

Iraqi Foreign Ministry's Website in a Statement Dismissed Claims That Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein Conveyed a Message From U.S. President Donald Trump to Iran and Labeled Such Claims as False and an Example of Unprofessional Conduct by Media Outlets

# IRAN NEWS

The Iranian Navy Has Firmly Denied Reports That a Panama-Flagged Oil Tanker Belonging to the United Arab Emirates Was Hijacked near Iran's Jask Port and Dismissed Any Connection to the Islamic Republic

VOL. XXIX, No. 8274 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

SUNDAY MAY 25, 2025 KHORDAD 04, 1404

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DOMESTIC



## Iran Faces Potential 50-Million Population Drop by 2101

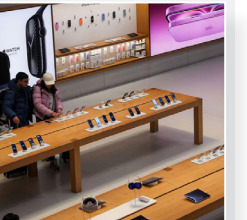
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INTERNATIONAL

## Trump Threatens New Tariffs on EU, Apple

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## IRGC Warns of Forceful Response to Any Hostile Acts by Enemies



TEHRAN - In a strongly worded statement issued on the anniversary of the liberation of Khorramshahr, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) declared its readiness to deliver a decisive and "unimaginable" response to any hostile action taken by adversaries.

Commemorating May 24 (3 Khordad), marked as the Day of Resistance, Sacrifice, and Victory in Iran, the IRGC called the liberation of Khorramshahr a symbol of divine will, the power of the Iranian people, and the unity of Iran's armed forces in the face of the invading Ba'athist regime during the early years of the Islamic Revolution.

"The liberation of Khorramshahr was more than a military victory; it was the emergence of a new identity and power," the statement read. "It was the triumph of a faithful and revolutionary nation against Saddam's war machine and its regional and international backers."

The IRGC emphasized the importance of the operation's codename, Beit al-Moqaddas (Jerusalem), saying it was a deliberate reflection of the martyrs' aspirations to liberate Palestine. The statement added that it would not be long before young fighters in the resistance axis fulfill the dream of liberating Jerusalem and continue their struggle against the "Zionist terrorist regime."

The statement called the remembrance of the 1982 liberation of Khorramshahr a beacon for future generations, reinforcing the values of resistance in the face of global aggression and injustice. It urged Iranian youth to emulate the courage of past commanders in today's "hybrid warfare," claiming that the same spirit can defeat enemies and reshape strategic calculations in Iran's favor.

## Liberation of Khorramshahr Is a Symbol of National Unity and Resistance



TEHRAN – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaff described the liberation of Khorramshahr as a powerful symbol of national unity and resistance. Speaking on Friday night at a ceremony commemorating the anniversary of the city's liberation, held at Khorramshahr's Grand Mosque, Qalibaf praised the city's historical role during the Iran-Iraq War.

"Khorramshahr represents resistance and marks a turning point in the history of the Islamic Revolution," he said. "It proves that when we stand by the principles of faith and unity, victory is possible even under the toughest circumstances."

Reflecting on the early days of the Iran-Iraq War, Qalibaf noted that although he was not present on the frontlines during the first 45 days of the conflict, he witnessed the resilience of the people during the occupation of Khorramshahr. "Despite lacking weapons and resources under then-President Bani-Sadr, the people showed extraordinary unity and resistance," he said. "Within 40 days, the siege of Abadan was broken, followed by the liberation of Khorramshahr."

Qalibaf emphasized the importance of maintaining a "jihadist spirit" and said that today's hardships stem from distancing from the people and divine values. "We need rationality, creativity, planning, national unity, and jihadist action to face today's challenges, just as we did during the war."

He also highlighted the importance of accountability to the public, stating that "the martyrs and our history have taught us this responsibility." He added that the government's upcoming 7th Five-Year Development Plan would give special attention to Khorramshahr and Abadan.

# Over 59,000 Infrastructure Projects Inaugurated in Iran with President's Presence



TEHRAN - In a major national development initiative coinciding with the anniversary of the liberation of Khorramshahr on May 24, a total of 59,264 infrastructure projects in the sectors of housing, urban development, transportation, and meteorology were officially inaugurated across Iran with the presence of President Masoud Pezeshkian.

According to the Presidential Office's official website, these projects represent a combined domestic investment of over 940 trillion rials (94 hems) along with foreign investments amounting to \$119 million and €39 million.

Among the key accomplishments: 43,521 housing units were launched, including 14,521 urban and 29,000 rural homes; 11,500 land plots were allocated under the Youth Population Growth Initiative; Four urban regeneration projects were initiated; and these housing and urban development ventures alone accounted for more than 370 trillion rials in investment;

Additionally: 4,219 transportation projects, valued at 580 trillion rials, received domestic and foreign funding; 20 meteorological projects, worth 8.55 trillion rials, were also launched; and 16,200 hectares of land were secured for urban housing expansion;

Other major highlights from the inauguration ceremony include: Commissioning of two search and rescue vessels in Khorramshahr and Abadan; Opening of a 29-kilometer railway line in Kashmar; Launch of an air taxi service between Karaj and Qazvin, using three MSSR aircraft; Activation of six meteorological stations, two climate monitoring stations, and four rain gauge stations; Addition of two Airbus A330-200 aircraft (528 seats total) to

Iran's civil aviation fleet; Completion of 50 kilometers of rural roads; Unveiling of Iran's first domestically produced S-MODE MSSR radar system; Opening of the first segment of the northern Arak bypass highway; and Deployment of the national integrated urban and regional development system and its corresponding management dashboard.

These developments mark a significant investment in Iran's infrastructure, with aims to boost economic resilience, improve living conditions, and enhance transportation and meteorological services nationwide.

Meanwhile in the ceremony, Pezeshkian expressed his gratitude for the efforts and dedication of the Minister of Roads and Urban Development, as well as all the officials and staff involved in bringing various infrastructure projects to the operational stage.

He also extended his appreciation to the head and officials of the Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs for handing over 288 newly constructed housing units to the families of veterans during today's event.

Pezeshkian emphasized the significance of the occasion, which coincided with the anniversary of the liberation of Khorramshahr, and stated:

"It is fitting on a day like this to sincerely honor all the sacrifices and acts of valor of our martyrs, war veterans, and their families. We are indebted to our veterans and must intensify our efforts to serve them even more."

# U.S. Gains Better Understanding of Tehran's Nuclear Position



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi hails "one of the most professional" rounds of talks with the United States, saying Tehran will continue to hold its ground and insist on its "completely clear" positions.

Araqchi made the remarks following the end of the fifth round of indirect talks between Tehran and Washington which lasted for more than three hours in the Italian capital Rome on Friday. The talks are mediated by Omani Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi.

"This round was one of the most professional rounds of negotiations we have ever had. We once again announced the positions and principles of the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding the negotiations. Our positions are completely clear, and we stand firm on them," the top Iranian negotiator said.

Araqchi said the American side has "now a better, clearer and more precise understanding of our positions."

Before his departure to Rome, Araqchi reiterated Iran's resolve to continue its uranium enrichment program and stressed that there will be no deal if the US insists on an excessive demand to slash Iran's legitimate right to enrichment to zero.

"Figuring out the path to a deal is not rocket science: Zero nuclear weapons = we DO have a deal. Zero enrichment = we do NOT have a deal," Araqchi wrote on X.

After the fifth round, he said both sides agreed to transfer proposals and ideas exchanged during the talks to their capitals for more discussions.

The Iranian foreign minister said his Omani counterpart, as the mediator, also worked for solutions to overcome existing obstacles and achieve progress.

hopeless," Araqchi said.

There is the possibility of making progress given the solutions proposed by Oman, he added. Just like the previous rounds, the Iranian foreign minister and US President Donald Trump's regional envoy Steve Witkoff led the negotiating delegations in the talks in Rome.

Since April, Tehran and Washington have held four rounds of indirect negotiations in Rome and Muscat over Iran's nuclear program amid repeated shifts in US stances, which have prompted Iranian officials to criticize the "contradictory" statements made by their Americans counterparts.

He said Iran plans to examine these new solutions and proposals that can potentially be helpful while maintaining its principles and positions.

"The two sides are expected to present their views on these proposals and solutions, and then the next round of negotiations will be organized," he added.

Araqchi expressed hope that the sides would engage in more detailed talks in the next round if the solutions are considered in the capitals.

"Therefore, it can be said that the case of indirect negotiations remains open and the negotiations will continue."

He said the negotiations are "more complicated" than can be settled in two or three sessions, "but the fact that we are currently on a reasonable path is considered an achievement."

The Iranian foreign minister hoped that the sides would achieve solutions that would lead to progress during the next sessions given the better understanding about Tehran's positions.

"We are not at that stage yet, but we are also not

## Two-State Solution an Unrealizable Promise Used Towards Violation of Palestinians' Rights



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has reiterated Iran's rejection of the so-called "two-state solution" as a supposed means of resolution of the Palestinians' plight, noting that the idea has only served to deepen the injustices faced by the already heavily-oppressed people.

The top diplomat made the remarks in Vatican City on Friday, meeting with the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Vatican, Cardinal Pietro Parolin.

Despite being initially put forward as a purported resolution, the "solution" has, over several decades, proven to be an "unachievable promise" that has only resulted in the "increasing violation" of Palestinian rights, Araqchi said.

"Meanwhile, the Israeli regime is continuing its efforts to erase Palestine through colonial tactics," he added.

The solution proposed by the Islamic Republic rather comprises establishment of a single democratic state across all of Palestine through holding a referendum with the participation of all original inhabitants of Palestine, including Muslims, Jews, and Christians, the foreign minister noted.

The official was echoing contents of a proposal devised by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

In his remarks, the foreign minister also highlighted the disastrous situation across the Palestinian territories, particularly in the Gaza Strip, where the Israeli regime has been staging a genocidal war and a simultaneous near-total siege since October 2023.

He stressed that the international community had both a legal and moral responsibility to act towards cessation of the atrocities.

"All countries and individuals must condemn the crimes in Gaza and take immediate action to halt these atrocities," he said, calling for direly-needed humanitarian aid to be urgently sent into the coastal sliver.

Araqchi, who has traveled to Rome to participate in the fifth round of indirect talks between Iran and the United States, meanwhile, took the opportunity to brief senior Vatican officials on the Islamic Republic's position regarding the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

## Israel Kills Over 75 Gazans Since Friday



GAZA CITY (Dispatches) - The Israeli military renews deadly strikes on Gaza residential areas, killing at least 76 since Friday, with casualties continuing to rise amid the genocidal war.

At least eight people have been confirmed dead after Israeli military attacks since midnight local time.

An Israeli strike hit a residential building in Khan Yunis, killing at least four and injuring dozens, according to local media reports.

Meanwhile, a separate attack on a home in Nuseirat camp in central Gaza left two dead and several injured.

Alaa Al-Najjar, a physician at Nasser Hospital, lost nine of her children in the Israeli forces' brutal attack on Khan Yunis.

The assault destroyed the Al-Najjar family home and triggered widespread fires across the neighborhood.

Civil defense crews recovered all nine bodies from the rubble, with eight remains severely dismembered by the force of the attack.

Al-Najjar received the news while treating children at Nasser Hospital's pediatric ward. Her killed children ranged from 2 to 16 years old, and her husband was among the wounded.

Gaza's health ministry reported at least 76 Palestinians killed in Israeli attacks on Friday alone.

The strikes that lasted into Friday morning came a day after Israeli tanks and drones attacked a hospital in northern Gaza, igniting fires and causing extensive damage, Palestinian hospital officials said on Thursday.

Israel is drawing increasing global condemnation over its genocide, with growing demands to lift aid restrictions as Gaza's humanitarian situation reaches catastrophic levels.



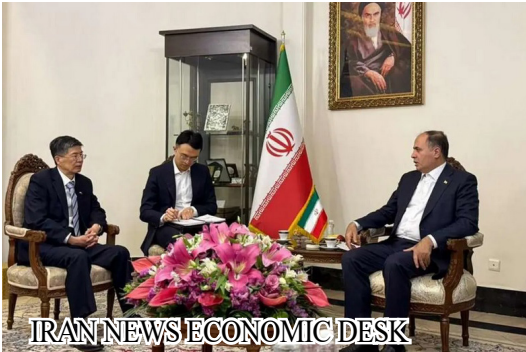


## FM Spokesperson Praises Heroic Liberation of Khorramshahr in 1982

TEHRAN (IRNA) - In a post on X, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmacel Baqaei said that the heroic liberation of Khorramshahr, located in Khuzestan Province, southwestern Iran, in 1982, symbolizes the belief that love for one's homeland is integral to the faith, and serves as a guiding light for the Iranian people toward dignity, independence, and progress.

Referencing the late Imam Khomeini's famous statement, "God liberated Khorramshahr," Baqaei said that May 24 marks one of the brightest chapters in Iran's contemporary history, which is the day when Khorramshahr was reclaimed through heroic resistance and determination of the Iranian nation.

## Iran and China Expand Agricultural Cooperation



TEHRAN - Iran and China are set to deepen their cooperation in the agricultural sector, focusing on the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and technology. According to a report from the Iranian Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, Iranian Minister of Agriculture Jihad, Gholamreza Nouri, met with Zhong Peiwu, the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Tehran. During the meeting, Nouri emphasized the importance of strengthening bilateral relations in agriculture, particularly in the areas of knowledge transfer and technological collaboration. Nouri highlighted that both countries possess valuable experience across various sub-sectors of agriculture and can benefit mutually through sharing these insights. He also underlined Iran's active participation in the agricultural programs of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and expressed Iran's readiness to contribute to the successful organization of the upcoming SCO Agriculture Ministers' Summit, scheduled to be held in Beijing in August. Additionally, Nouri extended an invitation to the Chinese Minister of Agriculture to visit Tehran and attend the third meeting of the Iran-China Joint Agricultural Cooperation Committee. Chinese Ambassador Zhong Peiwu remarked that agricultural relations between Iran and China are at a promising level. He noted that China is currently one of the main destinations for Iranian agricultural exports. Zhong also reaffirmed China's willingness to broaden the scope of technical and economic cooperation with Iran across various agricultural fields.

## Tourism Revival Hinges on Active Diplomacy, Strategic Attraction of Foreign Tourists



TEHRAN - Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Seyyed Reza Salehi Amiri, has emphasized that the future of the country's tourism industry depends on proactive international engagement and the strategic attraction of foreign tourists. Speaking during a meeting with the national association of professional hoteliers, the minister underscored that only through smart international outreach can the Iranian tourism sector achieve stability and growth. According to the Ministry's Public Relations Office, the meeting was held at the Ministry's Fajr Hall, during which Salehi Amiri called for a complete redefinition of the country's national tourism strategy. "I firmly believe the only path to revival and prosperity for Iranian tourism is through focused efforts to attract foreign tourists," he said. "For this reason, active tourism diplomacy has become a top priority for the Ministry, and we have already started working seriously to remove obstacles hindering tourist entry into Iran." The minister also outlined a new roadmap that prioritizes target destinations. Central Asian countries, the Caucasus, and Iran's neighboring states are listed as top priorities, followed by Gulf Cooperation Council nations and populous Muslim-majority countries. He clarified that this prioritization is not to the exclusion of other countries but aims to optimize resource allocation and maximize impact. Highlighting the positive outcomes of recent diplomatic trips, especially to Asian nations and Egypt, Salehi Amiri noted, "In-depth discussions during these visits signal the beginning of a new chapter in Iran's regional tourism relations—particularly with Egypt, where promising opportunities for cooperation are emerging." Presenting recent data, the minister announced that more than 7.3 million foreign tourists entered Iran in the past year, citing reports from the national law enforcement authority. He interpreted this as a sign that Iran is returning to the global tourism map. Salehi Amiri reaffirmed that the Ministry will not take on direct responsibility for tourism project implementation. Instead, it will focus on facilitation, support, and oversight, especially by enhancing infrastructure and unconditionally supporting private sector initiatives.

# Iran Faces Potential 50-Million Population Drop by 2101

TEHRAN - Iran could see its population plummet by more than 50 million by the year 2101 (1480 in the Iranian calendar) if current fertility trends continue, according to a top official at the National Population Headquarters. Speaking at a population-focused panel discussion held on Iran's National Population Day, Mahtab Razi, Secretary of the National Population Headquarters and advisor to the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, raised alarm over the country's declining birthrate and the long-term demographic risks it poses. "If the current fertility trend persists, some of our neighboring countries could surpass 450 million people by 2101, while Iran's population may shrink to just 35 million," Razi warned. Iran's current population stands at over 86 million, according to the National Statistics Portal. Razi explained that Iran's demographic challenge is deeply linked to cultural and societal changes, particularly shifts in family dynamics, women's roles, and youth priorities. "Today's young women prioritize education, employment, social standing, and financial independence—unlike the generations of the 1970s and 1980s, where marriage and motherhood were top goals," she said. "Motherhood is no longer viewed as a central life objective for many."

She added that the traditional concept of the family has evolved significantly and has, in many cases, become an individualized unit rather than a societal institution. This evolution, she argued, has affected reproductive decisions across the country. Razi emphasized that childbearing must be seen as a personal and family decision, not a governmental directive. "Unfortunately, current population policies have created the false perception that the government is ordering people to have children or will take full responsibility for raising them," she said. "This erodes individual and familial responsibility." She urged a reframing of public perception, noting that childbearing should be viewed through the lens of generational continuity and social vitality, not as a bureaucratic obligation. Razi revealed that recent surveys show 52% of people of reproductive age have no desire to have children, while only 40% are open to it—many of them students. Despite this, current laws focus almost exclusively on supporting families with a third child or more. "That's a major flaw," Razi noted, "since most families are debating whether to even have a first or second child." She called for greater support for student



marriages and housing for married university students, which are currently lacking. She criticized policy incentives such as offering land or cars for third or fourth children while 30% of Iranian families only have one child and 25% are still on their first. Razi also reported that over 40,000 childbearing loan applications remain unresolved due to difficult requirements like needing official guarantors or wage deductions—leaving many families feeling deceived. The official pointed out that at least 15 existing laws contradict the "Youthful Population and Family Support Law"—including those governing military service, academic hiring, medical residencies, and insurance regulations.

"For example, a woman is told to have more children but only has until age 45 to be hired as a faculty member—forcing her to choose between career and family," she said. "There's a deep disconnect between legal frameworks and real-life conditions." Razi warned that without coordinated and data-driven policymaking, current efforts risk not only failure but also further eroding public trust. Citing Uzbekistan as a successful model, Razi explained how that country boosted fertility from negative rates to 3.2 over three decades—without enacting a single new population law. "Their success came from addressing people's real needs—especially job security," she said, adding that Iran's youth are similarly anxious about employment stability. Uzbekistan also banned the construction of small homes under 60–70 square meters, instead mandating two-bedroom homes to support family life. The country also provided meaningful support for working mothers, including on-site childcare and targeted maternity leave policies. Razi concluded the session by stressing that Iran's population issue is a strategic national priority that requires both legislation and grassroots engagement. She criticized the lack of coordination between institutions. "We have the resources, but not the synergy. Empty government halls, unused urban spaces, and idle funds could all be repurposed to facilitate marriage and family life," she said. "But instead, each institution works in isolation, leading to inefficiency and public frustration." She urged a comprehensive overhaul of population policies, rooted in real-world needs and societal values, to help Iran avert a demographic crisis that could severely affect its economy, cultural continuity, and national security in the decades ahead.

# Iran's Overseas Mining Project in Guinea Faces Uncertain Future

TEHRAN - A senior official from Iran's Chamber of Commerce has expressed serious concerns about the stalled and increasingly uncertain fate of Iran's overseas mining project in Guinea, calling for a redirection of investment efforts toward domestic resources instead. This comes at a time when neighboring Saudi Arabia is making bold strides to become the regional hub for mining. In an interview with ILNA, Bahram Shakouri, head of the Mining and Mineral Industries Commission at the Iran Chamber of Commerce, emphasized that Iran lacks a coherent national strategy for overseas mining ventures. "The government hasn't even managed domestic mining effectively, so how can we expect it to succeed abroad?" he said. According to Shakouri, several overseas mines previously acquired by Iran have become inactive, including a major bauxite mine in Guinea, which was purchased in the early years following the Islamic Revolution. Production at that site has steadily declined, and Shakouri fears Iran may soon lose control over the mine altogether. "The government hasn't engaged in any new overseas mining projects. While the private sector has made some attempts, particularly in countries like Afghanistan, Turkey, Kazakhstan, various African nations, and Latin American countries like Venezuela and Bolivia, these efforts have not been part of a larger coordinated strategy," he added. Shakouri was blunt in his assessment of the government's financial capabilities. "The government doesn't even have the funds to provide consistent gas and electricity for local industries, so it certainly shouldn't be involved in overseas mining," he stated. He argued that rather than risking resources abroad, Iran



should focus on its untapped domestic mineral wealth. "There's immense potential here that remains unexplored. If we invest wisely within our borders, the returns could be far more beneficial," he said. However, attracting investment to Iran's mining sector has proven increasingly difficult. Shakouri cited a range of obstacles, from unreliable access to fuel and electricity to steep increases in taxes and royalties. Additionally, he criticized excessive regulatory restrictions from agencies such as the Department of Environment and the Natural Resources Administration, which he says exceed those in many other countries — even advanced industrial nations. In a stark comparison, Shakouri pointed to Saudi Arabia's rapid advancement in the mining industry. Once not seen as a mining player, the kingdom has now estimated its mineral reserves at \$1.3 trillion and aims to grow this figure to \$3 trillion as part of its strategic vision. "Saudi Arabia has clearly outpaced us. Their progress has been so significant that I doubt we can catch up in the short term," he warned. The remarks serve as a wake-up call for Iran's policymakers and industry leaders. Without substantial reform and investment in domestic infrastructure and regulatory systems, the country risks falling further behind in a global industry that is becoming increasingly competitive. As Saudi Arabia positions itself as the mining hub of the Middle East, Iran faces the dual challenge of reviving its neglected overseas ventures and overcoming a host of internal hurdles that continue to deter potential investors.

## Iran's Exports to South Korea Plummet by 84% in Early 2025



TEHRAN - Iran's non-oil exports to South Korea have dropped sharply by 84% in the first four months of 2025, according to a new report released by the Iran-South Korea Joint Chamber of Commerce. The report cites official data from the Korea International Trade Association (KITA), which shows that South Korea imported only \$505,000 worth of goods from Iran during this period. In contrast, South Korea's exports to Iran reached nearly \$55.7 million. This sharp downturn follows a significant upswing in trade during 2024. Last year, Iran's non-oil exports to South Korea saw a dramatic 180% increase compared to 2023, totaling \$8.6 million. The surge was largely driven by shipments of copper concentrate, polyethylene, dried fruits, and saffron—strategic commodities, with copper concentrate alone accounting for over 90% of Iran's total exports to South Korea. Despite the growth in 2024, the latest figures reflect a severe reversal. Notably, South Korean imports from Iran in February 2024 stood at \$426,000, down from \$757,000 in January of the same year, indicating a downward trend even before the current year began. South Korea's exports to Iran also declined by 11% in 2024, amounting to \$142.6 million. The report attributes the contraction to multiple factors, including international sanctions, banking restrictions, Iran's domestic economic conditions, and a strategic shift in South Korea's export markets. The report underscores the growing challenges in bilateral trade and highlights the impact of geopolitical and economic pressures on the trading relationship between the two countries.

## 13% Growth in Value of Iran's Iron and Steel Exports in April



TEHRAN - The Iranian Steel Producers Association has released export statistics for the first month of the Iranian year 1404 (March 20–April 19, 2025), showing a 13% increase—equivalent to \$38 million—in the value of the country's iron and steel exports compared to the same period last year. According to the report, the volume of Iran's iron and steel exports rose by 26%, totaling 173,000 tons. Notably, hot-rolled and cold-rolled steel sheets recorded export value growths of 43% and an extraordinary 727%, respectively, compared to the same month last year. Exports of angle irons, channels, and other sections reached 176,000 tons, marking a 72% increase in export value. In the intermediate steel segment, billet, bloom, and slab exports saw value increases of 8% and 855%, respectively. The combined export volume for billet and bloom was reported at 398,000 tons. Overall, total steel exports reached 515,000 tons in April—up 50% in volume and 34% in value compared to the same period in the previous year. The highest share of exports across the entire iron and steel chain was attributed to iron ore concentrate, with 1.176 million tons exported—a 145% surge in volume. The export value of iron ore concentrate rose by 153% year-on-year to \$92 million. The report highlights significant growth in iron ore concentrate and slab exports. However, the sharp rise in slab exports may not be sustainable. In contrast, continued surges in iron ore concentrate exports could raise concerns about raw material shortages for domestic steelmakers. The report also notes a 22% decline in rebar export volume. Rebar accounts for more than 87% of long steel product exports, making the drop particularly notable.



## India, Pakistan Extend Airspace Bans After Kashmir Violence

KARACHI (Dispatches) - Pakistan and India's aviation authorities said they would extend an airspace ban on each other's airlines, after the worst violence between the nuclear-armed rivals in decades.

It comes a month after the deadly April 22 attack on Indian tourists in Kashmir, which sparked a four-day military conflict between India and Pakistan.

More than 70 people were killed in missile, drone and artillery fire until a ceasefire was announced on May 10. Pakistan had closed its airspace to Indian aircraft on April 24, while India took a similar measure days later, with the ban to last until May 23.



## Erdoğan Declares Next Decade National Era to Boost Family, Birth Rates



ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan attended the International Family Forum and announced during the keynote closing session speech that Türkiye will designate the years 2026 to 2035 as the "Decade of Family and Population."

The announcement marks a major policy initiative aimed at reversing declining fertility rates and reinforcing the country's family-centered social structure.

Expressing deep concern over Türkiye's declining fertility rate, which has fallen to 1.48 children per woman for the first time in the nation's history, President Erdoğan described the situation as a "disaster," highlighting that this figure is well below the critical replacement threshold of 2.1.

"This is not just a statistic," he warned, "but a warning signal for our nation's future."

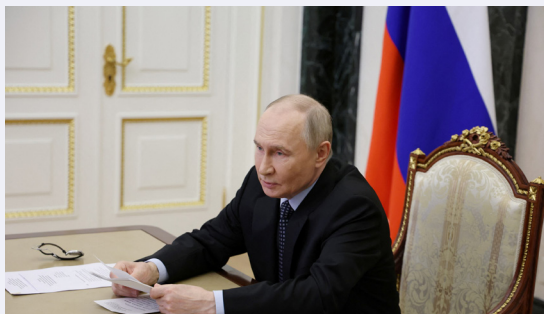
He also provided an update on the Family and Youth Fund, a government initiative to empower newlyweds.

"So far, approximately 114,000 applicants have sought support through the fund, and the number of eligible couples has reached 41,000," he noted, underscoring the program's growing impact.

Turning to global cultural trends, Erdoğan criticized what he sees as the erosion of traditional family structures, warning that as the institution of the family weakens worldwide, individuals are increasingly reduced to mere objects of consumerism under the sway of popular culture. "No matter where in the world, when the family loses altitude, humanity itself becomes commodified," he stated.

He was particularly vocal in condemning what he termed "LGBT deviance," framing the opposition to such movements as not merely a cultural stance but a broader moral and existential fight. "The struggle against LGBT deviance is, at its core, a struggle for freedom, for dignity and the very future of humanity," he declared.

## Putin Wants Boost to Russian Arms Exports



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - President Vladimir Putin said on Friday that Russia needs to strengthen its position in the global arms market by increasing exports of weapons.

In televised remarks, he also said the country's military complex needs more state support to develop its potential.

Since Moscow sent thousands of troops into Ukraine in February 2022, the defence industry has been largely focused on domestic military production to support operations there.

It has entailed a massive effort to build new missiles, drones and shells as well as recondition ageing Soviet-era tanks, vehicles and artillery.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Russian arms exports dropped to 7.8% of the global market in the 2020-24 period, compared with 21% in the previous four-year period, as a result of international sanctions over the conflict in Ukraine and increased domestic demand for weapons.

India, China and Egypt are among the biggest buyers of Russian arms.

"The portfolio of orders for Russian military products is now serious. It is tens of billions of dollars. And it is necessary to actively increase the volume of export deliveries," Putin said.

He also singled out weapons that utilise Artificial Intelligence (AI).

# Trump Threatens New Tariffs on EU, Apple

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - U.S. President Donald Trump threatened on Friday to ratchet up his trade war again, pushing for a 50% tariff on European Union goods starting June 1 and warning Apple he may slap a 25% levy on all imported iPhones bought by U.S. consumers.

The twin threats, delivered via social media, roiled global markets after weeks of de-escalation had provided some reprieve in the tariff battle. Major U.S. stock indexes and European shares fell and the dollar weakened, while the price of gold, a safe-haven for investors, rose. U.S. Treasury yields fell on fears about tariffs' effect on economic growth.

Trump's broadside against the EU was prompted by the White House's belief that negotiations with the bloc are not progressing fast enough. His saber-rattling also marked a return to Washington's stop-and-start trade war that has shaken markets, businesses and consumers and raised fears of a global economic downturn.

And the president's attack on Apple is his latest attempt to pressure a specific company to move production to the United States, following automakers, pharmaceutical companies and chipmakers. The United States, however, does not mass-produce smartphones - even as U.S. consumers buy more than 60 million phones annually - and moving production would likely increase the cost of iPhones by hundreds of dollars.

Later on Friday, Trump told reporters inside the Oval Office that his proposed tariff on Apple would also apply to "Samsung and anybody that makes that product," apparently referring to smartphones. He said he expected the new phone levy to be in place by the end of June.

Trump reiterated his complaint that the European Union treated the U.S. badly and restricted the U.S. from selling cars into the EU. "And I just said, 'It's time that we play the game the way I know how to play the game.'"

"I'm not looking for a deal," Trump said when asked whether he expected a deal before June 1. "We've set the deal - it's at 50%. But again, there's no tariff if they build their plant here."

EU trade Chief Maros Sefcovic said the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, was fully committed to securing a deal that worked for both sides, following a Friday phone call with U.S. counterpart Jamieson Greer and U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick. He added that EU-U.S. trade "must be guided by mutual respect, not threats."

Speaking to reporters in The Hague, Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof backed the EU's strategy in trade talks and said the EU was likely to see this latest announcement as part of the negotiations.

"We have seen before that tariffs can go up and down in talks with the U.S.," he said.

The White House paused most of the punishing tariffs Trump announced in early April against nearly every country in the world after investors furiously sold off U.S. assets including government bonds and the U.S. dollar. Trump left in place a 10%



their talks as franker and more in-depth than before.

Speaking to reporters, Akazawa said that while it would be great if an agreement could be reached when Trump and Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba meet at the Group of Seven summit next month in Canada, he would not rush just to secure a deal.

"Our country has national interests that must be protected, so it is not sufficient simply to forge an agreement quickly," Akazawa said. "As a negotiator, I can tell you that in negotiations the party stuck to a deadline usually loses."

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent would not comment on other potential trade deals, but said on Fox News that there would be more announced as the end of the 90-day pause on reciprocal tariffs approaches in July.

Apple declined to comment on Trump's threat, which would reverse exclusions he granted on smartphones and other electronics imported largely from China in a break for Big Tech firms that sell consumer goods. Apple shares fell 3% after Trump said in an early Truth Social post that he told company CEO Tim Cook "long ago" that "I expect their iPhones that will be sold in the United States of America will be manufactured and built in the United States, not India, or anywhere else."

# Russia, Ukraine Begin First Stage of Large-Scale Prisoner Swap

KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine and Russia began a major prisoner exchange Friday, as both sides received 390 people in the first stage in what, if completed, would be the biggest swap since Moscow invaded Ukraine more than three years ago. The process, set to last 3 days, will free 1000 prisoners in total on each side.

Both sides received 390 people in the first stage on Friday, and are expected to exchange 1,000 each in total under an agreement reached at direct talks in Istanbul last week.

The process is set to last three days, Kyiv said.

The enemies have held regular exchanges since Russia launched its 2022 attack -- but none have been of this scale.

"The first stage of the '1,000-for-1,000' exchange agreement has been carried out," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in a post on X.

"Today - 390 people. On Saturday and Sunday, we expect the exchange to continue."

Russia said it had received 270 Russian troops and 120 civilians, including some from parts of the Kursk region that were captured and held by Kyiv for months.

The two sides have not yet revealed the identities of those exchanged.

U.S. President Donald Trump earlier congratulated the two countries for the swap.

"This could lead to something big???" he wrote in a post on Truth Social.

Trump's efforts to broker a ceasefire in Europe's deadliest conflict since World War II have thus far been unsuccessful, despite his pledge to rapidly end the fighting.

After 39 months of fighting, thousands of POWs are held in both countries. Russia is believed to have the larger share, with the number of Ukrainian captives held by Moscow estimated to be between 8,000 and 10,000.

Kyiv and Moscow have both accused each other of violating the Geneva



Convention on the treatment of POWs, with the UN saying prisoners on both sides have been "subjected to torture and ill-treatment".

Shortly before the exchange, Kyiv released a statement accusing the Russian army of executing around 270 Ukrainian POWs since its invasion.

Russia regularly violates international norms by putting POWs on trial - with allegations of torture widespread and several Ukrainian captives confirmed to have died in custody.

Moscow's forces are also believed to have taken an unknown number of Ukrainian civilians into Russia in three years of seizing Ukrainian towns and cities.

There have been several high-profile cases of Ukrainian civilian captives.

Moscow this year returned the body of journalist Viktoria Roshchyna, who died in captivity.

Ukrainians put on trial have told Russian courts they experienced and witnessed torture in Russia's notorious prison system.

Kyiv's Commissioner for Missing Persons, Artur Dobroserdov, told Ukrainian media last month: "There are more than 60,000 people missing. Around 10,000 are confirmed to be in captivity."

With Kyiv not knowing the fate of thousands, each exchange brings surprises, a senior official told AFP.

"Almost every exchange includes people no one had knowledge about," he said.

"Sometimes they return people who were on the lists of missing persons or were considered dead."

A sizeable number of Ukrainian troops held in Russia were taken captive during the 2022 siege of Mariupol.

Aside from the thousands held since Moscow's invasion in 2022, Russia also has held some Ukrainians since its 2014 Crimea annexation. The number of Russian POWs in Ukraine is believed to be considerably smaller.

Zelensky has throughout the war encouraged the taking of Russian troops as prisoners to fill up what he calls Kyiv's "exchange fund" for future swaps.

Ukraine took hundreds of Russian troops captive during Kyiv's incursion into the Kursk region in 2024.

It has since also said it took some North Korean soldiers captive who fought for Russia in Kursk.

Kyiv has also jailed a growing number of people for allegedly collaborating with Russian forces and there is speculation that some of these could be included in future swaps.

Last year, a Ukrainian Orthodox priest jailed for justifying Russia's aggression was included in a prisoner swap with Russia.

# UN Says More Food Needed in Gaza as Looting Hampers Deliveries

CAIRO (Dispatches) - Israeli airstrikes killed at least six Palestinians guarding aid trucks against looters, Hamas officials said on Friday, as the head of the United Nations warned that only a "teaspoon" of aid was getting in following Israel's 11-week-long blockade.

The Israeli military said 107 trucks carrying flour and other foodstuffs as well as medical supplies entered the Gaza Strip from the Kerem Shalom crossing point on Thursday, for a total of 305 since Monday when the blockade was relaxed.

But getting the supplies to people sheltering in tents and other makeshift accommodation has been fitful and U.N. officials say at least 500 to 600 trucks of aid are needed every day.

So far, an umbrella network of Palestinian aid groups said, 119 aid trucks have got past the Kerem Shalom crossing point and into Gaza since Israel eased its blockade on Monday in the face of an international outcry.

Despite the relaxation of the blockade, distribution has been hampered by looting by groups of men, some of them armed, near the city of Khan Younis, an umbrella network representing Palestinian aid groups said.



"They stole food meant for children and families suffering from severe hunger," the network said in a statement, which also condemned Israeli airstrikes on security teams protecting the trucks.

The U.N. World Food Programme said 15 trucks carrying flour to WFP-supported bakeries had been looted, which it said reflected the dire conditions facing Gazans. "Hunger, desperation and anxiety over whether more food aid is coming is contributing to rising insecurity," it said in a statement.

A Hamas official said six members of a security team tasked with guarding the shipments were killed.

Israel imposed the blockade in early March, accusing Hamas of stealing aid meant for civilians. Hamas rejects the charge, saying a number of its own fighters have been killed protecting the trucks from armed looters.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military, which generally considers all armed Palestinians as militants.

"Hamas constantly calls the looters 'guards' or protectors' to mask the fact that they're disturbing the aid process," a military official said.





## Djokovic One Win From 100th ATP Title

GENEVA (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic moved to within one win of securing his 100th ATP title by defeating a battling Cameron Norrie to reach the final of a clay-court event in Geneva.

The 24-time Grand Slam champion, playing in Switzerland to warm up for the French Open, missed a match point in the second set before eventually winning 6-4, 6-7 (6/8), 6-1.

“It was the toughest match of the tournament for me so far, three sets,” said Djokovic.

“(In) the second set, he was a break up and I managed to come back to the tie-break, (I had) a match point, I got a little bit tight there. But I’m really glad how I regrouped in the third and played the best set of the tournament.”

Djokovic will attempt to secure his first tournament victory since winning Olympic gold in Paris last summer when he faces Poland’s Hubert Hurkacz in Saturday’s final.

He is aiming to become only the third player to reach a century of ATP titles after Jimmy Connors and Roger Federer.

The 38-year-old is playing in his first event since splitting from coach and old rival Andy Murray.

He also lost both of his previous matches on clay this season before this week, but appears to be finding form ahead of the start of Roland Garros on Sunday.

Djokovic will start his bid for a fourth French Open triumph and record-breaking 25th Grand Slam singles title when he faces American Mackenzie McDonald in the first round.

He took the first set against former Wimbledon semi-finalist Norrie courtesy of a break in the seventh game.

The Serb battled back from 5-2 down in the second set to force a tie-break, but saw a match point come and go as Britain’s Norrie sent the tie into a decider.

But Djokovic raced into a 3-0 lead in the third, losing just one point across those first three games.

He closed it out on his second match point after another run of three straight games.

Former world number six Hurkacz saw off 128th-ranked Austrian Sebastian Ofner 6-3, 6-4 to reach his first final since losing to Jannik Sinner in Halle last June.

Meanwhile Italy’s Flavio Cobolli came from a set down to battle past Tomas Etcheverry of Argentina and reach the Hamburg Open final with a 2-6 7-5 6-4 win.

With the French Open starting on Sunday, Cobolli dug deep to come from 3-1 behind in the second set before reaching his second final of the season in which he will face Andrey Rublev.

The Russian third seed, a winner in Hamburg in 2020 and losing finalist in 2019, eased past Felix Auger-Aliassime of Canada 6-1 6-4 and will now bid for his second title of the season after winning the Qatar Open.

Claycourt specialist Etcheverry earned his first break points in the sixth game and he converted on the third opportunity to go 4-2 up.

He then broke Cobolli, ranked 35th in the world, when the erratic Italian - who had 18 unforced errors at that stage, three times as many as his opponent - double-faulted on Etcheverry’s third set point.

Etcheverry initially kept up the pressure, hitting the ball deep, with one shot landing flat on the baseline to break his opponent again and go 3-1 up.

Cobolli, however, was not done, cutting down his error count and pinning Etcheverry to the baseline with longer rallies.

He twice broke the world number 55 to go 6-5 up and held serve to grab the second set.

The third went with serve until Cobolli broke to go 5-4 up, going on to reach the biggest final of his career on his first match point.

Rublev enjoyed an easier semi-final, breaking his opponent twice in the first set.

## McTominay Stars as Napoli Seal Dramatic Serie A Title Win on Final Day

NAPLES (Dispatches) - Napoli climbed back to the top of Italian football after sealing the Serie A title on Friday, bouncing back from disaster to win the Italian championship for the fourth time.

Scott McTominay and Romelu Lukaku netted in a 2-0 win over Cagliari at a packed and wild Stadio Diego Armando Maradona as Napoli secured their second league crown in three years on the final day of the season.

Napoli finished the season a point ahead of closest rivals Inter Milan who won 2-0 at Como, the outgoing champions’ opponents having to play half the match with 10 men after goalkeeper Pepe Reina was sent off just before half-time of his last ever match.

Friday’s triumph crowned a season which started with few thinking Napoli could challenge Inter after finishing 10th as reigning champions last term.

“It’s happened again and it’s fantastic... we’ve had a really great season and it’s all thanks to the boys who wanted to put themselves out there, especially those who won the league two years ago,” said coach Antonio Conte.



Conte has taken Napoli by the scruff of the neck but did nothing to squash rumours that he will leave in the summer after one season in Naples due to his frustrations at a lack of investment from owner Aurelio De Laurentiis.

“I have a good relationship with the president and his family,” said

Conte when pressed on his future by DAZN.

“I’ve had the opportunity to get to know him and him me, we’re celebrating together and we’re two winners. Maybe we’re a bit different, but we’re two winners.”

Inter’s win meant nothing as another Scudetto party was kicked off in Naples by the fans’ new heroes McTominay and Lukaku, with fans lighting flares and setting off fireworks in the streets in celebration.

Scotland midfielder McTominay, named player of the season, signed with the league campaign already underway in August and immediately made an impact on a team still reeling last season’s disaster.

His 12th goal of his first Serie A season, three minutes before half-time, was a fitting way for Napoli to break the deadlock as he has been the symbol of the team’s renewal under Conte.

“I’m lost for words. It’s incredible you know, the sacrifice that every single player in the group has put forward to the cause,” said McTominay.

## Tottenham Parade Europa League Trophy in North London



LONDON (Dispatches) - Europa League winners Tottenham were saluted by around 150,000 ecstatic fans during an open-top bus parade through north London.

Ange Postecoglou’s side beat Manchester United 1-0 in Bilbao on Wednesday to end the club’s 17-year trophy drought.

Brennan Johnson’s first-half strike sealed Tottenham’s first European silverware for 41 years, making amends for the team’s dismal form in the Premier League this term.

A white double-decker bus with ‘Europa League winners’ emblazoned on it carried Tottenham’s players on an “emotional” journey to their stadium.

Jubilant supporters packed the streets to hail the players, with chants of “glory, glory Tottenham Hotspur” echoing as the bus rolled past.

Tottenham’s South Korean captain Son Heung-min held the trophy aloft on the top deck of the bus as his team-mates proudly displayed their winners’ medals and Postecoglou waved to fans.

An estimated 150,000 supporters were expected for a parade that was due to last around 90 minutes.

Tottenham players were seen partying in a London nightclub after arriving back from Bilbao.

And Dutch defender Micky van de Ven soaked up the scene at the parade and said: “Unbelievable man. Yeah I slept only a little bit since then.

“Emotional, so emotional. The season we’ve had, it was so difficult, but we got the trophy and we’re so happy. I’m so proud of the boys.

“If you experience this, you want to do it over and over again. We’re going to try to do the same beautiful things next season.”

It was Tottenham’s first trophy parade since winning their last FA Cup in 1991, while their last silverware came in the 2008 League Cup.

Postecoglou’s side are currently 17th in the Premier League, one place above the relegation zone, as they face up to their worst finish since 1976-77.

## Ancelotti Not to Coach Another Club After Real Madrid Departure



MADRID (Dispatches) - Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti said that he has no desire to coach another club in the future as the Italian prepares to leave the Spanish giants after four hugely successful years in his second tenure.

The 65-year-old former Bayern Munich, AC Milan and Chelsea boss, one of the most decorated managers in world football, will become Brazil coach after leaving Real at the end of the season.

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“These are things I don’t know,” Ancelotti told reporters when asked if he would like to return to Real after his Brazil tenure ends.

“I don’t feel like coaching another club, or I didn’t, after Madrid. That’s what I’ve said and I maintain. In the future... I don’t know. But the most immediate thing is to do well with Brazil.

“I’m very excited to have the opportunity to not betray Madrid with any other club and to go to the national team with the most history, the five-time champions. It’s a great challenge, but I love being able to prepare for a World Cup with Brazil.”

His honors at Real include three Champions League titles, two LaLiga crowns, two Spanish Cups, two Spanish Super Cups, two Club World Cups, three UEFA Super Cups and one Intercontinental Cup.

However, Real are set to finish this season without a trophy.

Media reports have linked former Real midfielder Xabi Alonso as his replacement, with the Spaniard leaving German club Bayer Leverkusen at the end of the season but Ancelotti said he had no advice for his former player.

## Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, Giannis Antetokounmpo Lead All-NBA Picks

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - There were four repeat performers and one first-timer named to the 2024-25 Kia All-NBA First Team on Friday.

Milwaukee Bucks forward Giannis Antetokounmpo heads up the first team, earning top honors for the seventh consecutive year. He was joined by Oklahoma City Thunder guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, Denver Nuggets center Nikola Jokic and Boston Celtics forward Jayson Tatum, along with first-time honoree guard Donovan Mitchell of the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Gilgeous-Alexander, named the NBA’s Most Valuable Player earlier this week, earned his third consecutive first-team accolade, while Jokic captured his second in a row and Tatum was named for the fourth consecutive year. Those four players were named on all 100 ballots from a global media panel.

Mitchell earned second-team honors in the 2022-23 season.



New York Knicks guard Jalen Brunson, Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry, Minnesota Timberwolves guard Anthony Edwards, Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James and Cavaliers big man Evan Mobley earned All-NBA Second Team honors.

James extended his NBA record for most selections to 21, matching his number of seasons played dating back to 2004-05. Curry captured his 11th All-NBA Team accolade.

Brunson and Edwards have now earned back-to-back second-team honors, while Mobley, the NBA Defensive Player of the Year, made his debut.

Detroit Pistons guard Cade Cunningham, Indiana Pacers guard Tyrese Haliburton, Los Angeles Clippers guard James Harden, Knicks center Karl-Anthony Towns and Thunder guard-forward Jalen Williams comprised the All-NBA Third Team.