

Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad Said That Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) Members had Welcomed Iran's Proposal to Turn the Group Into an Organization Like the OPEC Bloc of Oil-Exporting Countries

IRAN NEWS

Iran Has Started Issuing Debit Cards for Tourists Visiting the Country Amid Efforts to Facilitate Rial Transactions for Foreigners and to Have Better Control Over Hard Currency Resources Circulating in the Market

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Speaker: Our Key Task Is to Remove Obstacles to a People-Centered Economy



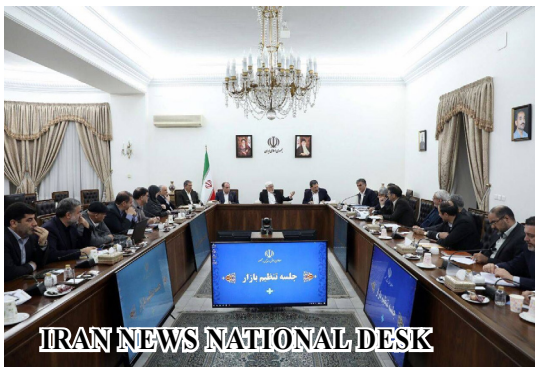
TEHRAN – Majlis Speaker, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, emphasized the necessity of facilitating a people-centered economy, stating that the most important task for lawmakers is to “remove obstacles from the path of economic democratization.”

Speaking at the International Conference on Investment and Financing in the Oil, Gas, and Petrochemical Industries on Monday, Qalibaf reflected on the legislative achievements of the 11th Parliament. He noted that 21 essential laws had been enacted during this term, although some implementing regulations remain pending. “Certain measures have not been studied sufficiently within the private sector or academic circles,” he added.

One of the significant laws, according to Qalibaf, was the Central Bank legislation aimed at curbing banks’ excessive liquidity creation and inflationary pressures. He further highlighted that in the current parliamentary term, efforts are underway to address conflicting and outdated regulations, with the goal of eliminating nearly two-thirds of the country’s 12,524 existing laws.

He stressed that approximately 80 percent of Iran’s economy remains state-controlled. “We must remove obstacles in the way of a people-centered economy. According to the founding views of Imam Khomeini, government intervention in the economy is religiously prohibited unless it addresses unmet needs that the private sector cannot fulfill,” he said.

VP Urges Officials Not to Air Disputes Publicly, Focus on People’s Livelihoods



TEHRAN - First Vice President, Mohammad Reza Aref, emphasized that “disheartening the public is not an art” and called on officials not to discuss internal disputes through public platforms. Speaking at a market regulation meeting on Sunday, Aref highlighted the enemy’s strategy of psychological operations against the Iranian people, noting that after failing to achieve success in the 12-day military conflict, adversaries shifted to economic and psychological warfare. He warned that misleading and provocative analyses from abroad are being repeated domestically.

Aref stressed the need for vigilance from regulatory and economic institutions, urging all authorities to avoid giving adversaries any pretext while ensuring citizens’ livelihoods are protected. He underscored that disputes among officials should be resolved internally in meetings rather than broadcast publicly, emphasizing that service to the people and securing their daily needs must be the top priority. “All institutions must devote their efforts to addressing the public’s economic concerns,” he added.

Referring to media reports on market conditions, Aref stated that “disheartening the public is not an art.” He urged ministers to be more attentive to emerging problems, resolving issues within their organizations promptly to prevent them from escalating into public concerns.

U.S. and Some Allies Are the Biggest Violators of the UN Charter

TEHRAN - The Iranian Foreign Ministry has accused the United States and some of its allies of being the greatest violators of the United Nations Charter, calling for a return to the principles of international law and justice. The remarks were made by Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei during a ceremony marking the 80th anniversary of the adoption of the UN Charter.

Speaking at the event, Baqaei highlighted the dual role of the United Nations as both a promoter of global peace, development, and welfare, and as a reminder of humanity’s historical suffering. “We have gathered today on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the UN Charter to acknowledge the organization’s achievements, while also addressing the abnormal conditions that threaten the very gains humanity has made. This process, if left unchecked, could endanger all human accomplishments,” he said.

Baqaei stressed that respect for the rights of nations is a fundamental principle that requires rejecting any foreign interference in the domestic affairs of sovereign states. “Unfortunately, the objectives of the UN Charter have repeatedly been violated or misused by parties unable to free themselves from the illusion of superiority. The world today faces the nightmare of endless wars, and human dignity is increasingly sacrificed to political agendas,” he said.

The spokesperson criticized powerful states for frequently breaching international law and human rights while imposing their policies over established rules. “The foundation of unilateralism lies in fabricated rules that powerful actors substitute for the principles and laws of the international system,” he added.

Highlighting the vulnerability of the UN Charter’s principles, Baqaei specifically pointed



Photo: Mehrdad Taheri

to the prohibition of the use of force, noting that it has never been as exposed to violation and pressure as it is today. “The United States and some of its allies are the largest violators of the UN Charter. Over the past two years, coinciding with what has been described as historical genocide in Palestine, Israel has carried out attacks on regional countries, often with the tacit support of certain states and powers, effectively granting impunity to these actions,” he said.

Baqaei also condemned the United States’ threats in the Caribbean region as unacceptable, reaffirming Iran’s consistent commitment to peace and justice. He recalled that both World Wars originated in the West but affected countries worldwide, including Iran, which suffered as a result. “Iran has always acted responsibly within the UN system over the past eight decades. Despite biases within the Security Council, we have never torn up the UN Charter, dismissed the UN as ineffective, or labeled its Secretary-General as undesirable,” he said.

He called on the international community not to retreat in the face of injustice, emphasizing that belief in justice must be accompanied by action. “On this anniversary, let us not merely focus on ideals; we must commit to their realization,” he urged.

In closing, Baqaei expressed gratitude to UN staff member Mr. Presner for four years of dedicated service, praising his professional collaboration in advancing the UN’s mission. The 80th anniversary ceremony underscores Iran’s long-standing perspective that while the UN has achieved significant progress in promoting global peace and development, the organization must return to its founding principles to address contemporary threats, including wars, human rights violations, and unilateral actions by powerful states.

Hezbollah Not Merely a Military Force But Integrated Strategic Project

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Hezbollah Secretary-General Sheikh Naim Qassem says the movement is far more than an armed group, describing it as an “integrated strategic project” that addresses Lebanon’s defense as well as its social and economic needs.

In an interview with Al-Manar TV aired on Sunday, Sheikh Qassem said resistance for Hezbollah is not a temporary tactic or a standalone military option but an “integrated way of life” embedded in the organization’s identity.

“We do not tire, and the party’s journey is strong and firm, and we cannot resort to surrender just because of a feeling of exhaustion. Instead, we continue to defend and stand firm,” he said, highlighting the religious and ethical commitment that animates the movement.

He stressed that the spirit of martyrdom permeates the group, from front-line fighters to the families who have borne heavy sacrifices. “The characteristic of the martyrdom-seeker belongs to every individual in the party, and it means facing difficulties and sacrificing everything precious to achieve the goal, no matter how difficult the path,” he said.

Reflecting on last year’s confrontation with the Israeli regime, Sheikh Qassem praised the movement’s resilience and defended the decision to support Gaza as correct, a choice he said would be taken again if circumstances repeated.

He described the fighters on the front lines as exemplars of sacrifice who “fought until their last breath.”

He said that hundreds of resisters halted the advance of more than 75,000 Israeli soldiers, and that that steadfastness prevented Israeli forces from reaching the Litani River, penetrating toward Beirut, or achieving their military objectives in Lebanon.

Sheikh Qassem also pointed to the role of Hezbollah’s leadership in bolstering fighters’ morale, saying the martyrdom of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah gave combatants “additional momentum” that reinforced their resilience and self-sacrifice.

Addressing a high-profile operation that targeted the home of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Sheikh Qassem said it was carried out on the basis of “precise intelligence work and a clear political decision,” comparable, he added, to the targeting of Tel Aviv with resistance rockets.

He praised the military command’s discipline throughout the operations and warned that operations could have continued had the confrontation persisted.

Responding to rumors that Iran led the battle for Hezbollah, he rejected them and emphasized that



Hezbollah’s achievements were the product of the group’s collective effort and continuous coordination between its political and military leadership.

He acknowledged that while Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, offered “various forms of support” and closely followed the battle’s needs, “there was not any direct interference in leading the war itself.”

Sheikh Qassem described the “Owners of Might” battle as a “qualitative shift to a new phase” in tactics, leadership and public engagement.

He said the accumulated power built by the resistance from 2006 to 2023 formed the foundation for deterrence against the occupation and that tactics and presentation methods have evolved accordingly.

He underscored the centrality of popular backing in Hezbollah’s resilience.

“Through you, the journey becomes stronger, and you are an integral part of the resistance and its victories,” he declared.

He pointed to mass public support and the cultivation of new generations through scouts as the “living image of the public’s will and the making of the resistance’s future.”

Sheikh Qassem asserted that Hezbollah does not initiate war but takes the position of legitimate defense against an enemy that seeks to annihilate the people and occupy the land.

He warned that Israel, if left unchallenged, would expand and dominate, threatening the future of coming generations.

“We are not the ones leading our people toward bad choices, but toward great choices that preserve dignity and establish a better future,” he said, arguing that resistance is the necessary option to defend land, people and national dignity.

“We say before the whole world that we will remain a resistance, even if we are left with only our fingernails or a stick, and we will not stop,” he added, reaffirming Hezbollah’s commitment to sustained deterrence.

He warned that even if Israeli leaders contemplate a large-scale war, their objectives “will not be achieved” because the resistance has built a “fortress of power” since 2006.

Sheikh Qassem called on Israeli leaders to adhere to the existing ceasefire and said Hezbollah remains bound by Lebanon’s official agreements and ready to defend the country.

He also criticized the Lebanese state for failing to act against repeated Israeli violations.

“Ten months have passed since the agreement, and the state has not acted. It must pressure, shout, and take responsibility; this is a public experiment for everyone to see.”

Iran Records \$26b in Non-Oil Exports in H1 of Year



TEHRAN - Iran’s non-oil exports reached a total of \$26 billion during the first half of the current year, marking a significant milestone in the country’s efforts to boost its trade beyond petroleum, according to the head of the Trade Promotion Organization’s Commercial Attachés Department.

Mohammad Rajab Nejad announced the figures during a meeting with Iran’s commercial attachés serving in various countries and local business representatives in Zanzibar province. He highlighted the revival of the Supreme Council for Non-Oil Exports and the establishment of a barter committee this year as part of the government’s strategic initiatives to facilitate trade.

“Government officials and business operators can submit their export-related challenges and concerns to the provincial ministries of industry, mining, and trade (IMT), which will forward them to the council’s secretariat. These issues are then reviewed and approved in sessions with the First Vice President,” Rajab Nejad explained.

He emphasized three main strategies of the Trade Promotion Organization: facilitating exports, promoting free trade, and encouraging an export-oriented economy. “The development of non-oil exports remains the primary driver of Iran’s economic growth, and exporters serve as the essential link connecting Iran to global markets,” he added.

According to Rajab Nejad, last year Iran achieved \$58 billion in non-oil exports, and with \$26 billion recorded in the first six months of this year, officials are optimistic that a positive growth trend will continue through year-end.

The Trade Promotion Organization has also introduced the concept of an “Export Week,” a new initiative aimed at enhancing trade diplomacy. During the event, meetings were held with members of parliament, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and economic stakeholders to strengthen Iran’s trade relations and discuss export challenges.

Iran Denies Request to Purchase Russia’s S-400 Defense System



TEHRAN - The spokesperson for Iran’s Parliamentary Commission on National Security and Foreign Policy has announced that Iran has made no request to purchase the Russian S-400 air defense system, emphasizing instead Tehran’s commitment to expanding its strategic relations with Moscow.

Speaking to reporters following a session of the parliamentary commission, Ebrahim Rezaei detailed the key discussions held during the meeting. He explained that the first part of the session focused on evaluating the implementation of Iran’s Seventh Development Plan, while the second section was devoted to reviewing the Comprehensive Border Security Plan, attended by officials and representatives from various institutions. Several articles of the plan were approved during the meeting.

In the final portion of the session, Kazem Jalali, Iran’s ambassador to Russia, delivered an extensive report on the latest developments in Iran–Russia relations, particularly over recent months. Jalali answered lawmakers’ questions and provided insights into ongoing cooperation between the two nations.

Rezaei quoted Ambassador Jalali as saying that Russia is a major and powerful neighbor of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and that Tehran seeks to maintain and enhance productive ties with Moscow. He added that Russian officials also emphasize their opposition to unilateralism in international relations, a stance Iran shares.

IRAN NEWS



Vital Role of Rail Transport in Achieving Iran–Turkey \$30b Trade Target

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (RAI) has emphasized the crucial role of rail transport in realizing the \$30 billion trade target set by the presidents of Iran and Turkey. Jabarali Zakeri met with Ufuk Yalçın, CEO of the Turkish State Railways Transport Company, on the sidelines of the 36th meeting of the UIC Regional Assembly for the Middle East (UIC RAME) in Istanbul. The talks focused on increasing freight and passenger exchanges between the two nations and facilitating cross-border rail operations.

No Option But to Replace Copper Cables With Fiber Optics



TEHRAN - Iran's telecommunications sector is entering a major transformation as the country prepares to phase out its century-old copper cable network in favor of fiber-optic infrastructure. Mohammad Jafarpour, Managing Director of the Telecommunication Company of Iran (TCI), said the shift is unavoidable given the growing need for fast and reliable internet in the age of artificial intelligence and digital communication.

Speaking at the National Telecommunications Conference in Tehran under the theme "United Voice for the Development of Communications," Jafarpour said modern life depends on high-speed, secure internet. "From households to healthcare and industry, everyone now relies on strong digital connectivity," he noted.

Jafarpour explained that copper cables, introduced nearly a century ago, can no longer meet current demand. "Over time, we've stretched the copper network to its limits. Like many countries, we must now migrate to fiber optics," he said.

Iran began rolling out fiber in 2016, yet only 8 percent of subscribers currently use it. "Fiber penetration is a key measure of development," Jafarpour added, calling the migration a national priority.

Currently, 80 percent of internet traffic in Iran relies on mobile networks — an imbalance TCI aims to fix by strengthening fixed broadband. Partnering with the Ministry of ICT, the company has launched a five-year national project to completely replace copper with fiber across the country. "This upgrade will modernize Iran's communications backbone," he said.

With fiber connections growing by 10,000 new users weekly, Jafarpour said TCI has been forced to import modems to meet demand. The goal is to reach 50,000 connections per week, prompting a call for domestic manufacturers to boost output.

"We are ready to pre-purchase every modem produced locally and even guarantee the market," he said, emphasizing that cooperation between operators, producers, and consumers makes the initiative both strategic and sustainable.

Jafarpour highlighted that fiber technology will boost internet speeds from around 16 Mbps under VDSL to 1 Gbps, easing pressure on mobile networks and enhancing service quality.

He added that expanding fixed broadband could raise the digital economy's share of GDP to over 10 percent. "The SWAP Project — replacing worn-out access points — is not just a telecom upgrade; it's an economic driver," he said.

Heart Attacks Account for 24% of Deaths in Iran



TEHRAN - Heart attacks are responsible for nearly one in every four deaths in Iran, according to Dr. Nasser Malekpour, head of the Center for Transplant Management and Disease Treatment at the Ministry of Health's Treatment Affairs Department.

Speaking at a national conference of deputy health directors from medical universities across the country, Dr. Malekpour emphasized that cardiovascular diseases remain the leading cause of death worldwide, accounting for roughly one-third of all fatalities. "In Iran, 46 percent of total deaths are caused by cardiovascular diseases, with heart attacks representing the largest share at 24 percent," he said. "Unfortunately, due to demographic and social factors, this trend continues to rise."

He noted that despite the launch of the National Heart Attack Management Program in 2017–2018, which aimed to equip hospitals and provide financial support through the "247 Program," the country still falls short of its goals. He called for constructive feedback and new proposals to help achieve the program's scientific and operational targets.

National data show that the average age of heart attack onset in Iran is estimated between 60 and 70 years. However, Dr. Malekpour warned that the age of incidence has been decreasing in recent years.

Tehran, Tokyo Expand Trade Cooperation With Focus on Health and Food Industries

TEHRAN - Iran and Japan are exploring new avenues to strengthen bilateral trade ties by focusing on non-sanctioned sectors such as healthcare, agriculture, and the food industry. During a recent meeting between Samad Hassanzadeh, President of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), and Tsukada Tamaki, Japan's Ambassador to Tehran, both sides underscored their commitment to revitalizing cooperation through practical and sustainable partnerships.

At the meeting held in Tehran, Hassanzadeh emphasized that despite the limitations imposed by international sanctions, Iran and Japan can still maintain and expand cooperation in areas unaffected by restrictions. "Japan has remarkable experience and advanced technologies in health and environmental sustainability," he noted, suggesting collaboration in pharmaceuticals, hospital construction, and the food industry.

He added that ICCIMA has conducted detailed research on potential areas for bilateral expansion and is ready to deepen relations in these sectors.

The ICCIMA president also highlighted the potential for joint investment and export partnerships in food industries, aquaculture, and agricultural products, noting Iran's expertise as a major producer of traditional Persian carpets. "Iranian handmade carpets, woven with fine wool, silk, and natural dyes, are world-renowned for their quality and durability," he said. "Unfortunately, countries like Pakistan, Turkey, and India have been marketing imitation Persian carpets, but they lack the authenticity of Iranian craftsmanship. We are eager to cooperate with Japan in this industry."

Hassanzadeh drew attention to Iranians' long-standing trust in Japanese automotive technology, proposing joint ventures for the local production of auto parts. "Many of the so-called Japanese car parts in Iran are currently imported from other countries," he remarked. "We can collaborate directly with Japan to ensure authenticity and quality."

He also discussed Iran's agricultural progress, especially in greenhouse farming, and pointed out that Iran needs advanced Japanese technology in both agriculture and medical equipment. "Iranian consumers have a strong confidence in Japanese-made products," Hassanzadeh said.

Finally, he invited Japanese companies to participate in Iran's planned Arvand River dredging project in Khuzestan Province, a waterway shared by Iran and Iraq, to improve navigation and trade logistics.

Ambassador Tsukada Tamaki welcomed these initiatives, calling the meeting "a positive sign" despite global political tensions. He noted recent political shifts in Tokyo, including changes in Japan's prime minister and ministers of foreign affairs and economy, and said these leaders have a deeper understanding of Iran and the Middle East.

"Japan is interested in working with Iran in non-sanctioned sectors such as technology and human resources," the ambassador stated. He acknowledged Iran's regional leadership in nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, and human resource training, adding that Japan values these strengths.

Tamaki also extended an invitation for Iranian engineers and technology experts to work in Japan, noting the country's need for skilled professionals in emerging tech



industries. "We want to solve people's problems through innovation rather than taxation," he explained. "There are strong opportunities for Iranian engineers to contribute in Japan."

Hossein Salahvarzi, President of the Iran-Japan Joint Chamber of Commerce, presented a report on the Iranian delegation's recent visit to Expo Osaka, where Iranian representatives held meetings with several Japanese companies and associations.

Salahvarzi emphasized the positive image of Japan among Iranians and the chamber's determination to focus on innovative sectors despite sanctions. "We aim to use Japan's expertise in energy efficiency, clean energy, and sustainable development," he said.

"In healthcare, Japan's medical equipment is highly advanced, while Iran's pharmaceutical industry is strong. We propose a joint hospital project, particularly for children or patients with special medical needs."

In another part of the meeting, Yamada, a representative of Marubeni Corporation, one of Japan's oldest trading companies, discussed redefining the commercial framework for bilateral cooperation. Marubeni, which established its Iran branch 70 years ago and has operated in oil, gas, and petrochemical sectors, now seeks to design a new model for modern trade relations.

Yamada stressed the need for innovation in agricultural logistics and food production, highlighting the aging farmer population in Iran—where the average age is around 50—as a challenge to productivity and market competitiveness. He suggested Iran and Japan work together on agricultural logistics and youth engagement.

The Japanese representative also pointed out that Japan faces a shortage of engineers, while Iran has a large pool of skilled professionals—making mutual collaboration in information technology and engineering highly feasible.

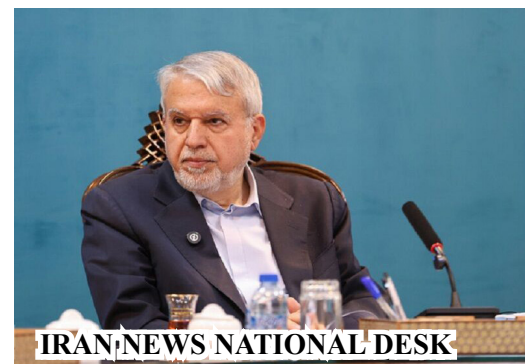
Yamada further proposed the establishment of a joint Iran-Japan certification center for Persian carpets to verify authenticity, as counterfeit carpets continue to flood international markets under the label of "Persian rugs."

Bahram Shakouri, Vice President of the Iran-Japan Joint Chamber and a mining entrepreneur, described the relationship between the two nations as "family-like and unbreakable." He proposed creating an innovation center within ICCIMA for cooperation in artificial intelligence and digital marketing, to train Iranian managers in AI-driven commerce.

Highlighting Iran's rich mineral reserves—ranking fifth globally—Shakouri mentioned significant resources of copper, gold, lithium, and decorative stones. "Nearly all mining machinery in Iran comes from Japanese brands and has an average lifespan of 20 years," he explained. "We propose to renovate and repair 15,000 mining machines using original Japanese parts."

He also emphasized the global shift toward environmental sustainability and carbon reduction, suggesting collaboration on green technologies. "Japan's achievements in reducing carbon emissions can be adapted for Iran," he said. "Such cooperation is not subject to sanctions and supports both environmental protection and technological advancement."

No Threat to Persepolis or Pasargadae Sites



TEHRAN - Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts has firmly dismissed recent rumors suggesting that the World Heritage Sites of Persepolis and Pasargadae are under threat, emphasizing that the situation at both locations is "completely stable" and that no warnings have been issued by UNESCO or any international body.

Minister Seyed Reza Salehi-Amiri made the remarks on the sidelines of a joint meeting with Abdolkarim Hosseinzadeh, the Vice President for Rural and Deprived Areas. Responding to questions about claims circulating online regarding potential risks to Persepolis, Salehi-Amiri stated that "if there were the slightest threat to these world heritage sites, it would be officially investigated and communicated by the Ministry."

The minister added that he personally visited Fars Province and confirmed that "no new developments or disturbances" have occurred in or around the Persepolis archaeological complex. "The situation is completely stable compared to previous years," he said.

Salehi-Amiri highlighted that his ministry maintains continuous field monitoring of both sites. "In recent days, I have spoken several times with the Director-General of Cultural Heritage in Fars Province, and we even held a meeting in Tehran yesterday. Based on the official reports, there has been no unauthorized construction or activity that could pose a threat to Persepolis or Pasargadae," he explained.

He also clarified that, to date, no correspondence, warning, or report has been received from UNESCO or any international authority regarding these sites. "This fact alone proves that the claims circulating in some media are baseless and lack any credible documentation," he said.

Underscoring the importance of relying on verified information, Salehi-Amiri stressed that any genuine threat to a UNESCO-listed site would be formally communicated through established channels. "When there is no such correspondence or official alert, it is clear that these rumors stem from misinformation or misunderstanding of local realities," he added.

Iran Requires €55b in Investment to Develop Mining Sector



TEHRAN - Iran's mining sector needs around €55 billion in new investment to achieve the 13% growth target outlined in the country's Seventh Development Plan, according to Mohammad Reza Bahraman, President of the Iran Mine House.

Speaking at a press conference ahead of the 19th Iran ConMine Exhibition—focused on mining, mineral industries, machinery, and related technologies—Bahraman emphasized the importance of joint investment with neighboring countries to drive the sector forward.

"To ensure our survival and growth, we must identify new markets, and the government should stand alongside the private sector so that policy and economy move in tandem," he said.

Bahraman noted that although private sectors in many other countries are also facing challenges, they remain active. "Iran is a supplier of raw materials to many nations, so we should fully utilize the potential of free trade with Eurasian countries," he added.

He acknowledged that international sanctions have limited Iran's ability to attract foreign capital, but stressed that the country must continue to support its mining industry under current conditions. "If we were not under sanctions, Iran could have been among the top destinations for foreign investment," he said.

Referring to what he called a 'mining revolution', Bahraman pointed out that many countries are now investing heavily in rare elements and mineral resources. "We must also take advantage of our domestic capacities and introduce Iran's mineral potential to the world," he urged.

Iran, Pakistan to Serve as Key Transit Route for China–Europe Trade Corridor

TEHRAN - Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development, Farzaneh Sadegh, announced that Pakistan will act as a transit bridge between China and Iran, with both countries playing a pivotal role in connecting Chinese freight to Europe.

Speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony for the six-lane expansion of the Saveh–Salafchegan Expressway, a project valued at 120 trillion rials (12 hemats), the minister emphasized the growing importance of Iran's transportation diplomacy and regional connectivity.

Highlighting the national and international importance of the new 65-kilometer highway segment, Sadegh said the project is not limited to the provinces of Qom and Markazi. "This is not just a regional development project; it is a national and international corridor that will strengthen Iran's strategic transport links," she explained.

She pointed out that the administration's economic diplomacy, spearheaded by President Masoud Pezeshkian, places special emphasis on expanding trade with neighboring countries, with the transport sector playing a central role. "In recent weeks, we held high-level meetings in Azerbaijan and Pakistan to discuss ways of deepening transportation and trade cooperation," she added.

According to Sadegh, a trilateral meeting between Iran, Russia, and Azerbaijan was recently held in Baku, where important agreements were reached. "We reached consensus on cargo insurance and freight guarantees for the missing link of the Rasht–Astara railway, and an executive contract between Iran and Russia will soon be signed," she said. "This will accelerate the completion of the Rasht–Astara rail segment, a vital piece of the International North–South Transport Corridor."

Turning to her visit to Pakistan for a ministerial summit of



neighboring transport ministers, Sadegh revealed that the meeting produced three key outcomes. Among them, the most significant was the decision for Iran to serve as a gateway for trade between Eurasia, the Caucasus, and Russia via Azerbaijan. At the same time, Pakistan will function as an intermediary between China and Iran, ensuring that Chinese goods can be transported efficiently to Europe through this emerging corridor.

"The common vision between Iran and Pakistan," she said, "is to create a seamless east-west trade route connecting China's industrial centers to European markets via Iran's rail and highway networks."

Minister Sadegh reaffirmed that expanding Iran's expressway and rail networks is central to boosting trade with regional partners. "We are grateful that despite sanctions and external constraints, our determination for progress remains unwavering. Challenges have only strengthened our unity and collective will," she remarked.

She emphasized that infrastructure expansion — particularly highways and railroads — will help Iran realize its strategic goal of becoming a transit hub connecting Asia to Europe.

Addressing the ongoing national housing program, Sadegh criticized previous administrations for making unrealistic promises to citizens. "In the past, people were promised housing units without the availability of land, facilities, or basic infrastructure such as water and electricity," she said. "There were even lotteries for housing units that didn't have land or construction permits."

She assured that the current government is taking a practical, evidence-based approach, ensuring that all land allocated for housing projects is properly prepared before delivery. "We will not hand over unprepared land. Every project we promise will be backed by real, operational readiness," she stressed.

U.S. Warplane, Helicopter Crash in South China Sea

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Two U.S. Navy aircraft crashed into the South China Sea in separate incidents yesterday, officials said, with no fatalities reported.

The first crash involved an MH-60R Sea Hawk helicopter, which “went down in the waters of the South China Sea while conducting routine operations from the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz,” according to a statement from the US Navy’s Pacific Fleet.

All three crew members aboard the helicopter were recovered by search and rescue teams, the statement said. A half-hour later, according to the Navy, a Boeing F/A-18F Super Hornet fighter jet crashed into the South China Sea, also “while conducting routine operations” from the USS Nimitz.



Red Cross, Egyptian Teams Join Search for Dead Hostages in Gaza



GAZA CITY (Dispatches) - Teams from the Red Cross and Egypt have joined the search for the remains of hostages still buried in the rubble of the devastated Gaza Strip, an Israeli spokesperson said Sunday. Hamas said it has widened its search for the dead hostages, whose return is fundamental to the U.S.-brokered ceasefire.

Hamas has expanded its search for bodies of hostages in the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian group said Sunday, a day after Egypt deployed a team of experts and heavy equipment to help retrieve them.

Red Cross and Egyptian teams have also been permitted to search for the bodies of deceased hostages beyond the “yellow line” demarcating the Israeli military’s pullback in the Gaza Strip, an Israeli government spokesperson said on Sunday.

Under the U.S.-brokered ceasefire, which took effect on October 10, Hamas is expected to return the remains of all Israeli hostages as soon as possible. Israel has agreed to return 15 bodies of Palestinians for each one.

Children and others watched the Egyptian equipment claw through the sand near badly damaged buildings in the southern city of Khan Younis.

Hamas has returned the remains of 15 hostages but hasn’t handed over any in five days. Israel has returned the bodies of 195 Palestinians, many of them unidentified.

More complicated steps lie ahead under the ceasefire plan, including the disarming of Hamas and the post-war governance of famine-stricken Gaza, where the UN and partners continue to urge Israel to allow in more humanitarian aid.

Four Killed as Cameroon Security Forces Clash With Opposition Protesters



DOUALA (Dispatches) - Four people were killed on Sunday in clashes between security forces and opposition protesters in Cameroon’s largest city, Douala, the regional governor said. Supporters of opposition candidate Issa Tchiroma defied a protest ban in several cities ahead of Monday’s expected announcement of presidential election results.

Tchiroma, who challenged President Paul Biya’s 43-year grip on power in the October 12 vote, had called on his supporters to march peacefully on the eve of the announcement, despite a ban on public gatherings.

Tchiroma says he won 54.8 percent of the vote, but most analysts expect the 92-year-old Biya to win an eighth term in a system his critics say has been increasingly rigged.

In Cameroon’s largest city Douala, the regional governor said demonstrators “attacked” a gendarmerie brigade and police stations in two districts.

“Four people unfortunately lost their lives,” said Samuel Dieudonne Ivaha Diboua, adding that several members of the security forces were also injured.

Earlier, police had fired teargas to disperse hundreds of people in Tchiroma’s northern stronghold of Garoua, where activists carried Cameroonian flags and banners reading “Tchiroma 2025” and chanted “Goodbye Paul Biya, Tchiroma is coming.”

For several days, dozens of supporters have gathered around the home of the opposition leader, who claimed in a video Sunday that military personnel had tried to take him away.

In the capital Yaounde, the call to protest did not seem to have been followed amid a heavy police presence.

Venezuela Slams U.S. Warship Visit to Trinidad as Provocation, Warns of War Plot



PORT OF SPAIN (Dispatches) - Venezuela blasted the arrival in nearby Trinidad and Tobago of a U.S. warship as a dangerous “provocation,” amid mounting fears of potential attacks against the Venezuelan mainland.

The USS Gravelly, a guided missile destroyer, docked in the Trinidadian capital Port of Spain for a four-day visit, which will include joint training with local defence forces.

The ship’s arrival comes amid a mounting military campaign by US President Donald Trump against alleged drug traffickers in Latin America, which has largely targeted Venezuelans and thus far been limited to deadly strikes in international waters.

Trump has increasingly threatened in recent days to take the campaign on land, while Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro claims Washington is plotting his ouster.

Trinidad and Tobago, situated just 11 kilometres from the Venezuelan coast at its closest point, has sided with Washington against its neighbour.

Venezuela angrily denounced “the military provocation of Trinidad and Tobago, in coordination with the CIA, aimed at provoking a war in the Caribbean.”

Caracas added that it had arrested “a group of mercenaries” with links to the CIA, days after Trump said he had authorised covert CIA operations against Venezuela.

Maduro’s government claimed the alleged mercenaries were mounting a “false flag attack” aimed at provoking a full-blown war, without giving details.

Venezuela regularly claims to have arrested US-backed mercenaries working to destabilize Maduro’s administration. The USS Gravelly is one of several warships Washington deployed to the Caribbean in August as part of an anti-drugs campaign that Venezuela sees as a front for trying to topple Maduro, whose re-election Washington rejects as fraudulent.

Tensions escalated sharply on Friday, when the Pentagon also ordered the deployment of the world’s biggest aircraft carrier, the USS Gerald R. Ford, to the region.

U.S. forces have blown up at least 10 boats they claimed were smuggling narcotics, killing at least 43 people, since September.

The standoff has pulled in Colombia’s Gustavo Petro, a sharp critic of the American strikes who was sanctioned by Washington on Friday for allegedly allowing drug production to flourish.

Caracas has accused Trinidad and Tobago — a laidback twin-island nation of 1.4 million people whose Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar is fiercely critical of Maduro — of serving as “a US aircraft carrier.”

In Port of Spain, some people welcomed the government’s show of support for Trump’s campaign, but others worried about getting caught up in a regional conflict.

“If anything should happen with Venezuela and America, we as people who live on the outskirts of it ... could end up getting a lash any time,” said 64-year-old Daniel Holder, a Rastafarian who wore a white turban.

“I am against my country being part of this,” he added.

Victor Rojas, a 38-year-old carpenter who has been living in Trinidad and Tobago for the past eight years, said he was worried for his family back home.

“Venezuela is not in a position to weather an attack right now,” he said, referring to the country’s economic collapse under Maduro.

Trinidad and Tobago, which acts as a hub in the Caribbean drug trade, has itself been caught up in the U.S. campaign of strikes on suspected drug boats.

Two Trinidadian men were killed in a strike on a vessel that set out from Venezuela in mid-October, according to their families.

The mother of one of the victims insisted he was a fisherman, not a drug trafficker.

Local authorities have not yet confirmed their deaths.

Trump Strikes Deals on Trade, Critical Minerals in Southeast Asia

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - The United States signed a flurry of deals on trade and critical minerals with four Southeast Asian partners, looking to address trade imbalances and diversify supply chains amid tighter export curbs on rare earths by China.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who is in Kuala Lumpur to attend a summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, signed reciprocal trade deals with his Malaysian and Cambodian counterparts, as well as a framework trade pact with Thailand that will see the countries work to address tariff and non-tariff barriers.

The United States would maintain a tariff rate of 19% on exports from all three countries under the deals, with the levy to be reduced to zero for some goods, according to joint statements released by the White House.

Washington also announced a similar framework deal with Vietnam, which has been levied with a tariff rate of 20% on its exports to the United States.

Vietnam, which recorded a trade surplus of \$123 billion with the United States last year, has pledged to vastly boost its purchases of U.S. products to reduce the trade gap between the two countries.

Trump on Sunday inked two separate U.S. deals with Thailand and Malaysia seeking cooperation to diversify critical minerals supply chains, amid competing efforts from Beijing in the rapidly growing sector.

Reuters reported exclusively this month that China was in talks with Kuala Lumpur on rare earths processing, with Malaysian sovereign wealth fund Khazanah Nasional expected to partner with a Chinese firm to build a refinery in Malaysia.

China, the world’s top miner and processor of rare earths, has imposed increasingly stringent export controls on its refining technology, sending global manufacturers scrambling to secure alternative supplies for critical minerals



used widely in semiconductor chips, electric vehicles and military equipment.

Malaysia agreed on Sunday to refrain from banning or imposing quotas on exports to the U.S. of critical minerals or rare earth elements, the countries said in a statement.

The statement however did not specify whether Malaysia’s pledge applied to raw or processed rare earths.

Malaysia, which has an estimated 16.1 million tonnes of rare earth deposits, has banned the export of raw rare earths to prevent the loss of resources as it

looks to develop its downstream sector.

The agreements were inked after Trump oversaw the signing of an enhanced ceasefire agreement between Thailand and Cambodia, following deadly border clashes between the neighbours earlier this year.

Under the deals, the four Southeast Asian countries pledged to remove trade barriers and provide preferential market access to various U.S. goods.

The deals also include commitments in digital trade, services and investments as well as promises by the Southeast Asian countries to protect labour rights and strengthen environmental protections.

Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam further agreed to accept vehicles built to U.S. motor vehicle safety and emissions standards, according to the statements.

Malaysia, a majority Muslim country recognised as a global leader in halal certification, agreed to streamline requirements for U.S. products such as cosmetics and pharmaceuticals.

Its trade minister Tengku Zafrul Aziz told reporters that Malaysia had also secured tariff exemptions for aerospace equipment and pharmaceutical products as well as commodities such as palm oil, cacao and rubber.

Thailand said it would eliminate tariff barriers on approximately 99% of goods, and relax foreign ownership restrictions for U.S. investment in its telecommunications sector, both countries said in a statement.

They also took note of several forthcoming commercial deals between Thai and U.S. companies, including the purchases of agriculture products such as feed corn and soybean meal worth an estimated \$2.6 billion per year.

Thailand has also committed to purchases of 80 U.S. aircraft totalling \$18.8 billion and energy goods including liquefied natural gas and crude oil of around \$5.4 billion annually, the statement said.

U.S.-Backed Milei Scores Surprise Midterm Win

BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - Argentina’s libertarian President Javier Milei scored a surprise victory in Sunday’s midterm elections, bolstering his embattled reform drive. His La Libertad Avanza party won 40.84% of votes for Congress, with 90% counted, marking a rebound for the US-backed right-winger after months of economic turmoil and political resistance.

Milei’s small La Libertad Avanza (LLA) party rebounded from a series of setbacks to win 40.84 percent of the votes cast for members of Congress, far outpacing the opposition in an election closely watched by jittery investors.

“Today we reached a turning point, today begins the construction of a great Argentina,” the 55-year-old president told supporters at a victory party in Buenos Aires.

He promised to continue on the reform path with what he predicted would be “the most reformist Congress in Argentina’s history.”

Half of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies and one-third of the Senate seats were up for grabs on Sunday.

Milei said LLA had more than tripled its seat count, winning 101 seats in the



lower house Chamber of Deputies, up from 37, and 20 seats in the Senate, up from six.

The center-left Peronist movement, in power for much of Argentina’s post-war history, trailed in second place with 31.64 percent.

“Far more Argentines want to move forward than go backwards,” Milei said on the demise of the opposition.

The elections were the first national test of Milei’s support since he won office two years ago on a promise to revive the long-ailing Argentine economy through a series of painful reforms.

The run-up to the vote was marked by a run on the national currency, the peso, that forced Milei to seek a bailout from U.S. President Donald Trump, a close ally.

Washington promised an unprecedented \$40 billion package of aid, but the assistance came with a warning from Trump to Argentines that he would not “be generous” if the election did not go Milei’s way.

At the LLA election party, hundreds of Milei’s supporters celebrated the results with cheers, hugs, chants and even tears.



Norris Wins in Mexico to Take F1 Lead From Piastri

MEXICO CITY (Dispatches) - McLaren's Lando Norris avoided early mayhem to cruise to a dominant Mexico City Grand Prix win and retake the Formula One championship lead by a single point from teammate Oscar Piastri.

Australian Piastri, who started the race seventh and 14 points clear of the Briton, finished fifth after a virtual safety car in the last two laps denied him a shot at fourth following a thrilling chase.

Charles Leclerc was runner-up for Ferrari, a hefty 30.3 seconds adrift of Norris, while Red Bull's reigning champion Max Verstappen took third — just 0.7 behind the Monegasque.

Norris, who started from pole position and led every lap, now has 357 points to Piastri's 356 with Verstappen on 321 and four rounds remaining.

"What a race. I could just keep my eyes focused and forward and focus on what I was doing," said Norris, who was booed by the home crowd for reasons that remained unclear.

"A pretty straightforward race for me which is just what I was after. A good start, a good launch, a good first lap and I could go from there."

Norris last led the standings in April, a gap of 189 days, and had not won a race since Hungary in early August. Yesterday marked his sixth victory of the season, one less than Piastri, and his career 10th.

"I felt like the whole race I was right behind someone and struggling with the dirty air. That was pretty difficult," said Piastri.

"Today was about trying to limit the damage, but also trying to learn some things about that. If I've made some progress with that I'll be happy."

Oliver Bearman was fourth for Haas — a best result for the Briton and also the US-owned team — and was 1.1 seconds clear of Piastri at a chequered flag waved by former heavyweight boxing champion Evander Holyfield.

"I held off Max in the first stint, I held off the Merces in the second, and I held off the McLaren in the third one," the rookie said.

"I spent more time looking in my rear view mirrors than in front. But that's sometimes how it has to be."

Kimi Antonelli was sixth for Mercedes, with teammate George Russell seventh and Lewis Hamilton eighth for Ferrari after a 10-second penalty dropped him from third and dashed his hopes of a first podium for the team he joined in January.

Esteban Ocon was ninth, making it a double points finish for Haas, while Sauber's Gabriel Bortoleto took the final point.

The top three all completed the race on a one-stop strategy, while Bearman, Piastri and the Mercedes drivers all pitted twice.

Ferrari moved back into second place, a point ahead of Mercedes, in a constructors' championship already won by McLaren but with a tight scrap for the runner-up slot.

Norris made a clean start from pole when the lights went out but was caught in a four-way tussle down the long run to turn one, with Verstappen cutting the corner and bumping over the grass.

Leclerc then cut turn two, giving the place back to Norris, who emerged from the chaos ahead while Verstappen gained a place in fourth — to the intense irritation of Russell.

"I got squeezed like crazy," said Verstappen over the team radio, as Russell, who started fourth, called in vain for the four-time world champion to hand the place back.

A scary incident saw Racing Bulls' Liam Lawson, who came in for a new front wing on lap three, accelerate out of the pits as two marshals ran across the track in front of him.

Verstappen and third-placed Hamilton made contact on lap six as they went side by side, with the Red Bull driver trying to go past at turn one but ending up cutting the next corner.

Hamilton went off at turn four, cutting back across the grass, and was handed a penalty for leaving the track and gaining an advantage.

Bearman meanwhile climbed to fourth, from ninth at the start, and looked on for a podium once Hamilton took his penalty on lap 24 — only to be reeled in by Verstappen.

While Norris enjoyed a calm afternoon in the sunshine, Piastri had to fight back from a low of 11th after his first stop, passing Antonelli in the pits and Russell on track.

The virtual safety car was deployed after Williams' Carlos Sainz, last year's winner for Ferrari, spun and stopped on track on the penultimate lap with smoke coming from his car.

Sinner Fights Back to Beat Zverev, Claims Second Vienna Open Title

VIENNA (Dispatches) - Italian top seed Jannik Sinner produced a spirited comeback to defeat Germany's Alexander Zverev 3-6 6-3 7-5 in the Vienna Open final, securing his fourth ATP Tour title of the season and his second triumph in Austria's capital.

Sinner, who beat Zverev in straight sets at this year's Australian Open, has now won 21 consecutive matches on indoor hardcourts. The 24-year-old has now also notched 22 tour-level titles and 51 career wins against fellow top-10 players.

The world number two banged down 11 aces and unleashed 44 winners in a thrilling contest that



lasted two hours and 28 minutes.

"It feels amazing," Sinner said. "It was such a difficult start in the final for me. Down a break ... I had some chances in the first set, couldn't use them. He was serving very well."

"I tried to stick there mentally. Trying to play my best tennis when it counts. Third set was a bit of a roller-coaster. I was feeling very well the ball at times. I tried to push."

"Very happy to win another title. It's very special."

The win also allowed the four-times Grand Slam champion to level his head-to-head record against Zverev at four wins apiece.

Real Madrid Edge Barcelona in Fiery El Clasico

MADRID (Dispatches) - Goals from Kylian Mbappé and Jude Bellingham earned Real Madrid a 2-1 victory over Barcelona in a spiky El Clásico that snapped a four-match losing streak against their rivals and extended their lead atop the LaLiga standings.

Mbappé opened the scoring in the 22nd minute with a close-range finish after a perfectly timed through ball from Bellingham.

However, Barcelona capitalised on a mistake by Arda Güler to equalise in the 38th minute through Fermin López.

Real regained the lead five minutes later when Bellingham tapped in from inside the six-yard box following an inspired run and cross by Vinicius Jr.



Real had several chances but were denied by an excellent display from Barça keeper Wojciech Szczęsny, who kept out Mbappé's penalty early in the second half.

Barcelona barely threatened Real keeper Thibaut Courtois after the break and finished the match with 10 men after midfielder Pedri earned a second yellow card for a sliding tackle from behind on Aurélien Tchouaméni in added time.

The closing stages were marked by drama as Vinicius Jr reacted angrily to being substituted by manager Alonso, storming down the tunnel before returning to the bench.

The Brazilian was later involved in a heated exchange between players from both sides, prompting Spanish police to intervene and prevent a full-scale brawl.

Arsenal Pull Clear After Eze Sinks Palace



LONDON (Dispatches) - Arsenal enjoyed a serene day as they beat Crystal Palace 1-0 while title rivals Manchester City lost by the same margin at Aston Villa, leaving the north London club four points clear at the top of the table.

Champions Liverpool's 3-2 defeat at Brentford on Saturday gave Arsenal the chance to move seven points clear of Arne Slot's side and they did just that with Eberechi Eze scoring the only goal against his old club.

City were unbeaten in nine matches in all competitions since a stumbling start to the campaign, but they came unstuck at Villa Park where Matty Cash's goal earned his side a fourth successive league win to lift them to eighth.

Tottenham Hotspur's impressive away form continued with a 3-0 win at Everton to move them third — defender Micky van de Ven's headed double in the first half helping the visitors become the first side to win at Everton's new home.

Bournemouth continue to punch above their weight as a 2-0 home victory over Nottingham Forest moved them second, while bottom club Wolverhampton Wanderers remain winless following a 3-2 defeat at home to promoted Burnley.

Arsenal have 22 points from nine games, with Bournemouth on 18 and Tottenham and Sunderland both on 17.

At the bottom, Wolves have two points, with 19th-placed West Ham United on four and Forest on five.

Eze spent five seasons at Selhurst Park before Arsenal signed him in August, and he did not celebrate when he showed great dexterity to score Arsenal's winner in the 39th minute after yet another set-piece goal.

Gabriel headed Declan Rice's free kick into his path and Eze leapt to steer a first-time finish past Dean Henderson.

Marquez Cruises to Malaysian MotoGP Win



SEPANG (Dispatches) - Alex Marquez dominated the Malaysian MotoGP to clinch his third victory of the season, romping home more than two seconds ahead of fellow Spaniard Pedro Acosta.

Marquez, who confirmed his runner-up spot in the world championship standings this weekend behind brother Marc, won for the first time this year outside Spain following success at the Spanish and Catalan Grand Prix races.

Honda's Joan Mir took home third place, with Franco Morbidelli and Fabio Quartararo completing the top five.

Newly crowned world champion Marc Marquez was absent because of a season-ending injury.

Pole-sitter Francesco Bagnaia, who won Saturday's sprint race, started convincingly on a hot and humid Sepang circuit to hold a slender lead in the first lap with Acosta and Marquez in hot pursuit.

Marquez made his move early in the second lap as the Ducati-Gresini star surged past Bagnaia during a sweeping corner, and maintained the lead until the finish line.

Ducati's Bagnaia had a tailgating Acosta behind him as the front three left the chasing pack behind.

As the race reached the halfway stage, Bagnaia's focus was to fend off intense pressure from Acosta, leaving Marquez to increase his advantage.

Acosta's pressure eventually paid off as the KTM stalwart found joy on the 13th lap to overtake Bagnaia into second place.

Unperturbed by the battle unfolding behind him, Marquez crossed the finish line in 40 min 09.249 sec.

Bagnaia's afternoon ended with a bike issue late on that left him unable to finish the race.