

The Government Has Designated Azar 9 (November 31 or December 1), the Anniversary of the British Withdrawal From Abu Musa, Greater Tunb, and Lesser Tunb, as the Persian Gulf Trio Islands National Day

IRAN NEWS

Deputy Spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, Denounced a U.S. Official's "Shameful" Memorial Tribute for the Dead Ringleader of a Terror Group, Saying American Politicians Have Become Addicted to Supporting Blind Terrorism Against the Islamic Republic

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Any Talks Based on Predetermined Outcome "Meaningless"



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi says any negotiation process must lead to "balanced" outcomes, emphasizing that talks based on predetermined results will be "meaningless".

Speaking at a news conference on Friday, Takht-Ravanchi said the United States does not show readiness for negotiations based on the principle of an equal footing, making Iran see no justification for the continuation of the talks under the current circumstances.

He added that Tehran was engaged in negotiations with Washington when Israel launched its war of aggression against Iran, which he slammed as a "blatant betrayal" of the negotiation process.

Iran and the US had held five rounds of Oman-mediated indirect negotiations in the Italian and Omani capitals over Iran's nuclear program early this year before the Israeli regime derailed the diplomatic efforts by launching a war of aggression against the Islamic Republic in June.

More than a week into the war, as the Israeli regime was facing serious setbacks, the United States joined the aggression and bombed Iran's nuclear facilities that were under the International Atomic Energy Agency's watch.

Takht-Ravanchi noted that in his meeting with Omani Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi in Muscat on Thursday, he elaborated on Iran's explicit stance on the nuclear issue.

Iran, Russia Confronting West's Arrogance, Unilateralism



TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior Iranian lawmaker says Iran and Russia, as "two brothers," are confronting the arrogant and unilateral policies of the West.

Mohsen Zanganeh, who is heading an Iranian parliamentary delegation to Moscow, made the remark in a meeting with Deputy Chairman of Russia's State Duma Boris Aleksandrovich Chernyshov on Friday.

"Iran and Russia have had strong relations for a long time, and these ties have been strengthened even more in recent years," he said.

He added that the Iranian Parliament will strive to allocate the necessary funds in next year's budget for the implementation of joint infrastructure projects, including the North-South Corridor.

Zanganeh further hailed the expansion of banking cooperation between Iran and Russia and the connection of their interbank networks, enabling the use of their banking cards in ATM network of both countries.

He noted that the level of bilateral trade interaction still falls short of the two countries' capacities but "can be multiplied several times."

The Iranian lawmaker suggested that the exchange of experience between Tehran and Moscow in combating sanctions and maintaining the value of their national currencies could serve as a successful model for other countries.

Iran Ready for Fair and Respectful Dialogue

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's Foreign Minister stated that the country's "flag of negotiation and diplomacy has never fallen," emphasizing that meaningful talks must be based on mutual respect, shared interests, and free from threats or pressure. He added that Iran is ready to engage in constructive negotiations whenever the other parties show readiness for fair and respectful dialogue.

Abbas Araqchi made the remarks during the East Azerbaijan Economic Diplomacy Conference. He noted that "Iran has never had an issue with negotiations, but talks differ from dictation and coercion. Whenever the other side is prepared to negotiate on equal terms, to reach a balanced and mutually beneficial agreement without intimidation or unilateralism, the Islamic Republic of Iran will be ready."

Araqchi explained that in order to advance the country's economic goals, the Foreign Ministry has launched a "provincial diplomacy" initiative to harness the capacities of Iran's provinces for engagement with neighboring countries. He said that "less than 50 percent of the existing potential in relations with our neighbors has been utilized so far."

Highlighting the key role of the private sector, Araqchi said, "The private sector must be at the center of economic activity, and the government's duty is to pave the way for its active participation. With its unique economic features, East Azerbaijan can lead in this regard."

He added that the president places special importance on provincial diplomacy and the devolution of authority to local governments. In this framework, economic diplomacy meetings with ambassadors from the Caucasus, Turkey, Iraq, and several European and African countries will be held in Tabriz to explore ways to expand cooperation.

Araqchi noted that his two-day visit to East Azerbaijan deepened his understanding of the province's vast potential, saying that "the progress and development in Tabriz and East Azerbaijan have been remarkable, exceeding expectations."

He stated that Tabriz, with its historical background and exceptional capacities, "should become an international city," adding that the Foreign Ministry has a duty to help achieve this goal.



"To make Tabriz an international hub, its airport infrastructure, flight routes, hotels, and tourism facilities must meet global standards," he said. "The city can attract regional business and economic activity."

He also called for regular international and regional events to be held in Tabriz, noting that such gatherings play a crucial role in boosting trade, travel, and resolving economic challenges.

Referring to the ECO Foreign Ministers Meeting recently held in Mashhad, Araqchi said the government aims to hold similar events in other provinces to extend economic diplomacy beyond the national level.

He reiterated that the Foreign Ministry's primary mission, as defined by its economic role, is to facilitate and support Iranian traders and economic actors abroad. "The ministry does not directly engage in

economic activity," he said, "but it is responsible for removing obstacles and easing international economic interactions."

Addressing the issue of sanctions, Araqchi said the ministry has two main missions: first, to lift sanctions while safeguarding national dignity and interests; and second, to neutralize and circumvent sanctions by strengthening economic relations and securing the country's needs through alternative channels.

Araqchi announced plans to enhance the Foreign Ministry's provincial offices, employing economic experts tailored to each province's strengths—for example, specialists in the carpet industry in Tabriz. Reducing administrative bureaucracy, he said, is also a priority to facilitate business ties.

He further mentioned overseas farming projects in African countries as promising areas for cooperation, explaining that "given Iran's water scarcity, producing water-intensive crops abroad is a practical and strategic approach."

"In today's circumstances, when our enemies are targeting the country from multiple fronts, we must work tirelessly and make full use of our domestic and international capacities to ensure national progress," Araqchi concluded.

Cutting Scientific Ties with the World Hurts the Country

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - First Vice President, Mohammad Reza Aref, emphasized the vital role of the country's academies in shaping scientific governance and national progress. Speaking at the General Assembly of the Academy of Sciences, he warned against the "closed-minded approach" of severing Iran's academic and research ties with the world under the pretext of security concerns, stressing that "the country suffers when it cuts scientific relations with the world."

Aref praised the contributions of Iranian scholars, researchers, and academics over the past four decades, noting that higher education has been one of the most successful sectors since the Islamic Revolution. He recalled the early post-revolution challenges—such as the shortage of students and professors—and said Iran has since become a country with recognized capabilities in science and technology, culminating in the drafting of the 20-Year National Vision Document.

Aref acknowledged that although Iran's scientific growth has been steady, the world has advanced at a much faster pace. "Our scientific and technological growth was linear and moderate, while the world moved forward rapidly," he said. Still, he described the country's progress as a valuable foundation for the future, aligned with the goals of the Second Phase of the Revolution.

He reaffirmed that the Supreme Leader has consistently emphasized technological advancement as a duty of universities, either directly or indirectly.

Aref stressed that the answers to Iran's economic and structural challenges lie within universities. "We firmly believe that every imbalance and economic issue can be solved through the ingenuity of our scholars and scientists," he said, calling on academia to address national issues such as governance, economic resilience, and livelihoods.

He also called for better support for young researchers, noting that "the salaries of elites in the public sector are incomparable to those in neighboring countries," yet Iranian youth remain motivated and patriotic. He emphasized that Iran must demonstrate its real power in all fields to deter any external aggression.

The vice president set a three-year goal to close the gap in advanced technologies, pledging government investment in universities and innovation funds to revive Iran's technological competitiveness.

Calling artificial intelligence both a technology and a strategic tool, Aref said developing AI is now an obligation, not an option. He cited Iran's success in nanotechnology—where it ranks among the global top 10—as proof that "with serious determination, we achieve our goals." He added that Iran aims to be among the world's top 10 nations in AI, as directed by the



Supreme Leader.

Aref stressed that academies must guide Iran's scientific and technological governance and draft solutions for issues from local to national levels. "If the country's leading scholars are empowered, we can overcome our challenges," he said, describing academies as the highest think tanks of the state.

Reforming Iran's education system, Aref said, is central to the 14th government's vision. "Universities should not function as large high schools or government departments," he declared. "They must be autonomous scientific institutions. The government has no right to interfere in their internal affairs beyond policymaking and general strategy."

He criticized inefficiencies in resource management, pointing to underused university facilities in some areas while others remain oversaturated. "Structural reform is difficult and requires surgery," he said, noting that freed-up resources will remain under university control to fund academic reforms.

Aref warned that Iran's near-total isolation from international scientific institutions is detrimental. "Professors are often barred from attending international conferences under the excuse of security risks, or foreigners are not invited to Iranian conferences for fear of espionage," he said. "This closed mentality must end, because the country is harmed by severing scientific relations with the world."

He urged the academies to help restore international collaboration, promote balanced regional development, and support scientific justice.

Aref celebrated Iran's vibrant youth, citing the women's national futsal team's victory in the Asian Games and strong youth participation in the Pardis Technology Park Olympiad, where 10,000 of 12,000 participants were Iranian. "We have an energetic generation eager to solve the country's problems," he said, calling for greater investment in nurturing young talent from an early age.

He also emphasized the role of academies in addressing environmental issues, warning that Iran's water management failures and illegal well drilling have made land subsidence widespread and "almost irreversible."

Aref concluded that the 14th government views itself as a servant of the people and believes the solutions to national challenges lie in scientific institutions, particularly the academies. He announced plans to draft a National Innovation Strategy, underscoring that structural reforms have begun within the Ministry of Agriculture and will continue across the government.

"The country's future depends on science, innovation, and openness," Aref said. "We must reform education, strengthen international cooperation, and allow our scholars to lead Iran toward sustainable progress."

Tehran-Ankara Train Service to Resume Using Turkish High-Speed Trains



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The long-awaited Tehran-Ankara passenger train route is set to resume operations, this time utilizing Turkish high-speed trains, according to Iran's Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development, Ali Zakari. The announcement was made during the signing ceremony for the Tehran Logistics City agreement, where Zakari highlighted the strategic importance of integrated transport systems in facilitating international trade, exports, and imports.

Zakari noted that following the earthquakes in Turkey in recent years, the speed and frequency of trains operating from Van to Ankara had been reduced. However, with Turkey now advancing its high-speed rail network, the two countries have agreed to make use of Turkish trains for part of the route between Tehran and Ankara. "According to the discussions held, it was decided that we will use Turkish high-speed trains for a section of the journey," he stated.

The Deputy Minister emphasized that developing multimodal transport systems is a key priority for Iran's railway sector, in line with the president's directive to strengthen regional corridors and expand international transport and intelligent logistics systems. He pointed out that last year Iran handled around 20 million tons of transit cargo, of which 2.5 million tons were moved by rail. Under the country's Seventh Development Plan, the goal is to double total transit volume to 40 million tons—a target that requires the establishment of supporting infrastructure such as logistics cities.

Addressing the significance of logistics hubs, Zakari explained that logistics cities play a vital role in integrating transport modes and improving efficiency. "They enhance coordination among different transport systems, speed up distribution processes, and improve service quality," he said.

Lebanon's Power Lies in Resistance, U.S. No Neutral Mediator



BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Hezbollah Secretary-General Sheikh Naim Qassem has stressed that resistance constitutes the strength of Lebanon, noting that the United States is not a neutral mediator between Lebanon and Israel due to its silence on thousands of Israeli violations of the ceasefire.

Despite Washington's claims of seeking to support Lebanon's independence, "experience has shown it isn't a neutral mediator; rather, it's the main sponsor of the [Israeli] aggression," Sheikh Qassem said on Friday while addressing a local event in Beirut.

The Hezbollah chief added, "The United States has provided nothing to Lebanon", referring to its silence on 5,000 Israeli violations of the US-brokered ceasefire agreement and the death of civilians in those strikes.

"We have heard no condemnation or call for Israel to stop its attacks. Instead, it [the US] merely justifies these violations," Qassem said.

He noted that Washington always pressured Lebanon to deprive it of its "strength, freedom and independence" to serve the interests of Israel. "Every time an American envoy visits Lebanon or an American official makes a statement, we see attacks intensify significantly."

He also criticized remarks made by American officials regarding the Lebanese president's order to army to confront any Israeli incursions, asking, "Has defending the land and strengthening sovereignty become a crime?"

IRAN NEWS



Iran and Oman Discuss Bilateral Ties

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Talht-e-Ravanchi met and held talks with Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi in Muscat.

In a meeting with the Omani foreign minister, the Iranian deputy foreign minister for political affairs stressed the importance of continuing coordination on current issues and supporting dialogue to resolve differences, while reviewing the latest regional and international developments and events.

Al-Busaidi wrote in a post on his X account, in this meeting, we discussed bilateral relations and ways to expand them.

Iran, Turkey Play a Key Role in Strengthening Regional Economic Ties



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran and Turkey can play a significant role in connecting East and West and in strengthening regional economic cooperation through enhanced railway infrastructure, Zahra Bahrouz Azar, Iran's Vice President for Women and Family Affairs, said on Friday.

Speaking at a ceremony marking Turkey's National Day, held at the Turkish Embassy in Tehran, Bahrouz Azar congratulated the government and people of Turkey and highlighted the historical, cultural, and religious bonds between the two nations.

"Iran and Turkey are neighboring countries with deep-rooted relations based on mutual respect," she said. "We hope to see further expansion of these ties in the economic, cultural, scientific, and social fields."

Bahrouz Azar referred to the upcoming 29th Iran-Turkey Joint Economic Commission, scheduled for 2024 (Iranian year 1403), expressing hope that the outcomes of the meetings will promote economic cooperation, expand trade, and strengthen people-to-people relations between the two nations.

The vice president stressed the importance of railway transport and transit collaboration, saying Iran and Turkey could significantly boost regional connectivity by developing their rail infrastructure.

"Expanding rail capacity, completing joint projects, and facilitating the transit of goods through Iran and Turkey would benefit both countries and the entire region," she added.

Bahrouz Azar also underlined the value of cultural exchange, noting that both Iran and Turkey possess vast capabilities in arts and culture. She said the two countries can build "lasting and meaningful partnerships" for future generations by drawing on their shared heritage.

Iranian Expert Rejects Claim That 35% of Deaths Are Linked to Poor Nutrition



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - A leading Iranian nutrition expert has rejected recent claims that 35 percent of annual deaths in Iran are caused by poor nutrition, describing the figure as unscientific and misleading.

Dr. Jalaeddin Mirzay-Razaz, associate professor at Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences and president of the Iranian Nutrition Society, said attributing one-third of all deaths in the country to dietary factors "lacks scientific evidence and epidemiological accuracy."

"Such statements may aim to highlight the importance of nutrition, but when made without reliable data, they distort public understanding and weaken scientific credibility," he told ILNA.

Mirzay-Razaz explained that nutrition-related deaths fall into two categories: direct causes such as severe malnutrition and protein-energy deficiency, and indirect causes such as chronic diseases linked to unhealthy diets. He said combining these categories to claim that a third of all deaths are diet-related "shows neither precision nor scientific validity."

Citing the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) reports, he said credible studies use complex modeling and data from multiple sources to estimate nutrition's impact on mortality. "Iran's own studies confirm poor diet as a significant health risk," he noted, "but not to the exaggerated extent recently reported."

According to Mirzay-Razaz, malnutrition in Iran is not just a health issue but a deeper structural, economic, and cultural challenge. He warned that any effort to reduce nutrition-related deaths would fail without reforming food production, distribution, and pricing systems.

Iran Aims to Attract \$10b in Investment in Each Free Trade and Industrial Zone Within Three Years

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance, Seyed Ali Madanizadeh, has called on the heads of the country's free trade and industrial zones to "think big," urging them to attract \$10 billion in investment within the next three years in each zone.

Speaking at a meeting with managers of the Kish Free Trade Zone Organization, Madanizadeh praised the efforts of the Secretary of the Supreme Council of Free Trade and Industrial Zones and other officials for their "valuable short-term achievements" on Kish Island.

"In Iran, anyone who has ever implemented a project knows how difficult it is to bring it to completion. That makes the accomplishments of the Kish Free Zone even more remarkable, given the scale of work achieved in such a short time," he said.

Madanizadeh expressed hope that the Kish Free Zone management team would continue to improve efficiency, precision, and innovation in their work, using modern knowledge and technology to accelerate progress.

He noted that the Kish Free Zone authorities are preparing a comprehensive transformation plan for the country's free zones, urging them to finalize it quickly with the help of international consultants.

"My request is that the section on 'anonymous investments' within this transformation plan be completed and implemented as soon as possible," he said, emphasizing the target of attracting \$10 billion in investment within three years.

Addressing issues raised by managers regarding customs and taxation, Madanizadeh stated that the Free Zones Secretariat has already prepared draft legislation for matters requiring parliamentary approval. "We are seriously pursuing its passage," he said.

He added that other issues not requiring new laws could be resolved within the Ministry of Economy or by the Cabinet, urging close coordination among the Free Zones Secretariat, Kish Free Zone Organization, the Tax Administration, and the



Ministry's banking and insurance departments to design practical solutions promptly.

Highlighting the ministry's six major national projects, the minister called on the Free Zones Secretariat to outline the role of free zones—particularly Kish Island—within these initiatives.

He suggested that Kish Island could become a regional hub for technology and innovation, noting that such a transformation could attract both domestic talents who face barriers in the mainland and international professionals seeking to work in Iran under more flexible conditions.

"Beyond digital economy development, we can build a full innovation ecosystem on Kish Island—bringing together leading technology companies and top universities to create a major innovation environment," Madanizadeh said.

Emphasizing that the governance model of free trade zones must differ from that of other regions, Madanizadeh stated, "When someone enters a government office in a free zone, they should experience something completely different from start to finish."

He underlined that free zones should pioneer data-driven governance, rapid data assessment, and streamlined decision-making, setting an example for other parts of the country.

"If we are talking about simplifying overlapping and complex regulatory systems, the free zones must be the first to eliminate such inefficiencies," he added.

Madanizadeh concluded by stressing that free zone managers possess broad authority similar to that of provincial governors.

"You are, in effect, like presidents within your own jurisdictions," he told them. "President Pezeshkian has repeatedly said that governors are the presidents of their provinces—and the law grants you almost the same powers. You must make full use of them."

Tobacco Use Costs Iran 50 Trillion Tomans Annually

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The head of the National Tobacco Control Secretariat at Iran's Ministry of Health has warned that tobacco consumption causes an annual loss of nearly 50 trillion tomans to the country's economy, citing treatment costs, productivity loss, and the burden of premature deaths among smokers. He also revealed that selling tobacco products to minors under 18 years of age is punishable by a fine of 10 million tomans, though enforcement remains a challenge due to a lack of smart monitoring systems.

In an interview with ILNA, Behzad Valizadeh, head of the Tobacco Control Secretariat, highlighted the growing concern over rising tobacco use among Iranian youth. "The last national survey conducted in 2016 showed that 3.4 percent of adolescents aged 13 to 15 smoked cigarettes, while 5.7 percent used hookah. Although newer data is not yet available, early indicators suggest that usage has increased, particularly due to the spread of new types of tobacco products entering the country through smuggling," he said.

Valizadeh noted that the new round of national studies currently underway will offer a clearer picture of youth smoking trends by the end of this year. "Adolescents who become addicted at an early age turn into lifelong customers for the tobacco industry—an industry that profits from death," he added.

Referring to previous studies, Valizadeh said that the earlier survey in 2007 revealed a disturbing shift: cigarette use among girls had nearly doubled, while it had slightly declined among boys. "This indicates a narrowing gap between male and female smokers. In some cases, girls are even outpacing boys," he said.

The growing popularity of new tobacco and vaping products, many of which enter Iran illegally, has exacerbated the problem. Despite repeated crackdowns on unauthorized vendors, these products continue to reach young consumers. "This is one of our most serious concerns," Valizadeh said.

Under Article 12 of Iran's Comprehensive Tobacco Control Law, selling tobacco to anyone under 18 years of age is illegal and carries a fine of approximately 10 million tomans. This regulation is also reinforced in the Law on the Protection of Children and Adolescents.

However, enforcement remains inconsistent. "Our main challenge is surveillance," Valizadeh explained. "We lack smart systems that can monitor violations in real time. Inspectors cannot be everywhere at once. If we could use surveillance cameras in shops and public areas, it would greatly improve monitoring." He added that proving violations still requires judicial officers or official reports.

Valizadeh called on citizens to report offenders through the 190 public hotline, noting that multiple complaints against the same store indicate ongoing violations and trigger legal follow-ups by inspectors and judicial authorities.

Still, he said, the fine lacks deterrent power. "A 10 million toman fine does not reflect the true cost of the harm caused. When a teenager becomes addicted to tobacco, the health and social costs are immeasurable," he stressed.

According to Valizadeh, tobacco use imposes an annual loss of around 50 trillion tomans (50 'hemats') on the Iranian economy. These costs arise from medical treatment of tobacco-related illnesses, absenteeism, reduced productivity, disability, and premature deaths among smokers.

"Some argue that the tobacco industry contributes to the economy,



but the reality is that the losses far outweigh the gains," he said. "Many countries have raised the legal smoking age to 21 and introduced policies toward creating a 'tobacco-free generation.' For instance, some have banned sales altogether to individuals born after a specific year."

Valizadeh criticized the "mushroom-like growth" of tobacco retailers across the country. "Despite regulations designed to reduce access, the number of outlets continues to rise," he said. The upcoming session of the National Tobacco Control Committee will address this issue and propose stronger enforcement measures.

He emphasized that public education and awareness campaigns must accompany stricter regulations. "Schools and cultural organizations must work together to prevent youth smoking and achieve a real reduction in tobacco use nationwide," he said.

Valizadeh announced new measures approved by the Ministry of Economy's Business Deregulation and Improvement Committee, requiring all tobacco sellers to comply with legal obligations. The Attorney General's Office has also ordered all tobacco retailers to install signs reading "Sale of Tobacco Products to Individuals Under 18 Is Prohibited."

Moreover, new guidelines mandate that tobacco vendors be officially licensed and that unauthorized sellers be banned from operating. Stores must also be located at least 100 meters away from schools, and repeated violations can result in the revocation of business licenses.

"The Ministry of Health, supported by the Judiciary and Attorney General's Office, is determined to enforce these regulations strictly," Valizadeh said.

Valizadeh identified the low price of tobacco products as one of the main reasons for rising youth consumption. "Cigarettes are priced so cheaply that even teenagers and low-income individuals can easily afford them. In contrast, in many countries, a single pack of cigarettes costs as much as two to three kilograms of meat," he explained.

He added that illegal practices such as selling single cigarettes further reduce costs for minors and make tobacco even more accessible.

Valizadeh also expressed concern over the portrayal of smoking in Iranian films and online series, calling it a harmful trend that normalizes tobacco use among youth and women. "Such depictions must be regulated. Protecting the next generation's health requires full cooperation from all cultural, judicial, and executive institutions," he said.

He warned that new tobacco products, including electronic and vaping devices, enter Iran mainly through smuggling and are not subject to any health regulation. "These substances may contain toxic or psychoactive chemicals that pose severe risks to consumers," he cautioned.

Valizadeh concluded by urging parents to remain alert to signs of tobacco use among their children. "Families must know that no modern or alternative tobacco product is safe. Increased public awareness is our strongest defense against addiction," he said.

"Ultimately, tobacco offers nothing but disease and death. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that the next generation understands this truth."

France's Domestic Political Turmoil Hurts Trade with Iran More Than Sanctions



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The head of the Iran-France Joint Chamber of Commerce has stated that France's internal political instability has had a greater negative impact on trade between the two countries than international sanctions.

Speaking to Iran Chamber Online, Mehdi Mir-Emadi, President of the Iran-France Joint Chamber of Commerce, said that while no precise data is currently available on bilateral trade, indications show a clear decline.

Iran's exports to France grew by 23 percent in 2024, reaching 21 million euros," Mir-Emadi said. "However, Iran's imports from France have decreased. The domestic political turmoil in France has accelerated and deepened the downward trend in trade relations to the point where no accurate statistics are currently available."

He added that a small volume of trade continues indirectly through third countries such as the UAE (Dubai) and Turkey, but even these transactions lack reliable figures.

Mir-Emadi emphasized that the negative effects of France's internal political situation on trade with Iran are greater than those caused by sanctions. He noted that as long as France's domestic political issues remain unresolved, there is little hope for even a modest recovery in bilateral trade.

The chamber head also referred to trade statistics from recent years, pointing out that despite the current turmoil, Eurostat data for 2023 ranked France as Iran's fifth-largest trading partner within the European Union.

However, trade between the two nations has been on a steady decline over the past five years — dropping from approximately €400 million in 2019 to €276 million in 2024, representing a 30 percent decrease overall.

Iran's Oil Industry Needs \$180b in Investment



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's oil industry requires \$170-180 billion in investment to meet its development targets, according to the managing director of the Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC). He warned that the current capacity to secure financing is severely limited, posing a major challenge to the country's energy plans.

Nasrollah Zarei, speaking as quoted by the National Iranian Oil Engineering and Development Company, outlined the implementation status of the Seventh Development Plan in the energy sector. He emphasized the need to review the financing mechanisms and development goals of the oil industry.

"The 14th government is committed to implementing the Seventh Plan," Zarei said. "However, after a year, it has become clear that certain provisions require expert revision. Effective implementation is impossible without analysis, correction, and lessons learned from previous plans."

Zarei noted that Parliament had set a production target of 4.45 million barrels per day, which was later increased by the Expediency Council to 4.8 million barrels, without clear technical or operational justification.

He explained that the plan envisions an increase of one million barrels per day in production capacity by the end of its term. "Achieving this and other goals demands at least \$170-180 billion in investment," he said.

According to Zarei, citing Parliament's Research Center, the share of oil development funding from national oil and gas revenues fell to 5 percent in the five years leading to 2023. On average, only \$2 billion per year was allocated from government and National Development Fund resources — meaning, even under optimistic conditions, only \$10 billion could be mobilized over the next five years, far below actual needs.

North Korea Says Denuclearization Is Unrealizable Pipe Dream

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korea said on Saturday that denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, which South Korea said will be discussed in a summit with China later that day, is an unrealizable “pipe dream,” according to state media KCNA.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and South Korean President Lee Jae Myung are set to hold a summit meeting on Saturday on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum held in Gyeongju, South Korea.

Lee’s office said on Friday that Xi and Lee will discuss the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

“The ROK is still unaware that struggling to deny the DPRK’s position as a nuclear weapons state and talking about its daydream of realizing the denuclearization just reveal its lack of common sense,” KCNA said, using the abbreviations for Republic of Korea, South Korea’s official name, and Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, North Korea’s official name.



Ukraine Lands Special Forces in Embattled Pokrovsk



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine landed special forces to fight in embattled parts of the eastern city of Pokrovsk earlier this week, just as Russia said it had surrounded Kyiv’s forces in the area, two Ukrainian military sources said on Friday.

The operation shows how Ukraine is battling to stabilise the situation in the strategically important city after scores of Russian troops breached its perimeter this month. Russia’s capture of Pokrovsk, an important road and rail hub, could enable further advances into the eastern Donetsk region, which Russia aims to fully occupy. Moscow’s military has been inching forward towards Pokrovsk for over a year.

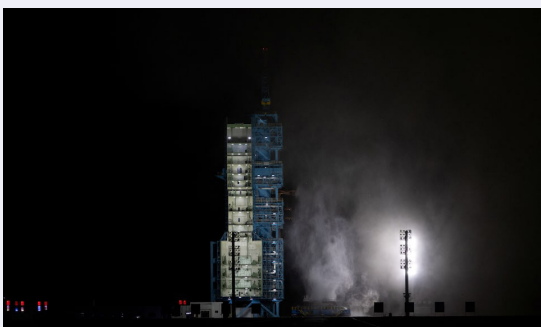
The Ukrainian special forces landed in a Black Hawk helicopter a few days ago in the operation, which was complicated by Russian drone activity, a source in the 7th Rapid Response Corps said.

The operation was overseen by military spy chief Kyrylo Budanov, and the troops headed to areas of the city claimed by Russia and seen by Moscow as vital for Ukrainian supply lines, the other source said.

At least 10 servicemen could be seen dismounting from a helicopter in a field in a video seen by Reuters. The news agency could not independently confirm the location or date when the video was filmed.

Russia’s defence ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the Ukrainian operation.

China Sends Its Youngest Astronaut to Heavenly Palace Space Station



BEIJING (Dispatches) - China’s Shenzhou-21 space rocket and its crew including the youngest member of its astronaut corps blasted off on Friday atop a Long March-2F rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in northwest China, Chinese state media reported.

It was the seventh mission to the permanently inhabited Chinese space station since it was completed in 2022.

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Missions on China’s Shenzhou-21 spacecraft involve trios of astronauts on six-month stays in space, with veteran astronauts increasingly replaced by younger faces. First-timers Zhang Hongzhang, 39, and Wu Fei, 32 - China’s youngest astronaut to be sent to space - were picked to participate in the programme in 2020.

Commander Zhang Lu, 48, flew on the 2022 Shenzhou-15 mission.

The Shenzhou-21 astronauts will take over from the Shenzhou-20 crew who had lived and worked on board Tiangong, or “Heavenly Palace”, for more than six months. The Shenzhou-20 astronauts will return to Earth in the coming days.

The Shenzhou-21 crew were also joined by four black mice, the first small mammals to be taken to the Chinese space station. The mice will be used in experiments on reproduction in low Earth orbit.

Trump Plays Coy as World Leaders Condemn Call for U.S. Nuclear Testing



ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE (Dispatches) - President Donald Trump reiterated Friday that he wants testing of US nuclear weapons, but again failed to clarify whether he meant live explosions in an order that has provoked global tension and confusion. Asked by an AFP journalist whether he meant conducting underground blasts for the first time in the United States since 1992, Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One: “I am not going to say.”

“You’ll find out very soon, but we’re going to do some testing, yeah. Other countries do it. If they’re going to do it, we’re going to do it,” he said on his way to spend Halloween at his golf resort in Florida.

No country other than North Korea has conducted an explosive nuclear weapon test for decades. Russia and China have not carried out such tests since 1990 and 1996 respectively.

The 79-year-old Republican first made his surprise testing announcement by social media post on Thursday, minutes before entering a summit with Chinese leader Xi Jinping in South Korea.

The announcement came in the wake of Russia saying it had tested a new nuclear-powered cruise missile, the Burevestnik, and a nuclear-powered and nuclear-capable underwater drone.

Japanese atomic bomb survivors group Nihon Hidankyo sent a letter of protest to the US embassy in Japan.

The order “directly contradicts the efforts by nations around the world striving for a peaceful world without nuclear weapons and is utterly unacceptable,” the Nobel Peace Prize-winning group said in the letter obtained by AFP.

Amid concern abroad and some in the US Congress, Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said the Pentagon was moving “quickly” to follow Trump’s orders and said testing was “responsible.”

“The president was clear. We need to have a credible nuclear deterrent,” he told reporters in Kuala Lumpur.

“Resuming testing is a pretty responsible, very responsible way to do that. I think it makes nuclear conflict less likely.”

But China’s foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun urged the United States to “earnestly abide” by a global nuclear testing

ban.

United Nations chief Antonio Guterres said through a spokesman that “nuclear testing can never be permitted under any circumstances.”

The United States has been a signatory since 1996 to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which bans all atomic test explosions, whether for military or civilian purposes.

Russia pushed back against any idea that its recent weapon systems tests could justify a return to live test explosions.

The Kremlin questioned whether Trump was well-informed – and implied Russia would conduct its own live detonations if Trump does so first.

The recent weapons drills “cannot in any way be interpreted as a nuclear test,” spokesman Dmitry Peskov told journalists. “We hope that the information was conveyed correctly to President Trump.”

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the Russian stockpile of deployed and stored warheads is 4,309, compared to 3,700 for the United States and 600 for China – figures that don’t take into account hundreds of other warheads scheduled for dismantling.

The United States conducted 1,054 nuclear tests between July 16, 1945, when the first was conducted in New Mexico, and 1992.

Its two nuclear attacks on Japan during World War II make it the only country to have used the weapons in combat.

The last US nuclear test explosion was in September 1992, a 20-kiloton underground detonation at the Nevada Nuclear Security Site.

Then-president George H.W. Bush imposed a moratorium on further tests in October 1992 that has been continued by successive administrations.

At Least 700 Dead in Tanzania’s Post-Election Protests

DAR ES SALAAM (Dispatches) - Hundreds of people have reportedly been killed in Tanzania after taking to the streets to protest this week’s presidential election, which saw the increasingly authoritarian incumbent, President Samia Suluhu Hassan, run unopposed for another term after her main challengers were jailed or barred from standing.

Some 700 people have been killed in three days of election protests in Tanzania, the main opposition party said Friday, with protesters still on the streets in the midst of an internet blackout.

“As we speak the figure for deaths in Dar (es Salaam) is around 350 and for Mwanza it is 200-plus. Added to figures from other places around the country, the overall figure is around 700,” John Kitoka, spokesman from the main opposition party Chadema, said.

“The death toll could be much higher,” he warned, saying killings could be happening during the nighttime curfew.

President Samia Suluhu Hassan, whose government is accused of a campaign of repression, had sought to cement her position and silence critics in her party in the virtually uncontested polls, with the main challengers either jailed or barred from standing.

Wednesday’s election descended into chaos as huge crowds took to the streets of Dar es Salaam and other cities, tearing down her posters and attacking police and polling stations, leading to an internet shutdown and curfew.

With foreign journalists largely banned from covering the election and a



communications block entering its third day, information from the ground has been scarce.

Chadema, which was barred from the election, said protesters were marching on the city centre in Dar es Salaam on Friday, met by a heavy police and army presence.

A security source told AFP they were hearing reports of more than 500 dead, “maybe 700-800 in the whole country”, while Amnesty said it had received information of at least 100.

Multiple hospitals and health clinics were too afraid to talk directly to reporters.

Local news sites had not been updated since Wednesday, and Hassan has not commented on the unrest.

The only official statement came from army chief Jacob Mkunda late Thursday who called the protesters “criminals”.

In Zanzibar, a tourist hotspot, Hassan’s ruling party had already been declared winner of the local vote on Thursday.

The opposition party, ACT-Wazalendo, rejected the result, saying: “They have robbed the people of Zanzibar of their voice... The only solution to deliver justice is through a fresh election.”

A senior party official said ballot boxes had been stuffed, people had been allowed to vote multiple times without ID and that their election observers had been kicked out of counting rooms.

The ruling party (Chama Cha Mapinduzi: CCM) was due to give a press conference later in the day.

At a meeting place for opposition supporters on Zanzibar, there was dismay and fear.

“There has never been a credible election since 1995,” said a 70-year-old man, referring to Tanzania’s first multi-party vote.

None of those interviewed gave their names. “We are afraid of speaking because they might come to our houses and pick us up,” said one.

Hassan has faced opposition from parts of the army and allies of her iron-fisted predecessor, John Magufuli, since she took over upon his death in 2021, analysts say.

UNSC Backs Moroccan Plan for Disputed Western Sahara

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The UN Security Council approved a US-backed resolution on Friday supporting Morocco’s continued control of the disputed Western Sahara, saying that “genuine autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty” could well be the most “feasible” option for the mineral-rich territory. The Algerian-backed Polisario Front continues to advocate independence for the former Spanish colony.

“Genuine autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty could constitute a most feasible solution,” the resolution said.

Although the vote was divided, the resolution offers the strongest endorsement yet for Morocco’s plan to keep sovereignty over the mineral-rich territory, which also has backing from most European Union members and a growing number of African allies.

“The United States welcomes today’s historic vote, which seizes upon this unique moment and builds on the momentum for a long, long overdue peace in Western Sahara,” Mike Waltz, US



ambassador to the UN, said in his remarks after the vote.

The resolution refers to Morocco’s plan as a basis for negotiation. As with similar resolutions in previous years, the text makes no mention of a referendum on self-determination that includes independence as an option, which is the solution long favoured by the pro-independence Polisario Front and its allies, including Algeria, Russia and China.

In a rare speech broadcast on Moroccan television after the vote, King Mohammed VI celebrated the result and pledged to supplement Morocco’s proposal with additional details. He also called for dialogue with Algeria’s President Abdelmadjid Tebboune.

The US led 11 countries in voting in favour, while three countries – Russia, China and Pakistan – abstained. Algeria, Polisario’s primary benefactor, did not vote.

Sidi Mohamed Omar, the Polisario ambassador to the UN, thanked the allies who abstained and Algeria for protesting the vote, saying this “made it very clear that today’s resolution does not imply any recognition of Morocco’s sovereignty over Western Sahara”.



PARIS (Dispatches) - Jannik Sinner took a step closer to reclaiming the world number one ranking with a comfortable victory over Ben Shelton in the Paris Masters quarter-finals on Friday, setting up a clash with reigning champion Alexander Zverev.

The Italian powered to a 6-3, 6-3 win over his fifth-seeded opponent and will next face Zverev, who saved two match points to beat Daniil Medvedev 2-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/5), in the semi-finals.

Sinner, looking to take advantage of rival Carlos Alcaraz's shock second-round loss to Cameron Norrie, extended his winning streak to 24 successive matches on indoor hard courts.

Sinner will usurp Alcaraz at the top of the rankings by winning the title at the La Defense Arena.

"At the moment I'm not thinking about the ranking," he said.

"It all depends on how I'm playing. We go day by day, every day you have very difficult challenges coming up."

He has now won seven successive matches against the powerful Shelton since losing their first meeting in Shanghai in 2023.

The 24-year-old is targeting his fifth title of the season after last weekend adding the Vienna Open trophy to his Australian Open, Wimbledon and China Open triumphs from earlier in the year.

Sinner has won his last three meetings with Zverev.

"I'm happy to be in the situation where I am, tomorrow it's again a very important day but I'm looking forward to it," Sinner added.

The four-time Grand Slam champion wrapped up the first set in just 34 minutes, sealing it with a thumping baseline winner to break Shelton's serve for the second time.

A 22nd consecutive win against American opponents appeared nothing more than a formality for Sinner when he moved 3-1 up in the second set.

But Shelton immediately hit back with a break to love before levelling the set to gain a foothold in the match, much to the delight of a packed crowd.

The left-hander's revival did not last long, however, as Sinner broke again in the eighth game.

A deft winner at the net secured a place in his 13th Masters semi-final on his first match point.

Third seed Zverev kept his title defence on track after digging deep in a tense clash with former world number one Medvedev.

Medvedev raced through the first set before losing his rhythm in the second as Zverev forced a decider.

The Russian moved to the brink of victory when leading 5-4 in the third as Zverev made a series of unforced errors on his forehand, but Medvedev passed up two opportunities to secure the win.

Zverev took that momentum into the tie-break and ended a run of five successive defeats by Medvedev when his opponent fired long.

Earlier, Alexander Bublik battled back to defeat Alex de Minaur and reach the first Masters 1000 semi-final of his career.

The Kazakh, enjoying his best-ever year, edged a dramatic contest 6-7 (5/7), 6-4, 7-5 to set up a last-four meeting with Felix Auger-Aliassime, who saw off Valentin Vacherot in his quarter-final.

Bublik is still in the race to qualify for next month's ATP Finals in Turin, competing for the eighth and last berth with Lorenzo Musetti and Auger-Aliassime, albeit is more likely to have a chance as an alternate.

"That's definitely an important match but not probably the most important of my life. You never know. We'll see," Bublik said of his clash with Auger-Aliassime.

Auger-Aliassime cruised past surprise Shanghai Masters champion Vacherot 6-2, 6-2 to keep his hopes of qualifying for the Finals alive.

The Canadian, targeting his second Masters 1000 final appearance, holds a 3-2 winning head-to-head record over Bublik.

"He (Vacherot) is so confident and you are kind of scared to be honest," Auger-Aliassime said.

"I had to be so focused from the start and this level of intensity from the first game I brought helped ease me into the match and I played some good tennis."

Balanced-Scoring Raptors End Skid With Win Over Cavaliers

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Brandon Ingram collected 20 points, eight rebounds and five assists while RJ Barrett and Jamison Battle also had 20 points apiece as the visiting Toronto Raptors beat the short-handed Cleveland Cavaliers 112-101 in the NBA Cup opener for both teams on Friday.

Toronto trailed 92-90 midway through the fourth quarter but responded with eight straight points. Battle sank a 3-pointer, Ingram added a three-point play and Ingram hit another bucket to give Toronto the lead for good in the East Group A matchup.

Reigning NBA Defensive Player of the Year Evan Mobley scored a season-high 29 points and grabbed eight rebounds while De'Andre Hunter scored 26 for Cleveland, which played without four injured starters, including All-Star shooting guard Donovan Mitchell.

The Raptors had lost four straight since beginning the season with a road win over the Atlanta Hawks. Toronto's Scottie Barnes posted 14 points, 10



rebounds and five assists on Friday, while Battle made 7 of 7 field goal attempts, including six 3-pointers, in 15 minutes off the bench.

Jaylon Tyson added 18 points for the Cavaliers, who used a 16-0 run that spanned halftime to grab a 54-48 lead. Lonzo Ball had eight points, five rebounds and five assists in his initial start for Cleveland.

Mitchell (left hamstring tightness), center Jarrett Allen (left fourth finger fracture), point guard Darius Garland (left big toe surgery) and small forward Sam Merrill (right hip bruise) are all listed as day-to-day.

Garland has been scrimmaging with the Cleveland Charge of the G League and could make his season debut as early as Sunday against the Hawks. Mitchell and Allen both missed a game for the first time this season after getting hurt Wednesday at Boston.

Sabalenka Targets First WTA Finals Title as Stars Collide in Riyadh

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Aryna Sabalenka will aim to reinforce her status as the world's top player by winning her first WTA Finals title in Riyadh as the season finale gets underway with all four of the year's Grand Slam champions featuring in a strong field.

The Belarusian exemplified consistency in 2025 and arrives for the November 1-8 tournament having retained her U.S. Open title in September, after finishing runner-up to Madison Keys at the Australian Open and Coco Gauff at Roland Garros.

The only Grand Slam final she failed to reach was at



Wimbledon, where Iga Swiatek defeated Amanda Anisimova.

"It's easier when you qualify early in the season but I'm super excited," said Sabalenka, who punched her ticket to the WTA Finals in July.

"Honestly I cannot wait to get back. I love that place, I love to play there, and I hope that this year I can do better than I did last year."

Martina Navratilova said the 27-year-old's sustained high-level performances made her the favourite in the eight-player line-up.

Bournemouth Eye Shock Statement Win at Struggling Manchester City



LONDON (Dispatches) - Second-place Bournemouth will attempt to continue their surprising Premier League start when they visit fifth-place Manchester City on Sunday.

The Cherries (5-1-3, 18 points) join league leaders Arsenal as the only EPL sides to lose just once through nine games, with arguably their most impressive victories coming in late August at Tottenham and home against Brighton in mid-September.

Antoine Semenyo has become the latest striker to blossom under manager Andoni Iraola. Semenyo's six league goals follow the career-best 11 he scored in 2024-25.

And while the Cherries have outperformed metrics like expected goals so far, City manager Pep Guardiola isn't about to write off the legitimacy of their position in the table or weigh in on whether they can maintain their spot.

"That's a question for Iraola," Guardiola said. "I would say it's just nine games but also in previous seasons they're consistent. The team, manager, players, a tough opponent, but we know that."

Guardiola would be as much of an authority as anyone, having led City (5-3-1, 16 points) to six league titles in total, including four in a row in an unprecedented streak that was halted with Liverpool's triumph last season.

His side is currently six points back of Arsenal – and two behind Bournemouth – after seeing a five-match league unbeaten run broken last weekend at Aston Villa.

City have one of the world's top scorers at their disposal in Erling Haaland, who leads the EPL with 11 goals and was cleared to return Sunday after a minor knock in the Villa defeat.

And they've remained unbeaten in both their other competitions so far, taking seven points from three UEFA Champions League matches and recently seeing off second-tier Swansea City 3-1 in the EFL Cup fourth-round tie in midweek.

Bournemouth haven't had to balance multiple commitments since a second-round EFL Cup defeat way back in August, and perhaps that shows in a virtually clean injury report.

Saim, Faheem Ease Pakistan to Nine Wicket T20 Win Over South Africa



LAHORE (Dispatches) - Opener Saim Ayub scored a quickfire 71 from 38 balls and seamer Faheem Ashraf took 4-23 as Pakistan cruised to a nine wicket win over South Africa in the second Twenty20 International in Lahore to level the three-match series at 1-1.

Pakistan won the toss and chose to field first, making light work of their visitors' top order as they bowled them out for 110 in 19.2 overs.

It never looked enough and the home side romped to victory with 41 balls to spare ahead of Saturday's third and final fixture at the same venue.

Babar Azam was not out with 11 from 18 deliveries and became the highest run-scorer in T20 Internationals with 4,234, going beyond India's Rohit Sharma.

Six of the South African batters were bowled as Pakistan found prodigious seam off the wicket, with only Dewald Brevis managing an innings of any substance with 25 from 16 deliveries.

There was a cavalier nature to the batting too with no-one in the visitors' line-up able to dig in and lay a platform.

Fast bowler Salman Mirza took 3-14 in his four overs.

South Africa could not find the same assistance from the wicket and Pakistan raced to victory on the back of Saim's fine knock.

Sahibzada Farhan, 28 from 23 balls, was the only Pakistan batsman who was dismissed after he was trapped leg before wicket by Corbin Bosch.