

Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf Has Emphasized That Hezbollah and the Resistance Front Are Remaining “Alive and Active”, Supported by the Public

# IRAN NEWS

Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi Has Congratulated Appointment of Yermek Kosherbayev as New Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan and Wished Him Success

VOL. XXIX, No. 8378 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

SUNDAY OCTOBER 05, 2025 MEHR 13, 1404

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### Compliance With Unlawful U.S., Western Sanctions Undermines Int'l Law



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has warned that bowing to the West's unlawful sanctions would erode international law and called on countries to resist.

Iran's Ambassador in Colombo Alireza Delkhosh said on Friday that the foreign minister's warning comes in official correspondence sent to his counterparts in Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

Araqchi called on his Sri Lankan and Maldivian counterparts to take serious stance in opposition to the U.S.-West sanctions after United Nations on September 28 confirmed the reactivation of "snapback" sanctions against Iran -- 10 years after they were lifted in a landmark international deal over Tehran's nuclear program.

The diplomatic outreach comes after the UN Security Council failed to adopt a resolution to extend Resolution 2231 by six months, following the formal invocation of the "snapback mechanism" last month by France, Britain, and Germany, the original signatories to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The UN sanctions will again freeze Iranian assets abroad, halt arms deals with the Islamic Republic and target the country's defensive missile program.

Iran, as well as Russia and China, the other two signatories to the 2015 nuclear deal, maintain that the mechanism is politically motivated and has no legal basis under international law.

Delkhosh said the message urged governments to resist pressure from Western powers and warned that international law has become a plaything for the United States.

This decision, taken with Western countries, is "very dangerous" for international law and can lead to long-term consequences for all countries in the world, he added.

### Russia Ready to Collaborate With Iran on International Lunar Station



TEHRAN - Russia has announced its readiness to collaborate with Iran on an international lunar research station as leading space powers gear up for comprehensive Moon exploration. Dmitry Bakanov, head of the Russian Space Agency, said Russia and China have launched a joint initiative to build a scientific lunar station and are inviting Iranian scientists and engineers to participate.

Speaking online at the opening ceremony of World Space Week in Iran on Saturday, Bakanov welcomed attendees and highlighted the importance of the annual event, which commemorates the launch of Sputnik 1, the world's first artificial satellite, on October 4, 1957—a milestone that marked the dawn of human space exploration.

"World Space Week is dedicated to life beyond our planet," Bakanov said. "Russia takes pride in its achievements in human spaceflight, from ensuring survival in the vacuum of space to advancing orbital technologies." He outlined Russia's historic accomplishments, including sending the first human into orbit, launching the first woman into space, conducting spacewalks, docking spacecraft, and developing orbital stations.

## Chabahar Space Base Prepares for First Solid-Fuel Launch

TEHRAN - Iran's Chabahar Space Base is set to make a historic stride in the country's space ambitions, as authorities confirm that the facility is in its final stages of preparation for its first launch using solid-fuel rockets. According to Dr. Hassan Salarieh, head of the Iranian Space Agency (ISA), the first phase of the Chabahar base, specifically designed for solid-fuel launchers, is nearly complete, and all systems are now being readied for the inaugural mission.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the International Space Week, held under the theme "Life in Space" at the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Dr. Salarieh emphasized that Iran's ten-year national space plan and the seventh national development plan include a variety of initiatives centered on research centers and universities across the country. Among the most important of these projects are the development of biological capsules and reusable research platforms, capable of precise control and guidance. These platforms function as small-scale space laboratories for conducting suborbital and orbital experiments on biological life, including studies on radiation effects, temperature and pressure variations, and other environmental factors.

Dr. Salarieh noted that following the launch of a 500-kilogram recoverable capsule in 2023, research and development for new capsule generations have been underway. The agency has made significant progress in designing and constructing these new research platforms, and various subsystem tests are expected to begin shortly.

Another key area highlighted by Dr. Salarieh is Iran's ongoing research programs involving other celestial bodies, particularly the Moon. He revealed that since late last year, Iran has been collaborating with China on the "Chang'e 8" lunar project. The design phase has been completed, and construction of the engineering model is expected to begin soon.

Stressing the critical importance of international cooperation in the space industry, Dr. Salarieh said that such collaborations will play a major role in advancing the economy and exploiting valuable off-Earth resources. He highlighted that energy and mineral resources in other celestial bodies have been confirmed, and the global trend among advanced nations is increasingly geared toward harvesting these resources. Negotiations are also ongoing with leading countries on potential involvement in the design and construction of space stations, which would provide Iranian scientists with significant opportunities for research in life sciences and space biology.

On the domestic front, the Iranian Space Agency is also focusing on the production of advanced imaging and telecommunications satellites. Following the launch of the Pars-1 and Nahid-2 satellites and evaluation of their performance in orbit, upgraded versions of these satellites are now being prepared for deployment. Pars-2, unveiled last year, is currently undergoing final testing before launch.

The agency is pursuing more precise and technologically advanced satellites, including



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Pars-3, which will offer imaging capabilities with a resolution better than one meter, a project under active development at the Space Research Institute. Additionally, the radar satellite "SAR 2" is being designed with a resolution of 20 meters. Both of these satellites are part of Iran's broader reconnaissance satellite family, with high-quality operational models planned for the coming years. Meanwhile, the telecommunications satellite Nahid-3, designed for higher bandwidth and multiple communication services, has been progressing steadily since its design phase began last year. Dr. Salarieh emphasized that satellites play an essential role in the development of Iran's space industry, supporting both

governmental and private sector initiatives.

Dr. Salarieh also announced preparations for the first satellites of the Shahid Soleimani constellation. This narrowband satellite project will initially include approximately 20 nanosatellites capable of providing critical communication services. Equipped with advanced sensors, these satellites will collect vital information from different regions and transmit it rapidly to other parts of the country. The project, led by a combination of private and state companies, has now reached the stage of producing and launching experimental satellites. The first experimental satellite is a 3U model, while the second is a 6U satellite. Several critical subsystems, developed by private companies, are being tested through these satellites.

The Chabahar base, located in a strategically advantageous geographic position, is now prepared for its first solid-fuel rocket launch. Dr. Salarieh noted that the second phase of the base, designed for liquid-fuel launch vehicles, is also planned. Liquid-fuel rockets can carry heavier payloads and are suitable for multi-satellite launches. The geographic location of Chabahar enables access to a wide range of orbital inclinations—from approximately 40 to 100 degrees—critical for satellite constellation deployment and sun-synchronous orbit insertions.

One of the standout achievements highlighted by Dr. Salarieh is the development of the Kosar satellite series by the private sector. Following the successful launch of the first Kosar satellite last year, the second satellite has now been built with upgrades and improvements. This satellite, capable of imaging with a resolution of approximately four meters, will soon be launched into orbit. The rapid turnaround between the first and second satellites underscores the growing maturity and capabilities of Iran's private space industry.

Other planned launches this year include the observational satellites Zafar-2 and Paya, which are set to be launched via international rockets, as well as another Nahid-2 satellite, to be deployed using the domestic Simorgh launcher. Suborbital and orbital experimental launches are also planned for the Shahid Soleimani constellation and other research payloads. Launch dates may be subject to change due to technical requirements, and final schedules will be announced accordingly.

## Iran Captures Only 2.5% of \$1 Trillion Regional Market

TEHRAN - Iran's non-oil exports continue to stagnate, holding just 2.5% of the \$1 trillion regional market. The country has only 22 commercial attaches globally, a factor former Trade Promotion Organization head Mohammad Reza Modoodi cites as a major structural barrier limiting growth beyond \$50 billion. Other obstacles include the widespread use of rented business cards and insufficient international trade representation.

Despite expectations that currency devaluation would boost exports, Iran's non-oil trade has hovered between \$40-50 billion for over a decade. Analysts attribute this stagnation to flawed foreign exchange policies, weak trade infrastructure, the absence of a coherent export strategy, and ongoing economic instability.

Modoodi explained that while higher exchange rates were expected to encourage exports, the opposite occurred. Following 2018 sanctions, rising currency costs increased production expenses for exporters relying on imported raw materials. Additionally, many exporters were reluctant to repatriate earnings, often using rented business cards to bypass foreign exchange obligations. "The idea that a weaker currency automatically spurs exports is misleading," Modoodi said. "Without integrated domestic value chains, rising costs have undermined Iran's competitiveness in international markets."

Modoodi criticized the central bank's priority on stabilizing the rial over promoting trade, arguing that this approach neither strengthened the currency nor fostered sustainable employment and investment. "If trade had been prioritized and the repatriation of export revenues strictly enforced, results would have been far better," he noted.

Highlighting the need for a new export strategy targeting regional markets, Modoodi pointed out



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that while neighboring countries import around \$1 trillion annually, Iran's exports to the region total just \$25 billion—roughly 2-2.5% of the market, far below potential.

Key trade promotion tools—including trade fairs, commercial attaches, and international trade delegations—remain underutilized. With only 22 attaches worldwide and constrained budgets, Iran lags behind countries with fully staffed trade networks. Limited participation from the domestic private sector further reduces the effectiveness of Iran's international trade outreach.

The Tehran International Exhibition, founded in the 1960s, has lost much of its global influence. Today, it primarily operates as a venue provider rather than a platform for promoting Iranian products abroad. Similarly, trade delegations are hampered by weak political and

banking relations, while ongoing international tensions have further curtailed trade activity.

Frequent changes to regulations and ad hoc directives create uncertainty for exporters. Modoodi stressed that consistent laws and policies are essential to maintain trust between government and private sector, arguing that regulatory instability undermines trade, investment, and social capital.

Iran's restrictive approach to imports and limited engagement in regional trade agreements reduce its appeal as a trade partner. "Major global exporters are also major importers. Iran must adopt a dual approach to deepen economic ties, improve competitiveness, and maintain access to essential goods," Modoodi said.

He concluded that Iran needs a comprehensive reassessment of its trade policies, balancing imports and exports, improving infrastructure for international trade, and leveraging political and banking relations to fully unlock the country's non-oil export potential.

### 2025: A Global Test of Ethics

Assessing the "rate of ethics" on a global scale requires a multidimensional look at both objective and subjective indicators.

Today's world faces a range of paradoxes. Humanity's sensitivity to ethical issues has risen to unprecedented levels: attention to animal rights, environmental protection, children's welfare, gender equality, reducing disparities in living standards, condemning discrimination, scrutinizing corruption, addressing inequalities in healthcare, education and welfare, combating poverty, and questioning the accumulation of wealth.

Yet, the gap between words and actions — along with the relentless struggle for survival in many regions — has led to the routine violation of ethical principles.

One measure of global ethics is the level of corruption in the public sector. While some countries have reported improvements, others still face entrenched, systemic, and even critical levels of corruption.

Human rights indicators reveal a stark duality: progress in some areas such as women's rights, and regression in others, including racial discrimination, genocide, suppression of free speech, and persistent double standards.

The Global Peace Index has declined due to rising violence and conflict — often driven by colonial-era interests and the use of force to secure gains.

Social trust — the confidence people have in one another and in international institutions — is also on the decline, leaving many areas visibly weakened.

In the realm of discourse and mutual respect, particularly in social media and digital spaces, there has been an ongoing trend of deterioration and polarization.

However, participation in charitable and volunteer activities has remained stable or even increased in many countries, as public expectations of ethical behavior from organizations and individuals continue to rise.

Globalization has helped turn principles such as human rights and environmental sustainability into dominant global narratives. While social media and digital platforms have empowered ordinary people to expose ethical violations and demand accountability, international and national laws have not consistently moved toward stronger protections for vulnerable groups.

Many large corporations fail to uphold ethical and environmental standards despite the importance of safeguarding their public reputations.

The widening gap between the rich and the poor has fueled incentives for unethical practices such as corruption and crime.

Political and social polarization has made respectful dialogue and the search for common ethical ground increasingly difficult. Meanwhile, technology — despite enabling greater transparency and collective oversight — has also been exploited for spreading disinformation and violating privacy.

Competition over scarce resources such as water and energy threatens to further erode ethical norms.

In conclusion, the global measurement of ethics appears to be rising, but the process is neither linear, uniform, nor rapid. The world is in the midst of a complex ethical transition, where growing awareness on one side is in constant conflict with mounting challenges on the other.

Ultimately, the answer to the question "What is the state of global ethics today?" depends largely on whose interests and which domains we choose to examine.



ByHamid Reza Naghashifan

### European Sanctions Have No Impact on Iran's Steel Exports



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TEHRAN - European sanctions on Iran's steel and metals industry are unlikely to affect the country's exports, according to Mohammad Sadegh Mofatteh, Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade for Commercial Affairs.

The European Union recently reinstated sanctions on Iran, imposing strict restrictions on the trade of steel, aluminum, graphite, and other metals. The measures prohibit the sale, supply, transfer, or export of these raw and semi-processed metals to Iranian companies or for use in Iran, citing concerns that such materials could contribute to Iran's nuclear and ballistic programs and strengthen industries controlled by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).



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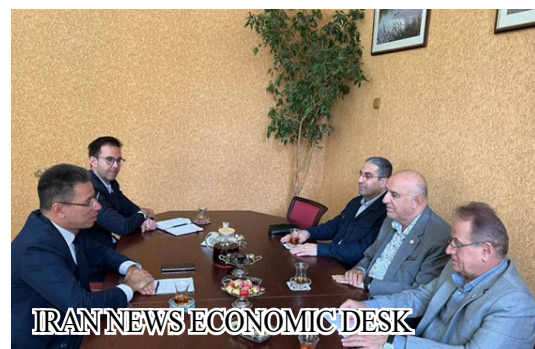


## Iran's Rail Passenger Numbers Rise 3% in H1 of 2025

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Official data show that 15.8 million passengers traveled by rail—both intercity and suburban—during the first half of the current Iranian year (March 20–September 21, 2025), marking a 3% increase compared with the same period last year. According to figures released by the Railway Passenger Services Planning and Supervision Department, the number of rail passengers in the first six months of the previous year stood at 15.4 million.

During this period, a total of 36,801 train services were operated to transport passengers, representing a 6% rise year-on-year. In addition, the passenger transport volume—measured in passenger-kilometers—reached 8.16 billion passenger-kilometers in intercity and suburban services in the first half of this year, reflecting a 2% increase compared with the same period in 2024.

## President of Iran–Russia Joint Chamber Meets Astrakhan's Foreign Relations Minister



TEHRAN - During an official visit to Russia, Hadi Tizhoush-Taban, President of the Iran–Russia Joint Chamber of Commerce, held meetings with Vladimir Galavkov, Minister of Foreign Relations of the Astrakhan region, and with Ahmad Heydarian, the newly appointed Iranian Consul General in Astrakhan.

In his meeting with Minister Galavkov, Tizhoush-Taban presented a report on preparations for the 22nd meeting of the Caspian Sea Littoral States' Chambers of Commerce (ICBC) as well as on the activities of the Iranian Trade Center in Astrakhan.

Galavkov praised the Iran–Russia Joint Chamber for its significant role in strengthening bilateral economic relations. He highlighted the establishment of the Iranian Trade Center and the installation of a statue of the Persian poet Omar Khayyam in Astrakhan as notable achievements during Tizhoush-Taban's tenure.

The minister described the upcoming ICBC meeting in Tehran as highly important and announced that a commercial delegation from Astrakhan will attend the event. He also revealed that the first Governors' Summit of the Caspian Sea Littoral States will be held on November 17–18 in Rasht, Iran, with the Astrakhan governor leading his region's delegation.

As part of his trip, Tizhoush-Taban also met with Ahmad Heydarian, Iran's new Consul General in Astrakhan. He expressed hope that Heydarian's appointment would mark a new phase in the development of relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Astrakhan region.

Tizhoush-Taban noted progress at the Iranian Trade Center, where several Iranian companies have already established offices and others are preparing to join. He also announced initial steps to launch a direct flight between Rasht and Astrakhan, which would reduce the current 25-hour travel time to just two hours, potentially boosting economic exchanges between the two regions.

For his part, Consul General Heydarian pledged to prioritize addressing the needs of the Iranian community in Astrakhan. He also acknowledged ongoing discussions to resolve the issue of long queues of Iranian ships at Astrakhan's port, emphasizing the importance of improving logistics for bilateral trade.

## Tourism a Driver of Economic Growth and Social Cohesion



TEHRAN - Deputy Minister for Tourism described tourism as a strategic sector for economic prosperity, strengthening social cohesion, enhancing public culture, and fostering dialogue among nations.

Speaking at an event marking Tourism Week and Tehran Week at the Koushk Bagh-e Honar cultural center, Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpey emphasized the strategic role of tourism in sustainable development, calling it a civilizational, transformative, and pride-inspiring phenomenon.

"Tourism is not only a source of jobs and foreign exchange, but also strengthens national identity and promotes cultural diplomacy on the global stage," he said.

Highlighting tourism as a source of national pride for all countries, Bandpey added:

"Every nation with historical, natural, and civilizational assets has a responsibility to leverage these resources with a scientific and strategic approach for both national and international development."

He referred to this year's UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) theme of 'Tourism and Sustainable Transformation', noting that the tourism industry plays a key role in realizing this global vision.

"Responsible travel, environmental protection, and empowering local communities are central pillars of this path," he stressed.

The deputy minister outlined government initiatives to support the sector, announcing that bank credit allocated to tourism has risen sharply this year—from 250 trillion rials (about 2,500 billion toman) to 4,000 trillion rials (about 40,000 billion toman), reflecting the government's commitment to strengthening infrastructure and supporting industry stakeholders.

# Iran Resumes Electricity Exports to Two Eastern Neighbors

TEHRAN - The head of Iran's Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution Company (Tavanir) announced that electricity exports to Afghanistan and Pakistan have resumed following a decline in domestic demand.

Speaking to IRNA, Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi said that the volume of electricity exported to the two neighboring countries currently stands at 150 megawatts, while Iran continues to import around 450 megawatts of power from Armenia and Turkmenistan.

Rajabi Mashhadi noted that the current level of exports is expected to remain unchanged unless new agreements or urgent developments arise in regional energy exchanges.

"At the moment, there are no immediate plans to increase exports," he added.

On August 27 this year the Tavanir chief had stated that Iran's electricity exports had dropped to their lowest level—nearly zero—due to domestic supply imbalances.

Electricity exports are only carried out when there is no disruption to the balance between domestic production and consumption, ensuring that internal needs are fully met.

In recent months, to address shortages during the hot season and periods of peak consumption, Iran's electricity imports surged to more than five times the volume of its exports, with most of the imported power used to stabilize the national grid and meet internal demand.

Until recently, Iraq had been the main recipient of Iran's electricity exports under international contracts, but these exports have been completely halted in recent months.

Exports to Afghanistan also continued under a separate international agreement but at volumes far lower than the amount of power imported into Iran.

Meanwhile the Managing Director of the Tehran Regional Electric Company announced that Qom Province will soon host its largest solar power plant, with a planned capacity of 2,000 megawatts, developed in cooperation with the private sector.

Speaking to IRNA, Farhad Shabih said the national-scale project will be implemented with private investment to expand the country's renewable energy infrastructure, eventually reaching a total capacity of 2,000 MW.



He added that in the first phase, a 350-MW solar plant will be built.

"Feasibility studies for connecting the plant to the national power grid are expected to be completed by late May 2026," Shabih noted.

The managing director highlighted that the Qom provincial government is preparing to allocate land for the first phase, with 600 hectares designated for the project under existing agreements.

According to Shabih, the solar plant will not only supply part of Qom's electricity demand and feed power into the national grid, but will also deliver significant environmental and economic

benefits.

"By operating this solar facility, thousands of liters of fossil fuel will be saved annually, and greenhouse-gas emissions will be substantially reduced," he said.

Shabih emphasized that officials in the energy sector see such projects as key to achieving the country's sustainable development goals:

"They help reduce reliance on fossil fuels, promote the use of clean energy, improve environmental indicators, and curb air pollution."

From an economic perspective, the project is also highly significant, he added.

"Alongside large-scale private-sector investment, hundreds of direct and indirect jobs will be created during both the construction and operation phases, boosting the local economy in Qom Province."

Shabih further stated that the planned 2,000-MW capacity will pave the way for adopting advanced technologies and increasing the share of renewable energy in Iran's energy mix.

According to IRNA, the project complements other national clean-energy initiatives and marks a major step toward implementing the country's long-term policies for renewable energy development and energy security.

Recently, with the commissioning and construction of 280 MW of new solar power plants nationwide, Iran's total installed solar capacity has surpassed 2,300 MW.

Each megawatt of solar power generation saves about 500,000 cubic meters of fuel and 400,000 liters of water annually, while preventing the release of roughly 1,000 tons of carbon monoxide into the atmosphere each year.

# ICCIMA Approves Governance Charter and Restructures Organizational Chart

TEHRAN - The Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) has approved a new Governance Charter aimed at guiding the chamber's direction over the next two decades. The move was accompanied by plans to revise ICCIMA's organizational chart to align with the charter's framework.

Speaking at the second day of a national gathering of provincial council secretariats in Mashhad, Keyvan Kashfi, a member of ICCIMA's Board of Directors and Deputy Secretary of the Government–Private Sector Dialogue Council, described the charter as a "long-awaited manifesto" for the chamber's extensive network, which includes provincial chambers, joint chambers, and national and regional business associations.

"The Iran Chamber has always played a central role in managing a vast range of capacities. For years, there was a need for a unified roadmap," Kashfi said.

Kashfi noted that the new charter was drafted following comparative studies of the legal structures, financial resources, and operational experiences of chambers of commerce in 40 countries.

He emphasized that Iran's chamber is structurally close to Eurasian and Asian models and retains full legal independence, with its leadership elected through internal votes.

"That is why we stress that any ongoing parliamentary revisions to the chamber's law should only proceed if they contribute to greater efficiency; otherwise, it is better left unchanged," he said.

According to Kashfi, the Governance Charter sets out a strategic framework for the chamber for the next two decades, while a six-year operational program is currently being prepared to translate the charter's principles into action.

The charter identifies five core strategies: Regulatory Engagement with government bodies and the private sector; Expansion of Foreign Relations and Trade; Strengthening the Chamber's Influence on Society; Growth of Membership; and Enhancement of Services.

Kashfi underlined that regulation is the primary focus: "Engaging with governmental, regulatory, and private-sector entities is at the



heart of the chamber's mission, particularly through the national and provincial Government–Private Sector Dialogue Councils."

Kashfi acknowledged that the chamber needs to improve its public image and outreach.

"Unfortunately, we lack strong communication channels with society, and at times, the public perception of the chamber has not been accurately reflected," he said.

He stressed that ICCIMA is not merely a supervisory body but a facilitator of

services.

"The more successful we are in providing service-oriented support, the more we will be able to grow our membership base," he added.

Kashfi described the Government–Private Sector Dialogue Council as a unique national platform, both in its legal standing and in the mix of government and private-sector participants. The council's ultimate goal, he said, is to improve the business climate in Iran.

He urged provincial chambers to invest in their technical and expert teams, pointing out that dedicated budgets have been allocated for this purpose.

He also recommended the creation of a communication platform linking local councils with ICCIMA's economic organizations and specialized commissions, which would strengthen cooperation and service delivery.

Kashfi, who has served as head of a provincial chamber for 16 years, called for deeper collaboration between provincial chamber leaders, local council secretariats, and regional governors to improve the effectiveness of the dialogue councils.

Concluding his remarks, he emphasized: "The primary focus of all dialogue councils across the country should be on regulatory reforms. Over the past decade, one of the most significant achievements of the chamber has been the Business Environment Improvement Law, from which the Dialogue Council itself emerged and was expanded nationwide."

## Iranian Delegation in Barcelona to Present Views on Cultural Rights, Culture Economy



TEHRAN - An Iranian delegation is participating in UNESCO's World Conference on Cultural Policies (Mondiacult 2025) in Barcelona to present the country's perspectives on cultural rights, cultural justice, and the culture-based economy.

The global conference, held at the Barcelona International Convention Center (CCIB), brings together over 160 high-level delegations, including culture ministers, scholars, artists, and international organizations.

Iran's delegation is led by Seyyed Abbas Salehi, Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, and includes Ahmad Pakatchi, Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to UNESCO; Hassan Fartousi, Secretary-General of Iran's National Commission for UNESCO; Mohsen Javadi, Deputy for Cultural Affairs; Hossein Entezami, Deputy for Administrative and Financial Affairs; and Seyyed Rouhollah Hassani, adviser to the minister.

Mondiacult 2025 builds on the outcomes of Mondiacult 2022 in Mexico, aiming to shape global cultural policies for the post-2030 development agenda.

At the opening session, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez; Spain's Minister of Culture Ernest Urtezar; Mexico's Minister of Culture and President of Mondiacult 2022 Claudia Curiel de Icaza; and UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture Ernesto Ottone addressed the role of culture in sustainable development, peace, justice, climate change, artificial intelligence, and human rights.

A major highlight of the conference was the call to include a "stand-alone cultural goal" in the post-2030 global development framework, alongside the unveiling of the first Global Report on the State of Culture.

## Iran Faces Feminization of Aging as Seniors Reach 12% of Population



TEHRAN - Iran's elderly population has grown to 12 percent of the country's total, and the proportion of older women is rising faster than that of men, officials warned on Tuesday.

Mojgan Rezaadeh, head of the National Council on Aging's Secretariat, said Iran is experiencing the "feminization of aging," a trend seen in many countries. "Women make up more than half of the elderly. This stems from women's higher life expectancy, men's higher mid-life mortality, and various social and economic factors," she said.

Rezaadeh urged gender-responsive policies, including reliable pensions, women-specific health care, poverty reduction for single elderly women, day-care and home-care services, and protection against vulnerabilities such as violence, lower retirement income, and reduced economic participation.

Official data show several million people receive assistance from the State Welfare Organization, but Iran's elderly population is estimated at 9–10 million.

"Roughly a third of the organization's clients are seniors, but there is no single, transparent figure for how many elderly people are covered. Many still remain outside the formal safety net," Rezaadeh said.

She described the needs of seniors as "overlapping and multidimensional," citing care at home and in day centers, chronic-disease management, access to medicine and rehabilitation, and support to prevent isolation and poverty. Priorities differ by region, she added, with poorer provinces needing more economic and caregiving support and older regions requiring stronger health and rehabilitation services.

Rezaadeh warned that northern and central provinces, including Gilan, Mazandaran, East Azerbaijan, Isfahan and Tehran, have the highest shares of elderly residents but insufficient healthcare and caregiving infrastructure.



## Sweden Plans to Boost Coast Guard Surveillance in Baltic Sea

COPENHAGEN (Dispatches) - Sweden is proposing legislation to increase security in the Baltic Sea by expanding its coast guard's ability to conduct maritime surveillance, the Nordic country's defence ministry said.

The Baltic Sea region is on heightened alert following a string of undersea cable and gas pipeline outages in the years following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, as well as recent drone sightings and airspace violations.

"We have not chosen our external situation, but we must deal with the reality we face," Sweden's Minister for Civil Defence Carl-Oskar Bohlin said in a statement.

NATO, of which Sweden is a member, said on Saturday that it was upgrading its mission in the Baltic Sea with an air-defence frigate and other assets following drone incursions in Denmark.



## Italians Take to Streets, Down Tools in Massive Gaza Protests



ROME (Dispatches) - Over 200,000 people protested across Italy Friday as they downed tools in support of the Gaza aid flotilla in a strike that caused widespread disruption.

Demonstrators condemned the treatment of the Global Sumud Flotilla that sailed to challenge Israel's blockade of Gaza, where the United Nations has reported famine conditions after nearly two years of war.

The Italian strike, called by the USB and CGIL unions, followed demonstrations Thursday in cities across the world, including Milan and Rome, where some 10,000 people marched from the Colosseum.

Protesters marched again Friday in Rome, setting off from the vast plaza outside the central train station of Termini, where services were cancelled or delayed.

Among the crowd -- estimated at least 80,000 by police -- was Giordano Fioramonti, 19, protesting along with other youngsters, university students, and professors.

"It's also our civic duty to show how angry and unhappy we are with what is happening in the world, with our government, to show our support for the flotilla, especially for Palestine, for the Gazans who are being killed, tortured and massacred," Fioramonti told AFP.

Up and down the country, thousands of people gathered for marches and flashmobs, from Turin and Trento in the north to Bari and Palermo in the south, according to local media, sometimes blocking highways or train tracks.

Police told AFP over 80,000 people were demonstrating in Milan, where a sea of people clapped and waved the Palestinian flag as they made their way through the streets, carrying a massive banner reading: "Free Palestine, Stop the War Machine."

## Georgia Votes in Local Polls as Opposition Urges Last-Chance Protest



TBILISI (Dispatches) - Georgia voted in local polls on Saturday as the country's opposition urges thousands to take to the streets in a "last chance" to save democracy, with the government warning of a tough response to those it casts as seeking "revolution".

The ruling Georgian Dream party faces its first electoral test since a disputed parliamentary poll a year ago plunged the Black Sea nation into turmoil and froze prospects for closer EU integration.

The normally low-key municipal vote has acquired high stakes after months of raids on independent media, restrictive laws on civil society, and jailings of opponents and activists.

Imprisoned reformist ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili has urged supporters to take to the streets on election day for what he said would be the "last chance" to save Georgian democracy.

"There are moments when action is needed here and now... Let's come on October 4 and stand our ground to the end. Freedom -- now or never," he wrote Thursday on Facebook.

"Many more people will be arrested and the rest driven out... total hopelessness will take hold, and the West will finally give up on us."

Opera star-turned-activist Paata Burchuladze has urged a "national assembly" rally outside parliament, casting it as a peaceful transfer of power from Georgian Dream.

Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze said plans for a "revolution" are doomed to fail, accusing organisers of "radicalism" and vowing a harsh police response.

# Trump Orders Israel to Stop Bombing Gaza; Hamas Ready for Peace

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Donald Trump told Israel to immediately stop bombing Gaza after Hamas agreed to release hostages and accept some other terms in a U.S. plan to end the war, but vexing issues like disarmament appeared unresolved.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Israel was preparing for an "immediate implementation" of the first stage of Trump's Gaza plan for the release of Israeli hostages following Hamas' response.

Shortly after, Israeli media reported that the country's political echelon had instructed the military to reduce offensive activity in Gaza.

The Israeli military chief of staff instructed forces in a statement to advance readiness for the implementation of the first phase of Trump's plan, without mentioning whether there would be reduction of military activity in Gaza.

Hamas, the Palestinian militant group that controls Gaza, responded to Trump's 20-point plan after the U.S. president gave the group until Sunday to accept or face grave consequences.

Trump, who has cast himself as the only person capable of achieving peace in Gaza, has invested significant political capital in efforts to end a two-year-old war that has killed tens of thousands and left U.S. ally Israel increasingly isolated on the world stage.

Trump said he believed Hamas had showed it was "ready for a lasting PEACE" and he put the onus on Netanyahu's government.

"Israel must immediately stop the bombing of Gaza, so that we can get the Hostages out safely and quickly!" Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform. "We are already in discussions on details to be worked out. This is not about Gaza alone, this is about long sought PEACE in the Middle East."

Netanyahu's office said Israel "will continue to work in full cooperation with the President and his team to end the war in accordance with the principles set out by Israel, which align with President Trump's vision."

Residents said Israeli tanks bombarded Talateen Street, a major artery in the heart of Gaza City, after Trump's message to Israel to stop.

Witnesses said Israeli military planes also intensified bombing in Gaza City in the hour after Hamas issued its statement, hitting several houses in the Remal neighborhood.

There were strikes on Khan Younis but no reports of casualties, residents said.

Before Israel's latest announcements, families of those being held by Hamas in Gaza called on Netanyahu "to



immediately order negotiations for the return of all hostages."

Domestically, the prime minister is caught between growing pressure to end the war -- from hostage families and a war-weary public -- and demands from hardline members of his far-right coalition who insist there must be no let-up in Israel's campaign in Gaza.

Israel began its offensive in Gaza after the October 7, 2023, Hamas-led attack on Israel in which some 1,200 people were killed and 251 taken as hostages back to Gaza, according to Israeli tallies. Israel says 48 hostages remain, 20 of whom are alive.

Israel's military campaign has killed more than 66,000 people in Gaza, most of them civilians, according to Gaza health authorities. Its assault has destroyed much of the strip while aid restrictions have triggered a famine in parts of Gaza, with conditions dire across the enclave.

A U.N. Commission of Inquiry and multiple human rights experts have concluded that Israel has committed genocide in Gaza. Netanyahu's

government says it has acted in self-defense.

Hamas, in a copy of its response seen by Reuters, did not say whether it would agree to disarm and demilitarize Gaza -- something Israel and the U.S. want but Hamas has rejected before.

It also did not agree to an Israeli withdrawal in stages, as opposed to the immediate, full withdrawal Hamas demands. A senior Hamas official told Al Jazeera that the group would not disarm before Israel's occupation of the enclave ends, comments that underscored the gap between the parties.

Qatar has begun coordination with mediator Egypt and the United States to continue talks on Trump's Gaza plan, the Qatari foreign ministry spokesperson said on X.

Trump's plan specifies an immediate ceasefire, an exchange of all hostages held by Hamas for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel, a staged Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, the disarmament of Hamas and the introduction of a transitional government led by an international body.

In its response to Trump's plan, Hamas said it "appreciates the Arab, Islamic, and international efforts, as well as the efforts of U.S. President Donald Trump, calling for an end to the war on the Gaza Strip, the exchange of prisoners, (and) the immediate entry of aid," among other terms.

# U.S. Gov't Shutdown to Drag Into Next Week

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The U.S. government shutdown is set to stretch into next week after senators voted Friday for a fourth time to reject a funding fix proposed by President Donald Trump's Republicans.

Federal agencies have been out of money since Wednesday -- with a wide range of public services crippled -- as a result of deadlocked talks in Congress on how to keep the lights on.

Tourist sites such as the Washington Monument have closed, key data on employment has been delayed and some official websites have ground to a halt, although other areas of government have yet to be affected.

Some 750,000 employees are likely to be put on furlough -- a kind of enforced leave with backpay after the shutdown -- as the funding crisis deepens.

Senate leaders have no plans to keep the upper chamber of Congress in session over the weekend, meaning Friday's vote on a short-term fix was the last chance of the week to end the crisis.

At the center of the standoff is a Democratic demand for an extension of health care subsidies that are due to expire -- meaning sharply increased costs for millions of low-income Americans.

Republicans -- who control the legislature and the White House but need Democratic votes on government funding bills -- have announced no plans to address the issue.

The Democrats are trying to force Republicans' hand by blocking a Trump-backed funding resolution that needs a handful of their votes.

The White House said the Democratic posture amounted to "an intentional sabotage of our country."

"This madness must end," Trump's press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters. "President Trump and Republicans are calling on Democrats to reopen the government immediately on behalf of the American public."

Amid widespread pessimism over the possibility of a



quick solution, Republicans voiced in Congress hopes that the latest failure might push some moderates in the opposition to cross the aisle.

"Hopefully over the weekend, they'll have a chance to think about it," Republican Senate leader John Thune told reporters at the US Capitol.

"Maybe some of these conversations start to result in something to where we can start moving some votes and actually get this thing passed."

Complicating efforts to strike a deal is the threat from Trump to turn thousands of the planned furloughs into permanent redundancies, strip funding and slash benefits as he ramps up pressure on the Democrats.

The administration has also been accused of allowing government officials to use partisan language in messaging about the shutdown after the Department of Housing and Urban Development on Tuesday posted a notice on its website blaming the shutdown on the "Radical Left."

The New York Times reported Friday that some furloughed Education Department staff had noticed their out-of-office email messages being altered without their knowledge to point the finger Democrats.

"Unfortunately, Democrat Senators are blocking passage of H.R. 5371 in the Senate which has led to a lapse in appropriations," the emails said, according to the Times.

With an announcement on layoffs expected any day, Trump's budget chief Russ Vought is planning to brief Republican senators next week.

The House of Representatives has been in recess and Republican Speaker Mike Johnson told reporters he has been meeting the president ahead of its return to discuss plans for layoffs.

Johnson accused Senate Democratic Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of pushing the shutdown because the veteran New Yorker is "terrified" of left-wing activists grabbing his seat in 2028 elections.

# U.S. Carries Out New Strike Against Alleged Drug Vessel Near Venezuela

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States killed four people in a strike against a vessel allegedly carrying illegal drugs just off the coast of Venezuela, U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said on Friday, at least the fourth such attack in recent weeks.

The strike is the latest example of President Donald Trump's efforts to use U.S. military power in new, and often legally contentious, ways, from deploying active-duty U.S. troops in Los Angeles, to carrying out counter-terrorism strikes against drug trafficking suspects.

Hegseth said Friday's strike was carried out in international waters and that all of the people killed were men. He said the vessel was transporting "substantial amounts of narcotics - headed to America to poison our people."

"These strikes will continue until the attacks on the American people are over!!!!," Hegseth said in a post on X.

In a nearly 40-second video shared by Hegseth, a vessel can be seen moving through the water before a web of projectiles fall on the boat and the surrounding water, causing the boat to explode on impact.

Hegseth said, without providing evidence, that the intelligence "without a doubt"



confirmed that the vessel was carrying drugs and that the people on board were "narcoterrorists." He did not disclose the amount or type of the alleged drugs on board the vessel.

Trump, also without providing evidence, said the boat had enough drugs to kill 25,000 to 50,000 people.

The Venezuelan communications ministry did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

In the past, counter-drug operations have been generally carried out by the U.S. Coast Guard, the main U.S. maritime law enforcement agency, not the U.S. military.

But earlier this week, the Pentagon disclosed to Congress in a notification reviewed by Reuters that Trump has determined the United States is engaged in "a non-international armed conflict" with drug cartels. The document aimed to explain the Trump administration's legal rationale for unleashing U.S. military force in the Caribbean.

Some former military lawyers say the legal explanations given by the Trump administration for killing suspected drug traffickers at sea instead of apprehending them fail to satisfy requirements under the law of war.





## Semenyo Double Fires Bournemouth to Late Win Over Fulham

BOURNEMOUTH (Dispatches) - Antoine Semenyo scored twice as Bournemouth moved up to second in the Premier League with three late goals to beat Fulham 3-1.

The Cherries were heading to their first league defeat since losing to Liverpool on the opening night of the season when Ryan Sessegnon put the visitors in front on 70 minutes.

However, Semenyo's brilliant individual run and finish kickstarted the comeback.

Justin Kluivert blasted into the top corner before Semenyo completed the turnaround on the counter-attack deep into stoppage time.

Andoni Iraola's men closed to within one point of leaders Liverpool, who travel to Chelsea on Sunday. Bournemouth's start is even more impressive given a number of their better performers last season were prized away for big fees during the summer transfer window.

Defenders Dean Huijsen, Milos Kerkez and Illia Zabarnyi departed for Real Madrid, Liverpool and Paris Saint-Germain respectively.

"It's a great feeling," said Semenyo on sitting second in the table.

"We lost so many important players for us, but the start to the season has been great and it's a great environment to be a part of."

At the Vitality Stadium, neither side was capable of playing flowing football in awful weather conditions as Storm Amy battered the United Kingdom with heavy rain and ferocious winds.

But the game came to life in the final 20 minutes after Sessegnon exchanged a slick one-two with Samuel Chukwueze before firing high past Djordje Petrovic.

The lead lasted only eight minutes as the in-form Semenyo burst past Timothy Castagne to reach the by-line and then produced an inch-perfect finish through the legs of goalkeeper Bernd Leno.

Semenyo was also credited with the assist for the second, but Kluivert did all the hard work with a stunning strike from distance.

The Dutch international has largely been used as a substitute by Iraola at the start of the campaign despite scoring 13 goals last season.

But Kluivert showed his quality as he collected possession from Semenyo just inside the Fulham half and strode forward before unleashing a dipping drive into the top corner.

In their quest for an equaliser, Fulham were caught short at the back in stoppage time.

Ben Gannon-Doak broke clear from a Fulham corner and kept his composure to wait for support before supplying Semenyo to score his sixth goal in seven Premier League games this season.

Defeat leaves Fulham still in 11th with eight points from their opening seven games.

"It's very tough for us the way we lost," said Fulham boss Marco Silva.

"The game was totally under control at 1-0."

## Monfils to Retire After 2026 Season

LONDON (Dispatches) - Former world number six Gael Monfils will retire at the end of next season, the Frenchman said.

Known for his athleticism and flair, Monfils has won 13 ATP Tour titles, the latest of which came in Auckland in January, nearly 20 years after his first in Poland in 2005.

His victory in the Auckland Classic made him the oldest player to win an ATP Tour title at 38 years and four months.

"Now, after celebrating my 39th birthday just a month ago, I'd like to share that the year ahead will be my last as a professional tennis player," Monfils wrote on social media.

"The opportunity to turn my passion into a profession is a privilege I have cherished during every match and moment of my 21-year career.

"Though this game means the world to me, I am tremendously at peace with my decision to retire at the end of the 2026 tennis season."

Monfils has reached two Grand Slam semi-finals, losing both at the French Open in 2008 and the 2016 U.S. Open, but said he would sign off without any regrets.

"Life is too short," he added. "Believe me when I say that I have no regrets. What I do have is the feeling that I have been



lucky: insanely, stupidly lucky."

Meanwhile Jessica Pegula bounced back from a first-set stumble to secure a 6-7(2) 6-2 6-1 win over American compatriot Emma Navarro and reach the China Open semi-finals where she will face Czech Linda Noskova.

Noskova, seeded 26th, thumped unseeded Briton Sonay Kartal 6-3 6-4 earlier on Friday to ensure her first appearance in the final four of a WTA 1000 tournament.

World number seven Pegula got a break early in the first set, but Navarro saved three set points to make it 5-5 before prevailing in the tiebreak.

However Pegula, a former U.S. Open finalist, kept her cool and dominated the next two sets, securing her third win in a row against Navarro.

"She did a good job of staying tough, but at the same time I felt I was playing the right way," Pegula said.

"I told myself to not get too frustrated. That kind of allowed me to play more free."

## India Flatten West Indies After Tons by Rahul, Jurel and Jadeja



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India racked up 448 for five after opener KL Rahul and middle-order batters Dhruv Jurel and Ravindra Jadeja struck hundreds to flatten West Indies and put the hosts in charge of the opening test in Ahmedabad.

Jurel's 125 was his maiden test hundred as he and Jadeja combined in a 206-run stand for the fifth wicket to help India finish day two with a chunky first innings lead of 286.

Jadeja, who hit five sixes in his fluent knock, will resume on 104 on Saturday with Washington Sundar on nine at the other end.

India had bundled out West Indies for 162 on Thursday and hit the accelerator when Shubman Gill (50) and Rahul (100) resumed on day two.

Rahul edged Jayden Seales but the ball sneaked through the gap between the wicket-keeper and first slip to reach the boundary.

Gill charged against Justin Greaves and played a wristy flick over mid-wicket for a four and pulled Johann Layne in the next over for another.

The right-hander hit debutant spinner Khary Pierre for two fours in the same over to put India into the lead en route to a fluent 50.

The India captain then frittered away the start when he was caught in the slip off Roston Chase after playing an ill-advised reverse sweep.

Rahul took a single off Chase to bring up his hundred but the second session got off to a frenetic start that began with his dismissal followed by a flurry of boundaries.

Rahul fell in the first over after play resumed spooning a tossed-up Jomel Warrican delivery to Justin Greaves at short extra-cover.

Jurel pulled Chase for a six to put the pressure back on the visitors and then Jadeja took over.

The all-rounder targeted Warrican and hit the left-arm spinner for two sixes in an over as he raised 108 runs with Jurel by the tea break.

Pierre got his maiden test wicket in the final session when he had Jurel caught behind.

## Alonso Tops Opening Practice for Singapore GP



SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - Aston Martin veteran Fernando Alonso was fastest in first practice for the Singapore Grand Prix, with Ferrari's Charles Leclerc second and Red Bull's Max Verstappen third.

Lewis Hamilton was fourth in the second Ferrari ahead of the McLarens of championship leader Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris.

The first session in Singapore is often exploratory for the teams as the street circuit rubbers in and lap times tumble.

It is also run in daylight, so unrepresentative for qualifying and the race, which both take place under floodlights.

Nevertheless the 45-year-old Alonso was impressive as he used his soft tyres late in the session to register a best lap of 1 min 31.116 sec, 0.150 sec ahead of Leclerc and 0.276 sec clear of Verstappen.

Two-time world champion Alonso, a winner at the Marina Bay Circuit in 2008 with Renault and in 2010 with Ferrari, used all his experience to coax every ounce of speed from his Aston Martin.

His pace was illustrated by the fact he was a massive 1.918 seconds quicker than Aston Martin teammate Lance Stroll in 18th.

McLaren are just 13 points from securing the constructors' championship in Singapore.

But more importantly they need a return to form for drivers' championship leader Piastri, who crashed on the opening lap in Baku last time out.

Norris, second in the championship, won in Singapore last year and a repeat of that result would close the 25-point gap to his McLaren teammate.

## Yamal out for Three Weeks, to Miss Spain World Cup Qualifiers

MADRID (Dispatches) - Lamine Yamal has been ruled out of Spain's World Cup qualifiers against Georgia and Bulgaria this month after suffering a recurrence of his groin injury, Barcelona said.

The 18-year-old winger is expected to be sidelined for up to three weeks after the problem resurfaced following Wednesday's 2-1 loss to Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League.

"The pain reappeared after the match with PSG," Barcelona said on Friday. "The estimated recovery time is two-to-three weeks."

Barcelona made the statement after Yamal had been called up to the national squad, with Spain promptly confirming the news and removing him from their list.

Against PSG, Yamal made his first start since August after missing four games while recovering from a groin injury, which drew the ire of Barcelona coach Hansi Flick, who felt it was made worse by playing in September's World Cup qualifiers.

Spain coach Luis de la Fuente said earlier on Friday that he



had no issue with Flick after his criticism of the national team's handling of the teenager.

"The risk in football and in sports always exists. If he is playing at his club, he is assuming those risks. We are talking about completely normal situations," said De la Fuente about Yamal.

"There is no conflict with Flick. I was simply surprised by those statements because he has been a national team coach and I thought he had that empathy," De la Fuente said after announcing his squad for the upcoming qualifiers.

"You know we have two very important matches; we are playing for World Cup (qualification). It seems like they're in the background, and we're talking about Flick.

"We are playing for the World Cup, that is what really matters. The rest is not important. Everyone said what they said, and that's it."

Yamal's latest injury also casts doubt over his availability for the Clasico against Real Madrid on October 26.

Spain will be without Nico Williams and Dani Carvajal next week as well, while Alvaro Morata has been left out of the squad after a slow start to the season at Como.