

Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Esmail Baghaei, Says the United States Is the Major Supplier of Weapons to the Zionist Regime, Which Has Waged Wars Against the Gaza Strip and Lebanon

IRAN NEWS

Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Esmail Baghaei Has Said That Iran Is Resolved to Pursue Its Right to Prosecute the Perpetrators of Martyr Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani's Assassination

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Iran Says Provided No Ballistic Missiles to Russia



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has said that Tehran has provided no ballistic missiles to Russia to use in the war with Ukraine.

Araghchi made the comment on Sunday on his X account in which he referred to his meetings in New York with EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell and Enrique Mora, deputy secretary general of the European External Action Service. The meetings took place on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session in September.

"In a meeting with Josep Borrell and Enrique Mora in NY, I said the following: 1- Iran-Russia military cooperation is not new; has a history, long before the Ukrainian crisis began. 2- Some Europeans have provided Israeli regime with all kinds of sophisticated weapons, and anxiously engaged in military operation against Iran", Araghchi said in his post.

"3-US Maximum Pressure policy is still in place, and business community in Europe follows OFAC instructions in full", he said, referring to the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), which is affiliated to the US Treasury Department and enforces economic and trade sanctions on other countries.

"I clearly said, and reiterate once again: we've NOT provided ballistic missiles to Russia. If Europe needs a case to appease Israel's blackmail, better find another story", the top Iranian diplomat added.

Araghchi's comments come as the EU reportedly plans to impose sanctions on a number of Iranian people and organizations the bloc accuses of having links to the alleged transfer of ballistic missiles to Russia.

Reuters, citing European diplomats on Friday, reported that EU foreign ministers plan to announce the sanctions during their meeting in Brussels on Monday.

Gov't Sets Ambitious Target to Attract 15m Foreign Tourists



TEHRAN - In a recent ceremony marking the introduction of the new governor of Fars Province, Eskandar Momeni outlined the Iranian government's strategic goal of attracting 15 million foreign tourists to the country. The event took place in a solemn atmosphere, honoring the memory of martyrs, particularly those who played pivotal roles in Iran's revolution. Momeni emphasized that the sacrifices of these individuals have paved the way for the security and stability enjoyed by the nation today.

Fars Province, home to the revered Shah Cheragh shrine and rich cultural heritage, was highlighted by Momeni as a cornerstone for Iran's tourism and economic development. He stated, "This province holds immense potential for economic advancement, and we must harness these opportunities to serve our people better." The governor underscored the importance of delivering quality services to the residents of Fars, emphasizing the collective responsibility to fulfill these duties.

Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi expressed gratitude for the efforts of the previous government and paid tribute to the late Martyr Raisi, stating, "Whenever we hear the name of Martyr Raisi, we think of service and dedication." Vahidi praised the contributions of the former governor of Fars, who remained committed to the public until his last day in office.

Momeni noted that the former governor had requested the appointment of a successor to further the province's development. He stressed that the people of Fars are the ultimate judges of their leaders' performances and that those who have served with integrity will be remembered positively.

The new governor, Mr. Amiri, was chosen after a careful selection process. Momeni explained, "I dedicated significant time to selecting a governor who understands this region and has experience at the national level." He remarked on Amiri's preference to serve in Fars, despite being considered for other roles, and highlighted the broad consensus that supported this choice.

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK



Tehran to Respond to Countries Helping Israel for Attacks on Iran

TEHRAN - Iran's Parliament speaker says the Islamic Republic will retaliate against the countries that allow their territories to be used for potential attacks against the Islamic Republic.

"We have said [this] time and again that the airspace and soils of the neighboring countries should not be used for attacks against our country," Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf told Lebanon's al-Mayadeen television network during a visit to the country on Saturday.

He said Iran was certain that its neighbors in the West Asia region take this matter into consideration in the same way that they have been committed to refusing their territories to be used against the Islamic Republic in the past, while asserting, "We enjoy peaceful relations with all the countries of the region."

However, should a third country's territory be used towards perpetration of aggression against the Islamic Republic, "our response will be clear and natural. Because we will retaliate against any location, from which an attack against Iran is launched," he added.

"We have said [this] repeatedly that we do not want to expand the war, but will surely respond powerfully and appropriately to any attack against our country."

The top legislator also commented on Iran's Operation True Promise II, which saw the Islamic Republic firing 200 ballistic missiles towards sensitive military and intelligence targets across the occupied Palestinian territories on October 1 in response to the Israeli regime's deadly atrocities against the country and other regional territories.

"In that operation, our response was of a military nature, since we only targeted the Israeli regime's military, intelligence, and security bases," he said.

The retaliation inflicted significant damage to the targets that included the headquarters of the regime's Mossad spy agency, the regime's Nevatim airbase that houses its F-35 warplanes, and the Hazerim base that had been used towards enabling the regime's assassination of the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah's Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut in late September.

Addressing the issue of his trip to Lebanon amid ongoing Israeli aggression against the country, Qalibaf asserted, "We are not afraid of the enemy, and have conducted this trip in line with the international laws."

The Parliament speaker, meanwhile, reaffirmed the Islamic Republic's continued support for the

oppressed Lebanese and Palestinian people in the face of Israeli atrocities.

He said the country's support includes contribution towards reconstruction of the infrastructures and areas that have suffered damage as a result of the atrocities.

Earlier Qalibaf reaffirmed Tehran's commitment to supporting the Lebanese government, nation and the resistance front during its challenging times.

Qalibaf spoke at a press conference held in Lebanon's capital Beirut on Saturday following a meeting with his Lebanese counterpart Nabih Berri.

"I am particularly carrying a message from Leader of the Islamic Revolution (Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei) for the Lebanese people with assurances that, in these difficult circumstances, the Islamic Republic of Iran shall stand with Lebanon's nation, government and the resistance front," he said.

He noted that he will echo the message of the oppressed Lebanese and Palestinian people to all parliament speakers and world nations during the 149th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, which will take place from October 13-17.

The top Iranian parliamentarian also highlighted Iran's readiness to assist those displaced and affected by the ongoing Israeli aggression, contingent upon coordination with the Lebanese government.

"If the Lebanese government provides an air corridor to Beirut, Iran will deliver aid to the people as soon as possible," he emphasized.

Israeli attacks on Lebanon have taken a deadlier turn over the past weeks. They have claimed the lives of some 2,300 Lebanese people, including Hezbollah's Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah.

Qalibaf also visited the site of an Israeli airstrike in central Beirut on Thursday night, which killed at least 22 people and wounded 117 others. He held talks with the families of those killed and injured in the terrorist attack.

Qalibaf, at the head of a delegation, arrived at Beirut's international airport on Saturday following an invitation by his Lebanese counterpart to express Iran's support for the Lebanese nation and government as well as its resistance movement Hezbollah amid Israel's escalated aggression on the Arab country.

Resistance Groups Hit Israeli Positions in Retaliation for Gaza, Lebanon Strikes

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Resistance groups have struck Israeli military positions in the occupied territories in retaliation for the Tel Aviv regime's ongoing military onslaught against Gaza and devastating strikes on Lebanon.

Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah said it launched a rocket barrage at a gathering of Israeli soldiers at the al-Jardah site on Saturday, emphasizing that the operation was conducted "in support of our steadfast Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and their valiant and honorable resistance, and in defense of Lebanon and its people."

The Lebanese resistance group also claimed responsibility for a missile strike on the Soma base in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, in retaliation for the barbaric Israeli strikes on towns and villages in southern Lebanon.

Hezbollah fighters also launched a salvo of missiles at Israeli troops stationed at the Zarit barracks and struck an Israeli military position at Mi'yilia in the western Galilee region.

An Israeli military bulldozer was also hit with a guided missile close to the Ramia military site.

Moreover, Lebanese resistance fighters shelled an Israeli infantry unit in the Khirbet Zarit outpost, confirming a direct hit.

Hezbollah fighters then shelled the 7200 base south of Haifa and pounded a factory in the area with a barrage of advanced rockets.

The Lebanese fighters also targeted a gathering of Israeli soldiers on the outskirts of the southern Lebanese village of Blida and shelled the coastal city of Tiberias in the occupied



lands.

Separately, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq said in a statement that it had conducted new operations against Israeli military sites in the occupied territories, using kamikaze drones in response to ongoing Israeli military onslaught against Gaza and devastating strikes on Lebanon.

The umbrella group of anti-terror fighters made the declaration in a statement on Saturday, stating they had hit a vital target in the occupied

Syrian Golan Heights.

"In continuation of our approach to resisting the occupation, and in support of our people in Palestine and Lebanon, and in response to the massacres committed by the usurping entity against civilians, including children, women and the elderly, the fighters of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, this morning, Saturday 12-10-2024, attacked a vital target in the occupied Golan using drones," the statement emphasized.

The coalition vowed to continue targeting strategic installations across the Israeli-occupied territories.

The resistance alliance also reported a second drone strike on a key target located in the same Israeli-occupied region.

"The fighters of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, this morning, Saturday 12-10-2024, attacked a vital target for the second time in the occupied Golan using drones," the group said in a follow-up statement.

The Iraqi resistance vowed to continue its operations against Israeli targets with increasing intensity.

Russians Have Not Yet Reached a Conclusion for Investment in the Astara Railway



TEHRAN - The future of the Rasht-Astara railway project, a critical infrastructure initiative spanning 164 kilometers, remains uncertain as negotiations between Iran and Russia have yet to yield a final contract. Initially signed in Ordibehesht 1402 (April-May 2023), the agreement aimed for commercial and conclusive arrangements to be finalized by early 2024. However, various disputes have emerged regarding the project's route and overall roadmap, leading to significant delays.

Despite earlier reports suggesting that disagreements between Iranian and Russian representatives had been resolved, the final contract for the Rasht-Astara railway has not yet been executed. This lack of progress is a growing concern, as both countries recognize the importance of this railway in enhancing connectivity and facilitating trade.

In an interview with ILNA, Mohammad Reza Rezaei Kochi, the head of the Parliament's Civil Commission, expressed frustration over the stalled negotiations. "Unfortunately, the Russians have not yet come to the table, and the final contract with them has not been signed," he stated. Rezaei Kochi confirmed that initial discussions had taken place, but for unspecified reasons, the contract remains unsigned.

He clarified that the delay does not stem from Iran's side, as the country is prepared to finalize the agreement. "The construction of the Rasht-Astara railway has been a priority for successive governments, and there is a concerted effort to conclude this contract," he noted. However, he indicated that the Russians have yet to reach a consensus on crucial issues, including technical details, participation methods, and investment terms.

Rezaei Kochi highlighted that the primary points of contention in negotiations revolve around the final pricing of the project and the execution route. "The signing of the final contract is contingent upon determining the final price and the investment participation method by the Russians," he explained.

Claims Linking Operation al-Aqsa Flood to Iran "Israeli Psy-War"



TEHRAN - Iran's permanent mission to the United Nations has dismissed reports alleging that Tehran had foreknowledge of last year's operation by the Palestinian Hamas resistance group, saying Israel is spreading lies as part of its psychological warfare against the Islamic Republic.

The mission made the announcement on Saturday after U.S. media claimed that Israel had gained access to documents that showed Hamas was negotiating with Iran over funding for a planned large-scale attack against the occupying regime as far back as 2021.

"We regard the Israeli regime as a mendacious criminal, anti-human entity and place no credence in their illusions," the mission said.

"They (the Israelis) have a long history of spreading falsehoods, fabricating already-counterfeit documents, and conducting deceptive psychological operations."

The U.S. media released what they said to be the minutes of several secret meetings Hamas held in the lead-up to the October 7, 2023, Operation Al-Aqsa Flood meant to persuade Iran and the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah to join in the anti-Israel attack.

They alleged that Yahya Sinwar and other Hamas leaders in the Gaza Strip had written letters to Iranian officials and requested financial assistance for the group, totaling \$500 million, paid in monthly installments over two years, as well as training and equipment to support an additional 12,000 fighters.

They also claimed that Hamas had planned to discuss the attack in more detail at a meeting with Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's leader at the time, but did not clarify whether the discussion happened.

Iran's UN mission pointed out that even the Hamas leadership in Doha, Qatar, has stated they were unaware of the operation, which was designed and managed solely by the Qassam Brigades, the resistance group's military wing based in Gaza.

IRAN NEWS



Machine-Made Carpet Exports Hit \$131m in H1

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Mahmoud Toulayi, head of the Union of Machine-Made Carpet Producers, discussed the export of machine-made carpets in the first half of this year. He stated that during this period, 18,659 tons of machine-made carpets, valued at \$131,656,947, were exported from our country. It is predicted that the export of this product will increase by 20% compared to last year by the end of the year.

The head of the Union of Machine-Made Carpet Producers also noted that last year, more than 32,700 tons of machine-made carpets, worth \$229 million, were exported from Iran to various countries. Iranian machine-made carpets are in demand from Australia to the United States due to their quality, design, and patterns. Toulayi mentioned the challenges facing the export of this product, stating that apart from oppressive sanctions, fluctuations in the price of raw materials have caused significant challenges for the machine-made carpet market.

Pakistan Is the Main Destination for Iran's Coal



TEHRAN - Based on Iran's customs reports, in the first six months of the current year, \$12 million worth of coke and coal were exported, which represents a 7.7% decrease compared to the same period last year.

The report also indicates that imports of this product in the first six months of the current year dropped by 54% compared to the same period last year, reaching \$155 million.

Regarding coke and coal exports over the past five years (2019-2023), the report states that in 2019, the exports amounted to \$16.4 million, which decreased by 47% to \$8.7 million in 2020.

The report notes that exports of these products increased in 2021 and 2022, reaching \$14.7 million in 2021 and approximately \$72 million in 2022, showing a 69% and 391% increase, respectively, compared to the previous year.

However, in 2023, coke and coal exports saw a 63% drop compared to the same period in the previous year, falling to \$26.4 million.

Since 2020, Pakistan has been the primary destination for Iran's coke and coal exports, accounting for 70% of the total export value in 2023.

As for imports, the report indicates that coke and coal imports increased from 2019 to 2022, but in 2023, they fell by 22%.

In 2019, \$270 million worth of coke and coal were imported, \$303 million in 2020, \$576 million in 2021, and \$808 million and \$631 million in 2022 and 2023, respectively.

The main countries involved in Iran's coke and coal imports since 2022 have been China and Oman, accounting for about 80% of the total import value.

IRANNEWS ECONOMIC DESK



No Room for Trial and Error in the Economy

TEHRAN - In a recent address during a key leadership transition within the Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO), Seyed Mohammad Atabak, Minister of Industry, Mines, and Trade (SMT), emphasized that the country's economy does not afford the luxury of trial and error. He made these remarks during the introduction ceremony of Reza Ansari, the newly appointed CEO of ISIPO, and Younes Elesti, who took over as Deputy for Management Development, Resources, and Provincial Affairs within the ministry.

Atabak stated that five candidates were considered for the position of CEO of SIPO, and after thorough discussions, Reza Ansari was selected for the role. The minister emphasized that Ansari's primary mission is to build a robust value chain within Iran's industrial parks. He highlighted the challenges faced by industrial parks in recent years, specifically their failure to attract and retain human resources.

"Many of the organizations in these parks have either devolved into land-selling ventures or embarked on initiatives that were bound to fail from the beginning. We had aimed to create jobs, but unfortunately, we ended up creating pensioners," Atabak said, criticizing the inefficiencies that have plagued the industrial parks.

He praised the efforts of former ISIPO head, Mr. Moghimi, who had addressed many of these problems, and expressed confidence that Ansari would continue this work. Atabak stressed that it is crucial for industrial parks to strike a balance between land allocation and industrial development. He noted that applicants for industrial land should be clearly distinguished between those merely seeking land and those genuinely interested in industrial activities. "If we build beyond what is necessary, we will face challenges," he warned.

The minister also spoke about the importance of leadership driven by defined

metrics, urging the new leadership team to focus on indicators that would benefit the country's industrial sector. "The ministry's managers must steer their organizations toward goals that contribute positively to the nation, using measurable standards as their guide," Atabak added.

Turning to the issue of human resources, Atabak emphasized the need for a shift in approach, comparing domestic companies unfavorably with their international counterparts. "Foreign companies prioritize their human resource capacities in their decision-making processes, unlike many of our internal organizations," he said. Atabak stressed that human resources are the most valuable asset in any organization, and their management should be treated as such.

Reflecting on his selection of Younes Elesti for the Deputy role, Atabak shared that he reviewed the records of four candidates, concluding that a deep understanding of both structure and operations is essential to success in the ministry. He explained that with the challenges facing the industrial sector and the economy at large, there is no time for trial and error. "We need individuals who know both the structure and the work to effectively lead under the current circumstances," he asserted.

Atabak also called for balance within the Ministry's internal structure, pledging his full support for initiatives aimed at achieving this equilibrium. He underscored the need to first look inward at the ministry's existing human resources before seeking external talent, reaffirming his commitment to enhancing the efficiency of internal personnel.

The minister's remarks underscore the pressing need for efficiency, expertise, and strategic leadership within Iran's industrial sector as the country grapples with economic challenges.

Iran's \$494m Exports to Russia in 6 Months



TEHRAN - The Iranian Customs Office has released data on Iran's trade exchanges with the Russian Federation for the year 1402 (2023) and the first half of 1403 (2024). Based on this report, in the first half of the current year, 1.3 million tons of goods valued at \$494 million were exported to Russia.

The volume of exports during this period increased by 20% in weight and 12% in value compared to the previous year.

The main export items to Russia in the first half of this year included greenhouse peppers, polystyrene, and in-shell pistachios, accounting for 5.9%, 5.8%, and 4.9% of the total export value, respectively.

The report also notes that the highest volume of goods exported to Russia was through Astara customs, representing 32% of the total export value.

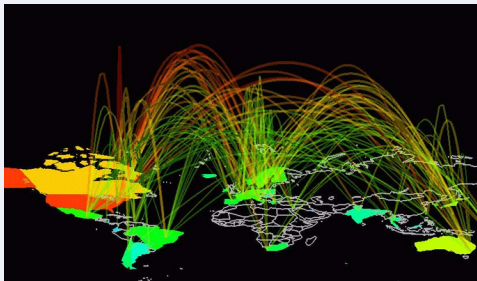
Regarding exports to Russia in 1402 (2023), 2.2 million tons of goods worth \$965 million were exported, reflecting a 54% increase in weight and a 28% increase in value compared to 1401 (2022).

During this period, Iran imported 1.1 million tons of goods worth \$797 million from Russia, showing a 38% decrease in weight and a 14% decrease in value. The main imported item from Russia was raw gold, accounting for 22% of the total import value from Russia.

Additionally, imports from Russia in 1402 (2023) amounted to 3.4 million tons, worth \$1.7 billion, indicating a 28% increase in weight and an 8% increase in value.

The report further highlights that in the first half of this year, foreign transit from Russia grew by 17%, reaching 526,000 tons, while foreign transit to Russia decreased by 18% to 56,000 tons.

Large Portion of Internet Traffic Is Filtered



TEHRAN - Reza Ghorbani, Vice Chairman of the Commission for Transformation, Innovation, and Productivity of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, in an interview with ILNA, emphasized the urgent need to lift internet filtering in Iran. He explained: "The public demand from the government regarding Iran's internet is to resolve the disruptions, which have created issues for those seeking stable internet access, including gamers."

These disruptions are caused by widespread filtering of Iran's internet, with over 70% of the country's internet traffic being filtered. In other words, the messaging apps and programs that account for this large portion of the traffic are blocked. Interestingly, despite the filtering, these services still make up a similar percentage of traffic, though access to them has become difficult. This problem has led to a public demand for unrestricted access to these services, though today, such demands have become illegal in our country."

He added: "Filtering in Iran follows a legal mechanism, and it is expected that the Working Group on Identifying Criminal Content, which includes six government officials, should address this issue. The six government members of this group are the Minister of Communications and Information Technology, the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, the Minister of Science, Research, and Technology, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Justice, and the Minister of Intelligence. It seems that these six individuals, aligned with the policies of the 14th government, are in favor of lifting the filtering. Therefore, it is expected that they will convince the non-governmental members of the group to join them. The six non-governmental members include the Attorney General, the head of the state broadcasting organization (IRIB), the commander of the national police, an IT expert selected by the Parliament's Industry and Mines Committee, a member of the Parliament's Legal and Judicial Committee, and the head of the Islamic Propagation Organization."

Ghorbani emphasized: "In my view, lifting the filtering is the easiest step that the 14th government can take. For this, there is no need for complicated issues like negotiating with the US or other hostile countries—it's a national issue. Of course, resolving it may lead to pressure from internal groups whose past actions are evident in the country's current state. Even in line with these groups' claims, local apps and messaging services were created to replace the filtered foreign ones, but they did not satisfy the public demand. Instead, the filtering led to the use of VPNs, which doubled traffic consumption and polluted the internet space and tools. Therefore, the issue of lifting the filtering is clear, and the solution is also obvious."

Iran's Oil Is Exported Despite Sanctions

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



TEHRAN - In response to recent U.S. sanctions targeting Iran's oil and petrochemical sectors, energy experts argue that these measures are largely symbolic and unlikely to significantly disrupt Iran's ability to continue exporting oil. The sanctions, announced in coordination with Israel, are viewed as a political move following Iran's missile strike on Israeli targets.

Morteza Behroozifar, a senior energy analyst, discussed the implications of these sanctions in an interview with ILNA. He emphasized that the U.S. has already imposed extensive sanctions on Iran's oil industry, leaving little room for further restrictions. "The latest sanctions are more of a gesture, signaling U.S. support for Israel," Behroozifar said. He explained that since the U.S. has already targeted Iran's entire oil sector, including its tankers, export mechanisms, and insurance services, the new sanctions add minimal practical impact.

Behroozifar pointed out that despite these sanctions, Iran has continued to sell oil, primarily to smaller Chinese companies, which remain unaffected by global financial pressures. "These companies are not integrated into the international financial system, so they are less susceptible to the risks associated with dealing with sanctioned entities," he said. "As long as China does not succumb to U.S. pressure, Iran will be able to maintain these limited exports."

However, while sanctions may not immediately cripple Iran's oil exports, Behroozifar warned that the country faces deeper challenges in sustaining and developing its oil and gas industries. Without addressing its strained relationship with the global community, Iran will struggle to attract foreign investment, technology, and expertise—essential components for expanding production capacity and modernizing infrastructure.

"Right now, Iran is forced to sell oil at a steep discount to select

buyers while bearing high operational costs," he said. "This severely hampers the country's ability to reinvest in its oil sector, procure necessary equipment, and ultimately increase production." Behroozifar suggested that improving diplomatic relations and lifting sanctions would be the only path to revitalizing Iran's oil industry.

In addition to the oil sector, Iran is grappling with a growing imbalance in its domestic gas market. Behroozifar highlighted that gas consumption in Iran continues to rise across households, industries, and power plants, while production has remained stagnant. The expert warned that the consequences of this gas shortage could be severe. In the previous year, Iran was forced to curtail gas supplies to industrial and petrochemical sectors to meet household demand. "This winter could be even harsher if consumption continues to rise without a corresponding increase in production," he cautioned.

Iran has sought to address its domestic gas deficit by importing gas from neighboring countries, such as Turkmenistan and potentially Russia. However, Behroozifar was skeptical about the viability of these arrangements, citing both logistical and financial challenges.

Iran's contract with Turkmenistan, for example, supplies only a small volume of gas—far from sufficient to cover the projected shortfall of 250 to 300 million cubic meters during the upcoming winter. Meanwhile, a potential deal to import gas from Russia faces significant hurdles. "If the gas pipeline were to run under the Caspian Sea, it would be incredibly costly, and given the deep waters in that region, only a few companies worldwide are capable of such a project," Behroozifar explained. He added that under current sanctions, Iran's ability to finance such projects is severely limited. "With the government struggling to bring even a single dollar into the country, how could it afford to pay billions annually to cover the gas deficit?"

Imbalance: The Achilles Heel of Iran-Iraq Trade



TEHRAN - Jahanbakhsh Sanjabi, the Secretary General of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, in an interview with ILNA, announced an increase in trade between Iran and Iraq in the first half of this year compared to the same period last year. He said that, excluding April, Iran's exports grew by 20% during the first six months, in both value and weight of exported goods.

He further mentioned that the trade balance between Iran and Iraq was positive in the first half of this year. Over the past 20 years, 95% of trade between the two countries has been Iran's exports to Iraq, primarily due to Iraq's limited exports, which mainly consist of oil and petrochemical products that Iran also produces. Apart from steel billets, aluminum ingots, aluminum and steel scrap, and some minor market items like rice for re-export, Iraq doesn't export much to Iran. Sanjabi noted that this imbalance might be considered a weakness in the long term, describing it as the "Achilles heel" of trade between the two countries.

He emphasized that balancing exports and imports between Iran and Iraq could potentially lead both countries towards free trade. In response to whether free trade is possible given Iran's sanctions and exclusion from international banking exchanges, Sanjabi explained that sanctions are not a major obstacle to free trade between Iran and Iraq. If trade balances are achieved, the two countries could remove foreign currencies from their trade and start using local, non-sanctioned currencies.

The main hurdle, according to Sanjabi, is the lack of balance in the availability of the Iranian Rial in Iraq and the Iraqi Dinar in Iran.

He also referred to the establishment of industrial zones on the border of the two countries, saying that agreements have been signed and locations selected, though implementation is still pending.

When asked how Iranian traders managed to increase exports to Iraq despite challenges like foreign exchange obligations, Sanjabi explained that although currency commitments have strengthened the Central Bank's control over foreign currency resources, they have also resulted in an average of \$10 billion of export earnings not returning to the country each year. Moreover, the centralized allocation of foreign exchange through specific systems has led exporters to undervalue their goods to minimize obligations, while importers overstate their imports to obtain more currency. This underreporting in exports and overreporting in imports contributes to the country's negative trade balance.

40 Nations Contributing to UN Lebanon Peacekeeping Force Condemn Israel

UNITED NATIONS (Dispatches) - Forty nations that contribute to the UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon said Saturday that they "strongly condemn recent attacks" on the peacekeepers. "Such actions must stop immediately and should be adequately investigated," said the joint statement, posted on X by the Polish UN mission and signed by nations including leading contributors Indonesia, Italy and India.

Other signatories include Ghana, Nepal, Malaysia, Spain, France and China -- all countries that have contributed several hundred troops to the force. At least five peacekeepers have been wounded in recent days as Israel takes its fight against Hezbollah into southern Lebanon. The peacekeeping mission, UNIFIL, has accused the Israeli military of "deliberately" firing on its positions.



Ukrainian Forces Holding Positions in Russia's Kursk Region



KYIV (Dispatches) - President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said that Russian forces had tried to oust Ukrainian troops from positions in Russia's Kursk border region, but that Kyiv's forces were holding their lines.

"Regarding the Kursk operation, Russia tried to push back our positions, but we are holding the designated lines," Zelenskiy said in his nightly video address. Russia's defense ministry said on Friday that its forces had recaptured two villages in the border Kursk region, where Ukrainian troops launched a mass incursion in August.

Zelenskiy has acknowledged that the Ukrainian advance into Kursk was intended to draw Russian troops away from frontline positions in eastern Ukraine, where Russian forces have been making steady gains in recent months.

In his address, Zelenskiy said that in Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia regions, partly held by Russian forces, "there are very difficult conditions, with harsh enemy actions. But the resilience of our units is crucial. Everything depends on our resilience."

Russia's defense ministry on Friday announced the capture of Ostrivske, a village on a reservoir near the town of Kurakhove, a key Russian target in its advance through Donetsk region.

Ukraine has not acknowledged the loss of the village, but military bloggers have reported Russian advances in the area.

Prosecutors in Donetsk region on Saturday said two people were killed in Russian strikes on villages near Kurakhove.

The General Staff of Ukraine's military, in a late evening report, reported 47 clashes in the area around Kurakhove and 27 more in the Pokrovsk sector to the northwest.

Further to the northeast, in Toretsk, which both Ukrainian and Russian forces say has been partly occupied by Russian forces, the General Staff said Russian forces had launched 14 assaults, assisted by air strikes.

UN Peacekeepers Warn of Catastrophic Conflict as Israel Battles Hezbollah and Hamas



BEIRUT (Dispatches) - UN peacekeepers in Lebanon warned yesterday against a "catastrophic" regional conflict as Israeli forces battled Hezbollah and Hamas militants on two fronts, on the holiest day of the Jewish calendar.

Israel has faced a fierce diplomatic backlash over the injuries suffered by five Blue Helmets serving in south Lebanon.

Lebanon's health ministry said yesterday that Israeli air strikes on three sites had killed at least 15 people, raising an earlier toll.

Israel had earlier told residents of south Lebanon not to return home, as its troops fought Hezbollah militants in a war that has killed more than 1,200 people since September 23.

More than a million people have been forced to flee their homes, Lebanese authorities say.

Hezbollah said it had fired missiles into northern Israel, where air raid sirens sounded and the military said it had intercepted a projectile.

The Iran-backed militants have stepped up their attacks on targets in and around Israel's main northern city of Haifa.

Israel's military said Hezbollah fired about 320 projectiles into Israel over the weekend of Yom Kippur, which ended at nightfall.

It also said roughly 280 "terror targets" were attacked in Lebanon and Gaza over the same period.

For the third time, it declared a "closed military area" along the Lebanese border in northern Israel.

Such measures since late September have preceded ground operations inside Lebanon.

In an interview with AFP, Andrea Tenenti, spokesperson for the United Nations peacekeeping mission, UNIFIL, said he feared an Israeli escalation against Hezbollah could soon spiral "into a regional conflict with catastrophic impact for everyone".

There is "no military solution", Tenenti said.

The UN mission said five peacekeepers had been wounded during fighting in south Lebanon in two days, and Tenenti said "a lot of damage" had been caused to its posts there.

But he added: "There was a unanimous decision to stay because it's important for the UN flag to still fly high in this region, and to be able to report to the Security Council."

Around Israel, markets were closed and public transport halted as observant Jews fasted and prayed on Yom Kippur.

After the holiday, attention is likely to turn again to Israel's promised retaliation against Iran, which launched around 200 missiles at Israel on October 1.

Tehran said the barrage was retaliation for the killing of top militants and an Iranian general. Israeli forces have been at war in Gaza since Hamas militants on October 7 last year carried out the worst-ever attack on Israel. Hezbollah, saying it was acting as a "support" front for Hamas, had been exchanging cross-border fire with Israel for almost

a year. But on September 30 Israel began a ground offensive against Hezbollah in Lebanon after intensifying air strikes on targets there.

On Friday, Israel faced criticism from the United Nations, its Western allies and others over what it said was a "hit" on a UN peacekeeping position in Lebanon.

Two Sri Lankan Blue Helmets were hurt in the second such incident in two days, UNIFIL said Friday.

Israel's military said soldiers had responded to "an immediate threat" around 50 metres (165 feet) from the UNIFIL base in Naqura, and pledged to carry out a "thorough review".

The Irish military's chief of staff, Sean Clancy, said it was "not an accidental act", and French President Emmanuel Macron said he believed the peacekeepers had been "deliberately targeted".

Both countries are troop contributors to UNIFIL.

Yesterday, 40 contributing nations said in a joint statement that they "strongly condemn recent attacks" on the peacekeepers. Efforts to negotiate an end to the Lebanon war have so far failed.

Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati said his government would ask the UN Security Council to issue a new resolution calling for a "full and immediate ceasefire".

But Jordan called for tougher measures and an end to "impunity" for Israel. It said the UN's Chapter 7 must be enacted "to force" Israeli compliance with international law.

Macron repeated his call for a ceasefire and said Hezbollah must "immediately stop" attacking Israel.

A source close to Hezbollah said the strike had targeted the group's security chief Wafiq Safa, something neither Hezbollah nor Israel has confirmed.

Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, resulted in the deaths of 1,206 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official Israeli figures.

The number includes hostages killed in captivity.

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza says 42,175 people, a majority civilians, have been killed since Israel's military campaign began there.

Israeli operations in Gaza continue, with the army besieging an area around Jabalia in the north, causing more suffering for hundreds of thousands of people trapped there, according to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA.

Israeli military spokesman Avichay Adraee posted an evacuation warning on X for an area near Jabalia, saying it was "considered a dangerous combat zone".

"There is no safe place, neither in the south nor in the north -- everyone is at risk of death," Sami Asliya, 27, told AFP.

Argentina's Triple-Digit Inflation Slows



BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - Argentina's triple-digit inflation, among the world's highest, is starting to slow down but this offers little relief for workers whose salaries have stayed the same while costs of basic goods skyrocketed and the government slashed state subsidies.

"We're losing track of what's expensive and what's cheap," said university professor Daniel Vazquez while shopping in Buenos Aires. "Prices keep going up and the only thing that isn't going up is salaries." "The gap is very, very big," he said.

While annualized inflation in September remained well into the triple digits at 209%, month-on-month price hikes slowed to their lowest level since late 2021 at 3.5%, data from the national statistics agency showed.

The data landed in line with the forecasts of analysts, who predict that inflation will end 2024 at 124%.

Libertarian President Javier Milei has cut subsidies to sectors such as energy and transportation, while vowing to trim what he calls bloat in the public sector, shuttering some offices and trimming jobs.

"You've never seen inflation being fought like this before. It takes a little longer but it's genuine," Milei wrote on X after the inflation data was published on Thursday.

U.S. Official Claims Russia and China Block Take-It-Or-Leave-It Draft on South China Sea

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Russia and China blocked a proposed consensus statement for the East Asia Summit drafted by South-east Asian countries, mainly over objections to language on the contested South China Sea, a U.S. official told Reuters.

A draft statement arrived at by consensus by the 10-nation Association of South-east Asian Nations was put to the 18-nation East Asia Summit meeting in Laos on Thursday evening, the official said.

"ASEAN presented this final draft and said that, essentially, this was a take-it-or-leave-it draft," the official said on condition of anonymity.

The United States, Japan, Australia, South Korea and India all said they could support it, the official said, adding: "The Russians and the Chinese said that they could not and would not proceed with a statement."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told a news conference in Vientiane on Friday the final declaration had not been adopted because of "persistent attempts by the United States, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand to turn it into a purely political statement."

China's Washington embassy did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The U.S. official said there were a couple of issues of contention, but the key one was how it referred to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), going further than in the previous 2023 EAS statement.

However, the official said, "there was certainly no language that was getting into the nitty gritty of any particular standoff, no language that was favoring any



claimant over any other."

China claims nearly all of the South China Sea and has stepped up pressure on rival claimants, including several ASEAN countries, notably the Philippines. ASEAN has spent years negotiating a Code of Conduct with Beijing for the strategic waterway, with some ASEAN states insisting it be based on UNCLOS.

China says it backs a code, but does not recognize a 2016 arbitral ruling that said its claim to most of the South China Sea had no basis under UNCLOS, to which Beijing is a signatory.

According to a draft seen by Reuters, the proposed EAS statement contained an extra sub-clause over the 2023 approved statement, and this was not agreed to. It noted a 2023 UN resolution saying that UNCLOS "sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out."

Another sub-clause not agreed said the international environment, including "in the South China Sea, the Korean Peninsula, Myanmar, Ukraine and the Middle East ... present challenges for the region."

Chinese Premier Li Qiang told the summit Beijing was committed to UNCLOS and striving for an early conclusion of a Code of Conduct, while stressing its claims have solid historical and legal grounds.

"Relevant countries outside the region should respect and support the joint efforts of China and regional countries to maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea, and truly play a constructive role for peace and stability in the region," he said.

Center-Left Set to Win as Pro-Ukraine Lithuania Votes

VILNIUS (Dispatches) - Lithuanians voted Sunday in elections likely to deliver a change of government but keep much else the same, including the NATO and EU member's strong support for Ukraine and moves to bolster defense policy.

The vote was likely to see the center-left replace the ruling conservatives, and could also see a new populist party whose leader is on trial for alleged anti-Semitic comments enter parliament for the first time.

The Baltic state of 2.8 million people has been warily eyeing perceived threats from neighboring Russia, fearing it could be the next target if Moscow were to succeed in its ongoing war against Ukraine, which began in 2022.

Lithuania's main parties all agree on the need for strong support for Ukraine and to maintain or increase defense spending, currently around three percent of GDP.

Opinion polls show the Social Democratic Party, which last led the government from 2012 to 2016, ahead of 14 other parties and coalitions, with the latest survey predicting they will secure around 20 percent of the vote.

The ruling center-right Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats are expected to receive around 15 percent, with six or seven parties likely to cross the electoral threshold in total.

Despite the potential change in government, no major changes in foreign policy are anticipated.

"There is no real alternative to what Lithuania chose 20 years ago," political analyst Linas Kontrimas told AFP, referring to the country joining the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

President Gitanas Nausėda, who was re-elected for a second term this May with backing from the Social Democrats, is believed to support a change in government.



During the campaign, Nausėda -- who defeated current Prime Minister Ingrida Simionyte in the presidential vote -- met with leaders of all parliamentary parties except the conservatives, who have been in frequent conflict with him during their four-year term.

"I voted for the authorities to work together, not against each other, to solve the problems of the Lithuanian people," Nausėda said after casting an early vote, although he did not reveal his party preference.

Other opposition parties have united against the ruling conservatives. "The time of the conservatives is over," Social Democratic leader Vilija Blinkevičiute, a former social security and labor minister, told reporters.

The Social Democrats have pledged to increase progressive taxation, tax luxury goods and provide additional funding for social services, as well as cut taxes for families with children, raise pensions and offer VAT relief on food.

The election has also been marred by controversy surrounding a new populist party, Nemunas Dawn, led by former long-time MP Remigijus Zemaitytis, which is expected to win parliamentary seats.

Last year, Zemaitytis gave up his seat in parliament after facing criticism over alleged anti-Semitic comments.

He is currently on trial for incitement to hatred, although he denies the charge and insists he only criticised the Israeli government's policies in the Gaza Strip.

Most political parties have vowed to exclude Zemaitytis from any ruling coalition.

"I think we are facing not only a geopolitical threat, but also an internal political threat," Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis, the leader of the conservatives, told reporters after he cast his early vote.



Ronaldo Scores in Portugal's Nations League Win

PARIS (Dispatches) - Cristiano Ronaldo scored as Portugal beat Poland 3-1 for their third straight Nations League win on Saturday, while European champions Spain put an end to Denmark's perfect start in the competition.

Bernardo Silva volleyed Portugal ahead in the 26th minute in Warsaw as Bruno Fernandes cleverly nodded a cross from Ruben Neves back towards the Manchester City midfielder.

Ronaldo then found himself in the right place at the right time to turn in the rebound for Portugal's second after Rafael Leao's shot came back off the post following a brilliant surging run by the AC Milan winger. The 39-year-old Ronaldo has now struck in all three games of this Nations League campaign for Portugal, taking his record men's international goals tally to 133.

Piotr Zielinski cut the deficit for Poland but Jan Bednarek's own goal sealed victory for Portugal, the lone remaining team in League A with a 100 percent record, and they could secure a place in the quarter-finals next week.

"We worked very hard the last few days, preparing various solutions for this game, and we were able to show it on the pitch. I am really satisfied because we controlled this game," said Portugal coach Roberto Martinez.

"We played great as a team."

Portugal have a maximum nine points in Group A1, three ahead of Croatia who beat Scotland 2-1 to condemn their opponents to a third successive defeat in the section.

Ryan Christie's first half-goal gave Scotland a shock lead in Zagreb, but Igor Matanovic equalised before

the interval and Andrej Kramaric bagged the winner midway through the second half.

Che Adams thought he had salvaged a stoppage-time equaliser but VAR disallowed his effort for offside, with Scotland winless in nine competitive outings -- the longest run in their history.

Spain needed a 79th-minute effort from Martin Zubimendi to shrug off Denmark 1-0 in Murcia as captain Alvaro Morata showed off the European Championship trophy to fans before kick-off.

The hosts were without Rodri and Dani Carvajal, both sidelined by long-term injuries, with first-choice goalkeeper Unai Simon still recovering from wrist surgery. Nico Williams, Dani Olmo and Robin Le Normand had also been ruled out.

But Luis de la Fuente's team grabbed the only goal when Zubimendi's low drive from just outside the area squirmed past Denmark goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel, who had earlier denied Lamine Yamal and Alvaro Morata.

"I'm very happy with the goal, but above all in such a close game in which we had to open the scoring," said Real Sociedad midfielder Zubimendi.

"He doesn't score many but he's starting to so I hope he continues like this," said De la Fuente. "He's one of the best players in the world in his position."

Spain moved up to seven points, one above Denmark, with Serbia picking up their first win after beating Switzerland 2-0 in Leskovac.

Serbia led through Nico Elvedi's own goal in first-half stoppage time and Aleksandar Mitrovic doubled the advantage before Predrag Rajkovic saved a penalty from Swiss striker Breel Embolo.

Beterbiev Edges Bivol to Become Undisputed Champion



LONDON (Dispatches) - Artur Beterbiev beat Dmitry Bivol by majority decision to become the undisputed light-heavyweight world champion as one of boxing's most-anticipated fights lived up to the hype in Saudi Arabia.

In a contest that could have gone either way, Bivol, 33, won the earlier rounds with his superior movement and combinations.

Fellow undefeated Russian Beterbiev, 39, was undeterred and forced his way back into the fight with relentless pressure and power punching.

With scores of 114-114, 115-113 and 116-112, Beterbiev becomes the division's first undisputed champion since 2002, and the first ever in the four-belt era.

"I feel not bad. I did not good today. I wanted to box with more quality," said a modest Beterbiev - who is now WBC, WBA (Super), IBF and WBO champion.

Bivol was defeated for the first time in 24 bouts.

"I am a warrior. I don't know, I did my job but I felt like I could do better but it was just the opinion of some judges," he said.

In the chief support, Fabio Wardley retained the British heavyweight title with a spectacular first-round stoppage win over Frazer Clarke in a rematch of March's fight-of-the-year contender.

Wardley, 29, landed a heavy, looping right hand to hurt the challenger and floored him with another ferocious right.

A dazed Clarke admirably rose to his feet but was in no position to continue as the referee halted the contest.

Two unbeaten champions with differing but equally effective styles produced a match-up of the highest level in a fight to make the boxing purist salivate.

Djokovic Beats Fritz to Set Up Shanghai Final With Sinner

SHANGHAI (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic moved a step closer to his 100th ATP title when he beat American seventh seed Taylor Fritz 6-4 7-6(6) in the Shanghai Masters semi-finals to set up a title decider against top-ranked Jannik Sinner.

Earlier on Saturday, Sinner secured the year-end world number one ranking by beating Czech 30th seed Tomas Machac 6-4 7-5 and becoming the first Italian to reach the final.

Djokovic, the 24-times Grand Slam champion, will play his fifth final in the tournament's history, looking to claim his 100th ATP title as well as his fifth Shanghai Masters crown.

"I came here this year definitely with the vision or desire to get to the final and fight for 100 titles," Djokovic said.

"I've got that chance against the best player in the world and let's see what happens."

Fourth seed Djokovic came into the match with a remarkable 9-0 head-to-head record against Fritz and immediately turned up the pressure in the opening game, forcing the American to successfully defend three break points.

The Serbian kept Fritz on the ropes with his powerful and precise groundstrokes, using his backhand to devastating effect as he racked



up three more break points at 2-2.

Fritz was only able to fend off one before sending a backhand flying wide, with the break proving decisive as Djokovic wrapped up the opener with his first ace of the match.

U.S. Open finalist Fritz built up some momentum in the second set after holding serve in a tight game where Djokovic landed a series of spectacular passing shots, before earning his first two break point opportunities of the match at 4-3.

Djokovic was able to hold but sustained a hip issue and needed treatment on court before taking the set into a tiebreak, with a wasteful Fritz struggling to land first serves and tamely relinquishing the match.

"Taylor is in form, we're coming off of the Grand Slam final and he's playing really well," Djokovic said of Fritz, who lost to Sinner in this year's U.S. Open final.

"Particularly on this surface, he's serving big, so I knew it was going to be a big test for me. I did not want to get to the third set and I'm just glad to overcome it."

Samson Ton Powers India to T20 Series Sweep After Record Total

HYDERABAD (Dispatches) - Opener Sanju Samson's blistering century helped world champions India hammer Bangladesh in the final T20 on Saturday to sweep the series 3-0 after they posted the format's highest total by a Test-playing nation of 297-6.

The hosts went past Afghanistan's 278-3 against Ireland in 2019. The Indian total is the second highest in all T20 internationals after Nepal's 314-3 against Mongolia at last year's Asian Games in China.

Samson hit 111 of 47 balls -- his first T20 international ton -- studded with 11 fours and eight sixes after India elected to bat first in Hyderabad.

In reply, Bangladesh managed 164-7 to go down by 133 runs in what was former skipper Mahmudullah Riyad's last T20 for the nation. Mahmudullah made eight before he fell to speedster Mayank Yadav and walked off with a smile and pat on the back by India skipper Suryakumar Yadav.

"We achieved a lot as a team," said Suryakumar. "I want to have selfless cricketers. We want to enjoy each others' success. We are having some fun."

Najmul Hossain Shanto's Bangladesh, who came on the India tour at the back of a two-Test sweep in Pakistan, were outplayed by the hosts as they lost the earlier Test series 2-0.

"We didn't play our best cricket," said Najmul. "We didn't execute our plans as a batting unit in all the three matches. We should believe in ourselves that we can compete."

Samson, a wicketkeeper-batsman, stood out and named player



of the match as he hammered leg-spinner Rishad Hossain for five straight sixes in an over en route to his ton in 40 balls.

He put on 173 runs for the second wicket with Suryakumar, who hit 75 off 35 balls but his knock was overshadowed by his partner's blitz and the mammoth total.

Samson finally fell to Mustafizur Rahman and walked back to a standing ovation by the weekend crowd. Suryakumar fell in the next over by Mahmudullah, who announced his retirement from the format ahead of the second match.

But there was more punishment in store for Bangladesh as new batters Hardik Pandya, who struck 47 off 18 balls and Riyan Parag, who made a 13-ball 34, kept up the charge with regular boundaries.

India surpassed their previous best total of 260-5 against Sri Lanka in 2017 as they scored at nearly 15 runs an over. Bangladesh were never in the chase but wicketkeeper-batsman Litton Das, who hit 42, and Towhid Hridoy, unbeaten on 63, attempted to put up a fight.

Leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi took three wickets including Litton and Najmul in his four overs. Pandya was named player of the series for his 118 runs, one wicket and five catches in the three matches.

India's Test team, led by Rohit Sharma, will now host New Zealand in a three-match series starting next week with the opener in Bengaluru.

Morocco Crush Central African Republic, Guirassy Scores Hat-Trick



JOHANNESBURG (Dispatches) - Morocco hammered Central African Republic 5-0 and Serhou Guirassy scored a hat-trick as Guinea trounced Ethiopia 4-1 on Saturday in the final 2025 Africa Cup of Nations third-round qualifiers.

Azzedine Ounahi netted twice and Abde Ezzalzouli, Achraf Hakimi and Soufiane Rahimi once each as 2022 World Cup semi-finalists Morocco eased to victory in Oujda after leading 4-0 by half-time.

It was a predictable Group B outcome as 114 places separate top-ranked African team Morocco from the Central African Republic -- the widest gap among the 24 third-round pairings.

Morocco equalled the biggest winning margin in 2025 qualifying after South Africa set the benchmark with a five-goal drubbing of Congo Brazzaville in Gqeberha 24 hours earlier.

Morocco qualify automatically for the AFCON as hosts, with the tournament due to start on December 21, 2025 and finish on January 18, 2026, the first time it has spanned two years.

But instead of playing friendlies, Morocco (nine points) opted for competitive match practice, leaving Gabon (four), Central African Republic (three) and Lesotho (one) to fight for one place.

The pace and power of Guirassy was too much for Ethiopia to handle in Group H as 65-year-old French coach Michel Dussuyer began a fourth spell in charge of Guinea.

Guirassy, born in France to Guinean parents, sent goalkeeper Seid Habtamu the wrong way from an 18th-minute penalty to open the scoring in Abidjan.

His next two goals, after 37 minutes and in first half added-time, saw the Borussia Dortmund forward outpace defenders and fire close-range shots into the right corner of the net.

It was the first hat-trick in 2025 qualifying and made Guirassy the joint leading scorer with Algerian Amine Gouiri, Egyptian Mahmoud 'Trezeguet' Hassan and Ivorian Jean-Philippe Krasso.

Seydouba Cisse, who set up the second goal for Guirassy, turned scorer early in the second half off an assist from Mady Camara.

After scoring just once in 180 minutes when losing to the Democratic Republic of Congo and Tanzania last month, Guinea netted four times within 48 minutes.

Ethiopia, who failed to score in their first two matches, finally breached the Guinea defence on 53 minutes with Kenean Markneh netting.