

An Iranian Company Has Supplied a First Shipment of Polio Vaccines to Venezuela Amid Growing Cooperation Between the Two Countries to Offset the Impacts of U.S. Sanctions on Their Economies

# IRAN NEWS

The Iranian Economy Expanded by 3% in the Calendar Year to March 20, According to Figures Released by the Iranian Government's Official Statistics Agency

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## Iran Warns of Response to IAEA's Politically-Motivated Pressure



TEHRAN - In a detailed statement issued on Sunday, June 1, Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs, strongly criticized a report by the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Grossi, which is set to be presented at the upcoming IAEA Board of Governors meeting. Gharibabadi denounced the report as politically motivated and based on outdated, unsubstantiated allegations.

According to Gharibabadi, the Director-General's report relies heavily on a resolution passed in November 2024 by the US and three European countries. He condemned this move as politically charged, disregarding the progress achieved during Grossi's visit to Iran. "It is regrettable that the Director-General ignored the lack of consensus in passing this resolution," Gharibabadi stated.

The Iranian diplomat asserted that the IAEA has no legal right to characterize Iran's lawful nuclear activities as concerning. He added that the report lacks any evidence suggesting deviation from peaceful nuclear activities, emphasizing that all current operations are under full IAEA monitoring.

Gharibabadi argued that the report revives previously closed issues based on alleged nuclear material found at four locations more than two decades ago, using data he claimed were fabricated by Israel. He highlighted that the IAEA itself had declared the cases involving two of the sites—Lavisan-Shian and Marivan—as resolved. He accused the Agency of reintroducing these topics merely to build a politically charged case against Iran.

Regarding the other two sites—Varamin and Turqezabad—Gharibabadi said Iran has provided full documentation, especially during recent visits by IAEA safeguards officials. "Iran has no undeclared nuclear materials or activities," he reiterated.

## Tehran Urges IAEA to Reflect Truth



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has called on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to reflect the realities concerning the Islamic Republic's peaceful nuclear energy program and prevent political exploitation of its coverage of the country's nuclear activities.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi made the remarks to the IAEA's Director General Rafael Grossi during a telephone conversation on Saturday.

The call featured the officials' discussing, among other things, the agency's newly published report on the Islamic Republic.

During the exchange, Araqchi reaffirmed the country's continued cooperation with the IAEA, noting that all of its nuclear activities were under the agency's supervision and conducted in line with the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement. The agreement allows the IAEA to verify that all nuclear materials in a country are used only for peaceful purposes, and are not diverted towards production of nuclear weapons.

The Iranian top diplomat, meanwhile, emphasized that there had been no deviation concerning either nuclear materials or activities at any stage of the nation's nuclear program.

Araqchi urged Grossi to ensure the agency's reports accurately reflected these facts to prevent certain actors from using the IAEA as a political tool against the Islamic Republic.

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK



## Iran Says IAEA Report Drafted Under Pressure

TEHRAN - Iran has denounced as "political" and unbalanced a report by the United Nations nuclear watchdog, which it said has been drafted under European pressure.

Iran's Foreign Ministry and the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) issued a joint statement on Saturday in response to the latest report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) accusing Tehran of stepping up its production of highly enriched uranium.

"The repetition of baseless allegations that cannot lend credibility to these claims, along with excessive expression of concern about this matter, is merely an excuse for political maneuvering against the Islamic Republic of Iran," it said.

It added that the illegitimate Israeli regime possesses a nuclear arsenal while it is not a member of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). However, Israel is threatening to attack the peaceful nuclear facilities of an NPT member state, it noted.

"Unfortunately, the director general of the Agency has not taken any action despite his legal responsibilities and the repeated requests of the Islamic Republic of Iran to condemn these threats," the statement pointed out.

In its latest report, the IAEA claimed that Iran has sharply increased its stockpile of uranium enriched to up to 60 percent, close to the roughly 90 percent level needed for atomic weapons.

In its quarterly report, the agency said that as of May 17, Iran possesses an estimated 408.6 kilograms of uranium enriched up to 60 percent, marking an increase of 133.8 kilograms since the previous report in February.

According to the report, Iran's total amount of enriched uranium now exceeds 45 times the limit authorized by the 2015 agreement – formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action -- and is estimated at 9,247.6 kilograms.

In the joint statement, Iran expressed its regret at the publication of the politically-motivated report and voiced its explicit protest at its content.

It emphasized that the IAEA report goes beyond the responsibilities of the agency's director general and is in contradiction to the professional requirements of international bodies, including the principle of neutrality.

The statement criticized the IAEA for failing to reflect the true level of Iran's comprehensive cooperation with the agency.

"In this report, the [IAEA] director general repeated previous biased and baseless accusations by extensively using forged documents provided by the Zionist regime," it emphasized.

It also noted that the IAEA's claims about Iran's undeclared activities and sites dated back to past decades.

## Iran Sees BRICS Summit as Strategic Opportunity for Economic and Political Expansion

TEHRAN – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf has described Iran's participation in the BRICS Parliamentary Forum as a significant opportunity to strengthen economic ties with major global powers and counter Western sanctions.

Speaking at Tehran's Mehrabad International Airport on Saturday night before departing for a multination tour of Latin America and the BRICS summit in Brazil, Qalibaf emphasized the strategic nature of Iran's engagement with the bloc. "Our presence in BRICS is a valuable opportunity to expand ties with the world's leading economic powers and take practical steps against unilateral sanctions," he said.

Qalibaf's trip begins in Venezuela, following an official invitation from the Venezuelan National Assembly to discuss expanding economic, political, and cultural relations. "Latin America, with over 600 million people, shares common international stances with Iran, particularly in opposing unilateralism and supporting multilateral cooperation," he noted.

Touching on the scope and influence of BRICS, he pointed out that the group accounts for 49% of the global population, 39% of the world's economy, and roughly 24% of global trade. "With key players like China, Russia, India, and Brazil in the group, BRICS presents an unparalleled political and economic platform," he said, adding that the Iranian parliamentary delegation will use the summit to strengthen both bilateral and multilateral ties.

He also highlighted the importance of BRICS financial initiatives, particularly the BRICS Pay system—an alternative to the SWIFT international banking network. "By participating in such mechanisms, we aim to bypass sanctions and deepen economic cooperation with the world's



emerging economies," he asserted.

The Iranian delegation's tour will include visits to Venezuela and Cuba, followed by participation in the 11th BRICS Parliamentary Forum in Brasilia, Brazil. Qalibaf expressed hope that the mission would yield "valuable economic, political, and cultural outcomes."

The BRICS Parliamentary Forum, hosted by Brazil's Federal Senate from June 2-4, is themed "The Role of BRICS Parliaments in Establishing a More Inclusive and Sustainable Global Governance." Discussions are expected to cover a wide range of global issues, including trade, artificial intelligence, climate change, global health, finance, and peace and security initiatives.

Accompanying Qalibaf are several prominent Iranian lawmakers: Ahmad Naderi (Tehran MP and Iran-Brazil Parliamentary Friendship Chair), Maryam Abdollahi (Deputy Chair of Iran-Brazil Friendship Group), Mostafa Taheri (Chair of the Parliamentary AI Caucus), and others involved in parliamentary friendship groups with Venezuela and Cuba.

Iran officially became a BRICS member in January 2024, alongside Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, and Ethiopia, following an invitation issued at the 2023 Johannesburg summit. With its large population, economic capacity, and natural resources, Iran aims to play a more active role within the bloc.

As the BRICS nations seek to reshape global governance and promote multipolarity, Tehran views deeper integration with the bloc as a cornerstone of its foreign policy strategy.

## Iran Receives Elements of a U.S. Proposal From Oman



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has confirmed Iran's having received parts of a proposal from the United States as conveyed by Oman's top diplomat, whose country is serving as the intermediary in indirect talks between Tehran and Washington.

The Iranian official made the announcement in a post on X, formerly Twitter, on Saturday.

"My dear brother Badr Albusaidi, distinguished Foreign Minister of Oman, paid a short visit to Tehran today to present elements of a US proposal," he wrote.

The foreign minister did not disclose the contents of the proposal, but emphasized that Tehran's response would be measured and consistent with its sovereign values and priorities.

"It (the portions of the proposals that have been conveyed to Iran) will be appropriately responded to in line with the principles, national interests, and rights of the people of Iran."

Also on Saturday, Araqchi reiterated during an event in the capital Tehran that Iran's foreign policy, including its position on the nuclear issue, remained rooted in firm rejection of foreign domination.

He underscored the Islamic Republic's right to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes, calling it a non-negotiable national entitlement.

"The statement that you should not carry out enrichment is itself a form of domination. Why shouldn't we have enrichment? This is absolutely unacceptable to the Iranian nation."

Iran and the United States have been engaged in indirect Omani-facilitated talks since April in an effort to resolve outstanding issues between the two sides.

## Iranian Army Ground Forces Express Readiness for Int'l Peacekeeping Missions



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Commander of Iran's Army Ground Forces, Brigadier General Kioumars Heydari, announced the force's preparedness to participate in international peacekeeping missions under international regulations and the United Nations framework. Speaking at the first conference honoring the peacekeepers of the Army Ground Forces, Heydari emphasized that peace should go beyond merely preventing war and must include supporting oppressed nations and combating terrorism.

According to the United Nations Charter, all member states are required to establish peacekeeping units within their armed forces. General Heydari noted that this responsibility in Iran has been assigned to the Army Ground Forces (NEZAJA), which has already formed and prepared such a unit for international deployment.

Reaffirming the Army's commitment to peace and the UN Charter, Heydari stated that Iran's armed forces seek justice and welfare for all nations, in line with the teachings of Islam. He stressed that Iran's professional and people-based army is capable of playing a constructive and ethical role in global peacekeeping operations.

"Our perspective on peace includes not just the absence of conflict, but also active opposition to tyranny and terrorism," he said. "Based on this, we declare our readiness to participate in peacekeeping operations that align with international standards and contribute to global stability."

Heydari further argued that Iran's participation in peacekeeping missions presents an opportunity to share military experience and showcase the Iranian armed forces' capabilities on the global stage. He emphasized that the Army considers itself part of the international community and views the establishment of lasting peace as both a humanitarian and Islamic duty.

Concluding his remarks, the commander announced that Iran's Army Ground Forces are prepared to host the second International Peacekeepers Conference in the near future.





## Iran Sets Goal to Transport 54m Tons of Freight by Rail by Year-End

TEHRAN - The CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways announced plans to transport 54 million tons of freight via the national railway network by the end of this year, with approximately 8 million tons allocated to export, import, and transit goods.

According to a statement from the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways, Jabbarali Zakeri shared this target during the 35th Regional Assembly of Middle East Railways (UIC RAME), attended by the heads of railways from Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Iraq, along with their delegations.

Zakeri highlighted Iran's strategic position in international rail transport, citing connections to Central Asian countries, Russia, and China, as well as access to the European rail network through Turkey. This positioning, he said, makes Iran a key player in East-West and North-South freight corridors.

## Iran's Economic Growth Reaches 3% in Past Year



TEHRAN - Iran's Statistical Center has announced that the country's economic growth reached 3 percent over the past year.

According to data released Saturday evening on Iran's economic growth indicators, in the Persian calendar year 1403 (March 2024–March 2025), the agricultural sector grew by 3.2%, the industry and mining group by 3.4% (including: crude oil and natural gas extraction 6.2%, other mining 0.5%, manufacturing 1.6%, natural gas distribution 0.5%, water and electricity supply 2.4%, and construction 0.5%), and the services sector saw 2.5% growth compared to the previous year (1402).

Based on the latest results from Iran's national quarterly accounts, the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at constant 1400 prices (March 2021–March 2022 base year) stood at 100.26 quadrillion rials with oil, and 76.14 quadrillion rials without oil in 1403.

In comparison, the GDP in the previous year was 97.30 quadrillion rials with oil and 74.58 quadrillion rials without oil, indicating a 3.0% growth in GDP with oil and a 2.1% growth in GDP without oil (at basic prices).

The figures show that the agricultural sector grew by 3.2%, the industry and mining group by 3.4%, and the services sector by 2.5% in 1403, as compared to 1402.

Iran's Statistical Center conducts quarterly national accounts in 18 main sections across 50 sub-sectors, based on the ISIC Rev. 4 classification. The agricultural group includes subsectors such as farming, horticulture, animal husbandry, forestry, and fishing. The industry and mining group covers crude oil and natural gas extraction, other mining activities, manufacturing, water and electricity supply, gas distribution, and construction. The services group includes wholesale and retail trade, accommodation and food services, transportation, warehousing, postal services, information and communications, financial and insurance activities, real estate, rental and business services, veterinary services, public administration and urban services, education, health and social work, and other public, social, personal, and household services.

## Iran Exports Agricultural and Horticultural Products to 80 Countries Worldwide



TEHRAN - Iran exports its agricultural and horticultural products to 80 countries across the globe, generating an annual revenue of over \$8 billion, according to a senior agricultural official.

Mohammad Mehdi Boroumandi, Deputy Minister of Horticulture at the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, made the announcement on Thursday during the Rose Festival held in the village of Sholdereh, located in the Dodangeh District of Sari.

"Iran exports its agricultural products even to countries with the most stringent standards, a testament to the high quality of our produce and the advancement of the country's agriculture sector," Boroumandi said.

Highlighting the country's export successes, he noted that Iran exported \$1.7 billion worth of pistachios last year alone.

Boroumandi stressed the need for a shift in agricultural policy: "We must move towards trade-oriented production."

Pointing to the unique agricultural capacities of Mazandaran Province, he added, "Fifty percent of the country's kiwifruit, a large portion of citrus fruits, and a significant share of poultry and day-old chicks are produced in Mazandaran. Without a doubt, Mazandaran is the agricultural hub of Iran."

He praised local farmers and emphasized the province's importance in ensuring national food security. "Mazandaran is a vital province for us and for the Iranian people. Its farmers play a crucial role in feeding the nation."

Regarding the development of damask rose cultivation in Sari, Boroumandi mentioned that a recent meeting was held with the Minister of Agriculture Jihad and the local parliamentarian to discuss support for the agricultural sector. He said new incentives and processing facilities are being planned for the region.

He concluded by emphasizing the broader economic impact of agricultural exports: "Iran earns over \$8 billion annually from agricultural exports, a significant contribution to the national economy."

# Iran's Strategic Weakness in Overseas Mining Highlighted



TEHRAN - Iran is lagging behind in the global mining landscape due to its minimal presence in overseas mining operations, a weakness that could prove critical in today's shifting geopolitical and economic climate, warned Mohammadreza Bahraman, Vice President of Iran's Chamber of Commerce and Head of the Iran Mine House.

In an interview with ILNA, Bahraman expressed concern over the declining contribution of Iran's industry and mining sector to the country's non-oil Gross Domestic Product (GDP). According to published data, the sector's share dropped from 26.3% in 2020 to 24.5% in 2023, and further declined to below 24% in the first half of 2024.

Despite a 5.3% growth in mining and industrial activities — including crude oil and natural gas extraction — in the first half of 2024, Bahraman emphasized that the country still faces significant structural challenges.

Bahraman underlined the mining sector's crucial role in the national economy, stating that in 2023, mineral and mining companies listed on Iran's stock exchange generated \$10.6 billion in revenue, accounting for 19% of total listed company sales. Nevertheless, the net value of Iran's mineral production stood at just \$3.2 billion, ranking Iran 21st globally.

In terms of exports, Iran shipped \$12.289 billion worth of minerals during the first 11 months of 2023, comprising 28% of the country's total exports. The primary exports included steel, aluminum, and copper. By the first 11 months of 2024, the volume of mining exports reached 58.58 million tons valued at \$12.56 billion, showing a modest increase of 0.4% in volume and 1.2% in value compared to the previous year. Over half of this came from the steel, aluminum, and copper value chains.

Highlighting the global shift toward renewable energy, Bahraman noted a surge in demand for critical minerals such as lithium, nickel, cobalt, graphite, and rare earth elements — essential components for batteries, solar panels, and electric vehicles. This trend is driving countries to rethink their strategies to secure stable supplies of these key resources.

He stressed that overseas mining, or "transnational mining," has become a strategic tool globally. Nations like the U.S., China, EU members, Japan, Australia, and Norway are actively investing in foreign mines, securing supply chains through ownership, long-term contracts, and strategic partnerships.

"Over 40% of global lithium mines are controlled by U.S. companies. American

and European firms also hold major stakes in Chilean copper mines. China dominates cobalt extraction in the Democratic Republic of Congo and leads globally in mineral refining," Bahraman explained. He added that Japan and the U.S. signed agreements in 2023 and 2024 to ensure sustainable imports of key minerals such as cobalt, graphite, lithium, manganese, and nickel.

When asked about Iran's role in overseas mining, Bahraman admitted the country's negligible presence abroad. "Iran lacks effective ownership or participation in foreign mining operations. Our companies are mostly limited to domestic resources," he said. This absence, he argued, reveals deeper systemic issues, including a lack of bilateral or multilateral agreements with resource-rich nations.

"In contrast, China not only leads in extraction but also dominates refining and battery production. Australia and Canada, through smart resource management and foreign investment attraction, play vital roles in global supply," Bahraman noted.

He warned that while countries like the UAE and Saudi Arabia are actively investing in African and Latin American mining projects, Iran remains largely a bystander.

Bahraman called Iran's weak position in overseas mining a strategic vulnerability, particularly in today's global context. To address this, he proposed several measures: Creating a national roadmap for foreign investment in critical mineral mines; Forming consortia of Iranian mining companies for international ventures in Africa, Latin America, and Central Asia; Signing long-term agreements with key mineral-rich nations; Expanding domestic refining capacity to reduce dependence on mineral imports.

Bahraman also commented on Saudi Arabia's aggressive mining strategy aimed at transforming the kingdom into the Middle East's mining hub. Riyadh is negotiating with the United States to sign cooperation agreements in mining and mineral resource development.

With extensive government support, major investments, and technology partnerships, Saudi Arabia's plans appear both ambitious and achievable, he said.

"Iran has immense potential in the mining and mineral industries," Bahraman concluded. "However, to fully leverage these assets, we must invest in modern technologies, infrastructure, and international cooperation. Otherwise, countries like Saudi Arabia will take the lead — and Iran will be left behind unless it adopts and implements long-term strategic plans."

# Iran Expresses Strong Will to Boost Trade Ties With Turkey

TEHRAN - Iran is committed to expanding its trade cooperation with Turkey, emphasized Adel Najafzadeh, head of the Iran-Turkey Parliamentary Friendship Group, during a high-level meeting with his Turkish counterpart in Ankara on Friday.

Najafzadeh, who is visiting Turkey with a delegation from the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Iran's Parliament), highlighted the strategic importance of mutual relations and shared geographical and security interests. He stressed that security in Turkey is of great importance to Iran and affirmed Iran's readiness to cooperate with Turkey in combating terrorism. "Any security threat is a threat to both nations," he stated.

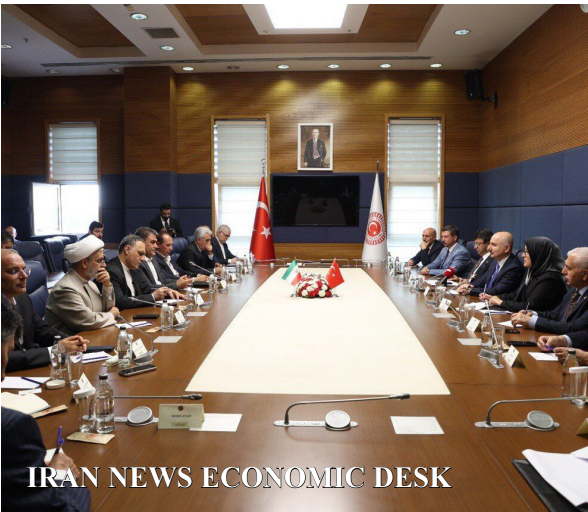
Najafzadeh underlined that Iran is pursuing new strategies to broaden bilateral cooperation and declared the Iranian Parliament's willingness to remove legal obstacles that may hinder the development of Iran-Turkey relations.

Members of the Turkish Parliamentary Friendship Group echoed these sentiments, expressing enthusiasm about the countries' vast potential for cooperation in political, economic, cultural, and security fields.

Kayhan Turkmenoglu, head of the Turkey-Iran Parliamentary Friendship Group, noted the over 400-year history of friendly ties between the two countries. He emphasized that relations have always been reciprocal and trust-based. He also advocated for increased trade volume, pointing to the strategic role of border markets between the two nations.

Turkmenoglu, who represents the city of Van in the Turkish Parliament, described terrorist groups active in both Iran and Turkey as "enemies of the Islamic world," calling for stronger bilateral cooperation to eliminate them.

He also condemned Israeli actions in Gaza and urged the



international community to raise its voice in support of a permanent ceasefire and the delivery of humanitarian aid to the region.

The Iranian parliamentary delegation was warmly received upon arrival in Ankara by Kayhan Turkmenoglu and other members of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.

On the first day of their visit, the delegation toured the Turkish Parliament and met with several key officials, including Numan Kurtulmus, Speaker of the Grand National Assembly; Adil Karaismailoglu, Chair of the Commission on Public Works, Transportation, and Tourism; Vahit Kirişçi, Chair of the Commission on Rural Affairs, Forests, and Agriculture; and Deputy Foreign Minister Nuh Yilmaz.

During the second day, the delegation held meetings with Ömer İskurt, Deputy Minister of Transport and Infrastructure; Serdar Çam, Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism; and Mustafa Tuzcu, Deputy Minister of Trade.

Discussions throughout the visit focused on reinforcing bilateral ties and enhancing parliamentary cooperation amid ongoing regional developments. Specific topics included cross-border markets, the opening of new border crossings, strengthening transportation and transit routes, cultural and tourism exchanges, regional partnerships, and joint efforts in border security and counterterrorism.

Najafzadeh also conveyed an official invitation from the Speaker of Iran's Parliament to the Speaker of the Turkish Parliament to visit Tehran.

Members of the Iranian delegation include Seyyed Jamal Mousavi, Mohammad Mirzaei, Rouhollah Lak Aliabadi, Mohammad Alijani, and Yaghub Rezazadeh.

## Iran Strengthens Tourism Diplomacy With UAE and Mexico



TEHRAN - In a bid to enhance regional and international tourism cooperation, Iran's Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpey, held bilateral meetings with senior officials from the United Arab Emirates and Mexico on the sidelines of the 49th Executive Council Meeting of the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in Segovia, Spain.

In a formal meeting with Reem bint Ibrahim Al Hashimy, the UAE's Minister of State for International Cooperation, the two sides discussed ways to boost bilateral collaboration in the tourism sector. Emphasizing the deep cultural, civilizational, and geographic ties between the neighboring nations, both parties agreed that shared heritage and proximity provide a strong foundation for enhancing people-to-people connections, facilitating tourism, and strengthening intercultural exchanges.

Bandpey highlighted Iran's unique potential in health tourism, marine tourism, ecotourism, and traditional and contemporary arts. He expressed Iran's readiness to design joint tourism programs, including customized travel packages, art tours, and cultural exchange initiatives.

Minister Al Hashimy welcomed Iran's proposals, describing the development of tourism ties as a strategic necessity and a practical step toward deepening regional integration. She expressed hope that with mutual planning and concrete actions, the two countries could soon witness a significant leap in tourism, cultural, and economic interactions.

Toward the end of the meeting, the Emirati minister presented the candidacy of a UAE-supported nominee for the position of Secretary-General of the UNWTO and requested Iran's support. The Iranian delegation stated that it would make a final decision based on a comprehensive review of all candidates' credentials, professional qualifications, and alignment with Iran's national interests.

In a separate meeting with top tourism officials from Mexico, the Iranian delegation emphasized strategic collaboration in areas such as human resource training, destination branding, and tourist exchange programs. Mexico also formally requested Iran's support for its candidate for the UNWTO Secretary-General position.

## Iran and Ghana Emphasize Expansion of Tourism Cooperation



TEHRAN - In a high-level meeting between the Deputy Minister of Tourism of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Tourism of Ghana, both sides underscored the importance of enhancing cooperation in health tourism, ecotourism, and called for reforms in the human resources structure of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpey, Iran's Deputy Minister of Tourism under the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, met with a top-level delegation from Ghana — including the country's Foreign Minister, Tourism Minister, and Ambassador — on the sidelines of the 49th Executive Council Meeting of the UNWTO held in Segovia, Spain.

During the meeting, Mohseni Bandpey highlighted Iran's strategic capabilities in health tourism and proposed expanding bilateral collaboration in this sector. The proposal was met with strong interest from the Ghanaian delegation. Both sides also explored areas of cooperation in ecotourism and the exchange of experience in nature-based tourism.

They agreed to initiate expert-level discussions between relevant institutions in both countries to implement the proposed collaborations.

The two delegations also pointed to the long-standing positive bilateral relations and coordinated voting patterns in international forums. They reiterated their commitment to mutual support in multilateral organizations. This political alignment, they noted, provides a strong foundation for boosting cultural and tourism ties between Iran and Ghana.

Another key point of discussion was the current structure of human resources within the UNWTO. A Ghanaian candidate for the position of Secretary-General of the organization outlined his proposed plans and vision.



## Indonesia Quarry Landslide Death Toll Hits 17

JAKARTA (Dispatches) - Indonesian authorities will continue searching today for eight people trapped in a rock collapse at a quarry in West Java, where the death toll has reached 17 with six injured, the search and rescue agency Basarnas said.

The toll, as reported by the victims' families, is provisional, the agency said in a statement late Saturday.

The site of Friday's collapse in Cirebon is dangerous and "does not meet safety standards for workers", West Java Governor Dedi Mulyadi posted on Instagram.

The Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry said in a statement it would investigate the cause of the collapse and conduct an assessment to identify any potential further landslides.



## China Accuses Hegseth of Vilifying Remarks at Security Forum



BEIJING (Dispatches) - China has protested to the United States over "vilifying" remarks made by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, the foreign ministry said on Sunday, while accusing it of deliberately ignoring calls for peace from regional nations.

China has objected to Hegseth calling it a threat in the Indo-Pacific, the ministry added, describing his comments at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on Saturday as "deplorable" and "intended to sow division".

"Hegseth deliberately ignored the call for peace and development by countries in the region, and instead touted the Cold War mentality for bloc confrontation, vilified China with defamatory allegations, and falsely called China a 'threat'," the ministry said on its website.

Hegseth had called on allies in the Indo-Pacific region to spend more on defence after warning of the "real and potentially imminent" threat from China.

"The United States has deployed offensive weaponry in the South China Sea and kept stoking flames and creating tensions in the Asia-Pacific, which are turning the region into a powder keg," the ministry added in the statement.

As part of Washington's longstanding defence ties with the Philippines, the U.S. military this year deployed Typhon launchers that can fire missiles to hit targets in both China and Russia from the island of Luzon.

China and the Philippines contest sovereignty over some islands and atolls in the South China Sea, with growing maritime run-ins between their coast guards as both vie to patrol the waters.

## India Changes Tactics Worked Well in Conflict With Pakistan



SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - India switched tactics after suffering losses in the air on the first day of conflict with Pakistan earlier this month and established a decisive advantage before the neighbours announced a ceasefire three days later, India's highest ranking general said.

The heaviest fighting in decades between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan was sparked by an April 22 attack in Indian Kashmir that killed 26 people, most of them tourists. New Delhi blamed the incident on "terrorists" backed by Pakistan, a charge denied by Islamabad.

On May 7, Indian jets bombed what New Delhi called "terrorist infrastructure" sites across the border. Pakistan has said it downed six Indian planes, including at least three Rafale fighters, in the initial clashes.

The ceasefire was announced on May 10 after bitter fighting in which both sides used fighter jets, missiles, drones and artillery.

General Anil Chauhan, India's chief of defense staff, said in an interview that India suffered initial losses in the air, but declined to give details.

"What was important is, why did these losses occur, and what we'll do after that," he told Reuters on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue security forum in Singapore, referring to the Pakistani claim of downing jets.

# Hamas Seeks Changes in U.S. Gaza Proposal

CAIRO (Dispatches) - Hamas said on Saturday it was seeking amendments to a U.S.-backed proposal for a temporary ceasefire with Israel in Gaza, but President Donald Trump's envoy rejected the group's response as "totally unacceptable."

The Palestinian militant group said it was willing to release 10 living hostages and hand over the bodies of 18 dead in exchange for Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons. But Hamas reiterated demands for an end to the war and withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, conditions Israel has rejected.

A Hamas official described the group's response to the proposals from Trump's special Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff as "positive" but said it was seeking some amendments. The official did not elaborate on the changes being sought.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that while his government had agreed to Witkoff's outline, Hamas was continuing its rejection of the plan. "Israel will continue its action for the return of our hostages and the defeat of Hamas," he said in a statement.

Earlier on Saturday, Hamas issued a statement saying: "This response aims to achieve a permanent ceasefire, a complete withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, and to ensure the flow of humanitarian aid to our people in the Strip."

The proposals would see a 60-day truce and the exchange of 28 of the 58 hostages still held in Gaza for more than 1,200 Palestinian prisoners and detainees, along with the entry of humanitarian aid into the enclave.

Senior Hamas official Basem Naim later denied any rejection of Witkoff's proposal but said Israel's response was incompatible with what had been agreed, and accused the U.S. envoy of acting with "complete bias" in favour of Israel.

A Palestinian official familiar with the talks told Reuters that among amendments Hamas is seeking is the release of the hostages in three phases over the 60-day truce and more aid distribution in different areas. Hamas also wants guarantees the deal will lead to a permanent ceasefire, the official said.

Israel has previously rejected Hamas' conditions, instead demanding the complete disarmament of the group and its dismantling as a military and governing force, along with the return of all 58 remaining hostages.

Trump said on Friday he believed a ceasefire agreement was close after the latest proposals, and the White House said on Thursday that Israel had agreed to the terms.

Saying he had received Hamas' response, Witkoff wrote in a posting on X: "It is totally unacceptable and only takes us



backward. Hamas should accept the framework proposal we put forward as the basis for proximity talks, which we can begin immediately this coming week."

On Saturday, the Israeli military said it had killed Mohammad Sinwar, Hamas' Gaza chief on May 13, confirming what Netanyahu said earlier this week.

Sinwar, the younger brother of Yahya Sinwar, the group's deceased leader and mastermind of the October 2023 attack on Israel, was the target of an Israeli strike on a hospital in southern Gaza. Hamas has neither confirmed nor denied his death.

The Israeli military, which relaunched its air and ground campaign in March following a two-month truce, said on Saturday it was continuing to hit targets in Gaza, including sniper posts and had killed what it said was the head of a Hamas weapons manufacturing site.

The campaign has cleared large areas along the boundaries of the Gaza Strip, squeezing the population

back.

Israel imposed a blockade on all supplies entering the enclave at the beginning of March in an effort to weaken Hamas and has found itself under increasing pressure from an international community shocked by the desperate humanitarian situation the blockade has created.

On Saturday, aid groups said dozens of World Food Programme trucks carrying flour to Gaza bakeries had been hijacked by armed groups and subsequently looted by people desperate for food after weeks of mounting hunger.

"After nearly 80 days of a total blockade, communities are starving and they are no longer willing to watch food pass them by," the WFP said in a statement.

The incident was the latest in a series that has underscored the shaky security situation hampering the delivery of aid into Gaza, following the easing of a weeks-long Israeli blockade earlier this month.

The United Nations said on Friday the situation in Gaza is the worst since the start of the war 19 months ago, with the entire population facing the risk of famine despite a resumption of limited aid deliveries earlier this month.

"The aid that's being sent now makes a mockery of the mass tragedy unfolding under our watch," Philippe Lazzarini, head of the main U.N. relief organization for Palestinians, said in a message on X.

# Pro-EU and MAGA Visions Clash in Poland's Closely Fought Presidential Runoff

WARSAW (Dispatches) - Poland held a knife-edge presidential election on Sunday which was to determine whether the largest country in the European Union's eastern wing cements its place in the bloc's mainstream or turns towards MAGA-style nationalism.

Turnout holds the key to the contest between Rafal Trzaskowski of ruling centrists Civic Coalition (KO), who holds a narrow lead, and Karol Nawrocki, backed by nationalists Law and Justice (PiS).

Parliament holds most power in Poland but the president can veto legislation so the vote is being watched closely in neighbouring Ukraine, as well as in Russia, the U.S. and across the EU.

Both candidates agree on the need to spend heavily on defence, as U.S. President Donald Trump is demanding from Europe, and to continue supporting Ukraine in its fight against Russia's three-year-old invasion.

But while Trzaskowski sees Ukraine's future membership of NATO as essential for Poland's security, Nawrocki has recently said he would not ratify it as president as this could draw the alliance into a war with Russia.

Trzaskowski says strong relations with both Brussels and Washington are essential for Poland's security, but Nawrocki, who met Trump in the White House in May, prioritises relations with the United States.

If Nawrocki wins, he is likely to follow a similar path to President Andrzej Duda, a PiS ally who has used his veto power to block the government's efforts to undo the previous PiS administration's judicial reforms which the EU says undermined the independence of the courts.

Coming around a year-and-a-half since Prime Minister Donald Tusk took office, the vote provides the stiffest test yet of support for his broad coalition government, with Nawrocki presenting the ballot as a referendum on its actions.



Opinion polls show that the difference between the candidates is within the margin of error.

In 2023, huge queues outside polling stations in large cities forced some to stay open later than planned. Analysts said that high participation by younger, liberal, urban Poles was crucial in securing a majority for Tusk.

Trzaskowski is hoping that such scenes will be repeated on Sunday.

"Encourage everyone, so that as many Poles as possible vote in the presidential election," he told a rally in Wloclawek, central Poland, on Friday.

Nawrocki, who draws inspiration from United States President Donald Trump and his Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement, told supporters in Biala Podlaska in the country's east that "these elections could be

decided by single votes".

The two candidates also differ on social issues, with Trzaskowski favouring the liberalisation of abortion laws and introduction of civil partnerships for LGBT couples, while Nawrocki says predominantly Catholic Poland should reject such moves.

The first round of the election on May 18 saw a surge in support for the anti-establishment far-right, suggesting that the KO-PiS duopoly that has dominated Polish politics for a generation may be starting to fracture.

Nevertheless, after a tumultuous campaign in which Nawrocki in particular faced a slew of negative media reports about his alleged past conduct, once again candidates representing the two main parties are facing off in the second round.

PiS has traditionally enjoyed high support in small towns and rural areas, especially in the south and east. These areas are typically more socially conservative than larger cities and poorer, creating a sense of exclusion that PiS has tapped into.

"They want to build a Poland for the elites," Nawrocki told voters in Biala Podlaska, referring to his opponents from KO.

"I am simply one of you, I am a citizen of the Polish state who has travelled a long road to be able to today face a person who is the creation of a political laboratory!"

KO, meanwhile, campaigns on a pro-European centrist agenda that appeals to more liberal-minded Poles who mainly live in cities or bigger towns.

Trzaskowski took heart from the turnout at a rally in Ciechanow, central Poland.

"Looking at this mobilisation, I see how much hope you have - hope in a future in which Poland plays a leading role in the European Union," he said.

# Russia Blames Illegal Interference After Deadly Bridge Collapse

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - At least seven people were killed late yesterday and dozens injured after a bridge collapsed onto a railway in a Russian region bordering Ukraine, officials said, in an incident the railway operator blamed on "illegal interference".

A train travelling from the Russian border town of Klimovo to the capital Moscow was derailed in the incident, authorities said, without giving details.

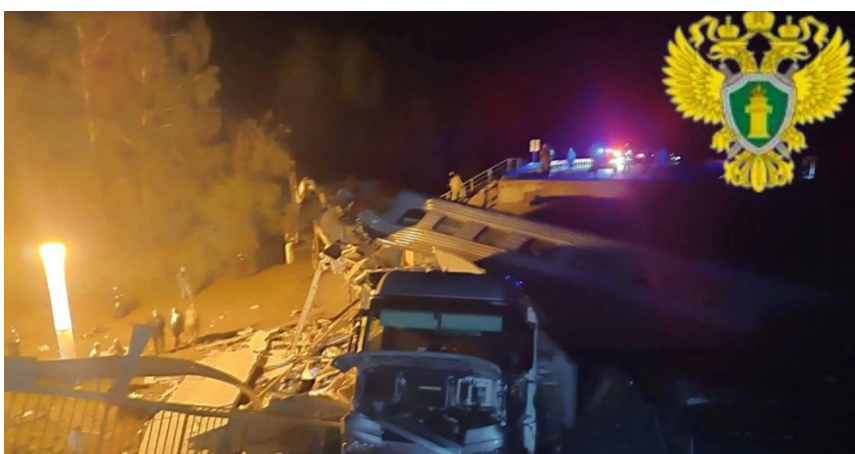
Videos showed rescuers working at the site of a large mound of rubble covering what appeared to be a train belonging to national operator Russian Railways, while another showed people shouting in distress.

"There are seven dead as a result of the collapse of a bridge onto railway tracks," Aleksandr Bogomaz, the Bryansk region's governor, wrote on Telegram.

At least 35 others were injured, including three children, he added.

Moscow Railways, a state-owned subsidiary, said a passenger train derailed "between Klimov and Moscow due to the collapse of a road bridge span, as a result of illegal interference in the operation of transport".

The incident happened at 10:44pm (1944 GMT) between Pilshino and Vygonichi stations in the Bryansk region, the railway operator said on Telegram.



The incident did not affect other train traffic, the firm added.

In one video posted on social media, someone can be heard screaming as eyewitnesses rush to find help.

"How did the bridge collapse? There are children there!" a woman can be heard shouting in the video.

Photos published online by Russian authorities showed a collapsed section of the bridge and damaged vehicles, as rescue workers were deployed overnight.

The disaster area is around 100 kilometres (62 miles) from the Ukrainian border.

Russia's emergency ministry said a team was on site, while Russian Railways said it had dispatched repair trains to the scene.

Prosecutors said they had opened an investigation.

Authorities did not explain how the incident happened and what the railway operator meant by "illegal interference".

Ukraine, which Russia has blamed for previous incidents, did not immediately comment.





## Dazzling PSG Crush Inter Milan to End Long Quest for Champions League Glory

PARIS (Dispatches) - At long last, Paris Saint-Germain have their hands on the big one. After a string of embarrassing Champions League debacles, PSG fans had come to despair of ever winning the biggest trophy in European club football.

When victory finally came on a balmy night in Munich, it proved almost too easy, with a thumping 5-0 defeat of three-time winners Inter Milan – the widest margin of victory in the competition’s 70-year history.

PSG’s astonishing triumph caps a rollercoaster journey that began in 2010 with a lunch at the Élysée Palace attended by Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, the Qatari emir whose tiny gas-rich country was poised to change European club football forever.

Fifteen years, several billion euros, and some notorious Champions League fiascos later, the team owned by Qatar Sports Investments are finally at the apex of the sport.

It’s been a steep learning curve for the Parisian upstarts, who had to first ditch their ‘Galactico’ delusions before finding the winning formula.

On paper, the team that triumphed in Munich was PSG’s least eye-catching in years, stripped of the likes of Lionel Messi, Kylian Mbappé and Neymar, the frustratingly inconsistent poster boy for the club’s “bling-bling” era.

But it was also their most accomplished – and in no small measure.

In two years at the helm, coach Luis Enrique has transformed PSG from an assortment of overpriced soloists to a youthful, cohesive and tactically disciplined unit that has delivered some of the most entertaining football this season.

The Spaniard, who plotted the 2017 “Remontada” as coach of the Blaugrana, has said he accepted the Paris job on one condition: that he be allowed to mould the team as he pleased, ditching the celebrity culture that gave top stars priority over football coherence.

The former Barcelona and Real Madrid player now has a squad ideally suited to his style of football, based on maximum possession, rapid movement and stifling pressing.

Standing in their way on Saturday was a battle-hardened squad of Champions League veterans who knew a thing or two about thwarting the most formidable attacks – as Lamine Yamal’s Barcelona found

out in their epic semi-final contests.

The final in Munich had been billed as a clash of football cultures and styles, pitting youth against experience and attacking brio against plucky defending.

Fittingly, it was 19-year-old Désiré Doué, the youngster emblematic of PSG’s new thinking, who provided the inspiration as the Parisians tore through Inter’s ageing midfield and defence, time and time again.

Doué scored twice and set up another goal in little over an hour on the field before being substituted in the second half.

He and substitute Senny Mayulu became only the third and fourth teenagers to score in a Champions League final, following Patrick Kluivert in 1995 and Carlos Alberto in 2004.

“I don’t have words,” Doué said. “But what I can say is, ‘Thank you Paris,’ we did it.”

Fresh from their Ligue 1 and French Cup titles, PSG were chasing a historic treble five years after falling short in a Champions League final played in an empty stadium, with fans locked out because of the Covid pandemic.

This time, thousands of raucous PSG supporters were in attendance, waving flags, lighting flares and drowning out their rivals from Inter, many of whose supporters left the stadium long before the final whistle.

If there were any nerves from Luis Enrique’s players it did not show as they dominated Inter from the start.

It took just 12 minutes for the French champions to go ahead with a move of speed and precision when Vitinha’s threaded pass into the box found the feet of Doué. The forward could have shot, but instead set up the onrushing Hakimi to tap into an open net.

The lead was doubled just eight minutes later, this time with more luck than precision as Doué’s shot from the right of the box deflected off Federico Dimarco and past Inter goalkeeper Yann Sommer.

The youngster got his second in the 63rd minute, sliding the ball into the bottom corner when PSG’s forwards found themselves through on goal for the umpteenth time.

## Djokovic, Sinner Flex Muscles to Reach French Open Last 16

PARIS (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic and Jannik Sinner flexed their muscles, powering into the fourth round of the French Open in straight sets, as Madison Keys saved three match points to advance alongside three other American women.

Djokovic eased past Austrian qualifier Filip Misolic 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 on Court Philippe Chatrier to keep his quest for a record-breaking 25th Grand Slam title on track.

The three-time French Open winner took just over two hours to beat 153rd-ranked Misolic and will next play Britain’s 81st-ranked Cameron Norrie for a place in the quarter-finals.

Djokovic played in the night session on centre court with the match overlapping with the Uefa Champions League final between Paris Saint-Germain and Inter Milan.

“I don’t know if it was good for me to get this scheduled slot, because it was interesting, the crowd was really following the (football) game,” he said.

“And I could hear once they (PSG) scored, and it was way too many times that they were celebrating. I was like, ‘Wow, there’s a lot of goals from Paris’ and ‘What’s going on?’ . So now I heard it’s 5-0, so it’s quite a result, to be honest.”



The 38-year-old faced only one break point, which he saved, while hitting just 14 unforced errors to 33 winners.

Earlier, world number one Sinner eased through 6-0, 6-1, 6-2 against outclassed world number 34 Jiri Lehecka.

“I think in early stages of Grand Slams it’s good that you don’t spend so much time, if you have the chance, on court,” said the top-

seed Italian.

“I don’t think there’s much I could improve.”

Three-time Grand Slam winner Sinner next meets Russia’s Andrey Rublev, who advanced after France’s Arthur Fils withdrew injured on Friday.

Sinner has been finding his feet since his comeback from a three-month doping ban, reaching the Italian Open final where he lost to reigning Roland Garros champion Carlos Alcaraz.

And the 23-year-old has not dropped a set in Paris -- extending his winning streak at Grand Slam events to 17 matches after titles at the 2024 US Open and Australian Open this January.

British fifth seed Jack Draper proved too strong for Brazilian teenage sensation Joao Fonseca, winning 6-2, 6-4, 6-2 to progress through to the fourth round, where he will meet Kazakh Alexander Bublik.

German third seed Zverev, who lost last year’s final to Alcaraz, won 6-2, 7-6 (7/4), 6-1 against Hamburg champion Flavio Cobolli.

“It was quite hot today, and I definitely felt it on the court,” said Zverev.

## Indiana Finish Off New York to Reach First NBA Finals Since 2000

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - It will be the Indiana Pacers against the Oklahoma City Thunder in the 2025 NBA Finals.

The Pacers finished off the New York Knicks on Saturday, winning 125-108 in Game 5 of the Western Conference finals after a third-quarter rally. It will be their first NBA Finals appearance since 2000, back when Reggie Miller and Jalen Rose starred while Larry Bird coached.

The Pacers players entered Gainbridge Fieldhouse decked out in all black, a shot at the Knicks doing the same last year, and fulfilled their promise of a funeral. They shot lights out, going 17-of-33 (51.5%) from 3-point range, and punished nearly all of the Knicks’ mistakes, with 34 points off 17 turnovers.

The Indiana offense was once again a beautiful machine, continuing



a postseason in which they’ve outraced the Milwaukee Bucks, Cleveland Cavaliers and now the Knicks. The epic comebacks will be better remembered, but it’s the Pacers’ ability to explode at any moment that has made them so different. It’s what happened in the third quarter, when the team jumped out to a 16-point lead they never relinquished.

Pascal Siakam led all scorers with 31 points on 10-of-18 shooting with five rebounds and three assists, while Tyrese Haliburton shook off a slow first quarter for 21 points and 13 assists. The Pacers’ biggest two-way impact came from Andrew Nembhard, who had 14 points, eight assists and six steals.

OG Anunoby led the Knicks with 24 points.

Thunder heavily favored over Pacers in NBA Finals

## Piastrri on Pole as McLaren Lock Out Front Row in Spain



BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Formula One leader Oscar Piastri seized pole position from teammate and title rival Lando Norris by a hefty margin as dominant McLaren locked out the front row in Spanish Grand Prix qualifying.

Red Bull’s Max Verstappen, last year’s winner, qualified third fastest in the same time as Mercedes’ George Russell, who will start fourth because the reigning champion finished his lap first.

Piastri had set a target time of one minute and 11.836 seconds in the top 10 shootout but Norris went 0.017 quicker thanks to an opportunistic aerodynamic tow, with McLaren still in a league of their own despite stricter front wing flex tests.

Norris, winner in Monaco from pole last Sunday to close the gap at the top to three points, managed to improve further to 1:11.755 before Piastri clinched pole with a brilliant final lap of 1:11.546 – 0.209 seconds quicker around the Circuit de Catalunya.

The pole was the Australian’s fourth in nine races so far this season.

“It wasn’t the perfect lap but I think around here with the tyres going off so much through the lap it’s very tough to do that,” said Piastri, who said over the radio that Norris’ slipstream was ‘cheeky’.

“I’m very happy with all the work we’ve put in.”

Norris said he had the pace but made a couple of small mistakes.

“Just a couple of little mistakes. Turn One, where you don’t want to make a mistake because it harms the tyres for the rest of the lap. A couple of little squiggles there. And Turn Four as well,” he explained.

## Messi Double as Miami Hit Five Past Columbus



FORT LAUDERDALE (Dispatches) - Lionel Messi scored twice and created two more as Inter Miami warmed up for the Club World Cup in style with a 5-1 win over the Columbus Crew in Major League Soccer.

Miami will open the new FIFA tournament on June 14 against Egyptian and African champions Al Ahly and after a major dip in form they have found their touch again in their last two MLS games.

A 4-2 win over Montreal in midweek, with Messi and Luis Suarez scoring two goals each, eased the tensions around Javier Mascherano’s team and their renewed confidence was evident from the outset.

Miami were helped by some uncharacteristically loose defending from Columbus, who have been one of the most consistent performers in MLS over the past three seasons but were easily opened up by Messi and Company.

Argentine Tadeo Allende opened the scoring in the 13th minute when Messi, who had dropped deep into midfield, sent him goalwards with a long ball over the top and the forward confidently slotted home.

Two minutes later, Columbus’s Guatemalan goalkeeper Nicholas Hagen, standing in for the injured Patrick Schulte, then gifted Miami’s second when he hesitated with the ball at his feet and passed straight to Messi, of all people, with the World Cup winner then attempting to chip him.

Hagen scrambled, getting an outstretched palm on the ball but the shot looped into the net to make it 2-0 and leave the visitors in deep trouble.

Messi made it three in the 24th minute when Sergio Busquets spotted the Crew defence were asleep and floated a pass over the top which Messi raced on to before lobbing the advancing Hagen.

Columbus gave themselves a glimmer of hope with a thundering header from Cesar Ruvalcaba in the 58th minute but six minutes later Miami had restored their three goal advantage.