

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei in His Message for Hajj Pilgrims Said Muslim Countries Must Cut Off All Aid to the Zionist Regime and Prevent It From Committing Further Savage Acts Against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip

IRAN NEWS

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi Have Expressed Their Eagerness to Enhance Bilateral Relations Between Their Countries

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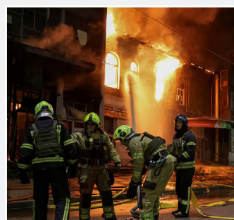


Iran Plans to Reopen Tourism Corridor with Egypt

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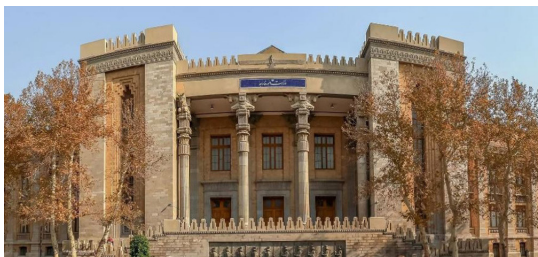
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Six Killed, 80 Wounded in Intense Russian Air Attacks on Ukraine



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Tehran Slams Racist U.S. Travel Ban Targeting Iranians, Other Muslim Nations



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran has condemned U.S. President Donald Trump's travel ban targeting Iranian citizens and people from several other majority Muslim countries, saying the move reveals Washington's "deep hostility" toward Iranians.

In a statement on Saturday, Alireza Hashemi Raja, the director general for Iranian expatriates at Iran's Foreign Ministry, described the move as clear evidence of the dominance of a "supremacist and racist" mindset among American policy-makers.

"The US administration's decision to restrict Iranian nationals solely based on their religion and nationality not only shows deep hostility from the US decision-makers toward the Iranian people and Muslims but also violates fundamental principles of international law, including the prohibition of discrimination and [adherence to] basic human rights," he said.

Hashemi Raja reiterated that denying hundreds of millions of people the right to travel based only on their nationality or religion is an act of racial discrimination and systemic racism by the ruling establishment in the U.S.

He also called on the United Nations and human rights organizations to openly oppose the US's unilateral and rights-violating policies, saying that the Islamic Republic of Iran will take all necessary measures to protect the rights of its citizens from the effects of this discriminatory decision.

Trump on Wednesday issued a sweeping order implementing a complete travel ban for nationals from 12 countries, while imposing restrictions on travelers from seven additional countries.

The banned countries include Afghanistan, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen.

The entry of people from seven other countries, namely Burundi, Cuba, Laos, Sierra Leone, Togo, Turkmenistan, and Venezuela, will be partially restricted.

CBI Governor Meets Head of BRICS New Development Bank



TEHRAN - The Governor of the Central Bank of Iran met with the President of the BRICS New Development Bank in Shanghai to discuss expanding financial and banking cooperation with BRICS member states.

Mohammad Reza Farzin, following his participation in the meeting of central bank governors and finance ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Beijing, met with Dilma Rousseff, President of the BRICS New Development Bank. The meeting focused on enhancing monetary and banking interactions with the BRICS bloc. During the talks, Rousseff voiced her support for Iran's accession to the BRICS bank in upcoming decision-making sessions.

During their meeting in Shanghai, both Farzin and Rousseff emphasized the vital role of the BRICS New Development Bank in advancing the goals of developing nations and emerging economies. They also referenced the importance of establishing the SCO Development Bank and highlighted Iran's active membership in international and regional financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank Group, the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

Farzin noted that the Islamic Republic of Iran, in addition to holding a seat on the IMF Board of Governors, also leads a constituency of eight member states within the organization. He also pointed to Iran's strong recent economic performance, along with its geographic, natural, and human resource advantages. Farzin reaffirmed Iran's readiness to deepen financial and banking ties with BRICS member nations through the BRICS New Development Bank.

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BRICS Members Eager to Expand Economic Cooperation

TEHRAN - Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf stated that member states of the BRICS group are strongly motivated to deepen economic collaboration, particularly in opposition to the United States' unilateralist policies.

Speaking upon his return to Tehran from a multi-nation Latin American tour that included Venezuela, Cuba, and Brazil, Qalibaf emphasized that during the recent BRICS Parliamentary Forum, the heads of legislative bodies expressed united stances against U.S. unilateralism and voiced strong interest in enhancing mutual economic ties.

According to the public relations office of Majlis, Qalibaf arrived at Tehran's Mehrabad Airport on Friday, following a diplomatic mission that began the previous Saturday and culminated in Brazil.

Reflecting on the first leg of the trip, Qalibaf highlighted productive discussions with senior Venezuelan officials, including the president, foreign minister, and transport minister, who also chairs the countries' joint economic commission.

He described the bilateral talks as a positive step forward for political and economic relations, noting the potential for expanded cooperation in sectors such as energy, agriculture, and technology. A key focus was an agreement on customs tariff liberalization, which is expected to be finalized in the coming months.

In addition to formal meetings, he also engaged with religious leaders, academics, and students, with discussions centering on U.S. foreign policy and the crisis in Gaza. He also visited a permanent exhibition of Iranian knowledge-based companies in Caracas, calling it a promising sign of growing bilateral scientific and industrial ties.

In Havana, Qalibaf praised Cuba as a nation of independence and resistance, acknowledging its long-standing challenges under economic sanctions. Meetings with Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel and parliamentary leaders underscored the potential for collaboration in agriculture and energy, particularly within the country's refinery infrastructure.

One notable development during the visit was the presentation of four Iranian nuclear medicine kits to the Cuban president, symbolizing Tehran's intent to expand cooperation in

the medical and pharmaceutical sectors.

The final leg of Qalibaf's trip took him to Brasília, where he participated in the 11th BRICS Parliamentary Forum. He described the bloc—comprising nearly half the world's population and a significant share of global trade and GDP—as a vital platform for Iran's regional and international diplomacy.

Qalibaf underscored the consensus among BRICS parliament heads against U.S. unilateralism and their mutual commitment to deepening economic relations. He also met with Brazilian Senate and House leaders to discuss trade imbalances. While bilateral trade volume stands at €8 billion, only €1 billion accounts for Iranian exports, which he said could be improved by leveraging Iran's capacity in agriculture and petrochemicals.

Qalibaf also noted that the 12th BRICS Parliamentary Forum will be held in New Delhi in 2026. During a meeting with the Speaker of India's Parliament, the two sides discussed accelerating the implementation of agreements and addressing development delays in key projects such as Iran's Chabahar port.

The Iranian Embassy in Brazil also hosted a cultural event to commemorate the 36th anniversary of the passing of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, attended by diplomats, academics, and students. Qalibaf thanked the embassy for organizing the tribute.

He concluded that despite the tight schedule, the trip yielded substantial results in parliamentary diplomacy and economic engagement. He emphasized that active parliamentary diplomacy is essential for advancing Iran's foreign policy and public diplomacy goals.

He was accompanied by a high-level delegation including Ahmad Naderi, head of the Iran-Brazil parliamentary friendship group; Maryam Abdollahi, its deputy chair; Mostafa Taheri, chair of the parliamentary AI caucus; Gholamreza Tajgardo, chair of the Budget and Planning Commission; Salar Velayatnadar and Jalil Mokhtar, heads of the Venezuela and Cuba friendship groups respectively; and Mohammad Rashidi from the Agriculture Commission.

No Desire for Nuclear Weapons, It Contradicts Our Core Beliefs

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araqchi has reiterated that Iran has no intention of acquiring nuclear weapons, emphasizing that the country's position is grounded in religious principles and the explicit fatwa of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

"We have no desire to obtain nuclear weapons, as this matter is rooted in our beliefs," Araqchi said in an interview with Egypt's Al-Nile News Network during his visit to Cairo on June 1.

"It goes back to the fatwa of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khamenei, who declared possessing such weapons as haram (forbidden). And since we are a religious nation, deviating from this fatwa is impossible for us," he added.

He noted that Tehran continues to engage in dialogue and nuclear negotiations to demonstrate the peaceful nature of its nuclear program. "And if there are questions or concerns, we are ready to address them through confidence-building," he said.

Araqchi said that Iran will continue pursuing diplomacy. "Iran remains capable of demonstrating its goodwill and is prepared to take steps toward rebuilding trust."

"This will nullify one of the most significant claims made by the Zionist regime," Araqchi noted. "We are fully aware that the Zionist regime possesses dozens of nuclear warheads, yet it accuses Iran of seeking nuclear arms. But our position is clear: our nuclear program is peaceful and poses no threat to any party or country."

Touching on recent developments in the Red Sea, Araqchi linked the events to regional



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dynamics. "What is happening in the Red Sea is, in fact, the support of the Yemeni people for Gaza," he said.

"According to the information we have, the ships targeted in the Red Sea were either Israeli-owned or heading toward Israeli destinations," he added.

He also noted a temporary ceasefire between Yemen's Ansarullah movement and the United States, which he said has resulted in "relative stability in the region."

"Undoubtedly, the root cause of all the problems in the region is the Zionist regime," he stated, adding, "What we are witnessing in the Red Sea dynamics is one of the many consequences of the crimes this regime commits against the Palestinian people."

Relentless Israeli bombardment and siege have left at least 54,381 Palestinians martyred and more than 124,054 injured in the Gaza Strip, according to local health authorities.

Araqchi also reaffirmed Iran's determination to foster strong and constructive relations with neighboring and regional countries, particularly Arab states.

"However, there is a reality we must acknowledge—the influence of Zionist regime propaganda and policies, which aim to portray Iran as a regional threat instead of themselves," he noted.

"In fact, it is the Zionist regime that poses a genuine threat to the entire region," he added.

Describing Arab countries as "friends and neighbors" and, more importantly, as "Muslim brothers," Araqchi said the foreign policy of Iran's current administration is firmly rooted in the principle of good neighborliness and in strengthening regional cooperation.

A 10-Year Outlook in the Global Economy



By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Based on evidence and analyses presented in various sources, it appears that the world in 2025 is facing significant signs of an economic crisis. This crisis has emerged due to several factors, including geopolitical tensions, rising global debt, financial market volatility, and persistent inflation. Global economic growth in 2025 has declined to 2.4%, which is 0.4 percentage points lower than previous forecasts. This slowdown is more noticeable in both developed and developing economies.

Forecasts indicate a drop in U.S. growth to the range of 1.7% to 2.2%, and in the Eurozone to around 1.5%. Moreover, corporate debt has reached \$22.1 trillion, with nearly half of that debt at risk of a credit downgrade. In the United States, consumer debt has risen to \$16 trillion, and credit card debt has reached \$1 trillion. The debt-to-income ratio has climbed to 145%, indicating growing financial pressure on households.

Although global inflation is projected to decrease from 4% in 2024 to 3.6% in 2025, it remains above the historical averages for the global economy. Food inflation, especially in developing countries, has reached double-digit levels, exacerbating inequality. In the U.S., core inflation remains at 2.8%, and new tariffs may further intensify inflationary pressures.

Stock markets in Europe and the U.S. have experienced sharp declines, while investors have shifted towards safe-haven assets such as gold and the dollar. The cryptocurrency market is also under selling pressure, with many investors liquidating their assets. The trade war between the United States and China, along with heavy tariffs on imports, has disrupted global supply chains and increased production costs. Tensions in the Middle East and the war in Ukraine have also negatively impacted energy markets and economic stability.

Central banks are caught between controlling inflation and preventing economic recession. Some, like the Federal Reserve in the U.S., may consider lowering interest rates, but inflation driven by tariffs is slowing this process. Countries such as Canada and Mexico are at risk of recession due to their dependence on trade with the U.S. China is also facing a slowdown, with growth dropping to around 4%. In Europe, the automotive and banking industries are under growing pressure due to tariffs and the debt crisis.

Under these conditions, the above evidence suggests that the global economy is on the verge of a multidimensional crisis. The combination of heavy debts, high inflation, trade tensions, and financial volatility has created a situation reminiscent of the 2008 crisis. However, monetary and fiscal policies by governments may partially alleviate the severity of the crisis in the consumer sector. If this trend continues, the current crisis could become deeper than previous ones and result in an economic deterioration not seen in the past 80 years.

Iran has only one viable path to escape this crisis: promoting a culture of austerity, reducing household consumption, and cutting government expenses.

Spreading awareness and understanding of the situation will lay the groundwork for national comprehension and cooperation.

Iran's New INS-Guided Missile Part of New Models of Confrontation With Enemies



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - A high-ranking Iranian military official has hailed a newly-unveiled GPS-independent ballistic missile as a key piece of defensive hardware that is in the service of the "new models" of confrontation with the country's adversaries.

Deputy Head of Science, Research, and Technology at the General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, Brigadier General Mohammad Mehdienejad Nouri made the remarks.

He was addressing the capabilities of the country's Qassem-Basir missile, which was unveiled by Defense Minister Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh on May 4.

The official identified the projectile as an instance of "significant achievement" in the field of cyber technology as well as the areas of designing and manufacturing military equipment.

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Iran, Singapore Emphasize Expansion of Maritime and Aviation Cooperation

TEHRAN - The Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) met with the Senior Advisor to the Minister of Transport of Singapore in London, highlighting the importance of expanding bilateral cooperation in maritime and aviation sectors.

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in London shared a message on social media platform X (formerly Twitter), stating: "Seyyed Ali Mousavi, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Iran to the IMO, and Yap Ong Heng, Special Envoy and Senior Advisor to the Minister of Transport of Singapore, held a productive and cordial meeting."

Ministry of Energy Aims to Attract Investors by Improving Business Environment



TEHRAN - Minister of Energy has criticized the sharp decline in investment in the country's electricity sector, emphasizing that the ministry's current policy is to make the business environment more appealing to investors.

Abbas Aliabadi made the remarks on Tuesday during a meeting with public relations managers from the country's water and electricity companies. The session was held to coordinate efforts ahead of the summer peak consumption period.

Aliabadi stated that the issue of imbalance in the electricity sector is not new, calling it a long-standing challenge. "This is not a recent problem; it has become a historical issue," he said, recalling that he was previously invited to the Ministry in 2007 to help manage this very crisis, which resurfaced again under the 14th administration.

Stressing the importance of a clear understanding of the challenges in order to implement effective solutions, Aliabadi said that the results will depend heavily on the policies and measures taken.

Highlighting the capabilities of Iran's electricity industry, the minister added, "Today, even major global powers, fully aware of Iran's capabilities, are unable to impose sanctions in this sector."

Aliabadi admitted, however, that Iran has not implemented effective consumption policies. "This mismanagement has led to capital flight," he said.

He also pointed to the artificially low electricity prices in Iran as a contributing factor to excessive consumption. "Now, it's common to see an air conditioner running in nearly every room," he said. "Due to rising housing costs, builders have been reducing insulation and wall thickness. Cheap electricity is compensating for poor construction standards."

Iran Showcases Agricultural Achievements at Belarus Agro-Food Expo in Minsk



TEHRAN - The Republic of Belarus is hosting the international food and agriculture exhibition Belagro 2025, featuring a strong presence from the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iranian companies are showcasing a range of industrial agricultural machinery and food products at the event.

According to the Iranian Embassy in Belarus, Belagro 2025 is being held concurrently with the Agro SHOS exhibition — an event for member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) — from June 2 to 6 at the Minsk International Exhibition Center.

Participants include companies from Belarus, SCO member states, CIS countries, and several Arab, Asian, and African nations. Among them, seven Iranian manufacturers are displaying their agricultural and industrial innovations as well as food products to a broad international audience.

A delegation from Iran's Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, including Majid Anjafi, Deputy Minister for Crop Affairs, and Karim Zolfaghari, Head of the Agricultural Mechanization and Industries Development Center, attended the opening ceremony of the exhibition.

Accompanied by Iran's Ambassador to Belarus, Alireza Sanai, the Iranian delegation toured the exhibition booths, paying special attention to the national pavilion of the Islamic Republic of Iran. They also held bilateral talks on the sidelines with officials from Belarus's Ministry of Agriculture and Food to explore avenues for expanding cooperation.

During the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Food Security Conference, held alongside the exhibition, Deputy Minister Anjafi stressed the importance of international engagement, regional alliances, and joint efforts to address global agricultural challenges. He reaffirmed Iran's readiness to expand scientific collaboration in the agricultural sector with SCO members, promote trade in agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides, and enhance the exchange of agricultural machinery, food products, and dairy equipment.

Iran Plans to Reopen Tourism Corridor with Egypt



TEHRAN - Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Seyyed Reza Salehi Amiri, announced the government's strategic plan to reopen tourism ties with Egypt, and to activate a shared Sassanid heritage route with Iraq, during a press conference held this morning at the Azadi Citadel in Tehran.

Salehi Amiri emphasized that Egypt remains a key Islamic and populous nation with deep civilizational and religious links to Iran. "There are no serious barriers between the two countries. In Cairo, streets still bear the names Iran, Tehran, and Mossadegh," he stated, highlighting the readiness on both sides to restore tourism cooperation.

He further revealed that President Raisi has ordered efforts to rebuild trust and explore pathways for collaboration, while Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian recently visited Cairo to reinforce diplomatic and cultural ties.

Salehi Amiri met with Egyptian intellectuals during his trip and noted their strong interest in rekindling relations with Iran.

The Minister outlined Iran's five-tiered tourism priorities. The top focus is on Central Asia and the Caucasus, followed by neighboring states like Turkey and Pakistan, Persian Gulf countries, and then populous Islamic nations such as Egypt, Indonesia, and Malaysia. China, India, and Russia round out the list.

Highlighting achievements, he noted significant improvements in relations with Tajikistan. Following high-level visits and agreements, tourist arrivals from Tajikistan jumped from 8,600 to 100,000. Additionally, visa waivers now allow Tajik citizens to visit cities beyond Tehran, including Mashhad and Kish.

In the case of Azerbaijan, strained ties due to an embassy incident two years ago drastically reduced tourist flows. However, through renewed diplomatic engagement, tourist numbers have rebounded to 222,000, with aims to restore pre-crisis levels of over 1.7 million.

Salehi Amiri also addressed imbalances in tourism flows with Turkey, noting that while around 860,000 Turkish tourists visited Iran, over 3.5 million Iranians traveled to Turkey. Discussions are underway to create more balanced exchanges, including through joint exhibitions attended by both countries' leaders.

On Iraq, he reported that 3.5 million Iranians visited the country annually, compared to 3,600 Iraqi visitors to Iran. "We believe this number can increase to 5 million, especially given our shared historical and cultural ties," he said, adding that efforts are underway to activate the Iran-Iraq Sassanid heritage

corridor, spanning from Firuzabad through Harsin and Bisotun to Babylon and Taq Kasra.

Salehi Amiri referenced new agreements with Pakistan and upcoming high-level participation in the International Conference of Tourism Cities to be hosted in Tehran. He described the event as a major diplomatic step in Iran's tourism diplomacy.

Addressing tourism potential with China, he criticized the low number of Chinese tourists (60,000) compared to the country's outbound tourism projections of 200 million by 2030. He called for greater effort to secure Iran's share of this market. Indonesia, Malaysia, and Russia were also named as next targets for engagement.

The Minister emphasized that Iran aims to double incoming tourists to 15 million and increase tourism revenue to over \$15 billion by the end of the seventh development plan. He called for removing bureaucratic and structural barriers and encouraged private sector investment under government policy support and supervision.

Among recent government approvals is a plan to allow tourism infrastructure around dams, rivers, and water resources in accordance with environmental regulations. Salehi Amiri highlighted marine tourism as a key focus, with 224 identified coastal points requiring coordination with military forces. He announced the arrival of Iran's first cruise ship, boasting 1,300 rooms, purchased privately and docked at Neka Port.

Salehi Amiri also previewed the upcoming Health Tourism Summit in Hamedan, describing it as a positive step forward. A new health tourism agreement is set to be signed soon by the ministers of Labor, Health, and Tourism.

He further discussed ongoing efforts to provide social security insurance for artisans and tour guides, and revealed initial agreements with Iran's tax authority to ease burdens on tourism-related businesses. Municipal tax exemptions of up to 80% have been proposed for building accommodation facilities.

In closing, the Minister reiterated the Ministry's policy of decentralization, empowering provincial directors and delegating certain authorities to professional guilds. "They are our operational arms," he said, emphasizing that the Ministry's role will focus on policy-making, support, and oversight rather than direct management.

Golestan Province Ready to Expand Trade Cooperation With Uzbekistan



TEHRAN - In a significant step toward boosting bilateral trade, the Golestan Chamber of Commerce hosted a high-level meeting with Furuddin Nasriev, the Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Iran, highlighting mutual interests in expanding economic cooperation between the two nations.

Amir Yousefi, President of the Gorgan Chamber of Commerce, welcomed the ambassador and described the visit as an honor and a valuable opportunity to strengthen bilateral relations. "This meeting is not merely a diplomatic event—it marks the beginning of a promising path in economic, commercial, and cultural cooperation between Iran and Uzbekistan," Yousefi stated.

He emphasized the historical and cultural ties between the two countries and identified key areas of potential partnership, including energy, transportation, agriculture, technology, and tourism. "The private sector plays a crucial role in sustainable development," Yousefi noted, adding that meaningful international trade thrives on trust and active engagement from entrepreneurs and businesspeople rather than solely on governmental agreements.

Highlighting Golestan Province's commitment to this effort, Yousefi announced the province's readiness to actively participate in advancing these initiatives. This includes hosting and sending trade delegations, supporting mutual investments, and implementing bilateral agreements.

According to Yousefi, Golestan exported approximately 719,000 tons of non-oil goods worth \$463 million in 2024—a 32% increase in volume and a 42% rise in value compared to the previous year. Imports reached \$63.4 million in the first nine months of the year, mainly comprising oil, soybeans, cotton, and machinery. Uzbekistan is already among Golestan's key export markets.

Erazjan Shomali, Vice President of the Gorgan Chamber, shared his personal admiration for Uzbekistan, which he visited two months

ago. "I was impressed by the country's progress, urban order, cleanliness, and precise management," he said, calling Uzbekistan a "brother nation" to Iran and a top choice for family travel.

Shomali praised the Uzbek people's ability to balance strong Islamic values with a welcoming atmosphere for foreign tourists. He proposed launching a five-star passenger train connecting Golestan to Tashkent via Turkmenistan. "This could function as a mobile hotel and enhance tourism between our regions," he suggested.

He also recommended organizing permanent or seasonal exhibitions of Uzbek products in Gorgan to introduce local goods and expand economic relations.

Saeed Safavi, also a board member, praised Uzbekistan's industrial progress, particularly in textiles, after visiting several advanced facilities in Bukhara. "The textile factories are modern and well-equipped, demonstrating the government's serious commitment to this industry," he observed.

Safavi expressed Iran's interest in importing Uzbek yarn for domestic textile production, particularly in Golestan, with the potential for re-exporting finished fabrics. He highlighted ongoing exports of fabric to Tashkent and said expanding connections with more Uzbek manufacturers could enhance trade for both countries.

In conclusion, Safavi voiced optimism that the meeting would open new doors for bilateral collaboration in textiles and related sectors, allowing the private sectors of both nations to realize their full potential.

This meeting marked a pivotal moment in Iran-Uzbekistan relations, showcasing Golestan Province's role as a dynamic hub for trade, agriculture, tourism, and industrial cooperation. With mutual respect and a long-term vision, both sides appear poised to deepen their economic partnership.

Return to the Path of Development Through Policy Reform



TEHRAN - In a visit by the First Vice President to the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), the Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade called for a revision of past non-technical policymaking to enable development organizations to return to their core functions.

Seyyed Mohammad Atabak, speaking at a meeting between First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref and IMIDRO's board of directors, expressed concern over the imposition of non-productive costs on large companies. He noted that such arbitrary measures have hindered development organizations from playing their essential role in advancing infrastructure projects.

Atabak highlighted that IMIDRO was established in recent years based on the model of IDRO (Industrial Development & Renovation Organization of Iran), with the goal of modernizing and expanding Iran's mining and mineral industries and undertaking major development projects in this sector.

He attributed the disruption of organizational structures and deviation from core responsibilities to outdated policy decisions, adding that these issues have created obstacles for IMIDRO in carrying out its development initiatives.

The minister thanked the First Vice President for his commitment to correcting unsound policies of the past and noted that certain privatization efforts, which separated profitable companies from their specialized parent organizations, diverted productive capital into superficial activities. However, he said, this trend is now being reversed under the Vice President's leadership.

Atabak also voiced concern over the energy imbalance and the escalation of certain industrial challenges into major crises. He explained that gas energy costs for large industries are now calculated based on regional prices, and any fluctuation in energy pricing could restrict investment in these sectors.

Tehran, Ankara to Boost Trade and Int'l Transport Through Resolution of Border Issues



TEHRAN - In a bid to expand bilateral trade and international transport, Iranian and Turkish officials have underscored the need to resolve existing issues at their shared border crossings. The emphasis was placed during a recent high-level meeting between Reza Akbari, Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development and Head of Iran's Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization, and Sezai Uçarmaç, Turkey's Deputy Minister of Trade and Head of Customs.

According to a report by the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, Akbari highlighted the strong relations between the two neighboring countries in recent years. He stressed that increasing trade and international transportation is a key priority for the ministry and the Iranian government. Akbari called for intensified efforts to strengthen cooperation through the resolution of border terminal challenges and the modernization of existing procedures.

He expressed hope that with continued bilateral dialogue, the removal of logistical and regulatory obstacles, and implementation of comprehensive border terminal development plans, the two countries could reach their goal of \$30 billion in annual trade.

Uçarmaç welcomed the initiative and emphasized the importance of holding technical meetings aimed at overcoming operational and infrastructural issues at the shared border. He pointed out that Iran is the second-longest land border neighbor of Turkey and that removing both software and hardware bottlenecks could significantly boost trade volume.

Meanwhile, Hedayati, Director-General of Iran's Transit and International Transport Office, presented a summary of previous bilateral agreements in the customs and transport sectors. He proposed the urgent formation of a joint committee to draft a roadmap to achieve the \$30 billion trade target. This roadmap would require formal approval and signing by senior officials from both countries—a proposal that received endorsement from the Turkish delegation.

Bangladesh to Hold Election in First Half of April 2026

DHAKA (Dispatches) - Bangladesh will hold a national election in the first half of April 2026, its de facto premier said on Friday, after a period of interim unelected government since student-led unrest in 2024 toppled then-prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

The administration led by Muhammad Yunus, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, has been running the South Asian nation of 173 million people since August, when Hasina fled to India in the face of deadly street protests against her government. Yunus' administration, however, has also faced serious discontent in recent weeks, with protests breaking out last month over wage demands and orders relating to the dismissal of public servants for misconduct without lengthy procedures.



Israeli Military to Draft 10,000 More Troops in Gaza



GAZA CITY (Dispatches) - Israel's military announced Friday the deaths of four soldiers in Gaza, saying it needed thousands more troops to press its offensive, just as the premier's coalition faces the prospect of collapse over ultra-Orthodox conscription.

News of the soldiers' deaths came as Gaza's civil defense agency reported 38 killed Friday in Israeli attacks across the territory, where Palestinians observed the Eid al-Adha holiday under the shadow of war for a second consecutive year.

Military spokesman Effie Defrin said the four soldiers were killed as they "were operating in the Khan Younis area, in a compound belonging to the Hamas terrorist organisation".

"Around six in the morning, an explosive device detonated, causing part of the structure to collapse," he said, adding that five other soldiers were wounded, one of them severely.

The deaths bring to 429 the number of Israeli soldiers killed in Gaza since the start of the ground offensive in late October 2023.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu extended his condolences to the soldiers' families, saying they "sacrificed their lives for the safety of all of us".

Israel recently stepped up its Gaza campaign in what it says is a renewed push to defeat Hamas, whose October 7, 2023 attack sparked the war.

Asked by a reporter about the issue of ultra-Orthodox conscription, which has emerged as a thorn in the side of Netanyahu's government, Defrin said "this is the need of the moment, an operational necessity".

The army was short around 10,000 soldiers, he added, including about 6,000 in combat roles, adding that "tens of thousands more notices will be issued in the upcoming draft cycle".

U.S. Job Growth Slows as Tariff Uncertainty Leaves Businesses in Limbo



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. job growth slowed in May amid uncertainty about the Trump administration's import tariffs, but solid wage growth should keep the economic expansion on track and potentially allow the Federal Reserve to delay resuming its interest rate cuts.

The ebbing labor market momentum reported by the Labor Department on Friday was underscored by sharp downward revisions that showed 95,000 fewer jobs were added in March and April than previously estimated over the two-month period.

The unemployment rate held steady at 4.2% for the third consecutive month because 625,000 people dropped out of the labor force, suggesting a lack of confidence in the jobs market. Surveys have shown that consumers are less optimistic about their prospects of finding a job in the event of being laid off.

Economists say President Donald Trump's flip-flopping on import duties has hampered businesses' ability to plan ahead. Opposition to Trump's tax-cut and spending bill from conservative Republicans in the U.S. Senate and tech billionaire Elon Musk has added another layer of uncertainty for companies.

"Cracks in the façade of labor market resilience are now starting to show and the longer the tariff uncertainty and government spending cuts continue, the worse the labor market reports are bound to be," said Scott Anderson, chief U.S. economist at BMO Capital Markets.



Six Killed, 80 Wounded in Intense Russian Air Attacks on Ukraine

KYIV (Dispatches) - Russia launched an intense missile and drone barrage at the Ukrainian capital Kyiv in the early hours of Friday, killing at least six people, Ukrainian officials said, as powerful explosions reverberated across the country.

The attacks followed a warning from Russian President Vladimir Putin, conveyed via U.S. President Donald Trump, that the Kremlin would hit back after Ukrainian drones destroyed several strategic bomber aircraft in attacks deep inside Russia.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said three emergency responders were killed in the missile and drone salvo against the capital.

Two died in an attack on the northern city of Chernihiv and at least one more in the northwestern city of Lutsk.

"Those killed in Kyiv were rescue workers who arrived at the scene of an initial strike and, unfortunately, were killed in a repeat Russian strike," Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address.

Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiba, writing on X, said Russia had "responded" to its destroyed aircraft... by attacking civilians in Ukraine... Multi-storey buildings hit. Energy infrastructure damaged."

Russia's Defence Ministry said its forces had carried out the strike on military and military-related targets in response to what it called Ukrainian "terrorist acts" against Russia.

"They gave Putin a reason to go in and bomb the hell out of them last night," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One on Friday, when asked about how Ukraine's earlier drone strikes had affected the conflict.

Zelenskyy said 80 people nationwide had been injured in the attacks, which also struck several other towns and cities. He said residents could still be trapped under rubble.

In Chernihiv, the national emergency services said two bodies were recovered from the rubble of a wrecked industrial enterprise.

In Lutsk, the body of a man was found in the ruins of an apartment block, while emergency crews kept searching for his wife. Thirty people were hurt in the city, where educational institutions and a government building were also hit.

Russian forces also struck industrial facilities and infrastructure in the western city of Ternopil, leaving parts of it without power, Mayor Serhii Nadal said.

The regional administration said the attack had injured 10 people and asked residents to temporarily stay inside due to a high concentration of toxic substances in the air after a fire.

The air force said Russia had used 407 drones, one of the largest numbers recorded in a single attack. It said 45 cruise and ballistic missiles were also fired.

Kyiv's metro transport system was disrupted by a Russian strike that hit and damaged tracks between stations, the military administration said. The state rail company said it was also diverting some trains due to rail damage outside the city.

Reuters witnesses reported a series of booming explosions powerful enough to rattle windows far from the impact sites.

Some Kyiv residents sought shelter in metro stations, or in underground car parks.

In the capital's Solomianskyi district, a Russian drone slammed into the side of an apartment building, leaving a gaping hole and burn marks, a Reuters photographer at the scene said.

Falling concrete blocks from the building crushed cars parked below. Two police investigators were examining what appeared to be the drone's engine.

Earlier in the night, Reuters reporters heard the sound of Russian kamikaze drones buzzing in the sky, accompanied by the sounds of outgoing fire from Ukrainian anti-aircraft batteries.

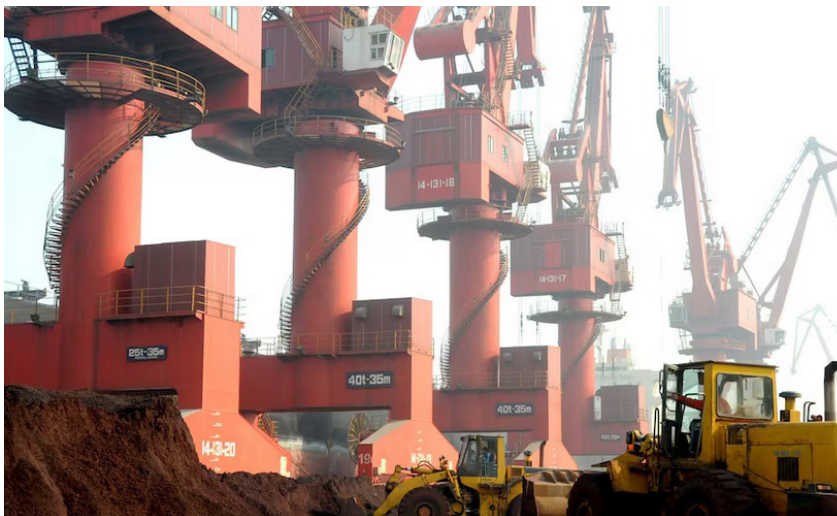
Zelenskyy called for concerted pressure on Russia.

"If someone is not applying pressure and is giving the war more time to take lives - that is complicity and accountability. We must act decisively," he wrote on X.

The Ukrainian military said it had launched a pre-emptive strike overnight on the Engels and Dyagilevo airfields in the Russian regions of Saratov and Ryazan, in addition to striking at least three fuel reservoirs.

In one of the most audacious attacks of the three-year-old war between Ukraine and Russia, Ukrainian spies last weekend destroyed some of Russia's strategic bomber aircraft on the ground using quadcopter drones hidden in wooden sheds.

China Issues Rare Earth Licenses to Suppliers of Top 3 U.S. Automakers



BEIJING (Dispatches) - China has granted temporary export licenses to rare-earth suppliers of the top three U.S. automakers, two sources familiar with the matter said, as supply chain disruptions begin to surface from Beijing's export curbs on those materials.

At least some of the licenses are valid for six months, the two sources said, declining to be named because the information is not public. It was not immediately clear what quantity or items are covered by the approval or whether the move signals China is preparing to ease the rare-earths licensing process, which industry groups say is cumbersome and has created a supply bottleneck.

China's decision in April to restrict exports of a wide range of rare earths and related magnets has tripped up the supply chains central to automakers, aerospace manufacturers, semiconductor companies and military contractors around the world.

China's dominance of the critical mineral industry, key to the green energy transition, is increasingly viewed as a key point of leverage for Beijing in its trade war with U.S. President Donald Trump. China produces around 90% of the world's rare earths, and auto industry representatives have warned of increasing threats to production due to their dependency on it for those parts.

Suppliers of three big U.S. automakers, General Motors, Ford and Jeep-maker Stellantis got clearance for some rare earth export licenses on Monday, one of the two sources said.

GM and Ford each declined to comment. Stellantis said it is working with suppliers "to ensure an efficient licensing process" and that so far the company has been able to "address immediate production concerns without major disruptions."

China's Ministry of Commerce did not immediately respond to a faxed request for comment.

China's critical-mineral export controls have become a focus on Trump's criticism of Beijing, which he says has violated the truce reached last month to roll back tariffs and trade restrictions.

On Thursday, Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping had a lengthy phone call to iron out trade differences. Trump said in social-media post that "there should no longer be any questions respecting the complexity of Rare Earth products." Both sides said teams will meet again soon.

U.S. auto companies are already feeling the impact of the restrictions. Ford shut down production of its Explorer SUV at its Chicago plant for a week in May because of a rare-earth shortage, the company said.

The approval for the auto suppliers follows a green light granted to a U.S. electronics firm's suppliers last week and another one issued earlier this week to suppliers of a U.S. non-auto company, the first person said, declining to name the companies.

"We have to give the Chinese the benefit of the doubt that they're working through this. It's up to them to show that they are not weaponizing it," said the person.

Reuters reported on Wednesday that China has introduced a tracking system for its rare earth magnet sector in a move to improve its control over the sector and crackdown on smuggling.

Trump Slams Musk Over Spending Bill Row

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Donald Trump said that Elon Musk had "lost his mind" but insisted he wanted to move on from the fiery split with his billionaire former ally.

The blistering public break-up between the world's richest person and the world's most powerful is fraught with political and economic risks all round.

Trump had scrapped the idea of a call with Musk and was even thinking of ditching the red Tesla he bought at the height of their bromance, White House officials told AFP.

"Honestly I've been so busy working on China, working on Russia, working on Iran... I'm not thinking about Elon Musk, I just wish him well," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One en route to his New Jersey golf club late Friday.

Earlier, Trump told US broadcasters that he now wanted to focus instead on passing his "big, beautiful" mega-bill before Congress—Musk's harsh criticism of which had sparked their break-up.

But the 78-year-old Republican could not stop himself from taking aim at his South African-born friend-turned-enemy.

"You mean the man who has lost his mind?" Trump said in a call with ABC



when asked about Musk, adding that he was "not particularly" interested in talking to the tycoon.

Trump later told Fox News that Musk had "lost it."

Just a week ago Trump gave Musk a glowing send-off as he left his cost-cutting role at the so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) after four months working there.

While there had been reports of tensions, the sheer speed at which their relationship imploded stunned Washington.

After Musk called Trump's spending bill an "abomination" on Tuesday, Trump hit back in an Oval Office diatribe on Thursday in which he said he was "very disappointed" by the entrepreneur.

Trump's spending bill faces a difficult path through Congress as it will raise the US deficit, while critics say it will cut health care for millions of the poorest Americans.

The row then went nuclear, with Musk slinging insults at Trump and accusing him without evidence of being in government files on disgraced financier and sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Sinner Stuns Djokovic to Set Up French Open Final With Alcaraz



PARIS (Dispatches) - Jannik Sinner said it “doesn’t get any bigger” than facing Carlos Alcaraz in the French Open final, after ending Novak Djokovic’s latest tilt at a record-breaking 25th Grand Slam title in the last four yesterday.

The world number one held off a battling Djokovic with an impressive 6-4, 7-5, 7-6 (7/3) win on Court Philippe Chatrier to reach his first Roland Garros final.

Sinner will face Alcaraz for a Grand Slam title for the first time on Sunday, adding another chapter to their already gripping rivalry.

“The stage, it doesn’t get any bigger now. Grand Slam finals against Carlos, it’s a special moment for me and for him, too,” said the three-time Grand Slam champion, who is now on a 20-match winning streak in majors.

“He won here last year, so let’s see what’s coming.

“But for sure, the tension you feel before the match and during the match is a little bit different in a way, because we are both very young, we are both different, but talented.”

Djokovic battled hard in a dramatic semi-final that lasted three hours and 16 minutes, but three missed set points late in the third set ultimately put paid to his hopes of a comeback.

Sinner, who is yet to drop a set in the tournament, will be hoping to gain revenge on Alcaraz after losing to the Spaniard in five sets in the semi-finals last year.

The Italian will be playing in a maiden Slam final not on hard courts after edging 5-4 ahead in his head-to-head record with Djokovic with his fourth successive victory over the 38-year-old.

Djokovic’s exit ensures that a sixth successive major title will be lifted by either Sinner or world number two Alcaraz, in what appears increasingly likely to be a permanent changing of the guard.

It will be the first Grand Slam final to be played between two men born in the 2000s.

Alcaraz has won his last four matches against Sinner, including in the Italian Open final in May when Sinner returned from a three-month doping ban.

Comparisons have already been made between their rivalry and those shared by the big three of Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer.

“It takes time to compare us with the big three,” said Sinner.

“I believe that tennis or every sport needs rivalries, no? This could be potentially one of these, but there are amazing players coming up.”

Djokovic was bidding to become the first man to win a Slam with victories over all of the world’s top three players after beating Alexander Zverev in the quarters.

Instead, he will turn his attentions to his seventh attempt to break out of a tie with Margaret Court on 24 major titles at Wimbledon next month.

“This could have been the last match ever I played here, so I don’t know,” said the three-time Roland Garros champion.

“Obviously Wimbledon is next, which is my childhood favourite tournament. I’m going to do everything possible to get myself ready.”

Sinner wrapped up an ultimately comfortable opening set after a break in the fifth game with a hold to love, finished off by a backhand winner.

Djokovic was the better player at the start of the second set, but could not find a way through against an opponent who had not dropped serve since his opening-round win over France’s Arthur Rinderknech.

Sinner served out the second set at the second time of asking courtesy of a battling hold that featured two aces, one from a second serve.

Djokovic called for the physio for treatment on his left leg ahead of the third set.

A cacophony of noise greeted a brilliant rally that saw Djokovic bring up two set points in the 10th game.

Sinner fended them both off, and then a third, before Djokovic became incensed by a line call that didn’t go his way as the set headed towards a tie-break.

Sinner, who like Alcaraz has never lost a Grand Slam final, completed the job in the breaker as Djokovic netted.

“Of course, it’s stressful,” Sinner said when asked what it is like to face Djokovic.

“It’s playing against Novak, playing against the best players in the world, you don’t get moments where you can relax. He makes you feel that.”

Postecoglou Sacked as Tottenham Manager Despite Europa League Triumph



LONDON (Dispatches) - Ange Postecoglou was sacked as Tottenham manager just 16 days after the Australian ended the club’s 17-year trophy drought by winning the Europa League.

Postecoglou led Tottenham to a 1-0 victory over Manchester United in Bilbao to clinch the north Londoners’ first European prize in 41 years and secure a place in next season’s Champions League.

But the Australian paid the price for Tottenham’s worst domestic season since they were relegated from the top flight in 1976-77.

“Following a review of performances and after significant reflection, the Club can announce that Ange Postecoglou has been relieved of his duties,” a statement on Tottenham’s official X account said.

Exactly two years after he was hired from Celtic, Postecoglou’s eventful spell in north London was brought to a ruthless end by chairman Daniel Levy.

Tottenham lost 22 of their 38 Premier League games to finish 17th in the table, above only relegated trio Leicester, Ipswich and Southampton.

“The Board has unanimously concluded that it is in the best interests of the club for a change to take place,” the statement said.

“Whilst winning the Europa League this season ranks as one of the club’s greatest moments, we cannot base our decision on emotions aligned to this triumph.

“It is crucial that we are able to compete on multiple fronts and believe a change of approach will give us the strongest chance for the coming season and beyond.

Europa League Boosts Man United Revenue Despite Premier League Woes



LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester United raised their annual core profit forecast on Friday as the club’s strong performance in the Europa League drove ticket sales and broadcast revenue.

United forecast adjusted core profit of between 180 million pounds and 190 million pounds for the year ending June, up from an earlier projection of between 145 million and 160 million pounds.

Ticket sales jumped more than 50 per cent to 44.5 million pounds in the three months to March as the club had a good run in the Europa League, before losing the finals to Tottenham Hotspur.

United had their worst Premier League season since they were relegated in 1974 and hopes of participating in a European competition next season were dashed after they lost the Europa League final.

“We had a difficult season in the Premier League, which we all know fell below our standards and we have a clear expectation of improvement next season,” CEO Omar Berrada said in a statement.

United’s absence from European competitions, which are lucrative sources of broadcasting revenue, deals a huge blow to the club’s future finances and has drawn anger and disappointment from fans worldwide.

Jim Ratcliffe, who holds a stake of about 29 per cent in the club and runs their football operations, has taken steps to revive the club’s fortunes, including by cutting jobs, raising ticket prices and stopping free lunches at staff canteens.

Those benefits are expected to be realised from the first quarter of the new fiscal year starting July, the club said on Friday.

United reported a net loss of 2.7 million pounds for the three months ended March 31, compared with a loss of 71.5 million pounds a year earlier.

Norway Crush Italy 3-0 as Haaland, Sorloth Shine



PARIS (Dispatches) - Italy crashed to a 3-0 loss away to Norway as the four-time champions made a disastrous start to their 2026 World Cup qualifying campaign, while Belgium had to settle for a draw in North Macedonia.

Alexander Sorloth, Antonio Nusa and Erling Haaland all scored in the first half in pouring rain in Oslo as Norway made it a night to forget for Italy, who missed out on the last two World Cups.

“I have no explanation. Our supporters don’t deserve this kind of match. We need to do some soul-searching. It’s unacceptable,” Italy captain and goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma told Rai Sport.

Italy are playing catch-up with Norway, the Group I leaders with a maximum nine points after wins over Moldova and Israel in March when the Azzurri were still involved in the UEFA Nations League.

Israel are second on six points after a 3-1 win over Estonia in Tallinn, where Norway will head for their next game on Monday. Italy return home to face Moldova in Reggio Emilia in their second game.

Belgium kicked off their qualifying bid in Group J with a 1-1 draw against North Macedonia.

Maxim De Cuyper gave Belgium the lead after Romelu Lukaku’s shot was blocked but former Leeds man Ezgjan Alioski volleyed in the equaliser with four minutes to play in Skopje.

England Beat West Indies in T20 Opener



DURHAM (Dispatches) - Former captain Jos Buttler scored a superb 96 off 59 balls, and Liam Dawson took four wickets on his international return, as England beat West Indies by 21 runs in the T20 series opener at Durham’s Riverside ground.

After making a 3-0 winning start to Harry Brook’s captaincy in the one-dayers, England kept the momentum in the shorter format with an innings of 188-6 after winning the toss and batting first.

West Indies finished on 167-9, with Romario Shepherd caught on the final ball of the match.

Buttler, in at number three with England 16-1 after Ben Duckett was caught by West Indies captain Shai Hope off Shepherd, brought up his half century from 25 balls in the eighth over.

He had earlier smashed three sixes and scooped a four from the first four balls of a devastating sixth over with Alzarri Joseph bowling.

The 34-year-old, who stepped down as white-ball captain last

February following England’s group-stage exit from the Champions Trophy, continued to look like a man relieved of a heavy burden as he hit six fours and four sixes.

Needing just four for the century, he was out lbw to Joseph in the penultimate over.

The tally was Buttler’s highest T20 international score on home soil.

West Indies were 33-2 off 5.2 overs after losing Johnson Charles for 18, stumped by Buttler off Dawson, and Hope caught by Duckett, who repaid his own dismissal in like-for-like fashion, for three off debutant Matthew Potts.

England restricted the visitors to 44-2 at the end of the powerplay, compared to 78-1 at the same stage of the home innings.

Evin Lewis hit West Indies top score of 39 off 23 balls, before being caught by Brydon Carse with Jacob Bethell bowling.