

As Electricity Supply Is Getting Into Critical Condition, the Iranian Energy Ministry Has Allowed Large Manufacturers in the Country to Start Importing Electricity Amid Restrictions Imposed on Their Power Supplies

# IRAN NEWS

Brigadier General Vladimir Nikolayevich Kupriyanuk, Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Belarus, in Meeting With Major General Seyyed Abdolrahim Mousavi, Commander-in-Chief of Iran Army, Emphasized the Importance of Strengthening Bilateral Interactions and Cooperation in Various Fields

VOL. XXIX, No. 8272 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

THURSDAY MAY 22, 2025 KHORDAD 01, 1404

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## Iran's Uranium Enrichment Not Open for Negotiation



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran will not negotiate over its uranium enrichment program in indirect talks with the United States, and will not forego this right under any conditions, said Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi.

"What we are witnessing now are completely unreasonable and illogical positions by the Americans, which have become public in the past few days. These positions were met with an immediate response from Iran," Araqchi said in remarks.

The minister said Iran entered into talks to "secure the rights of the Iranian people, and under no circumstances will we compromise on these rights."

"The subject of enrichment is not, in our view, open for negotiation at all," he stressed.

"I have provided a clear response over the past few days, and today the Leader completely clarified our stance," Araqchi said, referring to earlier remarks by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei that it is "utterly wrong" for the US to insist on Iran completely stopping its peaceful uranium enrichment activities.

"To say that 'we will not allow Iran to enrich uranium' is a huge mistake," Ayatollah Khamenei stated on Tuesday.

"No one is waiting for permission from anyone. The Islamic Republic has its own policies, its own methods, and it pursues its own agenda," the Leader underlined, while addressing a ceremony commemorating the first martyrdom anniversary of President Ebrahim Raisi.

## Further Expansion of Iran-Turkmenistan Ties to Benefit Both Nations



TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian says the Islamic Republic is eager to expand ties with Turkmenistan in various fields.

The Iranian president said strengthening cooperation between Tehran and Ashgabat will guarantee prosperity and security of both nations.

Pezeshkian made the remarks in a meeting with Turkmenistan's Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov in Tehran on Tuesday, where they discussed ways to expand bilateral relations.

"Deepening and strengthening cooperation, especially joint and mutual investments between Iran and Turkmenistan, can guarantee the future prosperity, comfort, friendship and security of the two nations," he said.

He said Iran is keen to import natural gas from Turkmenistan, while it also has the efficient capacity to export and swap gas with neighboring countries.

Pezeshkian underscored the need for building a gas pipeline between the two countries that can support multiple purposes, including domestic use, export, and gas swaps.

"In addition to energy cooperation, Iran aims to expand cooperation with Turkmenistan in areas such as transport, trade, investment, and cultural exchanges," he said.

Meredov, for his part, said Turkmenistan sees long-term opportunities for economic cooperation with Iran and is committed to enhancing trade routes and border markets.

Meredov, who is in Tehran for the 18th Joint Economic Cooperation Commission, said Turkmenistan seeks to increase the volume of natural gas it transits to other countries via Iran amid efforts by the Central Asian state to use growing relations with the Islamic Republic as an opportunity to expand its energy exports.

# Ordinary Lives of Martyrs Like Raisi a Powerful Response to Enemies' Allegations

TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian has stated that the humble and ordinary lives led by the late President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi and other public service martyrs serve as a strong and undeniable response to the baseless accusations made by the enemies of the Islamic Republic.

Speaking at a memorial ceremony held today in the Majlis to honor President Raisi and the "Martyrs of Service," Pezeshkian emphasized that he feels indebted to these devoted individuals, who dedicated their lives to the people of Iran.

"I recently visited the mother of Martyr Raisi in Mashhad. She lives in a modest home in an average neighborhood — nothing extravagant," Pezeshkian said. "Even in Tehran, the late president lived in a simple house in a regular area. Other martyrs of service resided in basic government housing. These were not the lives of elites, but of humble servants of the people."

The president highlighted how anti-revolutionary groups often spread negative propaganda about officials of the Islamic Republic. "There's no need to argue or defend — just visit their homes. Their honesty, integrity, and purity are evident in their way of life. That says more than any words could."

Pezeshkian noted that despite continuous plots against the nation, Iranians remain loyal to the revolution because they witness the selfless service of leaders who live modestly and work tirelessly for the public. "Each one of these individuals could have lived more comfortably given their positions, qualifications, and expertise — but they chose not to."

He continued, "We always say these individuals were tireless and honest — and they were. But what remains unseen is their lifestyle, and that's what truly defines their character." Addressing criticisms from international figures, Pezeshkian condemned comments by former U.S. President Donald Trump during his visit to Saudi Arabia, where he accused Iranian leaders of corruption and theft. "Those who plunder the world, the seasoned thieves and terrorists of this planet, accuse others of what they themselves are guilty of," he said.

The president added, "When someone dares to stand up and say you will not loot our nation, they are labeled as thieves or terrorists — yet the real looters are those making these accusations. They should come and witness the lives of our martyrs, then answer for the crimes they commit in plain sight."

Pezeshkian concluded by expressing pride in the martyrs and their families. "As an Iranian, I



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am proud of these martyrs of service and their families. We, as a government, strive to serve without seeking praise or reward. I pray that God helps us remain worthy of their sacrifice and that their families see us as their brothers — dedicated to serving them in every way possible."

He ended by expressing hope that all officials will follow in the footsteps of these martyrs in their path of service to the nation.

Meanwhile in the ceremony, Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqher Qalibaf emphasized the vital importance of the late President Ebrahim Raisi's governance model in building Iran's future.

He described Raisi as a tireless leader driven by sincerity and compassion. "We lost a president who did not distinguish between day and night when it came to serving the people," he said. "Neither the burden of responsibilities nor the ingratitude of some could deter his

unwavering resolve."

In the same incident, Iran also lost its Foreign Minister, a revolutionary governor, a people's cleric, and skilled personnel from the security and aviation teams. Qalibaf stressed that all were experienced, devoted public servants.

He noted the national outpouring of grief that followed their deaths, describing how the Iranian people quickly turned tragedy into a demonstration of unity, faith, and strength. "In just hours, this heartbreaking event transformed into a moment of spiritual resilience, guided by divine wisdom," he said.

Highlighting Raisi's leadership philosophy, Qalibaf said his approach was rooted in action, hope, and public service. "Instead of engaging critics with harsh words, Raisi offered a new standard of service. He embodied the Islamic Republic's expectations of its president as envisioned by Imam Khomeini."

Qalibaf called on all Iranian officials to follow Raisi's model by pursuing rationality, spirituality, and justice in governance. He reiterated that Raisi never sought personal gain and viewed himself as equal, if not smaller, than the people he served.

"Raisi remains alive in his tireless service to the poor, in his efforts to advance national interests, and in his focus on Palestine and the Islamic world," Qalibaf concluded. "His legacy belongs to the entire nation, regardless of political affiliation. Preserving and building upon that legacy is the best tribute we can offer."

# Iran Implements Zero Import Tariff on EAEU Goods

TEHRAN - Iran has officially reduced import tariffs to zero on goods from the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), marking a significant shift in its trade policy. According to Mohammad Ali Dehghan Dehnavi, head of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran, 87% of goods traded between Iran and the EAEU are now subject to zero tariffs. This move is part of the newly implemented Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Iran and the five-member EAEU bloc.

In a press conference on Tuesday, Dehnavi described the agreement as a major development in Iran's economic and trade landscape. The EAEU consists of Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, and Belarus. The agreement, which initially began as a Preferential Trade Agreement, evolved into a full FTA following successful evaluations and was enacted two months ago.

"Previously, countries imposed tariffs of 5% to 20% on imported goods, which increased consumer prices and made it harder for foreign products to compete," Dehnavi said. "Now, with tariffs eliminated on most goods, Iranian exporters can enter EAEU markets more competitively, and vice versa."

Dehnavi emphasized that Iranian producers now have greater access to foreign markets and can offer their products at more competitive prices. "This benefits consumers in EAEU countries through lower prices and provides Iranian manufacturers the opportunity to expand and plan for long-term exports," he explained. "It also creates joint opportunities for producers in both Iran and the EAEU."

One key benefit for Iran is the reduced cost of importing raw materials. "Sourcing raw materials from EAEU member states can lead to better quality and lower production costs in Iran," Dehnavi noted. However, he assured that the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Trade will take necessary measures to protect local industries if imports threaten domestic production.

Dehnavi framed the agreement as a strategic move to enhance Iran's international competitiveness. With the EAEU's total trade volume reaching between \$800 and \$900 billion annually—including imports worth up to \$500 billion—he said Iran has a valuable opportunity to claim a share of these markets.

"The FTA allows Iranian manufacturers to move closer to global standards in terms of pricing



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and quality," he added. "It's an essential step toward making Iranian products globally competitive and moving beyond the 90-million-strong domestic market to a global consumer base of 7 billion."

The FTA also paves the way for the growth of export management companies—firms that may not produce goods themselves but specialize in marketing and exporting products from other producers. "These companies are part of our strategic support programs, and this agreement provides a golden opportunity for them to enter new markets," Dehnavi stated.

He highlighted the mutual benefits of the agreement, stressing that opportunities for EAEU countries are not threats to Iran but shared prospects. "If Iranian manufacturers can source cheaper inputs from these countries, they can produce more affordable final goods and compete better in both domestic and foreign markets," he said.

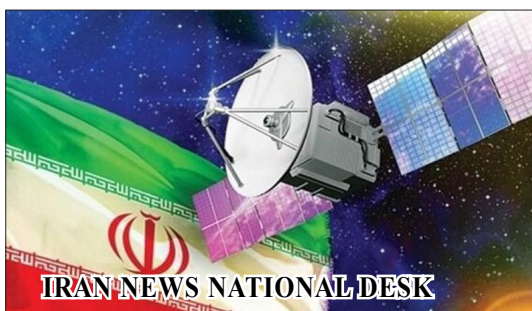
Dehnavi also addressed prospects for joint investments, suggesting that Iranian firms could transfer parts of their production processes to EAEU countries or partner with local producers to increase scale and market reach. "This would create added value and open larger markets for Iranian goods," he explained.

He reiterated that if any segment of domestic production is negatively affected by imports, the Trade Promotion Organization is prepared to provide targeted support to safeguard those industries. "The FTA with the EAEU is a rehearsal for broader global integration," Dehnavi said. "It prepares Iran for eventual participation in larger economic blocs by learning how to leverage opportunities and expand its market presence gradually."

Highlighting Russia as Iran's top trading partner within the bloc, he noted that Iran's total trade with EAEU members reached over \$3 billion last year. However, this figure could increase significantly depending on the import of key commodities like agricultural inputs from Russia and Kazakhstan.

The Iran-EAEU Free Trade Agreement officially took effect on May 14, 2025 (25 Ordibehesht 1404) after seven years of negotiations and ratification by the parliaments of all six participating countries. The agreement is viewed as a turning point in Iran's economic relations with the Eurasian region, offering new avenues for trade expansion and regional cooperation.

## Iran Pursues Development of Satellite Constellations Across All Categories



TEHRAN - Iran is planning to develop satellite constellations across all classes of satellites, including communication, remote sensing, and navigation, according to the head of the Iranian Space Research Center.

Dr. Vahid Yazdaniyan, President of the Iranian Space Research Center, emphasized the country's commitment to international space cooperation. "We are seriously pursuing joint collaborations in several areas. Our plans include building constellations for various satellite classes—communications, sensing, and navigation," he stated.

Yazdaniyan noted that these constellations will enhance the precision and effectiveness of satellite services. "We are ready to collaborate with other countries in constructing and launching satellite constellations," he said.

He also highlighted Iran's readiness to participate in joint projects not only in satellite deployment but also in service delivery. "We've had some experience in this field in the past, particularly in remote sensing satellites, but our goal is to expand these collaborations further," he explained.

Remote sensing applications, he said, are especially diverse, with uses in water resource management, combating desertification, and monitoring environmental factors. "We are prepared to carry out joint projects, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region," he added.

Another key area of focus, according to Yazdaniyan, is the transfer of space-related technical knowledge. "Countries with space technology often prefer to sell products rather than share their know-how. But our approach is different," he said.

Iran advocates for the dissemination of space knowledge and is committed to supporting other countries in developing their capabilities. "We have clearly expressed this in bilateral and multilateral negotiations," he emphasized.

Yazdaniyan pointed out that Iran not only offers satellite products but is also prepared to transfer its domestically developed space technology to interested nations. "This is especially relevant to neighboring countries, where our negotiations are more advanced and promising," he said.

## Iran's Bunkering Industry Struggles Under Sanctions, Holds Just 5% Market Share



TEHRAN - The secretary of Iran's Bunkering Industry Association says international sanctions remain the primary challenge facing the country's bunkering sector, severely limiting its role in supplying fuel to ships in regional and international waters.

Mohammad Jafar Abedinejad stated that fears of secondary sanctions have led international shipping lines to avoid sourcing fuel from Iran. This has left the country with less than a 5% share in the bunkering markets of the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.

Abedinejad explained that while approximately 30 companies have received fuel supply licenses from Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization, fewer than 10 are currently active due to operational and regulatory difficulties. Out of these, 20 companies are members of the Bunkering Industry Association.

He reported that Iran supplies roughly one million tons of fuel to ships annually, a figure held back by both internal constraints and external pressures.

The industry is also struggling to meet evolving international environmental standards. Since 2020, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has mandated the use of low-sulfur fuel (below 0.5%). This threshold is expected to drop to 0.1% soon, with a future goal of achieving carbon-neutral fuel usage.

Abedinejad noted that the production of low-sulfur fuel in Iran remains limited. A small quantity of high-quality, low-sulfur fuel is currently allocated to the national fleet from a single refinery, but this does not meet the full demand, and the private sector must rely on imports to supply vessels.

Commenting on the impact of regional conflicts, particularly in Yemen, Abedinejad acknowledged a significant increase in maritime freight rates in recent years, which has affected the cost structure of fuel supply operations.



# IRAN NEWS



## Iran Opposes Any Change in Int'l and Geopolitical Borders

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Defense Minister termed preserving territorial integrity and stability of regional borders among the unchangeable principles of Iran's policy.

Defense Minister Brigadier-General Aziz Nasirzadeh termed preserving territorial integrity and stability of regional borders among the unchangeable principles of Iran's policy, and said that the common border between Iran and Armenia is a historical communication route between the two nations, and Tehran will not allow any encroachment on this border.

In a meeting with the Armenian Defense Minister, Brigadier-General Nasirzadeh emphasized the strategic importance of relations between the two countries, and said that Armenia has a special place in Iran's neighborhood policy, and relations between Tehran and Yerevan are built on solid historical and cultural foundations, and lasting peace in the Caucasus will create vast opportunities for regional development.

## German Investors Still Interested in Iran Despite Sanctions



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TEHRAN - Despite ongoing international sanctions weighing heavily on Iran's economy, German investors have not completely lost interest in entering the Iranian market, according to Shahin Asgari, President of the Iran-Germany Joint Chamber of Commerce. In an interview with ILNA, Asgari highlighted both the potential for collaboration and the challenges foreign companies are facing, including a recent case of unmet commitments by Iran's Ministry of Energy.

Asgari cited a recent example in which a German company invested in solar power projects in Iran, only to face difficulties receiving payments from the Ministry of Energy. He warned that such breaches of agreement damage investor trust—both foreign and domestic—and contribute to the ongoing energy crisis in the country.

"The lack of infrastructure, largely due to sanctions, is evident in sectors like electricity. While German companies possess cutting-edge renewable energy technologies—especially in wind and solar—they need reliable partnerships to operate here," he said. He emphasized that Germany, a global leader in wind power, could play a key role in modernizing Iran's aging power infrastructure.

Discussing the broader outlook, Asgari stated that a potential agreement between Iran and the United States could significantly improve the business environment. "Building trust is the most crucial aspect of current negotiations. The overall tone of talks has given hope for improved relations and a possible easing of sanctions," he said.

He stressed that Iran, with its abundant natural resources, skilled workforce, and largely untapped market, remains an attractive destination for German investors. If sanctions are lifted, Iran and Germany could form a strong economic partnership, combining Iranian potential with German technology.

Asgari also reflected on missed opportunities in the past. "During 2017 and 2018, when sanctions were lifted, more than 50 high-level German delegations visited the Iran-Germany Chamber of Commerce. However, the Iranian side failed to capitalize on this opportunity due to lack of readiness and planning," he said.

## Iran, Turkmenistan Aim to Boost Trade Volume to 20m Tons Annually



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TEHRAN - Iran and Turkmenistan have reaffirmed their commitment to significantly expand bilateral trade, aiming for a target volume of 20 million tons annually. The pledge was made during the 18th Joint Economic Cooperation Commission meeting between the two neighboring countries.

According to a report by Iran's Construction and Development of Transportation Infrastructure Company (CDTIC), Houshang Bazvand, Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development, stated that the new trade target — encompassing transit, exports, and imports — is outlined in a memorandum of understanding signed at the latest summit. Bazvand emphasized that reaching this target would drive economic growth for both nations.

The two-day summit focused primarily on transportation and logistics, with discussions held in specialized committees to explore solutions and mechanisms needed to achieve the 20-million-ton goal.

Bazvand described the talks as productive and noted that the points raised are expected to influence the final agreement. He stressed that Iran and Turkmenistan must maximize use of existing transit capacities to bolster regional trade cooperation.

Reflecting on the 17th joint commission meeting, Bazvand reiterated that the updated memorandum emphasizes the same ambitious trade target. He highlighted that the expansion of commercial ties with Turkmenistan is a directive from Iran's President, and expressed hope that through collaborative meetings and ongoing efforts, the goal would be realized.

During the session, Bazvand also reviewed Iran's current infrastructure projects. He reported that 211 development plans are underway, comprising 364 individual projects with a combined current contract value of approximately 930 trillion Iranian toman (around \$18.6 billion USD at current exchange rates).

# Central Bank Governor Outlines Broader Financial Plans

TEHRAN - The Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), Mohammad Reza Farzin, announced that the Islamic Republic is preparing to issue foreign currency-denominated sukuk bonds in Oman as part of President Masoud Pezeshkian's upcoming diplomatic trip to the Persian Gulf country.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a ceremony marking the issuance of Murabaha sukuk by Mobarakeh Steel Company, Farzin said negotiations are scheduled with Omani central bank officials to introduce these Islamic financial instruments into their market.

Farzin emphasized that the Central Bank is focused on diversifying financial instruments to support both foreign currency and rial-based financing needs. He noted that while the CBI does not directly engage in currency operations, such activities have been delegated to Iran's Currency and Gold Exchange Center.

"We have multiple projects requiring foreign currency funding, and our aim is to use diverse financial tools for this," Farzin stated. "This includes launching pre-sale foreign exchange contracts and sukuk bonds."

He explained that the sukuk initiative is part of a broader push to establish a forward currency market in Iran — a common practice globally. Though technical and infrastructure hurdles have delayed the rollout, Farzin said the plans are firmly underway.

Among the alternative methods being implemented is the pre-sale of foreign exchange, which allows for upfront financing and has already begun through the issuance of bonds for select projects. The aim is to raise up to \$2 billion in foreign exchange sukuk this year, building on smaller efforts from the previous year, such as funding the Bidboland Refinery project.

Iran is also looking to collaborate with the National Development Fund and several domestic banks to facilitate bond issuance. Farzin believes these bonds could be attractive not only to the public but also to businesses, exporters, and importers.

Regarding Iran's efforts to market these financial products abroad, Farzin revealed that talks have already commenced with Russian financial institutions to introduce Iranian sukuk in their markets. However, the first available bonds, such as those from Mobarakeh Steel, are currently accessible only within Iran.

Farzin added that nearly €1.86 billion in projects are slated to be financed through foreign exchange bonds.

He dismissed concerns that sanctions might interfere with profit payments or



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principal repayments to investors, stating, "Sanctions have not impacted our ability to repay. All bondholders have received payments on time, and we've sold bonds with a 6% return in just 48 hours."

President Pezeshkian is expected to visit Oman next week, with Farzin scheduled to arrive a day earlier for preliminary discussions with Omani financial authorities. The talks will focus on finalizing the framework for offering Iranian sukuk in Omani markets.

Farzin also addressed the controversial case of Babak Zanjani, a businessman convicted of massive embezzlement. He confirmed that nickel reserves belonging to Zanjani are being held at the Central Bank's vault, not at customs warehouses.

"These reserves were supposed to be sold by Mr. Zanjani to repay his debts to not assessed the true value of the nickel, nor verified its authenticity."

the Central Bank. We're still waiting on that," Farzin said, adding that the CBI has not assessed the true value of the nickel, nor verified its authenticity.

On Zanjani's cryptocurrency assets, Farzin noted that any recovery or collection would depend on final rulings issued by the judiciary.

Farzin revealed plans to issue export credits for agricultural producers trading in the country's "Commercial Forex Market." This separate market aims to prevent agricultural exporters from competing with petrochemical firms, whose dominance often skews prices and access.

In response to questions on bank specialization, Farzin noted that charter reforms are underway as part of the Seventh Development Plan. Once implemented, banks will operate solely within their defined mandates — for example, marriage loans would only be processed by select specialized institutions.

Until then, all banks remain obligated to participate in mandatory lending programs such as marriage and childbirth support.

Mojtaba Zanganeh, Head of the National Development Fund, stated that the next planned bond issuance — in collaboration with Bank Tejarat — will raise up to \$200 million for upstream oil sector projects.

He emphasized the urgency of investing in shared oil fields currently being tapped by neighboring countries, warning that delays would lead to the loss of national resources. "The upstream oil sector offers strong returns and can help stabilize broader energy imbalances, especially in natural gas," Zanganeh said.

# Informal Employment on the Rise Amid Skilled Labor Shortage

TEHRAN - Iran is witnessing a growing shift toward informal employment, even as the country struggles with a shortage of skilled labor, according to Gholamhossein Mohammadi, head of Iran's Technical and Vocational Training Organization.

Speaking Tuesday at a provincial skills council meeting held at the Prophet Mohammad Hall in Kerman's governor's office, Mohammadi revealed that while around 500,000 new individuals were insured last year, a significant proportion were women and many were based in Tehran — a trend he says reflects the surge in informal and often unskilled, non-industrial jobs.

"People are turning away from formal jobs with standard salaries and insurance, opting instead for informal work, especially in cities like Tehran," said Mohammadi, who also serves as Deputy Minister of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare.

He attributed part of this trend to wage suppression in smaller industries, which discourages workers from entering formal employment sectors. "If this continues, our industry will face serious workforce challenges in the near future," he warned, adding that wage reforms are essential and should reflect sector-specific realities.

Mohammadi stressed the urgent need for stronger vocational training, pointing to a widespread shortage of skilled workers — an issue not limited to Iran but exacerbated by factors such as economic pressures, lack of synergy between the labor market and educational systems, rapid labor market changes, and weaknesses in Iran's training infrastructure.

Iran's labor market, he noted, is productivity-based, and boosting productivity is key to achieving the country's targeted 8% economic growth. "Technical and vocational training for just one year can raise an individual's productivity by 2–4%, with long-term impacts on national GDP," he said.

The private sector, he added, is increasingly investing in upskilling its workforce to overcome productivity challenges.

Mohammadi did not mince words about the shortcomings of Iran's education system. "We are among the bottom eight out of 141 countries in terms of organizational training," he said, citing poor global rankings: 61st in average years of education and 136th in overall skills index.

"This shows we're studying a lot but not effectively — our education doesn't match labor market needs," he said.

Organizational training ranks 134th globally, and the quality of that training sits at 115th, he added, leading to a significant mismatch between job market supply and demand.



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While 1.4 million Iranians enter the job market annually and a million job openings exist, both job-seekers and employers remain dissatisfied. "Employers say they can't find skilled workers, while youth say they're unemployed — because the training system doesn't equip them with the right skills."

Mohammadi pointed to global models that prioritize employer-led training, advocating for a system in which over 90% of vocational education is conducted with employer involvement, with just 10% handled by universities

and training institutions.

He emphasized that labor market strategies must be integrated with education systems and job classification frameworks. "We need co-creation," he said. "If our workforce shrinks, industries suffer, economic growth slows, and inflation rises — our futures are intertwined."

Mohammadi called for turning Iran's "passion for education" into a nationwide skills movement. He said programs are underway to achieve this, and emphasized the need for improvements in worker safety and housing alongside skills development.

"Safety protects lives, housing represents half of workers' livelihoods, and skills lead to higher income," he explained.

He also stressed the need for major investments in upgrading vocational training centers, particularly in southern Kerman. "Equipping a single technical school can cost up to one trillion rials," he said. As a solution, technical centers across the province are being opened to vocational high schools for free scheduled use.

If Iran sees economic growth, the demand for skilled labor will surge, Mohammadi said. To meet this, provinces have been authorized to purchase training services independently and hire trainers on a per-project basis. "We're prioritizing support for southern Kerman with increased funding," he added.

Calling Kerman a province with strategic opportunities, he encouraged local planners to develop region-based growth strategies tailored to the area's tangible and intangible assets. "Regional solutions outperform national, top-down approaches — this is our ministry's core strategy," he stated.

According to Mohammadi, 50% of trainees in vocational programs say they enrolled to gain employment, and 80% of those in Kerman have found jobs — compared to only 10% in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province, a success he attributes to Kerman's strong industrial ecosystem.

He also noted that 47 companies have joined a skills consortium aimed at creating job opportunities.

## Iran, Turkmenistan Sign Trade Roadmap for \$3b in Trade, 16m Tons of Transit by 2028



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TEHRAN - Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development and Turkmenistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs have signed a comprehensive roadmap to expand bilateral trade to \$3 billion and increase goods transit to 16 million tons by the year 2028.

The agreement was formalized during a ceremony held Tuesday evening at Iran's Ministry of Roads and Urban Development. Speaking at the event, Iranian Minister Farzaneh Sadegh Malvajerd described the successful conclusion of the 18th Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Economic Commission as the beginning of a new chapter in the countries' economic relations.

"Through intensive meetings and negotiations, we reached new agreements and approaches that will lay the groundwork for boosting trade between the two nations," she said.

Sadegh expressed hope that the final version of the trade roadmap would be completed before the planned visit of Iran's President to Turkmenistan. She emphasized the strategic location of both countries along North-South and East-West transport corridors, which offer significant benefits to the region.

Key targets outlined in the agreement include a transit volume of 16 million tons by 2028, with an overall goal of reaching 20 million tons in the long-term.

Additional areas of agreement include the establishment of joint free trade zones at Sarakhs-Sarakhs and Lofabad-Artik, and the enhancement of cross-border markets, particularly at Incheh Borun.

The two sides also agreed to advance a bilateral gas contract to define the framework for gas imports, construct the Qamdaq-Atrak road towards the Iranian border, and build a gas pipeline to Turkmenistan.

Further cooperation includes preparing a contract for the third power transmission line from Mary (Turkmenistan) to Sarakhs (Iran) and initiating studies for a potential fourth line.

## Tehran, Kabul Emphasize Expansion of Oil and Gas Cooperation



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TEHRAN - In a high-level meeting today, senior officials from Iran and Afghanistan underscored the need to deepen bilateral cooperation in the oil and gas sectors. Iran's Oil Minister, Mohsen Paknejad, and Afghanistan's Minister of Mines and Petroleum, Hedayatullah Badri, held discussions in Tehran to explore new opportunities for collaboration in energy development.

According to a statement from Iran's Ministry of Oil, Minister Paknejad highlighted the strong fraternal ties between the two neighboring countries and reiterated that the Iranian government's policy under the current administration is to strengthen economic relations with neighboring states—particularly in oil and gas.

He emphasized Iran's significant capabilities in exploration, development, and production of oil and gas fields through both public and private sector firms. "Given Afghanistan's current energy needs, Iran is fully prepared to engage in comprehensive cooperation in the fields of oil, gas, refining, and petrochemicals," Paknejad said. However, he noted that the current level of bilateral cooperation does not reflect the full potential of the two countries.

The Iranian minister also pointed to Iran's strong capacity for exporting petrochemical products, training human resources, supplying natural gas, and developing the compressed natural gas (CNG) sector in Afghanistan.

Afghan Minister Hedayatullah Badri echoed the sentiment, highlighting the deep historical and cultural ties between the two nations. He stressed the importance of regional connectivity and trade, facilitated by the long shared border and strategic geographic location of both countries.

Badri noted that Afghanistan has five major sedimentary basins with oil and gas potential and is in need of exploratory operations in these regions. He expressed confidence in the expertise of Iranian knowledge-based companies to assist in the exploration, development, and production of new or untapped oil and gas fields in Afghanistan.



## China Slams New U.S. Chip Curbs as Bullying, Vows Response

BEIJING (Dispatches) – China Beijing condemned on Wednesday new US chip export controls as “bullying”, warning it would take steps against measures aimed at restricting

Chinese access to high-tech semiconductors and supply chains.

“The US measures are typical unilateral bullying and protectionism, which seriously undermine the stability of the global semiconductor industry chain and supply chain,”

Beijing’s commerce ministry said in a statement.



## Russia Releases Oil Tanker From Baltic Sea Detention



COPENHAGEN (Dispatches) - Russia has released a Greek-owned oil tanker which was detained in Russian waters on Sunday after leaving an Estonian port, and the vessel has resumed its journey towards the Dutch port of Rotterdam, Estonian public broadcaster ERR reported on Tuesday.

The detention of the vessel has increased concerns over potential escalation in busy Baltic sea lanes where major oil supplies pass through, after separate action by Estonia in recent days to stop tankers as part of enforcing Western sanctions on Russia.

“Expect heightened maritime security risks, particularly around vessels transporting oil from or to Baltic ports, including the increased likelihood of arbitrary detentions, military posturing, and freedom of navigation impediments,” UK maritime security company Ambrey said in a note on Tuesday.

The Liberia-flagged Green Admire appeared to be underway in the Baltic Sea on Tuesday with its destination listed as Rotterdam and was estimated to arrive there on May 24, according to ship tracking data on the MarineTraffic platform.

The vessel’s Athens-based manager Aegean Shipping did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Norway’s Skuld, one of the tanker’s insurers, declined to comment on Tuesday.

Green Admire has not yet registered with Rotterdam’s port authority centre but is expected to do so shortly, a port authority spokesperson said.

The vessel had left the Sillamae port in Estonia using a designated navigation channel that crosses Russian territorial waters after which it was detained, the Estonian Foreign Ministry said on Sunday.

## Japan Farm Minister Resigns Over Free Rice Gaffe



TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan’s farm minister resigned Wednesday after a gaffe about rice drew public fury in a country experiencing soaring prices of the cherished staple.

Taku Eto told a gathering over the weekend that he had “never bought rice myself because my supporters donate so much to me that I can practically sell it”.

This hit a nerve in Japan where shortages have sent the price of rice soaring. Last month prices were almost twice the level of April 2024.

Factors include poor harvests due to hot weather in 2023 and panic-buying prompted by a “megaquake” warning last year, as well as a tourism boom.

The government has been forced to release some of its emergency reserves of rice in an attempt to bring down prices -- so far with little success.

Eto’s comments were criticised as “extremely inappropriate, out of touch and intolerable” by Junya Ogawa, secretary-general of the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan.

Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, whose poor poll ratings are due in part to high food prices, chastised the minister, calling the remarks “extremely unfortunate”.

“The agriculture minister’s job now is to provide solutions to the soaring rice prices. I expect him to offer solutions,” Ishiba told journalists on Tuesday.

# Europe Warns Israel: Unblock Gaza Aid or Face Consequences

GAZA CITY (Dispatches) - European countries ramped up pressure on Israel to abandon its intensified campaign in Gaza and let more aid into the war-ravaged territory, where rescuers said fresh attacks killed dozens of people.

Israel said that 93 trucks had entered Gaza from Israel yesterday but the United Nations said the aid had been held up.

The UN announced Monday that it had been cleared to send in aid for the first time since Israel imposed a total blockade on March 2, sparking severe shortages of food and medicine.

The humanitarian crisis has prompted international anger, with the European Union saying it would review its trade cooperation deal with Israel over the blockade.

European Union foreign affairs chief Kaja Kallas said “a strong majority” of foreign ministers from the 27 member states backed the move, adding “the countries see that the situation in Gaza is untenable... and what we want is to unblock the humanitarian aid.”

Sweden said it would press the EU to level sanctions against Israeli ministers.

Britain suspended free-trade negotiations with Israel, summoned the Israeli ambassador and said it was imposing sanctions on settlers in the occupied West Bank in its toughest actions so far against Israel’s conduct of the war.

“Blocking aid, expanding the war, dismissing the concerns of your friends and partners. This is indefensible and it must stop,” Foreign Secretary David Lammy told the UK parliament.

Israel rejected the moves. The EU action “reflects a total misunderstanding of the complex reality Israel is facing,” Israeli foreign ministry spokesman Oren Marmorstein said.

Responding to Britain, Marmorstein said “external pressure will not divert Israel from its path in defending its existence and security.”

COGAT, the Israeli defence ministry body that oversees civil affairs in the Palestinian territories, said “93 UN trucks carrying humanitarian aid, including flour for bakeries, food for babies, medical equipment, and pharmaceutical drugs were transferred” to Gaza.

The spokesman for UN chief Antonio Guterres confirmed dozens of trucks were allowed in, but spoke of difficulties. “Today, one of our teams waited several hours for the Israeli green light to ... collect the nutrition supplies. Unfortunately, they were not able to bring those supplies into our warehouse,” Stephane Dujarric said.



What was their fault?” he told AFP.

In a statement yesterday, the military said it had carried out strikes on more than “100 terror targets” in Gaza over the past day.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared Monday that Israel would “take control of all the territory of the Strip” with its new campaign.

Israel resumed operations across Gaza on March 18, ending a two-month ceasefire amid deadlock over how to proceed.

Negotiators from Israel and Hamas began new indirect talks in Doha at the weekend, as the intensified campaign started.

UN humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher said that the nine trucks cleared to enter on Monday were “a drop in the ocean of what is urgently needed.”

He told the BBC yesterday that 14,000 babies could die in the next 48 hours if aid did not reach them in time.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told a Senate Foreign Relations Committee meeting that the supplies were “not in sufficient amounts” but added: “We anticipate that those flows will increase over the next few days and weeks. It’s important that that be achieved.”

The Israeli army stepped up its offensive at the weekend, vowing to defeat Gaza’s Hamas rulers, whose October 7, 2023 attack on Israel triggered the current war.

Strikes overnight and early yesterday left “44 dead, mostly children and women, as well as dozens of wounded,” civil defence spokesman Mahmud Bassal told AFP.

Bassal said 15 people were killed when a petrol station was hit near the Nuseirat refugee camp, and eight others died in a strike on a school sheltering displaced Palestinians in Gaza City.

The Israeli military told AFP it had “struck a Hamas terrorist who was operating from within a command and control centre” inside the school compound. There was no comment on the other incidents.

At the bombed petrol station, Mahmoud al-Louh carried a cloth bag of body parts to a vehicle.

“They are civilians, children who were sleeping.

# Trump Unveils \$175b Golden Dome Missile Shield Plan



Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth, speaking alongside Trump, said the system is aimed at protecting “the homeland from cruise missiles, ballistic missiles, hypersonic missiles, drones, whether they’re conventional or nuclear.”

The plan’s Golden Dome name stems from Israel’s Iron Dome air defence system that has intercepted thousands of short-range rockets and

other projectiles since it went into operation in 2011.

The United States faces various missile threats from adversaries, but they differ significantly from the short-range weapons that Israel’s Iron Dome is designed to counter.

The 2022 Missile Defence Review pointed to growing threats from Russia and China.

Beijing is closing the gap with Washington when it comes to ballistic and hypersonic missile technology, while Moscow is modernizing its intercontinental-range missile systems and developing advanced precision strike missiles, the document said.

It also said that the threat of drones — which have played a key role in the Ukraine war — is likely to grow, and warned of the danger of ballistic missiles from North Korea and Iran, as well as rocket and missile threats from non-state actors.

Russia and China earlier this month slammed the Golden Dome concept as “deeply destabilizing,” saying it risked turning space into a “battlefield.”

It “explicitly provides for a significant strengthening of the arsenal for conducting combat operations in space,” said a statement published by the Kremlin after talks between the two sides.

The United States has gained valuable real-world experience in defending against missiles and drones in recent years.

In Ukraine, US systems have been used to counter advanced Russian missiles, while American planes and warships helped defend Israel against Iranian attacks last year and have repeatedly shot down missiles and drones launched at ships by Yemen’s Tehran-backed Houthi rebels. —

# G7 Finance Chiefs Meet in Canada, Focus on Ukraine War, Trump Tariffs

OTTAWA (Dispatches) - Top finance leaders from the G7 group of nations gathered in Canada for talks beginning Tuesday, with the war in Ukraine and economic turmoil unleashed by US President Donald Trump’s tariffs at the top of minds.

In meetings through Thursday, leaders will discuss global economic conditions and seek a common position on Ukraine, whose representatives have been invited to attend.

Ukraine’s presence “sends a strong message to the world” that members are recommitting to support the country against Russia’s invasion, Canadian Finance Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne told reporters Tuesday.

“We’re also going to talk about what we’re going to be doing in terms of reconstruction,” he said in a joint press conference with Ukrainian counterpart Sergii Marchenko.

The talks in Canada’s western province of Alberta come amid an uncertain approach among the G7 democracies towards Ukraine following Trump’s return to power.

Once broadly unified, the G7 -- Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan



and the United States -- has been rattled by Trump, who reached out to Russia and slapped tariffs on both allies and competitors.

Marchenko said he would seek during the meetings to reiterate Ukraine’s position on the need for more pressure on Russia.

While Trump’s levies are not formally on the agenda, a Canadian official told reporters that “trade and tariffs will be embedded in the discussion on the global economy.”

Economists warn tariffs could fuel inflation and weigh on growth, and the effects of US trade policy loom over Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent’s engagements.

Asked about talks with Bessent, Champagne said Tuesday that despite tension around tariffs, both sides are looking to coordinate actions and tackle concerns including excess industrial capacity, non-market practices and financial crimes.

“The spirit around the table is constructive,” he said.

A source briefed on US participation expects China’s excess industrial capacity to be discussed, with members sharing concerns on the issue.

A Japanese official told AFP its finance minister plans for a meeting with Bessent, seeking to address topics like foreign exchange.



## De Bruyne Departs, Rodri Returns as Man City Close in on Champions League



MANCHESTER (Dispatches) - Manchester City gave Kevin De Bruyne a fond farewell in a vital 3-1 win over Bournemouth to boost their chances of Champions League football next season.

Goals from Omar Marmoush, Bernardo Silva and Nico Gonzalez lifted City up into third in the Premier League heading into Sunday's final round of matches.

Mateo Kovacic's red card 20 minutes from time could have given Bournemouth hope, but Lewis Cook was also sent off just minutes later for a lunge on Gonzalez.

There was further cause for celebration for City late on when Ballon d'Or winner Rodri made his first appearance since September as a substitute after suffering a serious knee injury.

City's victory means a point when they travel to Fulham on the final day will be enough to secure a top-five finish thanks to their much superior goal difference to that of sixth-placed Aston Villa.

Just three days on from the disappointment of losing the FA Cup final to Crystal Palace, City had to raise themselves on an emotional night at the Etihad in De Bruyne's final home match.

Earlier in the day City had unveiled a mosaic and named a road at the club's training ground after the Belgian.

De Bruyne, who won six Premier League titles and the Champions League during his decade in Manchester, was greeted by a huge banner reading "King Kev" as he led the teams out.

"I want to bring joy to people, play offensive football, be creative, that is what I am on the pitch and I want to have fun," said De Bruyne.

"I think we had a lot of fun over the 10 years."

Marmoush saw a penalty saved in City's defeat at Wembley on Saturday which ensured they will end the season without a major trophy for the first time since Pep Guardiola's debut season in 2016/17.

Missing out on the Champions League would arguably be an even bigger blow for a club who have not

failed to qualify for Europe's elite competition in 14 years.

Marmoush made amends for his Wembley woe in stunning fashion when he crashed home a long-range effort off the inside of the post on 14 minutes.

The moment an expectant crowd had been waiting for looked set to appear moments later when Marmoush squared to give his captain an open goal.

Yet, De Bruyne could only spoon the ball onto the crossbar from point-blank range much to his own disgust.

Guardiola's men did double their advantage before the break.

Ilkay Gundogan's clever reverse pass found Silva, who slammed home at the near post to spark jubilant celebrations from an animated Guardiola.

The City boss was furious when a slack pass from Josko Gvardiol played in Evanilson and he was brought down by Kovacic, denying a clear goalscoring opportunity.

The red card hastened De Bruyne's goodbye as he was replaced by Gonzalez to a standing ovation.

"We got to remember how nice have been these 10 years," said Guardiola. "He got a lot of love from all the people who love this club."

The numbers were evened up just six minutes later as Cook caught Gonzalez on the shin with his studs.

The cheer for Rodri's return came close to matching De Bruyne's departure.

The loss of the Spanish midfielder has played a huge part in City's decline this season.

Gonzalez was bought in January to mitigate Rodri's absence but has struggled to hold down a place in Guardiola's side.

The Spaniard curled in his first Premier League goal with a fine finish on 89 minutes before Daniel Jebbison pulled a goal back deep into stoppage time.

## Gilgeous-Alexander, Thunder Rout Wolves in Opener

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Shai Gilgeous-Alexander overcame a slow start to score 31 points to lead the Oklahoma City Thunder to a 114-88 home win over the Minnesota Timberwolves in Game 1 of the Western Conference finals on Tuesday.

It was Gilgeous-Alexander's fourth consecutive game with 30 or more points and his eighth in 12 playoff games this season. He added a game-high nine assists.

With seven minutes left in the fourth quarter, Gilgeous-Alexander drove toward the basket and began falling, flipping the ball toward the bucket as he went down.

The ball rolled around the rim briefly before dropping through, and Jaden McDaniels was called for the foul.

Gilgeous-Alexander finished off the three-point play to put the Thunder up by 14. He finished 10 of 27 from the floor and 0 of 4 from 3-point range, but he made 11 of 14 from the free-throw line.

Early on, the Timberwolves' defense gave Gilgeous-Alexander fits, holding him to just 2-of-13 shooting in the first half.

Oklahoma City trailed by nine with a little more than a minute remaining in the first half before the Thunder closed on a 6-1 run to



cut the deficit to four.

In the second half, Thunder coach Mark Daigneault moved Gilgeous-Alexander off the ball, and it helped the likely Most Valuable Player find a rhythm.

Gilgeous-Alexander scored 12 points in the third quarter as Oklahoma City outscored Minnesota 32-18.

While Gilgeous-Alexander turned up the pressure on offense, it was the Thunder's defense that played the biggest role in the victory.

Overall, Oklahoma City scored 31 points on 19 Timberwolves' turnovers. Minnesota managed only 10 points off the Thunder's 15 giveaways.

Oklahoma City's Jalen Williams produced 19 points and eight rebounds, while Chet Holmgren added 15 points and seven boards.

The Thunder shot 50 percent from the field and 11 of 21 (52.4 percent) from beyond the arc while holding Minnesota to just 34.9 percent from the floor and 15 of 51 (29.4 percent) from 3-point range.

Julius Randle led Minnesota with 28 points, scoring 20 in the first half. After going 5-for-6 in the first half on 3-point tries, Randle didn't attempt a shot from beyond the arc in the second half.

Timberwolves star Anthony Edwards wound up with 18 points and nine rebounds. He attempted just one shot, a miss, while playing seven minutes in the fourth quarter.

## Alcaraz Wary of Sharper Sinner at French Open



PARIS (Dispatches) - Carlos Alcaraz arrives at Roland Garros brimming with confidence after taking down chief rival Jannik Sinner in Rome, but the defending champion expects the Italian to be an even tougher proposition after shaking off the rust following his doping ban.

Alcaraz and Sinner will be on opposite sides of the draw as the Spaniard returned to the second in the world this week following his Italian Open triumph, potentially setting the stage for another blockbuster final between the game's two rising superstars.

The 22-year-old Alcaraz has won 15 of 16 matches on clay this season, triumphing at Monte Carlo and reaching the Barcelona final before going all the way in Rome after missing the Madrid Open with a thigh injury.

He has also had Sinner's number of late, winning their last four meetings to take a 7-4 head-to-head advantage, a record that includes Alcaraz's five-set win in last year's French Open semi-final. His success on Sunday ended Sinner's run of 26 successive victories.

Four-time Grand Slam champion Alcaraz believes the challenge of playing Sinner brings the best out of him.

"He's the best player in the world. It doesn't matter that he was out of the tour for three months. Every tournament he's playing, he plays great. The numbers are there. He wins almost every match he plays," said Alcaraz.

"If I don't play at my best, 10 out of 10, it's going to be impossible to beat him. That's why I'm more focused when I'm playing against him, or I feel a little bit different when I'm going to face him than other players.

"He has that aura. When you're seeing him on the other side of the net, it's different.

"I'm not going to say I'm feeling like when Rafa (Nadal) and Roger (Federer) are playing, but I'm feeling like it's a different energy when we are facing against each other."

Sinner suffered his first straight-sets loss in 18 months in Rome, underlining his dominance in that time. Equally as impressive though was his run to the final in his first tournament since he retained the Australian Open title in January.

## Shipley Grateful for Unique Exemption Into Charles Schwab Challenge



LONDON (Dispatches) - Colonial Country Club has a special tradition regarding its annual PGA Tour stop, known these days as the Charles Schwab Challenge.

It's called the Champions' Choice: Past tournament champions select two players for a special invitation into the field each year. This week, the Champions' Choices were Neal Shipley and Blades Brown.

Brown is the 17-year-old who turned pro over the winter, and the good-natured Shipley captured golf fans' imagination in 2024 by finishing as the low amateur at both the Masters and the U.S. Open before he turned pro.

"It's been massive knowing that I can compete at those biggest stages so when I come out here, I know that I can beat most of the guys out here," Shipley told reporters Tuesday. "I think that's something that a lot of young pros don't get out of college, so really grateful for those two experiences."

After being featured on the Netflix docuseries "Full Swing," as well, Shipley is chipping away at his professional dreams and is grateful for the opportunity in Fort Worth, Texas.

"I'm really honored that some of my peers chose to give me that exemption and really excited to have a great week," he said. "The golf course is in phenomenal shape, and the membership here at Colonial has just done an awesome job welcoming us to their course."

Shipley is getting just his second PGA Tour start of the season as he works toward earning his card via the Korn Ferry Tour. He made the cut and tied for 47th at the Valspar Championship in March.

In the time since, Shipley notched his first professional title by winning a playoff at the LECOM Suncoast Classic on the Korn Ferry Tour in April.

## ATP roundup: One-sided matches in rainy Geneva

LONDON (Dispatches) - No. 6 seed Hubert Hurkacz of Poland hit 17 winners and saved 3 of 4 break points in a 6-3, 6-4 victory over French wild card Arthur Cazaux on a weather-interrupted Tuesday at the Gonet Geneva Open in Switzerland.

Only three Round of 32 matches were completed due to rain delays, with some fixtures being pushed to Wednesday.

Frenchman Arthur Rinderknech hit four aces and never faced break point in beating Serbia's Miomir Kecmanovic 6-4, 6-2 in 73 minutes. In an even more lopsided affair, Hungary's Fabian Marozsan needed about 46 minutes to finish off Brazilian qualifier Karue Sell 6-1, 6-1, as he enjoyed a 20-4 advantage in winners.

No. 2 seed Frances Tiafoe rang up a 7-5, 6-2 victory over China's Yunchaokete Bu in their opening-round match in



Germany.

Tiafoe won 26 of his 33 first-service points (78.8 percent). He will be joined in the second round by No. 5 seed Alejandro Davidovich Fokina of Spain and No. 6 seed Felix Auger-Aliassime of Canada, who each won 6-3, 6-3 over France's Gael Monfils and Germany's Daniel Altmaier, respectively.

The lone upset of the day saw Camilo Ugo Carabelli top eighth seed and fellow Argentine Sebastian Baez 6-3, 2-6, 6-4. Also advancing were Italian Flavio Cobolli, Argentina's Tomas Martin Etcheverry and Frenchman Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard.

Meanwhile Fourth-seeded Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan cruised into the quarterfinals with a 6-1, 6-3 win Tuesday over China's Xinyu Wang at the Internationaux de Strasbourg in France.