

Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Has Stressed That the World Must Stop Brutal Violations of the Law, End Impunity for War Criminals and Genocide, and Hold Accountable Those Who Justify These Crimes

IRAN NEWS

First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref Says That a 12-Day Israeli-Imposed War in June Produced Valuable Achievements, Describing It as “a Battle of Science Against Science”

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Iran Denounces Mistreatment of Sumud Flotilla’s Activists



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Foreign Ministry has strongly condemned the Israeli regime’s sheer mistreatment of hundreds of international activists from the Global Sumud Flotilla, which had sought to break Tel Aviv’s draconian siege of the Gaza Strip.

Spokesman Esmail Baghaei made the remarks in a statement on Saturday after Israeli forces violently detained the activists and transferred them to the regime’s notorious Ktzi’ot Prison that he called a “symbol” of torture and inhumane treatment of Palestinian prisoners.

The official also cited repeated instances of insult against the detainees by far-right Israeli minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who had called the participants “terrorists,” saying the overall aggression “represents yet another sign of the regime’s moral decline.”

According to Baghaei, it was rather the regime’s ill-treatment of the participants that amounted to a “terrorist act.”

On Friday, the Israeli navy intercepted the last vessel that had joined the flotilla, which had set sail from Barcelona late last month on a mission to challenge what human rights groups have condemned as one of the harshest and most inhumane blockades in the world.

Described as the largest maritime effort of its kind in decades, the flotilla had brought together delegations representing at least 44 different countries.

The interception spree was met with far-and-wide global condemnation.

Numerous participants reported threats and harassment by the regime, including climate campaigner Greta Thunberg, who was reportedly physically abused and forced to kiss an Israeli flag after regime forces raided the fleet.

Peace Through Strength Means Surrendering to U.S.



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian defense minister has sharply criticized the U.S. administration over attempts to impose its dictates through the so-called notion of “peace through strength,” warning that it is aggression based on tyranny and means surrender to the United States.

Speaking in an interview with the IRIB news agency in Tehran, Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh denounced Washington’s approach to peace.

“The current U.S. administration, by means of the ‘peace through strength’ idea, is actually trying to coerce other nations into surrender. It does not seek to secure genuine peace at all,” he said.

He argued that the tactic is tantamount to the imposition of unilateral will and application of naked force.

“This means: I possess strength. I have power. Whatever I say, you will get to do. This ultimately brings about submission instead of peace,” the Iranian defense chief pointed out.

He described the concept as conventional and reminiscent of the declaration of a US-led unipolar world order made by former Republican US president George H. W. Bush during a speech in Kuwait in 1991.

Claims Against Iran’s Peaceful Nuclear Program Are Baseless

TEHRAN —President Masoud Pezeshkian reaffirmed that Iran has no intention of developing nuclear weapons, saying such arms are prohibited by the country’s strategic policies and by a religious decree (fatwa) issued by the Supreme Leader. Stressing that Iran has consistently acted within international law and seeks peaceful relations with its neighbors, he dismissed Western allegations about Tehran’s nuclear program as “unfounded.”

In an interview with Fox News on the sidelines of the 80th United Nations General Assembly in New York, Pezeshkian presented Iran’s views on a wide range of issues — from the conflict in Gaza and regional security to the future of the 2015 nuclear accord, relations with the United States, and the role of women in Iranian society.

Pezeshkian voiced support for any diplomatic effort aimed at ending the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, where he said “people are dying of hunger.” He argued that dialogue remains the most effective way to resolve regional disputes and criticized what he called the international community’s failure to restrain Israel’s actions in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria.

Commenting on former U.S. President Donald Trump’s recently unveiled 21-point plan for the Middle East, the Iranian leader said:

“The fact that it calls for halting Israel’s current course is a step forward. The tragedies we witness — children dying from hunger, hospitals destroyed — could have been prevented much earlier.”

Responding to U.S. and Israeli claims that Tehran’s nuclear program is a cover for developing atomic arms, Pezeshkian reiterated:

“The Islamic Republic has never sought nuclear weapons. This is a principled belief of our system, and the Supreme Leader’s fatwa forbids it. We are ready to provide access to all sites so inspectors can verify this.”

He placed the blame for the deterioration of the 2015 nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), on Washington’s 2018 withdrawal from the accord. Pezeshkian noted that Iran had complied with the agreement and remained under full supervision by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) before the United States re-imposed sanctions.

“The U.S. exit undermined trust and pushed us to advance enrichment for our own needs,” he said. “We are ready to return to the JCPOA if our rights under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) are fully respected.”

He emphasized that Iran’s nuclear program serves peaceful purposes such as medical research, agriculture, and industrial development, adding:

“We do not need nuclear weapons and have no intention of building them.”

Pezeshkian condemned the continuation of U.S. sanctions, arguing that they harm ordinary Iranians by restricting access to medicine and limiting trade.

“These sanctions create hidden casualties more devastating than war,” he said. “If the U.S. is



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sincere about preventing nuclear weapons — and we say we do not want them — why tighten sanctions instead of lifting them?”

He accused Israel of destabilizing the Middle East through repeated strikes in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and even against Iranian targets, insisting that Tehran’s responses have been defensive.

“We have not started wars against anyone,” he said. “Those who accuse Iran should provide proof of their claims.”

The Iranian president confirmed that his government remains open to dialogue. He said Tehran had engaged in indirect talks through European intermediaries, but Washington’s rejection of proposed compromises and its push to reinstate UN sanctions have deepened mistrust.

“We never rejected talks,” he said. “But repeated breaches of commitments by the U.S. have convinced many in Iran that

Washington is not genuinely seeking solutions.”

On domestic social issues, Pezeshkian highlighted that several women hold senior posts in his administration. Addressing the debate over mandatory hijab, he said:

“I do not believe in compulsion. Issues such as hijab cannot be resolved by force; they require dialogue and mutual respect.”

He underscored the importance of cultural traditions being respected by all sides and recalled an example of goodwill shown during a previous sports event between Iran and the United States during the holy month of Ramadan.

Pezeshkian said that lasting peace in the Middle East requires addressing the “roots of injustice and displacement” that Palestinians face. He argued that without justice, no political initiative will succeed.

“A state that engages in mass killings and disregards international law is on a path to self-destruction,” he said, referring to Israel. “Coexistence in the region is possible only if it respects human and legal norms.”

Turning to the war in Ukraine, the Iranian president maintained that disputes should be settled within the framework of international law.

“Dialogue is always better than war,” he said, urging all parties to pursue negotiations instead of continued fighting.

Concluding the interview, Pezeshkian emphasized that Iran’s foreign policy is guided by the desire for peaceful coexistence.

“We want to live in peace and dignity with our neighbors and the world,” he said. “If there is honesty on the other side, Iran is ready for cooperation and to be part of global economic progress.”

Pezeshkian’s remarks highlighted Tehran’s consistent position that engagement and dialogue, rather than confrontation, remain the key to resolving disputes over its nuclear program and to achieving peace in the wider Middle East.

Iran’s Space Laboratories Among the Most Advanced in Asia-Pacific

TEHRAN - Iran’s top space research official says the country’s space laboratories are unmatched in the Asia-Pacific region and that Iran is now moving toward achieving independence in satellite navigation systems.

Speaking at Iran’s National Space Day ceremony on Saturday, Vahid Yazdanian, head of the Iranian Space Research Institute, highlighted the importance of research and the role of universities and research centers in developing the country’s space sector.

“The achievements in planning and research at the Iranian Space Agency, in cooperation with universities and research institutions, are no less significant than satellite construction and launches,” Yazdanian said.

“Launches generate excitement and public enthusiasm, but the real progress comes from building a skilled and motivated workforce and fostering a culture that integrates space technologies into everyday life.”

Yazdanian emphasized that the institute works closely with universities and research centers to advance space science and technology and to support infrastructure development.

He noted that some of the research and infrastructure needs in satellite systems are beyond the capacity of the private sector and academic institutions alone.

“We expect the country’s one-ton-class space laboratory to be ready for service by 2028, or even earlier,” he said, adding that the government had invested in the facility through the Space Research Institute because such a project is too large for the private sector.

Referring to the recent launch of the Nahid-2 satellite, Yazdanian reported that the spacecraft has performed well so far.

“The data and indicators we have received, along with the ongoing monitoring process, have been successful. We have previous experience in this area, and the success has been repeated with Nahid-



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2. We hope to move forward with greater stability,” he said.

Yazdanian underscored the role of space applications in critical sectors such as agriculture and water management. “Agricultural resource management, food security, and strategic crop monitoring—like knowing how much wheat we need and how much we have—are only possible through the analysis of remote-sensing satellite imagery,” he explained.

He added that satellite data are crucial for monitoring droughts, water availability, and even dust storms, all of which can be managed more effectively with accurate space-based observations.

He also noted that satellites are essential for maintaining communications in remote and hard-to-reach areas, particularly during crises.

The Iranian space chief revealed that the country has recently started efforts to develop its own satellite navigation constellations, acknowledging existing challenges in the sector.

“The current disruptions we face are due to our lack of domestic navigation capabilities. Many countries are still behind in this field. Japan and the UK have only recently pursued their own navigation constellations. If we had independent systems today, our situation would be different,” he said.

Yazdanian added that the Space Research Institute is leading this effort, stressing the need for comprehensive testing facilities to simulate conditions in space—including vacuum, radiation, pressure, and vibration.

“Such advanced testing platforms are rare in the Asia-Pacific region; perhaps only four or five laboratories have this level of capability,” he noted, emphasizing Iran’s unique position in regional space infrastructure.

Netanyahu Will Never Be Saved

U.S. President Donald Trump recently has unveiled a 20-point plan for an apparent ceasefire in Gaza, which Hamas has conditionally accepted.

Trump announced the plan for ending the Gaza war after meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whom the article calls the “tyrant of Israel.”

The plan states: “Israel will not occupy or annex Gaza or the occupied territories.”

In line with this proposal, the White House released a statement declaring:

“Gaza will become a region free of extremism and terrorism, posing no threat to its neighbors. Furthermore, within 72 hours of Israel’s formal acceptance of the agreement, all captives—both living and deceased—will be returned.”

The plan further stipulates: “After the release of all captives, Israel will free 250 prisoners serving life sentences, in addition to 1,700 prisoners from Gaza who were detained after October 7, 2023.”

The White House emphasized: “The United States will facilitate dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians to reach an agreement on a political horizon for peaceful coexistence and public well-being.”

According to the White House and Trump’s proposal, if both sides agree to the plan, the war will end immediately.

In addition, Trump gave Hamas a deadline until 6 p.m. Washington time on Sunday to accept his ceasefire proposal for Gaza, claiming that the plan could save the lives of the remaining Hamas fighters.

He warned that if this final opportunity for agreement is missed, a “hell” will be unleashed against Hamas, unlike anything ever seen before.

The Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) has delivered its formal, conditional response to Trump’s Gaza proposal to the mediating countries. In other words, Hamas has communicated its position on the 20-point plan through intermediaries.

Hamas expressed support for certain provisions of the proposal but has requested clarification and revisions to vague clauses—such as Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza and the disarmament of Hamas.

According to Qaddoumi, Hamas’s representative in Tehran, who spoke in a news interview, the movement presented its conditional response after consultations with its own leaders, other Palestinian groups, and mediators.

From a review of Trump’s 20-point plan, one can infer that it has two sides of the same coin:

On one side, it is a peace-seeking response to the global media-driven wave of outrage against the Israeli regime, portraying Trump as a supposedly impartial arbiter and champion of peace.

On the other side, it seeks to rescue the severely deteriorating situation of the Israeli regime and Netanyahu, who is deeply mired in internal crises—while creating a staged media confrontation to make it appear as though Netanyahu is being forced to accept the plan.

Regardless of what future this plan and its conditional acceptance by Palestinian fighters, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, may hold for Gaza, it is clear that this maneuver will not save Netanyahu, Trump, the Israeli regime, or their supporters—whose hands are stained with the blood of Gaza’s children, women, and innocents—even if they attempt to decorate Trump with the medal of a “peace-maker.”

Iran Calls for OIC Action to Ban Israel From Int’l Sports



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Minister of Sports and Youth Ahmad Donyamali has called on peers in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to form a united front against the Israeli regime and help ban it from international sports.

In a letter to sports ministers of 57 member states of the OIC, Donyamali said there is a need for setting up a “Unified Islamic Sports Front” to call on the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to suspend the Israeli regime’s presence in international sporting events.

He said in the letter that the Israeli regime has seriously undermined the Olympic Charter and the true spirit of sport through its actions in the occupied Palestine over the past eight decades, and particularly since October 2023, when it launched a genocidal war against the Palestinian people in Gaza.



Iran, Pakistan to Expand Police Diplomacy in Anti-Narcotics Efforts

TEHRAN (ILNA) - The head of Iran's Anti-Narcotics Police announced that the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan will enhance their police diplomacy and accelerate the exchange of information to strengthen joint efforts against drug trafficking. Brigadier General Iraj Kakavand, Chief of the Anti-Narcotics Police of FARAJA, made the remarks following a meeting with Mohammad Khurram Agha, Pakistan's Deputy Interior Minister. Kakavand said the current visit by the Iranian delegation was made at the invitation of the head of Pakistan's Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), expressing gratitude for the "warm hospitality and constructive cooperation" of Pakistani officials.

Tariff Reforms Essential to Boost Iran-Turkey Trade



TEHRAN - Iran and Turkey must revise trade tariffs to unlock the full potential of bilateral commerce, a senior Iranian business leader said during a meeting with Turkish commercial attachés in Tehran.

Hamed Asgari, Vice President for International Affairs at the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), described the current level of economic ties between the two neighbors as "unsatisfactory" and called for new tariff policies and streamlined cooperation to accelerate trade.

Speaking at the meeting, which also included Sama Fakhondehnejad, ICCIMA's Director for European Affairs, Asgari noted that the annual trade potential between Iran and Turkey could reach \$15-20 billion.

"Iran has significant comparative advantages in energy and competitive products for the Turkish market, but these opportunities remain underutilized due to tariff barriers and restrictions. Cement and clinker are prime examples," he said.

The Iranian official emphasized that with support from the Turkish Embassy in Tehran and the revision of tariffs, the two countries could significantly expand bilateral trade.

He also stressed the need for quick, non-bureaucratic links between Iranian and Turkish companies, highlighting opportunities in steel, petrochemicals, and other industrial sectors.

Asgari invited Turkish officials to raise the concerns of their businesses so that "appropriate solutions can be developed."

He also reaffirmed ICCIMA's readiness to send trade delegations to Turkey and to enhance institutional cooperation between the chambers of commerce of both nations.

On the Turkish side, Bilge Dönmez, the new Commercial Attaché at the Turkish Embassy in Tehran, underlined the importance of resolving misunderstandings in trade relations.

Orhan, another Turkish commercial attaché, stressed that removing trade barriers is critical, pointing out that Turkey serves as a gateway for Iran to European markets and that a large Iranian community resides in Turkey.

He also highlighted the potential for mutually beneficial cooperation in oil and energy, adding that chambers of commerce play a key role in this process.

Iran Requests Turkmenistan to Halt Water Extraction From ‘Dosti’ Dam



TEHRAN - Iran has called on Turkmenistan to suspend water withdrawals from the Dosti (Friendship) Dam to help ensure drinking water for the city of Mashhad until the end of the year, a senior Iranian official said.

According to Iran's Water Resources Management Company, Mohammad Javan-Bakht, Iran's Deputy Minister of Energy for Water and Wastewater Affairs, made the appeal during a meeting with Deryashan Kuliye, Deputy Head of Turkmenistan's State Water Management Committee.

Javan-Bakht praised the long-standing constructive cooperation between the two countries in managing the dam but stressed the urgency of the current situation.

"Due to the decline in water resources at the Dosti Dam in recent years, the Ministry of Energy has reserved the dam's water exclusively for supplying drinking water to Mashhad's five million residents," he said.

"We expect the Turkmen side to reduce its withdrawals from the dam to zero so that we can provide water to Mashhad through the end of the year."

Highlighting the deep religious, historical, and cultural ties between Iran and Turkmenistan, Javan-Bakht said such cooperation would not only strengthen neighborly relations but also represent a humanitarian act. He thanked Turkmenistan for its past collaboration in managing the dam and expressed hope for continued joint efforts to address the ongoing drought.

For his part, Kuliye acknowledged the two decades of successful cooperation over the shared use of the dam and affirmed Turkmenistan's understanding of Iran's challenges.

"Turkmenistan deeply understands Iran's situation," he said, pledging to pursue the necessary steps to meet Iran's request.

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Salmas and Chenaran Satellite Stations to Be Operational by Yearend

TEHRAN - Minister of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) announced that the Chabahar satellite launch base is ready to carry out its first satellite launch at the earliest opportunity and expressed hope that the Salmas and Chenaran satellite ground stations will be officially inaugurated by the end of the year.

Speaking on Saturday at a ceremony marking World Space Week, Minister Seyed Sattar Hashemi said:

"By the end of the year, we will be able to share the news of the official inauguration of the Salmas and Chenaran stations with the public."

Hashemi noted that the Chabahar launch site has achieved 93% completion and that its first phase will soon be put into operation.

Highlighting the rapid progress in Iran's satellite infrastructure, he said:

"The synergy and collaboration in this field are truly valuable. One of the areas where we must continue to improve is teamwork. The space industry has made progress in this regard, but it still needs to be strengthened. The reports we receive give us hope for a bright future for our country."

The minister also addressed the naming of Iranian satellites—such as Hodhod, Nahid, Pars, and Mehda—saying:

"These names should reflect a coherent sequence of events and missions. The volume of activity in universities and research institutes is very high, and each name carries its own concept and philosophy, which can evolve over time."

Hashemi praised the achievements of the Iranian Space Research Institute, saying that all subsystems have passed tests step by step.

"For the first time, a message relay and contact were successfully established in the KU band. A text message sent from one station was received at the Qeshm station. This demonstrates our strong potential in space communications, which

we hope will be pursued with a practical, service-oriented approach."

He emphasized that in the current administration:

"Launches must serve the delivery of services. If we focus on providing quality public services, we will gain both divine blessings and public satisfaction."

Reflecting on humanity's long journey of innovation, Hashemi noted that early civilizations were centered around water, later shifting to land, leading to successive industrial revolutions up to the fifth industrial revolution, which he described as the "Revolution of Fire," emphasizing renewable energy.

He warned, however, that industrial progress has also harmed the environment and reduced quality of life:

"We must choose a path that enhances quality of life. We have become a global village thanks to advances in communications, technology, and infrastructure, but we must rethink what we mean by 'the world.' We live on a small planet within the solar system, in the Milky Way, just a point in the infinite universe."

Underscoring the strategic importance of space exploration, the minister said:

"We aim to place our satellites in a 500-kilometer orbit and, in line with the Seventh Development Plan, reach the 36,000-kilometer geostationary orbit to develop communications satellites. Participation in lunar missions is highly valuable, but we must remember that these are only small steps within the vast universe."

Hashemi also pointed to significant domestic achievements in astronomy and space technology, citing the 'Saman-1' platform, which uses an indigenous launch vehicle to reach higher orbits and support communications satellites.

"This bold initiative is highly commendable. Sub-orbital tests have been completed, and the program will continue with determination."

Eight Iranian Villages Await Inclusion in UNWTO Global Network

TEHRAN - The Director-General for Domestic Tourism Development at Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts announced that the results of eight Iranian villages nominated for inclusion in the UN World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) Global Network of Tourism Villages will be announced within the next 10 days.

Mostafa Fatemi told IRNA that nomination files for eight villages in the provinces of Ardabil, Qeshm (Hormozgan), Lorestan, West Azerbaijan, Yazd, Mazandaran, Alborz, and Kurdistan have been submitted to the UN World Tourism Organization. These villages, he said, meet the key criteria set by UNWTO for joining the global network.

"The criteria include the presence of notable tourist attractions, conservation initiatives, social sustainability, economic opportunities for tourism development, and environmental sustainability measures that ensure long-term resilience," Fatemi explained.

"Environmental indicators such as reduced use of plastics, efficient water consumption, and renewable energy use are particularly important. Villages must also have a complete tourism chain — including accommodation, food services, transportation, signage, and other visitor facilities."

Fatemi added that the involvement of women and young people in tourism activities is a key factor in measuring social sustainability. Another criterion is the priority and commitment shown by national and local governments in supporting rural development — including investment in infrastructure such as roads, water supply, electricity, and healthcare.

The Iranian villages under consideration include:

Ardabil Province: Focused on ecotourism in the Sabalan Mountains and the role of nomadic communities.

Soheili Village, Qeshm Island: Recognized for mangrove forest conservation, environmental sustainability, cultural festivals such as



the Camel-Washing Festival, innovative use of fishing boats as overnight accommodations, and food-based tourism.

Hassanlou Village, West Azerbaijan: Known for long-term preservation of an ancient archaeological mound and for establishing a local museum as a tourism initiative.

Fahraj Village, Yazd Province: Highlighted for water resource management, use of qanats (ancient underground canals), greenhouse farming, and water-based sustainable tourism.

Kandolus Village, Mazandaran Province: Distinguished for creating a unique local museum and promoting literary and cultural tourism, turning it into a rural tourism hub.

Baraghan Village, Alborz Province: Noted for local products and traditional ice cream, restoration of an ancient qanat by a local woman entrepreneur, branding of local handicrafts under the name "Goujino," development of eco-lodges, and attracting investment in rural tourism.

Palangan Village, Kurdistan Province: Recognized for its stepped, environment-adapted architecture and revival of historical events such as the "Hezar Daf'e" legend.

Fatemi noted that Iran has participated in the UNWTO Global Network of Tourism Villages for five years, successfully registering the villages of Kandovan and Esfang.

"The main challenge facing rural tourism is infrastructure, especially internet bandwidth," he said.

"Government priority and support are crucial. Over the past year, we have worked to address deficiencies in these villages."

He added that the UNWTO's final announcement will be made during a meeting in Hangzhou, China, in 10 days' time, expressing hope that at least one or two of the Iranian candidates will be included in this year's list.

Reducing Oil Dependence Through Rail Transit Development



TEHRAN - Minister of Roads and Urban Development, Farzaneh Sadegh, emphasized the government's commitment to supporting the private sector, saying that the expansion of the rail transit industry will help reduce the country's reliance on oil revenues.

Speaking on Saturday at a ceremony to sign contracts for the procurement of rail fleet equipment using domestic manufacturing capacity, Sadegh noted that the 14th administration is pursuing "less government intervention and more private sector support."

"With synergy among government bodies, the delegation of responsibilities to provincial governors, and special backing from parliamentarians, we can pave the way for private sector participation — something clearly visible in today's event," she said.

Sadegh highlighted the close cooperation between the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development and the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade (MIMT), stressing that both ministries are working to resolve challenges faced by private companies in the transport sector.

Praising the role of youth and knowledge-based companies, Sadegh singled out MAPNA Group, describing it as "a home to committed specialists whose work strengthens the country."

Referring to three previous rail investment events held this year, the minister said the current initiative is expected to improve passenger rail services by 5% and enhance road transport safety.

Sadegh underlined the strategic importance of rail transport for Iran's geography and identity, adding that despite growing international sanctions, the country continues to showcase its capabilities.

Serious Warning on Inflationary Risks of a Unified Exchange Rate



TEHRAN - The Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) has issued a strong warning about the potential inflationary consequences of moving to a unified exchange rate, effectively stopping a controversial proposal from an economic advisor to the Ministry of Economy.

According to Tasnim News Agency, while high inflation and sluggish production have already strained markets and household budgets, one of the Economy Minister's close advisors recently called for the removal of preferential exchange rates and the full liberalization of the foreign exchange market—a move that experts describe as risky and highly inflationary. They warn that implementing such a policy could trigger another shock to the prices of essential goods and further burden millions of Iranian households.

Ebrahim Souzanji, an advisor to Deputy Minister Ali Madanizadeh at the Ministry of Economy, submitted a formal letter to the president proposing the elimination of preferential exchange rates, replacing the system with a market-based supply-and-demand mechanism, and overhauling the country's currency policies. The proposal was presented under the stated aim of "strengthening the national currency" and "enhancing foreign exchange reserves."

After receiving the proposal, the president's office referred it to the PBO for expert review. In its written response, the organization stated unequivocally that, under current market conditions and the state of the economy, implementing such a policy would lead to severe inflationary and social consequences, and the timing was wholly inappropriate.

The PBO's report warned that liberalizing the exchange rate and removing the existing allocation system—without first establishing strong oversight mechanisms—would drive up the prices of essential goods, increase pressure on low-income groups, and could even distort export incentives. The organization stressed that maintaining certain controlled interventions and limited preferential rates is currently necessary to ensure the supply of critical goods.

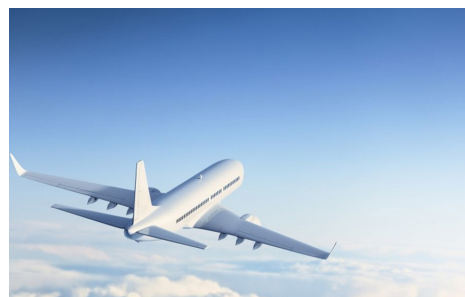
Lithuania Reopens Main Airport After Balloon Scare Halts Flights

VILNIUS (Dispatches) - Lithuania's main airport reopened today after an hours-long closure due to a suspected "series of balloons", the latest such incident to disrupt flights in a European city.

Airports in Germany, Denmark, Norway and Poland have recently suspended flights due to unidentified drones, while Romania and Estonia have pointed the finger at Russia, which has brushed off the allegations.

Vilnius airport said it had received official information at 10:16pm (1916 GMT) Saturday that "air traffic is being temporarily suspended".

"According to our information, the decision was made due to a possible series of balloons heading toward Vilnius Airport," it said on Facebook.



Andrej Babis Wins Czech Parliamentary Election



PRAGUE (Dispatches) - Populist, billionaire and self-proclaimed "Trumpist" Andrej Babis won the Czech parliamentary election Saturday in a political comeback that put the country on a course away from supporting Ukraine and toward Hungary and Slovakia, which have taken a pro-Russian path.

The party of billionaire ex-premier Andrej Babis topped the Czech parliamentary election on Saturday with 99 percent of the vote counted, according to official results.

His ANO (Yes) party, campaigning on pledges of welfare and halting military aid to Ukraine, scored 34.7 percent of the vote in country of 10.9 million people.

The pro-Western coalition of outgoing Prime Minister Petr Fiala followed suit with 23.2 percent of the vote, ahead of its coalition partner STAN with 11.2 percent.

A total of six parties were elected, including the Pirate Party with 8.9 percent, the far-right opposition Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) with 7.8 percent and right-wing newcomers, the Motorists, with 6.8 percent.

A triumphant Babis, a self-proclaimed "Trumpist", was all smiles and hailed the "historic result" as "the absolute peak" of his political career.

"We will definitely lead talks with the SPD and the Motorists and seek a single-party government led by ANO," Babis said.

He also said the government would review a Czech-led international drive to supply artillery shells to Ukraine, launched by Fiala's government, and "discuss it with (Ukrainian) President (Volodymyr) Zelensky" if necessary.

"We are clearly pro-European and pro-NATO," he added to dispel fears he might draw the Czech Republic closer to EU mavericks Hungary and Slovakia, which have refused military aid to Ukraine and oppose sanctions on Russia.

Trump Sends Troops to Chicago as Judge Blocks Portland Deployment



LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - President Donald Trump authorized deployment of troops to Chicago after a federal agent shot an allegedly armed motorist, while a judge blocked the Republican leader's attempt to send the military into Portland, another Democratic-run city.

The escalating crisis across the country pits Trump's increasingly militarised anti-crime and migration crackdown against opposition Democrats who accuse him of an authoritarian power grab.

"President Trump has authorised 300 national guardsmen to protect federal officers and assets" in Chicago, White House spokeswoman Abigail Jackson said in a statement, after weeks of the Republican threatening to send troops to the Midwestern city over the wishes of local leaders.

"President Trump will not turn a blind eye to the lawlessness plaguing American cities."

Portland and Chicago are the latest flashpoints in the Trump administration's rollout of raids, following the deployment of troops to Los Angeles and Washington.

Trump has repeatedly called Portland "war-ravaged" and riddled with violent crime, but in yesterday's court order, US District Judge Karin Immergut wrote "the President's determination was simply untethered to the facts."



CAIRO/GAZA (Dispatches) - Dozens were killed in Israeli strikes on Gaza on Saturday, local health officials said, despite a demand from U.S. President Donald Trump for Israel to stop bombing in response to a declaration by Hamas that it was ready to free hostages under his plan to end the two-year-old war.

With ceasefire talks due to begin in Egypt in the coming week, Trump said on Saturday on his Truth Social platform that Israel had agreed to an "initial withdrawal line" inside Gaza and that "when Hamas confirms, the Ceasefire will be IMMEDIATELY effective."

At least 36 people were killed in bombardments and airstrikes in the devastated Palestinian enclave since Trump pressed Israel to halt its attacks late on Friday.

Eighteen people died in sporadic incidents, while 18 people, including children, were killed and several others wounded in an Israeli strike on a house in the Tuffah neighbourhood in Gaza City, medics said. The attack damaged several buildings nearby.

Israel said it had targeted a Hamas militant who had posed a threat to its troops in the area, and that reports of casualties were under review.

The military "regrets any harm caused to uninvolved civilians and works to mitigate harm to uninvolved civilians as much as possible," it said in a statement.

Hamas said in a statement, referring to the Israeli prime minister, that "the continuation of the occupation's bombing and massacres exposes Netanyahu's lies about reducing military operations against civilians."

Early on Saturday, Trump said he appreciated that Israel had "temporarily stopped the bombing," and he urged Hamas, the Palestinian militant group, to move quickly on his plan "or else all bets will be off."

"I will not tolerate delay, which many think will happen, or any outcome where Gaza poses a threat again. Let's get this done, FAST. Everyone will be treated fairly!" Trump said on Truth Social.

Hamas had drawn a welcoming response from Trump on Friday by saying it accepted certain key parts of his 20-point peace proposal, including ending the war, Israel's withdrawal, and the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian captives.

But the group has left some issues subject to further negotiation, as well as questions unanswered, such as whether it would be willing to disarm, a key demand from Israel to end the war.

Trump posted later on Saturday: "After negotiations, Israel has agreed to the initial withdrawal line, which we have shown to, and shared with, Hamas."

He said that once Hamas agrees to it, a ceasefire would take effect, "the Hostages and Prisoner Exchange will begin, and we will create the conditions for the next phase of withdrawal." He did not elaborate.

There was no immediate confirmation from Israel, which has shown little willingness to significantly pull back its forces. Hamas did not immediately respond to a request for further comment.

Before Trump's post, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said in a televised statement that the first stage of the plan calls for Hamas to free the hostages and for Israeli forces to "redeploy in a way" that they "continue to hold all of the controlling areas deep inside the Strip."

A White House official said Trump was sending his envoys, Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, to Egypt to finalize the technical details of the hostage release and discuss a lasting peace deal.

Egypt will also host delegations from Israel and Hamas, the country's Foreign Ministry said.

Netanyahu said the intention of Israel and the U.S. was to limit the negotiations to a few days.

Netanyahu said he hoped to announce the return of the captives during the Jewish holiday of Sukkot, which lasts from October 6-13, all while the Israeli military remained deep in Gaza.

Hamas would be disarmed and Gaza demilitarized in the second phase of Trump's plan, Netanyahu said, warning that it would happen either politically or militarily.

Trump's plan sees the military eventually withdrawing to Gaza's perimeter but does not lay out any time frame.

The prime minister spoke as tens of thousands took to the streets in Tel Aviv in support of a deal to end the war.

Georgian Police Clash, Detain Protesters

TBILISI (Dispatches) - Georgian riot police used pepper spray and water cannons to drive demonstrators away from the presidential palace and detained five activists on Saturday, as the opposition staged a large demonstration on a day of local elections.

The governing Georgian Dream party said it had clinched victory in every municipality across the South Caucasus country of 3.7 million people in an election boycotted by the two largest opposition blocs.

Shortly before polls closed, a group of demonstrators attempted to force entry to the presidential palace in the capital Tbilisi, a Reuters witness said, after opposition figures called for a "peaceful revolution" against GD, which they accuse of being pro-Russian and authoritarian.

Georgia's pro-Western opposition has been staging protests since October last year, when GD won a parliamentary election that its critics say was fraudulent. The party has rejected accusations of vote-rigging.

Once one of the most pro-Western nations to emerge from the ashes of the Soviet Union, Georgia has had frayed relations with the West since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022.

On Saturday the Health Ministry said 21 members of the security forces and six demonstrators had been injured in clashes in the centre of Tbilisi, according to local media.

Georgia's Rustavi-2 television and Russian state media quoted Deputy Interior Minister Aleksandre Darakhvelidze as saying



the police detained five activists, including the opera singer Paata Burchuladze and two members of the United National Movement, Georgia's largest opposition party.

They are charged with calling for the overthrow of the authorities and face up to nine years in prison, if convicted, Darakhvelidze said.

The government froze accession talks to the European Union soon after last year's vote, abruptly halting a longstanding national goal and triggering large demonstrations that have continued since.

Thousands of protesters gathered on central Freedom Square and Rustaveli Avenue, waving Georgian and EU flags.

Davit Mzhavanadze, who attended the demonstration, said the protests were part of "a deep crisis which is absolutely formed by our pro-Russian and authoritarian government".

"I think this protest will continue until these demands will be responded to properly from our government," he said.

A smaller group of demonstrators marched to the presidential palace and were repelled by police after attempting to break into the building. Some of them then barricaded a nearby street, lighting fires and facing off with riot police.

Georgian Dream, which is widely seen as controlled by founder Bidzina Ivanishvili, the country's richest man and a former prime minister, denies it is pro-Moscow. It says it wants to join the EU while preserving peace with Russia, its huge neighbour to the north.

Sanae Takaichi Set to Be Japan's First Female PM

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Sanae Takaichi is poised to become Japan's first female prime minister, but many of her positions are socially conservative in an often still deeply patriarchal nation.

Takaichi, whose hero is Margaret Thatcher, became head of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party yesterday and will likely take office later this month.

She has promised to appoint a cabinet with "Nordic" levels of women, up from just two under outgoing premier Shigeru Ishiba.

Takaichi, 64, has also said she "hopes to raise awareness" about women's health struggles and spoken candidly about her own experience with menopause.

Despite these gestures, her policy positions on gender place her on the right of an already conservative LDP.

She is against revising a 19th-century law requiring married couples to share the same surname, which overwhelmingly results in women taking their husbands' names.

Takaichi also wants Japan's imperial family to stick to its male-only succession rules, and is "fundamentally opposed" to same-sex marriage.

Yuki Tsuji, a professor specialising in politics and gender at Tokai University, said



Takaichi "has no interest in women's rights or gender equality policies".

"Therefore, it is unlikely that any change will occur in this policy area compared to previous LDP administrations," she told AFP.

Tsuji added the symbolic significance of having a woman as premier is "quite substantial".

But the pressure will be high to achieve results, and if she fails "this could foster negative perceptions of woman prime ministers", Tsuji said.

Yuka, a Tokyo office worker in her 50s, welcomed Takaichi's win.

"We can proudly tell the world Japan will likely have a woman leader," Yuka told AFP.

But she is sceptical that there will be much progress on gender issues under Takaichi. Last year ex-cabin attendant Mitsuko Tottori became boss of Japan Airlines, but hers is a rare success story in the corporate world where hours are long and childcare options are often limited.

Women in Japan held 13.2 percent of management positions in 2021, the lowest among members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.



Chelsea Stun Liverpool; Arsenal Hit Top Spot

LONDON (Dispatches) - Brazilian wonderkid Estevao's first Chelsea goal inflicted a third consecutive defeat on Liverpool, allowing Arsenal to go top of the Premier League after beating West Ham 2-0.

After winning their opening seven games of the season in all competitions, Liverpool have suffered a nightmare week to leave Arne Slot plenty to ponder over the international break.

Injury-hit Chelsea were well worthy of a dramatic 2-1 win at Stamford Bridge to end their three-game winless run in the Premier League.

One-time Liverpool target Moises Caicedo blasted the Blues into a half-time lead with a blistering strike into the top corner on 14 minutes.

Alexander Isak's £125 million move to Liverpool last month broke Caicedo's record as the most expensive Premier League player of all-time.

The Swedish striker is still yet to score a league goal but his deft touch teed up Cody Gakpo to equalise just after the hour mark.

However, Chelsea were not to be denied as Estevao slid in at the far post to meet Marc Cucurella's cross deep into stoppage time, sparking wild celebrations from manager Enzo Maresca who was shown a red card for sprinting down the touchline.

Liverpool now trail Arsenal by one point, while Chelsea edge up to sixth.

In Mikel Arteta's 300th match in charge, Arsenal proved far too strong for the struggling Hammers to further their ambitions of a first Premier League title for 22 years.

Victory came at a cost for Arsenal as captain Martin Odegaard was forced off injured before half-time for the third time this season.

However, the strength in depth now on offer to Arteta has made light of Arsenal's injury troubles.

"We dominated and fully deserved to win this," said Arteta. "To go top of the table after some big fixtures over the last week and some injuries... we were able to respond."

Declan Rice, who left West Ham for £105 million in 2023, ended the visitors' resistance by blasting high into the net on the rebound after Alphonse Areola parried Eberechi Eze's drive.

Bukayo Saka made the points safe midway through the second half from the penalty spot on his 200th Arsenal appearance after Jurrien Timber was brought down by El Hadji Malick Diouf.

Manchester United handed Ruben Amorim some relief with a 2-0 win over Sunderland.

The Portuguese had taken just 34 points from his previous 33 Premier League games in charge, but enjoyed a rare convincing win to give him some breathing space over the international break.

"We were a competitive and adult team today," said Amorim. "We need to do this kind of performance away as well — it's our responsibility to play like this."

Before kick-off Old Trafford fell silent to honour the victims of a terror attack on a Manchester synagogue this week.

Amorim's bold calls with his team selection paid off as goalkeeper Senne Lammens kept a clean sheet on his debut, while Mason Mount justified his place over Matheus Cunha with the opening goal.

Mount eased the home fans' tension with a fine finish from Bryan Mbeumo's cross on eight minutes.

Benjamin Sesko doubled the Red Devils' advantage with a predatory finish from a long throw-in for his first Old Trafford goal since a £74 million move from RB Leipzig.

There was nearly a twist at the end of the half as Sunderland were initially awarded a penalty, only for VAR to intervene due to insufficient contact by Sesko on Trai Hume.

Sinner Shines in Shanghai Opener

SHANGHAI (Dispatches) - World number two Jannik Sinner launched his Shanghai Masters title defense by breezing past Germany's Daniel Altmaier 6-3, 6-3 while Alexander Zverev advanced despite toe trouble.

Sinner, fresh from winning the China Open, broke early in both sets to take control and ease himself comfortably into the third round.

The 49th-ranked Altmaier's best chance came in the eighth game of the first set, but he failed to convert a breakpoint twice, allowing the Italian to hold with an ace.

The second set provided even less opportunity to seriously bother the 24-year-old Wimbledon champion, but afterwards Sinner said it had been more difficult than it looked.

"First match is never easy, especially when you don't have a lot of time to adjust," he said.

"(Altmaier) is a very tough player, very talented... I just tried to stay mentally in a good point," he added.

"When I broke him twice very early in the set it gave me the confidence to serve the match out, so I'm very happy."

Sinner's path to retaining the title has been made easier by the withdrawal of great rival Carlos Alcaraz, who dropped out last



minute to rest.

The Italian's next match is today against the Netherlands' Tallon Griekspoor.

Four-time Shanghai champion Novak Djokovic will take to the court again today as well, facing Germany's 150th-ranked Yannick Hanfmann.

The tournament lost another top-10 player as Karen Khachanov was defeated by China's Shang Juncheng 7-6 (7/3), 6-3.

Shang, ranked 237th after slipping down the rankings due to injury, was egged on by an increasingly raucous crowd as ninth seed Khachanov flagged.

Shang broke in the eighth game of the second set with a backhand.

"I think I played well on the whole but I think everyone (in the crowd) must have put a lot of pressure on him," the 20-year-old Shang laughed.

World number three Zverev overcame an injury to his big toe to book his place in the third round, beating France's Valentin Royer 6-4, 6-4.

Furious Verstappen Loses Pole to Brilliant Russell

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - George Russell hailed taking an "amazing" pole position ahead of Red Bull's Max Verstappen for the Singapore Grand Prix, as the McLarens were outpaced around the Marina Bay Circuit.

Championship leader Oscar Piastri will start on the second row after coming third, four tenths of a second adrift of Russell, while his McLaren teammate Lando Norris was only fifth.

Russell's blistering Q3 lap of 1min 29.158sec was almost two tenths clear of Verstappen.

"Amazing to be on pole position," said Russell, who had limited practice on Friday after crashing in the second session.

"Yesterday was a very challenging day for many different reasons but good to come back and get a result."

Verstappen complained he would have been closer to Russell but was hampered near the end of his final flying lap by a slowing Norris.

Verstappen's engineer remarked on team radio, without naming Norris: "You can thank your mate for that. Hard luck."

The four-time world champion was fuming in his post-



session TV interview.

"That's what happens when there's a car just cruising two seconds in front," Verstappen said.

"That's noted," he warned. "It will be remembered as well."

"I'm disappointed to not be first, but for us this weekend so far has been really good."

Russell's Mercedes teammate Kimi Antonelli was fourth to split the two McLarens.

"A long sweaty race tomorrow but I knew there was potential in the car," added Russell.

"Kimi was doing an amazing job all weekend."

Verstappen won the previous two grands prix, in Monza and Baku, and is challenging the season-long dominance of the McLarens at the top of the standings.

He now has a chance of a maiden victory in Singapore that would keep him in the hunt for a fifth consecutive world title, having closed the gap to Piastri to 69 points and to 44 points on Norris.

"I just don't think we had the pace tonight, which is a little bit of a surprise for us," Piastri told reporters.

Vinicius, Mbappe Help Ruthless Real Reclaim Top Spot



MADRID (Dispatches) - Vinicius Junior fired Real Madrid to the top of La Liga with a brace in a 3-1 win over Villarreal, while Kylian Mbappe was also on target.

Los Blancos moved two points clear of champions Barcelona, who visit Sevilla today, as they bounced back from last week's derby drubbing.

Having returned from their long midweek trip to Kazakhstan, where they beat Kairat in the Champions League, Madrid turned their focus back to domestic matters.

Thrashed 5-2 by city rivals Atletico Madrid last weekend, Xabi Alonso's side had plenty to prove against a strong Villarreal team, who are third.

"I played very well and I want to continue like this, keeping this confidence and doing even more," Vinicius told Real Madrid TV.

"We have good feelings... when we come back (from the international break) we have big games and we need confidence," added Vinicius.

The winger did not start the season well but has found form in recent outings.

"Vini had a very good game and he was decisive, I'm very happy for him," Alonso told reporters.

Alonso brought Fede Valverde back into the team, playing him at right-back in the absence of injured duo Dani Carvajal and Trent Alexander-Arnold.

Madrid had the better of a slow-paced first half at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Teenage attacker Franco Mastantuono might have sent Los Blancos ahead but Villarreal defender Renato Veiga blocked his shot after Mbappe cut the ball back to him.

At the other end, Thibaut Courtois saved superbly from Tani Oluwaseyi, who snuck in behind the centre-backs but could not beat Madrid's Belgian goalkeeper.

Marsh Leads by Example as Australia Win T20 Series v New Zealand



DUBAI (Dispatches) - Captain Mitchell Marsh produced a blistering unbeaten 103 off 52 balls to secure Australia's series-clinching three-wicket victory in the third and final T20 International against New Zealand in Mount Maunganui.

The 33-year-old struck seven sixes in his maiden hundred in T20 Internationals as Australia overcame a top-order wobble and chased down a 157-run target with two overs to spare to complete a 2-0 series victory.

Australia, who won the opener by six wickets, were assured of retaining the Chappell-Hadlee trophy after the second match was washed out.

Put into bat, New Zealand posted a middling 156-9, overcoming a jittery start after Josh Hazlewood removed Devon Conway and Tim Robinson inside five overs.

Opener Tim Seifert (48) topscored for New Zealand, while skipper Michael Bracewell (26) and Jimmy Neesham (25) chipped in with cameos to take New Zealand past the 150-mark.

Sean Abbott (3-25) was pick of the Australian bowlers, and Xavier Bartlett claimed two wickets.

New Zealand's bowlers fought tooth and nail with Neesham (4-26) wrecking Australia's top order to inject new drama into the match.

Five of Australia top six batters fell for single digit scores but player-of-the-match Marsh needed only 50 balls to bring up his hundred.

"It was a little bit of pressure in the end but it's obviously great to win an away series in New Zealand," said Marsh, who was also adjudged player-of-tournament.