

The Head of Iran's Central Headquarters for Combating Goods and Currency Smuggling Said Official Estimates Show That Fuel Smuggling Is Inflicting Some \$4 Billion in Annual Losses on the Country

IRAN NEWS

The Guardian Council Sanctioned a Parliamentary Bill That Permits the Islamic Republic of Iran to Become a Member of the Asia Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (APAC)

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Iran Reaffirms Commitment to Peaceful Nuclear Enrichment



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TEHRAN - Iran will not abandon its right to nuclear enrichment under any circumstances, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Esmail Baghaei stated in an exclusive interview with CNN, underscoring Tehran's firm stance amid ongoing indirect negotiations with the United States.

In a sit-down with CNN correspondent Frederik Pleitgen in Tehran, Baghaei addressed the latest developments in nuclear talks and dismissed any suggestion that Iran would relinquish its nuclear rights under pressure. "If the objective is to ensure our nuclear program remains peaceful, that can be easily achieved," he said. "But if the intention is to deny the Iranian people their legitimate right to peaceful nuclear energy, it will seriously challenge the entire process."

Responding to questions about the position of the Trump administration and U.S. negotiator Steve Witkoff, Baghaei said ongoing dialogue indicates a shared understanding: "Iran cannot and will not forgo its right to peaceful nuclear technology, including enrichment."

When asked whether a compromise was possible, Baghaei replied optimistically, saying, "Where there is a will, there is a way. There are many paths to an agreement. Our nuclear program is fully peaceful, and we are committed to keeping it that way."

Addressing concerns about the possible use of military force—reportedly hinted at by President Trump as an alternative to a deal—Baghaei warned that such threats are counterproductive. "These threats will not help," he said. "Iranians have repeatedly demonstrated that they will not respond positively to coercion or pressure. We will stand united in defending our national security."

Afghanistan Using Iranian Cement to Build Dams Against Iran



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - A member of Iran's Parliament has accused regional and international actors of weaponizing water resources against Iran, claiming that Afghanistan is building dams on shared rivers using Iranian cement, thereby cutting water flow to Iran.

Abolfazl Zohrehvand, a member of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, stated that Iran's adversaries are helping Afghanistan construct dams on transboundary rivers such as the Harirud, which flows toward the Iranian city of Mashhad.

Zohrehvand criticized Afghanistan's double standards, saying: "While Afghanistan claims friendship with Iran, it is using Iranian cement to build dams that restrict water flowing into our territory. These actions, in reality, go against Iran's interests."

This follows concerns raised by Mohammad Javanbakht, Iran's Deputy Minister of Energy, who recently warned about the critically low water levels at the Doosti (Friendship) Dam, a key water source for Mashhad. Javanbakht urged Turkmenistan to cease or drastically reduce its non-potable water withdrawals from the dam to help Iran cope with the upcoming summer.

Zohrehvand noted that Iran could assist Afghanistan by offering solutions to modernize its irrigation systems instead of resorting to dam construction, which he called ineffective. However, he emphasized that such cooperation would only be possible if Afghanistan had a stable and accountable government—something he claimed is currently lacking.

"The absence of a responsible government in Afghanistan has allowed hostile actors to exploit the situation, affecting Iran's water interests," he added.

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



Iran, Pakistan Urged to Take Joint Action to Stop Israel's Crimes in Gaza

TEHRAN – Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says Iran and Pakistan should take "joint and effective" measures to stop the crimes of the Israeli regime in the Gaza Strip.

In a meeting with Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Tehran on Monday, the Leader said Pakistan has a special position in the Muslim world.

Ayatollah Khamenei hailed the end of hostilities between Pakistan and India and expressed hope that the two countries would resolve their differences.

The Leader noted that Pakistan has had a "very good and strong" stance on the issue of Palestine over the past years.

"There have always been temptations for Muslim countries in recent years to establish relations with the Zionist regime, but Pakistan has never been impacted by these temptations," Ayatollah Khamenei stated.

Pointing to the Islamic Ummah's great capacities to have more power in the world now, the Leader placed a premium on forging unity and developing relations among Muslim countries under such circumstances that warmongers in the world have much motivation to sow discord and wage wars.

This is the only thing that can ensure the security of Muslim nations, Ayatollah Khamenei added.

The Leader said Palestine is the "prime issue of the Muslim world" and noted that people in Europe and the U.S. hold demonstrations to voice their protest to their governments over the ongoing "catastrophic" situation in Gaza.

However, some Muslim countries stand by the Israeli regime, Ayatollah Khamenei said.

The Leader said Iran and Pakistan can play a pivotal role in the Muslim world by cooperating and redirecting the issue of Palestine from this wrong path.

The Leader expressed optimism about the future of the Muslim world.

Ayatollah Khamenei said Tehran and Islamabad have "warm and brotherly" relations, adding that Pakistan's good positions during the Iraqi-imposed war on Iran (in 1980-88) are an example of such cordial ties.

The Leader said the current bilateral cooperation in various fields is below the expected level and stated, "The two countries can help each other in many areas."

Ayatollah Khamenei expressed hope that the Pakistani prime minister's visit to Tehran would contribute to the comprehensive expansion of relations in various fields, especially in the economic, political, and cultural sectors.

The Leader also emphasized the necessity of cooperation between Iran and Pakistan in order to further active the ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization).

During the meeting, which was also attended by Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, the Pakistani prime minister commended Iran's positive role in solving the crisis between Pakistan and India.

Sharif expressed regret that the international community refrains from taking effective measures to put an end to the ongoing catastrophic situation in Gaza.

The Pakistani premier hoped that his good and constructive talks with Iranian officials in Tehran would pave the way for further expansion of mutual ties.

Admiral Sayyari: "We Are Fully Prepared to Defeat the Enemy"

TEHRAN - The Deputy Coordinator of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army, Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, declared that Iran is fully prepared to defeat any enemy aggression, warning that any threats or miscalculations would be met with a powerful response reminiscent of the historic Operation Beit al-Moqaddas.

Speaking on Tuesday at a ceremony held at Qom University to honor the martyrs of public service and the liberation of Khorramshahr, Admiral Sayyari emphasized the unwavering determination of Iranian youth. "Our youth today walk in the footsteps of the martyrs. Just as in the past, they will confront the enemy with the same spirit of Khorramshahr's liberation. Their courage and love for the homeland are clearly evident," he said. "These young people will bring the enemy to its knees."

Reflecting on the early days of the Islamic Revolution, he noted, "The enemies thought we were weak and attacked us. They soon realized, during eight years of defense, that we were capable of defeating them. Today, with the unity and support of the people, we are again fully prepared to confront any threats."

Admiral Sayyari highlighted that despite decades of sanctions since the Revolution, Iran has never been defeated. He urged the audience not to fall prey to the enemy's psychological warfare. "To carry on the path of the martyrs, we must recognize the enemy and understand the level of threats we face," he added.

Pointing to the critical role of youth and universities, Sayyari said, "Many of our wartime innovations came from academic efforts. Today's young generation continues to be present and



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came true.

Sayyari noted that the enemy had underestimated the strength of the Iranian people and their revolutionary spirit. "They believed we were militarily unprepared after the Revolution, but the reality of the battlefield proved otherwise," he said.

Recalling the Battle of Khorramshahr, he said, "It was a heroic chapter. Our forces made excellent use of the momentum from earlier victories to catch the enemy by surprise. Maintaining a complex military operation for 25 days in extreme heat was a remarkable feat."

He revealed that during the operation, around 40,000 enemy troops were either killed or captured — a blow that the invading forces found difficult to accept.

active on the frontlines."

Addressing the history of hostility from global powers toward Iran, Sayyari recalled that after the Revolution, Iran's adversaries lost their regional dominance and sought to destabilize the country using counter-revolutionary elements, ethnic discord, and terrorism before launching a full-scale war.

He said, "The enemy's goal was to halt the growth of the Revolution, annex Khuzestan, and overcome its geographic limitations in the Persian Gulf. Saddam Hussein was chosen for this mission, and he received extensive military and logistical support, even from some of Iran's neighbors."

The Admiral referred to the warnings of the late Imam Khomeini, who had cautioned neighboring countries against aiding Saddam, predicting that he would eventually turn against them as well — a prediction that ultimately

8% Economic Growth Requires \$200b Investment



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - First Vice President, Mohammad Reza Aref, announced that achieving an 8% economic growth rate would require between \$150 billion to \$200 billion in investment, emphasizing that while domestic resources are helpful, the country cannot rely solely on them.

In a meeting with the parliamentary delegation from Gilan Province, Aref addressed local challenges after listening to proposals from the governor and regional lawmakers. He stated that the 14th administration is prepared to cooperate fully to resolve the issues raised.

Aref highlighted the immense value of Gilan, saying, "Every centimeter of Gilan holds indescribable value." Despite being a national priority since the 1979 Revolution, northern provinces like Gilan have not developed as expected. He stressed the need for private sector involvement to elevate the province to its rightful place.

He pointed to Gilan's strategic role in connecting Iran to the Eurasian region, noting that much of Iran's trade with Eurasia passes through its northern borders, especially Gilan. Emphasizing the importance of the transit corridors through the province, he said they are vital for the country's commercial and logistical future.

Criticizing the prolonged environmental issues in Gilan and neighboring Mazandaran, Aref said wastewater and solid waste challenges remain unresolved after decades, calling for urgent action.

He noted that Gilan's development should prioritize agriculture, tourism, and clean industry, especially in IT and advanced technologies. With the presence of talented individuals and resources in the province, he said achieving this is feasible.

Reflecting on missed opportunities in Gilan's growth, he mentioned failures in tourism due to environmental degradation, as well as agricultural inefficiencies. "Despite Gilan's global reputation for rice, land reforms were poorly handled post-revolution, leaving many families with only half a hectare to sustain themselves," he added.

Armed Forces Fully Prepared to Deliver Appropriate Strikes Against Israel



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The chief commander of the Iranian Army says his forces are "fully prepared" to deliver an appropriate strike at Israel as the regime continues to ratchet up its bellicose rhetoric against the Islamic Republic.

"If they [Israel] are in a rush to receive another True Promise [operation], we are fully ready to deliver an appropriate blow and collect on what they already owe us," Chief Commander of the Iranian Army Major General Abdol-Rahim Mousavi told reporters on Monday.

In 2024, the Islamic Republic demonstrated its military might with Operation True Promise I and II, retaliatory strikes launched in response to Israeli aggression. The operations, carried out using hundreds of ballistic missiles and drones, showcased Iran's ability to strike sensitive Israeli military and intelligence targets with surgical accuracy.

Iranian officials have underscored that the country only deployed a fraction of its firepower during the dual reprisal.

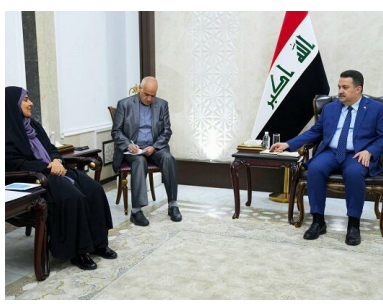
Mousavi said the Israeli regime is too abject to be able to harm Iran's endeavor. "This is while the Islamic Republic's power can pose extraordinary challenges to the regime and its supporters," Iran's Army chief emphasized.

He warned that Israel could still make a miscalculation against Iran as the regime is ruled by foolish, child-killing leaders.

The Israeli regime has threatened to launch an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities in the coming months, amid indirect talks between Tehran and Washington over a potential nuclear agreement.

U.S. President Donald Trump has reportedly told Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Washington was, for now, unwilling to support any military action against Iran.

IRAN NEWS



Iran, Iraq Discuss Expanding Rail and Transit Cooperation

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani, in a meeting with visiting Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq, has called for the enhanced transit cooperation between the two countries. Al-Sudani, while talking to Sadeq, also emphasized the completion of the Basra- Shalamchah railway project, calling it important for the transportation of passengers from the two countries and Central Asia, particularly during the Arbacen pilgrimage, IRNA reported on Monday.

The Iranian minister is in Iraq for talks with officials about transport relations between the two countries, especially the Shalamchah-Basra railway, which will create a new transportation horizon for Iran and Iraq.

Iran's Annual Inflation Rate Rises to 33.9% in May



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's annual inflation rate climbed to 33.9% by the end of Ordibehesht 1404 (May 2025), according to data released by the Statistical Center of Iran on Monday. This represents a 0.7 percentage point increase compared to the previous month.

The announcement, based on the consumer price index (CPI) using the year 1400 (2021-22) as the base year, highlights growing inflationary pressure across the country.

In May 2025, the national CPI reached 336.9, indicating: A 2.7% increase from the previous month; A 38.7% rise compared to the same month last year; and a 33.9% increase over the 12-month period ending in May, compared to the corresponding period the year before.

Point-to-point inflation, which compares the CPI to the same month of the previous year, stood at 38.7% in May. This means that, on average, households paid 38.7% more for a comparable basket of goods and services than they did in May 2024. The figure marks a 0.2 percentage point decline from the previous month.

Monthly inflation — the change in prices compared to the previous month — was 2.7% in May.

Iran, Kuwait Sign Two Strategic Agreements in the Field of Motoring



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Touring and Automobile Club of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the International Automobile Club of Kuwait have signed two strategic cooperation agreements aimed at strengthening bilateral relations in the fields of motoring, roadside assistance, overland tourism facilitation, and other related areas.

According to the public relations office of Iran's Touring and Automobile Club, the documents were officially signed today (Sunday, May 25) in Tehran by Mohammad Hossein Soufi, CEO of the Iranian club, and Essa Hamzeh, CEO and President of the Kuwaiti International Automobile Club.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Soufi expressed optimism about the future of bilateral engagement, stating: "The signing of these agreements marks the beginning of a shared and sustainable path toward expanding regional cooperation. Cultural commonalities and shared perspectives between the two nations serve as a strong foundation for deepening these ties."

He emphasized the strategic importance of collaboration in tourism and motoring between the two organizations, adding, "There is an unbreakable bond between the governments, peoples, and motoring clubs of Iran and Kuwait that paves the way for development. These agreements are a prelude to more significant initiatives and exemplary cooperation for other countries in the region."

Hamzeh also highlighted the depth of Iran-Kuwait relations, saying: "Today, we signed important documents, but our relationship goes beyond contracts. We sincerely seek interaction with Iran. These agreements simply make our path clearer and more purposeful."

"I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to Tehran and its attractions. Iran is a valuable country for tourism and for the Islamic world in the region. It deserves greater global recognition," he said, adding that a tourism delegation from Kuwait will soon visit Iran in coordination with the Iranian club to explore the country's tourism potential firsthand.

The two agreements signed at the ceremony cover areas including motoring, roadside assistance, training, road safety, the issuance of international driving permits, and the facilitation of overland tourism between Iran and Kuwait.

Both sides emphasized that this collaboration will not only enhance motoring and tourism ties between the two nations but could also serve as a successful model for other countries in the region.

Iran Aims for Self-Sufficiency in Meat, Rice, Sugar, Bananas Within Three Years

TEHRAN - Minister of Agriculture, Gholamreza Nouri, announced on Tuesday that the country is pursuing a strategic plan to achieve self-sufficiency in the production of meat, rice, sugar, and bananas within the next three years. Speaking during a meeting with Parviz Fattah, Head of the Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order (EIKO), Nouri emphasized that Iran is not opposed to imports and exports but stressed the need to first meet the nation's essential domestic demands.

Nouri praised the cooperation with EIKO and highlighted the success of the "Wheat Production Leap" project in rain-fed areas, attributing its progress to the dedication of Iranian farmers. He revealed that the initiative's achievements this year are expected to be significant and clearly measurable.

Building on the wheat project, the ministry is now moving into two new strategic areas: increasing domestic production of red meat—particularly from small livestock—and boosting national food security.

Nouri noted that past policies had neglected small-scale and rural livestock farming, with reduced attention to inputs and halted permit issuance. As a result, around 20% of Iran's meat demand currently relies on imports. The minister said that reversing this trend is now a top priority, guided by the Supreme Leader's emphasis on joint efforts for production growth.

The ministry's self-sufficiency plans also include bolstering small-scale rural agricultural units with increased access to resources, technology, and feed, thereby helping to reduce currency outflows and strengthen the national economy.

Nouri also discussed a joint agreement with EIKO to increase domestic rice production. Despite the availability of local capacity, a significant portion of the rice in Iranian markets remains imported. "We believe we can not only meet domestic needs but also enhance trade exchanges," he said. "We are not against imports or exports, but the country's basic needs must come first."

He added that Iran is developing new trade relationships with neighboring countries, members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and regional markets



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

to streamline imports, exports, and agricultural input supply.

"Iran has the potential to become a regional hub for food security," Nouri declared, stating that achieving self-sufficiency in a commodity does not mean ending trade—it opens opportunities for Iran to support neighboring countries.

On rice production, Nouri noted that research centers are working on more affordable, water-efficient rice strains. Support for these initiatives, including rapid equipment and seed replication, is essential to help farmers increase productivity and profitability.

Turning to sugar, Nouri announced that Iran aims to eliminate sugar

imports within three to four years. Efforts are underway to improve sugar beet seed quality and expand autumn beet cultivation. The plan requires both time and investment, including the construction of at least three large-scale sugar factories in northeast, southwest, and western Iran. Some private investors have already committed to projects at various stages of progress.

The minister added that existing sugarcane factories are being upgraded to process sugar beets, and building new facilities is also part of the national self-sufficiency drive.

Nouri also addressed banana imports, which have historically cost Iran \$600-700 million annually. With private sector cooperation, Iran hopes to meet domestic demand for bananas through local production within the next 3-4 years, further reducing the need for hard currency outflows.

Finally, he emphasized that the ministry's efforts are in line with the Supreme Leader's directive to strengthen national food security. "We have laid out plans and legislation to support this goal and, in some areas, are working to exceed those expectations," Nouri said.

He concluded by highlighting progress in agricultural trade balance: "By the end of 2024, we improved the sector's trade deficit from minus \$11 billion to minus \$8 billion—a \$3 billion improvement—indicating enhanced food security for the country."

Iran, Tajikistan Boost Bilateral Police Cooperation

TEHRAN - In a recent meeting between the Deputy Commander of Iran's Law Enforcement Command (FARAJA) and the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, both countries reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing joint cooperation in ensuring security and combating organized crime.

The meeting focused on the exchange of information, training of law enforcement personnel, and joint efforts in fighting drug trafficking and terrorism. The two sides underscored the importance of close relations and bilateral cooperation in security, with the ultimate goal of bolstering safety and stability in both nations.

Brigadier General Mohammad Sharafi, Deputy Commander of FARAJA, described the meeting as a valuable opportunity to examine shared security challenges and exchange experiences in maintaining public order. He emphasized that both Iran and Tajikistan recognize the critical role of international cooperation in tackling crime, especially in the realms of narcotics and terrorism, and consistently stress the need for joint action.

Sharafi also highlighted the importance of information and experience sharing in policing and public security as effective tools against common threats. He regarded this meeting as a significant step toward strengthening bilateral ties and enhancing regional security, reflecting the two nations' serious determination to deepen their security collaboration.

He further emphasized the shared cultural and linguistic heritage between Iran and Tajikistan, calling it a strong foundation for bolstering security and law enforcement cooperation. Sharafi noted that these cultural commonalities can facilitate better understanding and ease the process of information exchange and cooperation.

"Given our shared history and culture, our two nations have long walked similar paths, especially in the social and security arenas," Sharafi said. "This cultural connection can foster mutual trust and increase joint efforts in addressing shared security threats."

The senior Iranian police official also pointed to the two countries' shared determination to utilize cultural commonalities to strengthen their bilateral efforts in combating crime and enhancing security. He emphasized Iran's leading role in the global fight against narcotics, stating that Iran has been at the forefront of this struggle for decades, sacrificing over 4,000 martyrs and sustaining 12,000 injuries. Sharafi reiterated that Iran's efforts to prevent drug trafficking and protect other nations from this menace require robust regional and international cooperation. He expressed hope that through experience-sharing with Tajikistan, both countries can tackle this global challenge more effectively.



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Sharafi also touched upon the longstanding affection and close relationship between the Iranian and Tajik peoples, rooted in shared history and culture. He highlighted the power of literature—especially the works of iconic Iranian poets like Ferdowsi—as a deep cultural link between the two nations.

He described Ferdowsi's Shahnameh as one of the most significant and valuable works of Persian literature, representing a shared cultural identity between Iran and Tajikistan. Sharafi stated that the cultural and historical ties between the two nations should serve as a cornerstone for enhanced cooperation in various sectors, including security, education, and social development.

Additionally, he underlined the importance of cooperation between cyber police (FATA) and other law enforcement bodies. With the rapid expansion of technology and cyberspace, Sharafi said, collaboration between Iran's cyber police and their Tajik counterparts could significantly enhance cybersecurity and public safety.

"In today's world, cybercrime and related threats are among the most serious challenges faced by countries, causing widespread insecurity," he added. "Effective and coordinated cooperation between cyber police units can improve the state of cybersecurity and general safety in both countries."

Brigadier General Qayratsho Mubarak Shazadeh, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, also spoke during the meeting. He began by expressing his gratitude for the warm hospitality extended by the Iranian people, a trait for which they are well known. He expressed hope that this visit would mark a concrete step toward deepening relations and implementing previous agreements.

He affirmed that the cooperation between Iran and Tajikistan has continued since Tajikistan's independence and could be further expanded. He noted that the presence of the Iranian President in the Republic of Azerbaijan had positively influenced regional relations.

General Shazadeh voiced pride in the growing relationship between the two nations across various domains, emphasizing that their shared culture, language, and deep historical ties would positively impact these relations.

He referenced several memorandums of understanding signed between the two countries and confirmed that their police forces are ready to engage in broad cooperation in areas such as organized crime, counterterrorism, drug trafficking, and cybercrime.

"This readiness exists on both sides, and we believe it can pave the way for tangible progress in our joint efforts," Shazadeh concluded.

Renewable Electricity Exports Now Permitted



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Minister of Energy has announced a 500-megawatt boost in the development of renewable energy during the 14th government's term, along with the official launch of 297 MW of solar power plant installations across five provinces. In a significant policy shift, the country is also allowing the export of electricity generated from renewable sources.

At a ceremony held at the Ministry of Energy to mark the start of the solar power installations, Minister Abbas Aliabadi assured the public that these power plants will become operational on schedule and will support the national grid.

According to planning details, solar power plants are being developed as follows: East Azerbaijan Province: 9 sites totaling 27 MW; Golestan Province: 32 sites with a combined capacity of 96 MW; Shiraz County: 18 sites totaling 54 MW; Kish Island: 10 sites adding up to 30 MW; and Bushehr Province: 30 sites contributing 90 MW.

These projects have passed key preliminary stages, including land acquisition, licensing, network connection studies, soil assessments, mapping, design, equipment procurement, and logistics. The Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA) is overseeing the initiative in cooperation with provincial electricity distribution companies.

Highlighting the start of a major transformation in Iran's energy sector, Aliabadi referenced tech entrepreneur Elon Musk, who predicts that all future energy production will be powered by electricity and solar energy. "This bold claim may seem extraordinary, but it is far from unrealistic," Aliabadi said.

Iran Pursues FATF Normalization at Eurasian Anti-Money Laundering Summit



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran is leveraging its participation in the 42nd Plenary of the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism (EAG) to build international networks aimed at normalizing its status with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), according to a senior Iranian official.

Hadi Khani, Iran's Deputy Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance and Head of the Financial Intelligence Unit, told reporters on Tuesday that the Islamic Republic's presence at the EAG summit is of significant strategic importance.

"This meeting is critical for Iran, as it provides a platform to share knowledge and collaborate with other countries. Most importantly, it offers us the opportunity to showcase our efforts in combating money laundering and terrorist financing," Khani said.

Khani, who also serves as Secretary of the Supreme Council for the Prevention and Combating of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing, noted that presenting Iran's actions at such forums helps boost the country's reputation and lowers its risk profile in the eyes of the international community.

He explained that Iran, as an observer member of EAG, has previously used this regional forum to highlight its progress. At the current summit hosted in Moscow, Iran has brought representatives from key sectors — including the Economic Security Police and the banking system — to further present its initiatives.

Khani stated that reporting on Iran's actions began on Monday, May 26, the opening day of the summit. He added that the main session, scheduled for Thursday and Friday, will include comprehensive reports on Iran's anti-money laundering efforts and associated decisions.

North Korea Says U.S. Space Shield Is Nuclear War Scenario

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korea's foreign ministry has criticized the U.S. Golden Dome missile defense shield project as a "very dangerous threatening initiative", state media said.

U.S. President Donald Trump on May 20 said he had picked a design for the Golden Dome missile defense system and named a leader of the ambitious \$175 billion program.

The Golden Dome plan "is a typical product of 'America first', the height of self-righteousness, arrogance, high-handed and arbitrary practice, and is an outer space nuclear war scenario," said the Institute for American Studies of North Korea's foreign ministry, according to state KCNA news agency.



Kremlin Says Enhanced Missile Range for Ukraine Would Be Dangerous



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said any decision by European countries that might give Ukraine enhanced long-range missile capabilities would be a dangerous move, Kremlin correspondent Alexander Yumashev reported.

Peskov's comments came after German Chancellor Friedrich Merz had spoken about the absence of range restrictions for weapons delivered to Ukraine, which one German government official said did not represent a change in policy.

"These potential decisions, if such decisions have indeed been made, run absolutely contrary to our aspirations for reaching a political settlement," Peskov said.

He said such decisions, if there were any, were quite dangerous.

Merz on Monday said his government would do everything possible to keep supporting Ukraine militarily, pointing out that the lack of range restrictions meant Ukraine could attack military targets in Russia.

"Ukraine wasn't able to do that until some time ago," Merz said at the WDR European Forum. "With very few exceptions, it did not do so until recently."

Washington allowed Ukraine to use U.S.-made weapons to strike deep into Russia, Reuters reported in November, in a significant reversal of U.S. policy in Joe Biden's final months in office.

France and Germany's leaders said in May 2024 that Ukraine should be allowed to hit military sites inside Russia from which missiles were being fired at Ukrainian territory, but not other targets.

A German government official told Reuters: "This isn't new, this government never had a range limit."

The German parliament elected Merz as chancellor on May 6.

French Farmers Bring Tractors to Paris to Press for Looser Rules



PARIS (Dispatches) - French farmers disrupted highway traffic around Paris and rallied in front of parliament with their tractors on Monday, protesting against amendments filed by opposition lawmakers to a bill that would loosen environmental regulations on farming.

The draft legislation proposes simplifying approvals for breeding facilities and irrigation reservoirs and re-authorising a banned neonicotinoid pesticide used in sugar beet cultivation that environmentalists say is harmful to bees.

It is part of a trend in numerous European Union states to unwind environmental legislation as farmers grapple with rising input costs and households struggle with the cost of living.

Environmental campaigners and some unions representing small-scale and organic farmers say the bill benefits the large-scale agro industry at the expense of independent operators.

President Emmanuel Macron's opponents on the political left have tabled multiple amendments that the protesting farmers said threatened the bill.

"We're asking the lawmakers, our lawmakers, to be serious and vote for it as it stands," said Julien Thierry, a grain farmer from the Yvelines department outside Paris, criticising lawmakers from the Greens and left-wing France Unbowed (LFI).

Farmers across France and Europe won concessions last year after railing against cheap foreign competition and what they say are unnecessary regulations.

Gaza Aid finally Moves as Israeli Strikes School, Adding to Death Toll

CAIRO (Dispatches) - A U.S.-backed foundation tasked with supplying aid to Gaza said it began operations on Monday, delivering truckloads of food to designated distribution sites following uncertainty about whether any assistance had reached civilians.

The aid plan, which has been endorsed by Israel but rejected by the UN, appeared to be unfolding amid fierce Israeli attacks on the enclave, including on a school building where dozens of Palestinians sheltering inside were killed.

Palestinians reported no sign of aid deliveries earlier on Monday, but the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation later confirmed that distribution to civilians had begun, a day after its chief unexpectedly stepped down.

"More trucks with aid will be delivered tomorrow, with the flow of aid increasing each day," it said in a statement.

With food critically short after a nearly three-month blockade, Washington says it is working to restore a ceasefire more than 19 months into the war, but progress is elusive.

A Palestinian official said Hamas had agreed to a US proposal for a truce and the release of 10 Israeli hostages, but an Israeli official dismissed the proposal as unacceptable, denying it was Washington's suggestion.

US special envoy Steve Witkoff rejected reports that Hamas had agreed to his proposal, telling Reuters that what he has seen is "completely unacceptable."

Israel has faced a mounting international outcry this month, including from Western allies, as it launched a new offensive in Gaza, already largely destroyed by Israeli bombardment and where the population of 2 million is at risk of famine.

Close ally Germany said Israel's recent attacks in Gaza were inflicting a toll on civilians that could no longer be justified as a fight against Hamas, which ignited the war with its cross-border October 7, 2023, attack on Israel.

Israeli authorities last week allowed a trickle of aid into the Palestinian enclave for the first time since March. But the few hundred trucks carried a tiny fraction of the food needed.

The GHF's executive director, Jake Wood, announced his resignation on Sunday, saying the foundation could not adhere "to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence."

The Switzerland-registered foundation said on Monday it had appointed John Acree as interim executive director, describing him as a "senior humanitarian practitioner" with over two decades of field experience in disaster response



health authorities said.

In Gaza City, medics said 30 Palestinians, including displaced women and children who were seeking shelter in a school, were killed in an airstrike. Images shared widely on social media showed what appeared to be badly burned bodies being pulled from the rubble.

Israel's military confirmed it had targeted the school. It said the building was being used as a centre by Hamas and Islamic Jihad militants to plan and organise attacks.

Farah Nussair, who survived the attack, said "just the tired ones" who needed food and water were in the school.

She added, a child in her lap: "We fled to the south, they bombed us in the south. We returned to the north, they bombed us in the north. We came to schools ... There is no security or safety, neither at schools, nor hospitals - not anywhere."

Israel's military said it used precise weapons, surveillance and other steps to mitigate the risk of harming civilians. It did not provide evidence that the school was being used by militants.

and civil-military coordination.

The GHF has been heavily criticised by the United Nations, whose officials have said the private company's aid distribution plans are insufficient for reaching Gazans.

The new operation will rely on four major distribution centres in southern Gaza that will screen families for involvement with Hamas militants, potentially using facial recognition or biometric technology, according to aid officials.

But many details of how the operation will work remain unexplained, and it was not immediately clear whether aid groups that have refused to cooperate with the foundation would still be able to send in trucks.

Hamas condemned the new system, saying it would "replace order with chaos, enforce a policy of engineered starvation of Palestinian civilians, and use food as a weapon during wartime."

Israel says the system is aimed at separating aid from Hamas, which it accuses of stealing and using food to impose control over the population, a charge rejected by Hamas, which says it protects aid convoys from gangs of armed looters.

Israeli strikes killed at least 45 people on Monday, local

France, Vietnam Sign Airbus, Satellite Deals as Macron Visits Hanoi



HANOI (Dispatches) - France and Vietnam signed a deal on Monday for 20 Airbus planes, among other pacts, as President Emmanuel Macron visited Hanoi seeking to boost France's influence in its former colony, grappling with threats of crippling U.S. tariffs.

Macron's first formal visit to Vietnam, the first by a French president in nearly a decade, follows U.S. President Donald Trump's threats on Friday of 50% duties on EU goods from June that sharply fuelled tension with the 27-nation bloc.

Export-dependent Vietnam, under pressure from Washington to buy more American goods, has made pledges in trade talks to avert 46% tariffs that could impair its growth, fanning European concerns about deals at the region's expense.

Deals signed during Macron's visit covered the plane purchase, cooperation on nuclear energy, railways, Airbus earth-observation satellites and Sanofi vaccines, a list of documents seen by Reuters showed, confirming an earlier report.

In statements to the press with no questions allowed, Macron reiterated France's support of freedom of navigation, an issue dear to Vietnam as it often clashes with Beijing over contested boundaries in the South China Sea.

Macron added the partnership with Vietnam "entails a reinforced defence cooperation", citing the signing of multiple projects on defence and space. Vietnam's President Luong Cuong said the defence partnership involved "sharing of information on strategic matters" and stronger cooperation in

the defence industry, cybersecurity and anti-terrorism.

France ruled the Southeast Asian country for about 70 years until it was forced out in 1954 after a major defeat at Dien Bien Phu in northern Vietnam.

Ties have improved in recent decades, being upgraded last year to Vietnam's highest level.

On his trip, the first leg of a Southeast Asian tour that includes Indonesia and Singapore, Macron will visit a university in Hanoi on Tuesday, before flying to Jakarta, the Indonesian capital.

The deal with European planemaker Airbus for Vietnam's low-cost airline VietJet to buy 20 A330neo wide-body aircraft follows last year's

agreement for 20 of the jets.

The signing followed urging by European officials in recent weeks for Vietnam to be careful in concessions made to the White House, two officials based in Vietnam with knowledge of the discussions had told Reuters, referring to concerns on Airbus.

Airbus is the main supplier of jets to Vietnam, contributing 86% of its fleet, data from aviation analytics firm Cirium shows.

A separate agreement with Airbus Defence was also signed during the visit for cooperation with Vietnam on earth-observations satellites.

Airbus has long been in talks with Hanoi for the replacement of Vietnam's earth-observation satellite, built by Airbus' predecessor EADS and launched in 2013.

With an economy heavily dependent on U.S. exports, Vietnam has signalled the possible purchase of at least 250 Boeing planes by flag carrier Vietnam Airlines and rival VietJet.

Officials of both nations have said such deals would help cut its huge trade surplus with the United States and possibly appease Trump.

In talks with the United States, "Vietnam should make sure not to make decisions at the expense of European interests," one of the EU officials said.

Vietnamese leaders have been advised such steps could jeopardise close ties with the EU, which has a free trade deal with Vietnam and is a major buyer of its goods, they added.

Venezuela Ruling Party Keeps Control of Legislature

CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuela's ruling socialist party held its significant majority in the National Assembly in the election, winning nearly 83% of votes according to the electoral authority, in a contest boycotted by some opposition leaders amid deep division among parties opposed to the government of President Nicolas Maduro.

Some of the country's major opposition leaders called for voters to abstain in protest of the official results of the July 2024 presidential election, which the opposition says it won but which authorities say was a Maduro victory.

Sunday's legislative results will keep the ruling party in control of the attorney general's office and the top court, whose members are elected by lawmakers.

Authorities did not give a total number of seats which will be held by each party, but named 40 lawmakers from various parties who have won seats.

A coalition considered close to the ruling socialist party won 6.25% of the vote, while an opposition alliance won 5.17%, National Electoral Council (CNE) rector Carlos Quintero said in a declaration broadcast on state television.

Turnout to choose 24 state governors and 285 lawmakers was 42.6% of 21 million



eligible voters, Quintero said, similar to the turnout in the 2021 elections.

Opposition candidates won just one governorship, in the state of Cojedes, west of the capital Caracas, down from the four won by opposition parties in 2021.

Opposition leaders Maria Corina Machado and Edmundo Gonzalez called on supporters to abstain from Sunday's vote in protest at the official version of the 2024 election results and what they and rights groups say is a brutal crackdown on the opposition, including detentions this week.

Machado, Gonzalez and their Vente Venezuela coalition posted photos throughout the day of what they said were empty polling stations around the country, even as the government extended voting hours, saying turnout was high.

Meanwhile, another opposition faction headed by two-time presidential candidate Henrique Capriles and Zulia state governor Manuel Rosales, urged people to vote to avoid the opposition being cut out of all governance.

Capriles was elected to the national assembly, while Rosales lost his governor's seat.

The opposition and the international community, including the United States, have questioned the 2024 presidential result.



Swiatek and Alcaraz Both Open Strong

PARIS (Dispatches) - Defending champions Iga Swiatek and Carlos Alcaraz both opened their French Open campaigns with commanding wins, cruising to straight-set victories on Roland Garros' iconic red clay courts. "It was really, really solid," Alcaraz said about his opening performance. "Really proud about my start."

Swiatek, who has struggled lately, and Alcaraz, who has not, got off to good starts in their French Open title defenses Monday, recording straight-set victories to reach the second round.

Swiatek was up first in Court Philippe-Chatrier and defeated 42nd-ranked Rebecca Sramkova 6-3, 6-3. Swiatek compiled 25 winners and 17 unforced errors in the 1-hour, 24-minute contest.

Alcaraz needed only about a half-hour more than that for a 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 win over Giulio Zeppieri, an Italian qualifier who is ranked 310th. Alcaraz won all 14 of his service games, saving the three break points he faced, at Court Suzanne-Lenglen.

"It was really, really solid," Alcaraz said. "Really proud about my start."

Both Swiatek and Alcaraz sat in the Chatrier stands a day earlier to watch the farewell tribute to 14-time champion Rafael Nadal — and both active players wore the rust-colored T-shirts that read "Merci Rafa" distributed to spectators. Swiatek has often talked about her admiration for Nadal; Alcaraz is considered the 22-time Grand Slam champion's heir apparent.

"For sure, there were tears," said Swiatek, who faces 2021 US Open champion Emma Raducanu next. "It was amazing ceremony, and I'm happy that Roland Garros did this for Rafa. I'm happy that also the whole tennis world had an opportunity to kind of come together and just thank him. ... He's a GOAT, so I'm happy that I was there."

Alcaraz is seeded No. 2 behind Jannik Sinner — who advanced Monday night with a 6-4, 6-3, 7-5 victory over 75th-ranked Arthur Rinderknech— and is coming off a clay-court title at the Italian Open a

little more than a week ago. Alcaraz beat Sinner in the final there.

Monday's result gave Alcaraz 28 wins in his past 30 matches on red clay, including going 7 for 7 a year ago at Roland-Garros. One of the losses came against Novak Djokovic in the gold-medal match at last year's Paris Olympics, held at the same site as the French Open.

Swiatek has slipped to No. 5 in the rankings, her first time out of the top two spots in about three years. She hasn't reached a final at any tournament since collecting her third consecutive championship — and fourth in five years — in Paris in 2024.

The 23-year-old from Poland extended her French Open unbeaten streak to 22 matches and is trying to become the first woman with four trophies in a row at the tournament in the professional era, which began in 1968. Monica Seles and Justine Henin also won three straight titles at Roland-Garros.

Two highly seeded Americans who made career-best runs at the U.S. Open last September bowed out quickly in Paris: No. 4 Taylor Fritz, the runner-up to Sinner in New York, and No. 9 Emma Navarro, a semifinalist at Flushing Meadows.

Fritz lost 7-5, 3-6, 6-3, 6-1 to 66th-ranked Daniel Altmaier of Germany. The big-serving Fritz was broken five times and saw the end of his 15-match Grand Slam winning streak against opponents ranked outside the top 50.

Navarro was eliminated 6-0, 6-1 in just 57 minutes by Jessica Bouzas Maneiro of Spain. Bouzas Maneiro's biggest win of her career also came in the first round at a Grand Slam tournament: She beat reigning champion Marketa Vondrousova in the first round of Wimbledon last year.

Also on the way out Monday: Four-time major champion Naomi Osaka, who was in tears after her three-set loss to No. 10 Paula Badosa.

Knicks Surge Past Host Pacers to Take Game 3



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Karl-Anthony Towns found himself on the bench more than his liking in Game 2 and was enduring a poor outing with just four points through three quarters.

Then the fourth quarter began and the New York Knicks star was revving faster than the cars running at the nearby Indianapolis Motor Speedway earlier in the day.

Once Towns was running hot, there was no putting on the brakes. He scored 20 of his 24 points in the fourth quarter and collected a game-high 15 rebounds to help the Knicks notch a crucial 106-100 victory over the Indiana Pacers in Game 3 of the Eastern Conference finals.

The big fourth quarter marked just the second time a New York player scored 20 points in a quarter in a playoff game and in the process it kept the Knicks in the series. Jalen Brunson set the franchise record with 21 in a quarter against the Pacers in Game 1 of last season's conference semifinals.

"When I got a chance to do what I do in the fourth, I was going to make sure I seized the opportunity," Towns said. "I just wanted to go there to give our team a chance to win. I'm just happy I was able to do that."

Towns flirted with overheating when he scored 15 points in the first 3:58 of the quarter to give New York an 87-85 lead. But his offensive explosion was the fuel the Knicks needed.

"KAT is a very gifted scorer," New York coach Tom Thibodeau said of Towns, who played Towns fewer than 28 minutes in Game 2's 114-109 loss. "He can score three levels — he's comfortable at the 3-point line, he's comfortable putting it on the floor and he's comfortable playing back to the basket. As long as he stays aggressive, it's a huge plus for us."

Guardiola Admits Man City "Miles Away" From Liverpool



LONDON (Dispatches) - Pep Guardiola said he cannot guarantee Manchester City will be back challenging for the Premier League title next season.

City will play in the Champions League for a 15th straight season after they salvaged a disappointing campaign with a final-day, 2-0 win away to Fulham on Sunday that saw them finish third in the Premier League and seal their place among European club football's elite.

But the club's first season without a trophy in eight years ended their unprecedented run of four successive English top-flight titles, with Guardiola's men finishing 13 points behind the Premier League champions Liverpool.

Asked if his side would be in a position to challenge Arne Slot's side next term, Guardiola replied: "I don't know. I never thought we would win six Premier League titles in seven years."

"But if you expect that I am going to tell you now that next season we are going to win the Premier League, you are wrong."

The Spaniard added: "Since I have arrived at this club, we have finished with 80-plus points and this season we have finished with 71 so that is miles away from our standards. And it has happened for many reasons."

"Sport and football gives you another chance and we will look to prove ourselves."

"But we are miles away from Liverpool. That is the reality. I have a feeling next season will be better but I don't know how we will react after the Club World Cup. We will be exhausted without a holiday before next season."

"We have to rise and increase our level otherwise we will not compete to fight for the titles. But if we are fit, we will try and we will be closer."

With Kevin De Bruyne leaving City and doubts over the future of Jack Grealish, some believes Guardiola needs to oversee a major rebuild if the club are to mount a title challenge next season.

Maresca Targets European History for Chelsea in Conference League Final

WROCLAW (Dispatches) - Enzo Maresca is a man with a point to prove as he targets football history for Chelsea in Wednesday's UEFA Conference League final against Real Betis.

Victory in the final round of Premier League matches at Nottingham Forest on Sunday secured qualification for next season's Champions League.

Now Maresca's thoughts turn to Wroclaw and the chance for Chelsea to become the first team to win all five of UEFA's major men's club competitions.

The Blues have twice won the Champions League, Europa League, Super Cup and the defunct Cup Winners' Cup and can now complete the set if they overcome Betis in the final of Europe's newest competition in Poland.

Maresca has had a rollercoaster first season in charge at Stamford Bridge after replacing Mauricio Pochettino.

His team were within touching distance of eventual Premier League champions Liverpool in mid-December before stumbling badly, but results picked up again towards the end of the campaign.

Maresca, clearly frustrated, rounded on his critics after his youthful side secured fourth spot in the Premier League on Sunday with a 1-0 win at the City Ground.



"All the ones that (think) they are the answer, or all the ones that they are the truth, they were saying that we are too young, we are not good enough," he said.

"Unfortunately for them, they'll be all wrong, the ones that (think) they are the truth and they have the answer for everything."

Maresca, who has also been criticised by fans over perceived cautious tactics, told UEFA.com that winning the Conference League would turn a good season into a "great one" for Chelsea.

"It would be a way of saying that we are back and that we are a winning club in Europe, and we hope to achieve just that."

The west London club are still waiting to win their first silverware since Todd Boehly's consortium took over from former owner Roman Abramovich in 2022.

The 2021 European champions were clear favourites to win the Conference League from the start of the competition and have won 11 of their 12 games.

Former Leicester boss Maresca, 45, has rotated his squad during the competition, giving opportunities to youth and fringe players and has again stressed the need to make changes for Wednesday's match.

Maresca will pit his wits against 71-year-old Manuel Pellegrini, a man whom he describes as a football "father figure" after playing under him at Malaga and serving as assistant coach at West Ham.

"I am where I am today thanks to him," he said. "I worked with Manuel for four years — two years as a player and two years as part of his staff. So, I owe so much to him in terms of what I've achieved."

"I am grateful for the relationship we have and the advice he gives me. He told me never to change."

Car Ploughs Into Fans at Liverpool Parade, 27 in Hospital

LIVERPOOL (Dispatches) - A car ploughed into a crowd of Liverpool fans during a parade celebrating their side's Premier League soccer title on Monday, hospitalising 27 people, with two seriously injured, but police said they did not believe the incident was terrorism-related.

Police said they had arrested a "53-year-old white British man from the Liverpool area," whom they believed to be the driver of the vehicle which struck a large group of supporters who were celebrating in the city in northwest England.

Twenty people were treated at the scene. Ambulance officials said of the 27 taken to hospital, four were children. One child and one adult were in a serious condition. Four people trapped under the vehicle had to be released by firefighters.

Videos on social media showed people thrown into the air as the car rammed into spectators.



When the car stopped, angry fans converged on it and began smashing the windows as police officers intervened to prevent them from reaching the driver.

"We believe this to be an isolated incident, and we are not currently looking for anyone else in relation to it. The incident is not being treated as terrorism," temporary Deputy Chief Constable Jenny Sims told reporters.

With most people off work for the Spring Bank Holiday, hundreds of thousands of fans gathered to watch the Liverpool team and its staff travel through the city centre on an open-top bus with the Premier League trophy.

An eyewitness said the collision happened about 10 minutes after the bus carrying the Liverpool team had passed by, the British Broadcasting Corporation reported.