions and export restrictions that have significantly reduced Iran's trade volume with Europe. In contrast, Belgian exports to Iran grew during the same period, reaching \$336 million in 2023 before declining slightly in 2024—still remaining above 2022 levels. Belgian goods such as industrial machinery, chemicals, technology equipment, and metal products continue to find demand in the Iranian market.

## Iran Among World Leaders in Horticulture



TEHRAN - Iran ranks among the world's top countries in horticulture, Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri announced, stressing the importance of harnessing the expertise of young professionals and scholars to strengthen national food security. Speaking in a meeting with the Ministry's Youth and Elites Committee, Nouri emphasized that agricultural development relies heavily on the contributions of experts and knowledge-based companies. "Any support and resources required to advance agricultural goals and ensure the country's food security will be made available to elites and innovation-driven enterprises," he said. The minister welcomed the drafting of a strategic document on youth and elite engagement in agriculture, describing it as a positive step that provides both effective strategies and practical initiatives. He urged that workforce statistics compiled by the ministry be shared with the Department of Management and Resources Development, noting their importance for the ministry's future planning. Highlighting the critical role of think tanks, research centers, and young innovators, Nouri said their energy and motivation offer hope for advancing food security across the country. He underlined that food security is a constitutional priority, repeatedly emphasized by the late founder of the Islamic Republic, the Supreme Leader, and actively pursued by the president. Rejecting claims that Iran is not an agricultural nation, the minister asserted: "Iran is a land where agriculture was first established, and in the field of horticulture, in terms of genetic diversity, germplasm, product variety, and quality, we are among the world's leading countries."

## Iran in Talks With CIS Countries on Port Investment



TEHRAN - The Managing Director of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) has announced broad plans to advance the country's maritime economy policies, attract both domestic and foreign investment, and ease regulations. He confirmed that investment memorandums with several CIS countries have been finalized, with some contracts set to be signed soon. According to ILNA, Saeed Rasouli, Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development and head of the PMO, said the organization has entered a new phase of activity. He emphasized that in line with the directives of President Ebrahim Raisi and the framework of Iran's Seventh Development Plan, the PMO is prioritizing the maritime economy. Highlighting the policies outlined by Iran's Supreme Leader on the maritime economy, Rasouli noted that one of the key objectives is attracting foreign and domestic investment into Iran's ports. "We have launched a comprehensive review of internal procedures, regulations, and processes to create the necessary conditions for investors to participate effectively," he stated. Rasouli acknowledged that excessive bureaucracy and inconsistencies in some regulations had previously slowed investment opportunities, but said reforms are now underway. He added that reviving previously stalled projects is a priority, with tangible progress already achieved on several key initiatives. The PMO chief also pointed to strong interest from neighboring states,

particularly landlocked CIS countries, in investing in Iranian ports. "Most of these countries have expressed readiness to use Iran's transit routes, and some are even prepared to provide official state guarantees to channel cargo through our territory," he said. According to Rasouli, Iran is on the verge of signing operational investment contracts with several CIS countries, while investment memorandums with others have reached their final stages. He stressed that such projects will not only expand Iran's transit infrastructure but also increase the country's share in regional trade. Addressing past challenges, Rasouli acknowledged a lack of coordination among government bodies in managing transit projects. However, he pointed to the establishment of a new cross-agency committee—chaired by the president under the Seventh Development Plan—as a key step toward resolving this issue. He reaffirmed the PMO's commitment to playing a central role in boosting inter-agency cooperation, strengthening infrastructure, and attracting investment. Rasouli also highlighted record achievements in transit during 2023, noting that Iran must work toward handling 40 million tons of cargo transit by the end of the current development plan. Emphasizing the role of human resources, Rasouli concluded that measures are also being taken to enhance the skills and capacity of personnel within the PMO.

## Iran, Turkmenistan Aim to Boost Trade to \$3b Within Three Years

TEHRAN - The head of the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Chamber of Commerce has announced plans to increase bilateral trade between the two neighboring countries to \$3 billion over the next three years. Speaking to Iran Chamber Online, Ramadan Bahrami highlighted the "stable and friendly" nature of Iran's trade relations with Turkmenistan, stressing that despite regional and international tensions, private sector cooperation between the two countries has consistently grown. "This year, the first Turkmenistan exhibition was held in Iran, showcasing the country's industrial and commercial capabilities," Bahrami said, noting that around 60 Turkmen companies participated and several contracts were signed with Iranian businesses. According to Bahrami, trade between the two countries amounted to just \$6 million last year, but a series of upcoming trade delegations is expected to significantly boost this figure. Iranian delegations from Razavi Khorasan and Golestan provinces will soon visit Turkmenistan, while five Turkmen trade missions are scheduled to travel to Iran. Bahrami emphasized that such exchanges are vital to expanding economic ties but criticized the lack of sufficient government support. "Our only real backing comes from the Chamber of Commerce. Unfortunately, the government has not played its supportive role effectively," he said. He called on government experts to trust the private sector in



major projects in fields such as energy, petrochemicals, construction, and road development. "Decisions should not be made without consulting the private sector, only for us to learn about them later through Turkmen counterparts," he added. The Iranian official praised cooperation from both Iran's embassy in Ashgabat and Turkmenistan's embassy in Tehran, describing diplomatic support as "very constructive." With more than 1,200 kilometers of shared land and sea borders, four official border crossings, and additional trade routes through northern Iranian ports such as Bandar Anzali, Bahrami believes the two countries have significant untapped potential. "Taking advantage of these opportunities, alongside expanding trade delegations, we have set a goal of reaching \$3 billion in trade within three years," he said. However, he warned that restrictive government regulations remain a major obstacle. "To achieve this target, the government must avoid unnecessary interference and parallel activities that undermine the private sector. If they trust us and let us work, we will definitely achieve this goal." Bahrami also pointed to challenges in financial transactions and barter mechanisms but stressed that the private sector is finding its own solutions. "The Turkmen government is eager to strengthen relations with Iran, but when unqualified actors are pushed into major projects, it damages trust in our private sector. That is something we must prevent," he concluded.

## Turkmenistan Ready to Expand Transit Cooperation With Iran



TEHRAN - The Minister of Transport of Turkmenistan said the country is prepared to expand cooperation with Iran to boost transit and trade, highlighting the potential of Iran's northern ports and rail infrastructure, particularly Amirabad Port, as part of the North-South transport corridor. Speaking early Monday in a meeting with the Governor of Mazandaran, attended by the head of Iran's Railways in Sari, Minister Mammet Akmammedov noted: "Iran and Turkmenistan already enjoy strong economic and trade relations, and the transport infrastructure of both countries – especially in northern Iran – provides an important opportunity to further develop these ties." He added that during his visit to Iran, the Turkmen delegation plans to inspect transportation infrastructure in several provinces in order to draft new strategies for expanding bilateral economic cooperation. Akmammedov emphasized that Amirabad Port is one of the key infrastructures under consideration for enhancing trade exchanges and cargo transit between Iran and Turkmenistan. "We hope, through coordination with Iranian officials, to increase the use of this port as well as other transportation facilities, including railway routes," he said. According to IRNA, the Turkmen delegation's main agenda includes visiting northern Iran's railway lines, reviewing border projects, and assessing existing capacities for strengthening bilateral cooperation. The International North-South Transport Corridor is designed to create a powerful transit network stretching from the Indian Ocean to the Baltic and Scandinavian countries. Mazandaran's geographical position allows it to play a central role in this economic and trade corridor.

## Trade With Australia Continues Despite Restrictions



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Hamidreza Monaghebi, head of the Iran-Australia Joint Chamber of Commerce, said in an interview with Otagh Iran Online that Australia's foreign policy is "fully aligned with the positions of the United States." Despite banking and political hurdles, Monaghebi stressed that trade between the two countries has not come to a halt. "Restrictions are not an absolute barrier to the exchange of goods," he said, noting that Iranian products are mainly exported to Australia through third countries, with no reference to Iran in official documents. The same method, he added, is applied for imports. According to official statistics, Iran-Australia trade volume in 2024 was estimated at around \$300 million, including \$60 million in exports and \$240 million in imports. Monaghebi also praised the contribution of the Iranian community in Australia in maintaining commercial ties. "A significant share of trade between the two countries is facilitated by Iranians who live in Australia or travel back and forth. Families, company executives, academics, and Iranian graduates have played a vital role in keeping the ground warm for economic interaction," he said.

## Pakistan Becomes the Leading Export Destination for Isfahan Province



TEHRAN - The president of the Isfahan Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture has announced that Pakistan now ranks as the top export destination for the province. Speaking at the 11th meeting of the Chamber's Commission for Export Development and Import Management—focused on exploring trade and investment opportunities between Isfahan and Pakistan's Punjab province—Amir Keshani, head of the Isfahan Chamber, said that after analyzing target markets, several countries were identified as priorities for exports. Among them, Pakistan emerged as the leading destination. Keshani noted that in line with this strategy, several initiatives are underway, including specialized training programs for trade with Pakistan in cooperation with the Iran-Pakistan Chamber of Commerce, exchange of trade delegations, participation in specialized exhibitions, and encouraging producers to invest in water-efficient and environmentally friendly products. Fereshteh Amini, chair of the Commission for Export Development and Import Management and member of the Isfahan Chamber's board of representatives, highlighted Pakistan's importance, saying: "Pakistan has been one of the six priority export markets for Isfahan last year, and in the first four months of this year, it became the province's leading export destination." She stressed that alongside global markets, the potential of neighboring countries—particularly Pakistan—should not be overlooked. "During crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic or political tensions, trade with neighboring countries plays a vital role in sustaining economic activity," Amini added. Meanwhile, Amanullah Shahnava, vice president of the Iran-Pakistan Joint Chamber of Commerce, identified currency repatriation as the most significant obstacle in exports to Pakistan. He noted that three official customs posts currently operate between the two countries, with plans to reopen older border crossings soon.



## Norwegians Vote as Labour Party Narrowly Favored to Win Re-Election

OSLO (Dispatches) - Norway voted on Monday on the final day of a parliamentary election dominated by concerns over rising living costs at home and turmoil in international politics, with the ruling Labour Party narrowly favoured to remain in office. A left-wing bloc of Labour and four smaller parties is seen winning 88 seats in parliament, three more than the minimum needed to secure a majority and down from a combined 100 seats in 2021, according to an average of recent opinion polls. On the right, the populist Progress Party, the centre-right Conservatives and two smaller groups look set to win the remaining 81 seats, but the race remains within the margin of error and could depend on how some of the smallest parties fare.



## Russia Hits Ukraine With Biggest Air Attack of War



KYIV (Dispatches) - Russia launched its largest air attack of the war on Ukraine overnight, setting the main government building on fire in central Kyiv and killing at least four people, including an infant, Ukrainian officials said.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the drone and missile barrage killed four people and caused damage across the north, south and east of the country, including the cities of Zaporizhzhia, Kryvyi Rih and Odesa, as well as in the Sumy and Chernihiv regions.

"Such killings now, when real diplomacy could have already begun long ago, are a deliberate crime and a prolongation of the war," Zelenskyy said in a post on X, issuing a fresh appeal to allies to strengthen Ukrainian air defences.

Just after sunrise, thick smoke could be seen rising into the clear blue sky from the burning top floor of the main government building, located in the historic Pecherskyi district, Reuters witnesses said.

Elsewhere in Kyiv, residential apartments were hit and damaged, with dozens of residents wrapped in blankets gathering on the streets outside to survey the damage to their homes as rescue workers fought to extinguish the flames.

The attack underlined growing pessimism in Ukraine and among allies that the war can be ended any time soon, with Russian President Vladimir Putin resisting calls for a ceasefire and emboldened by strengthening relations with China.

## Argentina's Milei Suffers Major Electoral Setback



BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - Argentina's libertarian President Javier Milei vowed Sunday vowed to "accelerate" his libertarian reforms after a crushing defeat in Buenos Aires provincial elections, ahead of highly anticipated midterms.

The 54-year-old economist has slashed public spending, dismissed tens of thousands of public employees and led a major deregulation drive since taking office in December 2023.

He acknowledged his party's "clear defeat" by the center-left Peronist movement in the elections to the legislature of Buenos Aires province, the country's economic powerhouse.

A deflated-sounding Milei admitted to unspecified "mistakes" which he vowed to "correct" but said he would not be swayed "one millimeter" from his reform agenda.

"We will deepen and accelerate it," he said at a muted election night event in the resort of Mar del Plata, where he took the stage in silence, in marked contrast to his usual dramatic entrance to rock music.

With 91 percent of the votes counted, the center-left Fuerza Patria coalition had taken over 47 percent of the vote against nearly 34 percent for Milei's ruling La Libertad Avanza (LLA), official results showed.

Buenos Aires's votes are telling as a bellwether for Argentina. The province contributes more than 30 percent of Argentina's GDP and accounts for 40 percent of all eligible voters.



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Donald Trump said Sunday he was issuing a "last warning" to Hamas, saying the Palestinian militant group must accept a deal to release hostages in Gaza.

"The Israelis have accepted my terms. It is time for Hamas to accept as well. I have warned Hamas about the consequences of not accepting. This is my last warning," Trump said on social media, without elaborating further.

In a statement released shortly after, Hamas said it was ready to "immediately sit at the negotiating table" following what it described as "some ideas from the American side aimed at reaching a ceasefire agreement".

U.S. news outlet Axios reported Sunday that White House envoy Steve Witkoff sent a new proposal for a Gaza hostage and ceasefire deal to Hamas last week.

The White House has not released any details about the proposal but late Sunday Trump said "you'll be hearing about it pretty soon", as he portrayed the negotiations in a positive light.

"We had some very good discussions. Good things could happen," he told reporters. "I think we're going to have a deal on Gaza very soon."

In early March, Trump issued a similar ultimatum to Hamas, demanding it free all remaining hostages immediately and turn over bodies of dead hostages, saying if not, "it is OVER for you".

Israeli campaign group the Hostages and Missing Families Forum welcomed the US president's latest intervention as a "true breakthrough".

Hamas militants seized 251 hostages during the massive October 7, 2023 attack on Israel, with 47 still believed to be in Gaza.

The Israeli military says 25 of them are dead. Israel is seeking the return of their remains.

The statements from Trump and Hamas came as Israel's army bombed a Gaza City residential tower Sunday - the third in as many days - after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced the military was "deepening" its assault on the key urban center.

Witness Mohammed Al-Nazli told AFP that the strike on the Al-Roya tower "felt like an earthquake".

The air force has leveled two other residential high-rises under the same claim that Hamas had used them as observation points.

Netanyahu said on Sunday that around 100,000 residents had already left Gaza City, accusing Hamas of trying to prevent evacuations and of using civilians as "human shields".

The escalation has fueled fears of a further deterioration in already dire humanitarian conditions for Palestinians living in the area.

On Saturday, Israeli protesters took to the streets to call on their government to reverse the decision to seize Gaza City, fearing for the fate of hostages believed to be held there.

The October 7, 2023 attack resulted in the deaths of 1,219 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli figures.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed at least 64,368 Palestinians, most of them civilians, according to figures from the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza that the United Nations considers reliable.

Media restrictions in Gaza and difficulties in accessing many areas mean AFP is unable to independently verify the tolls and details provided by the civil defense agency or the Israeli military.

## Japanese Lawmakers Launch Leadership Bids After PM Resigns

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Former Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi became the first ruling party lawmaker to throw his hat into the ring to succeed outgoing Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba today, as financial markets whipsawed on the political uncertainty.

Ishiba called time on his brief tenure yesterday, saying he was taking responsibility for bruising elections that saw his ruling coalition lose its majority in both houses of parliament amid voter anger over rising living costs.

He instructed his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) - which has governed Japan for most of its post-war history - to hold an emergency leadership election. The party plans to hold the vote on October 4, broadcaster TBS reported, citing an unnamed senior party official.

Japan's yen sank and stocks surged today after Ishiba's resignation stoked speculation that his potential successors - such as fiscal dove Sanae Takaichi - may ramp up spending in the world's most indebted advanced economy.

"The LDP is facing its worst crisis since its founding," Motegi, 69, told reporters today as he announced his plan to stand for leadership.

"We must unite quickly to tackle our serious challenges at home and abroad and move the country forward."

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi also intends to run in the election, a source close to the government's top spokesperson told Reuters.

The frontrunners, however, are LDP veteran Takaichi and Shinjiro Koizumi, a political scion and son of former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who gained prominence as Ishiba's farm minister tasked with trying to rein in soaring rice prices.

Both would mark milestones for Japan: Takaichi, 64,



becoming its first female leader and Koizumi, 44, its youngest in the modern era.

Neither has formally announced their candidacy but they finished second and third respectively in the last leadership contest in September 2024.

"All indications are that it will come down to them facing off against each other," said Jeffrey Hall, a lecturer in Japanese studies at Kanda University of International Studies.

Of most consequence for investors and Japan's diplomatic relations would be Takaichi, who has held a number of posts including as economic security and internal affairs ministers.

She stands out for her opposition to the Bank of Japan's interest rate hikes and her calls to ramp up spending to boost the fragile economy.

Investors are betting the political hiatus alone will delay the BOJ's monetary policy tightening plans.

Money markets are now pricing in a roughly 20 per cent chance of the BOJ hiking rates by the end of October, down from 46 per cent a week ago.

The expected leadership bid of the nationalistic Takaichi will also be closely watched by Japan's powerful neighbour China.

Known for conservative positions such as revising the pacifist constitution, Takaichi is a regular visitor to the Yasukuni shrine to honour Japan's war dead, viewed by Beijing and others as a symbol of past militarism.

Takaichi earlier this year also visited Taiwan, the democratic island claimed by China, where she suggested Taiwan, Japan and other partners could form a "quasi-security alliance".

"China might take a more hostile stance towards Japan, because she depicts herself as very much a hawk regarding China," said Hall of Kanda University.

## Thousands of Bolsonaro Supporters Rally in Brazil

SAO PAULO (Dispatches) - Tens of thousands of supporters of Brazil's former president Jair Bolsonaro took to the streets on Sunday, the country's Independence Day, to rally against the Supreme Court ahead of its verdict this week in their leader's alleged coup trial.

On Saturday evening, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said Brazil will not accept foreign influence in its domestic affairs, in yet another reference to persistent criticism and sanctions imposed on his country by his American counterpart Donald Trump.

In recent years, Bolsonaro's allies have turned Sept. 7 into an annual show of political force. Lula sought to turn the focus of this year's Independence Day to sovereignty.

Crowds dressed in yellow and green once again gathered in Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo and the capital Brasilia to back Bolsonaro, who is under house arrest ahead of his verdict. Their favourite target was Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, the rapporteur of the case.

Bolsonaro is standing trial for allegedly leading a coup to stay in power despite his 2022 election defeat to Lula. He denies the charges and says he is being politically



persecuted.

A research group of Sao Paulo University said about 40,000 Bolsonarosupporters attended the protest in the metropolis, a similar figure to other demonstrations earlier this year. At the peak of his influence, Bolsonaro drew hundreds of thousands of people to the same streets.

Still, the enthusiasm of his diehard right-wing voters ran strong on Sunday, with many professing his innocence.

"If he (Bolsonaro) had wanted to stay in power, he would have been successful. Brazilians need to wake up," former military officer Suieton Souza, who had a sarong mingling the American and Brazilian flags wrapped around his shoulders, said on Copacabana Beach in Rio.

Sen. Flávio Bolsonaro, the eldest son of the president, wore a shirt that read "Bolsonaro 2026," though his father is barred from running. Flávio once again called de Moraes a dictator. In 2023, Brazil's top electoral court ruled Jair Bolsonaro ineligible until 2030 for abuse of power.





NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Carlos Alcaraz beat Jannik Sinner in four sets yesterday to win the U.S. Open and reassert his dominance of an era-defining rivalry in a final delayed by the visit of President Donald Trump.

The 22-year-old Alcaraz won 6-2, 3-6, 6-1, 6-4 to capture his second U.S. Open crown and sixth Grand Slam title, avenging his lone defeat in a major final by Sinner at Wimbledon in July.

"It's a great feeling. I'm working really hard just to lift this trophy. It's my second one but it's still a dream come true," said Alcaraz.

Alcaraz will reclaim the world number one ranking from Sinner, returning to top spot today for the first time since September 2023 after ending the Italian's 27-match winning run at hard-court Grand Slams.

"It was one of the first goals that I had, to recover the number one (ranking)," said Alcaraz, who also defeated Sinner in an epic French Open final in June.

Alcaraz has now won seven of the past eight meetings and is 10-5 overall against Sinner.

"I tried my best today. I couldn't do more," said Sinner. "I felt like he was doing everything slightly better today."

"He raised his level when he had to... He played better than me today."

Alcaraz and Sinner have shared the last eight Grand Slams on offer, winning four apiece to assert their superiority over the rest of the sport, including Novak Djokovic.

But while Sinner is 109-4 against the rest of the tour over the past two seasons, Alcaraz has had his number.

"It's going to be on me if I want to make changes or not," said Sinner. "That's what I have to do, trying to become a better tennis player."

Sinner's defeat at Flushing Meadows extends the longest drought without a successful men's title

defence of any Grand Slam in the Open era.

No man has retained the US Open crown since Roger Federer won five in a row from 2004 to 2008.

Anticipation for the third straight Grand Slam final between the game's top two players assumed an even greater dimension with the presence of Trump.

It was the latest in a series of visits to major sporting events for the US leader after his trip to the NFL's Super Bowl in February and the FIFA Club World Cup final in July.

He appeared before the playing of the Star-Spangled Banner, waving to the crowd, which greeted him with a mix of cheers and boos. He was given a frostier reception later in the match when shown again on the stadium's big screens.

A constellation of showbiz and sports icons turned out as well yesterday, with rock star Bruce Springsteen, fashion icon Tommy Hilfiger, actor Michael Douglas and basketball superstar Stephen Curry all on hand.

The start of the final was pushed back 30 minutes to allow fans additional time to enter Arthur Ashe Stadium as a result of tighter security measures in effect due to Trump's attendance.

Even then, the 23,000-capacity venue was no more than three-quarters full when Alcaraz broke Sinner in the opening game of the match.

As he did in the Wimbledon final, Alcaraz pinned Sinner on the back foot early and broke a second time for a 5-2 lead before serving out to love.

With hundreds of spectators still waiting to get in at the start of the second set, Alcaraz sought to hammer home his advantage against Sinner.

He created a break point but Sinner hung on and stalled Alcaraz's momentum, belatedly ramping up his game and surging 3-1 ahead as the Spaniard suffered a brief dip on serve.

## Verstappen Stuns McLaren With Monza Masterclass

MONZA (Dispatches) - Max Verstappen slowed McLaren's Formula One dominance with a phenomenal display of driving on his way to victory at the Italian Grand Prix, the fastest ever race in the sport's history.

Starting from pole, the reigning world champion completed a magical weekend at Monza — which included the fastest lap ever in F1 during Saturday's qualifying — by schooling McLaren pair Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri.

Red Bull's Verstappen has little chance of securing a fifth straight drivers' title as he still trails championship leader Piastri by 94 points, with the Australian finishing third.

"It was really enjoyable," said Verstappen, who took the chequered flag in 1hr 13mins 24.325sec.

"I think we pitted at the right time and with the hard tyres at the end you can push a bit more... It was a fantastic execution by everyone.

"I think the whole weekend we were all in. It was super enjoyable to win here."

Piastri leads the drivers' standings by 31 points from Norris, who finished second and would have placed third behind his teammate due to an awful pit stop had McLaren not enforced a position swap.

"I always know it's going to be a good fight with Max and it was," said Norris.

"But just not the speed today, not the pace of Max and the Red Bull. But it was still fun, still a good race."



Charles Leclerc, last year's winner and the last driver to triumph at Monza from pole position back in 2019, could not secure a podium spot for the massed ranks of Ferrari fans, finishing fourth.

Leclerc's teammate Lewis Hamilton gave it his best shot after a five-place grid penalty had him bumped back to 10th at the start, charging up to sixth thanks to some spectacular driving early in the race.

But the seven-time F1 champion could not push past his former Mercedes teammate George Russell and was left with another underwhelming result in his first Monza GP with Ferrari.

Yesterday's win, which hinged on a bold overtaking move against Norris on lap four, was just Verstappen's third of a season dominated by a McLaren car that has blown away the competition by winning all but four GPs.

But a second win in Italy this year — after triumphing in the Emilia Romagna GP in May — capped a historic weekend for the blunt 27-year-old.

Verstappen was forced to allow Norris into first place after a frantic start in which he appeared to have pushed his British rival off the track.

## Russell Wilson Flat in Opener; Giants Noncommittal for Week 2



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Russell Wilson might not make a second start for the New York Giants.

Wilson, who started his 200th career game on Sunday at Washington, completed 17 of 37 passes (45.9 percent) for 168 yards in a 21-6 loss to the Commanders and led the team in rushing with 44 yards.

Given multiple opportunities to declare Wilson would get his 201st career start next week in Dallas, Giants head coach Brian Daboll never found the words.

"We're gonna get home, look at our game. Collectively we've all got to do better," Daboll said, dancing around multiple questions about his commitment to Wilson as the Giants' starter. "We're just right here, after the game, I've got confidence in Russell. We've got to better around overall, players, coaches, around everybody. We'll get focused and ready to go on Dallas. ... We're talking about after every game. I've got confidence in Russ. So we're gonna go back, we'll evaluate the tape."

Rookie first-round pick Jaxson Dart was the No. 2 quarterback on Sunday. In an offense designed to find downfield opportunities, Dart was decisive in the preseason and averaged 7.9 yards per pass attempt with three touchdown passes. Wilson's average Sunday was 4.5 yards.

Generating six points and 231 total yards has a way of turning coaches on the hot seat to introspection. Sunday's loss might be viewed as an improvement over the Giants' 40-0 defeat at the hands of the Cowboys in Week 1 of the 2023 season and the 28-6 loss to the Vikings in last year's opener.

No matter how the defeat is scored in the public eye, losses are piling up for the Giants. It was Daboll's 26th since the 2023 season began.

With 2:36 left in the game, Giants wide receiver Malik Nabers was captured seated on the bench by FOX television cameras with his face entirely covered by a towel. Daboll spent part of one break appearing to tamp Nabers' emotions on the field near the sideline.

"I thought we competed our butts off today," Wilson said. "That was a physical game. We left it all on the field, we gave it our all physically."

## England Thrash South Africa by Record 342 Runs in Third ODI



LONDON (Dispatches) - Joe Root and Jacob Bethell scored centuries and fast bowler Jofra Archer took 4-18 as England demolished South Africa by a world record 342 runs in the third and final One Day International in Southampton.

South Africa sent their hosts in to bat having already won the series with victories in the first two games, and England amassed 414 for five in their 50 overs as Bethell scored his maiden century in professional cricket with 110 in 82 balls and Root made 100 from 96 deliveries.

It was as though South Africa were batting on a different wicket as England ran through their lineup, led by a fiery spell from Archer, whose pace and bounce were too much for the visitors and they were bowled out for 72, with captain Temba Bavuma unable to bat due to a calf strain.

The previous biggest winning margin was 317 by India against Sri Lanka in 2023 and while South Africa claimed the series, England have struck a psychological blow ahead of the teams' three-match Twenty20 International series that starts in Cardiff on Wednesday.

"It was the ultimate performance, we were awesome with the bat and put them under a lot of pressure. The bowling speaks for itself," England captain Harry Brook said.

"Jofra was bowling rockets, and to have that in your side alongside Brydon Carse and Jamie Overton is a frightening attack."

England opener Jamie Smith scored a brisk 62 from 48 balls before he was one of two wickets for spinner Keshav Maharaj (2-61).

## Merino Hat-Trick Fires Spain to 6-0 Thrashing of Turkey

KONYA (Dispatches) - Mikel Merino scored a hat-trick as a majestic Spain thumped Turkey 6-0 away in World Cup qualifying, while a brilliant Florian Wirtz free-kick helped Germany beat Northern Ireland 3-1 to get their bid up and running.

European champions Spain were in unstoppable form in the central Turkish city of Konya, claiming their second biggest-ever away win in World Cup qualifying as Arsenal midfielder Merino scored his first professional hat-trick.

Barcelona playmaker Pedri Gonzalez opened the scoring inside six minutes and later completed the scoring, with Ferran Torres netting the visitors' other goal.

The quality of Merino's strikes was remarkable, with his first



coming at the end of a superb team move and his second a controlled finish from a Pedri assist. He completed his triple with a curling shot into the top corner.

The one blemish on the night's work for Spain was the withdrawal of Nico Williams due to an apparent thigh injury, but Luis de la Fuente's team are already clear at the top of qualifying Group E with six points from two games.

"I'm very happy for winning, to pick up six points, for doing it in this way, and for scoring three goals, which is not normal — the first hat-trick of my career," said Merino.

The group winners will qualify directly for the finals, with the runners-up progressing to a play-off phase.