

Government Announced a 66.6% Increase in the Above-Quota Price of Gasoline While Retaining Heavily Subsidized Fuel Quotas for Millions of Motorists as the Free-Market Gasoline Price Will Rise by 20,000 Rials to 50,000 Rials Per Liter (USD 0.044) Starting December 6

IRAN NEWS

Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi Held a Phone Call Late Tuesday With Venezuelan Foreign Minister Yván Gil Pinto to Discuss Bilateral Relations and the Latest Developments in the Caribbean Region

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Fajr International Film Festival: A Platform for Sustainable Global Collaboration in Cinema



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance of Iran has described the Fajr International Film Festival as an important opportunity for establishing lasting collaborations among filmmakers from around the world. In a formal message issued on the occasion of the 43rd edition of the festival, Seyyed Abbas Salehi emphasized the festival's mission to create broader cultural engagement between Iran and the global film community.

According to the official press office of the Fajr International Film Festival, Salehi highlighted that the Islamic Republic of Iran firmly believes in the influential role of art in fostering mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence among nations. He noted that the festival serves as a venue for exchanging cinematic experiences, discovering fresh perspectives, and building sustainable partnerships among filmmakers from different countries.

Salehi began his message by underscoring the universal nature of cinema. "Cinema is a global language," he wrote. "It is an art that transcends borders and engages human experiences through a shared visual medium." Based on this principle, he continued, the Fajr International Film Festival aims to gather diverse cinematic viewpoints under one roof and provide a deeper understanding of contemporary global realities.

The minister further explained that Iranian cinema, since its inception, has been rooted in ethics, human dignity, and poetic expression. These values, he stated, have shaped the identity of Iranian filmmaking and continue to inspire new generations of filmmakers. This year's edition of the festival, he added, places a renewed focus on these principles, seeking to promote works that integrate honesty and humanity with artistic innovation.

Iran Urges European Accountability in Saddam's Chemical Weapons Program



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's foreign minister has underscored the responsibility of European countries, notably the Netherlands and Germany, in directly or indirectly equipping and expanding the former Iraqi regime's chemical weapons program.

Abbas Araqchi made the remarks during a meeting with Dutch Foreign Minister David van Weel on the sidelines of the 30th session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), held under the auspices of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), in The Hague, the Netherlands, on Tuesday.

Araqchi highlighted the suffering of innocent victims of chemical weapons, particularly in the city of Sardasht. He urged all governments to promote the rule of law and avoid complicity or indifference to law-breaking and bullying behaviors, given the current dominance of belligerent unilateralism in international relations.

Araqchi also called for serious cooperation on the part of concerned countries in independent judicial investigations into the entities and individuals involved in the Saddam regime's war crimes against the Iranians.

Israel Only Obstacle to Establishing WMD-Free Zone in West Asia

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Iranian foreign minister has slammed Israel's non-adherence to chemical weapons disarmament treaties as the primary barrier to regional stability, while also lashing out at the United States for non-compliance.

Abbas Araqchi made the remarks while addressing the thirtieth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), held under the auspices of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), in The Hague, the Netherlands, on Tuesday.

"The Israeli regime has acceded to no disarmament treaty whatsoever, including the Chemical Weapons Convention, and remains the only obstacle to the establishment of an ME WMD-free zone."

He further warned of the heightened risks posed by weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) under Israeli control.

"WMDs are always dangerous and inhuman, but when they are in the hands of wanted criminals who have been engaged in massacre and genocide for the past 2 years, constitute an existential threat to human civilization and to our planet," he said. "The Israeli regime must be compelled to accede to the Convention and to submit to full-scope inspections, as a priority for OPCW."

Araqchi praised the CWC as "the most successful disarmament treaty" but cautioned that its efficacy depends on universal compliance.

He criticized selective enforcement, stating, "Selective application or politically driven interpretations of the Convention's provisions would undermine our shared objectives and erode the collective trust among States Parties."

He highlighted ongoing compliance issues with the United States and other countries.

"That said, the cases of non-compliance and/or delays by the United States and certain other States must be duly addressed. They are grounded in the Organization's official reports, the statements of former officials of those countries, and matters previously highlighted in earlier sessions. We underscore that full transparency and constructive cooperation with verification mechanisms are indispensable to preserving the credibility of this Convention."

Araqchi detailed Iran's formal complaints against instances of non-compliance or delays in fulfilling the Convention's obligations by the United States.

"The US is continuing to develop non-lethal weapons and, according to its official sources, implementing various projects to weaponize psychoactive substances and synthetic opioid-based agents."



Araqchi said the US-Israeli acts of aggression exemplify 'militant unilateralism' threatening global norms.

"We all can sense how badly today's international relations face unprecedented distress due to 'militant unilateralism' disguised as 'rules-based order.' The United Nations and its underlying purposes and principles are under attack."

"Even worse, such violations are systematically normalized. What is taking place in our region, i.e., the Israeli perpetual wars, aggressions, genocide, and colonial expansion, is the direct outcome of American support and certain European countries' appeasement."

He said the US contempt for international law has translated into a bold attempt to construct a "force-based international order" where resorting to naked military power in pursuit of its illegitimate interests is justified.

Araqchi said West Asia is highly familiar with lawless behavior as Israeli-American wars have kept the entire region in a state of "perpetual insecurity and massive bloodshed," pointing to the genocide in Gaza and the regime's attacks on Lebanon and Syria, among others

He specifically addressed Israel's act of aggression against Iran, saying, "Israel's unlawful armed attack against Iran last June, followed by American direct military intervention, showcased the prevalence of militancy and armed bullying over 'rule of law.'"

Elaborating on the implications, Araqchi said the Israeli aggressions were not only a blatant attack on the tenets of the UN Charter and international law but also a huge blow to the NPT regime and the founding pillars of the CWC.

"They attacked not only our safeguarded nuclear facilities but also the installations and sites under the OPCW's verification mandate, thereby triggering the risk of the release of chemical and radioactive materials - a danger that could have threatened human health and the environment well beyond Iran's borders."

In his address, Araqchi reiterated Iran's demand for accountability regarding chemical weapons used during the Iran-Iraq War, which killed over 20,000 Iranian soldiers and medics and left tens of thousands more with long-term injuries.

"Those who provided the Saddam regime with the necessary materials and know-how to develop its military chemical program must be held to account. We urge those countries to be responsive to our constant call to undertake an independent and transparent investigation into their companies and nationals who were involved in procurement, development, and use of the former Iraqi regime's chemical weapons program."

Judiciary Chief Criticizes Use of Terms "Radical" and "Moderate" in National Political Discourse

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Judiciary Chief, Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei, has strongly criticized the increasing use of what he described as "baseless and fabricated words" such as "radical" (tondro) and "moderate" (kondro) in the country's political language. Speaking on the occasion of the 46th anniversary of Nationwide Basij Week, Ejei argued that these terms are misleading and should not be promoted within the political culture of the Islamic Republic.

"These non-realistic words have been invented and should not be expanded. There is no such thing as being a radical or slow-moving in the context of the Islamic Revolution; moving ahead or lagging behind the ideals of the Imam [Khomeini] is what's wrong," he said.

Ejei delivered these remarks during a meeting with a large gathering of Basij members. He emphasized that a true Basij—whether in war, peace, or social unrest—is someone who fulfills their duties responsibly, is committed to religious values, revolutionary principles, and acts rationally in defense of the truth. "Such a person is a member of Hezbollah," he added.

Calling the Basij "a fruitful, solid, and blessed tree," Ejei praised its role beyond Iran's borders, stating that the spirit of Basij has now become an international force confronting global arrogance. He stressed that Basij is not defined by a particular class or social group; rather, it belongs to the entire Iranian nation, and all segments of society benefit from its constructive services.

Even individuals who may not share religious or revolutionary sentiments, he said, ultimately benefit from the actions and sacrifices of Basij members: "During crises, disasters, and various social events, it is the Basij who step forward and serve the people without expecting anything in return."

Ejei described Basij members as "idealistic yet rational," adding that they continue



advancing their knowledge and spirituality while working to equip themselves with modern technology. "They are believers, committed, rational, revolutionary, defenders of the oppressed, adversaries of oppressors, sincere and tireless, enduring hardships in the path of truth. These are the characteristics by which our Basijis are known across the world," he said, stressing once again that the labels "radical" or "moderate" hold no meaningful value.

Turning toward his own institution, the Judiciary Chief highlighted that judges and staff are the main assets of the judicial system. He noted that the Judiciary includes around 17,000 active Basij members who, in his view, can play an essential role in enhancing ethics, training, and professional behavior within the judicial body.

He emphasized the need to recruit committed and talented youth into the Judiciary and said Basij members can help both in identifying skilled individuals and in training judicial personnel before and after employment. Ejei also urged Basij members to lead efforts in strengthening professional ethics, improving public interactions, protecting the integrity of the Judiciary, and supporting vulnerable staff.

"Respecting and serving people who come to judicial centers is a top priority for us. We ask Basij members to stand with us in this vital responsibility," he said. He added that protecting judicial staff from ethical and legal missteps is a crucial task, noting that the consequences of misconduct by a judicial employee are far more severe than in other institutions.

Finally, Ejei called on Basij-affiliated Judiciary employees to support cultural and moral programs aimed at strengthening the families of judicial workers. He reiterated that despite the demanding nature of judicial work, staff must not neglect their families. "We consider ourselves responsible for supporting the families of the Judiciary's employees. We ask for your help in enhancing the spiritual, cultural, and social lives of these families," he concluded.

A Tariff War Was Declared Against Trump

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

One of the actions that Donald Trump took during nearly one year of occupying the White House was increasing customs duties on imported goods into the United States, known as the "tariff war" against other countries. He believed that this would give him a superior diplomatic tool against other nations while also increasing the White House's revenue.

But, and what a big but, he was unaware that in the short term, higher tariffs would blow back into the eyes of the American people themselves, causing inflation and a rise in prices.

Now, a report by CNN shows that the majority of Americans in new polls emphasize that the cost of living in every sector—from food and housing to healthcare and energy—has increased sharply, and contrary to the Trump administration's claims, prices are rising every single day. Besides raw statistics speaking loudly, as the Trump administration approaches its first anniversary, Americans feel that prices are increasing daily in every small and large sector.

These are how costs have risen compared to one year ago:
Food: 85%; Bills and services: 78%; Healthcare: 67%; Housing: 66%; and Gasoline: 54%.

The U.S. Treasury Secretary recently stated that prices will go down. So what do the American people think?

CNN, interviewing the public, answers on their behalf: "People think he's talking nonsense, that's exactly what they think." Rising tariffs are already driving prices up.

84% of Democrats, 74% of Independents; and even a majority of Republicans believe that tariffs are increasing prices. Therefore, in this survey, when you manage to get the majority of both Republicans and Democrats to agree on one issue, it means the pain has truly reached the American people. End of message.



Larijani Extends Gratitude to Pakistan for Support During U.S.-Israeli War



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Larijani has thanked Pakistan for backing Iran during the "unjust war" of June waged by the Zionist regime and the United States.

In an X post, Larijani lauded Pakistan for "responsibly standing in Iran's defense," calling the position a reflection of the "firm and principled thinking of the Pakistani people."

The official, who was visiting Pakistan, said he conveyed the greetings of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei to the people of Pakistan.

Earlier, he held separate meetings with Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, President Asif Ali Zardari, and National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq.

According to a statement by Pakistan's government, Larijani and Sharif emphasized the historic and brotherly ties between Iran and Pakistan, calling for deeper cooperation in multiple fields.

Sharif praised Iran's principled regional positions and expressed gratitude for Tehran's solidarity with Pakistan.

It was agreed that a delegation led by Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar would soon travel to Iran to expand cooperation, particularly in agriculture and communications.

In a separate meeting, Zardari reaffirmed Pakistan's solidarity with Iran in the face of Israeli aggression and pledged continued diplomatic and political support. He welcomed progress in talks on the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline and underscored the need to enhance trade and connectivity, including rail links.

IRAN NEWS

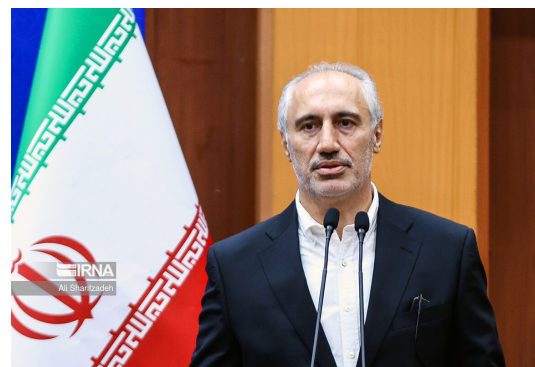


IRGC Seizes Large Cache of Explosives, Weapons at Northwestern Border

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says it has seized a large cache of explosives and military equipment belonging to anti-Iran militant groups near the country's northwestern border.

According to a statement carried by IRGC's official news portal Sepah News on Tuesday, the IRGC's Hamzeh Seyyed ul-Shohada base intercepted the cargo while it was being smuggled into Iran through the Targor border area in Urmia county. The shipment included significant quantities of explosives, weapons, and ammunition, including 198 explosive devices, the statement said.

Next Year's Budget Must Avoid Deficit



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The head of Iran's Planning and Budget Organization announced that next year's national budget must be prepared in a way that prevents any deficit, drawing on the financial performance of the past eight months.

Speaking to reporters on Tuesday evening after a meeting of the Parliament's Budget and Planning Committee, Seyyed Hamid Pournomahmadi outlined the government's legal obligation to submit the draft budget for the Iranian year 1405 (2026-2027) by December 21, as well as the budgets of state-owned companies by December 30. He emphasized that, based on new parliamentary regulations, the annual budget must be presented without additional legislative provisions.

Pournomahmadi explained that this rule was introduced so that necessary regulatory provisions would instead be included in the separate "Annex Bill (3)," which is still under review. He added that despite the bill's pending status, the government must urgently deliver the annual budget to Parliament.

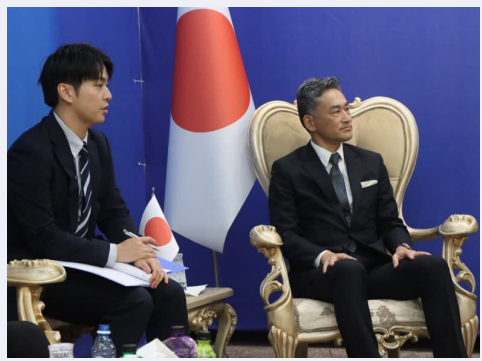
He stressed that the budget must be drafted based on a foundational law and predetermined regulations. The session, he said, focused on finalizing measures related to Annex Bill (3) so that it could soon be presented in an open parliamentary session and approved, allowing the budget to be drafted in accordance with it.

The budget organization chief noted that if the bill is not resolved in time, alternative solutions were also discussed to ensure the timely submission of the 1405 budget.

According to Pournomahmadi, another topic of the meeting involved presenting precise figures on government revenues and expenditures, enabling lawmakers to clearly see how much revenue has been realized, which sources have fallen short, what expenses have been paid, and what obligations remain.

He concluded that the eight-month financial performance of this year must serve as a guide for constructing next year's budget: identifying which budget lines could be eliminated, which projects should be prioritized, and how to balance government income and spending without harming the national economy.

Ahvaz Proposes Joint Innovation and AI Center With Japan



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

AHVAZ - The head of the Ahvaz Chamber of Commerce announced a formal proposal to establish a joint Ahvaz-Japan Innovation and Artificial Intelligence Center, emphasizing that bilateral economic cooperation will focus on non-sanctioned and technical sectors.

Speaking during the Japanese ambassador's visit to Khuzestan and in a meeting with senior economic officials, Shahla Amouri said that a strategic cooperation roadmap has been prepared, based on five key areas exempt from sanctions due to their technical, educational, and infrastructural nature.

Amouri highlighted the long-standing commercial relations between Iran and Japan, built on "respect and mutual trust," noting that this foundation provides strong support for expanding future cooperation.

The Ahvaz Chamber president stated that Khuzestan can utilize Japanese expertise to develop industrial waste management programs and water recycling projects, with Japanese specialists contributing to their technical implementation.

She added that establishing a joint innovation center at the Chamber's headquarters—focused on artificial intelligence, digital trade, and industrial efficiency—would support skilled workforce development, facilitate technology transfer, and strengthen the competitive edge of Khuzestan's export-oriented industries.

With a large fleet of Japanese-made machinery already in the province, Amouri said that localizing supply of original spare parts and specialized maintenance services could create a "low-risk market, sheltered from sanctions."

Cuban President Invites Iranian Brands to Enter Chain Stores in Cuba

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel has voiced strong support for expanding economic cooperation with Iran's private sector, inviting Iranian food industry brands to supply products to Cuba's national chain stores. The remarks came during his visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran's pavilion at the 41st Havana International Fair.

Diaz-Canel was welcomed by Samad Hassanzadeh, President of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture; Ghadir Giafeh, the chamber's Vice President; and Iran's Ambassador to Cuba, Zabiollah Naderi. The Cuban president toured booths showcasing the capabilities of Iranian companies in industrial manufacturing, exports and various commercial services.

During discussions with representatives of Iranian firms, Diaz-Canel reviewed details of their products, technologies and export capacities, expressing hope that the exhibition and its accompanying trade forums would pave the way for stronger cooperation, expanded economic ties and new trade opportunities between the two nations. He emphasized that Cuba fully supports mutual investment and the development of economic exchanges with Iran.

Iran's pavilion features companies active in petrochemicals, food production, industrial equipment, clothing, trade services and economic institutions — a presence that Diaz-Canel praised as demonstrating Cuba's interest in deeper cooperation with Iran.

During his visit to a booth of an Iranian pump manufacturer, he instructed officials to facilitate meetings between the company's representatives, Cuba's Water Resources Institute and the Minister of Foreign Trade to explore technical collaboration.

While visiting Iranian food producers, the Cuban president invited them to visit local chain stores and plan for product distribution in Cuba. In discussions with Iranian footwear manufacturers, he encouraged direct negotiations with Cuban companies to identify areas for joint production.

Diaz-Canel also pointed to a recent agreement between Iran's and Cuba's food and drug regulatory agencies as a model that could be expanded to other fields of economic cooperation.

Samad Hassanzadeh, who accompanied the Cuban president during the visit, praised Cuba's cooperation in providing vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic and said Iran's Chamber of Commerce is working to increase private sector presence in the Cuban market by improving knowledge of its regulations and needs.

He stressed that unfamiliarity with market demands remains a key obstacle to expanding trade, urging both governments to facilitate exchange of market information for greater business interaction.

Hassanzadeh identified pharmaceuticals and medical equipment, tourism, agricultural investment and mining as attractive sectors for expanding bilateral



cooperation.

Meanwhile later Hassanzadeh said that addressing challenges in Cuba's agricultural supply chain could become one of Iran's areas of activity in the country. He also emphasized that Iran is well-positioned to help revive Cuban industries that have been inactive for years.

Speaking to Al-Mayadeen during the 41st Havana International Fair (FIHAV 2025), which opened in a formal ceremony attended by Cuba's president, economic ministers, ambassadors, and heads of business chambers, Hassanzadeh highlighted the participation of major Iranian producers, economic actors, and leading industrial and food companies in

the event. He noted that Iran's significant capabilities in technical and engineering services, oil and petrochemical industries could support expanded economic cooperation with Cuba.

The head of the Iran Chamber stressed that many Iranian products are well-suited to Cuba's market needs. With advanced technology and expertise across multiple sectors, he said, Iran could provide valuable support in restoring Cuban industries that have been dormant for years, enabling Cuba to benefit from Iran's capacities and resources.

Hassanzadeh pointed to sugarcane cultivation as a promising area for bilateral agricultural initiatives, stating that the Iranian private sector is prepared to help resolve challenges in Cuba's supply chain based on Iran's agricultural capabilities.

He also called Cuba's recent achievements in biomedical research and vaccine development a strong foundation for mutual cooperation, adding that Iran's own accomplishments in healthcare make "health diplomacy" a practical path for strengthening bilateral relations.

Regarding Cuba's tourism sector, Hassanzadeh said he has instructed the Iran Chamber's International Affairs Department to take effective steps to better familiarize Iranian businesses with the Cuban market in order to identify opportunities for the presence of Iranian products in the country.

Vice President Ghadir Giafeh also pointed to the potential of the mining and mineral industries, expressing hope that trade volume between Iran and Cuba could reach \$1 billion annually within five years through a focus on this sector.

While trade between Iran and Cuba has grown steadily in recent years, officials acknowledged it remains far below its potential. In 2023, bilateral trade reached approximately \$218 million — a significant rise from previous years but still short of capacity.

Iran's main exports to Cuba include petroleum derivatives, petrochemicals, construction materials and food products such as rice, wheat, poultry and oilseeds. Cuba's major imports from Iran consist of pharmaceuticals, medical equipment and technical and engineering services.

Iran to Approve Long-Awaited Bill on Preventing Violence Against Women

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Vice President for Women and Family Affairs has announced new updates on the long-pending bill to prevent violence against women, the issuance of motorcycle licenses for women, and the government's policy on undocumented migrants. She also confirmed that the current administration has broken national records in appointing women to high-level managerial posts.

According to the government's information center, Zahra Behrouz Azar said that the 14th administration believes "society cannot reach its peak without both wings: women and men." She emphasized that women have always played a crucial role in Iranian society — from ancient history to the Islamic Revolution, and during the Iran-Iraq war. She said one of the administration's main goals is to remove barriers to women's advancement in line with the Seventh Development Plan.

Behrouz Azar reported that women now occupy 28 senior positions at ministerial or equivalent levels under the current administration. She noted that 21 executive appointments for women have been issued by the President so far, and 14 female members have joined national high councils.

She stressed that the government is working to ensure that these appointments include women from diverse social backgrounds, not only from limited groups. Training courses for female provincial and ministerial advisers have been held in cooperation with the Interior Ministry, with 70 women participating. These programs aim to help female managers represent the issues of vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and migrants in policymaking.

Behrouz Azar revealed that Iran will soon appoint its first female governor. Currently, 28 women serve as county governors, and the first was appointed for a Sunni woman in Kurdistan Province. She said the rising number of women in government is inspiring new ambitions among girls, who now see the possibility of becoming ministers or governors.

Calling it her biggest wish in government, Behrouz Azar said that the proposed law preventing violence against women has been under



review for 13 years. The government submitted the bill again to parliament last year, and Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf has personally followed up on its progress, she said.

Although some inter-agency coordination issues have slowed its passage, she promised that "the bill will soon receive final approval from parliament."

Behrouz Azar stressed that violence against women is not only a legal issue but also a cultural problem, noting that violence committed by men against women in Iran is "30 times higher than violence committed by women

against men."

On the issue of motorcycle licensing for women, the Vice President confirmed that there is no legal restriction. However, she said implementation requires practical measures such as female instructors, training centers, and police officers. The Interior Ministry is working on these procedures, and the Women and Family Affairs office is helping coordinate with legal authorities to finalize the process.

Behrouz Azar highlighted major economic support programs for women, particularly a new employment loan program worth 600 trillion rials (60 thousand billion tomans). For the first time, women's initiatives were prioritized in issuing these loans, especially for heads of households, rural and nomadic women, homemakers, working mothers, and female university students.

She said more than two million people — mostly women — have applied for home-based business support. She added that new cooperation with the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Communications aims to speed up online licensing, which now takes less than 24 hours. Collateral requirements for single-mother applicants have also been lifted.

Speaking on migrant policy, Behrouz Azar stated that undocumented foreigners "must return to their home country," while legal migrants may remain if they have valid work permits and sponsorships. She expressed concern over proposals to attract foreign athletes, arguing that "Iran is a producer, not importer, of sports talent," and emphasized the need for serious, needs-based migration policies.

Iran Produces Over 90% of the World's Saffron



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran cultivates more than 90 percent of the world's saffron, with over 90 percent of the country's production concentrated in the northeastern province of Khorasan Razavi, a senior agriculture official announced.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, Mohammad-Mehdi Boroumandi, Deputy Minister for Horticulture, highlighted Iran's global role in saffron production during discussions on joint projects with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

He stated that saffron, recognized as the world's most valuable medicinal plant, holds a special place in Iran, noting that over 120,000 hectares of land in the country are currently dedicated to saffron cultivation. Emphasizing the plant's economic and medicinal significance, Boroumandi stressed the need to develop its value chain and strengthen quality assurance.

"Iran is not only the main origin of this precious medicinal plant, but it also plays a decisive role in developing the saffron value chain, ensuring quality, and boosting exports," he said. He added that the ministry is working to enhance Iran's position in global markets through the use of scientific knowledge, domestic experience, and cooperation with international organizations.

Boroumandi emphasized that the heavy concentration of saffron cultivation in Khorasan Razavi provides unique opportunities for job creation, improving product quality, and increasing exports. He noted that training workshops are helping transfer knowledge and best agricultural practices to those active in the industry.

Isfahan Becomes Driving Force of Iran's Tourism Industry



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Director-General of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of Isfahan Province announced that Isfahan has become the main driving engine of tourism development in Iran. He emphasized that full development of the tourism industry in Isfahan will stimulate tourism growth across the country.

During a press briefing on Tuesday at the 15th International Tourism, Hospitality and Handicrafts Exhibition in Isfahan, Amir Karamzadeh highlighted the scale and quality of this year's event, noting that the exhibition covers an area of 8,000 square meters and hosts representatives from 12 provinces and several foreign countries.

He said the exhibition features various tourism sectors, including emerging fields such as medical tourism, with active participation from associations including tourist guides and hotel operators.

Karamzadeh praised the support of provincial authorities — particularly the governor and municipalities — which he said contributes significantly to boosting the tourism industry. He expressed hope that this year's exhibition will help bring foreign tourists back to Isfahan and revive the sector.

Announcing new plans to expand tourism infrastructure, he said four new five-star hotels will be inaugurated in Isfahan within the next two years, substantially increasing the city's tourism capacity.

He also reported progress on the high-speed rail project linking Tehran, Qom, and Isfahan, noting that it will make travel easier for tourists and potentially increase visitor numbers.

Over the past few months, more than 120 tourism-related events have been held in Isfahan, making the province a national leader in organizing tourism activities, Karamzadeh stated. These events, he said, play a major role in introducing Isfahan's attractions to domestic and international travelers.

Japan Fires Back at Unsubstantiated Chinese Letter to UN

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Japan has dismissed a Chinese letter to the United Nations accusing Tokyo of threatening armed intervention over Taiwan as “inconsistent with the facts and unsubstantiated”.

Fu accused Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi of “a grave violation of international law” and diplomatic norms when she said in parliament this month that a Chinese attack on Taiwan could trigger a military response from Tokyo.

Yamazaki, in his letter, also addressed to Guterres, said Japan’s fundamental policy was of “passive defense.”



Taiwan Plans Extra \$40b in Defense Spending to Counter China



TAIPEI (Dispatches) - Taiwan will introduce a \$40 billion supplementary defense budget to underscore its determination to defend itself in the face of a rising threat from China, President Lai Ching-te said.

China, which views democratically-governed Taiwan as its own territory, has ramped up military and political pressure over the past five years to assert its claims, which Taipei strongly rejects.

As Taiwan faces calls from Washington to spend more on its own defense, mirroring US pressure on Europe, Lai said in August he hoped for a boost in defense spending to 5% of gross domestic product by 2030.

Unveiling the T\$1.25 trillion package, Lai said history had proven that trying to compromise in the face of aggression brought nothing but “enslavement”.

“There is no room for compromise on national security,” he said at a press conference in the presidential office.

“National sovereignty and the core values of freedom and democracy are the very foundation of our nation.”

Lai, who first announced the new spending plan in an op-ed comment in the Washington Post on Tuesday, said Taiwan was showing its determination to defend itself.

Italy’s Southern Regional Votes Cast Shadow on Meloni’s 2027 Prospects



ROME (Dispatches) - Key wins for Italy’s opposition in southern regional elections show cracks in the ruling conservative bloc’s dominance, raising doubts over Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni’s ability to secure a second term in the next national vote, say political observers.

This year’s regional elections across Italy ended in a 3-3 draw between the two main political camps, but convincing wins for centre-left parties in Campania and Puglia gave them hope they could prevent Meloni from winning outright victory in 2027.

“For months now, we have been hearing the same tired refrain: Giorgia Meloni has no rivals, she is invincible, there is no alternative to her. The results in Campania and Puglia ... show that there is an alternative,” centrist senator and former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi wrote on social media platform X.

While Meloni’s coalition - including her Brothers of Italy party, Forza Italia and the far-right League - leads rivals in national polls, its grip on power could loosen if centre-left parties replicate their regional alliances at a national level.

Meloni and her allies took power with ease in 2022, mainly because the top two parties in the centre-left - the mainstream Democratic Party and the anti-establishment Five Star Movement - failed to form a pre-ballot alliance, dividing opposition support in a number of key first-past-the-post races.



ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE (Dispatches) - U.S. President Donald Trump on Tuesday backed away from a Thursday deadline for Ukraine to agree to a U.S.-backed peace plan and shrugged off a report that U.S. negotiator Steve Witkoff coached the Russians on how to approach him on the topic.

Trump, speaking to reporters on board Air Force One as he flew to Florida for the Thanksgiving holiday, said U.S. negotiators were making progress in discussions with Russia and Ukraine, and Moscow had agreed to some concessions. He did not detail them.

A U.S.-based framework for ending the war, first reported last week, prompted fresh concerns that the Trump administration might be willing to push Ukraine to sign a peace deal heavily tilted toward Moscow.

Trump said his envoy Steve Witkoff would be traveling to Moscow to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin next week and that his son-in-law Jared Kushner, who helped negotiate the Gaza deal that brought about an uneasy ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war, was also involved.

Trump in recent days had set the Thanksgiving holiday on Thursday as the day when he wanted to see Ukraine agree to a deal to bring about an end to Russia’s war in Ukraine.

But he and his aides have backed away from a firm deadline and now say they would like an agreement as soon as

possible.

“The deadline for me is when it’s over,” Trump said on the presidential aircraft.

Bloomberg News reported that Witkoff, in an October 14 telephone call with Yuri Ushakov, the top foreign policy aide to Putin, said they should work together on a ceasefire plan for Ukraine and that Putin should raise it with Trump.

Bloomberg said Witkoff’s guidance included suggestions on setting up a Trump-Putin call before Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskii’s White House visit later that week, and using the recently concluded Gaza agreement as a way in. Asked about the report, Trump said he had not heard the recording of the call that Bloomberg based its story on but that he was not surprised because “that’s what a dealmaker does.”

“You know, that’s a very standard form of negotiation,” he said. “I would imagine he’s saying the same thing to Ukraine.”

Trump said it appeared that Russia had the upper hand in the war and that it would be in Ukraine’s best interests to reach an agreement.

He said some Ukraine territory “might be gotten by Russia anyway” over the next couple of months.

Trump said security guarantees for Ukraine were being negotiated with Europeans.

Ex-President Bolsonaro Starts Serving 27-Year Sentence for Brazil Coup Plot

BRASILIA (Dispatches) - Brazil’s Supreme Court on Tuesday ordered former far-right President Jair Bolsonaro to begin a 27-year prison sentence for a coup plot against his successor, a climax to years of political turmoil and legal battles over his contentious legacy in Brazilian democracy.

The top court formally concluded the case against Bolsonaro on Tuesday, making his conviction final, pending confirmation by a four-member Supreme Court panel in the evening. The panel already rejected his appeal this month.

Justice Alexandre de Moraes told Bolsonaro to start serving his sentence in the Federal Police Superintendency in Brasilia, where he has been detained since Saturday after he tampered with his ankle monitor while under house arrest in a separate case.

The decision was the latest setback for a politician who rose from the fringe far right to the presidency in 2019, reshaping national debates with a populist style, appeals to military nostalgia and polarizing stances that left the country deeply divided.

Since leaving office in 2022, Bolsonaro has now been convicted, barred from public office and abandoned by one-time ally U.S. President Donald Trump, who has started reversing steep tariffs imposed to punish Bolsonaro’s prosecution.

“Today is a memorable day for Brazilian democracy,” congressman Lindbergh Farias said on X. “For the first time in our history, we are seeing a former president of the Republic and generals being arrested for a coup



d’état.”

One of the ex-president’s lawyers, Celso Vilardi, said the court rushed to conclude the case and should have allowed more time for appeals. His attorneys said they will keep fighting to challenge the outcome.

Bolsonaro was sentenced in September to 27 years and three months in prison for plotting a coup after losing the 2022 presidential election to leftist current President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Bolsonaro also served more than 100 days under house arrest in Brasilia while facing charges he solicited Trump’s interference on his behalf.

Congressman Eduardo Bolsonaro, the former president’s son, told Reuters in his first comments to the media on Tuesday that Bolsonaro’s prosecution

was “psychological torture” and a “rigged game.”

Another Bolsonaro son, Carlos, said after visiting his father in custody on Tuesday: “He is emotionally destroyed.”

Although Bolsonaro insists he will run for president again next year, he and his family are also working to preserve influence within Brazil’s right-wing politics and shape the choice of an alternative conservative candidate in 2026.

This has stirred impatience among allies who want to build an effective challenge in 2026 to Lula. He holds a lead in polls over all potential right-wing candidates and his approval ratings climbed again in a poll on Tuesday.

But Bolsonaro’s defense in his ankle-monitor tampering case – that he was impaired by prescription drugs - fueled doubts about his political viability. He said the medication led him to believe the ankle monitor concealed listening equipment.

“Until recently, Bolsonaro often boasted about being an athlete,” said Pedro Fassoni Arruda, a political science professor at the Pontifical Catholic University of Sao Paulo who noted declining public support for Bolsonaro in polls.

“Now he presents himself as someone frail and aging.”

In contrast to the mobs he spurred to storm Congress in 2023, only a handful of his supporters gathered outside the Federal Police building where Bolsonaro was being held on Tuesday.

Cuba Accuses U.S. of Seeking Violent Overthrow of Venezuelan Gov’t

HAVANA (Dispatches) - Cuba on Tuesday accused the U.S. of seeking a violent overthrow of the Venezuelan government, calling the increased presence of U.S. military forces in the region an “exaggerated and aggressive” threat.

The U.S. overthrowing Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro’s government would be extremely dangerous and irresponsible, and would be in violation of international law and the United Nations charter, Cuba’s Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez said in a statement.

Reuters reported on Saturday that the U.S. was poised to launch a new phase of Venezuela-related operations in coming days, citing four U.S. officials.

Two U.S. officials told Reuters the options under consideration included attempting to overthrow Maduro. U.S. President Donald Trump has said repeatedly he is not pursuing regime change.

Maduro, in power since 2013, has contended that Trump seeks to oust him and that Venezuelan citizens and the military will resist any such attempt.

“We appeal to the people of the United States to stop this madness,”



Rodriguez said. “The U.S. government could cause an incalculable number of deaths and create a scenario of violence and instability in the hemisphere that would be unimaginable.”

Meanwhile Cuba is reportedly considering a raft of measures to attract foreign investment by creating a “simpler, more agile and more transparent” business climate, a minister said on Tuesday, as the island nation faces a severe economic crisis.

Minister of Foreign Investment Oscar Pérez-Oliva Fraga said at a forum outside Havana that the communist-run government would allow investors to operate and pay employees in dollars, directly hire them, and buy real estate.

Foreign businesses would be allowed to import their own fuel when necessary, and red tape and wait times would be slashed on government authorizations, the minister said.

The measures, if written into law and implemented, would mark a continued drift away from the tightly controlled investment regime styled after the Soviet Union’s command economy. Cuba says it has 376 foreign businesses operating on the island from 40 countries.



Chelsea Dominate Barca in Champions League, Man City Lose

PARIS (Dispatches) - Chelsea romped to a dominant 3-0 win at home to 10-man Barcelona in the Champions League on Tuesday, while Pep Guardiola's much-changed Manchester City went down to their first defeat of the campaign against Bayer Leverkusen.

In a battle between the second-placed sides in the Premier League and La Liga, Chelsea emerged emphatic winners thanks to goals from 18-year-old Estevao and Liam Delap after a Jules Kounde own-goal had given the 2021 Champions League winners a first-half lead.

The visitors played just over half the encounter a player down following captain Ronald Araujo's dismissal for two bookable offences on the stroke of half-time.

After stalling last time out -- Chelsea being held 2-2 by Qarabag and Barca drawing three-apiece with Club Brugge -- both sides came into the match at Stamford Bridge looking to get their campaigns back on track.

Victory propelled Chelsea to fifth in the league phase standings on 10 points.

"It's a big win, especially because the other team was Barcelona," Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca said.

After two Enzo Fernandez strikes were disallowed for offside, the hosts finally took the lead on 27 minutes.

A short-corner routine ended with Marc Cucurella firing the ball across the box. Pedro Neto's attempted flick towards goal had the Barcelona defenders tying themselves in knots before France international Kounde inadvertently knocked it into his own net.

The game took a decisive turn in the 44th minute when Araujo received a second yellow card for a poor challenge on Cucurella.

Much of the pre-match build-up centred on talk around the young starlets on both sides, but it was Chelsea's Estevao who stole the show over Barcelona's Spain winger Lamine Yamal.

A moment of magic by the Brazilian teen put the game beyond the Spanish champions as he received the ball on the right before beating two defenders and lashing it into the roof of Joan Garcia's net five minutes before the hour.

"I don't really have any words to sum up how I'm feeling right now," Estevao told Amazon Prime. "It really was the perfect night."

Substitute Delap then put the game to bed in the 73rd minute.

A second defeat has the Catalans down in 15th spot, but Barcelona coach Hansi Flick insisted he was "really positive" about their chances of automatic qualification to the last 16.

"We've got players coming back now and there are three games to play and nine points to win," the German said.

Guardiola surprisingly rested the majority of his stars at the Etihad, with Erling Haaland, Ruben Dias, Bernardo Silva and Gianluigi Donnarumma all left out of the starting line-up as Man City went down 2-0 to Leverkusen.

A first loss of the campaign for Man City, coming hot on the heels of Saturday's 2-1 defeat at Newcastle in the Premier League, leaves the 2023 winners on 10 points.

"I take full responsibility, still I think the players that started were exceptional players but we missed something needed at the highest level," Guardiola said.

Wizards Snap 14-Game NBA Skid While Magic Rout 76ers

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Washington's C.J. McCollum scored a season-high 46 points and the NBA-worst Wizards snapped a 14-game losing streak by routing Atlanta 132-113 in an NBA Cup contest.

The Wizards improved to 2-15 with their first home victory of the season and first-ever triumph in the mid-season tournament, staying in Cup playoff contention.

"We did a good job," McCollum said. "We lost some close games throughout the season and we kind of let ourselves down in terms of execution and having lost."

"But I think tonight we got off to a good start in the third quarter, we withstood their runs and did enough to get the win."

McCollum hit 17-of-25 shots from the floor and 10-of-13 from three-point range, tying Trevor Ariza for the Wizards' record for three-pointers in a game and one shy of his career high for threes in a game.

"I put a lot of time in. I sacrifice a lot of time away



from my family to get in the gym at night," McCollum said. "These results, they come from hard work in the dark, a lot of sleepless nights trying to figure out how to master my craft and be more consistent with my jump shot."

French center Alex Sarr added 27 points and 11 rebounds while Corey Kispert had 19 points for Washington.

The Wizards seized a 45-23 lead after the first quarter, scoring their most points in any opening quarter since 1990 against Denver.

Washington took a 45-16 edge by hitting 15-of-20 shots from the floor and 8-of-8 from three-point range, Kispert and McCollum each starting 4-of-4 from beyond the arc.

Former Wizard Kristaps Porzingis had 22 points to lead the Hawks, who joined Washington at 1-2 in Cup Group A play.

Ronaldo Can Play in 2026 World Cup Opener as FIFA Suspend Ban

LISBON (Dispatches) - Portugal superstar Cristiano Ronaldo can play in the opening matches of the 2026 World Cup after global football governing body FIFA gave him a partially "suspended" ban on Tuesday following a red card.

The 40-year-old was sent off as Portugal lost 2-0 in Dublin earlier in November when he elbowed Dara O'Shea in the back, for his first dismissal in 226 international appearances.

FIFA banned Ronaldo for three matches, two of which will be suspended and the other has already been served, when Portugal sealed their qualification for next summer's tournament against Armenia.

"In line with article 27 of the FIFA Disciplinary Code, the serving of the two remaining matches has been suspended under a one-year probation period," said FIFA in a statement given to AFP.



"If Cristiano Ronaldo commits another infringement of a similar nature and gravity during the probationary period, the suspension set out in the disciplinary decision shall be deemed automatically revoked and the remaining two matches must be served immediately at the next official (Portugal) matches."

Ronaldo, the men's all-time top goalscorer in international football with 143 goals, is aiming to play at a sixth World Cup next summer in the United States, Mexico and Canada.

The former Real Madrid and Manchester United striker, currently at Al Nassr in Saudi Arabia, has not yet lifted the trophy but did win Euro 2016 with Portugal.

Ronaldo attended a dinner in the White House last week where he met US President Donald Trump, who said his son Barron "is a big fan" of the forward.

“Sincaraz” in Full Swing, But ITF Chief Sees Challengers Looming



BENGALURU (Dispatches) - Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner may have turned men's tennis into a duopoly over the last two years by sweeping the Grand Slams, but International Tennis Federation CEO Ross Hutchins is convinced a new wave of challengers will emerge.

The early 20-somethings, dubbed 'Sincaraz', split the majors again this year and clashed in six finals overall, reinforcing their grip on the men's game and signalling a power shift after the retirements of Roger Federer, Rafa Nadal and Andy Murray.

While 38-year-old Novak Djokovic remains a huge threat as the only active member of the "Big Four" that amassed 69 Grand Slam trophies over two decades, it is the "Sincaraz" rivalry that is defining a new era for the sport.

"It's exciting, isn't it?" Hutchins told Reuters. "I mean, what a story. Every time that we see amazing players come to the end of their careers, it seems like two, four, six, eight new players pop up and take the level forward to another dimension."

"What historic champions we've had, what amazing players we've had in the past. Now these two continue to push each other to new levels. Their serves improve, their forehands improve, their movement improves and their mentality improves."

"They keep taking the sport to another level, which is just embracing the world with such excitement every time they get on court. But the sport has a strong contingency of groups behind them as well."

Although Spaniard Alcaraz and Italian Sinner have pulled away with a combined 10 majors, Hutchins pointed to emerging talents like Brazilian Joao Fonseca as evidence that the next generation are knocking on the door.

Fonseca won his second tour-level title in Basel last month and the 19-year-old has burst into the top 25 in the world after starting the year ranked number 145.

American teenager Leamer Tien impressed by capturing his maiden title in Metz this month, as did Czech 20-year-old Jakub Mensik, who defeated his mentor and 24-times major champion Djokovic to claim the Miami Open crown in March.

India and Pakistan Drawn in Same Group at 2026 T20 World Cup



MUMBAI (Dispatches) - Arch-rivals India and Pakistan will clash in a politically-charged Twenty20 World Cup match in Colombo on February 15, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said as it announced the draw on Tuesday.

The 20-team tournament will be played across eight venues -- five in India and three in Sri Lanka -- between February 7 and March 8, the ICC said in a statement.

Pakistan will play all their games in Sri Lanka because of their soured political relations with India.

The March 8 final is scheduled for the western Indian city of Ahmedabad but would be moved to Colombo if Pakistan reach it.

A military conflict between the nuclear-armed neighbours in May overshadowed the subsequent Asia Cup in which India refused to accept the winners' trophy from Asian Cricket Council chief Mohsin Naqvi who is Pakistan's interior minister.

The teams in the tournament have been divided into five groups of four with the top two advancing to the Super Eight phase. The top four in that will qualify for the semi-finals.

Defending champions India will begin their Group A campaign against the U.S. in Mumbai on February 7.

Sri Lanka and Australia are in Group B, which also includes Ireland, Zimbabwe and Oman.

England and West Indies, both twice winners, will face first-timers Italy and Asian sides Bangladesh and Nepal in Group C.