

News in brief

◆ **India will be invited next month to join a new US-led initiative aimed at securing AI supply chains, the new US ambassador to New Delhi said yesterday. Ties between the allies have plummeted after US President Donald Trump slapped 50 percent tariffs on most Indian imports in August over New Delhi's purchases of Russian oil, even as officials continue to negotiate a long-delayed trade agreement. Speaking to reporters at the US embassy, ambassador Sergio Gor said India would be asked to become a full member of the Pax Silica initiative, launched by the United States last month. The US-led endeavour includes key Asia-Pacific allies -- Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Australia -- as well as Israel, and is meant to counter China's growing dominance in AI supply chains. Dubbed the "Pax Silica", after the Latin terms for peace and silicon, the alliance aims to secure supply chains of key components independent of China.**



India to be invited to join US-led AI initiative

Trump says Iran 'want to negotiate' after reports of hundreds killed in protests

the rising cost of living, the demonstrations have evolved into a serious challenge of the theocratic system in place since the 1979 revolution. Information has continued to trickle out of Iran despite a days-long internet shutdown, with videos filtering out of capital Tehran and other cities over the past three nights showing large demonstrations. As reports emerge of a growing protest death toll, and images show bodies piled outside a morgue, Trump said Tehran indicated its willingness to talk.

◆ **US prosecutors have opened an inquiry into Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, prompting a rare rebuke from the central bank chief against escalating pressure from Donald Trump's administration as the president pushes for lower interest rates. In an extraordinary statement released in text and video on Sunday, Powell took aim at the "unprecedented action" from the Trump administration, saying the Fed received grand jury subpoenas and threats of a criminal indictment relating to his Senate testimony in June. The issue at hand was a \$2.5 billion renovation project at the Fed's headquarters, which Trump has repeatedly attacked Powell over. Last year, the president floated the possibility of firing Powell over cost overruns relating to the historic buildings' facelift.**

US prosecutors open probe of Fed chief, escalating Trump-Powell clash



SPOTLIGHT

Indian rocket hits snag during launch

AFP | New Delhi, India

An Indian rocket hit a snag during its launch Monday, forcing a deviation in flight path as it carried an Earth observation satellite and commercial payloads, the country's space agency said.



The PSLV-C62 rocket which launched on Monday was carrying an "earth observation satellite along with 15 co-passenger satellites" from domestic and international customers, ISRO said in a separate statement.

"Close to the end of the third stage, we are seeing a little more disturbance in the vehicle," Narayanan told India's state broadcaster Doordarshan.

"Subsequently, there is a deviation observed in the vehicle flight path."

The world's most populous country has flexed its space-faring ambitions in the last decade, with its space programme growing considerably in size and momentum, matching the achievements of established powers at a much cheaper price tag.

In August 2023, it became the fourth nation to land an unmanned craft on the Moon after Russia, the United States and China.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2024 announced plans to send a man to the Moon by 2040.

The PSLV-C62, a four-stage launch vehicle, "encountered an anomaly" towards the end of the third stage, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) posted on X, without saying exactly what went wrong.

"A detailed analysis has been initiated," it added.

A livestream of the launch shows the rocket blasting into the sky.

However, a glitch led to a deviation in its flight path, ISRO chief V Narayanan said.

India's PSLV rocket, long considered the workhorse of the national space programme, has launched several of the country's flagship missions, including its first lunar and Mars orbiters.

In 2017, it set a world record by launching 104 satellites in a single mission.

Iran government stages mass rallies as alarm grows over toll

At least 648 protesters killed in Iran crackdown: rights group

◆ **Thousands of people filled the capital's Enghelab (Revolution) Square brandishing the national flag**

◆ **European Union has voiced support for the protesters**

◆ **Norway-based NGO Iran Human Rights (IHR) said it confirmed the killing of at least 192 protesters**

AFP | Paris, France

Iranian authorities yesterday sought to regain control of the streets with mass nationwide rallies in the wake of protests on a scale unprecedented in recent years, as alarm grew over a deadly crackdown.

The foreign minister said Iran was ready for both war and talks after repeated threats from Washington to intervene militarily over the crackdown on protests, which activists fear has left at least hundreds dead.

Over two weeks of demonstrations initially sparked by economic grievances have turned into one of the biggest challenges yet to the theocratic system that has ruled Iran since the 1979 Islamic revolution ousted the shah.

In a sign of the severity of the crisis, the authorities have imposed an internet blackout lasting more than three-and-a-half days that activists say is aimed at masking the extent of the crackdown.

Seeking to regain the initiative, the government called for rallies nationwide backing the Islamic republic on Monday.

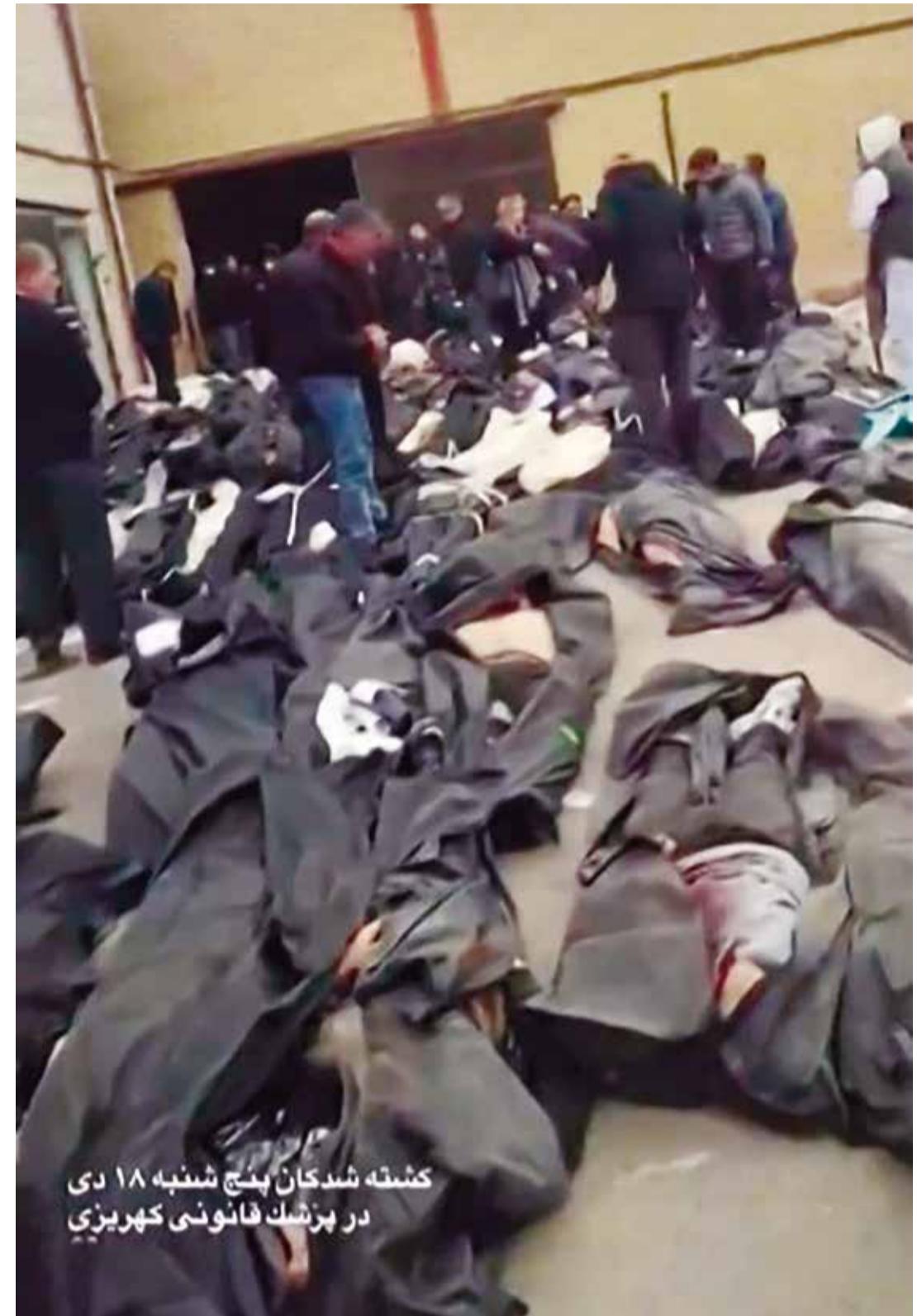
Thousands of people filled the capital's Enghelab (Revolution) Square brandishing the national flag as prayers were read for victims of what the government has termed "riots", state TV showed.

Addressing the crowds, parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said Iran is fighting a "four-front war", listing economic war, psychological war, "military war" with the United States and Israel and "today a war against terrorists", referring to the protests.

Flanked by the slogans "Death to Israel, Death to America" in Persian, he vowed the Iranian military would teach US President Donald Trump "an unforgettable lesson" if Iran were attacked.

Trump said Sunday that Iran's leadership under Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in power since 1989 and now 86, had called him seeking "to negotiate" after he repeatedly threatened to intervene militarily if Tehran killed protesters.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is not seeking war but is fully prepared for war," Foreign Minister



This video grab taken from UGC images on January 12, 2026, and first appeared online on January 10, 2026, and verified by AFP teams in Paris on January 11, 2026, shows the courtyard of the Forensic Diagnostic and Laboratory Center of Tehran Province in Kahrizak with dozens of bodies in body bags laid out for family members.

Abbas Araghchi told a conference of foreign ambassadors in Tehran broadcast by state television.

"We are also ready for negotiations but these negotiations should be fair, with equal rights and based on mutual respect."

Foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said a channel of communication is open between Araghchi and Trump's special envoy for the Middle East Steve Witkoff despite the lack of diplomatic relations.

Meanwhile, the foreign minister of Oman, which has on occasion acted as a mediator, met Araghchi in Tehran on Saturday.

Soaring toll

The European Union has voiced support for the protesters and on Monday said it was "looking into" imposing additional sanctions on Iran over the

repression of demonstrations.

"Iran's shutdown of the internet has now lasted more than 84 hours, said monitor Netblocks. The blackout has severely affected the ability of Iranians to post videos of the protests that have rocked big cities since Thursday."

A video circulating on Sunday showed dozens of bodies outside a morgue south of Tehran.

The footage, geolocated by AFP to the district of Kahrizak, showed bodies wrapped in black bags, with what appeared to be grieving relatives searching for loved ones.

The Norway-based NGO Iran Human Rights (IHR) said it confirmed the killing of at least 192 protesters but that the actual toll could be much higher.

"Unverified reports indicate that at least several hundreds, and according to some sourc-

es, more than 2,000 people, may have been killed," said IHR.

More than 2,600 protesters have been arrested, IHR estimated.

The US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency said it had confirmed the deaths of 544 people.

Iranian state media has said dozens of members of the security forces have been killed, with their funerals turning into large pro-government rallies. The government has declared three days of national mourning for those killed.

State outlets were at pains to present a picture of calm returning, broadcasting images of smooth-flowing traffic.

Tehran Governor Mohammad-Sadegh Motamedian insisted in televised comments that "the number of protests is decreasing".