

Iran's Largest Energy Construction Company, Mapna Group, Dismissed a Reuters' Report Which Claimed That the Company's Presence in Syria in the Past Decade Was in Line with an Alleged Iranian Project to Build an Economic Empire in the Arab Country

IRAN NEWS

The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Says It Will Increase the Capital Requirements for the Banks in the Country in the Calendar Year to March to Make the Sector More Robust and Avoid the Risk of Collapse for Certain State and Private Banks

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Tehran Rejects Allegations of Role in Yemen's Retaliatory Operations



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TEHRAN - Iran has firmly denounced recent accusations by U.S. and Israeli officials about its involvement in Yemeni retaliatory operations, calling them "baseless" and "misleading."

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said on Sunday night that Yemen's decision to support the Palestinian people is an independent decision, rooted in the Islamic nation's humanitarian and solidarity with Palestinians.

The top Iranian diplomat pointed out that it is the U.S. military that has entered into war with Yemen in support of the Zionist regime's ongoing genocide against the people of Gaza.

Araqchi slammed the U.S. for committing war crimes by targeting infrastructure and civilian areas across Yemeni cities.

He characterized the accusations as diversionary tactics aimed at deflecting attention from the Zionist regime's crimes in occupied Palestine, masking strategic failures, and justifying further destabilization of the region.

At the end, Araqchi condemned the U.S. attacks on Yemen as a clear violation of the UN Charter and the fundamental principles of international law.

Meanwhile, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei also strongly rejected the baseless allegations.

Baghaei said that attributing the Yemeni nation's courageous measures to Iran is an insult to this powerful and yet oppressed nation.

He said the Yemeni people's decision to support Palestinians is an independent decision, which is rooted in their humanitarian and Islamic solidarity with the people of Palestine.

Iran, Saudi Arabia Stress Strong Support for Syria's Territorial Integrity



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian and Saudi officials have jointly affirmed their commitment to Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and condemned the Israeli military aggression against the Arab nation as "destabilizing and unlawful".

The remarks were made during a Sunday meeting in Riyadh between Mohammad-Reza Raouf Sheibani, Iran's special envoy for Syria, and Saud al-Sati, Saudi Arabia's deputy foreign minister for political affairs as they addressed the evolving situation in Syria and the broader implications of Israeli airstrikes in the region.

Sheibani reiterated Iran's steadfast support for Syria's unity and sovereignty, denouncing the Israeli regime's attacks as destructive and destabilizing. He emphasized that such actions undermined regional stability and violated the international norms.

For his part, al-Sati echoed the sentiments, affirming Saudi Arabia's consistent stance in supporting Syria's territorial integrity, peace, and stability.

He condemned the regime's attacks on the Syrian territory, highlighting the need for adherence to the international law and respect for national sovereignty worldwide.

The both sides agreed on the importance of continued consultations regarding regional developments, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts to address ongoing challenges.

Iran Criticizes France's Attempt to Bargain Outside Nuclear Negotiation Framework

TEHRAN - Iran's Foreign Ministry has voiced strong disapproval of recent remarks made by French officials concerning the nuclear negotiations, suggesting that France may be attempting to exert influence outside the formal negotiation channels.

In a press briefing on Monday, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Esmail Baghaei stated that while France's statements were "surprising," such comments are not without precedent.

"Perhaps their aim is to bargain outside the negotiation room, which is unacceptable to us," Baghaei said, reinforcing Tehran's stance that the ongoing talks should remain strictly focused on the nuclear issue and the lifting of sanctions.

Responding to a question about the postponed Iran-EU Troika meeting originally scheduled for last Friday in Rome, Baghaei clarified that the delay was logistical and not a political message. He stressed Iran's readiness to resume talks once mutually agreed upon.

The spokesperson reiterated that Tehran will not accept the inclusion of non-nuclear topics in the negotiations, responding to recent remarks by the French Foreign Minister who suggested broadening the scope of any future agreement. "The negotiations are limited and exclusive to the nuclear issue and sanctions relief," Baghaei stated.

In response to U.S. President Joe Biden's recent assertion that Iran does not need nuclear energy due to its abundant fossil fuel resources, Baghaei rejected the claim as scientifically baseless. "We do not negotiate in the public or media sphere," he said, reaffirming Iran's "legitimate and logical" right to peaceful nuclear technology under international law.

He added that Iran's nuclear program has historical roots dating back to the 1970s—when the country had even greater fossil fuel reserves—and emphasized that recent energy shortages demonstrate the continued need for nuclear energy.

Baghaei also discussed upcoming diplomatic visits, stating that Foreign Minister Araqchi is scheduled to visit Pakistan for talks on regional issues, particularly concerning Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria. He will meet with Pakistan's Prime Minister and President during the trip.

Following this, the Foreign Minister will travel to India on Thursday to attend the Joint Economic Commission session, underscoring Iran's commitment to strengthening regional ties.

Baghaei confirmed that Iran remains committed to diplomatic engagement with the United States through indirect channels, with Oman acting as a key mediator. He noted that recent delays in talks were made with mutual understanding and based on Oman's recommendations. "We await Oman's decision regarding the next steps," he said, stressing that Iran remains fully prepared to resume discussions at the appropriate time.



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Commenting on recent changes in the U.S. National Security Council and reports of former officials working closely with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Baghaei stated that Iran does not involve itself in internal U.S. political dynamics. "What matters to us are the official positions expressed at the negotiating table by authorized U.S. representatives," he said.

When asked about Iran's participation in the recent International Court of Justice hearing concerning Israeli actions in Palestinian territories, Baghaei confirmed Iran's ongoing involvement. He criticized Israel's refusal to cooperate with international legal bodies and said Iran will seize every opportunity to advocate for Palestinian rights.

"We regret that, despite the clear evidence of genocide, we are still forced to debate secondary questions," he added. Baghaei noted that only the U.S. and the UK opposed recent ICJ proceedings, while other nations emphasized the importance of continuing humanitarian support for Gaza.

Baghaei provided an update on the comprehensive strategic partnership treaty between Iran and Russia. He confirmed that the Russian side has completed its internal ratification process and that Iran is expediting its own procedures to finalize the agreement.

Addressing threats of reimposing sanctions through the so-called "snapback" mechanism, Baghaei dismissed them as baseless. "There is no legal justification for activating this mechanism. Such attempts are rejected and will have consequences for the opposing parties," he warned.

Responding to reports of military threats against Iran, Baghaei emphasized that the country is conducting negotiations professionally and within a defined framework. "We will respond to any act of aggression with the utmost severity," he said.

He also addressed concerns about statements made by Iran's defense minister regarding U.S. military bases in the region. Baghaei clarified that Iran views its neighbors as friends and is committed to good relations. However, he issued a clear warning: "If any attack is launched from the soil of a neighboring country against Iran, that location will be considered a legitimate target for self-defense."

On U.S. pressure aimed at disarming resistance groups in Lebanon and Palestine, Baghaei firmly stated that such demands are illegitimate. "America is not in a position to dictate terms to Lebanon," he said. "The right to resist occupation is recognized under international law as part of the inherent right to self-defense—especially in a region facing an aggressive entity like the Zionist regime."

Iran Unveils New Ballistic Missile Called Qassem Basir

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran has officially unveiled its latest ballistic missile, Qassem Basir, a solid-fuel missile with a range of 1,200 kilometers.

Unveiled on Sunday, Qassem Basir has been developed as an upgraded version of the Martyr Haj Qassem ballistic missile.

According to military officials, the missile has undergone significant modifications to its warhead design, enabling it to maneuver more effectively and evade missile defense systems.

Qassem Basir is equipped with a thermal imaging guidance system, enhancing its precision and making it resistant to electronic warfare.

Defense Minister Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh said that the new missile was successfully launched from over 1,200 kilometers away, striking its designated target precisely, without deviation or reliance on GPS navigation.

Nasirzadeh emphasized that the missile has been enhanced both in terms of guidance and maneuverability, allowing it to bypass layered defense systems.

He noted that during testing, intense electronic interference was applied against the missile, yet it remained unaffected.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the defense minister criticized Washington for sending contradictory signals—expressing openness to negotiations on one hand while threatening military action on the other.

Nasirzadeh pointed out that Iran has never initiated a war and will not start one in the future. However, he warned that the country would respond decisively if attacked.

In the event of military aggression by the United States or Israel, the minister stated that Iran would target their interests, bases, and personnel wherever deemed necessary.

Additionally, the defense minister announced the successful testing of a new ballistic missile, developed based on experience from True Promise operations 1 and 2—massive missile strikes launched by the Iranian Armed Forces against the Israeli regime last year.

Iran has said that its military capabilities, including its missile program, are non-negotiable.

Based on images and information released about this new missile, the Qassem Basir is, in fact, the result of upgrades made to the guidance and control systems of the Martyr Haj Qassem missile, which has a range of 1,400 kilometers and was first unveiled in 2020.

The Haj Qassem missile is a two-stage solid-fuel tactical missile, weighing 7 tons, with a 500-kilogram warhead and a length of 11 meters. It re-enters the atmosphere at Mach 11 and strikes its target at Mach 5—placing it in the hypersonic speed category.

At the time of its unveiling, it was stated that the Haj Qassem missile was designed with the potential to extend its range to 1,800 kilometers.

In 2023, during a visit by the late President Ayatollah Raisi to a defense exhibition, a new feature of the Haj Qassem missile was showcased—its updated launch platform, which significantly



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TASNIM_Military

reduces launch preparation time compared to earlier missiles.

Images of this new platform suggest that it employs DRU (Dynamic Reference Unit) technology. This system provides precise navigational data about the launcher's position and status, allowing for rapid deployment, launch, and quick relocation. This technology has also been used in the launch systems of the Kheibarshakan and Fattah missiles. As announced by Commander Hajizadeh, it reduced the preparation time of the Kheibarshakan missile to one-sixth of similar systems.

It can be inferred that the Qassem Basir missile shares many characteristics with the Haj Qassem and uses the same advanced launch platform. However, it features two notable upgrades to its warhead.

The first difference lies in the missile's guidance system. Iranian ballistic missiles traditionally use a hybrid GPS-INS system: GPS guides the missile in its initial and mid-course phases, while INS (Inertial Navigation System) takes over in the final phase.

However, GPS is vulnerable to electronic warfare, and adversaries often attempt to jam or distort these signals.

INS uses gyroscopes and accelerometers within the missile to track its position based on pre-programmed coordinates. It is immune to jamming but is less accurate than GPS due to the high velocity and physical variables in the final phase, which poses challenges for hitting small targets such as fighter shelters or runways.

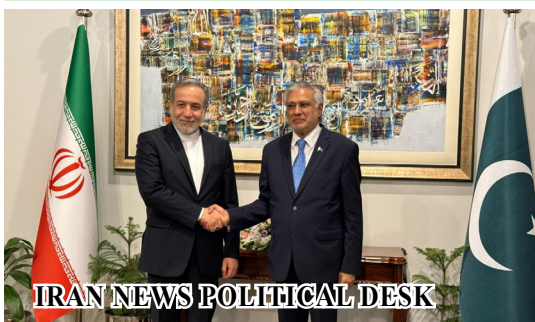
Operational experience, especially from the "True Promise" operations, showed that GPS jamming by the enemy significantly impacted missile accuracy. Therefore, Iranian forces had to rely on INS-only guidance, reducing precision.

To counteract the limitations of GPS and INS, optical guidance—particularly thermal imaging—has been introduced. This method provides highly accurate targeting and is nearly impervious to electronic warfare. The missile uses images from a camera mounted in its warhead to home in on the target.

One downside of optical guidance is reduced missile range, explaining the Qassem Basir's 200-kilometer shorter range compared to Haj Qassem. Despite this, the missile can still reach Israeli territory.

This is not the first use of optical guidance in Iranian missiles. The idea was first proposed by Martyr Tehrani Moghaddam for an anti-ship ballistic missile, resulting in the Ghadir-87, an upgraded Tondar-69 missile. Later models such as Persian Gulf, Fateh Mobin, and Zolfaghar Basir also adopted this technology.

FM Says Relations With Pakistan, India of Utmost Significance for Iran



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TEHRAN - The Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in his second official meeting in Islamabad, met with his counterpart at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan.

Seyed Abbas Araqchi and his accompanying delegation were received upon arrival at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Pakistan, along with several senior officials from the ministry.

Official talks between the foreign ministers of Iran and Pakistan, at the level of both countries' delegations, are currently underway.

In his first official meeting, Araqchi met with the Commander of the Pakistani Army. During this one-day visit, he was also scheduled to hold separate meetings with the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Earlier Araqchi said Tehran and Islamabad are working to put bilateral cooperation on a "better path."

Araqchi made the remark upon his arrival in the Pakistani capital on Sunday night as he started a day-long visit to the neighboring country for high-level talks.

He said Iran attaches importance to ties with Pakistan and other countries in the region, adding that during his stay in Islamabad, he would raise mutual relations and regional issues with senior Pakistani officials.

He noted that ties between Tehran and Islamabad are very important, adding that Iran's relations with other regional countries, including India, are also of significance.

"The situation in the region is very important for Iran, and we emphasize [on the importance of] easing tensions while calling on all parties to exercise restraint and prevent the escalation of the situation," the top Iranian diplomat emphasized.

Araqchi noted that he is scheduled to hold important meetings with Pakistani president, prime minister and foreign minister to exchange views about mutual relations and regional developments.

"We will try to deescalate tensions in the region," he said.

Tensions are running high between Pakistan and India over the April 22 attack in the Pahalgam tourist resort in the Indian-administered Kashmir, which claimed the lives of 26 civilians.

India has blamed Pakistan for the attack, but Pakistan has rejected the accusations.

Assembly of Experts Urges Gov't to Prioritize Livelihood Improvements



ISNA PHOTO

Amir Khosravi

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Chairman of Iran's Assembly of Experts, Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Movahedi Kermani, reiterated that improving public livelihood remains a longstanding demand of the Assembly from successive governments, emphasizing the impact of inflation on people's lives.

Speaking during a session of the Assembly in Qom, Ayatollah Movahedi Kermani expressed condolences over the recent tragic incident at Shahid Rajaei Port, urging relevant authorities to thoroughly investigate the causes and hold those responsible accountable.

He emphasized the Assembly's repeated concern for the economic well-being of the people, stating, "Inflation continues to pressure the public, and we have consistently raised this issue in internal meetings, commissions, and formal assemblies. We urge all administrations to present practical solutions for improving people's livelihoods."

Highlighting the importance of economic policy, he noted that the Supreme Leader's annual slogan typically reflects key economic priorities, adding that this year's slogan encourages investment and support from capital holders to help advance national development.

Ayatollah Movahedi Kermani also honored the memory of martyrs from the Iran-Iraq War and the Axis of Resistance, including figures such as Martyr Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah, General Qassem Soleimani, Seyyed Hashem Safi al-Din, and Ismail Haniyeh. He praised the resilience of Palestinians in Gaza and the youth of Yemen resisting the Zionist regime, condemning the crimes committed by Israel over the past year.



Iran Weighs Fuel Reform and Renewable Energy Boost

TEHRAN (ILNA) - The government and parliament are still deliberating over potential reforms to the country's fuel subsidy and distribution system, according to Mansour Shakerollahi, a member of the parliamentary Energy Committee. Shakerollahi said no final agreement has been reached on how to allocate subsidized gasoline. One proposal under consideration would deposit fuel subsidies directly into citizens' bank accounts, allowing even those without cars to benefit. However, the government and parliament have yet to finalize any changes. Importantly, he emphasized that gasoline prices will remain unchanged. Shakerollahi acknowledged a fuel supply imbalance and stressed the need for a strategic solution to ensure equitable distribution and control consumption.

Iran Unveils Four Key Strategies to Boost Trade Ties with China



TEHRAN - In a major step toward strengthening bilateral relations, the head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) unveiled four strategic pillars for expanding trade with China during the Iran-China Trade Development Conference held in Tehran.

According to the public relations office of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran, the event brought together Mohammad-Ali Dehqan Dehnavi, President of the TPO, Chinese Ambassador to Iran Chang Hua (Zhong Pei Wu), and Mahmoud Najafi Arab, President of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, along with numerous business leaders from both countries. The conference outlined plans from the Iranian government, parliament, and private sector to deepen economic ties with China in the coming years.

Dehqan Dehnavi highlighted the significance of China's participation in Iran's recent Export Capabilities Exhibition, which attracted more than 3,100 businesspeople from 111 countries. He emphasized that China, as the world's second-largest economy and Iran's top trading partner, plays a pivotal role in Iran's international trade ambitions.

Calling China a "trusted friend and reliable trading partner during tough times," Dehnavi stressed the importance of bilateral and multilateral cooperation amid rising global unilateralism that threatens international trade norms.

He introduced four main strategies that the TPO of Iran is pursuing to elevate trade relations with China:

Technology Transfer: Dehnavi emphasized the goal of expanding technological cooperation with Chinese firms, which are recognized for their innovation and substantial investments in R&D. He noted that many of these technological advancements have yet to be fully commercialized, presenting a valuable opportunity for deeper collaboration.

Trade in Higher Value-Added Goods: The second strategy aims to move beyond the current trade dominated by raw and semi-processed materials. Dehnavi pointed out that the average value of Iran's exports is under \$400 per ton and called for boosting exports of higher-value products. He welcomed China's recognition of Iran's strengths in nanotechnology and biotechnology and urged Chinese traders to embrace more value-added Iranian goods.

Joint Production and Investment: Described as a complement to the previous strategies, this approach focuses on shared production and joint investment ventures. Dehnavi assured foreign investors of Iran's strong investment security, including government guarantees and the ability to repatriate profits freely. He cited numerous successful cases where foreign investors had exited Iran with both their capital and profits, satisfied with their business experience.

Iran Invites Sweden to Revive Joint Investment Programs in Automotive, Power Sectors

TEHRAN - The President of Iran's Chamber of Commerce has extended an official invitation to Sweden to revive joint investment initiatives in Iran's automotive and electricity sectors, citing opportunities in non-sanctioned industries and promising government guarantees for foreign investments.

Speaking during a meeting with Sweden's ambassador to Iran, Samad Hassanzadeh, President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture, emphasized that both countries' commercial ties could return to previous levels — or even surpass them — with collaborative effort from their embassies and respective chambers of commerce.

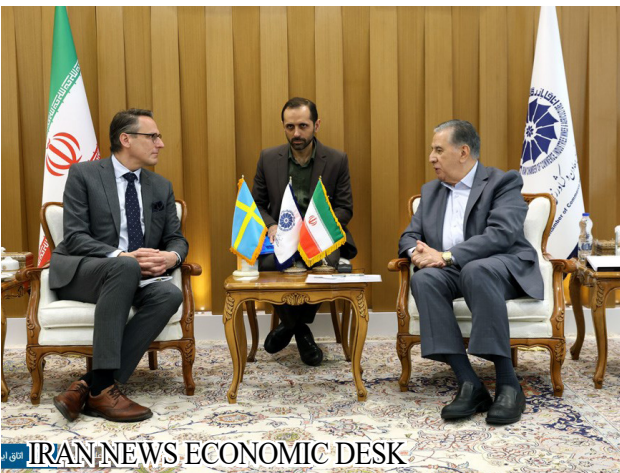
"Iran welcomes the entry of Swedish foundational technologies into the country," Hassanzadeh stated. "We have had a successful experience with Swedish joint investments in the automotive industry and industrial units in the past, and we hope to repeat that success."

He highlighted Iran's vast potential in various sectors, including petrochemicals, oil refining, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, food and dried fruits, handicrafts, and carpets. With competitive pricing in Iran, he suggested that Swedish companies consider participating in large-scale projects such as the development of power plants.

Commenting on the ongoing diplomatic talks between Iran and the United States, Hassanzadeh noted a shift in the Iranian government's approach toward expanding international relations. "Given the positive outlook for negotiations, we believe closer ties with Sweden and other European nations are within reach. I am confident the talks will conclude favorably for all involved," he said.

Despite sanctions, Hassanzadeh pointed out that foreign companies have been able to engage in joint ventures in sectors not subject to restrictions, with the Iranian government providing the necessary guarantees for capital returns and profit repatriation.

As the representative of Iran's private sector, Hassanzadeh formally invited the Swedish ambassador to help explore the revival of previously successful joint



ventures, such as the Volvo automobile production project. He requested a detailed report on existing barriers to be submitted to the Iran Chamber, promising full cooperation to resolve them.

He also extended an invitation to the President of Sweden's Chamber of Commerce to lead a business delegation to Iran. "Such a visit would facilitate greater mutual understanding and foster commercial ties between Iranian and Swedish businesses," Hassanzadeh noted. He added that the formation of a joint Iran-Sweden chamber of commerce would be a valuable step toward enhancing bilateral cooperation.

Sweden's ambassador to Iran, Mattias Otterstedt, responded positively, expressing confidence in the complementary nature of the Iranian and Swedish economies. He identified several promising areas for collaboration, including heavy vehicle manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, steel, and mining.

However, Otterstedt acknowledged ongoing difficulties in financial transactions and banking due to international sanctions. "We hope the negotiations will lead to the lifting of sanctions so we can revive our economic relations," he said.

He also pointed out that sanctions imposed over a decade ago had led to a generational gap in commercial experience. "Many of the experienced businesspeople have left the field, and some institutional knowledge has been lost. It is now up to both countries' chambers of commerce to revive that experience and share information."

Otterstedt emphasized that some trade obstacles are indeed surmountable and expressed Sweden's intention to build new networks with Iran's private sector. "If sanctions are lifted, and considering the tariff wars sparked during the Trump era, manufacturers will certainly look for new production hubs — and Iran will be a strong candidate," he concluded.

Iran's Petrochemical Exports Projected to Reach 34.8m Tons in 2025



TEHRAN - Iran's petrochemical industry is on track to increase its exports to 34.8 million tons, valued at approximately \$13.6 billion, by the end of the Iranian calendar year 1404 (March 2026). This anticipated growth is driven by the launch of new projects, diversification of product lines, and the utilization of unconventional feedstock sources.

According to data released by the Iranian Oil Ministry, the country's nominal petrochemical production capacity reached 97 million tons by the end of 1403 (March 2025). In the same period, Iran produced 75.2 million tons of petrochemical products, of which 29.2 million tons—worth around \$13 billion—were exported. The domestic market absorbed 13.1 million tons, valued at roughly \$11 billion.

Looking ahead to 1404, the sector is expected to undergo a major expansion. The addition of 8.5 million tons in new production capacity will bring the total nominal capacity to 105 million tons, with actual production forecasted at 83.5 million tons. Exports are set to climb to 34.8 million tons, generating \$13.6 billion, while domestic sales are projected to reach 16.1 million tons, valued at over \$10 billion.

Current development efforts are focused on non-gas feedstocks, with only one new project relying on natural gas. Additionally, three new petrochemical products will be introduced to the market for the first time. The industry also aims to incorporate 10 million cubic meters of gas recovered from flaring operations into its feedstock supply.

Energy requirements remain a strategic priority. The sector will need 51 million cubic meters of natural gas daily as feedstock and an additional 63 million cubic meters for fuel. Part of this demand will be met through investments in flare gas recovery and collaborations with major holding companies.

Geographically, nearly half of Iran's petrochemical capacity is located in the southern region of Asaluyeh, with another 25 percent in Mahshahr. Due to the availability of seawater and infrastructure, development is continuing along the southern coast, especially in the Makran region, which is drawing new investors.

Turkey Becomes Zanzan Province's Top Trade Partner



TEHRAN - The head of the Zanzan Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture announced that Turkey is now the province's leading trade partner, with efforts underway to further expand bilateral economic cooperation.

Speaking on Sunday during a meeting focused on trade opportunities and challenges between Zanzan and Turkey—attended by Iran's commercial attaché in Turkey—Sammad Yousefi Asl said Turkey holds a significant share of Zanzan's foreign trade. "We are focusing on enhancing these ties," he added.

Among the initiatives currently being pursued are the establishment of a direct flight route between Zanzan and Istanbul, the organization of a Turkish trade exhibition in the province, and the upcoming dispatch of a business delegation to Turkey led by Zanzan's governor.

Yousefi Asl emphasized that local authorities in Zanzan are fully committed to supporting investors, with active measures in place by both provincial officials and the Chamber of Commerce. "Fortunately, investment across the country is on the rise, and foreign investors from various countries have expressed interest in entering the Iranian market, including Zanzan," he noted.

He further stated that consistent flight connections from Zanzan to Tehran and key international destinations like Turkey—countries with strong trade ties to the province—are vital to boosting foreign trade. "Such infrastructure is essential for export development, and its absence significantly hampers Zanzan's export capacity," he warned.

The chamber head concluded by stressing that increasing exports must be driven by exporters themselves, which hinges on the removal of export-related barriers.

Facilitating Banking and Transportation Key to Expanding Iran-Turkmenistan Trade

TEHRAN - The Vice President of Iran's Chamber of Commerce emphasized the urgent need to improve banking, logistics, and transportation systems as prerequisites for enhancing trade relations between Iran and Turkmenistan.

On the sidelines of the Iran Expo 2025 international exhibition, a joint meeting between Iranian and Turkmen business leaders and economic actors highlighted the strong will of both nations to deepen their economic ties.

Organized in collaboration with the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Chamber of Commerce, the meeting provided a platform for dialogue and exchange of innovative ideas aimed at facilitating and expanding bilateral trade and industrial cooperation.

In his address, Payam Bagheri, Vice President of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, emphasized the longstanding and stable relationship between the two neighboring countries, while stressing the need to boost economic exchanges.

"Despite considerable potential in sectors such as energy, agriculture, and mining, the current volume of trade between Iran and Turkmenistan remains insufficient," Bagheri stated. "Serious efforts are needed to significantly increase this volume."

He reiterated that streamlined banking procedures and improvements in transportation and logistics are vital to achieving this goal.

Bagheri described Iran Expo 2025 as an ideal venue to enhance economic interactions and showcase Iranian products and cutting-edge technologies. He also expressed the Chamber's readiness to leverage its resources to further develop economic engagement with Turkmenistan.

Ramazan Bahrani, President of the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Chamber, emphasized the crucial role of the private sector in strengthening economic ties between the two countries.

"Mutual trust between the public and private sectors can pave the way for major achievements in trade," Bahrani noted. He called for greater cooperation in areas such as transit, investment, and the establishment of joint commissions to expand bilateral trade.

Bahrani also underlined the importance of setting up a Turkmenistan Trade Center in Iran to facilitate the exchange of goods and services.

Participants at the meeting also tackled key challenges hampering trade development, most notably banking issues and delays in financial transactions—areas that many believe require urgent governmental attention. Transportation and logistical hurdles were



also cited as barriers needing resolution to enable smoother trade flows.

Speakers highlighted the potential for collaboration in a range of sectors including energy, transportation, agriculture, and emerging technologies.

Bagheri stated that both countries could initiate joint ventures in fields such as energy, mining, agriculture, and infrastructure development. Transit of goods and infrastructure enhancement are key priorities in advancing mutual trade.

A notable segment of the meeting was dedicated to the participation of tech and knowledge-based companies at Iran Expo 2025. These firms are seen as a major asset for boosting high-tech exports and diversifying trade channels.

Seyed Hossein Mirshafi, an advisor to the Minister of Roads and Urban Development, emphasized the need to support knowledge-based firms in preparing for international exhibitions and penetrating global markets.

"For these companies to make a meaningful impact, they must attend exhibitions with proper planning and a clear understanding of target markets," Mirshafi said.

Bayram Yazmuhamedov, Head of the Chamber of Commerce of Mary Province and a representative of Turkmenistan's Chamber of Commerce, highlighted the exhibition as a strategic opportunity for strengthening trade ties.

"Iran Expo serves as a vital industrial and technological event that can play a key role in increasing trade exchanges," Yazmuhamedov remarked. He expressed optimism about exploring Iran's industrial capabilities and declared Turkmenistan's readiness to open a new chapter of cooperation.

He noted that such meetings could lead to joint projects in energy, transportation, agriculture, and technology, ushering in a new era of partnership.

All participants underscored the importance of future-oriented strategies and careful planning to develop trade and investment ties. Given the vast economic potential and the strong political will on both sides, the future of Iran-Turkmenistan relations looks bright.

The meeting, held as part of the Iran Expo 2025, offered exceptional opportunities for business leaders and entrepreneurs from both nations to take meaningful steps toward deepening economic cooperation and exploring new avenues of international engagement.

Iran, Afghanistan Economic Cooperation Key to Regional Stability



TEHRAN - At the Iran-Afghanistan Trade Opportunities Forum, Deputy President of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, Payam Bagheri, highlighted the strategic importance of strengthening economic ties between Iran and Afghanistan, calling it a vital step toward ensuring regional stability.

Speaking at the forum dedicated to introducing trade opportunities between the two neighboring countries, Bagheri emphasized that the Iran Chamber of Commerce is committed to fostering sustainable partnerships between Iranian and Afghan businesses.

Bagheri noted that the two nations, bound by deep linguistic, cultural, and historical ties, have the potential to establish a mutually beneficial economic relationship. "These connections should serve as a foundation for economic growth, trade expansion, and the development of enduring bilateral ties," he said.

He added that economic collaboration between Iran and Afghanistan would not only secure regional stability but also create a better future for upcoming generations. According to official reports, trade between the two countries witnessed significant growth in 2024, reflecting a promising outlook for future relations.

Bagheri pointed to Afghanistan's rich mineral resources, fertile agricultural land, and young, dynamic workforce, alongside Iran's advanced industrial infrastructure, technical expertise, and access to global markets, as complementary assets that could drive a win-win partnership.

Describing the Iran Chamber of Commerce's role as "central and proactive," Bagheri said the organization is committed to: Facilitating commercial ties between the two countries; Supporting the formation of strategic partnerships among economic actors; Engaging in dialogue with governments to help remove trade barriers; and expanding networks for entrepreneurs, exporters, and investors

Oil Drops More Than \$2/bbl as OPEC+ Accelerates Output Hikes

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - Oil prices fell more than \$2 a barrel in early Asian trade on Monday as OPEC+ is set to further speed up oil output hikes, spurring concerns about more supply.

Brent crude futures dropped \$2.04 a barrel, or 3.33%, to \$59.25 a barrel by 2240 GMT while U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude was at \$56.19 a barrel, down \$2.10, or 3.60%.

Both contracts touched their lowest since April 9 at Monday's open after OPEC+ agreed to accelerate oil production hikes for a second consecutive month, raising output in June by 411,000 barrels per day (bpd).

The June increase from the eight will take the total combined hikes for April, May and June to 960,000 bpd, representing a 44% unwinding of the 2.2 million bpd of various cuts agreed on since 2022, according to Reuters calculations.



Trump Orders Reopening of the Notorious Alcatraz Prison



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Donald Trump said Sunday he is directing the government to reopen and expand Alcatraz, the infamous former prison off San Francisco, closed since 1963. On Truth Social, he blamed "vicious, repeat offenders" for causing "misery and suffering," vowing to restore the island facility.

In a post on his Truth Social site Sunday evening, Trump wrote that, "For too long, America has been plagued by vicious, violent, and repeat Criminal Offenders, the dregs of society, who will never contribute anything other than Misery and Suffering. When we were a more serious Nation, in times past, we did not hesitate to lock up the most dangerous criminals, and keep them far away from anyone they could harm. That's the way it's supposed to be."

"That is why, today," he said, "I am directing the Bureau of Prisons, together with the Department of Justice, FBI, and Homeland Security, to reopen a substantially enlarged and rebuilt ALCATRAZ, to house America's most ruthless and violent Offenders."

Trump's directive to rebuild and reopen the long-shuttered penitentiary was the latest salvo in his effort to overhaul how and where federal prisoners and immigration detainees are locked up. But such a move would likely be an expensive and challenging proposition. The prison was closed in 1963 due to crumbling infrastructure and the high costs of repairing and supplying the island facility, because everything from fuel to food had to be brought by boat.

Violence Engulfs Besieged Zamzam Camp in Sudan's Darfur Region



KHARTOUM (Dispatches) - The conflict in Sudan that erupted two years ago has unleashed waves of ethnic violence, created the world's worst humanitarian crisis, and plunged several areas of the country into famine.

In April, the fighting between the Sudanese armed forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) spilled into one of the largest encampments for people displaced by years of warfare: the vast Zamzam camp in Sudan's western region of Darfur, home to around half a million people.

Witnesses described the moment RSF men poured into Zamzam displacement camp on April 11, looting and burning homes as shells rained down and drones flew overhead. The RSF seized the massive camp in April following days of shelling, drone attacks and ground assaults that the United Nations says left at least 300 people dead and forced around 400,000 to flee, one of the worst violations since the war began.

The capture of Zamzam comes as the RSF tries to consolidate its control over the Darfur region. The camp is near the city of al-Fashir, home to 1.8 million people and the last significant holdout from the RSF in Darfur.



Romania Nationalist George Simion Wins First Round of Presidential Vote

BUCHAREST (Dispatches) - George Simion, a nationalist ally of U.S. President Donald Trump, took a commanding lead on Sunday in the first round of Romania's closely watched presidential election, riding a wave of anger after an earlier election was annulled over allegations of foreign interference.

Simion, the 38-year-old leader of the Alliance for the Unity of Romanians, or AUR, was far outpacing all other candidates in the polls with 40% of the vote, official electoral data showed after 99% of votes were counted from Sunday's vote.

Far behind in second place was Bucharest's pro-EU mayor Nicusor Dan with 20.9%, and in third place the governing coalition's joint candidate, Crin Antonescu, with 20.3% — a gap that was expected to widen as the last votes from larger cities were counted.

In all, 11 presidential hopefuls were vying for the post, a semi-executive role that carries considerable powers in national security and foreign policy. A runoff will be held on May 18 between the top two candidates, with Simion carrying all the momentum on the back of his first-round success.

The result — which comes months after a top court voided a November 24 vote — could potentially herald a foreign policy shift in the EU country of 19 million, which has become a key pillar of NATO since Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"Together we made history today," Simion said in a video message broadcast at his party's headquarters as euphoric supporters chanted, "Out with the thieves, let patriots come!"

"I am here to restore constitutional order," the nationalist leader added. "I have a single objective: to give back to the Romanian people what was taken from them."

The rerun was held after Romania's political landscape was shaken last year when a top court voided the previous election in which far-right outsider Calin Georgescu emerged from nowhere to top the first round.

Georgescu was barred after authorities noted a massive TikTok campaign in his favour and issued claims of Russian interference, which Moscow has denied. He was replaced by 38-year-old Simion, who rode a wave of popular outrage at the

vote's annulment.

A Trump fan, Simion often dons a cap with the US president's slogan "Make America Great Again" and said he hopes to become Romania's "MAGA president".

"We are here with a single mission: to return to democracy — and bring justice to Romania," he said after casting his ballot on Sunday, accompanied by Georgescu, whom he has promised to appoint in his administration if he is elected president.

"It's time to take our country back," Georgescu added at the polling station in Mogosoaia, on the outskirts of Bucharest.

Simion has largely campaigned online, partly in a bid to woo Romania's influential overseas voters. While describing himself as "more moderate" than Georgescu, he shares his aversion to what he calls "Brussels' unelected bureaucrats".

Simion accuses EU officials of having meddled in Romania's elections and has vowed to restore his country's "dignity" within the bloc. While frequently denouncing Russia, he opposes sending military aid to Ukraine and wants Romania to reduce support for Ukrainian refugees.

His campaign found favour with 36-year-old voter Rares Ghiorghe, who hoped a Simion presidency would see Romania "return to the basic principles of democracy".

"What happened in December 2024 is definitely a dark chapter in the history of this country, and we can no longer accept it," Ghiorghe told AP. "I'm hoping things will get back to normal."

The election rerun is a crossroads moment for Romania as it seeks to restore its democracy and retain its geopolitical alliances, which have become strained since the canceled election fiasco.

The decision to annul the election and the ban on Georgescu's candidacy drew criticism from US Vice President JD Vance, who has lectured EU leaders on freedom of speech even as his administration cracks down on dissent. Washington took the rare step of sending observers to monitor the Romanian election on Sunday.

Putin Says He Hopes Nuclear Weapons Will Not Be Required in Ukraine

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that the need to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine had not arisen and that he hopes it will not.

In comments aired Sunday in a film by Russian state television about his quarter of a century in power, Putin said Russia has the strength and the means to bring the conflict in Ukraine to a "logical conclusion."

Responding to a question about Ukrainian strikes on Russian territory, Putin said: "There has been no need to use those (nuclear) weapons ... and I hope they will not be required."

"We have enough strength and means to bring what was started in 2022 to a logical conclusion with the outcome Russia requires," he said.

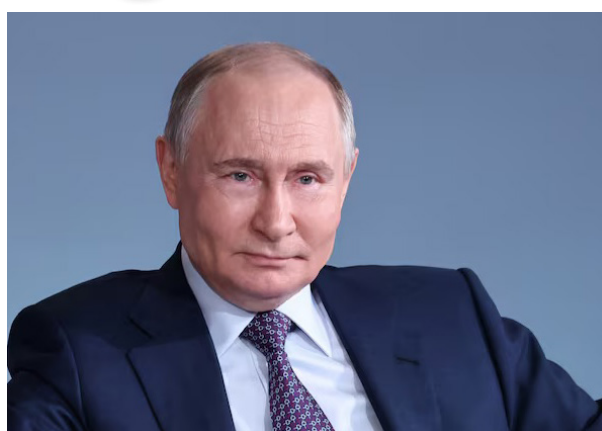
Putin signed a revamped version of Russia's nuclear doctrine in November 2024, spelling out the circumstances that allow him to use Moscow's atomic arsenal, the world's largest. That version lowered the bar, giving him that option in response to even a conventional attack backed by a nuclear power.

In the film, Putin also said Russia did not launch a full-scale invasion of Ukraine — what he called a "special military operation" — in 2014, when it illegally annexed Crimea, because it was "practically unrealistic."

"The country was not ready for such a frontal confrontation with the entire collective West," he said. He claimed also that Russia "sincerely sought to solve the problem of Donbas by peaceful means."

Putin said that reconciliation with Ukraine was "inevitable."

Russia and Ukraine, however, remain at odds over competing ceasefire proposals.



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said a ceasefire is possible "even from today" if Moscow is serious about ending the war.

Speaking Sunday at a joint news conference with Czech President Petr Pavel, Zelensky noted that Russia has ignored a US proposal for a full ceasefire for 54 days and thanked the Czech Republic for backing Ukraine's call for a 30-day ceasefire.

"Putin is very eager to show off his tanks at the (Victory Day) parade," Zelensky said, "but he should think about ending his war."

Zelensky again expressed deep skepticism over Russia's proposal of a

72-hour ceasefire in Ukraine to mark Victory Day in World War II, saying Moscow continues to launch hundreds of assaults despite publicly signaling interest in a partial truce.

"Even during Easter, despite promises — including to the United States — Russia carried out more than a hundred assaults," Zelensky said, referring to Russian attacks during the 30-hour Easter ceasefire unilaterally declared by Putin.

Zelensky has repeatedly called for a more substantial 30-day pause in hostilities, as the US had initially proposed.

The Kremlin said the Victory Day truce was on humanitarian grounds and will run from the start of May 8 and last through the end of May 10 to mark Moscow's defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945 — Russia's biggest secular holiday.

Zelensky thanked Pavel for his country's military support and said Ukraine hopes to receive 1.8 million artillery shells in 2025 as part of a Czech-led initiative to supply military aid to Kyiv. The initiative, launched in 2024 and supported by NATO allies, supplied Ukraine with 1.5 million artillery rounds last year.

Zelensky also said he had discussed with Pavel "the next steps in the development of our aviation coalition," namely the creation of an F-16 training school. He said that such a base could not be opened in Ukraine because of Russian attacks.

A Russian drone attack overnight on the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, wounded 11 people, Ukraine's State Emergency Service said Sunday. Two children were among the wounded.

Zelenskiy Says Ceasefire Could Be Put in Place at Any Moment

PRAGUE (Dispatches) - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said that a ceasefire with Russia in its more than three-year-old war was possible at any moment and called on Kyiv's allies to apply greater pressure on Moscow to put the measure in place.

Zelenskiy, speaking at a joint news conference in Prague alongside Czech President Petr Pavel, said that unless increased pressure were applied, Kremlin leader Vladimir Putin would take no real steps to end the conflict.

"We believe that without increased pressure, Russia will not take real practical steps to end the war. Today marks the 54th day that Russia has ignored even the American proposal to completely cease fire," Zelenskiy told reporters.

"We believe that a ceasefire is possible at any moment, even starting today, and should last at least 30 days to give diplomacy a real chance."

Putin last week declared a three-day ceasefire over May 8-10 to mark the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Soviet Union and its allies over Nazi Germany in World War Two.

Zelenskiy said such a measure is pointless and has called instead for an unconditional ceasefire over at least 30 days in line with a U.S. proposal launched in March.



The Czech government has been a strong backer of Kyiv since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, and has led an initiative to supply Ukraine with large-calibre ammunition.

The Ukrainian president said that rather than putting tanks on display at a May 9 victory parade, Putin should be thinking "about how to actually end his war".

"Three things are needed. More sanctions against Russia, continued support for Ukraine, and a significant increase in defence cooperation across Europe," he said. "Russians must know that Europeans will defend themselves."

Moscow has said it wants an unambiguous reply from Zelenskiy to its three-day offer.

Pavel said Russia had yet to show any indication it wanted to proceed with measures to end the war.

"If someone has all the cards in their hand to end the war then it is President Putin, who can do it with a single decision," he told reporters. "But so far the will has not appeared."

Under the military initiative, the Czechs have used their diplomatic, business and industrial expertise to find large-calibre ammunition around the world and ship it to Ukraine with funding from NATO allies.



Piastri Completes Hat-Trick of Wins to Stretch F1 Lead

MIAMI GARDENS (Dispatches) - Oscar Piastri made it a hat-trick of wins with victory in the Miami Grand Prix as McLaren enjoyed a one-two on the podium to continue their dominant Formula One season. Australian Piastri finished 4.6 seconds ahead of British team-mate Lando Norris with George Russell of Mercedes finishing third but 37.6 seconds behind.

The victory was the third in a row for Piastri after his wins in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia and his fourth in the six races so far this season.

With Norris pipping Piastri in yesterday's sprint race, McLaren picked up maximum points from the weekend and Piastri heads out of Miami with a 16 point lead over his team-mate.

Four-time world champion Max Verstappen, who started on pole, finished in fourth place with Alex Albon of Williams fifth and 18-year-old Italian Kimi Antonelli of Mercedes in sixth.

"I was aware enough to avoid Max in turn one, and from then I knew I had a good pace advantage," Piastri said. "The car was incredible today.

"The hard stint I was struggling a little bit, so there are some things to work on. Got to keep learning, but very happy to be leaving Miami on top.

"Two years ago here we were the slowest team, I think we got lapped twice. Here, we just won the race by 35 seconds," he added.

Piastri, who started at fourth on the grid, grabbed the lead on lap 14 when Verstappen took the inside line but was too late on the brakes and went wide.

"Brakes man, honestly, useless," the Dutchman told his team radio and the Red Bull driver, a two-time winner at Miami, was not to get a sniff of the lead again.

Norris went on the hunt for Verstappen but by the time he got ahead, after some jousting on lap 17, Piastri had opened up a nine-second lead.

"It's never the best feeling (to be second) but the team has done an amazing job, so I can't fault them at

all," said Norris.

"We were up the road so it is a good feeling. Oscar drove well, Max put up a good fight as always so it is what it is. I paid the price for not doing a good enough job today, but still happy to be second," he said. Norris had overtaken Verstappen while heading off piste himself and he had to then give back the spot to the Dutchman before finally getting ahead and into second place.

It was a spell which cost Norris crucial time which he was unable to recover but he had no regrets about his approach.

"What can I say? If I don't go for it, people will complain. If I go for it, people complain. So you can't win. It is the way it is with Max, it's crash or don't pass," he said.

Russell had finished behind his team-mate Antonelli in qualifying but after some frustration in the sprint race as well, he was glad to be on the podium.

"Really happy to come away with P3 as I have been struggling this weekend personally. Well done to the McLaren, they were just too far down the road," he said.

It was another disappointing day for Ferrari, with Charles Leclerc finishing seventh and Lewis Hamilton a place behind.

Hamilton, in his first season with the Italian team, expressed frustration with his team's tactics several times during the race, especially after he was instructed to let Leclerc pass him.

The Briton had himself been allowed in front of Leclerc but was unable to take advantage of that position with his team-mate closing the gap.

Some of Hamilton's comments to his team were cutting, but he played down the exchanges.

"I lost a lot of time behind Charles and in that moment I was thinking let's make a concise decision and not waste time. I'm sure people didn't like certain topics but you've got to understand it's frustrating, people say way worse things than I say, it was more sarcastic than anything.

Ruud, Sabalenka Win Madrid Open

MADRID (Dispatches) - Norway's Casper Ruud won his first Masters 1000 title, as he stormed to a 7-5 3-6 6-4 victory over fifth seed Jack Draper in the Madrid Open final with a gutsy performance that showcased his claycourt mettle.

The 26-year-old 14th seed, playing in his 18th claycourt final, overcame both a rib injury sustained in the semi-final and a resilient Draper to secure the trophy after previously dispatching Taylor Fritz, Daniil Medvedev and Francisco Cerundolo.

"It's been a long time coming. I have been dreaming about this since I was young. I knew Jack was playing unbelievably, so I had to bring my A+ game," Ruud said in an on-court interview.

Ruud had previously reached three Grand Slam finals, including two at Roland Garros, and Masters 1000 finals in Miami in 2022 and Monte Carlo last year.

Ruud staged an impressive comeback from 3-5 down in the opening set, breaking Draper twice to take it 7-5.

The Briton refused to go quietly in the second, however, holding to love for 3-3 before breaking Ruud twice while making just one unforced error to force a decider.

Although Draper was more composed at the start of the third set, it



was Ruud who seized the initiative, breaking the Briton to take a 3-2 lead and securing the title with a hold to love.

Despite the loss, 23-year-old Indian Wells champion Draper will leapfrog Novak Djokovic to a career-high number five in the world rankings on Monday.

"I want to congratulate Casper on your first ATP Masters win, I think you really deserve it. The way you played, you were braver than me in the key moments. You deserve it and you have put in so

much work over the years," Draper told a packed stadium.

Meanwhile world number one Aryna Sabalenka overcame a second-set fightback by fourth seed Coco Gauff to secure a 6-3 7-6(3) win and clinch her third Madrid Open as the three-times major winner claimed her third title this year on the WTA tour.

Sabalenka, who has played the last three finals of the WTA 1000 tournament, equalled Petra Kvitova's record haul of three Madrid Open titles. She also caught up with Gauff in head-to-head, with five wins apiece after 10 meetings.

"I always enjoy fighting against you, you're such a fighter," Sabalenka told Gauff at the presentation ceremony after she won her sixth straight match against top-10 ranked opponents this year without dropping a set.

"I'm super happy I was able to win this year."

A dominant Sabalenka won four games straight without conceding a point to build a 4-1 lead in the first set. Although former U.S. Open champion Gauff battled back with a break to make it 4-2, the Belarusian secured the set with another break.

Gauff broke Sabalenka to go 2-1 up in the second set and held under pressure to build a 5-3 lead. But Gauff's double faults while serving for the set allowed Sabalenka to break back and make it 5-5 before winning the title in a tiebreak.

Chelsea Move Closer to Top-Five Finish

LONDON (Dispatches) - Chelsea moved a step closer to securing Champions League qualification with a 3-1 victory over weakened champions Liverpool on Sunday, while Newcastle United slipped up in a 1-1 draw with Brighton & Hove Albion.

Newcastle salvaged a point thanks to a last-gasp Alexander Isak penalty, while Brentford edged a young Manchester United side 4-3, and West Ham United and Tottenham Hotspur's disappointing form continued in a 1-1 draw.

Enzo Maresca's Chelsea are fifth in the Premier League on 63 points, separated from fourth-placed Newcastle only by goals scored. Both teams trail third-placed Manchester City by a point with three games remaining. The game at Stamford Bridge was less than three minutes old when Cole Palmer found Neto whose cut-back fell to the unmarked Enzo Fernandez and the Argentine whipped the ball low into the net. Palmer was also instrumental in the second goal after he clipped the ball into the area and Liverpool captain Virgil van Dijk's attempted clearance bounced off teammate Jarell Quansah and into the goal.

Palmer ended a lengthy drought with his first goal since mid-January from the spot in the 96th minute after Quansah's foul on



Moises Caicedo.

"I think we did well the team showed character," Caicedo told Sky Sports. "We are happy that we won this game.

"(Palmer) deserves it. He is working hard to get goals. Now was his opportunity and he scored." Van Dijk had pulled one back for Liverpool, who made six changes to their starting lineup after clinching the title last weekend, in the 84th minute from a corner. "There was chances for us to score - in the end they deserve the win," Van Dijk said.

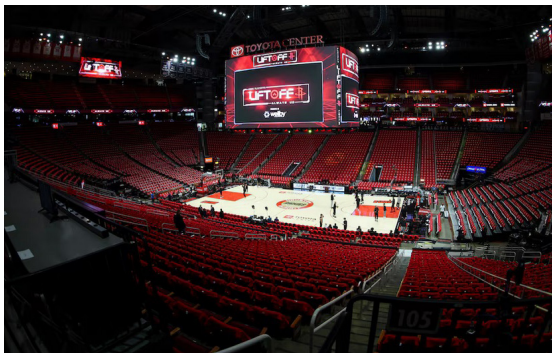
At Brighton, Isak's last-gasp penalty earned a potentially crucial point for Newcastle in their chase of Champions League qualification.

Brighton looked poised for victory after winger Yankuba Minteh struck in the first half, but Isak's 89th-minute spot kick sent goalkeeper Bart Verbruggen the wrong way for his 23rd league goal of the season.

"It's all to play for," Newcastle boss Eddie Howe told Sky Sports. "We have three huge games, three very tough games in different ways. Two of them are at home and we hope that can make the difference."

Hield Leads Warriors Past Rockets in Game 7

7



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Buddy Hield scored 33 points, Stephen Curry tallied 19 of his 22 points in the second half, and the Golden State Warriors rode a stifling defensive performance to a 103-89 road victory over the Houston Rockets and a 4-3 victory in this Western Conference first-round series.

The seventh-seeded Warriors advanced to play the sixth-seeded Minnesota Timberwolves, with Game 1 set for Tuesday in Minneapolis. Their Game 7 win over the Rockets prevented the Warriors from blowing a 3-1 series lead and resulted in their fifth playoff series win over Houston since 2015.

Curry came alive when the Warriors needed him most, producing a driving layup and a 3-pointer to open the fourth quarter that extended the Golden State lead to 75-62. Hield drilled a 3-pointer with 8:18 left for his first basket of the second half before Curry scored again for an 82-70 lead.

Hield shot 12 for 15 overall and 9 for 11 from behind the arc. Curry added 10 rebounds and seven assists to his ledger while Jimmy Butler posted 20 points, eight rebounds and seven assists. Draymond Green added 16 points, six rebounds, five assists and two blocked shots.

The Warriors repeatedly stuffed the Rockets at the rim. Houston had little success in the paint - excluding Amen Thompson, who thrived with 24 points on 9-of-16 shooting and nine rebounds.

Alperen Sengun paired 21 points with 14 rebounds but made only nine of 23 shots. The Rockets shot just 40.5 percent and missed 12 of 18 3-pointers. The Warriors finished 18 for 43 from behind the arc.

The Warriors forged a six-point lead in the opening period before the Rockets clawed back, pulling even at 13-13 and securing their first lead when Jalen Green scored through a foul for a 19-17 lead with 1:24 left in the period.

But Hield drilled a 42-foot 3-pointer to beat the buzzer and supply the Warriors a 23-19 lead entering the second. The Warriors shot 6 of 12 from behind the arc in the frame and, behind Hield, maintained that shooting touch for the remainder of the first half.

Mbappe Brace Maintains Real Madrid Liga Dream in Celta Thriller



MADRID (Dispatches) - Kylian Mbappe struck twice as Real Madrid held off Celta Vigo with a thrilling 3-2 win to stay within sight of La Liga leaders Barcelona.

After the Catalans scraped a comeback win at Valladolid on Saturday, Madrid survived a late Celta fightback to maintain the four-point gap ahead of next Sunday's Clasico.

Defending champions Madrid, second, took a three-goal lead but were left clinging on at the Santiago Bernabeu against a Celta side seventh and hoping to qualify for European football next season.

"The game seemed finished... you have to remember we're without six defenders and we're not always capable of solving these things," said Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti.

"Yes it could have been dealt with better, we suffered a bit, but it's a nice victory."

Madrid's Champions League defence crumbled and Los Blancos were also beaten in the Copa del Rey final against Barcelona last week, but Los Blancos are still hopeful of overhauling Hansi Flick's side in La Liga.

"We had a very good first half (but)... we fell apart, these things can't happen, it's happened to us a lot," admitted Real Madrid midfielder Fede Valverde on the club's television channel.

"We left a lot minutes for them to get comfortable and they are a great team and they put us in a tough spot."

Ancelotti's side came into the game with a spate of defensive injuries but after riding out an early wave of Celta chances took control, with Turkish 20-year-old Arda Guler pulling the strings.

With Rodrygo Goes out with illness the youngster started in his stead and took full advantage.