

A Senior Iraqi Official Has Warned the United States That Any Move by Washington to Restrict the Supply of Natural Gas From Iran to Iraq Would Cause a Collapse to the Arab Country's Electrical Grid

# IRAN NEWS

A Spokesperson for Afghanistan's Caretaker Government Emphasized the Cultural and Religious Commonalities Between His Country and Iran, Stating That Developing Bilateral Relations With Tehran Is a Priority for Kabul

## 2 DOMESTIC



### Iran Prepares 1,000 Museums and Historical Sites for Nowruz 1404 Celebrations

> SEE PAGE 2

## 3 INTERNATIONAL

### European Arms Imports Surge, U.S. Expands Lead as Top Global Weapons Exporter

> SEE PAGE 3



### Tension and Conflict Will Harm Iran, Global Stability



TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian says tension, unrest and conflict will be detrimental to Iran, the region and the entire world.

In a phone conversation on Sunday, Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre and the Iranian president discussed bilateral and multilateral issues.

Pezeshkian said Iran has never sought to produce nuclear weapons and affirmed the country's principled policy on defusing tensions and fostering unity in the region.

"However, we will definitely counter any threat against our country's security and interests with strength and power," he added.

He noted that Iran has always had and will have cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency on verification of the country's nuclear activities.

In an interview with Fox News recorded on March 6, US President Donald Trump claimed that he had sent a letter to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Trump said he had warned Iran to open talks on a nuclear deal or be handled militarily.

In response to Trump, Ayatollah Khamenei said on Saturday that the insistence of some bullying powers on holding talks with Iran does not aim to solve issues, emphasizing that Iran would never accept the expectations of bullying states.

Elsewhere in the phone call, Pezeshkian pointed to good relations between Tehran and Oslo and common grounds for bilateral cooperation on regional and international fields and hailed Norway's efforts to establish peace in the region.

Referring to the ongoing sensitive situation in the region and the world, he said Iran has always made efforts to maintain regional peace, stability and security and prevented the occurrence of any war and conflict.

"Unfortunately, the Zionist regime, as the main factor of tension and crisis in the region, is inciting war and committing crime and genocide against the oppressed people of Palestine," Pezeshkian emphasized.

He added that the Israeli regime "is attempting to portray the peaceful nuclear activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran as a factor of insecurity through fabrication of lies."

### Iran Will Never Engage in Negotiations Under Pressure, Intimidation



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has categorically dismissed the possibility of engaging in negotiations under pressure and intimidation.

"We will NOT negotiate under pressure and intimidation. We will NOT even consider it, no matter what the subject may be," Araqchi said in a post on his X account on Monday.

"Negotiation is different from bullying and issuing diktats," he added.

He reaffirmed the everlasting peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear energy program, emphasizing that there is fundamentally no such thing as its "potential militarization."

Iran's nuclear energy program has always been—and will always remain—entirely peaceful. There is fundamentally therefore no such thing as its "potential militarization."

In an interview with Fox News recorded on March 6, US President Donald Trump claimed that Iran can be handled either militarily or by making a deal on Tehran's nuclear program.

On Saturday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said that the insistence of some bullying powers on holding talks with Iran does not aim to solve issues, emphasizing that Iran would never accept the expectations of bullying states.

In his post, Araqchi said consultations between Iran and the European troika – France, Germany and Britain – and separately with Russia and China are underway "on equal footing and mutual respect."

## Negotiations Under Pressure and Threats Are Meaningless



TEHRAN – In his weekly press conference, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, Esmail Baghaei, firmly stated that negotiations conducted under pressure or threats are meaningless and unacceptable to the Islamic Republic. Addressing a range of diplomatic issues, Baghaei underscored Iran's unwavering stance on sovereignty, regional stability, and its rejection of coercive tactics from foreign powers, particularly the United States.

Baghaei opened the briefing by highlighting key diplomatic events from the past week, notably the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) summit held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Proposed by Iran, the summit aimed to address what Baghaei described as a "plot to displace the people of Gaza." He noted that the meeting resulted in productive discussions between Iran's Foreign Minister and his counterparts, emphasizing Iran's proactive role in regional diplomacy.

Responding to claims by former U.S. President Donald Trump about sending a letter to Iran, Baghaei dismissed the assertion, stating, "No, no letter has been received." He went on to criticize threats from U.S. officials, calling them a violation of international law and a "criminal act." Baghaei argued that such threats reflect the law-breaking nature of American policymakers, adding that Iran has consistently responded to such provocations with resistance. He reiterated that Iran remains open to negotiations based on mutual respect but will never accept talks under duress.

On the topic of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) advisory opinion and Switzerland's cancellation of a related meeting, Baghaei expressed disappointment. He explained that a 2024 UN General Assembly resolution had tasked Switzerland with hosting a summit to support humanitarian goals in armed conflicts, particularly in Gaza and Palestine. Despite extensive consultations, Switzerland opted not to proceed, a decision lamented by OIC ministers in Jeddah. Baghaei refrained from judgment but noted the lack of meaningful responses from human rights bodies to ongoing violations over the past two years.

Addressing the U.S. decision not to renew Iraq's waiver for importing Iranian gas, Baghaei called the sanctions "an admission of lawlessness and a crime against humanity," lacking any legal justification. He urged regional countries to prioritize their own interests over U.S. pressure, affirming Iran's ongoing coordination with Iraq to mitigate the impact.

Turning to recent unrest in Syria, Baghaei condemned attacks on civilians and minorities, particularly the Alawite community, describing them as conscience-shocking acts with no

justification. He emphasized Iran's diplomatic efforts to express concern to influential countries, warning that such incidents complicate Syria's political landscape. Baghaei called on all parties to uphold their responsibility to protect Syrian lives.

In response to a question from Tasnim News, Baghaei hailed the Jeddah OIC declaration as one of the strongest statements to date, reaffirming Palestine's centrality to the Islamic world. The document rejected any plans to displace Palestinians—whether internally or externally—labeling such actions as genocide. It also called for humanitarian aid and support for Gaza's orphans, a poignant reminder of the conflict's toll, with over 40,000 Palestinians having lost family members.

Baghaei addressed the ongoing investigation into the deaths of two Iranian citizens in France three months ago, noting that details remain unclear. Despite Iran's efforts, French authorities have yet to provide specifics on the killings or a missing Iranian woman. The ministry raised the issue with the French embassy on March 9, 2025, pressing for swift clarification.

Baghaei reiterated Iran's call for countries to impose sanctions on Israel, arguing that nations are obligated under the Genocide Convention to halt atrocities in Gaza, including the cutoff of water and electricity. He criticized the failure to stop arms shipments to Israel and urged an end to commercial ties, a stance echoed in the Jeddah resolution and recently supported by the African Union.

On Iran's relations with regional neighbors, Baghaei described ties as strong and growing, despite U.S. attempts to interfere. He emphasized that countries in the region value their sovereignty and mutual interests, ensuring continued cooperation with Iran.

Regarding negotiations with Europe, Baghaei clarified that Iran has not closed the door to dialogue but rejects talks predicated on threats. Discussions with European parties to the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), as well as Russia and China, remain ongoing, with an expert-level meeting expected soon.

Baghaei's remarks underscored Iran's resolute position against coercion, its commitment to regional stability, and its advocacy for Palestinian rights. As tensions persist with the U.S. and its allies, Iran continues to assert its diplomatic principles, prioritizing sovereignty and mutual respect in all dealings.

## Tehran Rules Out Talks Aimed at Dismantling Peaceful Nuclear Program

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's permanent mission to the United Nations says there is no possibility of any negotiations aimed at dismantling the country's "peaceful nuclear program."

"Should the aim [of the talks] be the dismantlement of Iran's peaceful nuclear program... such negotiations will never take place," the mission said in a post on its official X account on Sunday.

It added that Iran would never accept such negotiations that would enable the White House to claim that what former President Barack Obama failed to achieve has now been accomplished.

The mission further noted that Iran would consider negotiations that seek to ease concerns regarding any potential militarization of its nuclear program.

"If the objective of negotiations is to address concerns vis-à-vis any potential militarization of Iran's nuclear program, such discussions may be subject to consideration," it wrote. The post came a day after Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said the insistence of some bullying powers on holding talks with Iran does not aim to solve issues.



"The insistence of some bully governments on negotiations is not aimed at resolving issues, but rather [aims] to assert and impose their own expectations," the Leader said.

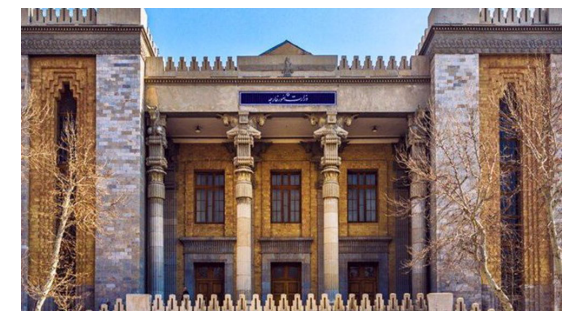
"Absolutely, the Islamic Republic will not accept their expectations," Ayatollah Khamenei emphasized.

In May 2018, US President Donald Trump pulled Washington out of a multilateral international agreement, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), signed between Iran and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany in 2015.

The UNSC-endorsed agreement required Iran to scale back some of its nuclear activities in return for the lifting of sanctions imposed on the country, especially by the United States.

Trump then imposed severe economic sanctions against Tehran while Iran was adhering to its commitments under the deal and even continued to do so for a year after the US withdrawal. Tehran started to reduce its commitments under the JCPOA in a series of pre-announced and clear steps after witnessing the other parties' failure to secure its interests under the agreement.

### Swedish Ambassador Summoned Over Interventionist, Unsubstantiated Remarks



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran has summoned Sweden's ambassador to Tehran after the Swedish minister of education made "inflammatory and unsubstantiated" remarks about the Islamic Republic.

On Monday, Mattias Otterstedt was summoned to the Foreign Ministry, where Shahrām Qazizadeh, head of the ministry's Third Department for Western Europe, formally notified the diplomat about Tehran's strong protest at the statements made by Johan Pehrson, who called the country a "rogue state" and a "sponsor of terrorism."

Qazizadeh rejected Pehrson's remarks as "unfounded, interventionist, and contrary to international norms."

He also criticized the Swedish government for chiming in with baseless accusations and hostile rhetoric against the Islamic Republic, and warned that such statements only served to undermine relations between the two countries.

The summoning came after Pehrson in remarks to Swedish daily Expressen claimed "Iran is a rogue state that many Swedes have fled from. They have institutionalized misogyny, anti-Semitism, and sponsor terrorism."

He made the comments after Expressen alleged that an Iranian student at Sweden's Lund University had previously worked for Iran's intelligence services.

Iran has firmly rejected the allegations, calling them part of a broader Western campaign to portray the country in a bad light and restrict scientific and academic exchanges.

Qazizadeh also condemned Sweden's recent summoning of Iran's ambassador to Stockholm as Swedish authorities demanded immediate release of Ahmadreza Jalali.

The Iran-born resident of Sweden has been convicted and imprisoned in the Islamic Republic for espionage for the Israeli regime's spy agency Mossad in a development that led to assassination of two Iranian nuclear scientists.

Qazizadeh stressed that Sweden had no right to question the actions of Iran's sovereign institutions, namely the ones that acted against Jalali.

"The Swedish government is in no position to cast doubt on the legal decisions of another country or to defend individuals whose crimes have been legally established," he asserted.

It was not the first time Tehran summoned Sweden's envoy.

### Iran Rebukes Canada's New Sanctions as Deceitful



TEHRAN - The Iranian Foreign Ministry has strongly denounced the latest round of Canadian sanctions against the Islamic Republic, characterizing them as "deceitful" and "in violation of international law."

In a statement on Sunday, Assistant to Foreign Minister and Director General for the Americas Department at the Iranian Foreign Ministry, Issa Kameli, said the move is unlawful, illegitimate, and a violation of the human rights of the Iranian people, making the Canadian government internationally accountable.

"The new sanctions imposed by Canada against Iran under the pretext of human rights are a political and deceitful move that contradicts the principles of the United Nations Charter and international laws governing free trade between countries," the statement read.

Canada announced on Friday fresh anti-Iran sanctions targeting seven individuals and entities over their alleged links to networks involved in the production of weapons, which Ottawa claims to have been sent to Russia for use in the Ukraine war.

The Canadian government also justified the sanctions by citing Iran's purported role in "gross human rights violations" and destabilizing activities.

The Canadian Foreign Ministry said the new sanctions align with measures taken by Canada's allies, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union.

Kameli pointed out that Canada itself is among the major violators of human rights, including through its complicity and deliberate participation in the genocide of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.



# IRAN NEWS



## Vice President Congratulates National Paralympic Committee on IPC Recognition Award

TEHRAN (IRNA) - First Vice President Mohammad-Reza Aref has congratulated the National Paralympic Committee of Iran for winning the 2025 International Women's Day Recognition Awards. In a post on X on Sunday, Aref said the award reflects the capabilities and determination of Iranian women who have made history for the country. "I also congratulate the athlete women of my country and all those who prepared the ground for this great achievement," he added. The National Paralympic Committee of Iran (NPC) was one of three organizations honored with the IPC's 2025 International Women's Day Recognition Awards.

## Iran Ready to Continue Cooperation with UNIDO



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The head of Iran's Fisheries Organization announced that the country is prepared to deepen its collaboration with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) to enhance tuna fishing practices and bolster both domestic and export markets for tuna products.

According to a report from the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, Hamzeh Rostampour, in a meeting with UNIDO's fisheries representative, expressed gratitude to the Tehran UNIDO office for its persistent and effective efforts. These efforts included organizing a short-term training course for an Iranian delegation in Japan, facilitating visits by Japanese experts to Iran for knowledge exchange, and conducting educational workshops. Rostampour emphasized Iran's keen interest in continuing its partnership with UNIDO.

As the Deputy Minister of Agriculture Jihad, Rostampour highlighted key priorities, including the adoption of longline tuna fishing methods by fishing vessels and boats, the development of Iran's tuna value chain through improved quality, the production of diverse products, waste reduction, and the utilization of fishing byproducts. He also stressed the importance of strengthening both domestic and export markets for tuna.

Rostampour urged faster action to bring a Japanese vessel to Iran, addressing any potential obstacles or arranging for a pre-approved Iranian substitute vessel if necessary. "It would be ideal for Japanese experts to be stationed on the vessel to accelerate project implementation," he noted. He also emphasized the need to install cooling systems at the Konarak fishing dock and on the designated vessel, adding that winches produced by Iranian companies should be purchased by UNIDO and installed on vessels in coordination with provincial fisheries authorities.

He further suggested that providing longline fishing equipment to fishermen would significantly speed up operations. Rostampour also called for upgrades to low-consumption fishing boat engines, proposals to maintain product quality onboard, the use of renewable energy in aquaculture farms, and the development of production projects for coastal villages and rural women's communities.

Tomoshi Kome, UNIDO's fisheries director, described the collaboration with Iran's Fisheries Organization as highly productive, thanks to the effective fisheries working group. He confirmed that two cooling systems had been delivered to Iran's shipping authority and requested that Iran's Fisheries Organization draft a letter to extend the contract, to be sent through diplomatic channels.

## Iran Prepares 1,000 Museums and Historical Sites for Nowruz 1404 Celebrations



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - In a significant announcement, the Director General of National and Global Sites and the official in charge of Nowruz programs at the Cultural Heritage Deputy, Mostafa Pourali, revealed that 1,000 locations, including museums, historical monuments, and national and global heritage sites, are being prepared to host special programs for Nowruz 1404 (the Persian New Year beginning March 20, 2025).

The statement was made during the "Welcoming Nowruz" conference held on Sunday in Tehran, attended by the Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Seyed Reza Salehi Amiri, along with several deputies and managers from the ministry.

Pourali detailed that the 1,000 designated sites include 800 museums and 200 prominent historical monuments and bases, all set to welcome tourists during the Nowruz holidays. "These locations have been identified as key destinations for hosting visitors," he said, emphasizing the scale of preparations for the upcoming festivities.

This year's Nowruz coincides with the holy month of Ramadan, prompting the ministry to design programs that honor both the national celebration of the Persian New Year and the religious significance of Ramadan. Among the highlighted initiatives is the "Nowruz Crescent" program, which blends the cultural and spiritual elements of these two occasions. Pourali added, "Special events have been planned at significant sites such as Persepolis and Hafezieh, and all museums and historical sites across the country will host Nowruz programs."

During the ceremony, Minister Salehi Amiri officially unveiled the poster for the Nowruz 1404 programs, themed "Nowruz Crescent." The unveiling marked the formal launch of the planned activities, symbolizing the fusion of Nowruz traditions with the reverence of Ramadan.

Ali Darabi, Deputy Minister and Cultural Heritage Deputy, also addressed the conference, assuring the public that there will be no increase in ticket prices for cultural and historical sites or museums this year. "For the first time, educators, teachers, and retirees from the Ministry of Education can visit these heritage sites at half price," Darabi announced, highlighting efforts to make cultural experiences more accessible.

Darabi emphasized the unique convergence of Nowruz and Ramadan, describing it as "two springs coming together—the spring of the Quran and the

spring of nature." He noted that this duality reflects Iran's rich heritage as a Muslim nation that cherishes both its ancient traditions and religious values. "Nowruz and the traditions of Ramadan, including iftar gatherings, are registered on UNESCO's global list, an honor credited to Iran," he said. Darabi called for widespread public participation and collaboration with provincial authorities, municipalities, and rural councils to ensure the success of "Nowruzgahs" (Nowruz celebration hubs) across the country.

With the New Year's moment of transition coinciding with the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Ali (AS), the first Shia Imam, Darabi assured that programs have been carefully planned to respect the sanctity of this period. "We've ensured that the dignity of these days is upheld," he said. Following the Nights of Power (Laylat al-Qadr), cheerful and entertaining events will take place, particularly during the Eid al-Fitr holidays and the traditional outings on April 1 and 2 (12 and 13 Farvardin), across all Nowruzgahs.

Darabi underscored additional priorities for the celebrations, including the production of engaging content and media campaigns for visitors, maintaining cleanliness and hygiene at all sites, and ensuring respect and hospitality toward guests. "These are critical aspects that must be meticulously observed during Nowruz," he stressed.

The deputy minister also highlighted that many cultural and historical sites will host exhibitions and handicraft bazaars in collaboration with the Handicrafts Deputy. "All museums and historical sites will work closely with this sector to promote local artisans and their products," he noted, reinforcing the ministry's commitment to preserving and promoting Iran's cultural heritage.

The conference saw virtual participation from directors general and deputies of the provincial offices of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, who provided updates and reports on their preparations. The event underscored a nationwide effort to make Nowruz 1404 a memorable and inclusive celebration, blending tradition, spirituality, and community engagement.

As Iran gears up for this dual festivity, the preparations reflect a deep respect for its historical roots and a forward-looking approach to welcoming visitors from across the country and beyond.

## Iran Faces 25,000 MW Power Shortage Forecast for Next Year



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Ali Nikbakht, Chairman of the Board of Iran's Power Plant Industry Association, has warned of a severe electricity shortfall projected for 2025, estimating a deficit of approximately 25,000 megawatts (MW). This shortage, he stated, means the country will be unable to meet roughly one-third of its electricity demand next year.

In an interview with ILNA, Nikbakht highlighted the worsening imbalance in Iran's power sector. "Next year, the country's electricity demand is expected to rise by 6 to 7 percent," he said. "To keep pace, we need to add at least 6,000 MW of new capacity annually. However, forecasts suggest that not even one-third of this target will be met in 2025." He explained that this shortfall, combined with an existing 20,000 MW deficit from this year and the anticipated demand increase, will exacerbate the crisis—assuming no additional unforeseen issues arise.

Nikbakht pointed to operational challenges plaguing the industry, noting that many power plants are currently unable to secure the necessary funding for maintenance and upgrades. "A significant number of plants have fallen behind on overhauls and won't be able to generate power by next summer," he warned.

Reflecting on past predictions, Nikbakht said, "In 2023, we forecasted a minimum shortage of 17,000 MW for this year and faced criticism for it. Yet, the deficit reached 20,000 MW this summer. For 2025, we're certain the shortfall will hit 25,000 MW—meaning we can't supply about a third of the nation's electricity needs." He stressed that efforts to improve consumption patterns have been insufficient.

Nikbakht dismissed the idea that simply building more power plants is the solution, arguing that a broader strategy is needed. "We've proposed various measures to boost capacity and address the imbalance, but not even one-fifth of these have been implemented to convince the private sector to act," he said. On the topic of renewable energy, he was skeptical: "Renewable power plants are more of a slogan than a solution. After 20 years, we still have less than 1,000 MW of solar capacity. Even with a maximum addition of 3,000 MW—hindered by investment constraints like high dollar rates and lack of foreign currency allocation—it won't solve much."

## SEO Chief Urges Against Linking Market Performance to Politics



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - In a statement issued on Sunday, Hojjatollah Seidi, the head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO), announced that the organization would consider revising trading range limits and base volume regulations in 1404 (the Iranian calendar year starting March 21, 2025), provided the market maintains stability.

Speaking at a meeting of the Iranian Investment Institutions Association, Seidi reflected on the challenges of 1403 (March 2024-March 2025), describing it as a "special year filled with unusual events" that made managing the economy exceptionally difficult. Despite this, he emphasized the resilience of the capital market, stating, "The market is alive and moving forward, as evidenced by its performance and statistics."

Seidi highlighted key figures, noting that total transaction values in the market reached approximately 2,550 trillion tomans (around \$60 billion USD), with over 1,500 trillion tomans from retail trades. He added that financing through the capital market hit a respectable 1,130 trillion tomans, while initial public offerings (IPOs) amounted to about 6,300 billion tomans. "Though we aim for higher figures, these numbers kept hope alive, and conditions improved in the second half of the year," he said.

Seidi revealed that initial projections had aimed for a 25% market growth in the second half of 1403, targeting an index of 2.5 million units. However, the index has now climbed to nearly 2.8 million units, reflecting a return of over 35% driven by market participants and financial institutions. He expressed hope for improvement in the equal-weighted index, which has underperformed due to limited growth among small and medium-sized companies, a capacity he believes can be tapped in 1404.

## ECO, IOFS Sign MoU on Food Security



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) aimed at enhancing food security in the member states of both organizations.

ECO Secretary-General Asad Majeed Khan and IOFS Director-General Berik Aryn, affiliated with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), met today at the ECO Secretariat in Tehran. The meeting focused on establishing a joint framework to promote agricultural development and food security across the region and within the member countries of both organizations.

The discussions, held in a spirit of mutual cooperation, culminated in the signing of the MoU, which outlines key areas of collaboration and operational methods. The agreement is expected to lay a solid foundation for future joint action plans and foster dynamic partnerships to address shared regional challenges.

During the meeting, the ECO Secretary-General emphasized the organization's commitment to tackling food security through various initiatives, including the ECO Regional Food Security Program, as well as efforts in veterinary services, agricultural biotechnology, and seed trade cooperation.

Meanwhile, the IOFS Director-General highlighted his organization's initiatives, such as capacity-building programs focused on gene banks and water management in agriculture. He underscored the importance of collaboration with ECO to achieve these goals.

Recognizing the need for a deeper understanding of each organization's capabilities, both parties pledged to strengthen inter-organizational cooperation in areas of mutual interest, including sustainable agriculture and food security. This partnership aims to enhance mutually beneficial collaboration in the future.

The signing of this MoU marks a significant step forward in the joint efforts of ECO and IOFS to address food security challenges in their respective regions.

## Iran's Gold Industry Faces 30% Production Drop



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Nader Bazrafshan, President of the Tehran Gold and Jewelry Union, revealed in an interview with ILNA that Iran's gold production has declined by 20 to 30 percent this year due to a combination of rising global and domestic gold prices, inflation, and reduced purchasing power among the public. He contrasted Iran's meager gold exports of just 875 kilograms with Turkey's impressive 700 tons exported between 2022 and 2024, attributing Turkey's success to substantial government investment in the sector.

Bazrafshan highlighted the multiple challenges facing Iran's gold and jewelry industry in the current year. "The gradual increase in gold prices, both globally and domestically, coupled with inflationary pressures, has weakened people's purchasing power and led to stagnation in the market," he said. This economic strain has caused a significant reduction in production, with manufacturing and distribution units facing rising operational costs, including rent, labor, and other expenses.

Bazrafshan noted that gold, as a precious metal, is often one of the last items in a household's budget, purchased only when savings allow. "Unfortunately, the unexpected price hikes and inflation have made it difficult for people to invest in gold, resulting in a tough year for the industry," he added.

The union president described the situation as an "unprecedented crisis," pointing out a 20 to 30 percent drop in production among manufacturing units. Even traditionally busy occasions, such as the birthday of Hazrat Fatemeh Zahra (celebrated as Women's Day in Iran), failed to boost demand this year. "Unlike previous years, when we saw a slight uptick in demand, this year there was no change in business activity or market interest," Bazrafshan lamented.

With the year-end approaching, he expressed hope that economic conditions and price fluctuations might improve to ease the burden on industry workers. However, he acknowledged that the overlap of the upcoming New Year with the holy month of Ramadan could further

complicate recovery efforts.

Bazrafshan urged lawmakers and government officials to adopt a more specialized approach toward trade associations, arguing that their input is often overlooked in policymaking. "There are numerous restrictive laws affecting various industries, yet no specialized consultations are held with trade representatives before implementation," he said. He emphasized that Iran's 3.2 million trade association members represent a vital economic force that could drive growth and address national

challenges if properly supported.

He also criticized the lack of export focus, noting that while Iran's gold industry has advanced significantly over the past decade, its export figures remain negligible compared to regional competitors like Turkey. "Turkey has made remarkable progress in production and exported 700 tons of gold products globally from 2022 to 2024, while we managed only 875 kilograms—an amount that's effectively zero in comparison," Bazrafshan stated.

Bazrafshan pointed to untapped resources, such as semi-precious gemstones in South Khorasan, which could bolster the economy if extracted and exported. He also highlighted Iran's capability to export machinery to European countries, underscoring the industry's potential. "With a 7,000-year history and such capacity, this sector should not be viewed merely as a luxury market," he argued. "It could play a pivotal role in generating foreign currency and creating jobs."

Expressing frustration with policymakers, Bazrafshan called for a shift in perspective. "In meetings, officials treat gold as a luxury item, but this industry has the power to transform key economic sectors if given the attention it deserves," he concluded.

As Iran's gold industry grapples with declining production and stagnant demand, Bazrafshan remains hopeful that the blessings of Ramadan and a new year might bring relief and revitalization to this historic trade.



## Argentina Declares Three-Day Mourning

BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - Argentina announced three days of national mourning late Sunday after authorities raised the death toll from recent flash flooding to 16, with more still missing.

The deadly floods struck Friday when a year's worth of rain fell in a matter of hours in and around Bahia Blanca, a major port city located in the south of Buenos Aires province, with entire neighborhoods inundated by the fast-rising waters.

The Latin American nation has been particularly shaken by tragic reports of two girls, aged one and five, being swept away in the torrent.

Provincial security minister Javier Alonso confirmed their disappearance Sunday, saying the sisters had climbed onto the roof of a van with their mother to escape the rising waters when a surge ripped them away. Their mother was rescued.



## Russian Forces Take Three New Settlements in Kursk



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian forces on Sunday recaptured three more settlements in Russia's western Kursk region, the Defence Ministry said, part of an operation to evict Ukrainian troops holding chunks of territory seven months after a cross-border incursion.

The ministry statement, posted on the Telegram messaging app, followed reports by Russian bloggers that Russian special forces had crept for miles through a gas pipeline near the town of Sudzha in an attempt to surprise Ukrainian forces.

The three settlements now under Russian control according to the ministry -- Malaya Lohnya, Cherkasskoye Porechnoye and Kositsa -- all lie north of Sudzha.

"The Russian Federation's armed forces are continuing to rout groups of the Ukrainian army on the territory of Kursk region," the statement said.

The earlier report by Russian bloggers on the pipeline operation appeared to be a ruse aimed at cutting off thousands of Ukrainian soldiers in the region ahead of Ukrainian talks with the United States on a possible peace deal to end the war.

Ukrainian troops seized about 1,300 square km (500 sq. miles) of Russia's Kursk region in August in what Kyiv said was an attempt to gain a bargaining chip in future negotiations and to force Russia to shift forces from eastern Ukraine.

Russia has been pressing its drive to regain control of the region with some success in recent days. Open source maps on Friday showed Kyiv's contingent in Kursk nearly surrounded after rapid Russian advances.

"The lid of the smoking cauldron is almost closed," former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said on Telegram. "The offensive continues."

Yuri Podolyaka, a Ukrainian-born, pro-Russian military blogger, said Russian special forces crept nearly 16 km (10 miles) along the inside of the 1.5 metre wide gas pipeline and spent several days in the pipe before surprising Ukrainian forces from the rear near Sudzha.

## Israel Cuts Off Gaza Electricity Supply as Truce Talks Set to Resume



GAZA (Dispatches) - Israel ordered an immediate halt to Gaza's electricity supply Sunday in an effort to pressure Hamas into releasing hostages, even as it prepared for fresh talks on the future of its truce with the Palestinian militants.

Israel's decision comes a week after it blocked all aid supplies to the war-battered territory, a move reminiscent of the initial days of the war when Israel announced a "siege" on Gaza.

Hamas described the electricity cut as "blackmail," a term it had also used after Israel blocked the aid.

The truce's initial phase ended on March 1 and both sides have refrained from returning to all-out war, despite sporadic violence including an air strike Sunday that Israel said targeted militants.

Hamas has repeatedly called for an immediate start to negotiations on the ceasefire's second phase, aiming to end the war permanently.

Israel says it prefers extending phase one until mid-April, and halted aid to Gaza over the impasse.

On Sunday it ordered a cut in the electricity supply.

"I have just signed the order to stop supplying electricity immediately to the Gaza Strip," Energy Minister Eli Cohen said in a video statement.

"We will use all the tools at our disposal to bring back the hostages and ensure that Hamas is no longer in Gaza the day after" the war, he said.

Izzat al-Rishq, a member of Hamas's political bureau, described Israel's move as "a desperate attempt to pressure our people and their resistance through cheap and unacceptable blackmail tactics".

Just days after the war erupted on October 7, 2023 after Hamas's attack, Israel cut electricity to Gaza, only restoring it in mid-2024.

The sole power line between Israel and Gaza supplies the main desalination plant, and Gazans mainly rely now on solar panels and fuel-powered generators to produce electricity.

# European Arms Imports Surge, U.S. Expands Lead as Top Global Weapons Exporter

LONDON (Dispatches) - NATO countries in Europe more than doubled their arms imports in the past five years, more than 60 percent of which were purchases of US weaponry, researchers on Monday.

The findings by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) coincide with an announcement by European Union states that they intend to strengthen the continent's defence capabilities in response to a US foreign policy shift under President Donald Trump.

In the period 2020 to 2024, Ukraine became the world's largest arms importer.

The United States consolidated its position as the world's top weapons exporter -- accounting for 43 percent of global exports -- far ahead of the second largest, France, which accounted for 9.6 percent.

Over that same period, arms imports by European NATO members rose by 105 percent compared to the previous five years.

That reflects "the rearmament taking place among states in Europe in response to the threat from Russia", said Mathew George, the head of the SIPRI Arms Transfers Programme.

The United States provided 64 percent of these weapons, compared to 52 percent in the period from 2015 to 2019.

"With an increasingly belligerent Russia and transatlantic relations under stress during the first Trump presidency, European NATO states have taken steps to reduce their dependence on arms imports and to strengthen the European arms industry," senior researcher Pieter Wezeman said.

"But the transatlantic arms supply relationship has deep roots.

"Imports from the USA have risen and European NATO states have almost 500 combat aircraft and many other weapons still on order from the USA," he added.

Countries including Italy and the United Kingdom have also bought US-made F35 fighter jets and Patriot anti-air defence systems, which are complex systems that are difficult to quickly substitute, Wezeman told AFP.

"The F-35 is, of course, an American product but as part of (F-35) sales to European states ... the industry in those states has also been involved in the production of key components," the researcher said.

Countries like Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark -- which is currently embroiled in diplomatic tensions with the United States over Greenland's future -- are even more dependent on US weaponry, he explained.



Changing that "would require an enormous financial and political investment", Wezeman said.

"Arms procurement takes many years, and often it takes a lot more time than a US presidential term."

This surge in imports has led Europe to become the largest weapons market for the United States for the first time in 20 years.

European states as a whole accounted for 35 percent of US arms exports in 2020-24, putting them ahead of the Middle East, which accounted for 33 percent.

In terms of individual countries, though, Saudi Arabia remained the single largest individual purchaser of U.S. arms.

The U.S. continues to dominate the world arms trade.

"At 43 percent, its share of global arms exports is more than four times as much as the next-largest exporter, France," George said.

France meanwhile has tripled its exports to the rest of Europe compared to the 2015-19 period, mainly due to the sale of the Rafale fighter jet to Greece and Croatia and the supply weapons to Ukraine.

India accounts for the largest share of France's exports combined.

Russia is still the third largest arms exporter, despite seeing a massive 64-percent decline in exports in the 2020-24 period compared to the previous five years.

In addition to prioritising its own needs, Russia has suffered from international sanctions, as well as pressure from the United States and its allies not to buy Russian weapons following the invasion of Ukraine.

For instance, India -- which still accounted for 38 percent of Russian exports in 2020-24 -- is increasingly turning to other countries.

Meanwhile China, which bought 17 percent of Russian weapons exports, has bolstered its own defense industry.

In the Middle East, arms imports by Israel remained stable between 2015-19 and 2020-24, according to SIPRI.

However, the U.S. -- already the biggest provider of military aid to Israel (66 percent in 2020-24) -- has been ramping up supplies of "major" weapons such as guided bombs since late 2023.

That has coincided with an intensification of Israel military operations in Gaza, Iran, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen, SIPRI said.

## Mark Carney Set to Replace Justin Trudeau as Canada's PM

OTTAWA (Dispatches) - Canada's Liberal Party overwhelmingly elected Mark Carney as the country's next prime minister and the former central banker lost no time in taking a defiant stance against threats from US President Donald Trump.

Carney, 59, won 85.9 percent of the ballots cast in the Liberal Party leadership vote, according to the final tally.

Carney will take over from outgoing party leader Prime Minister Justin Trudeau over the coming days, but he may not have the job for long.

Canada must hold elections by October but Carney could well call a snap poll within weeks. Current polls put the opposition Conservatives as slight favorites.

In his victory speech to party supporters, Carney warned the United States under Trump was seeking to seize control of Canada, an effort he said must be defeated.

"The Americans want our resources, our water, our land, our country," Carney told a boisterous crowd in Ottawa after the results were announced.

Trump is "attacking Canadian workers, families, and businesses. We cannot let him succeed."

One of your browser extensions seems to be blocking the video player from loading. To watch this content, you may need to disable it on this site.

Carney, who previously led both the Bank of Canada and the Bank of England, soundly defeated his main challenger, Trudeau's former deputy prime minister, Chrystia Freeland, who has held several senior cabinet



positions in the Liberal government that was first elected in 2015.

Since entering the Liberal leadership race, Carney has maintained that he is best candidate to defend Canada against Trump's attacks.

The US president has repeatedly spoken about annexing Canada and thrown bilateral trade, the lifeblood of the Canadian economy, into chaos with dizzying tariff actions that have veered in various directions since he took office.

Delivering a farewell address to party supporters at a hall in Ottawa

before his successor was announced, Trudeau said "Canadians face from our neighbor an existential challenge."

At the party meeting, Carney supporter Lozinda Longkines told AFP that Trump's repeated musings about making Canada the 51st US state were "a blessing in disguise."

"We are so united... We have a common enemy," the 71-year-old said before the results were announced.

Greg MacEachern, who declined to say who he supported, agreed the party would emerge from the vote tightly focused on Trump.

"This is a serious time, and I think people have taken this leadership race very, very seriously," said MacEachern, wearing a hockey jersey.

Carney has argued that he is the ideal counter to Trump's disruptions, reminding voters that he led the Bank of Canada through the 2008-2009 financial crisis and steered the Bank of England through the turbulence that followed the 2016 Brexit vote.

Data released from the Angus Reid polling firm on Wednesday shows Canadians see Carney as the favorite choice to face off against Trump, potentially offering the Liberals a boost over the opposition Conservatives.

Forty-three percent of respondents said they trusted Carney the most to deal with Trump, with 34 percent backing Tory leader Pierre Poilievre.

Before Trudeau announced his plans to resign in January, the Liberals were headed for an electoral wipeout, but the leadership change and Trump's influence have dramatically tightened the race.

## Sharaa Calls for Peace as Communal Violence Against Alawite Minority Continues

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) - Syrian leader Ahmed al-Sharaa called for peace on Sunday after hundreds were killed in coastal areas in the worst communal violence since the fall of former president Bashar al-Assad.

"We have to preserve national unity and domestic peace, we can live together," Sharaa, the interim president, said as clashes continued between forces linked to the new Islamist rulers and fighters from Assad's Alawite religious minority.

"Rest assured about Syria, this country has the characteristics for survival," Sharaa said in a circulated video, speaking at a mosque in his childhood neighbourhood of Mazzah in Damascus. "What is currently happening in Syria is within the expected challenges."

One of your browser extensions seems to be blocking the video player from loading. To watch this content, you may need to disable it on this site.

Syrian security sources said at least two hundred of their members were killed in the clashes with former army personnel owing allegiance to Assad after coordinated attacks and ambushes on their forces that were waged on Thursday.



The attacks spiralled into revenge killings when thousands of armed supporters of Syria's new leaders from across the country descended to the coastal areas to support beleaguered forces of the new administration.

The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported on Saturday that 745 Alawite civilians were killed by security forces and allied groups since fighting broke out.

The war monitor said they were killed in "executions" carried out by security personnel or pro-government fighters, accompanied by the "looting of homes and properties".

In total, it said the overall death since Thursday has climbed to 1,018, including also 125 security personnel and 148 fighters loyal Assad.

The authorities blamed summary executions of dozens of youths and deadly raids on homes in villages and towns inhabited by the religious minority on unruly armed militias who came to help the security forces and have long blamed Assad's supporters for past crimes.



## Swiatek, Medvedev Sprint Into Fourth Round



INDIAN WELLS (Dispatches) - Defending champion Iga Swiatek edged closer to an unprecedented third straight Indian Wells WTA title, overwhelming Dayana Yastremska 6-0, 6-2 to reach the fourth round. Swiatek's 65-minute victory set the tone on a day that saw Daniil Medvedev spend just 10 minutes on court before ailing opponent Alex Michelsen retired.

Swiatek, the world number two from Poland, was in full control against hard-hitting Ukrainian Yastremska, swinging freely as she won the first 10 games.

She converted six of her 11 break chances and didn't face a break point herself and it was virtually over by the time Yastremska got on the board with wins in her last two service games. "It's always hard to finish a match like that," Swiatek said. "But I'm happy that I got my intensity up the last game and closed it with confidence."

Swiatek next faces Czech Karolina Muchova, who trailed 3-5 in the first set but won 10 of the next 11 games to beat compatriot Katerina Siniakova 7-5, 6-1.

Russian 17-year-old Mirra Andreeva and 2023 Indian Wells champion Elena Rybakina joined Swiatek in dishing out bagels as they lined up a fourth-round clash.

Andreeva, who triumphed in Dubai last month to become the youngest ever winner of a WTA 1000 event, beat Denmark's Clara Tauson 6-3, 6-0 in 63 minutes.

Rybakina downed Britain's Katie Boulter 6-0, 7-5. Andreeva -- who beat Tauson in the final in Dubai -- said she found conditions on Stadium Court tougher than she made it look.

"I'm just happy the way I managed to stay in the game," she said. "I didn't give her much rhythm so I guess it was not bad -- but there's a lot of things to work on."

Women's fourth seed Jessica Pegula of the United States, fresh off her first WTA title of the year in Austin,

was another quick winner, putting away China's Wang Xinyu 6-2, 6-1 in just 62 minutes.

Pegula next faces Ukraine's Elina Svitolina, a 6-2, 6-4 winner over Danielle Collins.

Medvedev headlined the men's lineup in the combined ATP Masters and WTA 1000 event, but he was barely underway when 20-year-old Michelson retired because of illness after dropping the first two games.

"Food poisoning or something like this, these things happen," said Medvedev, who was headed to the practice courts to tune up for a fourth-round clash with 10th-seeded American Tommy Paul.

Paul beat Britain's 2021 Indian Wells winner Cameron Norrie, now ranked 77th in the world, 6-3, 7-5. Eighth-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas, coming off his first title in almost a year in Dubai, beat Matteo Berrettini 6-3, 6-3 in a rematch of their Dubai quarter-final last week.

Tsitsipas dropped just eight points on his serve as he wrong-footed Italian with a variety of athletic shots, breaking him three times on the way to victory in 68 minutes.

After months in the doldrums Tsitsipas said he was relishing a new mental approach to the game. "I just feel like I want to get out there on the court and be a gladiator, and that's how I approach every single match I get to play," he said.

Tallon Griekspoor, the world No. 43 from the Netherlands who shocked world number two and top seed Alexander Zverev in the second round, backed up his big win with a 7-6 (7/3), 6-3 victory over France's 29th seed Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard.

Griekspoor fired 10 aces, dominating the first set tiebreaker, and didn't face a break point in the second set.

Griekspoor needed an hour and 16 minutes to secure the win, but in a season in which dropping the first set has become an alarming habit that was fast enough.

"It feels nice to win a match in under one and a half hour," he said.

## Timberwolves Take Down Spurs for 5th Straight Win



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Anthony Edwards scored 25 points on 10-for-15 shooting, and the Minnesota Timberwolves pulled away for a 141-124 win over the San Antonio Spurs in Minneapolis.

Naz Reid added 20 points on 8-for-15 shooting off the bench for Minnesota, which won its fifth game in a row. Julius Randle flirted with a triple-double with 14 points, 10 assists and seven rebounds, and Donte DiVincenzo scored 17 off the bench.

De'Aaron Fox scored 22 points on 8-for-12 shooting, including 4-for-6 from beyond the arc, to lead San Antonio. Harrison Barnes contributed 15 points for the Spurs, who lost for the seventh time in their past nine games.

The Timberwolves shot 55.8 percent (53 of 95) overall and 50 percent (21 of 42) from 3-point range. The Spurs shot 55.3 percent (47 of 85) from the field and 36.7 percent (11 of 30) from long distance.

San Antonio struggled to keep pace down the stretch. Bismack Biyombo and Sandro Mamukelashvili made back-to-back shots to pull the Spurs within 129-111 with 4:28 left, and Nickail Alexander-Walker quickly responded with a layup to extend the lead back to 20.

Minnesota finished the third quarter with a 109-94 lead. Devin Vassell made a 3-pointer to pull the Spurs within 94-88 with 3:24 remaining in the third quarter.

Reid made a turnaround hook shot 21 seconds later to increase Minnesota's advantage to 96-88. That started a 15-6 run for the Timberwolves to finish the quarter.

Jaylen Clark made a 3-pointer with 0.8 seconds left in the session to help Minnesota.

The Timberwolves led 68-60 at the half. Minnesota led by as many as 14 points before halftime. Mike Conley drained a 3-pointer to put the Timberwolves on top 52-38 with 7:53 to go before the break.

The Spurs pulled within five points when Fox made a 3-pointer to cut the deficit to 65-60 with 3:22 seconds remaining in the half.

On the next possession, Reid made a 3-pointer to increase Minnesota's lead to eight.

## India Milk Home Advantage to Win Champions Trophy

DUBAI (Dispatches) - India won the Champions Trophy title to confirm their status as the world's premier white-ball side even though their latest achievement could well be branded with an asterisk.

Skipper Rohit Sharma led by example as reigning Twenty20 World Champions India prevailed in a nerve-racking final against New Zealand to claim their second successive global title.

Their four-wicket victory was a perfect culmination of their unbeaten run in the 50-overs tournament featuring the world's top eight teams.

India now have an incredible record of winning 22 of their last 23 completed matches in International Cricket Council (ICC) tournaments.

Their lone defeat in the last three ICC events came in the final of the 50-overs World Cup against Australia in 2023.

Sunday's triumph will alleviate some of that pain but questions abound about the "unfair advantage" Rohit Sharma and his men got by playing all their matches in Dubai.

India stuck to their stand of not touring host nation Pakistan because of the political bickering between the neighbors, who play each other only in global events.

While other teams shuttled between three venues in Pakistan and flew to United Arab Emirates for any match against India,



the eventual winners stayed put in Dubai where conditions also favoured their traditional strength of spin bowling.

India persisted with a four-pronged spin attack in the knockout matches and their spin quartet bowled 38 of the 50 overs against New Zealand.

Rohit paid tribute to his spinners and also thanked the legions of Indian fans at the heaving Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Sunday.

"The crowd has been magnificent. It's not our home ground but they've made it our home ground," Rohit, who was player-of-

the-match for his rapid 76, said.

New Zealand have been India's bugbear in ICC events and beating them twice in the tournament will be particularly pleasing for the eventual winners.

The Black Caps produced a lion-hearted bowling effort defending a modest 251-7 and skipper Mitchell Santner will take heart from their gallant display in their first ICC event under the spinner's leadership.

New Zealand won a tri-series in Pakistan in their build-up and lost only to India in their spirited Champions Trophy campaign.

A shoulder injury to Matt Henry robbed them of the service of their pace spearhead but New Zealand fought tooth and nail against India.

All-rounder Rachin Ravindra was adjudged player of the tournament for being the tournament's leading scorer while also sharing the spin workload and claiming three wickets.

The 25-year-old struck two hundreds that followed three centuries in the 2023 ODI World Cup.

"We've seen how he steps up in these major events and that's all you can ask for," Santner said of the curly-haired all-rounder.

"He understands his game at such a young age already. He's got such a massive future ahead. He even took the ball in hand and put the pressure back on them today."

## Real Madrid Maintain Pressure in Title Race



MADRID (Dispatches) - Kylian Mbappe and Vinicius Jr scored in the first half to give Real Madrid an easy 2-1 win over neighbours Rayo Vallecano that helped them draw level at the top of the table in the battle to retain their LaLiga crown.

Only one point separates Spain's three biggest clubs in one of the closest title races in recent years with Barcelona leading the pack on 57 points, ahead of second-placed Real on goal difference with Atletico Madrid in third on 56 points after a 2-1 loss at Getafe earlier on Sunday.

Barca, who will face Atletico next Sunday, have a game in hand after their match against Osasuna on Saturday was postponed due to the sudden death of their team doctor.

Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti rested several key starters including goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois and defender Antonio Rudiger ahead of the second leg of their Champions League last-16 tie against rivals Atletico Madrid on Wednesday.

Yet Real were still the better side and dominated proceedings from early on at their Santiago Bernabeu stadium.

They got a two-goal lead with quickfire strikes, as Mbappe finished a counter in the 30th minute and Vinicius extended their advantage with a fine individual goal four minutes later.

Vinicius also hit the post with a strike from just outside the box that could have extended their lead even further.

Rayo reduced the deficit in added time before the break with a tremendous shot from the edge of the area by Pedro Diaz, which hit the crossbar before bouncing over the goalline and then out again, with the VAR awarding the goal after it was not given by the referee.

Real did just enough to manage their lead after the break against a Rayo side that fought hard and created good chances but lacked firepower to pose a real threat to the LaLiga champions.

## Arsenal Title Hopes Hit Again With 1-1 Draw at Man United

MANCHESTER (Dispatches) - Arsenal midfielder Declan Rice struck in the second half to cancel out Bruno Fernandes's free kick but Mikel Arteta's men could only muster a 1-1 draw with Manchester United in a big blow to their Premier League title chances.

Second-placed Arsenal, who have failed to win their last three Premier League games, have 55 points and trail leaders Liverpool by 15 points but with a game in hand.

Manchester United, with one league win in their last five games and just three victories in their last 12, are 14th on 34 points.

The first half was far from a classic with Arsenal, who were hoping to build on the momentum from their midweek 7-1



Champions League thrashing of PSV Eindhoven, dominating possession but with few chances for either side.

Fernandes finally broke the deadlock seconds before halftime and against the run of play with a brilliant free kick that sailed over the wall and past the outstretched hands of goalkeeper David Raya. It was the first time United had led at halftime of a Premier League game since December 1.

The second half was far more entertaining with near misses for both sides before Rice levelled in the 74th minute when he latched onto a ball from Jurrien Timber and unleashed a blistering shot from the edge of the box past Andre Onana.

Rice celebrated by raising a finger to shush the United fans in the Stretford end.