







## SMEs exports at %17 growth in H1

Export of products by Small- and Medium-Sized Industries (SMEs) registered a 17 percent growth in the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (from March 21 to Sept. 22). Deputy CEO of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) Asghar Masaheb made the remarks on Sunday and revealed the 16.7 percent growth in export of products by these small industries based in industrial parks and towns since the beginning of the current year. He put the total value of products exported by these companies from March 21 to Sept. 22 at \$1.740 billion, showing a 16.77 percent growth as compared to the last year's corresponding period. Masaheb put the value of products exported by SMEs from March 21 to Sept. 22, 2019, at \$1.490 billion. He pointed to the spread of COVID-19 and added, "SMEs managed to export \$1.740 billion worth of products to other countries since the beginning of the current year at the condition that the country is grappling with the adverse and negative consequences of COVID-19." Elsewhere in his remarks, member of the Board of Directors and Deputy CEO of ISIPO added, "In this period, SMEs managed to export maximum volume of their products to the countries including Pakistan at \$1 billion, Iraq at \$364 million, Afghanistan at \$83 million, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) at \$50 million, Turkey at \$36 million, Azerbaijan Republic at \$26 million, Armenia at \$25 million and India at \$20 million."

Masaheb put the number of exporting units in the first half of the current year at 430.

## Iran exports \$2.47 billion goods from Bushehr province in past six months

More than 11 million tons of non-oil goods worth over \$2.47 billion were exported from Bushehr Province in southern Iran during the past six months of the current Iranian year (starting from March 20), Bushehr Province Department of Industry, Mine and Trade said on Sunday. Hossein Hosseini said that China, the UAE, Afghanistan, India, South Korea, Qatar, Pakistan, Turkey and Brazil were the main export destinations of the exports. He said that butane, propane, polyethylene, methanol, urea, styrene, butene, raffinate, cement, clinker, base oil, polystyrene and alkylbenzene were the main petrochemical products exported from Bushehr. Meanwhile, about 247,000 tons of goods worth \$508 million were imported to Bushehr Province during this period, Hosseini added. The imports included auto tires, butter, black tea, auto parts, rice, tools, industrial faucets, and automatic door parts. Bushehr Province's Department of Industry, Mine, and Trade said that China, the UAE, India, the Philippines, New Zealand, Germany, Sri Lanka, Italy, South Korea and Spain were top exporters to the province.

## Iran's H1 Foreign Trade Tops \$30b

Iran's non-oil foreign trade stood at 62.84 million tons worth \$30.34 billion during the first half of the current fiscal year (March 20-Sept. 21), indicating a 28% decline in value compared with the corresponding period of last year.

According to Mehdi Mirashrafi, the head of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration, H1 non-oil exports accounted for 46.31 million tons worth \$13.56 billion and imports constituted 16.52 million tons worth \$16.78 billion of the total trade figure.

As a result, the country's trade deficit stood at \$3.22 billion over the period under review.

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## President Orders Formation of Iran Trade Database

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani assigned the new minister of industry to set up a comprehensive database system on trade, saying it would contribute to more transparency and help the fight against corruption and smuggling.



Addressing a Sunday meeting of the Administration's Economic Coordination Headquarters,

Rouhani ordered Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Alireza Razm-Hosseini to establish a comprehensive database on the supply and distribution chain, including the data on production, exports and imports. The database should be available to the public, including all managers and economic activists, so that all stages of production, distribution, and the

all organizations, including the customs office and insurance companies, must join the database.



stock of products would be clear, the president said. Rouhani added that it would prevent harm to the society's psychological security in the economic sector, would help the fight against corruption and smuggling by creating transparency, and will mark a major step in

organizing the economy. The president also emphasized that all organizations, including the customs office and insurance companies, must join the database. In August, Rouhani highlighted his administration's efforts to deal with the economic consequences of the US sanctions

and the coronavirus pandemic while economic boom and stability was still high on the agenda. In June, the Iranian president said Iran has achieved a positive economic growth without reliance on petrodollars and despite being under the pressure of sanctions.

## Tourism sector enjoying growth despite sanctions: min.



The Minister of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Ali Asghar Mounesan told Mehr News on Sat. that tourism sector had a growth in last year despite all the events including US sanctions which could affect this sector. Speaking to Mehr News correspondent

on Saturday afternoon while visiting the MNA HQ, Minister of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Ali Asghar Mounesan talked briefly about the role of the ministry in the development of tourism industry and increase of foreign tourists despite US sanctions.

"I am glad to inform you that the tourism sector of the country tried to minimize the effects of sanctions on this sector with the efforts of all activists in this field. In the last Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 20, 2020), despite the fact that we faced the coronavirus crisis in the last two months of the year, 8,800,000 tourists were registered. The figure indicates an increase compared to the corresponding period in the last Iranian calendar year 1391 (ended on March 20, 2013)," he said.

"Last year, in addition to the sanctions, many other events happened in the country, including floods at the beginning of the year, the martyrdom of Lt. Gen. Soleimani and the tragic accident of the Ukrainian plane, each of which could have dealt a fatal blow to the tourism industry.

But fortunately, as statistics show, we had a growth in this sector last year despite all the events," he added.

The minister went on to say, "Therefore, tourism is one of the important economic sectors. One of the important things we did in this area was to diversify tourism services. Previously, most of our foreign tourists were interested in cultural and historical fields. Now, due to the efforts made, the health tourism, ecotourism and nature tourism sectors have greatly improved. Recently, sectors such as agricultural tourism and mining tourism have been added to this area."

"In 2019, our share of the country's GDP was \$11.8 billion. Unfortunately, one of the things that has recently fluctuated the foreign exchange market is the loss of foreign tourists in the last nine months due to the coronavirus," Mounesan noted. "Therefore, the tourism sector has been able to play its role well due to the existing capacities in the country, including Iranian customs, climatic diversity and precious cultural heritage," he added.

## Fars Province ready to host Int'l convention on peace and tourism

Cultural director-general of tourism and pilgrim affairs of Fars Province Governor's Office said that this province because of its unique cultural and historical situation, is ready to host international convention on peace and tourism in 2021.

Mojtaba Alavi said on Sunday in the international webinar on "Tourism For Peace and Friendship" that Fars Province with its unique and remarkable tourist attractions and historical monuments is regarded as an international tourist attraction and can be informed to tourists all over the world.

Due to the obvious role of cultural, historical, and religious values as well as the proper role of the works of handicrafts and traditional arts in advancing the goals of the tourism industry, it is important that the promotion of peace and kindness among nations is a satisfactory approach, Alavi added. Her noted that Iran is the flag bearer and symbol of universal peace advocacy throughout history and does its best to maintain this concept. Cultural director-general of tourism and pilgrim affairs of Fars Province Governor's Office said that the province is the front-runner for peace tourism and said, "We talk about the province which is very peaceful with its historic, religious and cultural backgrounds."

The ancient city of Shiraz is the city of Love and Literature and the origin of first samples of Persian gardens is the unique example of hospitality and warmth of its people and bears many historical and ancient attractions and old cities of Persian Empire showing the glory of a nation such as Persepolis and Necropolis and Pasargad.

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Sudoku

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News

## All Iran-Iraq flights cancelled due to COVID19: CAO

Head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) said that all flights of Iranian airlines and Al-Araqiya Airlines were cancelled until further notice from Iran to Iraq and vice versa due to spread of COVID-19. Speaking in an interview with Mehr news agency on Saturday, Touraj Dehghan Zanganeh announced, "All flights of

Iranian Airline companies and Iraq's Al-Araqiyah Airline from Iran to Iraq and vice versa were abolished until further notice due to the outbreak of the second wave of coronavirus pandemic, COVID-19, as well as observing health guidelines as instructed by the Coronavirus Combat and Prevention Headquarters. Before this order, a limited number of flights were scheduled to be operated by Al-Iraqiya Airlines to return Iraqi citizens present in Iran, he added.

### Nagorno-Karabakh crisis and its impacts on regional security

Full-scale conflict of Armenia and Azerbaijan on Nagorno-Karabakh will have long-term security repercussions for the regional security and Iran is expected to use all its capacity to help find an immediate settlement to the crisis, an analyst said on Sunday.

Kaveh Afrasiabi, an expert of Iranian foreign policy issues, told IRNA correspondent that the crisis is so much deep and can be compared with Karabakh war in 1991-92 which led to a ceasefire in 1994.

Some people believe that negotiations between Armenian and Azeri parties by mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group is enough, while the participation of representatives from Karabakh region is also necessary for the talks to yield fruit, Afrasiabi said.

He said that the global spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has diverted the public attention from the danger of the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis.

Everyone knows that Iran has based its foreign policy on good relations with neighbors and wants to strike balance to its relations with the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia, the expert said.

Referring to Iran's mediation role in the crisis in 1992 during the presidency of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Afrasiabi said that Iran has now once again offered to mediate between the warring sides.

"As Turkey is not reliable by the Armenian side on the one hand and Iran has good relations with both countries on the other hand, it is likely that a peace conference will be held in Tehran in the future."

He said that Iran would not be happy with the victory of one of the warring sides over the other one and such a victory would not benefit Iran's national security.

## Iran warns Armenia, Azerbaijan over mortar shells

A senior official in Iran's East Azarbaijan province that is adjacent to Armenia and Azerbaijan said Iran has given the two clashing countries the necessary warnings about the consequences of mortars hitting Iranian villages. Aliyar Rastgoo who serves as the deputy for East Azarbaijan governor-general in political and security issues, told IRNA that province's highest authority has also sent a letter to the Ministry

of Foreign Affairs to pursue the issue through diplomatic channels. Meanwhile, he added, the Iranian military is present in the region and is closely monitoring the situation. Also, earlier on Saturday, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh warned the warring parties fighting over the Nagorno-Karabakh region against any violation of Iran's territorial integrity and national sovereignty. Iran meticulously monitors all the movements at the borderlines with the two parties engaged in the dispute, said Khatibzadeh when responding to a question about the reports on Iran's territory being violated. Khatibzadeh said that any violation of the Iranian territory is intolerable. He stressed the need for the both clashing parties to stop the

conflicts and start serious time-bound talks.

The spokesperson also expressed Iran's readiness to help the two parties pursue these goals. In the conflict that has been going on between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the past few days, a number of rockets and missiles hit the Iranian villages close to the joint borderlines which injured a number of people including a five-year-old child.



## US Analyst Explains What Will Happen If Trump Withdraws before Polling Day

An American analyst told Tasnim what would happen if US President Donald Trump died or were incapacitated before the election following his positive test for COVID-19.



"If it happens prior to the election: First, both parties would nominate someone else to be on the ticket if a candidate is incapacitated or dies before an election,"

Myles Hoenig, who ran for the US Congress in 2016 as a Green Party candidate, said.

Following is the full text of the interview:

Tasnim: What happens if a US presidential candidate is ill and has to withdraw before polling day?

Hoenig: If it happens prior to the election: First, both parties would nominate someone else to be on the ticket if a candidate is incapacitated or dies before an election.

For the Democrats, the Democratic National Committee chairman - currently, it is Tom Perez - would meet with the Democratic Governors Association and the Democratic leadership in Congress.

The chairman would then report to the DNC's 447 members. Those members would decide on who would take the nominee's place.

As for the GOP, the Republican National Committee's 168 members would cast a vote on the leadership's recommendation for a replacement. Three members from each state's delegation cast the same number of votes that their state or territory is entitled to at the party's nominating convention.

If it happens after an election but before the Electoral College vote

While Americans go to the polls to vote for the president, you are actually choosing a representative to vote for a candidate when the Electoral



College convenes. That happens on Dec. 14 this year.

Should a candidate die before the Electoral College meets in December, the process to name a replacement would be the same as if it happened prior to the election - the party would decide on a replacement.

Where there could be some uncertainty, is that the party would assume their electors would vote for the replacement chosen by the party leaders and members.

In some states, electors cannot, by law, be made to vote for a replacement. In other states, electors are legally bound to vote for the candidate that wins their state's election.

If it happens after the vote of the Electoral College

Should a candidate die after the votes were cast by the Electoral College and before Congress counted the ballots on Jan. 6, 2021, the new Congress would have to make some decisions. Congress would have to decide if the votes made by the Electoral College are to be counted. If they are counted, then the vice president-elect would become president.

If the Congress does not count the votes, the 12th Amendment will kick in. The amendment allows for the House of Representatives to elect a president from among the three

candidates who received the most votes in the election. If it happens after Jan. 6

If the person who was elected by the Electoral College and accepted by the Congress should die after Jan. 6, the rules of succession to the presidency would apply and the vice president would be the next president.

Tasnim: President Trump has contracted COVID-19. What is your take on this?

Hoenig: Everything from Schadenfreude to karma. Here was the most powerful person in the US encouraging his followers to forego caution against the virus. We can include those people in with the over 200,000 already murdered by this president. He knew it was deadly but for fear of upsetting Wall Street, and his #1 campaign issue, a strong economy, he downplayed the crisis. The only thing is how Wall Street is doing has very little to do with how the economy is doing and everyday people's lives.

Trump has flouted the rules, regulations, dictums, and advice from medical professionals, on and off his staff. His callous disregard for other people's lives has been his calling card for nearly all his life. In fact, he knew he was exposed to a carrier yet delved right into crowds coming out to see and 'glorify' in his

presence. Except for all the people he's likely infected, it couldn't have happened to a more deserving person.

Tasnim: Can a presidential election be delayed?

Hoenig: A presidential election cannot be delayed. It is written in the Constitution to be the first Tuesday in November. Changing the Constitution takes months, sometimes years, but only when there is a sustained groundswell of support.

Tasnim: What happens if a president dies in office?

Hoenig: Eight presidents have died while in office. Abraham Lincoln and John Kennedy, and two others, were assassinated. The rules of succession are unambiguous. The Vice President immediately assumes the role, once sworn in. Many Vice Presidents are chosen, not so they can take over if the worst happens, but often as presidential insurance against assassination or impeachment. The argument goes that the 2nd choice is often far worse than the first, and that dissuades the other party from trying to remove the president. That's the more cynical reason for how a vice president is chosen. Mostly, it's either for political or ideological balance, or geographical balance, or playing the numbers game with the Electoral College.

Everything from Schadenfreude to karma. Here was the most powerful person in the US encouraging his followers to forego caution against the virus.

### NEWS

### President, Envoy Weigh Plans to Boost Iraq-Iran Ties

President of Iraq Barham Salih and Iran's Ambassador to Baghdad Iraj Masjedi discussed ways to promote cooperation between the two neighbors in various fields.

In the Saturday meeting in Baghdad, Salih and Masjedi discussed the latest political developments in the region, with both stressing the need for commitment to dialogue and plans to strengthen regional peace and security, the Iraqi president's office said in a statement. They also emphasized the necessity of supporting the Iraqi government's efforts to protect diplomatic delegations and enforce the law.

The two sides agreed in the meeting that stability in Iraq and settlement of the regional crises would pave the way for the promotion of mutual cooperation.

In July, Masjedi said the Islamic Republic and neighboring Iraq have plans to boost relations in all arenas, days before Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi visited Tehran.

In his trip to Iran, Kadhimi met senior authorities, including Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

### Unity, amity, empathy needed to overcome current crises: Veep

Iranian First Vice President said that unity, amity and empathy is needed to overcome crises and problems overshadowing the country.

Speaking in a telephone conversation with Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi, a prominent Shia Marja, late on Saturday, Es'hagh Jahangiri reiterated that the country is grappling with unjust and cruel US sanctions and effective steps should be taken in order to get rid of economic sanctions imposed against the country.

He pointed to the spread of coronavirus, COVID-19, in the country and added, "People of the country are living in a difficult situation at the condition that they are grappling with adverse effects of COVID-19 as well as anti-human and unjust US sanctions."

To get rid of economic problems and difficulties, the country needs unity, amity and empathy among all people and governmental officials, Jahangiri emphasized.

While expressing his condolences on the advent of Arbaeen pilgrimage, which marks forty days after Imam Hussein (PBUH) and his true companions were martyred at Karbala, Jahangiri said, "This year, all walks of life have to observe Arbaeen ceremonies the other way round due to coronavirus pandemic conditions in accordance with the guidelines instructed by the National Coronavirus Combat and Prevention Headquarters."

Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi, for his part, pointed to the outbreak of coronavirus and added, "All people should observe health protocols and guidelines as instructed by the National Coronavirus Combat and Prevention Headquarters fully."

By observing health guidelines, the ayatollah expressed hope that the deadly disease will be eradicated in the country.

### News

## Expansion of Iran's ties with EAEU, pathway to thwart US sanctions

Experts believe that Iran's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and expansion of trade and economic relations with the Union member states are effective pathway to thwart the US unjust sanctions. According to remarks of the Iranian officials, agreement between Iran and the EAEU is a test for evaluating how much Tehran's trade infrastructure is ready to cooperate with the world. And such evaluation will help find obstacles to economic relations in order to remove them. From 2015, EAEU with five members, including Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia started work to take economic policies on free trade agreements with other states. On September 19, Managing Director of Iran's International Exhibition Company Bahman Hosseinzadeh announced that the Iranian capital is to host the

first Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) exhibition by the end of the year. Hosseinzadeh said the exhibition is aimed at boosting the volume of trade exchanges and promoting economic cooperation with the EAEU member countries. In mid-September, Iranian Minister of Energy Reza Ardakanian underlined the importance of strengthening Iran's position in the EAEU 200-million-population market in order to have active role in the Union. Iran is under arbitrary sanctions while Europe could not stand loyal to its commitments to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action due to Washington's pressure on the states respecting the UN Security Council Resolution 2231, so that all-out cooperation with EAEU will prepare considerable opportunities for Iran to enhance regional trade and increase its non-oil exports. Hosseinzadeh said that Tehran-EAEU exhibition set for a month before the end of the Iranian year on March 21, 2021, is as an ample opportunity to share capacities of the member states for trade and industrial outputs. He noted that impacts of the sanctions will be lessened effectively when export capacities are created permanently with the friendly states.



Hosseinzadeh said that he is optimistic about the EAEU exhibition as it will have a positive impact on Iran's economy in the future. About a year ago, Iran and EAEU reached a barter trade agreement covering 860 types of commodities. Statistics show that Iran has witnessed 63 percent increase in its trade exchanges with the EAEU countries.

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## Rouhani to inaugurate 1st phase of 'smart school network'

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani is to inaugurate the first phase of the country's smart school network via videoconference on Monday. In the first phase of the project, more than 76,000 schools will be connected to the National Information Network. As planned, all the Iranian schools will join the network gradually. The opportunity to implement tele-education and distant-learning system in Iran has never arisen, either because of the lack of the necessary infrastructure or the lack of a need for mobile application. However, this year, all schools for the new academic year started September 5 in Iran with special considerations being taken into account due to the coronavirus pandemic. In order for students to keep in touch with their studies, in red coronavirus zones in where the schools have been shut down, the Ministry of Education launched a homegrown mobile application, called SHAD, providing students with distance learning programs.



### Headlines

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### CALL TO PRAYER TIME IN ISFAHAN

**Morning call to prayer:**

04:40:17

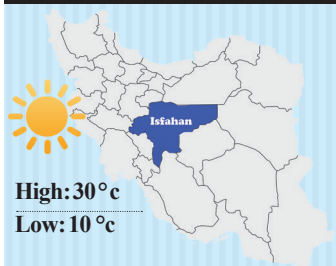
**Noon call to prayer:**

11:51:36

**Evening call to prayer:**

18:00:08

### WEATHER



### Any aggression against Iran doomed to failure

The commander of Central Provost of Iran Army warned that Iran will give a crushing response to any aggressor who violates Iran's security and authority. Speaking on the sidelines of an exhibition with the theme Holy Defense, Second Brigadier General Seyyed Mohammad Reza Hosseini said that during the past four decades, Iran has achieved many accomplishments and become more powerful under pressures and sanctions. Stressing that the Islamic Republic of Iran has been never looking for war at no time, Hosseini said, "According to Leader's remarks, Iran always attaches great importance on maintaining the security of the Iranian nation and neighboring countries."



## President Orders Formation of Iran Trade Database

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## American people facing 'choiceless' democracy

Stating that the US elections are not fully democratic, Richard Falk said that it does not matter for American people who wins as either way the problems of their lives will not be solved. To know more about the US Presidential Election, we reached out to Richard Anderson Falk, professor emeritus of international law at Princeton University.

### Why is turnout so low in US elections?

Electoral turnout has been low in recent years because the perceptions of living in a 'choiceless' democracy give many US citizens the impression that it does not matter who wins as either way the problems of their lives will not be solved. Perhaps, more than choiceless, a better existential explanation of this devaluing of the right to vote is the sense of what I would call irrelevant democracy. This means that political outcomes of elections are felt to be irrelevant to conditions of poverty or discrimination, or economic unfairness, an interpretation that gains credibility that it is 'the losers' in American society that make up the bulk of those who fail to vote. It reflects deep alienation in middle class and underclass America, which has been somewhat lessened at this time due to a fear that Trump's reelection could produce a fascist America. This fear will undoubtedly increase voter turnout in November, but not necessarily in a post-Trump future. Although it is the disadvantaged who disproportionately refrain from voting (and partly also for reasons connected with voter suppression discussed previously), there are sophisticated citizens who refuse to vote on principle or vote under the banner of 'the lesser of evils'. Progressive anti-Trumpists are faced with this dilemma in the forthcoming elections.

Can the US election be considered a fully democratic election?

No, the American elections as currently administered on national level are not fully democratic for three principal reasons: (1) most obviously, due to various forms of voter suppression and distortion encroaching especially on the rights of persons of color and the impoverished to cast their votes either as a result of difficult registration rules or by making polling sites feel hostile or requiring especially long waits in neighborhoods where minorities and the

poor live; (2) by presidential opposition to voting by mail and by alleging fraud and rigging without any evidence imperiling his willingness to transfer political power if he loses, undermining confidence in the integrity of elections and causing the public great anxiety; (3) by not acknowledging and challenging 'systemic racism' inherent in American society that produces discrimination against African-Americans, Muslims, and other victimized minorities.

What is the difference between Trump and Biden? Could we describe Biden as a pacifist candidate?

Biden's record, especially on international issues and the Middle East, is of a consistently war-mongering character that includes strong support for the disastrous 2003 war and subsequent occupation of Iraq and mindless indifference to Israel's criminal disregard of Palestinian rights. Besides, as suggested, Biden seems as ready for a new cold war than Trump. His version of the foreign policy bipartisan consensus is more coherent and deferential to the considered views of the political elite and militarized American bureaucracy while Trump is an impulsive leader that thinks he can by himself engineer a revival of American preeminence by bullying, bluster, and bluff. My own reluctant support of Biden is rooted in my greater apprehensions about Trump, which also explains why I equally reluctantly supported Hillary Clinton in 2016 when she opposed Trump. I regard his demagogic style, racist affinities, ultranationalism, ecological denialism as a vehicle for a fascist future for the United States, which would mean the total abandonment of democratic procedures of governance, accompanied by repressive policies and practices. Such an abandonment would almost certainly produce harsh exclusionary hostility to immigration except from majority white countries, punishment of dissent and protest activity, and an economic and political order even more slanted in favor of the most wealthy. My reluctance about the electoral choice posed by Biden or Trump is also colored by uncertainty in the form of an obscure future. I fear a belligerent future in which Biden's approach leads to interventions and even war, whereas I grant the possibility that a reelected Trump could opt for isolationism, which resulted in more moderation in the Middle East and elsewhere.

## Azerbaijan claims advances in Karabakh, Armenia vows historic struggle

Armenia said on Saturday it would use "all necessary means" to protect ethnic Armenians from attack by Azerbaijan, which said its forces had captured a string of villages in fighting over the mountain enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Regional and military analysts say the Azeris lack the firepower to overrun Karabakh completely but may settle for territorial gains that will enable them to declare a victory and gain leverage in future negotiations.

Ignoring a French attempt to mediate, the opposing sides pounded each other with rockets and missiles for a seventh day in the newest flare-up of a decades-old conflict that threatens to draw in Russia and Turkey.

The death toll rose to at least 230 in the fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh, an ethnic Armenian enclave inside Azerbaijan that broke away from its control in the 1990s.

Each side said it had destroyed hundreds of the other's tanks. The Azeri side claimed gains, and President Ilham Aliyev sent congratulations to a military commander on the capture of a Karabakh village.

"Today the Azeri army raised the flag of Azerbaijan in Madagiz. Madagiz is ours," Aliyev declared on social media. He later announced the capture of seven more villages.

Hundreds of people took to the streets of the Azeri capital Baku in celebration, waving flags and placards reading "Karabakh was and will be ours". It was not possible to independently verify the situation on the ground.

Armenian Defence Ministry official Artsrun Hovhannisyann said the situation was changing frequently. "In such a large war such changes are natural. We can take a position, then leave it in an hour," he told reporters.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan told his countrymen in a televised address that fighting all along the front was intense.

"As of now, we already have significant human losses, both military and civilian, large quantities of military equipment are no longer usable, but the adversary still has not been able to solve any of its strategic issues," he said. Armenia's armed forces have so far held back from entering the war alongside those of Nagorno-Karabakh. But Pashinyan portrayed the conflict as a national struggle and compared it to the country's war with

Ottoman Turkey in the early 20th century.

His Foreign Ministry said Armenia, as the guarantor of Nagorno-Karabakh's security, would take "all the necessary means and steps" to prevent what it called "mass atrocities" by the forces of Azerbaijan and its ally Turkey. A ministry spokeswoman declined to comment on what steps this could entail.

The clashes are the worst since the 1990s, when some 30,000 people were killed. They have raised international concern about stability in the South Caucasus, where pipelines carry Azeri oil and gas to world markets.

### PATIENCE RUNS OUT

Apart from a four-day war in 2016 that killed about 200 people, the Karabakh region has mostly been calm for the past quarter-century, with Russia playing a balancing role as an ally of both Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Now Azerbaijan, emboldened by Turkish backing, says it has run out of patience with decades of ineffective diplomacy that have failed to lead to the return of its lost territory.

While Russia, the United States and France have called for an end to hostilities, Turkey has said Armenian "occupiers" must withdraw and rejected "superficial" demands for a ceasefire.

Regional and military analysts say the Azeris lack the firepower to overrun Karabakh completely but may settle for territorial gains that will enable them to declare a victory and gain leverage in future negotiations.

The two sides continued to trade accusations of foreign involvement, with Pashinyan saying Armenia had information that 150 high-ranking Turkish officers were helping to direct Azeri military operations.

Both Turkey and Azerbaijan have repeatedly denied the involvement of Turkish forces, as well as assertions by Armenia, Russia and France that Syrian rebels are fighting on the Azeri side.

Azerbaijan hit back, saying in a statement on Saturday that ethnic Armenians from Syria, Lebanon, Russia, Georgia, Greece and the United Arab Emirates had been deployed or were on their way to operate as "foreign terrorist fighters" on the ethnic Armenian side.

Biden's record, especially on international issues and the Middle East, is of a consistently war-mongering character that includes strong support for the disastrous 2003 war and subsequent occupation of Iraq and mindless indifference to Israel's criminal disregard of Palestinian rights.



