

Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi Says Another Meeting With EU Foreign Policy Chief Kaja Kallas Will Probably Take Place, After the Two Met in Qatar Earlier This Month to Discuss Iran's Nuclear Issue

# IRAN NEWS

Ali-Akbar Velayati, Senior advisor to the Leader on International Affairs, Has Condemned the Israeli Regime's Attack on Qatari Soil, Urging the International Community to Break Its Silence in the Face of Israeli Aggression

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## FM Calls on Muslim Countries to Confront Israel’s Law of the Jungle Against Region



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has called on Muslim countries to enhance cooperation and interaction across all sectors to counter the Israeli regime's "law of the jungle" against the regional countries.

Araqchi said the Islamic Republic invites all Muslim states to boost partnership and cooperation in all fields to serve their nations and confront the law of the jungle, which is being implemented by the Israeli regime with the backing of the United States and several Western governments.

In an interview with the Arabi 21 news website, he urged Muslim and West Asian countries to act immediately to stop war and massacre and to counter the regime's schemes in Palestine and the entire region.

The Iranian minister pointed to several fruitless Arab, Islamic, and international meetings held on Palestine so far. He said the Palestinian people do not merely need words but require food, medicine, the fulfillment of all their needs and an end to the injustices to which they are exposed.

## Iran Calls for Moral Action Against Israeli Genocide, Urges Accountability



TEHRAN (PresSTV) - The spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry has rejected the extension of the "true" principle of "neutrality in times of war" to the Israeli regime's ongoing genocide in occupied Palestine.

In a post on his X account on Friday, Esmail Baghaei said it is true that neutrality in times of war is not indifference.

“But war and GENOCIDE are inherently different.”

Underscoring moral imperative against Israeli genocide, Baghaei said neutrality in the times of war cannot be applied when the regime has been committing an “undisguised genocide” in broad daylight against the people of Palestine for the past two years.

Genuine humanitarianism calls for moral courage to explicitly abhor atrocious crimes and demand accountability for the Zionist criminals, the Iranian spokesperson stated.

Baghaei's post came after the UN special rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories Francesca Albanese wrote on X on September 9 that the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other humanitarian organizations is vital, asserting that neutrality in war is essential.

Israel has launched a genocidal war on Gaza since October 7, 2023, after Palestinian resistance fighters waged the surprise Operation Al-Aqsa Flood against the Zionist entity in response to the regime's decades-long campaign of bloodletting and devastation against Palestinians.

## No Power Can Force Iranians to Surrender



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN — President Masoud Pezeshkian declared that no foreign power can coerce Iran into submission if the nation's leaders and people make sound decisions and act wisely to protect national pride, dignity, and resources.

Speaking at a meeting of Ardabil Province's Planning and Development Council, Pezeshkian emphasized the importance of long-term strategic planning and the responsible use of national resources. “All management principles, as Amir al-Mo'minin emphasized, begin with self-awareness: know where we are, what we have, and where we want to go. Effective management requires understanding our water, land, and other resources and using them wisely,” he said.

The president warned that Iran must plan for the next 50 to 60 years and align development strategies with the vision outlined by the Supreme Leader for 2025—a goal he admitted had not yet been achieved. “Our planning has been flawed. Even when we drew maps, we did not follow them effectively,” he noted. Pezeshkian stressed that economic policy must answer four key questions: what to produce, the quality of production, production volumes, and distribution channels.

Pezeshkian sharply criticized large-scale water transfer and other infrastructure projects carried out without adequate study. He highlighted mismanagement of natural resources, citing water scarcity in Qazvin and Isfahan, land subsidence, and the degradation of historical and cultural heritage sites. “We sit on a treasure, yet we struggle with water, electricity, gas, and fuel shortages,” he said, questioning the logic of drawing water from the Caspian Sea while Lake Urmia dries up due to dam construction.

He also warned that mismanagement has brought Tehran and surrounding cities to critical levels. “If we do not understand our environment, no disaster will befall us except that which we bring upon ourselves,” Pezeshkian said, noting a drop in per capita water from 6,890 cubic meters to just 1,200 in the capital. He urged scientific planning based on local geography and climate to guide future development.

Pezeshkian identified government expansion as the primary driver of inflation. “The government has grown too large, lacks sufficient revenue, prints money, and fuels inflation,” he said, calling for administrative reform and measures to reduce unnecessary government

consumption, such as flexible work hours. He emphasized preventing waste and adhering to the Supreme Leader's guidance on efficiency.

“Any nation that plans and acts correctly for its land, resources, and honor cannot be forced into submission,” he said, highlighting Iran's vast natural resources and strategic geopolitical position. “Instead of harnessing our potential, we fight among ourselves over positions and offices,” he added, calling for unity, disciplined management, and strategic governance.

Pezeshkian stressed the necessity of appointing competent and experienced leaders, warning against nepotism and favoritism. “Entrusting responsibilities to unqualified individuals is a betrayal of the people. Managers must have the knowledge, expertise, and capacity to govern effectively,” he said, stressing that experience, scientific consultation, and data-driven decision-making are essential to preventing crises in water, agriculture, and industry.

He warned that without sustainable water management, urban centers like Tehran could face severe shortages, and emergency measures such as tanker distribution would be insufficient. “We have reduced per capita water from 6,800 cubic meters to below 1,000. If this continues, a water conflict is inevitable,” he said.

Pezeshkian called for national unity to counter foreign schemes aimed at exploiting domestic divisions. He cited alleged attempts by adversaries to destabilize Iran through engineered conflicts and stressed the Iranian people's vigilance. “Legislators, religious leaders, and government institutions must act in concert with the people to advance national interests,” he said.

He highlighted ongoing efforts to involve local communities, schools, and mosques in governance initiatives. “From schools to mosques, local centers can serve as hubs for social responsibility, ensuring public welfare, security, and ethics are prioritized,” he said.

Concluding his address, Pezeshkian underscored the importance of collaboration and strategic foresight. He praised local and national officials for their dedication to Ardabil's development and reiterated that the nation's path must align with the Supreme Leader's vision. “We purchased this monumental mountain with our sweat and dedication. We must live differently, work differently, and approach the future differently,” he said.

## Iran, Russia Forge Stronger Strategic Alliance on Global Stage

TEHRAN - Iran and Russia have strengthened their alignment in international affairs, according to Kazem Jalali, Iran's ambassador to Russia and former member of the Iranian Parliament. In a detailed interview with Tasnim News Agency, Jalali explored the growth of Iran-Russia relations, highlighting both opportunities and challenges.

At the outset, Jalali emphasized the deep cultural ties between the two nations, noting the sister-city relationship between Isfahan, one of Iran's historic cultural hubs, and Russia's Saint Petersburg. He described Isfahan as a “great symbol of ancient Iranian civilization,” underlining ongoing exchanges that reinforce cultural and diplomatic bonds.

Asked about Russia's stance during the 12-day Sacred Defense period and the Iran-Iraq War, Jalali described it as supportive. He recalled that on the first day of the conflict, Russia issued strong statements condemning aggression, including three declarations from the Russian Foreign Ministry and firm positions at the United Nations Security Council.

Jalali also highlighted Russia's diplomatic engagement with Iran during the conflict. “On the first day of the war, President Putin and Mr. Pezeshkian held a telephone conversation. The next day, Iranian Foreign Minister Mr. Araqchi spoke with Foreign Minister Lavrov. These exchanges continued, including visits to Moscow by Mr. Araqchi and later Mr. Larjani, as well as our Defense Minister. Our interactions were consistent and strategic,” he said.

Jalali attributed anti-Russian narratives in media and political circles to Western bias. He criticized the West's historical stance toward Iran, both before and after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, citing what he called a pattern of unilateral support for the Pahlavi regime, efforts to sow discord, and repeated hostility, including sanctions and threats during the Iran-Iraq War.

He identified two major global trends shaping the current geopolitical landscape: first, an emerging desire among nations to establish a new international order beyond Western dominance, as evidenced by Western opposition to BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization; second, Western efforts to diplomatically isolate Iran and hinder its cooperation with non-Western powers.

“In today's world, the West aims to prevent the establishment of a new global order in which Iran, Russia, China, India, and other nations collaborate. This is part of a deliberate strategy,” Jalali said.



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

He also addressed social media narratives questioning Russia's military support, including claims that Moscow withheld S-400 missile systems or Su-35 fighter jets. Jalali clarified that Iran had never formally requested the S-400, calling such claims misleading, and dismissed rumors that Russian intelligence had exposed Iranian defense systems as false and damaging to bilateral relations.

Jalali emphasized that Iran pursues a pragmatic approach to military cooperation while protecting national interests. “We are neither Russophiles nor Anglophiles. Our sole guide is the national interest of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” he said.

He further noted that Iran aims for balanced international relations, citing Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei's encouragement of engagement with Europe and beyond. However, geopolitical pressures, including potential reinstatement of sanctions, necessitate careful strategic partnerships.

Tracing Russia's evolving foreign policy since the Soviet Union's collapse, Jalali recalled that Moscow initially pursued rapid engagement with the West, leaving Iran to bear high costs in opposing Western initiatives. Over time, Russia recognized the limitations of Western engagement, particularly after 2014, fostering closer Iran-Russia cooperation.

“This alignment is not one-sided but a strategic convergence, reflecting a shared understanding that Western policies are increasingly untenable,” Jalali said. He highlighted Iran's membership in BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and observer status in the Eurasian Economic Union as evidence of this growing alignment.

Jalali described Iran-Russia economic relations as “stable and promising,” citing projects such as the North-South Corridor and gas transfer through Iranian territory. He also noted the “psychological effect” of the so-called snapback of UN sanctions, explaining that Russia has consistently opposed these measures in international forums.

Concluding, the ambassador stressed that Iran-Russia relations are strategic and balanced, grounded in national interests rather than ideological alignment. While challenges remain, the partnership has deepened over time due to shared perspectives on global governance and regional security.

“The positions of Iran and Russia on the international stage are now closely aligned. Our cooperation is expanding across economic, political, and strategic dimensions,” Jalali affirmed.

## Europe Withdraws the Snapback Letter

The E3 countries (Germany, France, and the United Kingdom), arguing that the United States lost its legal right to trigger the “snapback” mechanism after leaving the JCPOA, refused to recognize Washington's request and effectively declared it “ineffective and legally unacceptable.” This position itself was a kind of indirect “withdrawal” of the U.S. request. But could Europe change its stance and actually move in a direction independent of the U.S. demand (that is, withdraw its own letter and accept that the snapback should not be triggered)?

Did Abbas Araqchi's negotiations in Cairo with the head of the Agency yield results that carried enough weight to be considered equal to—or even more significant than—the withdrawal of the snapback letter?

That making the implementation of agreements with Grossi conditional on the European troika's retreat from carrying out the snapback is certainly an attractive way of framing the matter.

And, without a doubt, it would serve to restore Europe's identity. Although the likelihood of this happening in the short term is very low, it is not impossible. The analysis can be divided into several aspects:

Reasons why Europe prefers to maintain its current stance and avoid triggering the snapback:

Firstly; fear that by pulling the snapback trigger, they would hand the U.S. a tool, and if Washington sparks an oil war in the Persian Gulf, Europe would bear the cost of soaring oil prices.

Secondly; Europe has allies in Iran who do not want to face trial and prison sentences for failing to uphold Articles 36 and 37 of the JCPOA.

Thirdly; if Araqchi manages to impose his condition on Europe—even superficially—it would naturally hand Europe's allies in Iran a new tool for political propaganda, useful in deceiving voters again in elections.

Fourthly; after being humiliated by Trump at the negotiating table, Europe came to resemble a henchman—“a lion without a mane, tail, or claws.” By withdrawing the snapback letter, it would regain a sense of identity.

Fifthly; activating the snapback would mean the certain death of the JCPOA and destroy years of European diplomacy. By withdrawing the snapback letter, there remains some hope that the JCPOA could be revitalized by figures like Rouhani or, with the help of Pezeshkian, infused with new life.

We should note that Europe's position on the snapback has not been built upon a solid legal foundation. Both China and Russia have pointed this out. Retreating from this stance carries the risk of the issue failing to gain approval in the UN Security Council.

Most importantly, triggering the snapback would amount to declaring total diplomatic war against Iran, eliminating any possibility of negotiation or containing Iran's nuclear program through diplomacy.

And since Europeans are concerned that more sanctions could escalate instability in the Middle East—and possibly provoke a strong Iranian reaction—pulling the snapback trigger will never truly be desirable for Europe.

Now, given these considerations, the design of the Cairo meeting could be seen as an initiative by the European troika—both to curb American threats and to prevent Europe from being further isolated by the risks of triggering the snapback. Under these conditions, the prospect of Europe withdrawing the snapback letter appears more likely and more realistic.

## Yemen Launches New Missile Attack Against Israeli Occupied Territories



SANAA (PressTV) - Air raid sirens have been activated in the Israeli-occupied territories after the Yemeni Armed Forces launched a ballistic missile in response to Israel's genocidal war on Gaza.

As reported by Israeli media, a new missile strike originating from Yemen sounded sirens in Tel Aviv and other communities across the occupied lands early on Saturday.

The missile attack caused widespread panic among illegal settlers, pushing hundreds of thousands of them to seek refuge in bomb shelters.

Israel's Magen David Adom (MDA) emergency response service has not reported any direct injuries resulting from the attack or from debris impacts.



# IRAN NEWS



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

## Government Plans to Import 200,000 Tons of Red Meat to Stabilize Market

TEHRAN (ILNA) - The government has announced plans to import large volumes of red meat in an effort to stabilize the domestic market following recent sharp price increases. Mansour Pourian, head of the Livestock Suppliers Council, said that the plan includes importing 135,000 tons of frozen beef and lamb, 70,000 tons of fresh meat, and 40,000 live animals. In total, the program covers between 250,000 to 300,000 tons of meat and livestock. According to Pourian, the market has recently witnessed an “unprecedented” surge in live cattle prices, with beef prices rising by 100,000 tomans per kilogram. He attributed the hike to a shortage of government-supplied feed, higher feed prices in the open market, and an increase in the cost of imported Brazilian frozen meat.

## Strategic Opportunity to Showcase Iran’s Potential at China Services Trade Fair



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran’s Ambassador to China described the country’s participation in China’s International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS 2025) as a strategic opportunity to highlight Iran’s capacities and expand innovative cooperation. He noted that the event, with the participation of more than 70 countries and 800 companies, has secured its place as one of China’s top three exhibitions and a global platform for dialogue and collaboration in innovative services. Ambassador Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli wrote on social media platform X: “Iran’s presence at the opening ceremony of CIFTIS 2025 and the unveiling of the Islamic Republic’s national pavilion offers a strategic opportunity to showcase Iran’s strengths and to foster innovative partnerships in the trade of services.” The ambassador emphasized that the fair, held with the participation of more than 70 countries and 800 companies, was inaugurated with a congratulatory message from China’s president, along with speeches by the country’s vice premier, the minister of commerce, and representatives from UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) and the WTO (World Trade Organization). He added that this has reinforced CIFTIS’s standing as one of China’s three largest exhibitions and a leading international platform for cooperation in innovative services. Rahmani Fazli further noted that key highlights of this year’s fair include presentations of smart medical technologies, AI-based diagnostics, pharmaceutical research and development, as well as global innovations in healthcare, international trade services, finance, digital solutions, and other professional and technological services.

## Iran Expands IT Exports to All Five Continents

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



TEHRAN - Iran has successfully exported information technology services to all five continents, thanks to the non-physical nature of IT activities, according to Sohrab Salimi, Acting Director of the Office for Knowledge-Based Products and Technical-Engineering Services at the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO). Speaking to the TPO’s Public Relations office, Salimi highlighted the role of regional agreements such as the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in boosting technical and engineering exports. He noted that projects involving both services and goods—such as infrastructure construction—can particularly benefit from such agreements. “For projects like bridge construction, where equipment, parts, and materials must be shipped abroad—for example to Armenia, a member of the Eurasian bloc—this agreement is highly effective. We are already witnessing promising developments in this area within EAEU member states,” Salimi said. In contrast, Salimi explained that purely consultancy-based projects, which generate maximum added value without requiring the export of physical goods, fall outside the scope of these agreements. Nevertheless, such projects still bring foreign currency earnings into Iran by leveraging local technical expertise in target countries. Salimi emphasized the growing capacity of Iran’s IT sector in global markets. He pointed out that IT has been explicitly included in the country’s regulations on technical-engineering service exports, giving it unique advantages over traditional sectors such as road construction and civil works. “Fields like coding and software development have great potential abroad. Beyond neighboring countries, opportunities also exist in Australia, the Americas, and Canada. Due to its digital nature, IT has already reached all five continents,” he said.

## “IranPlast”: A Showcase of Iran’s Regional Trade Vision



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Senior officials in Iran’s oil and petrochemical sector say the 19th International IranPlast Exhibition has marked a turning point in boosting commercial cooperation with neighboring countries, while also highlighting the growing role of knowledge-based companies in developing innovative, eco-friendly solutions. Oil Ministry Deputy and NPC Managing Director Morteza Abbaszadeh praised the exhibition for drawing targeted foreign participation, addressing industry challenges, and presenting cutting-edge products. Speaking on the closing day of the four-day event, he said the exhibition exceeded expectations despite initial doubts over attendance and logistics. “Some concerns were raised before the opening, including speculation that participation would be low or the exhibition might not even take place,” Abbaszadeh said. “But with the efforts of our colleagues and cooperation across industries, the event was held at a high standard and delivered strong results.” Abbaszadeh emphasized that one of the defining features of this year’s IranPlast was the purposeful presence of industry experts and business leaders. This, he said, created valuable opportunities for effective commercial ties in the petrochemical sector. He noted that even on the exhibition’s final day, specialized visitors continued to attend in large numbers, underlining the importance of the event to professionals. A key success, Abbaszadeh added, was the focus on attracting professional visitors and facilitating direct engagement between domestic producers and international traders. He revealed that many exhibitors had successfully built connections with foreign buyers, particularly from neighboring countries who had been invited with a specific trade agenda. “This approach aligns with the President’s directive to prioritize regional markets,” Abbaszadeh said, adding that it has already produced tangible benefits for Iran’s petrochemical industry. The exhibition also served as a platform for stakeholders to voice pressing industry concerns. Among the most critical challenges, Abbaszadeh cited problems related to order registration and access to foreign currency, particularly for downstream producers.

He pointed to the visit of Deputy Industry Minister Ebrahim Sheikh to the event, noting that Sheikh held discussions with exhibitors and pledged serious follow-up on the issues raised. Abbaszadeh hailed the strong presence of knowledge-based companies as the most significant achievement of this year’s exhibition. Their booths featured a wide range of innovative products, many developed for the first time in Iran. Some of these new products, he explained, can replace chemical additives that are facing increasing global restrictions—especially in food-contact applications. “This is a very promising development,” Abbaszadeh said. “The international treaty on plastic pollution will soon impose strict limits on the use of chemical additives. The emergence of bio-based and plant-derived substitutes by Iranian firms demonstrates their leadership in this field.” Given the sanctions environment, which restricts both imports and knowledge transfer, Abbaszadeh argued that the ability of Iranian companies to independently develop such technologies is particularly significant. He added that the NPC, in cooperation with Iran’s Department of Environment, is drafting new guidelines to support companies active in reducing plastic pollution and producing environmentally friendly materials. “Special incentives and backing will be offered to these firms,” he confirmed. Reflecting on his visits to the various exhibition halls, Abbaszadeh observed that the quality of downstream petrochemical products has improved notably compared to previous editions of IranPlast. Many companies, he said, have reached export-grade standards, with a large share of their output now sold abroad. “This trend shows not only rising quality but also the industry’s ability to compete in international markets,” he noted. Held from September 7 to 10, 2025 (17–20 Shahrivar 1404), at the Tehran International Fairgrounds, the IranPlast Exhibition is recognized as one of the leading regional and global events in the plastics and petrochemicals sector. Its dual mission is to strengthen domestic markets while facilitating global outreach, serving as a hub for manufacturers, traders, and innovators to connect and shape the future of the industry.

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



## Iran’s Engineering Service Exports Fall to \$3b as African Presence Grows

TEHRAN - Iran’s exports of technical and engineering services have dropped to around \$3 billion, despite the country’s vast capacity in infrastructure development, according to the head of the Construction and Engineering Services Commission of Iran’s Chamber of Commerce. Ali Naqavi, head of the commission, told ILNA that Iran remains competitive in various infrastructure sectors, including road construction, dam building, power plants, water and sewage projects, oil and gas, and housing. Naqavi noted that Iranian companies can match leading international firms in terms of quality, with domestic experience in large-scale projects providing a strong foundation for entering foreign markets. However, he emphasized that Iran’s main challenge is not technical ability but rather a lack of structural support and restrictions caused by international sanctions, which hinder financial transactions and participation in global tenders. He identified Iraq as Iran’s largest export destination for engineering services, citing reconstruction needs after years of war and ISIS attacks. Iranian companies are also active in Central Asian countries such as Tajikistan and in several African nations. Naqavi stressed that unlike goods exports, engineering service projects are long-term commitments, often vulnerable to political or economic instability in host countries, making sustained participation difficult for Iranian firms. While official figures on exports vary between \$1 billion and \$3

billion due to sanctions and informal activity, Naqavi said the sector’s true value exceeds the numbers, as projects also stimulate exports of Iranian goods such as cement, pipes, cables, and industrial equipment. “Engineering services act as a driver for the country’s non-oil exports,” he added. Currently, fewer than 10 Iranian companies remain active abroad, mostly relying on their own risk-taking rather than government support. Naqavi warned that sanctions, banking restrictions, and political instability have forced many capable firms to withdraw from foreign markets. He compared Iran’s performance with Turkey, which has expanded its engineering exports to over \$60 billion through financial and structural support, while Iran lags behind despite similar potential. Naqavi criticized the limited role of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), where Iran is the second-largest shareholder. He said the bank has refused to finance Iranian projects due to sanctions, and in some cases, even canceled contracts won by Iranian companies under political pressure. In the first five months of the current year, Iranian companies launched new projects in Iraq, Tajikistan, and several African countries. Iraq remains the primary destination, but Iranian presence in Africa is growing. Despite persistent obstacles, Naqavi expressed confidence that engineering services could play a significant role in advancing Iran’s Seventh Development Plan and strengthening non-oil exports.

## Iran Engages Chinese Firms to Boost Renewable Energy Development



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran is in talks with leading Chinese companies to expand its renewable energy capacity, with a particular focus on solar power plants and advanced battery storage systems, according to Mohammad Allahdad, Deputy for Transmission and Foreign Trade at the Iran Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution Company (Tavanir). Allahdad told IRNA that China was chosen as a partner because of its global leadership in solar energy deployment and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS). “Chinese companies are at the forefront of installing solar cells and storage systems worldwide,” he said. He noted that developing renewable energy—especially solar power—has become a government priority, given Iran’s high number of sunny days. However, he emphasized that solar energy requires storage systems to maximize efficiency. “Solar plants only operate during the day, but with storage, we can use this energy at night as well,” Allahdad explained. According to the official, negotiations are underway with two major Chinese firms active in the solar sector. China, which hosts the world’s largest solar capacity, has also integrated storage systems alongside its plants. Allahdad added that Chinese expertise extends to pumped-storage power stations, with prior experience in joint dam projects with Iranian firms. As part of the new cooperation, technical know-how for building storage systems will also be transferred to Iranian partners. “This approach will both localize the knowledge for storage technologies and accelerate the expansion of solar power plants across the country,” he said.

## Iran, Armenia Explore Expanded Energy Cooperation



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Managing Director of the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) has held talks with Armenian officials to deepen energy cooperation and boost trade in petroleum products between the two neighboring countries. Managing Director Mohammad Sadegh Azimifard paid a one-day visit to Armenia, where he met separately with the country’s Minister of Economy Georg Papoyan and Deputy Minister of Economy Armen Simonyan. Iran’s Ambassador to Yerevan also accompanied the delegation. During the meeting, Minister Papoyan underlined the significance of strengthening bilateral energy ties, describing them as a foundation for long-term and mutually beneficial cooperation. He expressed Armenia’s strong interest in importing liquefied gas from Iran, noting that such supplies would not only enhance bilateral trade but also contribute to Armenia’s energy security. Papoyan further highlighted opportunities for future collaboration, including: Expanding trade in petroleum products, Developing infrastructure for liquefied and natural gas supply, Launching joint investments in the energy sector, and Leveraging regional transport and logistics networks for more efficient cooperation. In a separate session, Azimifard and Deputy Minister Simonyan discussed joint programs related to the production and trade of fuel. Both sides emphasized the importance of coordinated planning to ensure sustainable energy exchange and to maximize the use of existing regional capacities.



## U.S. Backs Philippines, Slams China's Destabilizing Plans

MANILA (Dispatches) - Secretary of State Marco Rubio yesterday said the U.S. stood with Philippines and rejected what he described as China's "destabilising plans" involving Scarborough Reef.

"Beijing claiming Scarborough Reef as a nature preserve is yet another coercive attempt to advance sweeping territorial and maritime claims in the South China Sea at the expense of its neighbors," Rubio said in a statement.

China's plan to establish a nature reserve in the Scarborough Shoal has raised fear among Filipino fishermen, who fear that it could make it harder for them to operate in the disputed South China Sea atoll, which is under the constant watch of Chinese vessels.

The shoal lies within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone but has been under Beijing's control since 2012.



## Taiwan Warns of China's War Plans



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - China is preparing for war to take Taiwan, the island's top China policymaker said in Washington yesterday, warning if Taiwan were to fall it would cause a regional "domino effect" that would threaten the security of the United States.

Chiu Chui-cheng, the cabinet-ranked head of Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council, told the Washington-based Heritage Foundation that China's ruling Communist Party had long refused to renounce the use of force against democratically governed Taiwan, which it considers part of its territory.

Chiu said that in seeking "unification with Taiwan," China aimed to exclude US influence from the Asia-Pacific and ultimately replace the United States as the global leader "in order to restore national glory and realize the so-called 'China Dream.'"

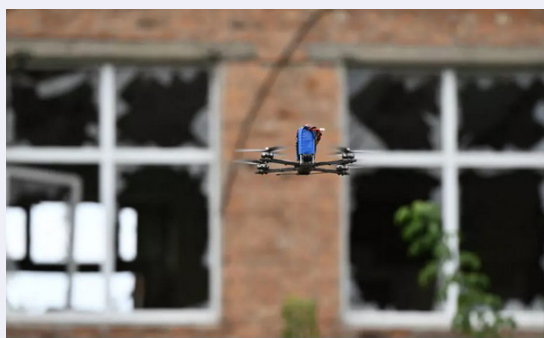
He added that Beijing "has been actively preparing for war" and highlighted stepped-up Chinese military activity around the island.

"If Taiwan were to be taken over by China by force, it will trigger a domino effect, undermine the regional balance of power, and directly threaten the security and prosperity of the United States," Chiu said.

China said yesterday that its newest aircraft carrier, the Fujian, had sailed through the Taiwan Strait, a ship which once it enters service will enable the country to project power further out into the Western Pacific.

The United States is Taiwan's most important international backer and arms supplier, despite the lack of formal diplomatic ties, and Chiu said Taipei appreciated the reaffirmation of that commitment under President Donald Trump.

## Russia Says It Downed 221 Ukrainian Drones Overnight



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia on Friday said it downed 221 Ukrainian drones, one of the highest tallies in the war. More than half of them flew over the Bryansk and Smolensk regions, according to the Russian defence ministry.

The Russia defense ministry on Friday said it downed 221 Ukrainian drones, one of the highest tallies since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Russian alert systems had "intercepted and destroyed" the drones overnight, over half of which flew over the regions of Bryansk and Smolensk, said the defense ministry.

Twenty-eight drones were shot down over the Leningrad region, which surrounds the city of St Petersburg, and nine in the Moscow region.

A Ukrainian drone attacked one of the buildings of the Smolensk nuclear power station in western Russia overnight but it was downed and no damage or casualties were reported, a subsidiary of Russian nuclear corporation Rosatom said on Friday.

Leningrad governor Aleksandr Drozdenko said a fire had broken out on a vessel in the Port of Primorsk, a major facility on the Baltic Sea, but the blaze had been brought under control and there was no risk of an oil spill.

UNITED NATIONS (Dispatches) - The United Nations General Assembly on Friday overwhelmingly voted to endorse a declaration outlining "tangible, timebound, and irreversible steps" towards a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians ahead of a meeting of world leaders.

The seven-page declaration is the result of an international conference at the U.N. in July - hosted by Saudi Arabia and France - on the decades-long conflict. The United States and Israel boycotted the event.

A resolution endorsing the declaration received 142 votes in favor and 10 against, while 12 countries abstained.

The vote comes ahead of a meeting of world leaders on September 22 - on the sidelines of the high-level U.N. General Assembly - where Britain, and France are expected to formally recognize a Palestinian state.

The declaration endorsed by the 193-member General Assembly condemns the attacks against Israel by Palestinian militants Hamas on October 7, 2023, which triggered the war in Gaza.

It also condemns the attacks by Israel against civilians and civilian infrastructure in Gaza, siege and starvation, "which have resulted in a devastating humanitarian catastrophe and protection crisis."

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said the resolution secured the international isolation of Hamas.

"For the first time today, the United Nations adopted a text condemning it for its crimes and calling for its surrender and disarmament," he said in an X post.



The resolution was supported by all Persian Gulf Arab states. Israel and the United States voted against it, along with Argentina, Hungary, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay and Tonga.

The declaration endorsed by the resolution says the war in Gaza "must end now" and support the deployment of a temporary international stabilization mission mandated by the U.N. Security Council.

The United States described the vote as "yet another misguided and ill-timed publicity stunt" that undermined serious diplomatic efforts to end the conflict.

"Make no mistake, this resolution is a gift to Hamas," U.S. diplomat Morgan Ortugus told the General Assembly. "Far from promoting peace, the conference has already prolonged the war, emboldened Hamas and harmed the prospects of peace in both short and long term."

Israel, which has long criticized the U.N. for not condemning Hamas by name for the October 7 attacks, dismissed the declaration as one-sided and described the vote as theater.

"The only beneficiary is Hamas... When terrorists are the ones cheering, you are not advancing peace; you are advancing terror," Israel's U.N. Ambassador Danny Danon said.

## NATO to Beef Up Defense of Europe's Eastern Flank

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - NATO announced plans to beef up the defense of Europe's eastern flank on Friday, two days after Poland shot down drones that had violated its airspace in the first known action of its kind by a member of the Western alliance during Russia's war in Ukraine.

At the United Nations, the United States called the airspace violations "alarming" and vowed to "defend every inch of NATO territory," remarks that appeared aimed at assuaging Washington's NATO allies after President Donald Trump said Russia's drone incursion could have been a mistake.

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Warsaw has portrayed the drone incursions as an attempt by Russia to test the capabilities of Poland and NATO to respond.

On Friday, Poland rejected Trump's suggestion that the incursions could have been a mistake, a rare contradiction of the U.S. president from one of Washington's closest European allies. Its foreign minister told Reuters Poland hoped Washington will take action to show solidarity with Warsaw.

Later on Friday, the U.S. joined Western allies in a statement to express concern about the drone incursion and to accuse Moscow of violating international law and the founding U.N. Charter.

Russia said its forces had been attacking Ukraine at the time of the drone incursions and that it had not intended to hit targets in Poland. Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said the maximum range of the drones used did not exceed 700 km "which makes it physically impossible for them to have reached Polish territory."

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte called the incursions "reckless and unacceptable."



"We can't have Russian drones entering allied airspace," he told a press conference announcing operation

NATO's top military official, Supreme Allied Commander Europe Alexus Grynkeiwich, a U.S. Air Force general, said it was a flexible operation to bolster defences along NATO's entire eastern flank, which stretches from the Baltic states in the north to Romania and Bulgaria in the south.

Grynkeiwich said "Poland and citizens from across the alliance should be assured by our rapid response earlier this week and our significant announcement here today."

The mission, which begins on Friday evening, will involve a range of assets integrating air and ground bases. NATO already has substantial forces in eastern Europe, including thousands of troops. It did not specify how many additional troops would be involved in the new operation.

Rutte said allies, including Denmark, France, Britain, and Germany, have committed to the mission with others set to join. He said NATO was still assessing the possible intent behind the Russian incursion.

NATO's announcement detailed a modest number of additional military assets - including two F-16 fighter jets and a frigate from Denmark, three Rafale fighter jets from France, and four Eurofighter jets from Germany. Spain said it would provide air assets and Britain said it would detail its contribution soon.

Trump told Fox News on Friday that his patience with Russian President Vladimir Putin was "sort of running out and running out fast," but stopped short of threatening new sanctions over the war.

Trump has repeatedly set deadlines for Moscow to agree to a ceasefire or face new sanctions, only to row back.

Germany said it had extended air policing over Poland and it and France summoned the Russian ambassadors to their countries over the drone incident.

For Polish leaders to directly contradict Trump is almost unheard of and a sign of Europe's alarm at the U.S. president's willingness to give weight to Moscow's account.

This week's incident has raised questions about NATO's ability to respond to the sort of mass drone attacks - often involving hundreds of unmanned aerial vehicles - that have been a feature of the war in Ukraine following Russia's 2022 invasion.

## Nepal Appoints First Female PM as Interim Leader

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Nepal appointed former chief justice Sushila Karki interim prime minister on Friday in a bid to appease student protesters whose deadly anti-corruption rallies toppled the previous government. Karki was known as an anti-corruption crusader in government while she was in office.

Nepal's former chief justice Sushila Karki was sworn in Friday as the country's prime minister to lead a six-month transition to elections, after deadly anti-corruption protests ousted the government.

The previous prime minister quit Tuesday as parliament was set ablaze.

"I, Sushila Karki... take an oath in the name of the country and the people to fulfil my duty as the prime minister," the 73-year-old Karki, Nepal's first woman chief justice, said as she was sworn into office by President Ram Chandra Paudel.

"Congratulations! We wish you success, wish the country success," Paudel said to Karki after the small ceremony in the presidential palace, attended by diplomats and some former leaders.

Parliament was later dissolved, and elections were set for March 5, 2026.

The Himalayan nation of 30 million people was plunged into chaos this week after security forces tried to crush rallies by young anti-corruption protesters.



At least 51 people were killed in the worst violence since the end of a civil war and the abolition of the monarchy in 2008.

The military took back control of the streets on Wednesday, enforcing a curfew.

The appointment of the judge, known for her independence, comes after two days of intense negotiations by army chief General Ashok Raj Sigdel and Paudel, including with representatives from "Gen Z", the loose umbrella title of the youth protest movement.

Thousands of young activists had used the online app Discord to debate the next steps - and name Karki as their choice of next leader.

Karki, dressed in a red sari dress, took the oath but did not make a further speech. She smiled and bowed with her hands pressed together repeatedly in traditional greetings.

"It is a moment of victory... finally the power vacuum has ended," said Amrita Ban, a Gen Z protester.

"We did it", key youth protest group Hami Nepal posted on Instagram, calling for unity.

"Honour the lives of those who sacrificed themselves for this moment".





## Dunfee, Perez Win First Gold Medals of Tokyo Worlds

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Evan Dunfee of Canada and Spanish defending champion Maria Perez prevailed in suffocating Tokyo humidity to win the first gold medals of the 20th World Athletics Championships in the 35-km walks on Saturday.

Dunfee, the pain of the gruelling effort in tough conditions etched on his face, crossed the line at the National Stadium in two hours, 28 minutes and 22 seconds to claim his first global title.

"It is a dream come true," said Dunfee. "I am turning 35 this year but I just feel like I am getting better and better."

"I was just patient today. That is part of my game and everyone who knows me knows that I can become better in the second half of the race."

Caio Bonfim of Brazil won silver in 2:28.55 while Hayato Katsuki took a popular bronze for hosts Japan in 2:29.16.

World record holder Perez, who did the 20-km-35-km double at the last world championships in Budapest two years ago, roared in delight as she hit the tape in 2:39.01 before sinking to her knees on the track and sobbing.

Italian Antonella Palmisano, the 2021 Tokyo Olympic champion at 20km, took silver more than three minutes behind in 2:42.24, while bronze went to Paula Milena Torres in an Ecuadorian record time of 2:42.44.

"I kept fighting throughout the course and this is what race walking is about, to aim to be a better athlete and person," said Perez.

"I feel privileged to beat Antonella. She is my idol."

The start times of both races were shifted back by half an hour in a bid to mitigate the heat and humidity in the Japanese capital.

Local hopes Katsuki and Masatora Kawano, who won bronze in Budapest, set the pace from the start of the men's race to the delight of the fans lining the streets.

Ecuadorian David Hurtado soon joined them in the leading group, hitting the front on his own at around the 29-km mark, only to fall foul of the officials and be forced to serve a 3 1/2-minute time penalty.

As Kawano struggled in the conditions, Dunfee swept past the two Japanese athletes to take a lead he would not relinquish despite clearly struggling with pain in his legs.

"The last 2 km felt like the hardest ones I have ever done," Dunfee said. "I had to channel all my strength for all the people back home, the ones who supported me."

"I was just thinking, 'One more step, one more step.' And it all paid off."

In the women's race, Perez raced in a five-strong leading pack with the two other medallists, Kimberly Garcia of Peru and China's Li Peng.

## France and Argentina Close in on David Cup Final

8

LONDON (Dispatches) - France moved to the brink of the Davis Cup Final 8 by taking a 2-0 lead over Croatia and Argentina, Austria and Germany are also close to booking their spots in Bologna after also dominating the opening day of their qualifying ties.

Debutant Corentin Moutet gave 10-time champions France the ideal start in Osijek by beating home favourite Dino Prizmic 6-4 5-7 6-1 before world number 57 Arthur Rinderknech topped big-serving 2014 U.S. Open winner Marin Cilic 6-4 6-4.

France will progress if they win any of the possible three rubbers beginning with the doubles.

In Groningen, hosts the Netherlands are hoping to emulate last year's run to the final, which they lost to Italy, but already have a mountain to climb after losing both singles to Argentina.

Jesper De Jong was beaten 6-4 6-4 by Tomas Etcheverry before world number 21 Francisco Cerundolo battled past Botić van de Zandschulp 7-6(1) 6-1 to put the visitors in charge.



Dutch captain Paul Haarhuis said his side will need to be perfect on Saturday.

"We can't afford any bad matches tomorrow, it's a deep hole we're in," he said. "But we still have a chance."

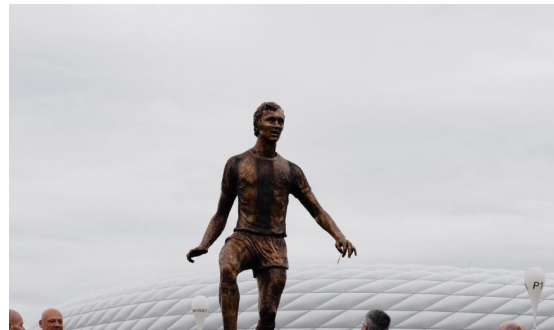
Austria are well-placed to spring a surprise in Hungary after also moving 2-0 ahead in Debrecen.

Jurij Rodionov, ranked 158th in the world, gave Austria the lead by stunning 56th-ranked Fabian Marozsan 6-2 6-7(5) 7-5 and Lukas Neumayer then, also ranked outside the top 50, outlasted the experienced Marton Fucsovics 6-3 3-6 7-6(7).

Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff, who reached the fourth round of the U.S. Open this month, put his side ahead against Japan in Tokyo with a hard-fought three-set win against Yoshihito Nishioka and Yannick Hanfmann eased past Shintaro Mochizuki.

The United States are playing a strong Czech Republic in Delray Beach while Spain's clash with Denmark in Marbella began on Saturday, as does Australia's home tie with Belgium.

## Beckenbauer Statue Unveiled at Allianz Arena



MUNICH (Dispatches) - A bronze statue of Germany football legend Franz Beckenbauer was unveiled outside Bayern Munich's Allianz Arena, a day after what would have been his 80th birthday.

Known as the 'Kaiser', the German word for emperor, for his elegant and commanding playing style, the statue is the latest in a series of honors for Beckenbauer, who died in January 2024 aged 78.

The statue depicts Beckenbauer looking ahead with his right foot on the ball.

It is a characteristic pose in his typical 'Libero' position behind the defence which the Munich-born footballer is widely credited with reinventing during the 1970s.

Beckenbauer won the Bundesliga and the World Cup as both a player and a manager, along with lifting the European Cup, the precursor to today's Champions League, three times from 1974-1976.

"Standing here today, unveiling the statue and seeing how many people have come along is a moving moment," Bayern president Herbert Hainer said.

"I had become very good friends with Franz Beckenbauer over the past few years. We all miss him — not just as a footballer, but above all as a person."

Beckenbauer's red Bayern no. 5 jersey has also been painted into the Allianz Arena rafters, while the street leading up to the stadium has been renamed Franz Beckenbauer Place.

The German Super Cup, a pre-season match featuring the league and cup winners, was renamed the Franz Beckenbauer Super Cup ahead of this campaign.

## Haaland Is a Little Bit Above Isak



LONDON (Dispatches) - Pep Guardiola said Erling Haaland is "a little bit above" Alexander Isak as the Manchester City boss responded to Arne Slot's claim that Liverpool's new signing was "maybe the best striker in the world".

Isak could make his Liverpool debut at Burnley after the Sweden star completed a British-record £125 million from Newcastle on transfer deadline day.

Liverpool manager Slot hailed Isak's quality after the 25-year-old trained with the Premier League champions for the first time this week.

But his suggestion that Isak could be the world's best did not go down well with City boss Guardiola.

Haaland has scored 88 times in 100 Premier League games for City since signing from Borussia Dortmund in 2022, helping them win two Premier League titles, the Champions League and the FA Cup.

Isak moved to Newcastle from Real Sociedad in 2022 and scored 54 goals in 86 league appearances, helping the Magpies end their 56-year trophy drought by winning the League Cup last season.

Guardiola was quick to back Haaland as the cream of the crop.

"A little bit above," he said of Haaland. "Isak is an exceptional player. You asked me about Erling and he is top."

"Isak must be a top player because of what they paid. Another one would say (Kylian) Mbappe, another (Lionel) Messi, Cristiano (Ronaldo)."

"I wouldn't change Erling for anyone. I know him. I like him."

Guardiola will need Haaland at his predatory best as City seek to get back on track in tomorrow's Manchester derby after successive defeats against Tottenham and Brighton.

After a disappointing third-place finish last season, Guardiola hoped his revamped team would hit the ground running but they have been beset by injuries and defensive problems.

## Turkey Thrash Greece to Reach Eurobasket Final

LONDON (Dispatches) - Ercan Osmani shot the lights out for Turkey as they hammered Greece 94-68 on Friday to set up a Eurobasket final showdown with Germany.

Osmani got Turkey off to an electrifying start, hitting all four of his three-point attempts and registering 14 points in the first time, with the Turks hitting the first shot of the game and never relinquishing the lead.

The 27-year-old power forward made 11 of his 15 shots to finish the game with 28 points and six rebounds, and he did plenty of work on the defensive end too, contributing to a team effort that stifled the usually dominant Giannis Antetokounmpo, limiting him to 12 points.

Turkey, whose best Eurobasket result came with a silver-medal performance when they hosted the tournament in 2001, will face the Germans, who beat Finland earlier on Friday, in Sunday's decider, with the Finns and Greece colliding in the bronze-medal game.

Meanwhile point guard Dennis Schroeder scored 26 points



and dished out 12 assists as Germany blazed past Finland 98-86 to book their place in the Eurobasket final, bringing the remarkable run of the Finns to a shuddering halt.

One of four co-hosts along with Cyprus, Poland and Latvia, Finland were appearing in the semi-finals for the first time, and though they started well, they were soon shut down by the reigning FIBA World Cup champions.

Franz Wagner came out strong with 20 first-half points as Schroeder carved open the Finnish defense, grabbing eight assists to give the Germans a 61-47 lead at the break.

The Finns came storming back, cutting the deficit to six late in the third quarter but again the Germans turned up their defense, shutting down Finnish star man Lauri Markkanen and limiting him to 16 points as he scored a paltry two of his nine three-pointers.

Germany will play Turkey in Sunday's decider, with Finland taking on the loser in the bronze-medal game.