

The Qods Headquarters of the Ground Forces of the IRGC Confirmed in a Statement on Tuesday Night That Its Forces Succeeded in Arresting and Eliminating Six Terrorists in Chabahar in Sistan and Baluchestan Province

IRAN NEWS

In a Unified Step, 102 High-Ranking Clerics and Seminary Professors From Qom Have Issued a Statement Declaring Their Steadfast Support for the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei

VOL. XXIX, No. 8309 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

THURSDAY JULY 10, 2025 TIR 19, 1404

2 DOMESTIC



Iran Prepares Damage Assessment Report on War Impact to Cultural Heritage

> SEE PAGE 2

3 INTERNATIONAL

Trump Pushes Netanyahu for Gaza Ceasefire

> SEE PAGE 3



U.S. Must Rebuild Trust for Diplomacy to Resume



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran's foreign minister has issued a call for the United States to revive diplomacy following a breakdown in indirect talks, warning that further engagement will only be possible if Washington demonstrates a genuine commitment to a fair resolution. "Iran remains interested in diplomacy, but we have good reason to have doubts about further dialogue," Abbas Araqchi wrote in an article published by the Financial Times. "If there is a desire to resolve this amicably, the US should show genuine readiness for an equitable accord."

The foreign minister referred to his five rounds of talks with US special envoy Steve Witkoff, saying that the two sides had made progress in those meetings.

According to Araqchi, discussions covered sensitive issues, including Iran's uranium enrichment program and a potential end to US sanctions, with proposals from both sides and mediation by Oman.

The talks, he suggested, could have laid the foundation for an economic partnership potentially worth trillions, offering Iran development opportunities while addressing US President Donald Trump's ambitions to revive struggling US industries.

But, Araqchi said, hopes for a breakthrough were shattered when Israel launched an unprovoked assault on Iran just 48 hours before a planned sixth round of talks in a move to derail diplomatic progress.

"Israel prefers conflict over resolution," he wrote, arguing that the bombardment was not about stopping Iran from developing nuclear weapons but about sabotaging dialogue.

Iran's Armed Forces confronted Israeli, U.S. Aggression With Full Might



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's top military commander asserts that the Islamic Republic's Armed Forces confronted the Israeli and American aggression with the full range of their capabilities and military prowess during last month's assaults by Tel Aviv and Washington.

Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi, chief of staff of the Armed Forces, made the remarks during a telephone conversation with Qatar's Defense Minister Khalid bin Mohammad Al Attiyah on Tuesday.

"Iran's Armed Forces stood up to bullying using all of their capabilities, and responded to the aggressors with the entirety of their might," the commander noted.

On June 13, the Israeli regime began a series of airstrikes against the Islamic Republic with unprecedented American military and intelligence support.

Iran's Armed Forces began responding initially with comprehensive defensive maneuvers.

Shortly afterwards, however, they launched rapid, forceful, and unyielding counteroffensives, unleashing precision strikes against critical nuclear, military, and industrial targets deep within the occupied Palestinian territories.

The commander's remarks also concerned a ballistic missile strike that was carried out by the Iranian forces against al-Udeid -- the US's most important regional airbase that is located in Qatar -- in response to American attacks against Iranian nuclear sites that took place towards the end of the Israeli war.

Attack on Iran's Peaceful Nuclear Facilities Is an Unforgivable Crime

TEHRAN - In a meeting with the Saudi Minister of Defense, Iran's Foreign Minister described the Israeli regime's military aggression against Iran and its attack on the country's peaceful nuclear facilities as an unforgivable crime and an unprecedented assault on regional and global peace and security.

Seyed Abbas Araqchi, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, met on Tuesday evening with Prince Khalid bin Salman, the Minister of Defense of Saudi Arabia.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the growing trend of bilateral relations and exchanged views on the latest security situation in the region following the recent military aggression by the Israeli regime and the United States against Iran.

The Iranian Foreign Minister, expressing satisfaction with the continued constructive consultations between the two countries in security and defense fields, described Prince Khalid's recent visit to Tehran as highly significant and effective in advancing bilateral cooperation aimed at strengthening security and stability in the region.

Araqchi emphasized that the Israeli regime's military aggression against Iran and the attack on Iran's peaceful nuclear facilities constitutes an unforgivable crime and an unprecedented act of aggression against regional and global peace and security. He also thanked Saudi Arabia for its responsible and firm stance in condemning this aggression.

The Foreign Minister further stated that the Israeli regime's attacks against Iran are the result of the occupying regime's longstanding impunity for its crimes against the Palestinian people and its ongoing aggressions against other countries in the region. He stressed that regional countries must redouble their efforts to strengthen homegrown security mechanisms in response to the dangerous consequences of the Israeli regime's expansionism and hegemonic ambitions.

In the meeting held in Jeddah, the Saudi Minister of Defense reaffirmed his country's position in rejecting and condemning the Israeli regime's military aggression against Iran and offered condolences for the martyrdom of several Iranian military figures and civilians during these attacks.

He also highlighted the dangerous repercussions of the Israeli regime's recent violations of international law on regional peace and security and stressed the need for greater cooperation



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

among regional countries to effectively confront destabilizing factors.

Later Araqchi, in a meeting with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, emphasized the shared responsibility of regional countries in confronting threats posed by the expansionism and warmongering of the Zionist regime.

During their talks in Jeddah on Tuesday evening, the two top diplomats discussed bilateral relations and the latest regional developments.

Araqchi expressed appreciation for Saudi Arabia's warm hospitality during this year's Hajj and for the country's valuable cooperation in facilitating the return of Iranian pilgrims, following complications caused by the recent Israeli military aggression against Iran. He reaffirmed the Islamic Republic's determination to deepen ties with Saudi Arabia across all areas of mutual interest.

Highlighting the unified stance of regional and the United States' military aggression against Iran, Araqchi underlined the collective responsibility of regional nations to counter the threats resulting from the Zionist regime's expansionist policies and warmongering.

He also strongly condemned the ongoing killing and genocide of the Palestinian people, the continued occupation of Islamic territories, and the persistent attacks by the Zionist regime on Lebanon and Syria. Araqchi criticized the silence and inaction of the UN Security Council, describing this as the main cause of growing insecurity in the region. He further held the supporters and justifiers of the Zionist apartheid regime responsible for its crimes.

For his part, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan reaffirmed his country's principled stance, shared by other regional nations, in condemning aggression and violations of Iran's territorial integrity and national sovereignty. He emphasized the need for greater efforts to prevent further escalation and expressed Saudi Arabia's readiness to assist in this regard.

Meanwhile Esmail Baghaei, spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, announced that Araqchi had fruitful talks with Bin Salman, the Saudi Foreign Minister, and the Saudi Defense Minister.

Baghaei wrote on social media: Araqchi held fruitful discussions with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, and Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman regarding bilateral relations and the latest developments in the region.

Hezbollah Commends Leader's Steadfast Support for Resistance Cause

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Hezbollah's secretary-general has praised and expressed gratitude towards Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei for steadfast support for the Lebanese resistance movement's cause of struggle against Israeli occupation and aggression.

Sheikh Naim Qassem made the remarks on Tuesday in his first interview with Lebanon's al-Mayadeen television network since taking office following predecessor Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah's martyrdom.

He stressed the indispensable nature of the support, asserting that "the source [of the support], Imam Khamenei's commitment, remains steadfast."

The resistance official noted how the Islamic Republic sustained the support for the Lebanese resistance movement throughout the Israeli regime's deadly escalation against Lebanon -- which began in October 2023 -- without resorting to direct military intervention

"Iran did everything it could and more," Sheikh Qassem said, asking, "What more could we ask for?"

He, meanwhile, noted that the group has "never asked Iran to participate in the war, and it did not need to be asked. Its support is the foundation of our resilience, and that of the entire resistance."

The official stressed that direct military engagement was not the only form of meaningful support. "Participation comes in many forms. Iran did what mattered most, and it was deeply effective."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Sheikh Qassem roundly rejected the notion of his movement's giving up its armed struggle in the face of continued Israeli aggression and occupation.

"There is no third option between victory and martyrdom. We do not have surrender as an option," he said.

Hezbollah won't wait forever in face of Israeli violations

The resistance leader stated that Hezbollah would not "wait forever" in the face of the Israeli regime's violations of a ceasefire that was clinched last year with the aim of ending the regime's escalation.

"There are limits" to the movement's patience, he stressed.

He also noted how the ceasefire was agreed upon after Hezbollah successfully thwarted the regime's objectives by limiting Israeli advances into southern Lebanon among other things.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Hezbollah's secretary-general said the movement had formed a central investigative committee tasked with probing such momentous issues as the pager explosions



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

targeting its members and others and the assassination of the group's revered former leader.

The committee, he said, was investigating the 2024 blasts hitting thousands of explosive-laden pagers and walkie-talkies devices used by Lebanese people, including Hezbollah's members.

The incident saw the devices explode simultaneously across the country, claiming the lives of 42 people and wounding more than 3,500 others.

The official confirmed that "human espionage [contributing to the tragedy] appears very limited" compared to technological breaches caused by the Israeli regime.

The investigative body, he stated, was also looking into the circumstances surrounding the martyrdom of Nasrallah, who was assassinated during intense Israeli airstrikes against Beirut in the same year.

In the meantime, Sheikh Qassem remarked on the former resistance icon's profound leadership, saying he took on the movement's leadership, despite the immense challenge of replacing such a towering figure.

Nasrallah embodied the spirit of resistance, he added, but also said, despite his assassination, Hezbollah would continue on its path with loyalty and strength.

The committee, which enjoys several subcommittees, was also addressing the Israeli regime's subsequent assassination of Sayyed Hashem Safieddine, former head of Hezbollah's Executive Council, Sheikh Qassem said.

Various monitoring and investigation points have also been established in line with underway efforts at examining the matters, he stated.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Sheikh Qassem addressed the numerous operations that Hezbollah began after the Israeli regime launched a genocidal war on the Gaza Strip in on October 7, 2023. The decision to launch the strikes was made only two days following the onset of the warfare during an "in-person meeting."

He underlined that -- although the operations took a heavy toll on the regime -- Hezbollah had decided to only take part in "limited engagement" in support of Palestinians in the coastal sliver.

The engagement was primarily aimed at redirecting Israeli forces to northern Palestine, encouraging evacuation of Israeli settlers, and weakening Israeli military capabilities around Gaza.

The Hague Urged to Take Principled Stance on U.S.-Israeli Aggression



TEHRAN - Iran's ambassador to the Netherlands has criticized the Dutch government for its silence in the face of Israel and the US attacks on the Islamic Republic.

Speaking with Dutch public broadcaster Ongehoord Nederland, Ambassador Hadi Farajvand said The Hague -- widely known as the "legal capital of the world" for hosting the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) -- has a responsibility to take a principled stance.

"We expected the Netherlands to respond appropriately and issue a clear condemnation of this aggression and blatant violation of international law," Israel attacked Iranian military, nuclear, and civilian infrastructure during a 12-day unprovoked aggression that began on June 13. The United States later joined the offensive, targeting three major nuclear sites, just before Tel Aviv unilaterally accepted a U.S.-proposed ceasefire.

The U.S., Israel, and their Western allies have been accusing Iran of "diverting" its peaceful nuclear energy program towards "military purposes" -- a claim that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has failed to verify.

Farajvand also highlighted that, according to repeated reports by the IAEA, Iran's nuclear program "has always been peaceful," with no evidence of diversion toward military objectives.

"Therefore, the pretexts put forward by the Zionist regime and the United States to attack Iran's nuclear facilities lack any legal basis or international legitimacy."

Iran Confirms Receiving New U.S. Messages to Resume Talks



TEHRAN - Iran has revealed that it has recently received messages from the United States signaling Washington's interest in returning to the negotiating table, amid heightened tensions and stalled diplomatic efforts.

Speaking to reporters, Saeed Khatibzadeh, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister and head of the Center for Political and International Studies at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, confirmed the development. "In recent days, messages from the United States have reached us, indicating their desire to come back to the negotiation table," Khatibzadeh said.

He added that negotiations had previously been underway but were disrupted by what he described as hostile actions from the US. "As you know, there was a negotiation table, and we were in the middle of talks when that table was attacked. We were also engaged in negotiations with Europeans in Geneva, and the US even targeted that process," he explained.

Highlighting the challenges facing any future dialogue, Khatibzadeh stressed that "every negotiation requires a minimum level of trust." He pointed to longstanding mutual suspicion between Tehran and Washington. "We used to say there was a high wall of mistrust between Iran and the US, but the recent blatant violation of Iran's territorial integrity has practically destroyed what little trust was left," he noted.

Despite these obstacles, Khatibzadeh reaffirmed Iran's commitment to diplomacy as a core principle of its foreign policy. "These matters need to be rebuilt, and the responsibility of the US for violating Iran's national sovereignty is not something that can be forgiven easily," he said. "However, diplomacy has always been the main pillar of the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy. When the time is right, the diplomatic apparatus and senior officials will announce their decision regarding negotiations."



FM’s Messages Handed Over to Omani Counterpart

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran’s Ambassador to Oman Mousa Farhang has handed over Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi’s messages to Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi.

According to Oman News Agency (ONA), Farhang presented the two written messages to al-Busaidi on Monday.

ONA wrote that Araqchi’s letters were about bilateral relations.

Farhang and al-Busaidi discussed bilateral relations and ways to strengthen cooperation in political, economic, cultural, and investment fields.

Al-Busaidi had earlier emphasized in his statements that Iran’s nuclear negotiations can resume if conditions are favorable, and that the only solution to Iran’s nuclear issue lies through diplomacy.

Iran’s Caviar Production Grows by 17%



TEHRAN - Iran’s caviar production saw a 17% increase last year, according to Naser Karami Rad, Director General of the Office for Aquatic Genetic Resources Conservation and Restoration at the Iranian Fisheries Organization.

Karami Rad announced that the country’s caviar output rose from 21.6 metric tons in 2023 (Iranian calendar year 1402) to 25.1 metric tons last year.

Speaking to ILNA via the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, he highlighted the significant expansion of sturgeon farming across 22 provinces. He noted that thanks to favorable climate conditions, the second phase of development has set ambitious targets: producing over 140 tons of caviar and 20,000 tons of sturgeon meat.

Karami Rad described investment in this sector as highly profitable, adding that investment dashboards have been prepared to help develop the industry in different provinces.

Last year, production of sturgeon meat reached more than 6,050 tons—representing a 26% increase compared to 2023.

Karami Rad also reported that over 7.5 tons of caviar were exported directly through customs channels. Additionally, a significant volume of Iranian caviar is estimated to have left the country via travelers and in luggage.

“Iranian caviar remains unrivaled in the global market and retains its dedicated customers,” he said. “With this ongoing growth, the country’s production and export capacity for sturgeon products is increasing, creating new opportunities for investment.”

Average Age of Marriage in Iran Announced



TEHRAN - According to the latest report by the Statistical Center of Iran, the average age of marriage for men and women in the country during last winter was 28.5 and 24.3 years, respectively. This shows a slight increase compared to the previous season. The average age difference between spouses at the time of marriage was reported to be 5.5 years, with this gap being larger in rural areas compared to urban areas.

As reported by ISNA, data on Iran’s social and cultural situation released by the Statistical Center of Iran indicates that in the winter of the Iranian year 1403, the average age of men at first marriage was 28.5 years, which is 0.3 years higher than in the autumn.

In urban areas, the average age of men at first marriage increased from 28.5 years in the autumn to 28.7 years by the end of winter. In rural areas, this figure rose from 26.4 years in the third quarter of 1403 to 26.7 years in winter.

The average age of women at first marriage during the winter of 1403 was reported as 24.3 years, showing an increase of 0.7 years compared to autumn.

In urban areas, the average age of women at first marriage rose from 24 years in autumn to 24.6 years in winter. In rural areas, however, this figure dropped from 24.3 years to 21.8 years over the same period.

Overall, the average age of men at first marriage last winter remained higher than that of women.

Further analysis of the data shows that by the end of last winter, the average age of marriage for men and women—regardless of whether it was their first marriage—was 31.6 and 26.7 years, respectively. Both figures increased by about 0.3 years compared to autumn.

The report also highlights that the average age difference between spouses at the time of marriage nationwide was 5.5 years. In urban areas, this difference was 5.4 years, while in rural areas, it reached 6.2 years, indicating a higher age gap in rural marriages compared to urban ones.

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



Iran Prepares Damage Assessment Report on War Impact to Cultural Heritage

TEHRAN - Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Seyyed Reza Salehi Amiri, announced on Tuesday that the government has finalized a detailed report assessing the damage inflicted on the country’s cultural heritage by the recent 12-day conflict. This report will serve as part of a legal case for international complaint against the Israeli regime.

Speaking at the ministry’s eighth media briefing, held with journalists and provincial directors joining online, Salehi Amiri outlined the government’s response to the crisis and broader efforts to strengthen cultural resilience and tourism recovery.

Reflecting on the recent conflict, Salehi Amiri noted, “We are neither in full-scale war nor in stable peace. We stand at a crossroads, where cultural wisdom and social cohesion must guide Iran through crises.” He described the conflict as a “national maturity test,” adding that Iranians, by consciously choosing resistance, reinforced their credibility on the world stage.

The minister explained the government’s response on three levels: recognizing both visible and hidden messages of the conflict, taking swift actions to protect social stability, and actively safeguarding Iran’s cultural identity.

Salehi Amiri condemned what he called “the child-killing Zionist regime” for escalating from targeting scientists and military figures to attacking key defensive, energy, and communication infrastructure. Despite these pressures, he stressed that Iranian society maintained strategic rationality over emotional reactions.

During the height of the crisis, the government distributed over 800,000 tons of essential goods from southern ports and kept national service networks operational. Remarkably, more than nine million people traveled to Mazandaran province alone, with just 30 official complaints lodged regarding tourism services.

Private tourism businesses also responded by opening hotels and eco-lodges across the country, offering discounts up to 90%, and in some cases, free accommodation. “This was an ethical and social act, not merely a commercial move,” Salehi Amiri emphasized.

Highlighting the government’s legal strategy, the minister confirmed that all relevant agencies have been tasked to prepare precise damage assessments and compile them into a legal dossier for an international complaint. The Ministry of Cultural Heritage has already completed its comprehensive report.

Beyond legal steps, the ministry sent formal letters to UNESCO, the United Nations, and related bodies urging immediate action. More than 100 Iranian academics, artists, and cultural figures also submitted written protests to international organizations.

Salehi Amiri spoke passionately about strengthening young Iranians’ ties to their cultural roots. Over the past year, the ministry has focused on the themes of “Iran,” “Iranian civilization,” and “cultural Iran,” believing that social erosion often begins when attachment to homeland fades.

“Iran is not just a land; it is a living spirit flowing through Hafez, Saadi, Ferdowsi, architecture, arts, myths, and museums,” he said. The minister praised the Supreme Leader’s strategic support for the iconic song Ey Iran, calling it a clear reminder that Iran unites all ethnicities, faiths, and generations.

The minister also outlined fresh cultural diplomacy initiatives. After engagements with Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Tajikistan, Iran is now working to rebuild ties with Egypt. “If the recent military escalation had not occurred, 2025 could have been a golden year for Iranian tourism,” he noted.

He added that the president is personally focused on removing tourism barriers, and the government is actively addressing demands from industry stakeholders.

Salehi Amiri defended the policy of leasing historical monuments to private investors, stressing that the aim is preservation rather than profit. So far, 41 historical sites have been handed over for restoration, with a 90% completion rate on planned transfers.

Meanwhile, Deputy Minister Ali Darabi highlighted efforts to engage filmmakers and content creators through three rounds of the National Cultural Heritage Festival, which attracted thousands of submissions across various categories.

Darabi acknowledged challenges in global cooperation following the withdrawal of two countries from UNESCO, though he noted that veteran heritage experts and the International Council of Museums (ICOM) have continued correspondence.

Iran remains a founding member of the World Civilizations Forum, which held its first session last year and adopted agreements on repatriating historical artifacts. The Tehran-based intangible heritage center also plays an active role, with 11 permanent members and coverage extending to 24 countries.

Deputy Minister of Tourism Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpey said the recent crisis has inevitably slowed tourism’s return to pre-conflict levels, but the ministry has outlined a 14-point plan for recovery, with discussions underway to implement it.

He noted that many provinces remained unaffected by conflict, and domestic travel has helped sustain tourism in those areas. Religious tourism, particularly pilgrimages, has also remained resilient.

Mohseni Bandpey confirmed that tourism services are priced uniformly for domestic and international tourists in local currency, with currency conversions subject to central bank regulations. Dual pricing, he said, contradicts national monetary policy.

Looking ahead to the Arbaeen pilgrimage, he described plans for cultural markets and eco-tourism hubs along pilgrimage routes. Religious tourism, especially from Iraq, remains the country’s strongest inbound segment, with over 3.5 million visitors so far this year.

Deputy Minister of Handicrafts Maryam Jalali announced initiatives to highlight Iran’s craft heritage during Arbaeen. These include special markets at the Mehran border terminal, exhibitions in Sulaymaniyah, and future showcases in Erbil and Basra.

“Our responsibility is to illustrate the concept of Iran through museums, architecture, and cultural symbols,” she said.

As Iran works to overcome crisis-related challenges, officials stress that cultural resilience, tourism revival, and heritage diplomacy remain central to national strategy.

Over 40 Sea Voyages and 8,000 Passengers Transported During 12-Day Imposed Conflict

TEHRAN - The director of the passenger transport division at the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) announced that following the Zionist regime’s attack on Iranian territory and the temporary closure of the country’s airspace, the passenger shipping sector successfully transported 8,000 passengers from ports in the UAE to Iranian ports.

He explained that a significant number of Iranian citizens who were abroad and planning to return home faced serious obstacles due to the airspace closure. In this situation, the maritime route between Iran and the UAE played a vital and secure role as one of the main options for return.

The director noted that IRISL’s passenger division, which has long been a pioneer in sea passenger transport in the Persian Gulf, swiftly responded after the incident. Beginning June 13, the division organized and mobilized resources to transport Iranian passengers between Sharjah and Dubai ports to Bandar Abbas and vice versa, using two vessels each with a capacity of 240 passengers.

He added that one of the significant measures taken was increasing the number of sea voyages. The number of weekly trips on the two main routes rose from two to three, which helped reduce congestion and ease the return of passengers through the mentioned ports.

Given the challenging sea conditions in the summer and the rough route between Bandar Lengeh and Dubai, he said, on days when safe travel was not possible, passengers were instead transported



between Dubai and Sharjah to Bandar Abbas.

He further stated that the company managed to increase the seating capacity of its two vessels to 300 seats by obtaining the necessary permits from the General Directorate of Ports and Maritime Affairs of Hormozgan Province, in coordination with UAE authorities, and with effective cooperation from Iran’s embassy in the UAE.

The official also noted that, following further efforts, permission was granted to transport passengers free of charge for those who had been stranded abroad for an extended period and were facing financial difficulties.

He emphasized that, overall, in two weeks and through more than 40 sea voyages, around 8,000 Iranian citizens were successfully transported on the Iran-UAE route. This effort once again demonstrated the vital role of maritime transport and the readiness of national companies during crises.

Finally, the director pointed out that, due to ongoing restrictions in the country’s airspace and the refusal of some foreign airlines to operate flights into Iran, the company remains committed to continuing its passenger transport services on the Iran-UAE route. Using two equipped vessels with standard capacity, the company will maintain regular passenger services in line with the special plans implemented over the past two weeks.

First Phase of Major Project to Transfer Oman Sea Water to Isfahan Completed



TEHRAN - The Governor of Isfahan announced the completion of the first phase of the ambitious project to transfer water from the Oman Sea to Isfahan Province — a move set to end the use of Zayandeh-Rud River water by local industries.

Speaking on Tuesday, Mehdi Jamali-Nejad said that despite numerous obstacles and constraints, the first concrete step to secure water supplies for Isfahan’s industries has now been achieved.

He explained that the initial phase of the project focuses on disconnecting local industries from the Zayandeh-Rud River by completing the first stage of the large-scale Oman Sea water transfer system. This phase involved constructing around 800 kilometers of pipelines, along with building reservoirs, pumping stations, valves, and related infrastructure.

According to Jamali-Nejad, this stage enables the transfer of 70 million cubic meters of desalinated seawater annually to Isfahan — an amount equivalent to the total annual consumption of the province’s major industries.

“In the first phase, this water will come via the Persian Gulf,” he said. “In later phases, the water transferred to the province will come directly from the Oman Sea.”

Jamali-Nejad added that following the inauguration of this stage, the Isfahan Refinery and industries in the north of the province will begin using this new water source. Soon after, within the coming days, Mobarakeh Steel Company and industries in southern Isfahan will also gain access.

He emphasized that once these industries are connected to seawater, a strict countdown will begin to cut all their consumption of local freshwater resources, enforcing an immediate shift to the new supply.

He made it clear that the project does not aim to enable further expansion of water-intensive and polluting industries around Isfahan city.

Referring to remarks by the Supreme Leader that “today, the best way to resist the United States is to serve the people,” Jamali-Nejad said: “In these difficult times, we will certainly work harder, and soon we will share good news about other water projects in the province.”

Iran, Tajikistan Urged to Lead Greater Unity in the Persian-Speaking World



TEHRAN - The Head of the International Affairs Center at Iran’s Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts has emphasized the need to establish and strengthen a Persian Language and Culture Union, stating that Iran and Tajikistan — as two strong wings of Persian culture — should take the lead in fostering cohesion across the Persian-speaking world.

During the sidelines of the Meeting of Culture Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states, Hojatollah Ayoubi, Head of the International Affairs Center of Iran’s Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, met with Matluba Khon Sattorian, Tajikistan’s Minister of Culture.

In this meeting, both sides highlighted the deep-rooted and inseparable cultural and civilizational ties between Iran and Tajikistan, rooted in shared history, language, and thought.

Ayoubi stressed the distinguished status of the Persian language in both countries and reiterated the necessity of creating and reinforcing a union dedicated to Persian language and culture. He noted that Iran and Tajikistan, as two powerful pillars of Persian culture, should take the lead in uniting the broader Persian-speaking community.

He further remarked that, just as Turkic-speaking nations have forged extensive cooperation through cultural unions, it is appropriate for Iran and Tajikistan — drawing on their shared cultural treasures — to create a lasting structure for cultural, scientific, and civilizational convergence.

Over 160 Still Missing After Texas Floods Kill 109

NEW JERSEY (Dispatches) - More than 160 people remain unaccounted for after devastating floods in Texas, the state governor said, marking a dramatic increase in the number of missing from a tragedy that has so far claimed 109 lives. Four days after flash floods roared through several Texas counties, some in the middle of the night, hopes of finding survivors were fading—and Governor Greg Abbott warned that the list of those unaccounted for could yet rise. “Just in the Kerr County area alone, there are 161 people who are known to be missing,” he told reporters Tuesday as the grim search continued. “There very likely could be more added to that list,” he said, adding that the figure was based on people reported as unaccounted for by friends, relatives and neighbors.



Trump Criticizes Putin After Approving More Weapons for Ukraine



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Donald Trump said he had approved sending U.S. defensive weapons to Ukraine and was considering additional sanctions on Moscow, underscoring his frustration with Russian President Vladimir Putin over the growing death toll in Russia's war with Ukraine.

Trump, who pledged as a presidential candidate to end the war within a day, has not been able to follow through on that promise and efforts by his administration to broker peace have come up short.

Trump directed his ire at Putin on Tuesday during a meeting with cabinet officials at the White House.

“I’m not happy with Putin. I can tell you that much right now,” Trump said, noting that Russian and Ukrainian soldiers were dying in the thousands.

“We get a lot of bullshit thrown at us by Putin ... He’s very nice all the time, but it turns out to be meaningless,” Trump said.

Trump said he was considering whether to support a bill in the Senate that would impose steep sanctions on Russia over the war.

“I’m looking at it very strongly,” he said.

The bill, whose lead sponsors are Republican Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and Democratic Senator Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, would also punish other countries that trade with Moscow, imposing 500% tariffs on nations that buy Russian oil, gas, uranium and other exports.

Trump said on Monday that the United States would send more weapons to Ukraine, primarily defensive ones, to help it defend itself against Russian advances. On Tuesday he said he had approved such a move.

“We’re sending some defensive weapons to Ukraine, and I’ve approved that,” he said.

Taiwan Launches Annual War Games



TAIPEI (Dispatches) - Taiwan launches its largest ever military drills on Wednesday, starting with simulated attacks on its command systems and infrastructure ahead of a Chinese invasion, senior defense officials said.

The early stages of the annual Han Kuang exercises will focus on testing how Taiwan's military can decentralize command in the event of a crippling communications attack. Over the next 10 days, the drills will expand to assess Taiwan's combat readiness against a full-scale attempt to seize the island.

“We are learning from the situation in Ukraine in recent years and realistically thinking about what Taiwan might face ... in real combat,” said one senior defense official, highlighting the need to protect command and communication systems.

“Commanders have to think what issues their troops might face and they need to pass them down to their subordinates,” the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the operation.

Cyberattacks and misinformation campaigns are seen by Taiwan as high-intensity “grey zone” actions that are likely to precede a broader Chinese assault.

The annual Han Kuang exercises will this year mobilise the largest number of reservists, some 22,000, and for the first time feature New High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, or HIMARS, made by Lockheed Martin along with Taiwan-developed Sky Sword surface-to-air missiles.

Trump Pushes Netanyahu for Gaza Ceasefire



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu met for the second time in 24 hours as the U.S. president intensified the pressure on the Israeli prime minister to reach a deal to end the “tragedy” of the war in Gaza.

Netanyahu's return to the White House for fresh talks came after Qatari mediators warned it would take time to seal an elusive ceasefire between Israeli and Hamas at talks in Doha.

“It’s a tragedy, and he wants to get it solved, and I want to get it solved, and I think the other side wants to,” Trump told reporters as he announced that Netanyahu was coming back.

Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff said he hoped for an agreement within days.

“We are hopeful that by end of this week we will have an agreement that will bring us into a 60-day ceasefire,” Witkoff said.

The deal would include the return of 10 live hostages held by Palestinian militant groups since Hamas's October 2023 attack on Israel, and nine dead hostages, Witkoff added.

The Israeli leader, who had dinner with Trump on Monday evening, arrived back at the White House for talks that were being held without any media access.

Asked earlier as he met U.S. House speaker Mike Johnson if a ceasefire announcement was imminent, Netanyahu replied: “We’re certainly working on it.”

Trump has kept up strong U.S. support for Israel, especially over the recent Iran-Israel war, but has also been stepping up the pressure to end what he calls the “hell” in Gaza.

Qatar however said Tuesday more time was needed for negotiations for a breakthrough between Israel and Hamas, as indirect negotiations extended into a third day in Doha.

“I don’t think that I can give any timeline at the moment, but I can say right now that we will need time for this,” Qatar's foreign ministry spokesman Majed Al-Ansari said.

Qatar, a mediator along with the United States and Egypt, said the meetings in Doha were focused on a framework for the talks, while a Palestinian official close to the negotiations said no breakthrough had been achieved so far.

Hostilities meanwhile continued on the ground.

Gaza's civil defence reported 29 killed in Israeli strikes on Tuesday, including three children.

Five Israeli soldiers were killed in combat in northern Gaza—one of the deadliest days this year for Israeli forces in the Palestinian territory.

Netanyahu described the soldiers' deaths as a “difficult morning.” They were reportedly killed by improvised explosive devices near Beit Hanun in northern Gaza.

And Lebanon said three people were killed Tuesday in a strike near Tripoli that the Israeli military said targeted a Hamas militant, the first in the area since a November ceasefire with Hezbollah.

Trump has been trying to seize on the momentum from the recent ceasefire between Iran and Israel, which was precipitated by US airstrikes on Tehran's nuclear program.

France's foreign intelligence chief said Tuesday that the program has been “very, very delayed” by US and Israeli strikes, wading into a contentious debate over just how hard it was hit.

Wildfire Near Marseille Forces Airport Shutdown

MARSEILLE (Dispatches) - A wildfire in southern France that forced Marseille airport to close and interrupted train traffic has not been fully contained, the country's interior minister said.

Several forest fires have raged in recent days in southern France, fanning out at speed due to wind and parched vegetation after a heatwave, including yesterday's just north of France's second largest city, Marseille.

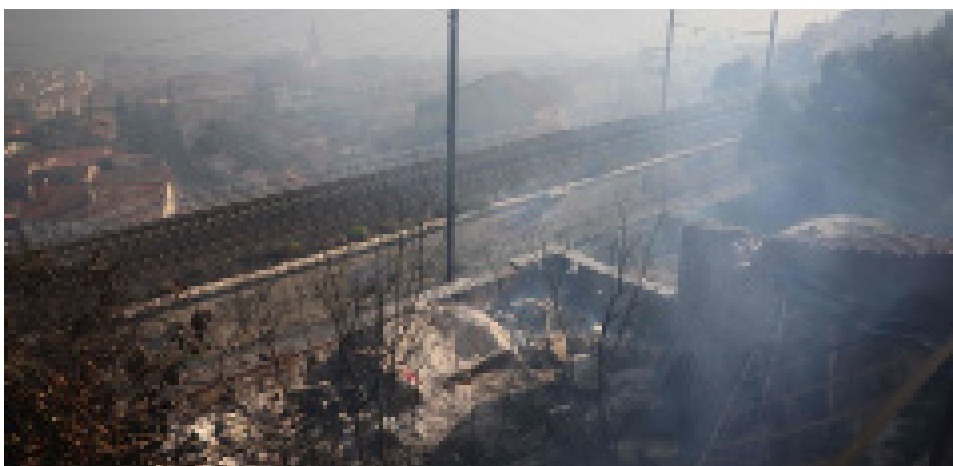
Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau, during a visit to firefighters in the region, said the fire could be contained overnight if winds weaken, as expected.

Scientists say human-induced climate change is increasing the intensity, length and frequency of extreme heat that fuels forest fires.

The fire started in a vehicle in the area of Pennes-Mirabeau to the north of Marseille, on the road to the airport, roaring across 700 hectares (1,730 acres) by the evening, firefighters said.

The spokesman later said that the airport would partially reopen at around 9:30 pm and that 54 flights had been cancelled and another 14 redirected.

The website of the SNCF national rail operator showed more than a dozen train trips had been cancelled in and out of the city. It said rail travel to and from Marseille would remain “highly affected”



on Wednesday.

Retailleau said 400 people have been evacuated and 63 houses damaged, with some dozen destroyed. He said about 100 people have suffered light injuries, including from emergency services.

“At the moment that I speak to you there are no deaths, which is remarkable given the extent of the fires,” he said. “But there are all the reasons to think we are headed towards a summer of high risk.”

Marseille Mayor Benoit Payan on X warned residents the fire was now “at the doors of Marseille”, urging inhabitants in the north of the city to refrain from taking to the roads to leave way for rescue services.

The mayor of Pennes-Mirabeau said two housing estates had been evacuated and firefighters had positioned themselves outside a retirement home to fight off approaching flames.

The Marseille Provence airport is the country's fourth after Charles-de-Gaulle and Orly outside Paris, and Nice.

The fire near Marseille is just the latest to hit France in recent days.

To the west along the Mediterranean coast, near the city of Narbonne, more than 1,000 firefighters from around the country were seeking to contain another blaze.

It had crept across 2,000 hectares (4,900 acres) of trees since starting on the property of a winery on Monday afternoon, emergency services said.

In the village of Prat-de-Cest on Tuesday morning, trees were blackened or still on fire.

As she watched fire trucks drive to and fro, retiree Martine Bou recounted fleeing her home with her cats, tortois and dog on Monday afternoon before returning.

But her husband, Frederic, stayed all night to hose down the great pines on the other side of the road so the fire would not engulf their home.

“I’ve never seen anything like it. I have never lived next to such an enormous fire,” he told AFP, reporting flames dozens of metres (more than a hundred feet) high.

The fire near Narbonne caused authorities to close the A9 motorway to Spain, but on Tuesday morning they said they were progressively reopening it to traffic.

ASEAN Hits Back at Trump's Counterproductive Trade Tactics

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - South-east Asian nations will express “concern” over “counterproductive” U.S. tariffs, according to a draft statement shared with AFP, after Donald Trump threatened more than a dozen countries with higher levies.

The president's trade war will likely be high on the agenda as foreign ministers from the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) gather in Kuala Lumpur for talks this week.

“We expressed concern over rising global trade tensions and growing uncertainties in the international economic landscape, particularly the unilateral actions relating to tariffs,” ASEAN foreign ministers said, according to a draft Joint Communique.

Without directly naming the United States, the ministers said tariffs were “counterproductive and risk exacerbating global economic fragmentation and pose complex challenges to ASEAN's economic stability and growth”.

Trump sent letters to 14 countries announcing that duties he had suspended in April would snap back — even more steeply — in three weeks.

Among those targeted were top trade partners Japan and South Korea, which each

face 25 per cent tariffs.

Indonesia, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia and Myanmar — all members of the ASEAN — face duties ranging from 25 per cent to 40 per cent if they do not strike a deal with Washington by August 1.

Export-dependent Vietnam, which is also an ASEAN member, is one of only two countries to have reached a tentative agreement that spares it from Trump's measures.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio will join his ASEAN counterparts on Thursday and Friday as part of his first trip to Asia since taking his post.

Rubio will likely tell leaders that the United States wanted to “rebalance” its trade relationships, a senior State Department official told reporters on condition of anonymity.

His visit coincides with that of his Russian and Chinese counterparts, Sergei Lavrov and Wang Yi.

But an analyst told AFP that Rubio is expected to play a placating role after Trump's latest tariff announcements.



Alcaraz Steamrolls Norrie as Sabalenka Scrapes Through



LONDON (Dispatches) - Carlos Alcaraz swept into the Wimbledon semi-finals for a third successive year as the defending champion demolished Cameron Norrie, while world number one Aryna Sabalenka survived a major scare to reach the last four.

Alcaraz needed just 99 minutes to win 6-2, 6-3, 6-3 in his most commanding performance in this year's tournament.

The Spanish second seed dropped four sets in a series of scrappy displays during his run to the last eight. But Alcaraz was back to his imperious best in the quarter-finals, blasting 39 winners against the overwhelmed British world number 61, setting up a last-four clash with American fifth seed Taylor Fritz. Alcaraz is on a career-best 23-match winning run since losing to Holger Rune in the Barcelona final in April — a superb streak which has brought him titles at the French Open, the Rome Masters and Monte Carlo.

The Spaniard, who vanquished Novak Djokovic in the last two Wimbledon finals, has won 34 of his 37 Tour-level matches on grass, while his last defeat at the All England Club came against Jannik Sinner in the fourth round in 2022.

“To be able to play another semi-final here at Wimbledon is super special,” Alcaraz said.

“It’s going to be great. I’m really happy with the way I played against a really difficult player.”

Wimbledon’s controversial line technology system malfunctioned again as Fritz beat Russian 17th seed Karen Khachanov 6-3, 6-4, 1-6, 7-6 (7/4) to reach his first Wimbledon semi-final.

Swedish umpire Louise Azemar Engzell had to stop a point in the opening game of the fourth set on Court One when “fault” was incorrectly called after a Fritz forehand landed well inside the baseline.

The call of “fault”, rather than “out”, and positioning of the ball suggested the system was still tracking Fritz’s serve as opposed to a rally and the point had to be replayed.

Tournament organisers were forced to apologise and make a change to the system to avoid further issues after a major error in Sonay Kartal’s fourth-round defeat to Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova in the women’s draw.

Belarus’s Aryna Sabalenka reacts as she plays against Germany’s Laura Siegemund during their women’s singles quarter-final tennis match on the ninth day of the 2025 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in Wimbledon, south-west London July 8, 2025. — AFP pic

pic

Belarus’s Aryna Sabalenka reacts as she plays against Germany’s Laura Siegemund during their women’s singles quarter-final tennis match on the ninth day of the 2025 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in Wimbledon, south-west London July 8, 2025. — AFP pic

A fully automated system has replaced human line judges at Wimbledon for the first time this year, in line with the Australian Open and the US Open.

Tournament organisers claimed the system had failed to reset because the ball from Fritz’s first serve was still being retrieved when he started lining up his second.

“The player’s service motion began while the BBG (ball boy or girl) was still crossing the net and therefore the system didn’t recognise the start of the point,” an All England Club statement said.

“As such the chair umpire instructed the point be replayed.”

Sabalenka fought back from the brink of a shock exit to reach the semi-finals with a gutsy 4-6, 6-2, 6-4 win against Germany’s Laura Siegemund.

She twice trailed by a break in the final set on Centre Court and was two games away from crashing out before staging a dramatic revival to win in two hours and 54 minutes of unrelenting tension.

The 27-year-old top seed is through to the Wimbledon semi-finals for the third time after losing at that stage in 2021 and 2023.

Beaten in the Australian and French Open finals this year after winning the US Open in 2024, Sabalenka remains on course to reach a fourth successive Grand Slam title match.

Sabalenka remains the only one of the top six women’s seeds still standing at the tournament after two weeks of shocks.

“That was a real test. I need some time to cool down and recover after this,” Sabalenka said.

In the semi-finals, the Belarusian will face American 13th seed Amanda Anisimova, who defeated Russian world number 50 Pavlyuchenkova 6-1, 7-6 (11/9).

Anisimova took an eight-month break from tennis in 2023 after suffering with depression brought on by the scrutiny and expectations that came from her run to the French Open semi-finals aged just 17.

“It’s been an extraordinary year for me. So many highs. It’s been such a ride,” she said.

Joao Pedro Brace Sends Chelsea Into Secures Club World Cup Final

EAST RUTHERFORD (Dispatches) - New signing Joao Pedro scored twice on his first start as Chelsea eased to a 2-0 win over Fluminense yesterday to seal a spot in the final of the Club World Cup.

The Brazilian striker opened the scoring in lethal fashion in the 18th minute of the last-four clash at the MetLife Stadium and struck again shortly before the hour mark as Chelsea set up a showdown with either Real Madrid or Paris Saint-Germain in Sunday’s final.

Signed from Brighton and Hove Albion last week for a reported £60 million (RM335 million), the 23-year-old cut short a holiday and made his debut off the bench in the quarter-final win over Palmeiras.

He was then given his first Chelsea start up front here in place of the suspended Liam Delap.

Joao Pedro refused to celebrate after either goal against the club with whom he started his career and made 36 top-team appearances before moving to England with Watford in 2020.

The result ends Fluminense’s impressive run at the tournament after the 2023 Copa Libertadores winners held Borussia Dortmund in the group stage, beat Inter Milan in the last 16 and knocked out



Manchester City’s conquerors Al-Hilal in the quarter-finals.

With their exit go the prospects of a South American winner of the first 32-team Club World Cup, with Chelsea claiming back-to-back victories against Brazilian opposition to reach the final.

As always seemed most likely, the trophy will be claimed by one of Europe’s superpowers, with the final now guaranteed to be between two of the last five winners of the Uefa Champions League.

“It is a great achievement. It has been a fantastic season—top four in the league, (winning) the Conference League and now in the final in this competition. We are so, so happy,” Chelsea coach Enzo Maresca told broadcaster DAZN.

“Now finally it is the last game of the season, we can say that, and hopefully we can win the tournament.”

Fluminense coach Renato Portaluppi had described his team as the “ugly duckling” of the tournament due to the enormous difference between their budget and those of the other three remaining sides.

Pogacar Secures Stage Four Tour de France Win



PARIS (Dispatches) - Reigning champion Tadej Pogacar overtook race leader Mathieu van der Poel just before the line to win stage four of the Tour de France, and is now level at the top of the general classification after earning his 100th career victory.

The 174.2km ride from Amiens to Rouen came down to a sprint finish between the top three in the overall standings, with the Slovenian world champion getting the better of the Dutchman, and Denmark’s Jonas Vingegaard (Visma-LeaseA Bike) coming in third.

A breakaway group of four riders – Lenny Martinez, Jonas Abrahamsen, Thomas Gachignard and Kasper Asgreen – got away early but the peloton, led by Van der Poel’s Alpecin-Deceuninck team, kept them well within reach.

The action was always going to come in the closing 50km, with five categorised climbs packed into the finale, and Martinez was the last to be caught with 20km remaining, shortly after a crash had brought down several riders in the bunch.

Pogacar’s UAE Team Emirates took control at the front coming to the penultimate climb, before Visma-Lease A Bike took over, pushing hard on the descent, as anticipation grew for a late attack.

When it came on the final climb, it was the expected break from Pogacar, but he was unable to shake off two-times champion Vingegaard, and the pair were joined by five other riders, including Van der Poel, to set up a high-stakes finish.

Van der Poel went first, looking for his second stage win in three days, but Pogacar had the legs to overtake before the line, and made up the four seconds which separated the pair overall thanks to the stage win bonus.

South Africa Complete Easy Victory Over Zimbabwe to Win Test Series



BULAWAYO (Dispatches) - South Africa completed an innings and 236-run victory over hosts Zimbabwe on the third day of the second test to convincingly sweep the two-match series at Queens Sports Club.

South Africa, who were put into bat and declared their first innings on 626-5, bowled Zimbabwe out for 220, having enforced the follow-on after skittling out the home side for 170 in their first innings.

Zimbabwe were 51-1 in their second innings overnight and, although they added 92 runs in the morning session, they regularly lost wickets and were all out before tea.

Seamer Corbin Bosch took 4-38 to clean up the tail, with three wickets for spinner Senuran Muthusamy.

Takudzwanashe Kaitano (40), Nick Welch (55) and skipper Craig Ervine (49) offered resistance in a clash best remembered for the decision by South Africa stand-in captain Wiaan Mulder not to chase down the highest score in a test innings.

Mulder was 367 not out, 34 runs away from breaking Brian Lara’s 21-year-old landmark of 400 for West Indies against England, when he decided to declare the innings at lunch on the second day.

With one of cricket’s significant milestones in his sights, and plenty of time left in the five-day contest, Mulder’s decision not to attempt to break the record was met with astonishment.

But the 27-year-old all-rounder, whose test batting average before the match was 26.2, felt it would be inappropriate to dislodge one of the game’s greats from the record books.

“Respecting the game is really important and Lara is one of the greatest ever to play the game and deserves to keep that record,” Mulder said at a press conference after play on Monday.

His knock, however, was the fifth-highest score in a test and a South Africa record. He also took three wickets and snagged three catches in the match.

South Africa rested most of the team that won the World Test Championship against Australia at Lord’s last month but still proved far too strong for their neighbours as they also won last week’s first test by 328 runs.

Jokic to Wait Until Next Summer for Contract Talks

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Denver Nuggets superstar Nikola Jokic, eligible as of Tuesday for a contract extension, will wait until next summer to negotiate a new deal, the Denver Post and ESPN reported.

A three-time MVP, Jokic is eligible for a three-year, \$206.4 million contract extension, which Nuggets management has publicly said it would offer. However, the center could wait for a max contract worth \$285.4 million if he signs next summer.

Jokic, 30, has until Oct. 20 to sign for the lesser total, per reports, or can continue to play the three years left on a five-year, \$276 million extension he signed in the summer of 2022. The final season, 2027-28, is a player option valued at \$62.8 million.



The player-option year would be replaced by a new deal, or he can wait until 2026 and add a fourth year at an extra \$77 million, per ESPN.

Contract negotiations could be shaped by factors such as salary-cap raises and incentives, but once next season starts, the contract cannot be extended until July 1.

“We’re definitely going to offer it,” Nuggets president Josh Kroenke told reporters recently of a contract extension this summer for Jokic. “I’m not sure if he’s going to accept it or not, because we’re also going to explain every financial parameter around him signing now versus signing later. To be completely transparent, that’s the way we always are. And then he makes the best decision for himself and his family, and we’ll support him in it.”