

UNESCO Has Given Its Final Approval to Two Major Iranian Scientific and Cultural Initiatives, Marking a Significant Milestone in Iran's Role Within Global Research Cooperation and Cultural Heritage Protection

IRAN NEWS

Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs and Pakistani Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar Have Underlined Strengthening Bilateral Cooperation

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U.S., Israel Entered Dangerous New Phase After Assault on Nuclear Sites



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's nuclear chief says the "unprecedented" attack on the country's peaceful nuclear facilities in mid-June showed that the US and its allies, including Israel, are targeting the Islamic Republic's scientific capabilities.

Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Mohammad Esalmi made the remark in an interview with Yemen's al-Masirah television channel published late on Sunday, saying such an attack had not happened before in the history of targeting the scientific capabilities of countries.

"The nature of the attack and its timing show that the United States and its allies have entered a new phase of dangerous escalation of tensions in line with their war against Iran's scientific advancements," he said.

He added that targeting Iran's peaceful nuclear facilities constitutes a "blatant crime" against the will of a nation that is determined to enjoy peaceful nuclear technology in the face of all threats and pressures.

The AEOI chief emphasized that Iran is in possession of substantial evidence proving the nature of the aggression, the parties involved, and their motives.

The Iranian nuclear chief reiterated the country's firm determination to safeguard its rights, vowing that Tehran will never allow anybody to impose their own will upon it.

Iran's Defense Power Advancing Without Pause



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran's Army Chief Major General Amir Hatami says the Islamic Republic is continuously working to enhance its defensive capabilities in response to ongoing threats.

Hatami made the remarks during a meeting with members of the Civil Commission of Parliament on Sunday, emphasizing that the armed forces are committed to continuously advancing the nation's defense capabilities.

"Among the components of national power, those related to defense belong to the armed forces and the Army of the Islamic Republic, and we have not lost a moment in this field," he said, noting that Iran is "seriously and continuously striving to improve these components."

Referring to the 12-day war imposed by Israel in June, Hatami described leadership, sacrifices, and national cohesion as key elements that forced the enemy to request a ceasefire.

He also cited the decisive role of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, alongside the unity and resilience of the Iranian people and armed forces.

"The cohesion, empathy, insight, and determination of the Iranian nation, together with the efforts of the armed forces, compelled the enemy to request a ceasefire," he said.

Hatami also stressed that Iran is determined to preserve and further strengthen its defense capabilities, adding that the lessons learned from the war have significantly increased national awareness and readiness in confronting future threats.

Public Dissatisfaction With Administrative Services Is Unacceptable

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian said it is completely unacceptable for the government to allocate a budget to the administrative system and pay its employees while people remain dissatisfied with the quality of administrative services.

According to ISNA, the Strategic Council of the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics convened on Monday with President Pezeshkian in attendance.

Upon arriving at the Defense Ministry, the president visited the memorial for unknown martyrs and paid tribute to their sacrifice. He then toured parts of the facilities that were destroyed during the 12-day imposed war following the Zionist regime's attack.

At the start of the meeting, the Minister of Defense presented a detailed report on the ministry's activities and programs aimed at strengthening the country's defense capabilities. He also outlined cooperation efforts with public and private sectors, especially in technological collaborations and the exchange of capabilities and technologies.

Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh further described the ministry's actions during the recent Israeli aggression and the support provided to the armed forces.

Speaking at the meeting, Pezeshkian said he had come to express gratitude and offer encouragement to the staff of the Defense Ministry. He emphasized that given the ministry's mission, it can play a significant role in aligning national capacities and facilitating the transfer of its capabilities and achievements to the country's construction, technical, and infrastructure sectors.

The president also noted that the armed forces possess considerable human-resource capacities that could greatly assist the government in addressing structural imbalances and



resolving national challenges.

Referring to the experience of managing the frontlines during the eight-year Iran-Iraq War, Pezeshkian said: "At that time, people from all professions would leave their businesses to help the country in the war effort. Today, solving national problems requires the same model of management. We must overcome challenges through practical, not theoretical, jihad-style management."

Pezeshkian added that Iran's adversaries know well that a military attack alone cannot bring down the Islamic Republic. "They seek instead to exacerbate economic problems and structural imbalances to intensify public dissatisfaction and exploit it," he said.

The president identified the country's oversized administrative structure and its associated expenses as major root causes of budget deficits and resource-expenditure imbalances. He stressed that the government is working to reduce costs, eliminate such imbalances, and improve efficiency in the preparation of the 2026 national budget.

Highlighting the need to enhance the effectiveness of the administrative system alongside boosting productivity, Pezeshkian stated: "It is absolutely unacceptable for us to fund the administrative system and pay its employees while the public remains dissatisfied with the quality of its services."

Pezeshkian described unity and cohesion as key to overcoming national challenges. "Unfortunately, for 47 years we have focused on changing individuals instead of addressing root problems," he said. "Reform must start with ourselves, and this is the path the 14th administration has chosen."

Iran Ranked Among World's Leading Contributors in the Fight Against Narcotics

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian anti-narcotics official said Tuesday that the Islamic Republic remains at the forefront of the global fight against drug trafficking, citing more than four decades of intensive operations, thousands of casualties among security forces, and a steadfast commitment to curbing addiction—identified by the country's top leadership as the most severe social challenge facing Iran.

Speaking at a ceremony in southern Tehran where 20 tons of narcotics and psychotropic substances were publicly destroyed, Mohammad Zarei, Deputy Secretary-General of Iran's Drug Control Headquarters, emphasized the high human cost of Iran's long-running anti-narcotics campaign. "More than 4,000 of our forces have been martyred and nearly 12,000 wounded in this noble struggle," he said, stressing that such sacrifices have placed the Islamic Republic "at the top tier of global anti-drug combatants."

Iran's position between Afghanistan—the world's primary producer of opium and heroin—and markets in Europe and the Persian Gulf has for decades forced the country into the role of a defensive front line. Following the collapse of formal governance structures in Afghanistan in recent years and the instability that has allowed drug cultivation and trafficking routes to flourish, Iranian authorities say the burden on Iran's security forces has increased significantly.

Zarei highlighted this geopolitical reality, noting that the drug trade is "not only a scourge threatening our country but a global affliction." According to UN figures, more than 300 million people worldwide use illicit substances, and approximately 500,000 people die annually due to drug abuse—a toll that he said surpasses many modern wars and natural disasters.

The deputy secretary-general reiterated that Iran's actions are driven by both strategic necessity and ideological commitments. "Iran's leading position in protective and anti-narcotics efforts is rooted in deeply held values," he said. "Despite the heavy costs, the Islamic Republic has consistently fulfilled its responsibilities in safeguarding not only its own citizens but also contributing to global security."

He underscored remarks made by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader, who has repeatedly warned that addiction constitutes "the greatest social harm" in the country. The



government, Zarei added, has borne enormous social, economic, and human costs in its battle to curtail the spread of addiction and disrupt trafficking networks.

Zarei also praised Brigadier General Ahmadreza Radan, the Commander of Iran's national police force (FARAJA), for significant improvements in anti-drug operations in recent months.

"Following General Radan's appointment and the strategies implemented under his leadership, we have witnessed round-the-clock efforts by police personnel," he said. "Today, many of the troubling scenes that once dominated major problem zones in the capital—such as Shush, Herandi, Farahzad Valley, and the green belts along the Niayesh Expressway—have vanished."

These areas had long been known for high concentrations of homeless drug users, open-air dealing, and associated criminal activity. Their transformation, Zarei said, has been noticeable to residents and commuters who previously endured "the degradation of urban life and the distortion of the capital's image" due to visible addiction and trafficking.

The centerpiece of Tuesday's event was the destruction of more than 20 tons of narcotics, including opium, heroin, methamphetamine, synthetic drugs, and various psychotropic substances. These materials had been seized during months of police operations across Tehran Province.

The disposal took place in Kahrizak, south of Tehran, and officials described the event as a "major blow" to trafficking networks operating in and around the capital.

Law enforcement authorities emphasized that large-scale public destruction serves not only a symbolic purpose but also demonstrates the efficiency of ongoing operations and the state's determination to prevent seized drugs from re-entering illegal markets.

Despite the successes highlighted at the ceremony, Iranian officials acknowledge that the struggle remains far from over. The combination of domestic demand, international drug routes, regional instability, and sophisticated trafficking networks continues to pose complex challenges.

Nevertheless, Zarei concluded that Iran's long-standing leadership in fighting narcotics will continue. "Our record, our sacrifices, and our unwavering commitment place us at the forefront of global anti-drug efforts. This is a position earned through decades of relentless struggle—one that we will maintain as part of our moral and national responsibility."

Tehran to Host First "Nowruz Tourism Ministers Summit"



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts announced that Tehran will host the first-ever summit of tourism ministers from Nowruz-celebrating countries in spring 2026, highlighting the ancient festival's central role in Iran's cultural identity and regional diplomacy.

The decision was approved during the 25th Strategic Council meeting of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts on Monday, November 17, 2025. The session was attended by Minister Seyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, the head of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization, Mohammad-Mehdi Imanipour, and senior officials from the culture and tourism sectors.

Salehi-Amiri described the forthcoming summit—scheduled for Nowruz 1405—as a rare and significant regional event that could mark the beginning of a new phase of cultural and tourism cooperation among countries that share the centuries-old spring festival.

Emphasizing that Nowruz is "a common heritage of the region's nations and one of humanity's most ancient rituals," the minister noted that the New Year celebration, with its multi-millennial history and UNESCO inscription as Intangible Cultural Heritage, offers unparalleled potential for strengthening cultural ties and projecting Iran's soft power.

He said hosting the summit at the governmental level would not only boost social vitality inside Iran but also promote sustainable tourism, cultural dialogue, and joint initiatives to preserve the historical and spiritual assets of Nowruz-celebrating societies.

Iran to Respond to New Resolution With Fundamental Review of Policies



TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior Iranian diplomat says Tehran will carry out a "fundamental review" of its approaches if the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors adopts a new resolution against the country.

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs, Kazem Gharibabadi, made the remarks on Sunday in reaction to the European troika — France, Britain, and Germany — submitting a new resolution against Iran to the Board of Governors meeting next week.

"I hope they (E3) choose rationality and do not formally present the resolution, but if they do, Iran will certainly conduct a fundamental review of its policies," Gharibabadi said.

He added that the adoption of the resolution will certainly change the situation.

"If they do not value interaction and cooperation, Iran will make fundamental revisions to its approaches," he stressed.

He added that the three European countries have removed themselves from dialogue and diplomacy with Iran by triggering the snapback mechanism, reinstating UN sanctions on Iran over its peaceful nuclear program.



ICT Minister Travels to Baku for Global Telecommunications Conference

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Minister of Communications and Information Technology has departed for the Republic of Azerbaijan as part of the ministry's strategic "technology diplomacy" program aimed at strengthening international cooperation. The purpose of the trip is to attend the 2025 World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-25), held under the theme "Global, meaningful, and affordable connectivity for an inclusive and sustainable digital future."

Iran's Exports to Africa Double in First Half of the Year



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The acting head of the Africa Office at Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) announced a 100% increase in non-oil exports to Africa during the first six months of the current year, along with plans to hold an Africa Summit in December 2026 (Azar 1405). He said this achievement reflects Iran's growing position in the high-potential African market of 1.4 billion people.

According to the TPO, Mohammadreza Safari said that Iran's exports to Africa reached \$675 million in the first half of 1404, doubling compared to the same period last year.

Calling this growth a major success, Safari noted that the current export volume already represents 80% of last year's total exports to the continent. He expressed hope that by year's end, Iran will reach an unprecedented 10-year record in exports to African markets.

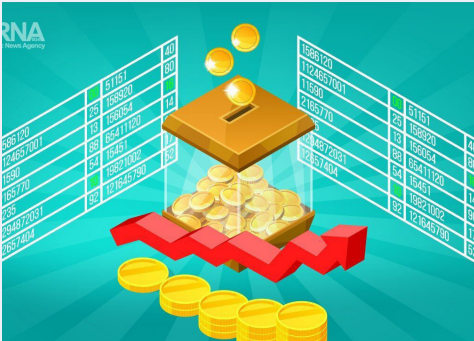
Safari described Africa as a vast and promising destination for Iranian businesses, particularly under the current sanctions and global conditions.

"Many traders, following recent international developments, are looking for new markets, and Africa can be a very suitable alternative," he said. With 1.4 billion people, the continent represents a significant consumer base for a wide range of Iranian products.

He cited the successful model of Asian countries such as China and Turkey—joint presence and co-production with African companies—and stressed that Iran should adopt similar strategies. Given the restrictions caused by sanctions, he added that Iran can propose new mechanisms such as barter trade to African partners. Some African countries, facing similar sanctions, are keen to expand cooperation with Iran.

Safari also referred to the recent convening of the 8th meeting of the Africa Headquarters within the government. This body, attended by the First Vice President and 13 ministers, oversees policy planning for Africa. Within its economic commission—led by the TPO—eight specialized committees have been formed to address key issues including shipping, air transport, credit lines, and agricultural development.

Foreign Investment in Isfahan Province Surpasses \$254m



Thousands of Anti-Graft Protesters Take to Streets of Manila

MANILA (Dispatches) - Tens of thousands of protesters returned to the streets of Manila for a second straight day on Monday, pressing their demands for accountability over alleged corruption in flood-mitigation projects. The protest, which started on Sunday and drew over 600,000 people, will run until Tuesday. It is organised by Iglesia Ni Cristo, a 2-million-strong church known for bloc voting, which mobilised members nationwide.

Many in Sunday's crowd expressed frustration at what they described as ineffective inquiries into irregularities in major infrastructure projects.

"We are calling for the government to carry out a real, sincere, investigation and not cover up for anyone who are involved in this anomaly," said 60-year-old Freddie Beley.



Japan Posts First GDP Dip Since 2024



TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan's economy shrank 0.4 percent in the three months to September, official data showed, as new Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's government prepares a major stimulus package.

The quarter-on-quarter reading for gross domestic product beat market expectations of minus 0.6 percent but was the first contraction since the first quarter of 2024.

The preliminary, seasonally adjusted figure follows growth of 0.6 percent—revised upwards from an earlier reading of plus 0.5 percent—for the April to June quarter.

Takaichi became Japan's first woman prime minister in October and has tasked her government with putting together a new stimulus package.

Finance Minister Satsuki Katayama said yesterday that the value would be "well above" 17 trillion yen (\$110 billion), local media reported.

The cabinet was expected to approve the package on Friday, the reports said.

BNP Paribas economist Ryutaro Kono said before the data was released that there was no need to view negative growth in the third quarter as "particularly serious".

"Exports rebounded in September on a monthly basis. Surveys... indicate that the overall business conditions in the export sector have not deteriorated due to the US tariff hikes, and corporate willingness to invest in equipment remains solid," Kono said.

Marcel Thieliant at Capital Economics warned however that current tensions with China following Takaichi's comments about Taiwan risk escalating "into a full-blown trade spat".

"There are several avenues through which this could play out, but the biggest risk is that China restricts exports of rare earths or imposes restrictions on Japanese exports," Thieliant said before the GDP release.

Russia Says Its Forces Advance in Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Region



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia said on Sunday its forces had moved forward sharply in Ukraine's southeastern Zaporizhzhia region, taking two settlements as part of a major push aimed at taking control of the entire Zaporizhzhia region.

With a smaller army than Russia's, Ukraine has been grappling with how to bolster defences in the Donetsk region while keeping the rest of the front stable under intense artillery and drone attack from highly mobile Russian units.

Since advancing into the Dnipropetrovsk region in late June, Russian forces have been pushing there and in the neighbouring Zaporizhzhia region where they have moved forward along a relatively broad front by at least 30 km (19 miles) over the past six weeks, according to pro-Ukrainian maps.

Russia's defence ministry said its forces had taken Rivnopillya, which puts the southern town of Huliaipole in danger of being the target of Russian pincer movements. It said Russian forces had also taken Mala Tokmachka, just 9 km (6 miles) from Orikhiv.

"It is difficult to overestimate the importance of this village for the defence of Orikhiv," said Yuri Podolyaka, one of Russia's top war bloggers, adding that Mala Tokmachka was essentially "the gateway to Orikhiv".

There was no immediate comment from Ukraine. Ukraine's top general said last week that fighting had worsened on parts of the Zaporizhzhia front including around the town of Huliaipole. Separately last week, Kyiv's military said its troops had fallen back from several villages in the area.

Ecuador Rejects Return of U.S. Military Bases in Major Setback for Noboa



QUITO (Dispatches) - Ecuadorans on Sunday rejected the return of U.S. military bases, early referendum results showed, dealing a setback to Trump-aligned President Daniel Noboa. With more than half the ballots counted, about 60% of voters opposed lifting the country's long-standing ban on hosting foreign military facilities.

With three-quarters of the vote counted, about 60 percent of Ecuadorans had voted 'no' to lifting a longstanding ban on foreign bases.

The rejection effectively blocks the U.S. military from returning to an airbase at Manta on the Pacific coast -- once a hub for Washington's anti-drug operations.

It is a serious defeat for Noboa, who has staked his political fortunes on tackling rampant cartel violence and forging an alliance with US President Donald Trump.

Nearly 14 million Ecuadorans were eligible to cast ballots on whether to overturn a 2008 ban on foreign military bases in the country.

"We respect the will of the Ecuadorian people," Noboa said, after results showed a solid majority of voters had rejected his proposals.

The vote came against the backdrop of U.S. military airstrikes against alleged drug smuggling boats in the Caribbean and Pacific, a divisive policy that Noboa has backed.

"The president's campaign has been disastrous," said 28-year-old engineer Oscar Varela. "Everything his government has said has been a lie."

Voters were also asked three other questions: whether they should end public funding for political parties, reduce the number of lawmakers, and create an elected body that would draft a new constitution.

Noboa had hoped a new constitution would give him more powers to tackle crime, curb the power of the judiciary, and reform the economy.

The early count showed those proposals failing by a large margin, too.

Noboa had hoped a new constitution would give him more powers to tackle crime, curb the power of the judiciary, and reform the economy.

The result is a shock. Polls had predicted that Noboa would win on all four questions, and he remains personally popular, having recently won a second term in office.

The referendum took place amid unprecedented violence sparked by turf wars between drug trafficking gangs who transport cocaine from Latin America to North America, Europe, and Asia.

In office since November 2023, Noboa has deployed soldiers on the streets and in prisons, launched dramatic raids on drug strongholds, and declared frequent states of emergency -- criticised by human rights groups.

The 37-year-old Porsche-driving millionaire has also posted images of hundreds of inmates, their heads shaved, in orange uniforms being moved to a new mega-prison, echoing moves by El Salvador's Nayib Bukele.

Still, in the first half of this year, there were 4,619 murders -- the "highest in recent history," according to Ecuador's Organised Crime Observatory.

Just as voting began, Noboa announced that the leader of the country's most notorious gang, Los Lobos, had been captured.

The most-wanted drug kingpin known as "Pipo" had "faked his death, changed his identity, and hid in Europe," Noboa said on X.

Interior Minister John Reimberg later said "Pipo" had been detained in Spain in a joint operation between Ecuadoran and Spanish police.

Once much safer, Ecuador now has one of the highest homicide rates in Latin America, and many would like to give Noboa freer rein.

Trump Hints at Possible Talks With Maduro

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Donald Trump said on Sunday the United States "may be having some discussions" with Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, signalling a possible diplomatic opening as Washington expands its military presence near Venezuela. The USS Gerald R. Ford's arrival, part of a counterdrug mission, has raised concerns it is aimed at pressuring Maduro.

Trump didn't offer details about the possible discussions with Maduro, but he said "Venezuela would like to talk."

The US military has been carrying out a series of strikes against vessels suspected of transporting drugs. The arrival of the USS Gerald R. Ford and other warships, announced by the Navy in a statement, marks a major moment in what the administration insists is a counterdrug operation but has been seen as an escalating pressure tactic against Maduro.

When asked Sunday what he meant when he said Maduwants to talk, Trump simply said: "What does it mean? You tell me, I don't know."

"I'll talk to anybody," he added a few moments later. "We'll see what happens."

Venezuela's government didn't immediately reply to a request for comment. Maduro, who faces charges of narcoterrorism in the US, has said the US government is "fabricating" a war against him.

The Ford rounds off the largest buildup of US firepower in the region in generations. With its arrival, the "Operation Southern Spear" mission includes nearly a dozen Navy ships and about 12,000 sailors and Marines.

The carrier's arrival coincided with the military announcing its latest deadly strike on a small boat it claims was ferrying illegal drugs. The military's Southern Command posted a video on X on Sunday showing the boat being blown up, an attack it said took place Saturday in international waters of the eastern Pacific Ocean and killed three men. The military did not immediately

respond to a request for more information.

Since early September, such strikes by the US in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific have killed at least 83 people in 21 attacks.

The carrier strike group, which includes squadrons of fighter jets and guided-missile destroyers, transited the Anegada Passage near the British Virgin Islands on Sunday morning, the Navy said.

Rear Adm. Paul Lanzilotta, who commands the strike group, said it will bolster an already large force of American warships to "protect our nation's security and prosperity against narco-terrorism in the Western Hemisphere."

Adm. Alvin Holsey, the commander who oversees the Caribbean and Latin America, said in a statement that the American forces "stand ready to combat the transnational threats that seek to destabilize our region."

Holsey, who will retire next month after just a year on the job, said the strike



group's deployment is "a critical step in reinforcing our resolve to protect the security of the Western Hemisphere and the safety of the American Homeland."

In Trinidad and Tobago, which is only 7 miles from Venezuela at its closest point, government officials said troops have begun "training exercises" with the U.S. military that will run through much of the week.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Sean Sobers described the joint exercises as the second in less than a month and said they are aimed at tackling violent crime on the island nation, which has become a stopover point for drug shipments headed to Europe and North America. The prime minister has been a vocal supporter of the US military strikes.

The exercises will include Marines from the 22nd Expeditionary Unit who have been stationed aboard the Navy ships that have been looming off Venezuela's coast for months.

Venezuela's government has described the training exercises as an act of aggression. It had no immediate comment Sunday on the arrival of the aircraft carrier.

Meanwhile, Army Secretary Dan Driscoll said Sunday that US troops have been training in Panama, underscoring the administration's increasing focus on Latin America.

"We're reactivating our jungle school in Panama. We would be ready to act on whatever" Trump and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth needed, he told CBS' "Face the Nation."

The administration has insisted that the buildup of American forces in the region is focused on stopping the flow of drugs into the US but it has released no evidence to support its assertions that those killed in the boats were "narcoterrorists." Trump has indicated military action would expand beyond strikes by sea, saying the US would "stop the drugs coming in by land."

Chile Sends Communist Jara and Far-Right Kast to Presidential Run-Off

SANTIAGO (Dispatches) - Chile's former labor minister Jeannette Jara and far-right leader Jose Antonio Kast will face a presidential run-off after leading Sunday's first-round vote, provisional results showed. With 82.97% counted, Jara had 26.71% and Kast 24.12%. The campaign has been dominated by rising violent crime blamed on foreign gangs.

With 82.97 percent of the results counted, Jara, a 51-year-old communist running on behalf of an eight-party coalition, won 26.71 percent, compared to 24.12 percent for Kast, the Servel electoral service said.

The election was dominated by deep concern over a surge in murders, kidnappings and extortion widely blamed on foreign crime gangs.

Kast, 59, has vowed to build walls, fences and trenches along Chile's border with Bolivia to keep out migrants from poorer countries to the north, such as Venezuela.

As the results came in, he called for unity and vowed to "rebuild" Chile after four years of center-left rule, which he termed "maybe the worst government in Chile's democratic history."

Jara, a minister under outgoing center-left President Gabriel Boric, has



promised to hire more police, lift banking secrecy to tackle organized crime and tackle cost-of-living issues.

Her score was several percentage points below pollsters' predictions, while Kast's exceeded expectations.

Rodrigo Arellano, an analyst at Chile's University for Development, called the results "very bad news" for Jara and said it seemed "unlikely" she could win the December 14 run-off.

"Not only is her vote count low, but the combined total of the opposition candidates is almost more than double hers," he pointed out, blaming anti-incumbent and anti-communist sentiment.

"Don't let fear harden your hearts," Jara appealed to voters, insisting that the answer to crime was not to "come up with ideas, each more radical than the next" and hide behind bulletproof glass -- a dig at Kast's draconian campaign security measures.

Maverick economist Franco Parisi caused surprise by finishing third on 19.42 percent, ahead of ultra-right MP Johannes Kaiser on 13.93 percent and former conservative mayor Evelyn Matthei, the establishment choice, on 12.70 percent.



Sinner Caps Eventful Year With ATP Finals Triumph Over Alcaraz

TTURIN (Dispatches) - Jannik Sinner ended a turbulent season in the best possible fashion after seeing off Carlos Alcaraz in straight sets, 7-6 (7/4), 7-5, to retain his ATP Finals title in front of delighted fans in Turin.

Italian Sinner brought the house down by winning the championship match tennis fans wanted to see, adding the prestigious year-ending tournament to the Australian Open and a landmark triumph at Wimbledon this season.

The 24-year-old also bounced back from a three-month ban which chopped out a large chunk of his season despite the World Anti-Doping Agency accepting that the Italian was accidentally contaminated with banned substance clostebol last year.

"It has been a really long week... it was a brilliant atmosphere here, it was almost like being at a football match," said Sinner on court to loud cheers.

"I'm really happy to have given something positive to all of you."

Sinner has now won 31 straight matches on indoor hard courts, a run which stretches back to the 2023 championship match at Turin's Inalpi Arena which he lost to Novak Djokovic.

Four more indoor wins would draw him level with Djokovic's tally set between 2012 and 2015 -- the second-highest in the Open era but some way behind John McEnroe's record of 47.

He hasn't dropped a set at the Finals since losing that final to the Serb two years ago, and he was imperious over the week in northern Italy.

Alcaraz, unlike Sinner, now heads into the Davis Cup after a remarkable individual season in which has won eight tournaments in total and taken his Grand Slam tally to six.

Spaniard Alcaraz had the edge over Sinner over the course of the season, winning four of their six match-ups, which all decided top-level tournaments, and pipping his rival to the year-end world number one spot.

"I'm really really happy with the level that I played today, with the performance," said Alcaraz.

"I mean I just played against someone that hasn't lost a match indoor for two years now, so that means you know how great player you are," Alcaraz told Sinner.

While both Sinner and Alcaraz breezed into the final, the championship game was an attritional affair, with each player rock-solid on serve until an enthralling tie-break at the end of the first set.

Sinner took the lead thanks to a brilliant lob which set up set point, and he made no mistake with a missile of a serve which Alcaraz could only limply send wide.

But Sinner immediately handed Alcaraz the advantage in the second set with two double-faults which helped hand his opponent a break of serve at the start of the frame.

Sinner hadn't dropped a service game in the whole tournament up to that point but he broke back in game six to put the crowd on their feet.

And Sinner collapsed to the ground in joy when Alcaraz sent a backhand wide on the first championship point, before heading into the stands to share his joy with his family amid the roars of the crowd.

Portugal, Norway Clinch 2026 World Cup Spots

PARIS (Dispatches) - Portugal booked their ticket to the 2026 World Cup with a 9-1 victory over Armenia, while an Erling Haaland brace rubber-stamped Norway's place in the global showpiece as they romped to a 4-1 win in Italy.

After being held by Hungary and then stunned by Republic of Ireland last time out, Portugal sealed top spot in Group F at the third time of asking with a resounding win over bottom-side Armenia.

In the absence of the suspended Cristiano Ronaldo, star midfielders Bruno Fernandes and Joao Neves both scored hat-tricks as the Portuguese ran riot in Porto.

Renato Veiga, Goncalo Ramos and Francisco Conceicao were also on the scoresheet.

"The most important thing was qualifying for the World Cup," Paris Saint-Germain lynchpin Neves told RTP.

"For me, as I always say, the team always comes before the individual. I'm very happy to have scored my first goal for the national team, and my second and third as well."

Portugal will compete in a seventh consecutive edition of the World Cup, a tournament which the Euro 2016 champions are yet to win.

"We're at the World Cup! Let's go, Portugal!" Ronaldo posted on social media.

The striker could miss the start of the tournament



depending on whether FIFA extend his suspension beyond the mandatory one-match ban he served against Armenia.

Ireland sewed up the play-off place in the group thanks to Troy Parrott's 96th-minute hat-trick goal handing them a 3-2 win over third-placed Hungary.

Daniel Lukacs gave the hosts the lead in Hungary after four minutes, before Parrott levelled from 12 yards shortly afterwards.

Barnabas Varga's 37th-minute goal looked to have been enough for Hungary to seal second spot until 23-year-old Parrott notched his fourth and fifth international goals this week.

Parrott was the hero with his brace in Thursday's 2-0 defeat of Portugal, and he struck to equalise again for Ireland with 10 minutes remaining in the Hungarian capital.

The AZ Alkmaar forward then sparked wild Irish celebrations as he prodded home Liam Scallan's knockdown deep into injury time to send Heimir Hallgrimsson's side into March's play-offs.

Italy needed a miracle in Milan to pip Norway to first place in Group I due to the visitors' gargantuan goal difference advantage.

Braathen Wins Levi Slalom for First Brazilian World Cup Victory



LEVI (Dispatches) - Lucas Pinheiro Braathen held his nerve to win the men's slalom in the Finnish resort of Levi, a maiden World Cup victory for Brazil.

That proved decisive as he timed an aggregate of 1min 50.72sec for victory.

France's Clement Noel was second, at 0.31sec, with Finland's Eduard Hallberg edging Britain's Laurie Taylor to round out the podium.

"It represents who I am, I think," said Braathen, who left the Norwegian set-up in 2023 after clinching the World Cup slalom crystal glob and announced his link-up with the Brazilian federation in March 2024.

"I'm just out here trying to do it my own way and try to ski with my heart, try to ski for myself instead of for others.

"It has cost a lot of big sacrifices. It's been quite challenging.

"Being oneself is a tough road to go, but for me it's the right way and it led me to the very top today here in Levi," said Braathen, a five-time World Cup winner when representing Norway, his father's country and the nation where he largely grew up.

An emotional Braathen added: "This one is a win that is a way bigger personal win than it is a win for the athlete that I am.

"This is a win for me and myself and the choices that I've made and the purpose that I have."

Taylor, 15th fastest in the first run, blasted down with the fastest time in the second, taking the lead ahead of fancied rivals such as Austria's Manuel Feller and Marco Schwarz, and the Swiss pair of Daniel Yule and Tanguy Nef.

Then came the top 10. Croatia's Samuel Kolega, Switzerland's reigning world champion Loic Meillard, Norway's 2023 world champion Henrik Kristoffersen, Frenchman Steven Amiez and Austrian Fabio Gstrein all failed to bother the podium places.

Norway's Atle Lie McGrath, sixth fastest in the first leg, skied out, before Hallberg sent the crowd wild with a descent that snatched the lead by just four-hundredths of a second.

Hakimi, Osimhen, Salah Shortlisted for Top African Award



JOHANNESBURG (Dispatches) - Moroccan Achraf Hakimi, Nigerian Victor Osimhen and Egyptian Mohamed Salah were shortlisted on Sunday for the 2025 African men's player of the year award, the Confederation of African Football (CAF) announced.

Currently injured, full-back Hakimi helped Paris Saint-Germain win the UEFA Champions League for the first time and finish runners-up to Chelsea in the final of the expanded Club World Cup.

If fit, the 27-year-old will lead hosts Morocco in the Africa Cup of Nations from December 21 as they seek to win the competition for the first time since 1976.

Twice winner of the African award, Salah has been struggling lately after an outstanding contribution to Liverpool winning the Premier League a record-equalling 20th time last season.

The 33-year-old won the 2024-25 Premier League Golden Boot award with 29 goals, six more than Alexander Isak, who has since moved from Newcastle United to Liverpool.

Osimhen, from top Turkish outfit Galatasaray, has been outstanding recently for club and country, but some of his achievements will not count as the deadline for the judges was October 15.

That rules out a Champions League hat-trick against Ajax in Amsterdam and two goals in a 2026 World Cup play-off victory over Gabon last Thursday.

Paris Saint-Germain star Ajibade was voted the best player at the Africa women's Cup of Nations this year after Nigeria came from two goals behind to defeat hosts Morocco 3-2 in the final.

Gafford Helps Push Mavericks Past Blazers in OT

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Daniel Gafford's contributions on both ends of the floor proved critical down the stretch, as the Dallas Mavericks snapped a three-game skid and avoided a winless homestand with their 138-133 overtime defeat of the Portland Trail Blazers.

Gafford, limited thus far in 2025-26 by an ankle injury, delivered a season-high 20 points, including four in the final seconds of the extra period for Dallas.

His free throws with 1:39 remaining gave the Mavericks the lead for good and ignited a 6-0 mini-run that effectively put the game away. During one sequence, Gafford rejected Shaedon Sharpe at the rim, then finished at the other end on a physical basket in the paint to give Dallas a five-point advantage.

Gafford's block and bucket followed P.J. Washington's thunderous dunk on a leakout, set up from Cooper Flagg's outlet assist off a missed Sharpe 3-pointer.



Sharpe's inability to score in the final minute and a half came at an inopportune time on an otherwise outstanding night for the Portland guard. He scored a season-high 36 points, just one shy of matching his career best, and dished six assists.

Sharpe was left shouldering the load after Deni Avdija, the Blazers' season-long leading scorer, fouled out. Avdija finished with 29 points, seven assists and six rebounds.

Flagg and Washington led the Mavericks with 21 points apiece. Brandon Williams and Max Christie added 15 and 14 points, respectively.

Portland's scoring came almost entirely from its starting five, with Jerami Grant adding 26 points, Donovan Clingan scoring 16 and Toumani Camara chipping in 11. Clingan and Camara both recorded double-doubles with 11 and 10 rebounds, respectively.