

Iran Condemned the U.S. Navy’s Attack on a Commercial Vessel Carrying Venezuelan Crude Oil Off the Coast of the South American Country as an “Act of State Piracy,” Warning About the Consequences of Such Coercive Measures

IRAN NEWS

The Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Has Announced That Tehran Will Host a Regional Meeting to Discuss the Latest Developments in Afghanistan With the Participation of Special representatives for Afghanistan From Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, China and Russia

VOL. XXIX, No. 8436 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

SATURDAY DECEMBER 13, 2025 AZAR 22, 1404

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U.S. Urged to Lift Restrictions on Iranian Diplomats



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The United Nations says the US must allow accredited Iranian diplomats to carry out their work freely, affirming the world body’s position that Washington, as host country, is obligated to permit the unrestricted movement of all UN-based diplomatic personnel.

UN Deputy Spokesman Farhan Haq made the remarks at a press briefing on Thursday when asked whether the world body had received a formal communication from the Islamic Republic regarding tightened restrictions on its Permanent Mission.

“Whenever countries have faced restrictions on their diplomatic personnel, they raise that with us, and then we remind the host country of its obligations under the Host Country Agreement to allow the free movement of diplomats accredited to the United Nations,” he said.

Haq reiterated the organization’s “consistent stance,” noting, “Our standpoint with all nations, not just Iran, is that we want to make sure that the host country allows their diplomats to go about their work freely, once they’ve been accredited here.”

Tehran has sharply criticized the United States for escalating pressure on its UN Mission.

In a statement issued earlier in the day, the Foreign Ministry denounced Washington for abusing its “host-country status” by imposing extensive restrictions on the residence, movement, banking access, and even daily purchases of Iranian diplomats.

It said these measures had been designed to disrupt the normal and lawful functions of Iranian representatives.

FM Bemused by Lebanon Counterpart’s Rejection of Tehran Visit



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran’s Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi says he is “bemused” by his Lebanese counterpart’s decision not to accept Tehran’s invitation for an official visit, while welcoming an offer to meet in Beirut instead.

In a post published on X Thursday night, Araqchi said that while he was grateful for Youssef Raggi’s “kind invitation,” there was no need for “a ‘neutral’ venue” for talks between countries with “brotherly and full diplomatic relations.”

Araqchi added he understood why Raggi was not prepared to travel to Tehran, citing Israel’s occupation and violations of a ceasefire.

“Hence I will gladly accept his invitation to come to Beirut,” he said, adding that Iran also sought “a new chapter” in bilateral ties based on the principles Raggi had outlined.

Lebanon’s foreign minister, in an official message cited by local media, had apologized for declining the Tehran visit, saying the refusal “does not mean rejecting dialogue,” but that “suitable conditions” for such a meeting were not currently available.

Raggi then eerily proposed a bilateral meeting in a “neutral third country” agreeable to both sides, and that Lebanon was in “full readiness to establish a new era of constructive relations with Iran based on mutual respect.

Iran Advancing Despite Many Challenges

TEHRAN (Dispatches) – Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says despite enormous shortages and challenges facing Iran, the nation is “moving, striving, and advancing” through the steadfastness, sincerity, and justice-seeking of its people.

“The shortages and problems across the country are many, but the nation, day by day, with perseverance, sincerity, goodness, and pursuit of justice, creates honor and strength for Islam and Iran, and by God’s grace, the country is moving, striving, and advancing,” he said Thursday.

Speaking in Tehran Thursday to thousands of devotees on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Fatima al-Zahra (SA), the beloved daughter of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him), Ayatollah Khamenei touched on a broad media and propaganda campaign after the June aggression by Israel and the US met Iran’s crushing response, forcing the adversaries into a ceasefire.

“Today, beyond the military clashes we have witnessed, we are in the center of a propaganda and media war with a broad enemy front,” he said. “The enemy has realized that this property, land, and spiritual homeland cannot be subdued and occupied through military pressure.”

He criticized those raising fears of renewed war, saying “Some repeatedly raise the possibility of another military confrontation, and some deliberately inflate this to keep people uncertain and anxious, but God willing, they will not succeed.”

Ayatollah Khamenei said the enemy’s “line, danger, and goal” is to erase the effects, goals, and concepts of the Islamic Revolution. The US, the Leader said, is “at the center of this wide and active front,” with some European countries surrounding it and domestic mercenaries and traitors residing in Europe seeking personal gain on the periphery.

He underscored the importance of understanding the enemy’s strategy, saying that resisting Western media campaigns is “difficult but entirely possible.”

“Like the military front, in this propaganda and media confrontation, our formation must be aligned with the enemy’s plan and goals and focus on the points he targets, namely Islamic, Shia, and revolutionary teachings.”



Highlighting Iranian resilience, Ayatollah Khamenei said: “The people of Iran, through national resistance, have thwarted ongoing efforts by the enemy to change the religious, historical, and cultural identity of the nation.”

He emphasized that proper defensive and offensive arrangements are needed to counter propaganda attacks targeting “minds, hearts, and beliefs,” and stressed that “Iran, despite existing problems and shortages across the country, continues on a forward-moving path.”

Ayatollah Khamenei defined national resistance as “endurance and steadfastness in the face of various pressures from dominators,” whether military — as seen during the Sacred Defense of the 1980s when Iranians fought an Iraqi invasion and in recent months among the youth — or economic, media, cultural, or political.

He cited provocations and propaganda by Western media actors and political-military leaders as instances of the enemy’s propaganda pressure, noting that the pressures often aim at “territorial expansion — like what the US does in Latin America — control of underground resources, changing lifestyles, and most importantly, identity transformation.”

Ayatollah Khamenei also reflected on a century of foreign attempts to undermine Iran’s identity.

“For over a hundred years, global oppressors have tried to change the religious, historical, and cultural identity of the Iranian nation, but the Islamic Revolution made all those efforts futile. In recent decades, the people, through steadfastness and resilience, have foiled extensive pressures by enemies,” he said.

He highlighted the regional impact of Iranian resistance, saying the concept and language of resistance have expanded from Iran to regional countries and beyond.

“Some things the enemy did to Iran and the Iranian nation, if done to any other country, that nation and country would have been finished,” he said.

Ayatollah Khamenei called for vigilance and persistence, emphasizing that Iran’s continued “movement, effort, and progress” depends on steadfastness against both military and media pressures and on protecting the nation’s religious, historical, and cultural identity.

Pezeshkian Hails Decisive Step in Ties as Iran, Kazakhstan Seal 14 Deals

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran and Kazakhstan have signed 14 cooperation documents in Astana as Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian met his Kazakh counterpart Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, marking what they described as a significant step in expanding bilateral ties.

In a ceremony attended by the two presidents, senior officials from both countries concluded agreements and MoUs covering transportation, transit and logistics, cultural exchanges, legal assistance, health and medical care, diplomatic interaction, and media cooperation.

The two leaders also signed a joint statement outlining their commitment to deepen relations.

Pezeshkian, in Astana at the head of a high-ranking delegation, said the results of the visit represent “a major and decisive step” toward strengthening bilateral relations.

He expressed optimism that the political will in Tehran and Astana could raise the volume of trade and investment to a level “worthy” of the two nations.

“I believe that the results of this visit are a significant and decisive step on the path of strengthening bilateral cooperation, and the political will in Tehran and Astana can raise trade and investment between the two countries to a deserving level,” he said.

The Iranian president added that Iran and Kazakhstan must promote close relations to counter the United States’ unilateralism.

“The US and some Western countries have targeted the identity and independence of sovereign states. Under such circumstances, it is necessary to develop mutual ties with more seriousness and sensitivity,” he said.

The Iranian president warned of a “complex” regional environment and growing unilateral approaches in global politics.

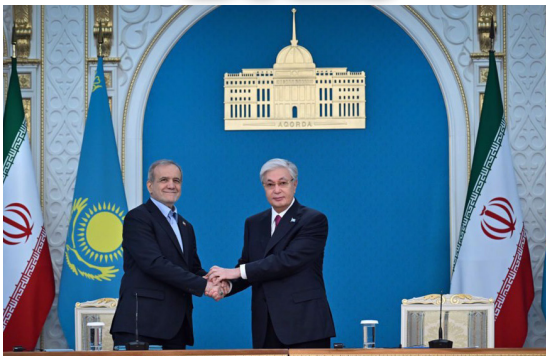
He added that the two countries have managed to achieve 40-percent growth in bilateral trade and are ready to carry out a roadmap aimed at raising the value of trade up to three billion dollars.

He expressed hope that Tehran and Astana will make more use of the capacities of the private sector.

The Iranian president added that the two countries have always maintained friendly relations since Kazakhstan’s independence, stressing that Iran attaches special significance to ties with neighbors.

Pezeshkian emphasized that Tehran and Astana interact closely on many regional and international issues, saying, “The two countries have had good cooperation in various political, economic, and cultural fields and have also reached valuable agreements.”

Pointing to Iran-Kazakhstan active cooperation in international organizations, he added that “stable and close relations exist between the two countries in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and also in [issues pertaining to] the Caspian Sea region.”



He urged both countries to continue this path and focus on further promotion of cooperation.

Pezeshkian said the resolution of banking problems would play an important role in developing relations, and emphasized that the full implementation of the free trade agreement between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union will pave the way for further expansion of trade and economic relations between Tehran and Astana.

Meanwhile Kazakhstan’s president announced his country’s readiness to cooperate with Iran in developing port terminals, stressing that expanding a multi-directional transport corridor linking Central Asia to the Persian Gulf is of great strategic importance.

Kazakhstan’s President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev referred to his meeting with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian earlier in the day. “In our discussions, we reviewed various aspects of bilateral cooperation. Kazakhstan seeks to strengthen its partnership with Iran, and exchanges between our governments are expanding,” he said.

Tokayev noted that trade between the two countries has exceeded \$340 million and is expected to grow several fold this year. “We aim to increase the bilateral trade volume to \$1 billion by the end of this year, and in the next phase, to \$2 billion,” he stated.

He emphasized that the establishment of the Kazakhstan Trade House in Tehran will facilitate the stable and direct supply of Kazakh agricultural products to the Iranian market.

Tokayev highlighted Iran’s growing investment footprint in Kazakhstan. “In recent years, Iran has invested more than \$226 million in Kazakhstan, and over 350 Iranian companies are currently active in our country. This figure must continue to grow,” he said.

Pointing to Kazakhstan’s ongoing efforts to attract foreign investment, he explained, “We have established a special investment task force, and our national digital platform is expanding. We are prepared to develop joint projects with Iran.”

Identifying logistics cooperation as the first major pillar of bilateral engagement, Tokayev stated: “We are ready for joint cooperation to develop port terminals, enhance logistical capacities, and increase transit cargo volumes with Iran. The development of a multi-route corridor linking Central Asia to the Persian Gulf is critically important to us, and the Kazakhstan–Turkmenistan–Iran railway plays a central role in this connection.”

Turning to agriculture as the second pillar of cooperation, he noted that agricultural trade between Iran and Kazakhstan reached \$220 million last year and has approached \$280 million in the past 10 months alone. “We welcome joint projects and cooperation in agricultural sectors,” he added.

Tokayev also emphasized the importance of cooperation on preserving the Caspian Sea ecosystem, advancing regional environmental initiatives, and jointly responding to the rapid global expansion of digitalization and artificial intelligence—areas he described as key to the future of Iran–Kazakhstan relations.

A Pulsating Capital Market — But Why?

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

According to the latest news reports, the Tehran Stock Exchange has maintained its upward trend in recent days. In the final days of last week, the overall stock index reached 3,482,000 units, and today (Tuesday, December 8, 2025) it is expected to experience a mild increase as well. A strong inflow of real liquidity (more than 10 trillion rials on Monday) and demand outweighing supply have been the main drivers of this positive movement.

Active and influential symbols in the market can be described as follows: the recent flow of liquidity has been concentrated in certain industries and specific symbols.

Index-making symbols such as Foolad and Emeli have had the most positive impact on the index in recent days. This group benefits from rising global metal prices and exports.

Similarly, index-making energy symbols such as Shapran, Shapna, and Shebandar have also been influential, as these stocks are consistently attractive due to their value and profitability and remain among the market’s most highly traded and liquid stocks.

Following metals and oil, the banking and investment sectors gained attention. Index-making symbols such as Vebmellat, Shasta, and Ghadir drew significant interest. Vebmellat has been one of the most heavily traded banking symbols in recent days. Large investment companies like Shasta and Ghadir are also key market players.

After the banks, the automotive sector stood out. Index-making stocks such as Khodro and Datsra also accounted for high trading volumes in recent days.

But in a “neither war nor peace” situation, why has the capital market gained such momentum, and why is capital flowing into this market from many other sectors?

Almost all political-economy experts summarize the main reasons for the market’s current appeal in the following factors:

High liquidity (marketability): In unstable conditions, investors look for markets where they can enter and exit quickly. Compared to real estate or automobiles, the stock market offers higher liquidity.

Inflation and depreciation of the national currency: In such conditions, people turn to the stock market or other assets to preserve the value of their capital and protect their purchasing power.

Inflation expectations and rising prices: If market participants anticipate higher prices for goods or raw materials, they tend to buy shares of manufacturing or export-oriented companies to hedge against inflation.

Government policies to manage the crisis: Governments may support the capital market through measures such as injecting liquidity or lowering interest rates, which can attract investors.

Profitability of certain companies in special conditions: Some industries (such as metals, petrochemicals, and raw materials) may become more profitable during sanctions or geopolitical tensions, increasing demand for their shares.

The stock market’s relative attractiveness compared to other markets: If parallel markets like currency, gold, or housing lose their appeal due to government controls or other factors, the stock market becomes a more attractive alternative.

However, it must be noted that this positive trend may be driven by excitement and could involve significant volatility and risk, as a “neither war nor peace” environment is inherently unpredictable and subject to sudden change.

Iran Should Turn From Buyer to Creator of Technology



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) says the country cannot remain a mere buyer of technology and should rise to become its creator.

Mohammad Eslami made the remarks on Thursday in an address to the 2nd Congress on Plasma Medicine in Iran, saying a society that cannot create technology will inevitably be labeled as backward.

“Technology is changing rapidly, and we cannot remain a merely buyer of it; we must become its creator. This is a societal need, a pillar of progress, and a source of dignity for Iranian people,” he added.

IRAN NEWS



Uruguayan PFU Announces Readiness to Export Timber, Pursue JVs With Iranian Companies

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) has reported that PFU—one of Uruguay's top three timber exporters—has expressed readiness to supply Iran with up to 150 containers of wood per month. The company has also signaled interest in joint investment projects with Iranian partners for cultivating eucalyptus in Uruguay. According to ICCIMA's International Affairs Department, PFU's Middle East regional director stated that the company can deliver timber shipments based on global market prices via Montevideo Port or Bandar Abbas.

Tehran, Minsk Agree on Joint Production of Agricultural Machinery and Potash Fertilizer



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - In a meeting between Iran's Minister of Agriculture Jihad and the Belarusian Minister of Industry, the two sides emphasized expanding bilateral cooperation in agriculture, forestry, veterinary services, and plant and animal quarantine. They also reached agreements on the joint production of agricultural machinery and potash fertilizer.

According to Iran's Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, the meeting was held as part of follow-ups to the agreements made during the Iranian president's previous visit to Belarus. The two countries agreed that Iran would supply part of Belarus's food needs, while Belarus would export agricultural raw materials required by Iran.

Iran also expressed its readiness to facilitate the transit of Belarusian agricultural products to other countries.

One of the most notable outcomes of the meeting was an agreement to jointly produce potash fertilizer in Iran. Under the plan, part of the potassium fertilizer will be imported from Belarus, while stages of the production chain will be processed domestically.

Given Belarus's industrial capabilities, the two sides also agreed to pursue the supply and joint production of heavy agricultural machinery—including tractors, harvesters, trucks, and ultra-heavy transport vehicles—in cooperation with Iranian companies such as Iran Tractor Manufacturing Company.

Both ministers described the agreements as a practical step toward enhancing bilateral cooperation and leveraging the complementary capabilities of the two countries for mutual benefit.

The cooperation is expected to strengthen food security and support agricultural development in both nations.

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Iran Ready to Facilitate Tourist Travel and Expand Heritage Cooperation with Greece



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Seyed-Reza Salehi-Amiri, has emphasized the need to establish a "joint action plan" between Iran and Greece in the fields of cultural heritage, tourism, and handicrafts. In a meeting with Greek Minister of Tourism Olga Kefalogianni in Athens, he stated that the two nations—both guardians of ancient civilizations—possess exceptional tangible and intangible heritage and are well positioned to become strategic partners in cultural and tourism cooperation.

Salehi-Amiri held the meeting with Kefalogianni on Thursday, shortly after arriving in Athens to participate in the Assembly of Ancient Civilizations. Highlighting Iran's unique capacities in the areas of cultural heritage and tourism, he reiterated that drafting a comprehensive joint action plan should focus on facilitating tourist exchanges, expanding cooperation between museums, strengthening restoration partnerships, organizing joint exhibitions, and increasing expert exchanges. He added that such efforts would deepen the cultural connection between two civilizations with thousands of years of shared history.

During the meeting, Salehi-Amiri also pointed to Iran's newly registered intangible cultural heritage element at UNESCO. "Today, Iran's twenty-seventh intangible heritage, the 'art of mirror-work in Iranian architecture,' was inscribed on the UNESCO list," he said. He noted that in addition to 29 registered tangible and natural heritage sites, Iran has countless other elements eligible for international recognition. "Iran is a living civilizational treasure, and it can serve as the foundation for innovative and forward-looking cooperation between our two countries," he emphasized.

ICCIMA Chief Urges Removal of Iran-Kazakhstan Trade Barriers

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - At the Iran-Kazakhstan Business Forum held in Astana, Samad Hassan-Zadeh, President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, underscored the need to remove four major barriers hindering bilateral trade. He emphasized that coordinated planning, government support, and active participation of the private sector are essential, adding that completing the infrastructure of the International North-South Transport Corridor must be prioritized in joint cooperation.

Speaking at the forum attended by the presidents of both countries, Hassan-Zadeh noted that the current volume of bilateral trade—estimated at around USD 350 million—could increase several-fold in the short term, given the existing potential.

He said the presence of both sides at the forum reflects a shared determination to enhance economic and commercial relations, which are rooted in historical and cultural ties, regional common interests, and vast economic capacities.

Hassan-Zadeh described Kazakhstan as one of the most significant economies in Central Asia and a strategic partner for Iran, enjoying a special position in the eyes of the Iranian private sector. He highlighted opportunities for cooperation in energy, agriculture, mining, maritime transport in the Caspian Sea, petrochemicals, basic metals, food industries, technical and engineering services, and pharmaceuticals.

Despite restrictions caused by sanctions, he said, opportunities for collaboration are emerging more than ever. However, challenges—including inadequate transport and logistics infrastructure, the absence of a joint bank and secure financial mechanisms, insufficient familiarity of businesses with each other's markets, and competition from regional goods in Kazakhstan—remain major obstacles. Addressing these issues, he stressed, requires joint planning, government backing, and proactive private-sector engagement.

The head of Iran's Chamber added that both public and private sectors have taken positive steps in recent years and have developed significant joint programs for the current and upcoming year. He expressed hope that closer coordination among institutions would accelerate this progress.

Pointing to the membership of Iran and Kazakhstan in key regional



organizations—including the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), as well as their shared status as Caspian littoral states—Hassan-Zadeh said strengthening bilateral cooperation within these bodies could greatly facilitate trade, expand transport corridors, harmonize commercial regulations, and enhance regional economic stability. Continued consultations on regional and global issues and mutual support in international forums, he said, remain essential.

Highlighting the strategic importance of the International North-South Transport Corridor

(INSTC), Hassan-Zadeh said the route, which passes through Iran and connects to Bandar Abbas, provides Kazakhstan and other CIS countries with access to the Persian Gulf and South and East Asian markets. Expanding this corridor would reduce transportation costs and play a key role in regional food security, energy cooperation, and trade. Completing the infrastructure of this corridor and removing operational obstacles, he stressed, should be at the forefront of joint efforts.

He added that with improved infrastructure and the resolution of issues such as financial transfers, the private sectors of both countries could cooperate in industrial exports, technical and engineering services, scientific collaboration—particularly in nanotechnology and biotechnology—as well as tourism and health tourism. Iran, he noted, is ready to participate in Kazakhstan's infrastructure, industrial, and commercial projects, invest in mining exploration and extraction, and engage in joint production ventures based on mutual interests.

Hassan-Zadeh emphasized that Kazakhstan is a priority partner for Iran due to geographic proximity, shared interests, diverse capacities, and its membership in the Eurasian Economic Union. The Iran Chamber of Commerce, he said, is fully prepared to take practical steps to strengthen these relations. Achieving this goal, he concluded, requires joint action to eliminate avoidable barriers and pave the way for long-term, sustainable cooperation.

Call for Redefining the Role of Iran's Embassy in Baku With a Focus on Economic Diplomacy

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Following a recent visit by an Iranian delegation to Baku, the President of the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Chamber of Commerce emphasized that relations between Iran and Azerbaijan must move beyond the current cold phase and return to their previous period of vitality. He stressed, however, that such a revival can only be achieved through economic engagement—not political maneuvering.

Hossein Pirmoazen, President of the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Chamber, underlined that the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Baku must assume a more prominent economic role rather than functioning primarily as a political institution. The current situation, he said, is a serious warning that the country's diplomatic apparatus—particularly regarding neighboring states—requires a fundamental reassessment. This means forming specialized economic teams, maintaining continuous engagement with the private sectors of both countries, addressing trade barriers, coordinating with domestic economic institutions, and providing precise analytical reports on opportunities and risks in the Azerbaijani market.

He noted that under the previous administration, a plan to establish an economic deputy in Iranian embassies was approved—an important step toward strengthening economic diplomacy. However, many embassies, including Iran's in Azerbaijan, failed to implement this initiative effectively. Pirmoazen said that during Seyyed Abbas Araghchi's tenure in the foreign ministry, diplomacy with neighboring countries remained largely political, while economic aspects were pushed to the margins.

He added that the foreign minister's approach toward Azerbaijan followed the same pattern, even though a deeper understanding of regional geopolitics and Iran's economic needs should have led to a more strategic and transformative engagement with Baku.



The Vice President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce also criticized the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, which chairs the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Economic Commission, for weak economic performance in dealings with Azerbaijan. He emphasized that key projects—such as joint railway initiatives, North-South transit corridors, and bilateral investment ventures—could have become symbols of economic cooperation between the two countries. Instead, he said, sluggish activity and lack of planning have

resulted in the loss of valuable opportunities.

Pirmoazen described Azerbaijan, despite certain political differences, as a strategic neighbor with significant economic, cultural, and commercial potential. He stressed that the unique cultural and geographic commonalities between the two countries should serve as tools for economic convergence and stronger people-to-people ties—not grounds for political misunderstanding.

To overcome the current chill in political relations and restore the once warm and strategic partnership, Pirmoazen said the mission of Iran's embassy in Baku must be redefined. The embassy's primary responsibility, he argued, should no longer be limited to political follow-ups, but should include driving economic relations, supporting traders, and reviving joint projects. He also urged the foreign minister and the minister of roads to address past shortcomings and revise their strategies by prioritizing regional economic cooperation, border collaboration, and the shared interests of the two nations.

He concluded that while political diplomacy remains an important function of embassies, the current economic challenges facing Iran make a shift toward economic diplomacy indispensable. Iran-Azerbaijan relations can once again become warm and cooperative through economic engagement—but achieving this requires a change in mindset and performance at the level of Iran's embassy in Baku.

Iran, Qatar Strengthen Environmental Cooperation to Combat Dust and Airborne Pollution



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran and Qatar have reaffirmed their commitment to expanding bilateral environmental cooperation, particularly in combating dust storms and addressing regional ecological challenges. The pledge was made during a meeting between Iran's Vice President and Head of the Department of Environment, Shina Ansari, and Qatar's Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki Al-Subaie, held on the sidelines of the Seventh Session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-7).

According to the Iranian Department of Environment, Ansari praised the constructive technical collaboration and joint committee work already established between the two nations. She described the current state of environmental relations between Iran and Qatar as positive and forward-moving.

Highlighting the growing severity of regional dust storms, Ansari stressed the need to strengthen joint efforts to control and mitigate airborne pollution. She emphasized the importance of adopting modern monitoring technologies, including satellite-based systems, to identify dust hot spots and inform effective management strategies. "Advanced monitoring tools and satellite observations are essential for mapping dust sources and implementing well-planned environmental interventions," she noted.

Ansari also underscored the importance of cooperation in protecting the marine and coastal ecosystems of the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman. She pointed to shared environmental concerns such as marine pollution, biodiversity loss, and the illegal trafficking of wildlife—issues that require coordinated regional responses. Strengthening joint initiatives in these areas, she said, will help safeguard the ecological integrity of vital water bodies shared by both countries.

Iran's Overland Transit of Goods Reaches 11m Tons



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's overland transit of goods has climbed to nearly 11 million tons since the beginning of the current year, according to the latest figures released by the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development.

Javad Hedayati, Director General of the Transit and International Transport Office at the Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization, announced on Thursday that road transit through the country's land borders reached 10,967,606 tons by the end of Aban (mid-November). The movement of these goods was facilitated through more than 496,000 trips carried out by fleets active in international freight transport.

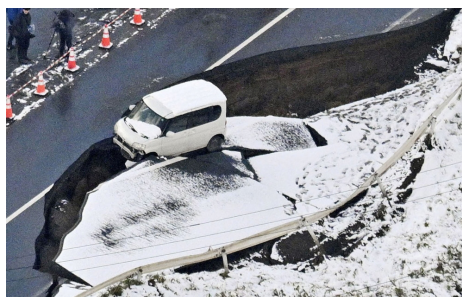
According to the organization's public relations office, Hedayati noted that this surge underscores the increasing role of Iran as a key transit corridor in the region, connecting major trade routes between Asia, the Caucasus, and the Middle East.

He added that during the same period, Iran's export shipments via land borders totaled over 8,824,000 tons, transported through 370,309 trips conducted by cargo fleets. In addition, more than 1,686,000 tons of imported goods entered the country through 76,666 transport operations, reflecting the continuous activity of Iran's road freight network.

Hedayati emphasized the substantial capacity of Iran's international transport sector, pointing to its growing ability to support trade with neighboring countries. He said the steady rise in export volumes demonstrates the strength and reliability of Iran's cross-border logistics system.

Japan Hit by Second Quake in Days, Tsunami Advisory Lifted

TOKYO (Dispatches) - A powerful earthquake struck off the coast of northern Japan on Friday, the weather office said, days after an even larger tremor shook the region and injured at least 50. The Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) upgraded Friday's quake to magnitude 6.7 and warned that tsunami waves of up to one metre (three feet) could hit the northern Pacific coastline. In the end, waves of up to 20 centimetres were recorded on the main northern island of Hokkaido and in the Aomori region, the JMA said, before the tsunami advisory was lifted. Broadcaster NHK said there was no obvious change at either of the ports where the waves hit.



U.S., Japan Defense Chiefs say China Harming Regional Peace



TOKYO (Dispatches) - Beijing's actions are "not conducive to regional peace", Japan's defense minister and U.S. counterpart Pete Hegseth agreed during a call after Chinese aircraft locked radar on Japanese jets near Taiwan, Tokyo said Friday.

The December 6 radar incident came after comments by Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi on Taiwan that infuriated China.

It was followed this week by Chinese-Russian air patrols around Japan.

Hegseth and Shinjiro Koizumi "exchanged candid views on the increasingly severe security situation in the Indo-Pacific region, including the radar incident", the Japanese defence ministry said after the call.

They "expressed serious concern over any actions to increase regional tensions, as China's actions are not conducive to regional peace and stability", the statement added. Koizumi said on X he told Hegseth that China was "disseminating information that is completely contrary to the facts" about the radar incident.

"However, Japan has made clear that it does not seek escalation and that we are responding calmly while making necessary rebuttals, and we are keeping the door open for dialogue," Koizumi added.

Hegseth's office said they had "discussed... China's military activities" among other issues including "Japan's efforts to increase its defense spending and strengthen its capabilities".

Takaichi had indicated on November 7 that Japan would intervene with military force in any Chinese attack on Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its own and has not ruled out seizing by force.

Thailand's PM Dissolves Parliament in Shock Move Amid Opposition Clash



BANGKOK (Dispatches) - Thailand's Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul announced on Thursday that he is "returning power to the people," moving to dissolve parliament and clear the way for elections earlier than previously anticipated.

Government spokesperson Siripong Angkasakulkiat told Reuters the move followed a disagreement with the largest grouping in parliament, the opposition People's Party.

"This happened because we can't go forward in parliament," he told Reuters.

Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn later endorsed the decree, the official Royal Gazette announced on Friday, making way for early elections, which by law must be held within 45 to 60 days. The political turmoil coincides with a fourth day of a fierce border conflict between Thailand and Cambodia in which at least 20 people have been killed and nearly 200 wounded.

Anutin told reporters on Wednesday that dissolving parliament would not impact Thailand's military operations along the frontier, where clashes have broken out at more than a dozen locations, some involving exchanges of heavy artillery.

"I am returning power to the people," Anutin said on social media late on Thursday.

U.S. Preparing to Seize More Tankers Off Venezuela's Coast

HOUSTON (Dispatches) - The U.S. is preparing to intercept more ships transporting Venezuelan oil following the seizure of a tanker this week, as it increases pressure on Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, six sources familiar with the matter said on Thursday.

The seizure was the first interdiction of an oil cargo or tanker from Venezuela, which has been under U.S. sanctions since 2019. It came as the U.S. executes a large-scale military buildup in the southern Caribbean and as U.S. President Donald Trump pushes for Maduro's ouster.

The latest U.S. action has put shipowners, operators and maritime agencies involved in transporting Venezuelan crude on alert, with many reconsidering whether to sail from Venezuelan waters in the coming days as planned, shipping sources said.

Further direct interventions by the U.S. are expected in the coming weeks targeting ships carrying Venezuelan oil that may also have transported oil from other countries targeted by U.S. sanctions, such as Iran, according to the sources familiar with the matter who declined to be named due to the sensitivity of the issue.

Venezuela's state oil company PDVSA did not reply to a request for comment. Venezuela's government this week said the U.S. seizure constituted a "theft."

Asked whether the Trump administration planned further ship seizures, White House spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt told reporters she would not speak about future actions but said the U.S. would continue executing the president's sanctions policies.

"We're not going to stand by and watch sanctioned vessels sail the seas with black market oil, the proceeds of which will fuel narcoterrorism of rogue and illegitimate regimes around the world," she said.

The U.S. has assembled a target list of several more sanctioned tankers for possible seizure, according to one of the people familiar with the matter.

The U.S. Justice Department and Homeland Security had been planning the seizures for months, according to two of the people.

A reduction or halt in Venezuelan oil exports, the main generator of revenue for the Venezuelan government, would fuel the Maduro government's finances.

The U.S. Treasury said on Thursday it imposed sanctions on six supertankers that, according to PDVSA's internal



voyages of three freshly loaded shipments totaling almost 6 million barrels of Venezuela's flagship export grade, Merey, sources said.

"The cargoes were just loaded and were about to start sailing to Asia," said a trading executive involved in dealing and shipping Venezuelan oil. "Now the voyages are cancelled and tankers are waiting off the Venezuelan coast as it's safer to do that."

U.S. forces were monitoring tankers at sea and some vessels in Venezuelan ports, either being repaired or loaded, and waiting for them to sail into international waters before taking action, one of the sources said.

In the runup to the seizure of Skipper, which was previously sanctioned for its oil trading with Iran, U.S. forces had stepped up surveillance of waters close to Venezuela and neighboring Guyana, another of the sources said.

At the White House, Leavitt said the seized vessel was expected to sail to a U.S. port where the government intends to seize its cargo of oil through a formal legal process.

Amnesty Repeats Genocide Claims Against Israel

GAZA CITY (Dispatches) - Amnesty International on Thursday accused Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups for the first time of crimes against humanity during and after the October 7, 2023 attack that sparked the Gaza war, with Hamas rejecting the report as "lies".

"Palestinian armed groups committed violations of international humanitarian law, war crimes and crimes against humanity during their attacks in southern Israel that started on 7 October 2023," the human rights watchdog said in the 173-page report.

Amnesty said the mass killing of civilians on October 7 amounted "to the crime against humanity of extermination". Hamas rejected the report, saying it contained "inaccuracies and contradictions".

"The report's repetition of the lies and allegations promoted by the occupation (Israeli) government concerning rape, sexual violence, and the mistreatment of captives clearly demonstrates that the purpose of this report is incitement and distorting the image of the resistance," the militant group said in a statement.

It called on Amnesty to retract the "flawed and unprofessional report".

Amnesty has also accused Israel of committing genocide in its retaliatory campaign in Gaza, an accusation Israel has vehemently denied.

The rights group said Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups in Gaza "continued to commit violations and crimes under international law in their holding and mistreatment of hostages and the withholding of bodies seized".

"The holding of hostages was done as part of an explicitly stated plan



explained by the leadership of Hamas and of other Palestinian armed groups," the report stated.

Amnesty has previously accused Hamas and other groups of committing war crimes, which are serious violations of international law against civilians and combatants during armed conflict.

Crimes against humanity can occur in peacetime and include torture, rape and discrimination, be it racial, ethnic, cultural, religious or gender-based. They involve "a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population".

Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack on Israel resulted in the deaths of 1,221 people, and 251 people were taken hostage that day, including 44 who were dead.

Of the 207 hostages taken alive, 41 died or were killed in captivity. All have since been returned—mostly under a series of ceasefire agreements—except for the body of one Israeli officer.

Among the acts listed by Amnesty as crimes against humanity were murder, extermination, imprisonment, torture, enforced disappearance, rape and "other forms of sexual violence".

For the latter crimes, the group said it was not able to interview survivors except for one case, and therefore could not conclude the scope or scale of the sexual violence.

The report concluded that Hamas and its armed wing were "chiefly responsible" for the crimes.

Hamas ally Palestinian Islamic Jihad, as well as the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and "unaffiliated Palestinian civilians", were responsible to a lesser extent.

In May 2024, the International Criminal Court applied for arrest warrants for Hamas political bureau chief Ismail Haniyeh, the head of its armed wing Mohammed Deif, and its October 7 mastermind Yahya Sinwar, who was then the group's chief in Gaza.

The ICC withdrew the applications after all three were killed later that year by Israel.

The court also issued a still-active arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant in November 2024 for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the war.

Zelensky Says U.S. Is Still Pushing Territorial Concessions as Part of Peace Plan

KYIV (Dispatches) - The U.S. is still pushing for Kyiv to make big territorial concessions to Russia to halt the war that started with Moscow's February 2022 invasion, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Thursday.

Washington wants only Ukraine to withdraw its troops from parts of the Donetsk region, not Russia, where a demilitarised "free economic zone" would be installed as a buffer between the two armies, Zelensky told reporters.

Under the latest US plan, Moscow would also stay where it is in the south of the country, but pull some of its troops out of Ukrainian regions that Russian President Vladimir Putin has not claimed to have annexed in the north.

Zelensky's remarks appear to show little has changed in Washington's core position on how the conflict should end since it sent a 28-point plan to Kyiv and Moscow last month that heavily favoured Russia.

Ukraine has been revising that and this week sent a 20-point counter-proposal to Washington, the full details of which have not been published.

"We have two key points of disagreement: the territories of Donetsk and everything related to them, and the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. These are the two topics we continue to discuss," Zelensky told reporters at a briefing.

"They see Ukrainian forces leaving the territory of Donetsk region, and the



supposed compromise is that Russian forces do not enter this territory... which they already call a 'free economic zone'," Zelensky said about the US plan.

Zelensky has long said he has no "constitutional" or "moral" right to cede Ukrainian land, and said his citizens should have the final say on the issue of territory.

"I believe that the people of Ukraine will answer this question. Whether through elections or a referendum, there must be a position from the people of Ukraine," he said.

Zelensky also pushed back against the idea of a unilateral Ukrainian withdrawal in the Donetsk region.

"Why doesn't the other side of the war pull back the same distance in the other direction?" he said, adding there were "a great many questions" still unresolved.

Under the US plan, Russia would relinquish territory it has captured in the Kharkiv, Sumy and Dnipropetrovsk regions – three areas over which Moscow has not made a formal territorial claim.

In 2022, Russia claimed to formally annex the Donetsk, Kherson, Lugansk and Zaporizhzhia regions, despite not having full control over them.

Ukraine's troops still hold around one-fifth of the Donetsk region, according to AFP's analysis of data from the Institute for the Study of War (ISW).



Manchester City Edge Real Madrid, Arsenal Maintain Perfect Record

PARIS (Dispatches) - Erling Haaland scored his 34th goal for club and country this season to give Manchester City a 2-1 win at Real Madrid as Arsenal maintained their perfect group stage record with a 3-0 victory at Club Brugge.

It was a second successive home defeat for Real following their 2-0 reverse against Celta Vigo at the weekend and heaped more pressure on coach Xabi Alonso, whose side have won just two of their last eight in all competitions.

For Haaland, though, this was a 21st goal in 21 City games this season and a 51st in 50 Champions League starts, while Nico O'Reilly scored his first goal in the competition.

"(The) game was a bit chaotic, we couldn't really control it. We get the win in the end, super happy," Haaland told TNT Sports, pointing to how important it was to bounce back from their home defeat to Bayer Leverkusen last time out.

"Two more games left. We need to finish strong and hopefully we can be in the first eight because then we're through."

Rodrygo gave Real, who were missing Kylian Mbappe, the lead just before the half-hour mark with a crisp shot across Gianluigi Donnarumma into the far corner.

But academy product O'Reilly equalised just seven minutes later, reacting quickest to prod home the loose ball from inside the six-yard box after Thibaut Courtois had saved Josko Gvardiol's header.

And Haaland was able to fire City in front from the penalty spot on 43 minutes after VAR intervened to punish Antonio Rudiger for wrestling the Norwegian forward to the ground to prevent him reaching a cross.

It could have been worse for Real but Courtois redeemed himself somewhat for flapping at Gvardiol's header with a crucial double save to deny Haaland and Rayan Cherki in quick succession

as the half drew to a close.

It was a breathless end-to-end second half and Jude Bellingham could have done better than chip over the bar with only Donnarumma to beat, while Courtois made a fingertip save to deny Jeremy Doku.

Vinicius Jr. had a late chance to equalize but skied his volley after Donnarumma had come for and missed an inswinging corner.

Substitute Endrick also clipped the top of the bar with a header as Real pushed for a late equaliser.

"It's a difficult moment for us and for (Alonso) as well. Things aren't going well... we wanted to show people we're together with the coach," said Rodrygo, who hugged his under-fire boss on the side of the pitch after the match.

Noni Madueke's double helped Arsenal win a sixth straight Champions League match this season and close in on the last 16.

The Premier League leaders already have more points (18) than was needed last season to secure a top eight spot and direct qualification for the last 16, and they have two matches still to come.

"We're fighting on all fronts. I feel like we can win this competition and win the league, that has to be the aim," Madueke told TNT Sports.

Madueke's two goals could not have been more different.

The first was a wonder goal in which he beat two players and thrashed in a long-range strike.

For the second he was teed up by Martin Zubimendi for a simple finish.

Brugge had put the Gunners under fierce first-half pressure but they crumbled after the second goal as Gabriel Martinelli added to their misery, bending the ball around the goalkeeper from outside the box.

Villa, Forest Celebrate Wins as Celtic and Rangers Suffer European Misery



PARIS (Dispatches) - Aston Villa beat Basel 2-1 in the Europa League to secure their eighth successive win, while Nottingham Forest won at Utrecht as Celtic suffered a heavy home defeat by Roma.

Evann Guessand struck the opener for Villa in Switzerland but the hosts hit back when Flavius Daniliuc glanced Xherdan Shaqiri's flighted free-kick past a hesitant Marco Bizot.

Youri Tielemans steered in the winner from just outside the area early in the second half as Unai Emery's side picked up their fifth victory in six league phase games this season. They have won 14 of their last 16 matches in all competitions.

Villa sit on 15 points and are third in the Europa League standings, guaranteed of at least a play-off place. They trail leaders Lyon and Midtjylland only on goal difference.

Forest bolstered their hopes of qualifying directly for the last 16 with a 2-1 win at Utrecht.

Arnaud Kalimuendo swept Forest shortly after the break in the Netherlands before the Dutch side levelled through a header from Mike van der Horst.

Igor Jesus slotted through a crowd two minutes from time to clinch a first away victory in Europe for Forest since 1995, keeping them two points adrift of the top eight.

"I'm very pleased with the players and the result, and long may it continue. I'm pleased for everyone concerned," said Forest manager Sean Dyche.

Wilfried Nancy became the first Celtic boss to lose his first two games as the Scottish champions went down 3-0 to Roma.

An own goal from Liam Scales handed Roma a sixth-minute lead in Glasgow and on-loan striker Evan Ferguson's first-half brace sealed the points for the Italian side.

Rangers were all but knocked out of Europe after sliding to a fifth defeat in six games. They lost 2-1 to Hungarian outfit Ferencváros, who are coached by former Republic of Ireland striker Robbie Keane.

Falcons Edge Reeling Buccaneers 29-28 in NFL

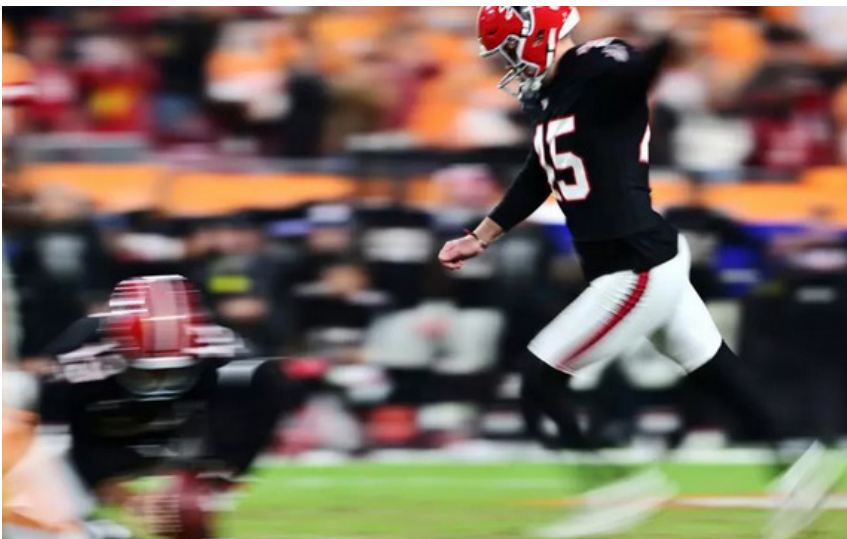
LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Zane Gonzalez booted the game-winning field goal as time expired to lift the Atlanta Falcons to a 29-28 NFL victory over Tampa Bay on Thursday that saw the Buccaneers slip out of a tie for the NFC South divisional lead.

The Falcons, already eliminated from playoff contention, clearly relished their role as potential spoilers in Tampa Bay, where Atlanta quarterback Kirk Cousins threw for 373 yards and three touchdowns -- all to tight end Kyle Pitts Sr.

Bijan Robinson also ran for a touchdown and Gonzalez kicked a 43-yarder to seal the victory.

Trailing 28-14 with 13:34 remaining, the Falcons had touchdowns by Robinson and Pitts but missed two-point conversions on both.

After the Bucs, leading 28-26, came up empty on their final drive the Falcons got the ball back and despite a sack of Cousins and a holding penalty set



Gonzalez up for the game-winner.

"If you're a pro football player you're a fighter," Cousins said.

"There's a lot for us to play for in terms of just us men and wanting to be excellent at what we do. And I think that showed tonight."

Tampa Bay quarterback Baker Mayfield threw for 277 yards and two touchdowns with one interception.

The Bucs, who had raced to a 6-2 record and threatened to run away with the division, have now lost five of their last six games -- including a loss to division stragglers New Orleans last week.

The Carolina Panthers can tighten their grip on the NFC South when they visit the Saints on Sunday.

The Buccaneers and Panthers will then meet twice over the final three weeks of the regular season.

Federer Returns to Australian Open Stage for Legends' Battle of the No.1s

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Roger Federer will return to the scene of some of his greatest triumphs in January when he headlines a "Battle of the World No.1s" to officially launch the 2026 Australian Open, organizers said Friday.

The Swiss great will be back on Rod Laver Arena for the first time since he retired in 2022 as the Grand Slam at Melbourne Park introduces an inaugural "opening ceremony".

Held on the evening before the tournament starts on January 18, it will include a tribute to Federer, who won the Norman Brookes trophy six times among his 20 major titles.

He will also join four-time Australian Open winner Andre Agassi and Australians Pat Rafter and Lleyton Hewitt for a star-studded match.

"It feels like a lifetime ago that I coined the phrase the



'Happy Slam' for the Australian Open, and it still makes me smile when I think about all the moments I've had there," Federer said.

"I've experienced so many emotions on Rod Laver Arena—the joy of lifting 'Norman' six times, the honor of playing in front of Rod Laver himself.

"The challenge of competing against my biggest rivals, and always the overwhelming love and support of the Australian fans.

"Coming back to win the AO in 2017 is one of my most treasured Grand Slam memories and backing it up to win in 2018 was another dream come true in Melbourne."

Federer also won the tournament in 2004, 2006, 2007 and 2010.

South Africa Win Big to Level India T20 Series



INDIA (Dispatches) - Opener Quinton de Kock hit a 46-ball 90 to set up South Africa's convincing 51-run win over India in the second T20 international and level the series.

De Kock's knock laced with five fours and seven sixes powered South Africa to 213-4 after being invited to bat first on the outskirts of Chandigarh.

South Africa bowled out India for 162 in 19.1 overs despite Tilak Varma's valiant 62 off 34 balls as the visitors pulled one back after they lost the opener of the five-match series.

The series is part of the build-up for the T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka in February-March.

Medium-pace bowler Otneil Baartman stood out with figures of 4-24.

The left-handed de Kock set the tone for the big win after he put on 83 runs for the second wicket with skipper Aiden Markram, who made 29.

South Africa bounced back from their crushing defeat in the first match when the tourists crashed out to their lowest T20 total of 74 all out.

"Much better tonight," said Markram. "Obviously we started off with a special knock from Quinny (de Kock) and some really good contributions at the end that got us to a really good total."

Indian spinner Varun Chakravarthy bowled opener Reeza Hendricks for eight on his first ball and later dismissed Markram after being hit for two sixes by the captain.

De Kock, who turns 33 on Wednesday, looked in control from the start as he hit left-arm quick Arshdeep Singh for two sixes in the bowlers' first two overs.