

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi Will Visit Saudi Arabia and Qatar on Saturday, a ministry Spokesperson Says Amid Reports that Tehran and Washington May Hold a New Round of Indirect Talks

IRAN NEWS

Iran Has Lifted a Five-Year Ban on Imports of Goods That Have Domestic Rivals, Allowing Businesses to Resume Imports of Products Like Home Appliances

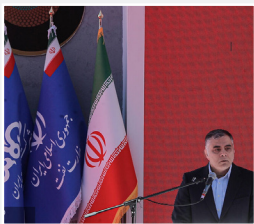
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Iran's Red Lines Clear, Everything Depends on U.S. Behavior



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Akbar Ahmadian says the Islamic Republic's red lines are quite clear in the indirect talks with the US, stressing that everything depends on the US behavior.

Speaking during a gathering of senior commanders of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) in Tehran Thursday, Ahmadian said the results of the ongoing negotiations with Washington are unpredictable.

"As for the content and outcome of the negotiations, nothing can be predicted; of course, our red lines are entirely clear, and everything depends on the US's behavior and the circumstances," he said.

Iran and the US have so far held three rounds of Oman-mediated talks on a replacement for the 2015 nuclear deal. The fourth round had initially been scheduled for May 3 in the Italian capital, but it was postponed due to what Oman described as "technical and logistical" reasons.

Both sides have so far described their indirect talks as generally productive, including the last round, which was billed as a "constructive" process.

"Just as direct negotiations under conditions of coercion and threat are unwise and dishonorable, negotiations under equal conditions and free from threats and coercion are rational and honorable," Ahmadian stressed.

Tehran's peaceful nuclear policy has been verified unexceptionally by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which has never found any indication of such pursuit, as it has put the country's nuclear activities under the most extensive investigative processes compared to any other member of the United Nations nuclear agency.

Araqchi Says Sanctions Hinder Iran-India Economic Ties



TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi says that the sanctions hinder the growth of Iran-India economic relations.

He made these remarks during the 20th session of the Iran-India Joint Commission, held at Hyderabad House in New Delhi on Thursday. The meeting was co-chaired by Araqchi and India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar.

During the session, Araqchi highlighted the enduring friendship between the two countries, saying that Tehran and New Delhi have always maintained warm and friendly relations rooted in mutual respect and common interests.

Speaking about economic ties, Araqchi acknowledged that while Iran and India enjoy strong economic relations, the current level of cooperation does not meet expectations. He also said that sanctions are one of the obstacles to enhancing economic ties and expressed hope that this issue would be solved in the future.

Meanwhile Araqchi and Jaishankar signed two memoranda of understanding at the end of the 20th Iran-India Joint Commission Meeting at Hyderabad House in New Delhi on Thursday.

The agreements include a memorandum of understanding on customs cooperation and another on regulations related to pharmaceutical products. They also signed the minutes of the joint commission meeting.

Araqchi said that Iran and India have always enjoyed friendly and warm relations founded on mutual respect and common interests, emphasizing that the two sides maintain close ties at present.

IRGC Commander Warns U.S. and Israel: "Sit Down or Face Hell"

TEHRAN - In a forceful address at the Imam Reza Shrine in Mashhad during the first anniversary memorial of the late President Ebrahim Raisi and his entourage, Major General Hossein Salami, Commander-in-Chief of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), delivered stark warnings to the United States and Israel, urging them to avoid provocation or face devastating consequences.

Speaking before a crowd gathered to honor Raisi and other officials who died in service, Salami declared: "From the sacred grounds of Imam Reza's shrine, I warn our enemies: if you make a wrong move, we will open the gates of hell upon you."

Referring to recent threats from Israeli leadership, Salami lashed out at Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, saying: "You couldn't stop a single missile from Ansarullah in Yemen—how do you expect to face the thousands of Iranian missiles?"

The commander cautioned both Israel and the U.S. that Iran has made extensive preparations and any aggression would bring consequences far beyond the operations known as "Truthful Promise 1 and 2," referencing past military actions attributed to Iran or its allies.

Salami also commented on Iran's nuclear policy, reiterating that while Iran is not seeking nuclear weapons based on its religious and strategic doctrines, it is fully prepared for war "at any scale" if faced with threats.

"We are not pursuing nuclear arms, but we will never abandon our vital national interests. If you threaten us, know that we are ready for war."

He warned the U.S. against falling for what he described as Israeli efforts to drag America into another prolonged Middle Eastern conflict:

"You've already tasted the bitter outcomes of war in this region. Don't let Netanyahu's criminal plans make you the prey of his ambitions."

Throughout his speech, Salami paid tribute to President Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, and other senior officials who died in the line of duty, portraying them as devoted, revolutionary figures who embodied the spirit of resistance and service to the nation.

"Raisi was a man of rare integrity and resolve. He led the government in one of the toughest times—through a pandemic, economic siege, and international isolation—and turned obstacles into progress with faith and determination."

The commander recalled Raisi's unwavering commitment to the people and his closeness to Iran's Supreme Leader. He also cited verses from the Quran, portraying the fallen leaders as divinely guided servants whose deaths elevated their legacy and solidified their roles as eternal



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new underground drone base by the IRGC's Navy in the Hormozgan province.

Major General Salami emphasized that the IRGC Navy is structured to engage with foreign powers, particularly those beyond the region. He described the force as self-reliant, with the capability to manage and successfully conduct prolonged warfare. He highlighted the Navy's arsenal, which includes a range of advanced weaponry, from precision-guided anti-ship ballistic missiles to various types of cruise missiles designed to target both stationary and moving objectives.

He also underscored that the drones in service with the IRGC Navy are equipped with some of the most modern and advanced technologies, enhancing the flexibility and strategic options available to Iranian commanders.

"We stand firmly against our enemies, equipped with the full capacity to defend our nation," said Major General Salami. "This display of power is also aimed at correcting the enemy's mistaken calculations, ensuring they understand the true extent of our strength. We don't want them to make rash decisions due to a lack of awareness."

The General reaffirmed a central principle of Iran's defense doctrine: any enemy action against Iran's interests, from any location, will be met with an immediate and decisive response. "We declare that any point, in any territory, that serves as the origin of an attack will become a target for us," he concluded.

This announcement and the unveiling of the drone base demonstrate Iran's continued focus on strengthening its military capabilities, particularly in response to regional tensions and perceived threats.

Secret Nuclear Site Report Desperate Netanyahu Fabrication to Wreck U.S. Talks

TEHRAN (PressTV)- Iran has rejected reports about an alleged secret nuclear site, saying they are supplied by the terrorist cult Mujahedin Khalq Organization (MKO) on Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's order in a bid to sabotage indirect talks between Tehran and Washington.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi made the remarks in an X post on Friday after Fox News released what it claimed to be satellite imagery of a previously undisclosed nuclear facility in Iran's Semnan Province.

Araqchi said Netanyahu is using "Saddam's Iranian henchmen" under his policy of dictating what President Donald Trump must do with regard to the Islamic Republic in a desperate attempt to sabotage Iran's talks with the U.S.

"Like clockwork, more Very Scary Satellite Images are being circulated as Iran-US indirect nuclear talks are set to resume," he said.

"With his credibility in tatters and exposed as a saboteur, Netanyahu—under his 'Determining What @realDonaldTrump Can & Cannot Do' policy—is turning to both old and new sock puppets. This time, he is using Saddam's Iranian henchmen. They may come cheap, but hiring a literal cult only conveys utter desperation."

Iran and the US have already held three rounds of indirect talks, mediated by Oman, on Tehran's nuclear program and the removal of US sanctions.

Earlier on Friday, the Iranian mission to the United Nations rejected the report as "absurd".



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

"The modus operandi of the terrorist cult known as the MKO demonstrates that it—in a desperate pursuit of recognition—furnishes fabricated reports, disguised as so-called intelligence findings, to Western intelligence services, including those of the United States," it said in a statement published on X.

"However, once such agencies come to discern the utter unreliability of the absurd reports churned out by the MKO terrorist cult, it then seeks out its next clientele among Western media outlets, aiming to exploit those platforms in order to ride the tide of media momentum."

The notorious MKO group has a dismal history of perpetrating terrorist attacks against Iranian civilians and officials and killing around 12,000 people since the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Back on April 23, Araqchi had warned against "clear" attempts by the Israeli regime and certain groups to spoil diplomacy amid indirect negotiations with the US over Tehran's civilian nuclear program.

"Those seeking to manipulate public opinion can also be expected to come up with fantastical claims and props like scary-looking satellite images," he noted, adding, "Reality check: Every single milligram of enriched uranium in Iran is under full and constant IAEA supervision and monitoring."

Iran Categorically Rejects Involvement in Alleged Plot to Attack Israeli Embassy in UK



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Tehran has categorically rejected Western media reports about Iranian nationals being involved in an alleged plot to target the Israeli embassy in London.

In a post on his X account on Thursday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said Tehran has not been informed of any allegations via "proper diplomatic channels".

"Iran stands ready to engage to shed light on what has truly transpired, and we reiterate that UK authorities should afford our citizens due process," he wrote.

The United Kingdom has arrested eight men, including seven Iranian nationals, as part of two investigations regarding alleged threats to national security.

London's Metropolitan Police confirmed the arrests on Sunday, saying five men, including four of the Iranian nationals, were detained on suspicion of "preparation of a terrorist act" while the other three were being held under national security legislation introduced in 2023 to counter the actions of hostile states.

They were arrested as part of a "pre-planned" investigation into an alleged plot to "target specific premises," the Metropolitan Police said, adding that the "affected site" was made aware and is being supported by police.

As part of a separate investigation led by the Met, three other Iranian men were arrested in London on Saturday.

The Met said three men — aged 39, 44 and 55 — were arrested under section 27 of the National Security Act at separate addresses in north-west and west London, and had been taken into custody while searches continued.

In his post, Araqchi pointed to the stories in the media about the alleged involvement of Iranian nationals in a supposed plot to target the Israeli embassy in London and urged the UK to engage so that Tehran may assist any probe into credible allegations.

The top Iranian diplomat warned that third parties are resorting to desperate measures, including false flag operations, to derail diplomacy and provoke escalation.

"Timing and lack of engagement suggest that something is amiss," he said.

In a post on his X social media account on Tuesday, the Iranian foreign minister called on the UK to respect the rights of Iranians arrested in Britain, underscoring Tehran's readiness to assist investigations in the incident.

Iran Advances Two Spots in Global Human Development Index



TEHRAN - In its latest Human Development Report, the United Nations has announced that Iran has climbed two spots in the Human Development Index (HDI), surpassing China — the world's second-largest economy — and positioning itself just one step away from the group of countries classified as having "very high human development."

According to the UN Development Programme's (UNDP) 2025 report, which reflects data from 2023, Iran improved its global HDI ranking from 77th in 2022 to 75th in 2023, despite continued U.S. sanctions. This places Iran ahead of 118 other countries, including several major economies.

The report categorizes the world's 193 countries into four tiers: Very High Human Development (74 countries); High Human Development (50 countries); Medium Human Development (43 countries); and Low Human Development (26 countries)

Iran now stands just one rank below the last country in the "very high human development" category.

Notably, China dropped from 74th to 78th in the HDI rankings, allowing Iran to overtake it. Similarly, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, which had been ranked higher than Iran in 2022, fell to 76th place.

Other countries now ranking below Iran include Thailand, Brazil, Ukraine, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia, Indonesia, Iraq, and India.

IRAN NEWS



Iran, UAE to Expand Cooperation in Air Navigation and Air Traffic Management

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran and the United Arab Emirates have agreed to increase their cooperation in the fields of air navigation and air traffic management following a joint meeting held on the sidelines of the 22nd Middle East Regional Air Navigation Planning and Implementation Group meeting (MIDANPIRG & RASG) in Doha, Qatar.

According to Iran's Civil Aviation Organization (CAO), the joint session brought together delegations from both countries to discuss expanding collaboration in areas including air navigation, traffic management, technical training, and professional development.

Iran Positioned to Host 20 Globally Recognized Forms of Tourism



TEHRAN - Iran is the only country in the region capable of hosting and developing 20 internationally recognized forms of tourism, from medical and heritage tourism to culinary, desert, marine, eco, and spiritual tourism, said Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts.

Speaking on the sidelines of the official D-8 Tourism Ministers' Summit in Cairo, Minister Seyyed Reza Salehi Amiri told CNBC International that Iran's diverse offerings make it a "trans-geopolitical destination" for global travelers. He emphasized Iran's deep-rooted cultural and civilizational strengths and called on the Islamic world and Arab nations to reconsider their perception of Iran and experience firsthand a country that is safe, attractive, and rooted in civilization.

"Iran is a treasure trove of historical civilizations and a central hub for cultural interactions within the Islamic world," Salehi Amiri said. "What we possess is not just tangible physical assets, but a strategic capital for dialogue among civilizations, regional image enhancement, and cultural diplomacy."

Highlighting Iran's rich heritage, the minister noted that more than one million historical sites have been identified across the country, with 43,000 officially registered. He also pointed to the vibrant presence of one million artisans in Iran's handicrafts industry, positioning the country as more than a tourist destination—rather, as a cultural and civilizational model for the Islamic world.

Salehi Amiri revealed that over 7.3 million international tourists visited Iran in 2024. The country's five-year strategic tourism plan aims to attract 15 million visitors by focusing on infrastructure development, service quality enhancement, and rebranding Iran's image in the global tourism market.

Iran, Tajikistan Strengthen Trade, Industrial, and Agricultural Cooperation



TEHRAN - As part of the 17th Joint Economic Commission between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Tajikistan, a high-ranking Tajik trade delegation visited Shiraz and held discussions with business leaders and members of the Shiraz Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture. The meeting, coinciding with bilateral talks between top officials of both nations, focused on expanding cooperation in key economic sectors.

Ali Avazpour, Secretary General of the Shiraz Chamber of Commerce, emphasized the strong cultural, linguistic, and historical ties between Iran and Tajikistan as a solid foundation for deepening economic relations. He highlighted the strategic position of Fars Province in southern Iran, its robust transportation infrastructure, skilled workforce, and high economic potential, all of which make it an ideal partner for expanded cooperation with Tajikistan.

Avazpour proposed the creation of specialized working groups to address challenges in bilateral trade, including banking transactions, transportation, and customs tariffs. He also expressed the Chamber's readiness to host Tajik delegations and organize reciprocal trade visits, as well as joint exhibitions in both countries.

Sohrab Sharafi, member of the Board of Representatives and head of the Trade Commission of the Shiraz Chamber, described Tajikistan as a strategic opportunity for Iran's private sector, especially given the mutual linguistic and cultural affinities. He noted the Tajik market's growing demand for imports, particularly in shared Persian language, traditions, and literature, which offer fertile ground for further trade and economic engagement. He pointed out the growing momentum in bilateral trade, especially in sectors such as energy, agriculture, construction, engineering services, and tourism.

Sharafi underscored the long-standing fraternal ties between the two nations, rooted in shared Persian language, traditions, and literature, which offer fertile ground for further trade and economic engagement. He pointed out the growing momentum in bilateral trade, especially in sectors such as energy, agriculture, construction, engineering services, and tourism.

Emphasizing the importance of private-sector economic diplomacy, Sharafi proposed the establishment of a joint Iran-Tajikistan Chamber of Commerce based in Fars Province to streamline and institutionalize commercial relations.

Iran Plans \$10b Investment in Oil Industry by Year-End

TEHRAN - Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad announced plans to invest approximately \$10 billion in the country's oil sector by the end of the current Iranian year (March 2026), with the completion of over 30 major oil projects listed as a key priority.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the 29th International Oil, Gas, Refining, and Petrochemical Exhibition in Tehran on Thursday, Paknejad outlined the ministry's efforts to boost investment, streamline contracts, and support knowledge-based companies. The exhibition, which features over 2,200 companies from Iran and abroad, is held at Tehran's permanent fairground complex.

"Despite intensified sanctions, Iran's oil exports remain at their highest possible level," Paknejad said. "But this is just the beginning—we aim to position Iran as a regional energy hub and center for cooperation."

Highlighting the exhibition's theme, "Investment in the Oil Industry: A Guarantee for Economic Growth and Development," Paknejad said it reflects the country's broader economic strategies and aligns with guidance from Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The minister revealed that oil production has increased by 150,000 barrels per day, raw gas production by 30 million cubic meters per day, and the country's refining capacity has grown by 180,000 barrels per day since the current government took office. Additionally, annual petrochemical output has increased by 7 million tons.

Among the key goals is the completion of over 30 major projects that will raise oil production capacity by 250,000 barrels per day and add another 30 million cubic meters to daily raw gas production.

Paknejad stressed the need for over \$20 billion annually to maintain and develop oil and gas fields, requiring modern financing tools and greater private sector involvement.

He highlighted a recent cabinet resolution enabling energy-intensive industries and petrochemical companies to directly invest in gas field development. The first such contract is expected to be signed during the exhibition.

"To achieve the goals outlined in the Seventh Development Plan, we must overhaul contract procedures," Paknejad said. "Previously, finalizing upstream oil and gas contracts took three to four years. We've reduced this to under one year thanks to approvals from the Economic Council."

He added that new incentives have been introduced to make contracts more appealing, including higher internal rates of return, tax breaks, and bonuses for exceeding production targets.

A key initiative is the introduction of improved IPC (Iran Petroleum Contract) models, public-private partnerships, and financial instruments like the \$6 billion National Oil Guarantee Fund to reduce investment risk and enhance transparency. Paknejad emphasized the ministry's commitment to local content, noting that 86



contracts worth \$200 million have been signed with 68 knowledge-based firms, leading to foreign currency savings and greater self-sufficiency in refinery equipment manufacturing.

At this year's exhibition, an additional 16 contracts worth \$150 million are expected to be signed with knowledge-based companies for the production of "first-time" domestic goods.

The minister said the Oil Ministry is pursuing funding through the National Development Fund, domestic banks, and international sources, aiming to finalize over \$10 billion in oil and gas development contracts this year.

He cited a recent event dedicated to investment transformation in the upstream sector, where more than 200 opportunities were officially introduced for the first time.

"These efforts reflect our firm resolve to increase private sector participation and highlight the strategic role of oil and gas in wealth creation and national development," Paknejad said.

He also pointed to the government's commitment to fostering international partnerships, particularly with neighboring countries, to expand Iran's presence in global energy markets.

Recent collaborations include a gas swap agreement between Turkmenistan and Turkey via Iran, which strengthens Iran's role as a regional energy hub. Paknejad also noted progress in cooperation with Russia, including a legal framework to facilitate joint investments and reduce political risks through a proposed treaty.

Paknejad concluded his remarks by underscoring the importance of adopting emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence across the oil and gas value chain, calling it essential for the industry's modernization.

He thanked President Masoud Pezeshkian and Supreme Leader Khamenei for their support, stating that oil is a divine blessing that must be leveraged for national empowerment and comprehensive development.

The 29th International Oil, Gas, Refining, and Petrochemical Exhibition runs from May 7 to May 10 in Tehran. Open daily from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., the event is regarded as the largest oil industry gathering in the Middle East.

According to the exhibition's director, Saman Ghoddousi, around 2,200 Iranian and international companies are participating, including firms from China, Russia, Spain, Italy, the UK, Switzerland, South Korea, Turkey, India, the UAE, Canada, France, Germany, and Brazil.

"The exhibition offers a unique platform for knowledge exchange, business networking, and showcasing the latest technological achievements of Iranian industry players," Ghoddousi said.

Due to high demand, five additional halls were added this year, along with expanded outdoor space. This year's exhibition also features two major digital initiatives: an AI-based navigation system and a virtual exhibition platform, enabling remote participation.

Ambassador Urges Business Acceleration Ahead of EAEU Free Trade Agreement Implementation

TEHRAN - With the upcoming implementation of the Free Trade Agreement between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) on May 15, Iran's Ambassador to Russia, Kazem Jalali, has called on Iranian businesses and economic officials to act swiftly and seize this strategic opportunity to expand exports.

In a televised interview, Jalali emphasized that the agreement, which eliminates customs tariffs on around 90% of traded goods, marks a significant shift in Iran's trade landscape with EAEU member states—Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia. He noted that while the government has laid the groundwork, it is now the private sector's turn to engage actively.

"If exporters and responsible organizations delay, the benefit of zero tariffs will go to other countries, giving them an edge in trade," Jalali warned. "This is also an opportunity to standardize our products and strengthen customs infrastructure, preparing us for integration into larger economic unions."

The agreement, signed in January 2024 in St. Petersburg, will come into effect two months after Iran's final ratification, which coincides with May 15, 2025. Observers of the union currently include Iran, Uzbekistan, Moldova, and Cuba.

Jalali highlighted that Russia has become Iran's largest foreign investor, citing data from Iran's Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance. According to agreements already signed, Russia is set to invest \$8.8 billion in Iran's oil sector over the coming years, with over \$2 billion already committed.

Referring to the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership signed by Presidents Pezeshkian and Putin during the Iranian president's visit to Moscow in January 2025, Jalali stressed the importance of full implementation now that both countries have ratified the treaty.

"Our relationship with Russia has now reached a strategic level. Unlike the past, Russian officials now refer to Iran as a strategic partner, not just a regional ally," he said, urging Iranians to recognize and adapt to the evolving political dynamics.

Jalali recounted how post-Soviet Russia initially sought close ties with the West, but disillusionment led to a pivot eastward. "Putin realized the West aimed to weaken Russia, prompting a fundamental shift in foreign policy," he explained.

He added that Iran and Russia have been brought closer due to



mutual resistance to Western pressures. "Western hostility has naturally aligned our strategic interests," Jalali said. "This is not about Iran following Russia but about mutual alignment."

Jalali pointed out that limited understanding of modern Russia among Iranian elites has hindered the growth of bilateral economic relations. "Many still rely on outdated narratives and Western sources instead of engaging with Russian media and experts directly," he said.

He also criticized the lack of a long-term trade strategy with Russia, noting that most Iranian traders in Russia entered the market by chance rather than design. "Given Russia's shifting economy post-Ukraine war, this is a missed opportunity unless addressed quickly," he added.

Discussing infrastructure, Jalali highlighted progress and challenges in the North-South Transport Corridor, which connects India, Iran, and Russia. Its eastern branch moved 650,000 tons in 2023 and is expected to reach 1.8 million tons in 2024, but falls short of the 15 million ton capacity.

The western route via Azerbaijan faces delays due to incomplete rail links like the Rasht-Astara segment. "If we don't act quickly, Russia will seek alternative corridors," Jalali cautioned. "For Russia, this corridor is a necessity due to its geopolitical constraints."

Jalali identified banking as a major barrier, but noted progress: "We now have secure messaging systems and linked the MIR and Shetab payment networks. We no longer need SWIFT to facilitate bilateral transactions."

He also called for an overhaul of customs facilities and logistics infrastructure—including railcars, trucks, ships, containers, and port services—to support increased trade volume. "Digital customs and streamlined processes will accelerate goods movement," he said.

Jalali confirmed that gas swap talks between Russia and Iran are nearing completion. "Once finalized, Iran will play a key role as a regional gas hub," he said, adding that this was discussed in recent high-level meetings between the two countries' presidents.

Jalali's remarks underscore a pivotal moment in Iran-Russia economic relations, as both nations aim to deepen strategic ties and expand trade under new geopolitical and economic realities. His message is clear: delay risks forfeiting opportunities to more prepared competitors.

Iran's Raw Material Exports to China Rise



TEHRAN - Iran's raw material exports to China have grown significantly in recent years, raising concerns over the country's increasing reliance on unprocessed goods. At the same time, questions are mounting over the transparency and impact of Iran's commercial attachés posted abroad, especially in key trade partner nations like China.

Majid-Reza Hariri, President of the Iran-China Chamber of Commerce, criticized the performance of Iran's commercial counselors during an interview with ILNA. According to Hariri, there is a lack of accountability and transparency in their operations. "We have no measurable reports of their impact on increasing trade volumes. For instance, the Iranian trade advisor in Beijing has been in position for four years, yet trade between Iran and China has not meaningfully changed," he said.

While official statistics may show an increase in the value of trade, Hariri attributes this to global price fluctuations rather than a rise in trade volume. More troubling, he said, is that the structure of trade has remained unchanged: "Four years ago, 86% of Iran's non-oil exports to China were oil-based and mineral raw materials. That figure has now climbed to 91%—a clear indication of increased raw material exports or 'raw-selling'."

Hariri also questioned the placement of trade attachés in countries with little or no trade with Iran. "Roughly 75–80% of Iran's non-oil foreign trade is conducted with fewer than eight countries. So why are our commercial counselors stationed in ten others where there is little trade?"

Iran currently has 19 trade attachés stationed in 18 countries. Hariri emphasized that these positions are meant to support the private sector, yet in the case of China, he claimed the Iranian trade advisor not only fails to assist but actively obstructs private business activity.

New Chapter in Tourism Cooperation Among D-8 Nations Begins With Iran's Strategy Endorsement



TEHRAN - The Fourth Ministerial Meeting on Tourism of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation concluded today, May 5, 2025, with the adoption of the strategic "Cairo Declaration"—a milestone document outlining a renewed vision for cultural and tourism collaboration among Islamic nations.

The summit convened in Cairo with the participation of high-level representatives from Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, Nigeria, Azerbaijan, and host country Egypt.

During the meeting, tourism ministers and delegation heads reaffirmed their shared commitment to strengthening tourism ties, exchanging expertise, and promoting sustainable development through the collective capabilities of member states.

The "Cairo Declaration" emphasized the implementation of the D-8 Comprehensive Tourism Strategy and the "Crescent Moon Initiative," aiming to deepen cultural partnerships and expand economic and social engagement via tourism. The Islamic Republic of Iran, playing a key role in promoting cultural diplomacy, endorsed several of the declaration's core proposals.

Comprising 15 transformative points, the declaration includes: Development of the D-8 Comprehensive Tourism Strategy, with a focus on cultural branding and showcasing both tangible and intangible Islamic heritage; Strategic adoption of modern technologies such as artificial intelligence, digital platforms, and data-driven approaches in building tourism infrastructure; Facilitation of visa processes through bilateral and multilateral agreements; Knowledge-sharing in sustainable and responsible tourism, especially regarding the role of local communities; Introduction of an annual "Islamic World Tourism Capital" initiative; Promotion of investment infrastructure and encouraging private sector participation in joint tourism projects; and enhancement of academic cooperation and specialized knowledge transfer in areas like tourism economics, international marketing, and innovation.

North Korea's Kim Jong Un Leads Missile Test

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised a test of a short-range ballistic missile and long-range artillery on Thursday and stressed the importance of combat readiness of the country's nuclear forces, state media reported on Friday. The test, which also included an inspection of the operational reliability of its "nuclear trigger" system, was designed to ensure the rapid response posture to counter the sensitive regional military climate, KCNA news agency said. South Korea and Japan on Thursday reported multiple ballistic missiles were fired from North Korea's east coast in what was believed to be a performance test of short-range missiles that had been already deployed. KCNA said the 600 mm multiple launch rocket systems and tactical ballistic missile Hwasong-11 were mobilised for the test.



Russia, China Mark Victory in WW2 as Ukraine War Grinds on



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia marked the 80th anniversary of the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany in World War Two on Friday with a parade attended by China's Xi Jinping amid tight security to guard against Ukrainian attacks after three years of devastating war.

President Vladimir Putin, the longest-serving Kremlin chief since Josef Stalin, stood beside Xi, several dozen other leaders and Russian veterans on a rooftop tribune beside Vladimir Lenin's mausoleum on Red Square as Russian troops marched past.

Putin's defense minister, Andrei Belousov, dressed in a suit, inspected 11,000 troops - including many who have fought in Ukraine - and congratulated them on Victory Day to roars of approval.

The Ukraine war, Europe's deadliest since World War Two, haunts this celebration. Ukraine attacked Moscow with drones for several days this week, though there were no reports of major attacks on Russia on Friday amid a 72-hour ceasefire declared by Putin.

The Kremlin says the attendance of Russian allies such as Xi, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and several dozen leaders from the former Soviet Union, Africa, Asia and Latin America shows Russia is not isolated even if Moscow's former WW2 Western allies want to stay away. From Europe, the leaders of Serbia and Slovakia were attending.

"The victory over fascism, achieved at the cost of enormous sacrifices, has an everlasting significance," Putin told Xi in the Kremlin on Thursday. "The countless sacrifices made by both our peoples should never be forgotten."

Trump, Starmer Hail Limited U.S.-UK Trade Deal



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Donald Trump and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Thursday announced a limited bilateral trade agreement that leaves in place Trump's 10% tariffs on British exports, modestly expands agricultural access for both countries and lowers prohibitive U.S. duties on British car exports.

The "general terms" agreement, is the first of dozens of tariff-lowering deals that Trump expects to land in coming weeks after upending the global trading system with steep new import taxes aimed at shrinking a \$1.2 trillion U.S. goods trade deficit.

Trump hailed the deal in the Oval Office with Starmer patched in on a speaker phone, as U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and top trade negotiator Jamieson Greer head to Switzerland to launch negotiations with Chinese negotiators.

He pushed back against seeing the UK deal as a template for other negotiations, saying that Britain "made a good deal" and that many other trading partners may end up with much higher final tariffs because of their large U.S. trade surpluses.

Robert Francis Prevost Becomes Pope Leo XIV



VATICAN CITY (Dispatches) - Robert Francis Prevost became Pope Leo XIV after cardinals from around the globe chose him to be the first leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics from the United States.

Tens of thousands cheered as Leo, successor to the late pope Francis, appeared on the balcony of St Peter's Basilica to deliver his first address.

"To all people, wherever they are, to all peoples, to the whole Earth, peace be with you," the smiling 69-year-old Chicago native told the crowd.

"Help us, and each other, to build bridges through dialogue, through encounter, to come together as one people, always in peace."

Leo's speech drew warm applause, especially a section where the prelate — who spent more than two decades in Peru — broke into Spanish, and also when he paid tribute to the popular Francis.

"We still keep in our ears that weak, but always courageous, voice of pope Francis blessing Rome," he said, referring to the ailing Argentine's Easter Sunday address, a day before his death.

"We must seek together how to be a missionary Church, a Church that builds bridges, which hold dialogues, which is always open," he said.

Prevost's election was greeted with elation in Peru, where he was bishop in the northern city of Chiclayo and had acquired nationality, as well as the United States.

Outside New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral, Rosaria Vigorito, 66, said she could "feel the excitement just in the few minutes I've been walking around." She hoped Leo XIV would be a reformer who would allow women priests.

"He loved goat, duck with rice and ceviche. Those were his favourite dishes," Chiclayo's current bishop Edison Farfan told a press conference highlighting the new pope's deep links to the South American nation.

Prevost had been talked about as among the "papabili" — cardinals thought qualified for the papacy — and as someone who could defend and further Francis's legacy.

But he was not a globally-recognised figure among the Catholic rank and file.

World leaders raced to welcome the 267th pope and promised to work with the Church on global issues at a time of geopolitical uncertainty.

Leo now faces a momentous task. As well as asserting his moral voice on a conflict-torn world stage, he must try to unite a divided Church and tackle burning issues such as the continued fall-out from the sexual abuse scandal.

As Cardinal Prevost, the new pope had defended the poor and underprivileged and had republished articles online critical of US President Donald Trump's anti-migrant policies. But the White House chief nevertheless welcomed the election. "Congratulations to Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost, who was just named pope," Trump said in a social media post.

"It is such an honour to realise that he is the first American Pope. What excitement, and what a Great Honour for our Country."

It was not known how many ballots it took to elect Leo XIV, but the conclave followed recent history in wrapping up in less than two days.

While the details of the election will forever remain secret, the new pope had to secure at least two-thirds of votes to be elected.

The crowds swelled with emotion when white smoke billowed into the sky from the Sistine Chapel chimney, signalling an election on the second day of voting.

The bells of St Peter's Basilica and churches across Rome rang out and crowds rushed towards the square to watch the basilica balcony, fitted out with red curtains for the first address from the new pope, who was introduced in Latin.

"It's an amazing feeling," said Joseph Brian, a 39-year-old chef from Belfast in Northern Ireland, who came with his mother to Rome for the spectacle.

"I'm not an overly religious person but, being here with all these people just blew me away," he told AFP as people around him jumped in excitement.

Polish National Day Celebrated in Tehran

TEHRAN - The Polish Embassy in Tehran marked a historic occasion on May 6 as Chargé d'Affaires a.i. Mr. Marcin Wilczek delivered a powerful address commemorating Poland's National Day and celebrating the enduring ties between Poland and Iran.

Speaking at a diplomatic gathering attended by ambassadors, foreign dignitaries, and members of the diplomatic corps, Mr. Wilczek highlighted the significance of the Constitution of May 3, 1791 — the first written constitution in modern Europe and the second in the world, following the United States Constitution of 1787. He described it as a cornerstone of Polish identity, emphasizing its role in sustaining the Polish spirit through 123 years of foreign partitions and decades of communist rule.

Mr. Wilczek underscored the unique historical relationship between Poland and Iran, noting that in 2024 the two nations celebrated the 550th anniversary of their diplomatic ties. He recalled that official contact dates back to 1474 when Shah Uzun Hassan sent a letter to the Polish King Casimir Jagiellonian via a Venetian envoy, with the first recorded Polish diplomatic mission to Persia taking place in 1602.

"Very few countries can trace their diplomatic history so far into the past," Mr. Wilczek said, expressing optimism about the upcoming centenary of the 1927 Treaty of Friendship, which established formal legations in both Warsaw and Tehran.

In remarks touching on present-day diplomacy, Mr. Wilczek noted ongoing dialogue between Polish and Iranian foreign ministries, including recent high-level talks and condolences extended to Iranian officials following the tragic explosion in Bandar Abbas. As Poland currently holds the presidency of the EU



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Council, its embassy in Tehran is also representing the European Union in coordination with the European External Action Service.

Mr. Wilczek paid tribute to the hospitality extended by Iran to thousands of Poles evacuated from the Soviet Union in 1942, noting that around 120,000 Polish citizens found refuge in Iran during World War II — a gesture still deeply appreciated by Poles today.

Turning to contemporary geopolitical issues, Mr. Wilczek voiced strong support for Ukraine, condemning Russia's invasion as "the most significant and immediate threat" to Poland and the European Union. "No state should support Russia's illegal, unjustified, and unprovoked aggression," he asserted, calling for a collective international response grounded in the UN Charter.

On the Middle East, Mr. Wilczek reiterated Poland's longstanding support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He highlighted Poland's early recognition of Palestinian statehood in 1988 and the establishment of a Polish diplomatic mission in Ramallah in 2005.

Welcoming the resumption of dialogue between Iran and the United States, Mr. Wilczek expressed hope that renewed talks would lead to a sustainable agreement beneficial to regional stability.

The address concluded on a forward-looking note, celebrating growing academic exchanges. Nearly 500 Iranian students are currently pursuing higher education in Poland, particularly in medicine, engineering, arts, and design. Mr. Wilczek emphasized their potential as future ambassadors of friendship between the two countries.

He also recognized the Polish community in Iran, offering best wishes in Polish and thanking them for serving as a cultural bridge.

"Your presence, your knowledge of both cultures and languages, makes you an important bridge between our nations," he said.

The event ended with warm applause, reflecting the shared respect and longstanding camaraderie between the Polish and Iranian peoples.

India Accuses Pakistan of Launching Fresh Drone and Artillery Attacks

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India said Friday it had repulsed a wave of Pakistani drone and artillery attacks overnight, and Islamabad insisted it had not struck targets across the border, as the latest conflict between the nuclear-armed neighbours showed no signs of relenting.

There were also reports of Indian and Pakistani soldiers exchanging heavy volleys of shells and gunfire across their frontier in Kashmir overnight, killing at least five civilians.

"We're used to hearing exchange of fire between Pakistan and India at the Line of Control, but last night was different," said Mohammad Shakil, who lives near the frontier in Chakothi sector.

In India, a woman was killed and two other civilians were injured in Uri sector, police said.

At least 50 people have been killed on both sides, mainly in Pakistan, since India launched air strikes on Wednesday targeting "terrorist camps" and sparking the worst clashes in decades.

New Delhi blames Islamabad for backing an April 22 attack near Pahalgam, a tourist town on the Indian-run side of disputed Kashmir which killed 26 people,



almost all of them travellers and Hindu men.

Pakistan denies the claim.

The countries have fought two of their three full-scale wars over Kashmir, a disputed territory that both claim in full but have administered separate portions of since 1947 when the sub-continent was divided into two nations after British colonial rule ended.

"Pakistan Armed Forces launched multiple attacks using drones and other munitions along entire Western border on the intervening night of 08 and 09 May," the Indian army said in a statement on Friday.

"The drone attacks were effectively repulsed and befitting reply was given," it said.

Islamabad denied launching drone attacks after India on Thursday said Pakistani forces targeted three military stations — two in Kashmir and one in the neighbouring state of Punjab.

"Pakistan has not targeted any locations in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir, or across international border, so far," Pakistan's Information Minister Ataullah Tarar said late Thursday.



Man United Crush Athletic Bilbao 7-1 on Aggregate to Face Spurs in Europa League Final

MANCHESTER (Dispatches) - Mason Mount starred as Manchester United roared back to crush Athletic Bilbao 4-1 and 7-1 on aggregate, setting up a mouthwatering Europa League final against Tottenham.

United, 3-0 up after the first leg, fell behind to a superb strike from Mikel Jauregizar and looked nervy and untidy as they fought to find their feet at Old Trafford.

But a flurry of second-half substitutions — including the entrance of Mount and Amad Diallo — changed the complexion of the game completely and led to a United onslaught.

Mount, a peripheral figure since his move from Chelsea two years ago, produced an excellent turn and shot into the far corner to bring much-needed relief in the 72nd minute.

Casemiro scored a header from a Bruno Fernandes cross seven minutes later before Rasmus Hojlund converted from close range.

And there was still time for Mount to score a breathtaking second from near the halfway line in stoppage time, with goalkeeper Julen Agirrezabala well out of position.

United, after a terrible Premier League season, have a chance to end the campaign on a high note with the showdown against Tottenham in Bilbao on May 21.

Spurs beat Norwegian champions Bodo/Glimt 5-1 on aggregate.

“I’m just worried about the next game, trying to not get any injuries for the final,” United manager Ruben Amorim told TNT Sports. “If we don’t win the final, it means nothing for us.

“We have to have a full squad (against Tottenham), stay in the game and have a bit of luck and we have to be clinical.

“It’s quite similar for me and (Spurs boss) Ange (Postecoglou). It is a tough moment (for us both) and one of us is going to win. It’s going to be a big final.”

Fireworks crackled and red smoke filled an expectant Old Trafford following an impressive 3-0 win against 10-man Athletic in northern Spain last week.

But the air of anticipation was tinged by the knowledge that Amorim’s United have shown a startling ability to implode during a horrendous Premier League season.

The United manager reverted to the team that started in the first leg, making eight changes following Sunday’s 4-3 defeat against Brentford.

Dani Vivian was suspended after his red card last week and Athletic coach Ernesto Valverde was also hamstrung by the absence of brothers Nico and Inaki Williams, as well as top-scorer Oihan Sancet.

Athletic midfielder Alex Berenguer had a good early opportunity but his shot sailed over the bar and he also fired wide after a surging run from midfield.

But the visitors broke the deadlock in sensational style after half an hour to give themselves hope when Jauregizar picked his spot from outside the box and curled past Andre Onana after sloppy play by Harry Maguire.

United struggled for attacking rhythm but should have been level shortly before half-time.

The stadium held its breath as Alejandro Gamacho was put through by the lively Patrick Dorgu but his attempted dink over the goalkeeper went wide.

United offered little going forward in the early stages of the second half as Athletic made the running,

forcing the home side to hack clear on multiple occasions.

Both teams made a triple change just after the hour mark and it transformed the home side.

The dangerous Diallo, recently returned from injury, was a menace on the right side of United’s attack while Mount gave the side attacking focus and guile.

Arsenal’s European Dream Ends as PSG Clinch Champions League Final Spot



PARIS (Dispatches) Paris Saint-Germain clinched a place in the Champions League final as goals by Fabián Ruiz and Achraf Hakimi gave them a 2-1 win over Arsenal in the second leg of their last-four tie, securing a 3-1 aggregate triumph.

Ruiz crashed in a shot from the edge of the area in the 27th minute at the Parc des Princes to leave PSG firmly in the driving seat after they had withstood an early bombardment from the visitors.

Already leading in the tie after Ousmane Dembélé’s goal in last week’s first leg, PSG then saw Vitorinha have a second-half penalty saved.

However, Hakimi put the tie beyond Arsenal when he scored in the 72nd minute, even if Bukayo Saka did then pull one back for the visitors.

PSG advance to a showdown in Munich on May 31 against Inter Milan, and it will be the second Champions League final in their history, five years after a defeat by Bayern Munich in Lisbon.

Arsenal, meanwhile, saw their European dream come to an end as they fell short of reaching what would have been their second final, 19 years after losing to Barcelona in Paris.

Still without a trophy since the 2020 FA Cup, all that is left to play for now for Mikel Arteta’s side is securing a third consecutive second-place finish in the Premier League.

There was an electric atmosphere all evening in Paris, and PSG were able to celebrate getting to a final in front of their fans for the first time, after their victory against RB Leipzig in the last four in 2020 was played behind closed doors during the pandemic.

There was a feverish mood in and around the ground pre-match, but PSG have tripped up in big Champions League ties plenty of times over the last decade.

In addition, their top scorer Dembélé was not in the starting line-up having come off with a hamstring problem in the first leg.

Arsenal, with Thomas Partey back in midfield after missing the first leg through suspension, did their best to silence the raucous home support by throwing everything at the Parisians right from the off.

Pellegrini Celebrates Betis’ First European Final But Shifts Focus to LaLiga



MADRID (Dispatches) - Real Betis manager Manuel Pellegrini celebrated reaching the Conference League final on Thursday, but stressed that securing a Champions League spot in LaLiga remains his top priority.

A decisive extra-time goal from Abde Ezzalzouli secured Betis a 4-3 aggregate win at Fiorentina in the Conference League second semi-final leg, sending the Seville club to its first-ever European final.

“My satisfaction is logical. It makes me much happier to see the joy of the Betis fans. We felt a little bit indebted, with the need to give the Betis fans this kind of joy,” Pellegrini told reporters.

Pellegrini and Betis will now face Chelsea in the final but the 71-year-old insists that ending the LaLiga campaign on a high note is the first priority as his side are sixth with 57 points, a single point behind Villarreal.

“From tomorrow we leave the Conference League out because we have four very important league games left to aim for the Champions League until the end of the season,” he said.

“We are very happy to reach the final, and even more so with Chelsea and I sent (manager Enzo) Maresca a message a long time ago being very happy for him.”

For manager Raffaele Palladino and Fiorentina, the mood was somber as the Conference League continues to resemble a cursed campaign for the Italian side.

Fiorentina have reached the last two finals only to be undone by late deciding goals — a painful pattern that has continued into the semi-final of this season’s edition.

Wolves Cruise to Game 2 Win Over Stephen Curry-Less Warriors

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Julius Randle scored 24 points and dished 11 assists as the Minnesota Timberwolves pulled away for a 117-93 win over the Golden State Warriors in Game 2 of their Western Conference semifinal series on Thursday night in Minneapolis.

Anthony Edwards added 20 points and nine rebounds for Minnesota, which evened the best-of-seven series at 1-1. Nickeil Alexander-Walker scored 20 points off the bench, and Jaden McDaniels finished with 16 points on 7-for-10 shooting.

“We watched film yesterday,” Edwards said. “We saw that it wasn’t just that we didn’t make shots (in Game 1), it was more so our defensive pressure and intensity. We didn’t bring it. So, we knew we had to bring it today.”

Jonathan Kuminga scored 18 points on 8-for-11 shooting to lead the Warriors. Jimmy Butler III tallied 17 points to go along with seven rebounds.

Warriors guard Stephen Curry watched the game in street clothes on the bench. The contest marked Golden State’s first playoff game without Curry, who injured his left hamstring in Game 1 and is



expected to miss at least a week.

The Timberwolves overcame an injury scare to Edwards in Game 2. Their leading scorer during the regular season limped slowly off the court after injuring his left ankle in the second quarter, but he returned to start the second half.

Golden State pulled within 62-55 by starting the third quarter on a

16-6 run. Buddy Hield punctuated the run with a 3-pointer off an assist from Brandin Podziemski.

“We made a really spirited run, got it to seven, and then we just kind of lost a little bit of composure,” Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. “We turned it over right out of that timeout a couple of times and gave up a couple threes where we lost connection defensively. But we learned a lot, and I think this game will help us figure out how to move forward.”

Minnesota responded with an 18-5 run later in the third quarter to re-establish control. Alexander-Walker buried a 3-pointer from the left wing to put the Timberwolves on top, 83-63, with 27.1 seconds left in the period.

The Timberwolves’ regulars watched the final few minutes from the bench with the score out of reach. Reserves such as Terrence Shannon Jr., Josh Minott and Leonard Miller scored in the final two minutes.

The Timberwolves led 56-39 at the half.

Minnesota started the game on a 25-7 run. Edwards drained a 3-pointer and Alexander-Walker added a two-point basket to put the Timberwolves on top by 18 with 2:36 remaining in the first quarter.

Alcaraz Raring to Go, Welcomes Sinner Back From Doping Ban

ROME (Dispatches) - Carlos Alcaraz said he is back to his best for the Italian Open after suffering injuries last month while the Spaniard also welcomed back world number one Jannik Sinner, who is poised for a comeback on home soil after serving a doping suspension.

Alcaraz withdrew from the Madrid Open last month after struggling with hamstring and groin injuries he had sustained during the Barcelona Open final, opting to take a break so he could recover well before his French Open title defence.

Alcaraz, who celebrated his 22nd birthday on Monday, received a bye into the second round in Rome where he will play Serbia’s Dusan Lajovic.

“I’m really happy to be here in Rome... The practices were great so far. I’m in a good shape, I’m 100% ready to start the tournament,” Alcaraz told reporters on Thursday.

“I couldn’t play Madrid. It was a special tournament for me... But I could play really good tournaments in Monte-Carlo and Barcelona, good matches. I stopped a little bit to try to recover from the injury, which I wasn’t worried (about) at all.



“Right now I have confidence... Obviously I would say the first round in every tournament is never easy, you have to get used to the conditions, the tournament, the court, everything. But I’m just excited, I can’t wait for tomorrow.”

Alcaraz is the third seed in Rome and the Spaniard said he hopes to meet Sinner in the final, with both players on opposite sides of the draw.

The Italian has remained world number one despite serving a three-month doping ban as the three-times Grand Slam champion prepares for his first match since winning the Australian Open in January.

“Honestly, I’m really happy to have him around again. It’s been three months. Obviously for him it was tough,” Alcaraz added.

“I think there isn’t a better place to come back than here in his home, for him here in Rome. I saw him, it is great for me, for tennis and for the fans to have him around again.

“I’m real happy to see him and his team around. I think I’m going to enjoy watching him playing again.”