

Secretary General of the Iranian National Commission for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Hassan Fartousi, Says Israel's Aggression Towards Iran Posed a Threat to "Rationality, Science, and Peace"

# IRAN NEWS

The Head of the Judiciary's Legal Center for Attorneys, Official Experts and Family Counselors Says Iran Will Use All Domestic and International Capacities to Restore the Nation's Rights in the Wake of the Recent Israeli Aggression

2 DOMESTIC



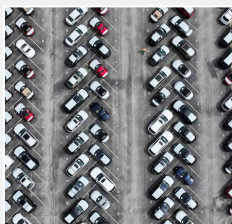
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## Negotiation Is No Easier Than the Battlefield, And May Be Even Harder



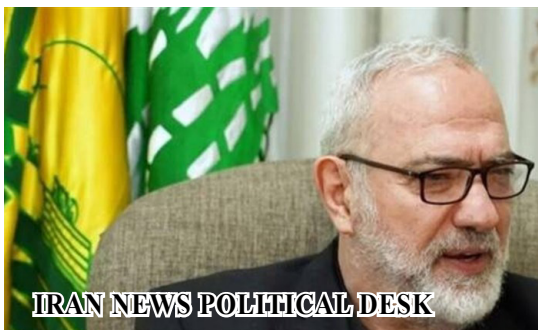
TEHRAN – Foreign Ministry Spokesman, in response to media speculation regarding the resumption of talks between Iran and the United States, stated that such speculation is nothing new, and stressed that negotiation is a form of struggle; if it is not harder than the battlefield, it is certainly no easier.

Esmail Baghaei, spokesperson for the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, spoke today (July 12) in a live phone interview with Radio Gofitoo's program Tolou-e Hemaasch. Referring to the course of negotiations between Iran and the United States prior to the Israeli military aggression, he said: "The illegal attack against the Islamic Republic of Iran during diplomatic efforts was disgraceful. The enemy failed to stand up to the logic of dialogue and engagement, and today it is clear to everyone that the Islamic Republic is committed to dialogue and diplomacy."

Baghaei further emphasized that the action against Iran cannot be justified under any legal, ethical, or political standards. "According to the UN Charter, it constitutes a clear act of aggression. This attack took place amid negotiations, and everyone witnessed that Iran, as an influential actor, was engaged in talks, while the other side undermined the logic of diplomacy and engagement. The United States weakened the basic and obvious principles of diplomacy, and our trust in them has fallen below zero."

In response to a question about renewed media speculation on direct talks between Iran and the US, Baghaei reiterated: "These rumors are always heard. Negotiation itself is a form of struggle. Just as the armed forces of the Islamic Republic defended Iran's sovereignty, the diplomatic apparatus has a duty, when necessary, to use diplomacy to protect the interests of the Iranian people. Negotiation is not a place for pleasantries; and if it is not harder than the battlefield, it is certainly no easier. Therefore, negotiation, dialogue, and engagement should be seen as tools for safeguarding national interests."

## Iran's Power Benefits the Whole Region



TEHRAN - A senior Hezbollah official has emphasized that Iran's strength serves the interests of the entire region and reaffirmed that the movement's resistance strategy will persist despite mounting pressures.

Speaking amid growing U.S. and Israeli efforts to pressure Lebanon and incite domestic opposition against Hezbollah, Mahmoud Qomati, a member of Hezbollah's political council, said:

"Those calling for the surrender of the resistance's weapons — whether through collusion with the enemy or by deceiving the public and spreading fear — are effectively implementing the American-Zionist project."

In an interview with Sputnik News Agency, Qomati stated that there are factions seeking to disarm the resistance, but the overwhelming majority of Lebanese firmly reject this idea.

He added: "This group is clearly aligned with the goals of the United States and the Zionist regime in the region."

Qomati emphasized that U.S. and Israeli policies are ultimately aimed at weakening all military capabilities across the region — from the countries surrounding occupied Palestine to Iran, Yemen, and Iraq.

"However," he noted, "these weapons have proven resilient, and the occupying regime has failed to destroy them even during recent aggressions. Israel also seeks to dismantle Lebanon's military capabilities, but the existence of the resistance has repeatedly thwarted the occupiers' plans to establish settlements or maintain a foothold in the country."

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## No Rush for Reckless Negotiations

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araqchi announced that the United States has sent several messages expressing its willingness to return to the negotiating table. His remarks came after delivering a speech before ambassadors, chargés d'affaires, and heads of international missions based in Tehran.

Speaking to reporters, Araqchi addressed the European Union's recent threats to activate the "snapback" mechanism, which would restore previous UN Security Council resolutions by canceling Resolution 2231. "In recent months, and especially in recent days, Europeans have repeatedly hinted at the possibility of invoking the snapback mechanism," Araqchi said. "But I believe this would be the biggest mistake they could make—much like the Americans' decision to attack Iran's nuclear facilities, which only made the nuclear issue much more difficult and complex to resolve. Resorting to snapback would have the same effect: it would complicate and harden the situation further."

Araqchi stressed that Iran's nuclear issue cannot be resolved by military means or by referring the matter back to the UN Security Council. "The only viable path forward is through negotiations, aiming for a solution that safeguards the interests of the Iranian people," he explained. "These interests specifically include our nuclear rights—most notably, Iran's right to uranium enrichment and the practical exercise of this right, which remains at the heart of the discussions. The recent military aggression showed that neither technology nor scientific knowledge nor this right can be taken away from the Iranian people by force."

Asked by a reporter about what kind of assurances Iran requires to return to the negotiating table—and whether any signals had been received from the other side—Araqchi revealed that Tehran had indeed received multiple messages from Washington urging a return to dialogue. "We were in the midst of negotiations when suddenly the Americans chose the military option. This was a betrayal, not just to us but to diplomacy itself," he said. "If the Americans insist on coming back to the table—and clearly, they do, as shown by the numerous messages

they have sent—it is only natural for us to seek reassurance that they will not again abandon negotiations in favor of military escalation if they fail to achieve their demands diplomatically."

He continued, "In international relations, there is no such thing as absolute guarantees—and I never claimed otherwise. What matters is that we must be convinced, based on sufficient assurances, that this time things will not repeat themselves. Some reassurances have indeed been conveyed, and we are currently examining them carefully. If and when we become convinced that Iran's national interests and the rights of the Iranian people can truly be protected through negotiations, then we will have no fear or hesitation about returning to talks."

Regarding the potential timing of new negotiations, Araqchi clarified, "We are still reviewing the appropriate time, place, format, and the necessary reassurances. We are in no rush to enter into hasty or ill-considered negotiations, yet at the same time, we will not miss any opportunity to secure Iran's interests and objectives. We are studying the situation with the utmost care, weighing all aspects. Whenever and wherever we see that the interests of the Iranian people are secured, we will act accordingly."

Concluding his remarks, the foreign minister underlined that "the doors of diplomacy are never closed. In every situation, diplomacy remains an option to achieve our goals—but we pursue it with full awareness and complete confidence."

Reflecting on the recent conflict, Araqchi said, "We went through a heroic war marked by outstanding resistance. There is no doubt that the Islamic Republic of Iran and its people emerged victorious. And when you are the victor, holding your flag high, naturally you have no fear of negotiations. In fact, the best time for dialogue is right after you have successfully repelled a military attack."

## Women Account for 24% of Patents Registered in Iran

TEHRAN - The Vice President for Women and Family Affairs emphasized the importance of recognizing both the challenges and the strengths of women in Iran, noting that women have registered 24% of the country's patents. This figure, she said, is well above the global average of 14-17%, and is a point of national pride.

Speaking on Saturday evening at a meeting with women activists from Khorasan Razavi province in Mashhad, Zahra Behrouz Azar added: "Today, women and girls make up over 60% of the national education workforce, 56% of the academic community, and 63% of new university entrants."

She stressed that the 14th government believes true national progress requires the participation of both women and men: "We need both wings to fly; without them together, progress cannot happen."

Behrouz Azar explained that the President has consistently highlighted the need to utilize the potential of women, youth, and ethnic groups during meetings with provincial governors. "So far, the President has made more than 15 appointments in the field of women's affairs. For the first time in the country, we have four women in the cabinet, and for the first time in the 46-year history of the Islamic Revolution, we have a female government spokesperson. This is the result of years of effort by those who believed in women's equal presence in decision-making arenas."

She added that the First Vice President also insists that positions given to women should not be merely ceremonial: "It is with this view that one of our most important ministries is now led by a woman."

Behrouz Azar further noted that today, women also head key institutions like the Central Bank's supervisory board, the Privatization Organization, and the National Standards Organization: "These are not symbolic roles; they are critical positions."

The Vice President announced that monitoring appointments remains a priority and that a detailed report on women's appointments over the past year will be released soon. "We aim to expand managerial roles for women proportionate to the number of active women professionals, in line with gender justice."

However, she acknowledged that in many provinces, while roles like county governor or district chief have been offered to women, some have declined due to family responsibilities or lack of confidence. "Women should embrace these responsibilities and prepare for them, which requires cultural acceptance and a shift in discourse."

Behrouz Azar emphasized the government's focus on economically empowering women,



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stating: "Currently, women run 70% of home-based businesses, and special loans have been allocated to them, which we promise will be made easily accessible."

She noted that collateral for business loans remains a challenge: "We have decided that if a woman lacks a guarantor, the provincial Women and Family Affairs office will act as guarantor and introduce her to guarantee funds to access loans."

Furthermore, she mentioned dedicated loans for women engaged in network-based home businesses, where women work in linked production chains.

"For the first time, the budget for mandatory loans to female heads of households is being distributed across various agencies—including the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, the State Welfare Organization, the Omid Entrepreneurship Fund, and

the Rural Development Office—to make access to loans easier," she said.

Behrouz Azar added that from the start of the 14th government, granting family benefits to working women has been on the agenda. "It's a legal right, and we have begun drafting legislation to revise existing laws, which has already been reviewed by the Human Capital Commission. The draft now awaits technical assessment by the Administrative and Recruitment Organization and the Planning and Budget Organization, and we hope to secure the necessary resources to submit it to Parliament."

She highlighted that women's participation in economic diplomacy and international forums is also a government priority, reflected in the Seventh Development Plan: "This year, for the first time, we issued a call for nominations and selected five women to lead working groups and represent Iran in BRICS. We have also established the BRICS Women's Office within the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs, which had been halted during the war period but will soon resume. This opportunity is open to all women active in international fields."

Behrouz Azar noted that around 12% of startups and knowledge-based businesses in Iran are currently run by women, with a target to increase this figure to 30%.

She praised women's steadfast support during the recent war waged by the Zionist regime, saying: "Women from all backgrounds stood firmly behind the nation and the Iranian flag, which increases our responsibility to serve them better."

Finally, she mentioned that provincial offices have set up youth working groups to address the concerns of "Generation Z," "Generation Alpha," and soon "Generation Beta." "Such a group has already been formed in Khorasan Razavi," she added.

## No Rift Between Diplomacy and the Battlefield



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TEHRAN - First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref stated that there is no conflict between diplomacy and the battlefield, reaffirming that the government remains committed to "negotiations with strength."

Speaking in a meeting with faculty members of Sharif University of Technology, Aref praised the critical role of the public during the recent 12-day imposed war, highlighting how citizens' involvement thwarted the enemy's plans. "The enemy's strategy was to attack our military infrastructure and provoke the people to rise against the system," he said. "But the people acted decisively and disrupted their plans."

Aref described the national consensus formed during the conflict as unprecedented, noting that even the nearly 50 percent who did not participate in last year's presidential elections played a part in defending the country. "The strengthened social cohesion and public trust are invaluable assets that must be carefully preserved, as circumstances can always change," he added.

The Vice President urged academics to step forward with practical and strategic proposals to help maintain national unity. "Sharif University could take the lead by organizing roundtables, conferences, workshops, or research initiatives to assess different viewpoints and identify strengths and weaknesses," he suggested. He also noted that the government has asked executive agencies involved in the war to document and critically review their performance during the conflict.

Aref further revealed the establishment of a task force within the Vice President's office, composed of university professors, to explore ways to safeguard social capital. He said that last year, the government approved a "wartime economy" plan anticipating reduced oil sales, and during the recent conflict, the public largely cooperated with the government, with only minor issues such as fuel queues arising. "We must remain attentive to the public's demands and sensitivities so that people continue to see the government as their servant and support it," he stressed.

## Tehran Residents Urged to Worry About Water Shortages



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TEHRAN - The spokesperson for Iran's water industry has warned that water shortages could reduce living standards for residents of Tehran, Alborz, and other regions supplied by the country's five major dams.

Issa Bozorgzadeh said that due to low rainfall, water inflows into the nation's dams since the start of the current water year up to July 11 have reached just 22.4 billion cubic meters, representing a 43% decline compared to the same period last year, when the figure was 39.15 billion cubic meters.

He added that thanks to reservoir management and controlled water releases, the volume of water currently stored in the dams is about 23.67 billion cubic meters. While this remains 26% below last year's level of approximately 32 billion cubic meters, it is still an improvement compared to the sharper drop in inflows.

Bozorgzadeh noted that overall, the country's dams are only 46% full.

Speaking about the situation in Tehran, he said forecasts had predicted normal rainfall in May and June, but this did not materialize. Total precipitation recorded from the start of the water year to July 10 stood at around 150 millimeters, marking a 34% drop compared to the same period last year and a 44% decline compared to long-term averages.

Bozorgzadeh explained that the current water year is the second driest in the past 57 years, and that Iran is now experiencing its fifth consecutive year of drought. This has compounded water shortages from previous dry years, worsening the drought's impact.



# IRAN NEWS



## Major Fiber Cut Abroad Blamed for Iran Internet Slowdown

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The CEO of Iran's Infrastructure Communications Company announced that a significant fiber optic cable cut outside the country is the main cause of the recent decline in internet quality. Behzad Akbari wrote on the social platform X on Saturday evening that the widespread fiber cut has disrupted connections, and teams are working to resolve the issue. He estimated that the disruption may continue for another two hours. "We apologize for this inconvenience and thank users for their patience," he added. Since the start of the recent 12-day conflict between Iran and Israel, internet services inside Iran have faced frequent disruptions and, on some days, complete outages due to security concerns. According to officials, the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology has been working to minimize the negative impact on citizens and online businesses.

## Iraq Bans MD Aircraft from Entering Its Airports



TEHRAN - The Secretary of the Iranian Airlines Association has announced that Iraq has recently banned McDonnell Douglas (MD) aircraft from entering its airports. This move is expected to reduce passenger capacity, especially during the upcoming Arbaeen pilgrimage.

Mahsoud Asadi Samani, Secretary of the Association, explained to ILNA's economic correspondent that this year's ticket prices for Arbaeen flights have increased compared to last year. In coordination with the Civil Aviation Organization, fixed prices have been set for Arbaeen flights between August 8 and 18. Round-trip tickets on the Tehran-Najaf route have been priced at 18 million toman (approx. USD 400), while flights from eastern airports like Mashhad are priced at 22 million toman (approx. USD 485).

Asadi Samani attributed the price hike to a significant rise in operational costs. "Last year, airlines obtained dollars at around 44,000 toman; this year, the rate exceeds 70,000 toman," he said. He added that the cost of operating Najaf flights in foreign currency has increased accordingly.

The Secretary further pointed out that jet fuel prices have surged 24-fold compared to last year. Additionally, Najaf Airport is among the world's more expensive airports, charging airlines about USD 12,000 per flight, and collecting a USD 30 airport fee per passenger.

He emphasized that airlines do not profit from Arbaeen flights. "The revenue from these flights merely covers expenses; the aim here is not profit but to serve pilgrims," he said.

Regarding ticket sales, Asadi Samani noted that pre-sales for the fixed-price tickets covering August 8-18 will begin soon. "However, travelers can already purchase scheduled Najaf flight tickets from now," he added.

He also highlighted Iraq's new restriction on MD aircraft, which further limits the capacity to transport pilgrims. "We also face hourly restrictions for flight operations during this period, and it's important to remember that during peak Arbaeen days, flights often operate one-way empty on return legs," he said.

## Unemployment Rate Drops in Spring; Economic Participation Reaches 41.2%



TEHRAN - According to the Statistical Center of Iran, in spring this year, the unemployment rate for the population aged 15 and over was recorded at 7.3%, while the economic participation rate stood at 41.2%.

Data from the spring 2025 Labor Force Survey shows that the number of employed individuals aged 15 and over reached 25.123 million, marking an increase of around 377,000 compared to the same season last year.

The findings indicate that 7.3% of the active population (employed and unemployed) were unemployed. The unemployment rate declined by 0.4 percentage points compared to spring 2024.

In spring 2025, 41.2% of the population aged 15 and over were economically active, meaning they were either employed or actively seeking work. The economic participation rate remained unchanged compared to the same period last year.

Meanwhile, the economically inactive population (including students, homemakers, people living on unearned income such as pensioners, etc.) reached 38.739 million, an increase of approximately 510,000 compared to spring 2024.

A breakdown of employment across major economic sectors shows that in spring 2025:

The services sector accounted for the largest share with 52.4%. Followed by industry with 33%, and Agriculture with 14.6%.

The unemployment rate among youth aged 15-24 stood at 19.7%, reflecting a 0.3 percentage point decrease from the same period last year.

For the age group 18-35, the unemployment rate was 14.5%, also showing a decline of 0.5 percentage points compared to spring 2024.

The data further reveals that 6.6% of employed people aged 15 and over worked less than 44 hours per week for economic reasons (such as seasonal fluctuations, lack of work, or inability to find more work) and were ready to work additional hours. Conversely, 40.1% of the employed worked more than 49 hours per week.

# Iran Condemns Israeli "Twelve-Day Military Aggression" in Letters to 150 Countries



TEHRAN - In an unprecedented diplomatic move, Nasser Seraj, Deputy Head for International Affairs of Iran's Judiciary and Secretary of the Human Rights Headquarters, has addressed an open letter to his human rights counterparts in more than 150 countries. The letter strongly condemns what he describes as a "coordinated and premeditated military assault" by Israel against Iran, allegedly supported by Western governments that claim to defend human rights.

According to Seraj, this twelve-day military campaign not only targeted Iran's nuclear and military facilities, but also deliberately struck civilian infrastructure, residential areas, medical workers, and media institutions. He characterizes the attacks as a blatant violation of international law, including the UN Charter's principle prohibiting the use of force.

Seraj also claims that these strikes violate fundamental tenets of international humanitarian law, particularly the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution in armed conflict. He further states that targeting civilians and medical facilities constitutes war crimes under the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, which should trigger international prosecution.

The letter accuses Israel of repeatedly disregarding international norms, citing its actions in Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon. Seraj asserts that, despite this record, Israel enjoys "apparent legitimacy" through recognition by certain states and membership in international bodies—reflecting what he calls a "profound failure" of the international system to uphold its founding principles, including respect for sovereignty and the promotion of human rights.

Seraj's letter includes grim statistics: since October 7, 2023, roughly 57,130 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have reportedly been killed in Gaza, with over 135,000 injured. From March 18, 2025, alone, another 6,572 Palestinians were killed and 23,132 wounded. Nearly 14,000 remain missing under rubble, while Israel has reportedly ordered the forced displacement of another 80,000 Palestinians from Khan Yunis. Citing UN data, Seraj says about 85% of Gaza's territory is now under evacuation orders or declared military zones, yet no new shelter aid has entered Gaza for months.

# Food Security Recognized as a Pillar of National Power

TEHRAN - Minister of Agriculture, Gholamreza Nouri Ghezleji, has emphasized the strategic importance of food security, calling it a cornerstone of national strength alongside military capabilities.

Speaking at a meeting of senior officials at the Iranian Fisheries Organization, part of the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, Nouri Ghezleji highlighted recent national defense achievements and underlined the ministry's responsibility to ensure food security for the population.

"Our foremost duty is to guarantee food security for our people," he said. "The Ministry of Agriculture Jihad will mobilize all its resources to fulfill this mission."

The minister stressed that supporting domestic production remains critical, especially in the current climate of external pressures. "The most significant aspect of passive defense lies in strengthening local production so we can meet the nation's food demands through our own capabilities," he explained.

Paying tribute to the memory of national martyrs, Nouri Ghezleji also pointed to the fisheries sector's vital role in food security. "Today, everyone recognizes the importance of food security. Fisheries are a main provider of protein for society, and their development and support for local producers are among the ministry's top priorities," he added.

Acknowledging the recent efforts to invigorate the fisheries sector, the minister praised the new leadership at the Iranian Fisheries Organization. "The organization's new head has shown an understanding of its mission and significance, and the steps taken so far are commendable," he said.

Nouri Ghezleji announced plans to hold a dedicated meeting soon with senior fisheries managers. "This session will offer a more focused review of the challenges in the fisheries field and explore practical solutions for its development," he noted.

Hamzeh Rostampour, head of the Iranian Fisheries Organization, emphasized the sector's central role in ensuring food security and boosting economic growth. "Fisheries are the backbone of livelihoods in underprivileged regions and a vital source of foreign currency," he said.

Reflecting on the sector's performance during a recent 12-day national crisis, Rostampour credited coordinated planning over the



past nine months for the ministry's effective response. "The satisfaction expressed by citizens and officials shows the results of sustained effort and planning," he remarked.

He identified three key lessons learned from the crisis: "First, the broad solidarity and unity among people; second, the necessity of ongoing attention to production issues; and third, the undeniable role of food in safeguarding national security."

"Food forms the foundation of a country's security, making comprehensive support for agriculture essential," Rostampour stressed.

He also noted that fisheries go beyond just fish production, describing them as integral to the nation's economy, society, and food security. "By utilizing resources like saltwater, barren lands, and coastal areas, fisheries generate valuable protein and income," he explained.

Rostampour highlighted the sector's efficiency, noting that it produces high yields of animal protein with minimal water consumption. "With 20,000 fishing vessels, 500 processing and value-added factories, and over 260,000 aquaculture farmers and fishers active in the industry, fisheries significantly improve livelihoods in border and underdeveloped areas," he said.

The head of the fisheries organization revealed that a comprehensive guide to provincial fisheries capacities has been prepared to attract investors. He also noted that incomplete and inactive projects have been identified, and strategic fisheries task forces have been set up in coastal provinces under the leadership of provincial governors.

Among strategic plans, Rostampour listed the expansion of caviar fish cage farming, support for deep-sea fishing, and cooperation with the armed forces to enhance the sustainable use of marine resources.

He added that the foreign currency needs of the Ministry's Trade and Commerce Deputy could be fully met by seafood exports if the necessary frameworks are in place.

Finally, Rostampour pointed to the potential of Chabahar in shrimp farming and its planned expansion into coastal villages. "Our aim is to increase efficiency in water and land use and transform production through structural reforms," he concluded.

## No Obstacles to the Exit of Undocumented Migrants at Iran's Borders



TEHRAN - The Vice President for Women and Family Affairs, Zahra Behrouz Azar, announced that there are no obstacles hindering the departure of undocumented foreign nationals from Iran, following her on-site visit to the Dogharoon border crossing in Khorasan Razavi province.

Speaking to reporters, Behrouz Azar explained that the process of repatriation is proceeding smoothly, and any issues that do arise are related to the destination country beyond Iran's borders. "Such problems, which mainly concern Afghanistan, are being addressed through diplomatic consultations," she added.

Behrouz Azar emphasized that Iran is no longer able to host these undocumented migrants, but stressed that they are leaving the country with dignity and respect. "Conditions for the continued stay of these individuals in Iran no longer exist, yet they depart our soil in an atmosphere of full respect," she said.

She praised the coordinated efforts of various organizations and security forces, including the army, border guards, police, local governorates, and municipal services in Khorasan Razavi, for ensuring the smooth departure process. "Today, I witnessed firsthand the commitment and dedication of all those involved," she said.

Referring to the heightened presence of migrants at the border during the recent 12 days of conflict in the region, Behrouz Azar noted that the situation at the Dogharoon crossing has since normalized. "Currently, the process is routine, and there is no disruption at the Iranian border itself," she explained.

## Smuggled Cosmetic Products Return to Iranian Market in New Packaging



TEHRAN - The Director General of Cosmetics and Hygiene Products at Iran's Food and Drug Administration has revealed alarming cases in which confiscated or illegal cosmetic products are re-entering the market under fake packaging and counterfeit branding.

Mahmoud Al-Bouyeh said that alongside other bodies, including the Headquarters for Combating the Smuggling of Goods and Currency, the Food and Drug Administration has been actively monitoring the distribution of unauthorized cosmetics and has taken significant steps to prevent their sale.

Al-Bouyeh described the methods used by profiteers, explaining that some seized or rejected cosmetic and hygiene products are being repackaged with new designs and false brand names before being reintroduced to the market. "These items, which were originally collected due to lack of authorization or safety concerns, unfortunately find their way back to consumers through fraudulent means," he said.

He emphasized that the public can verify the authenticity of products using the national tracking systems "ASL" and "TTAC," which allow consumers to check tracking codes printed on packaging. Through these systems, citizens can confirm the legitimacy of distribution licenses and verify whether products have been officially imported or produced.

Al-Bouyeh warned that many of these cosmetics and hygiene products are smuggled into the country through unofficial routes and in small quantities, making them harder to trace and more dangerous. "Some of these products may not have the necessary permits or quality standards. There have even been cases where expiry dates are tampered with or ingredients are altered, posing serious health risks to users," he added.

Highlighting the primary goal of protecting public health, Al-Bouyeh stressed that no product should be distributed without proper safety and authenticity approval. He also called on the public to play an active role by reporting suspicious cosmetic products, noting that such reports greatly help authorities identify and halt these violations.



## UN Warns Gaza Fuel Crisis “Critical”

GENEVA (Dispatches) - The United Nations warned yesterday that dire fuel shortages in the Gaza Strip had reached “critical levels”, threatening to further increase the suffering in the war-ravaged Palestinian territory.

Seven UN agencies said in a joint statement that “fuel is the backbone of survival in Gaza”. Fuel was needed to “power hospitals, water systems, sanitation networks, ambulances, and every aspect of humanitarian operations”, they said, highlighting that bakeries also needed fuel to operate.

The besieged Palestinian territory has been facing dire fuel shortages since the beginning of the devastating war that erupted after Hamas’s deadly attack inside Israel on October 7, 2023.



## Taiwan Deploys Advanced U.S. HIMARS Rockets in Annual Drills



TAICHUNG (Dispatches) - Taiwan’s military began deploying one of its newest and most precise strike weapons on Saturday as part of intensifying drills meant to showcase the island’s determination to resist any Chinese invasion.

Two armoured trucks with HIMARS - High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems - were seen manoeuvring around the city of Taichung near Taiwan’s central coast on the fourth of 10 days of its most comprehensive annual Han Kuang exercises yet.

Fire simulation and some live-fire drills are expected next week as more air force planes and naval ships become involved.

In a wartime scenario, said a military officer at the site, it would be vital to conceal HIMARS from enemy aerial reconnaissance, satellites “or even enemy operatives behind our lines” until the order to fire was given.

China views democratically governed Taiwan as its own and has intensified military pressure around the island over the last five years, staging a string of intense war games and daily naval and air force patrols around the territory.

Taiwan’s defense ministry said it had detected 14 Chinese air force sorties and nine naval ships around the island overnight. Nine of the sorties crossed the median line, the unofficial barrier between the two sides.

Taiwan rejects China’s sovereignty claims, with President Lai Ching-te saying only Taiwan’s people can decide their future.

China’s defense ministry said this week the Han Kuang drills were “nothing but a bluff” while its foreign ministry said its opposition to U.S.-Taiwan military ties was “consistent and very firm”.

Regional military attaches say the HIMARS deployment in a warlike exercise will be closely watched, given that they have been used extensively by Ukraine against Russian forces. Australia has also purchased the Lockheed Martin systems.

## France Announces Historic Deal Creating New Caledonia State



PARIS (Dispatches) - France on Saturday announced a “historic” accord with New Caledonia in which the overseas territory, rocked by deadly separatist violence last year, would remain French but be declared a new state.

President Emmanuel Macron had called for talks to break a deadlock between forces loyal to France and those wanting independence, asking New Caledonian elected officials, as well as political, economic and civil society leaders to gather near Paris to hammer out a constitutional framework for the territory.

After 10 days of talks, the parties agreed that a “State of New Caledonia” should be created.

The archipelago is to retain “a status within France, with Caledonians who will remain French”, said Nicolas Metzdorf, an anti-independence deputy.

“No more referendums are planned, with the exception of the one confirming this agreement,” he said in a message sent to AFP.

The priority now was New Caledonia’s economic recovery after last year’s violence that killed 14 and is estimated to have cost the territory two billion euros (\$2.3 billion), shaving 10 percent off its gross domestic product (GDP), he said.

Prime Minister François Bayrou said Saturday’s deal -- which still requires parliamentary and referendum approval -- was of “historic dimensions”.

Home to around 270,000 people and located nearly 17,000 kilometres (10,600 miles) from Paris, New Caledonia is one of several overseas territories that remain an integral part of France.

It has been ruled from Paris since the 1800s, but many indigenous Kanaks still resent France’s power over their islands and want fuller autonomy or independence.

## Trump Intensifies Trade War With Threat of 30% Tariffs on EU, Mexico

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Donald Trump threatened to impose a 30% tariff on imports from Mexico and the European Union starting on August 1, after weeks of negotiations with the major U.S. trading partners failed to reach a comprehensive trade deal.

In an escalation of a trade war that has angered U.S. allies and rattled investors, Trump announced the latest tariffs in separate letters to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum that were posted on his Truth Social media site on Saturday.

The EU and Mexico, both among the largest U.S. trading partners responded by calling the tariffs unfair and disruptive while pledging to continue to negotiate with the U.S. for a broader trade deal before the deadline.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said she was sure an agreement can be reached. “I’ve always said that in these cases, what you have to do is keep a cool head to face any problem,” Sheinbaum said at an event in the Mexican state of Sonora.

“We’re also clear on what we can work with the United States government on, and we’re clear on what we can’t. And there’s something that’s never negotiable: the sovereignty of our country,” she said.

Trump sent similar letters to 23 other trading partners this week, including Canada, Japan and Brazil, setting blanket tariff rates ranging from 20% up to 50%, as well as a 50% tariff on copper.

The U.S. president said the 30% rate was “separate from all sectoral tariffs,” indicating 50% levies on steel and aluminum imports and a 25% tariff on auto imports would remain.

The August 1 deadline gives the targeted countries time to negotiate agreements that could lower the threatened tariffs. Some investors and economists have also noted Trump’s pattern of backing off his tariff threats.

The spate of letters showed Trump has returned to the aggressive trade posture that he took in April when he announced a slew of reciprocal tariffs against trading partners that sent markets tumbling before the White House delayed implementation. But with the stock market recently hitting record highs and the U.S. economy still resilient, Trump is showing no signs of slowing down his trade war.

He promised to use the 90-day delay in April to strike dozens of new trade deals, but has only secured framework agreements

with Britain, China and Vietnam.

The EU has hoped to reach a comprehensive trade agreement with the U.S. for the 27-country bloc.

Trump’s letter to the EU included a demand that Europe drop its own tariffs. “The European Union will allow complete, open Market Access to the United States, with no Tariff being charged to us, in an attempt to reduce the large Trade Deficit,” he wrote.

Von der Leyen said the 30% tariffs “would disrupt essential transatlantic supply chains, to the detriment of businesses, consumers and patients on both sides of the Atlantic.”

She also said while the EU will continue to work towards a trade agreement, it “will take all necessary steps to safeguard EU interests, including the adoption of proportionate countermeasures if required.”

Mexico’s economy ministry said Saturday it was informed the U.S. would send a letter during a meeting on Friday with U.S. officials.

“We mentioned at the roundtable that it was unfair treatment and that we did not agree,” the ministry’s statement said.

Mexico’s proposed tariff level is lower than Canada’s 35%, with both letters citing fentanyl flows even though government data shows the amount of the drug seized at the Mexican border is significantly higher than the Canadian border.

“Mexico has been helping me secure the border, BUT, what Mexico has done, is not enough. Mexico still has not stopped the Cartels who are trying to turn all of North America into a Narco-Trafficking Playground,” Trump wrote.

China is the main source of the chemicals used to make the opioid fentanyl. According to U.S. authorities, only 0.2% of all fentanyl seized in the U.S. comes from across the Canadian border, while the vast majority originates from the U.S.-Mexico border.

Mexico sends more than 80% of its total exported goods to the U.S. and free trade with its northern neighbor drove Mexico to become the top U.S. trading partner in 2023.

The EU had initially hoped to strike a comprehensive trade agreement but more recently had scaled back its ambitions and shifted toward securing a broader framework deal similar to the one Britain brokered that leaves details to be negotiated.

## Israel and Hamas Exchange Blame as Gaza Ceasefire Talks Stall

GAZA CITY (Dispatches) - Gaza ceasefire talks hung in the balance as Hamas and Israel on Saturday accused the other of blocking attempts to strike a deal, nearly a week into an attempt to halt 21 months of bitter fighting in the Palestinian territory.

A Palestinian source with knowledge of the indirect talks in Qatar told AFP that Israel’s proposals to keep its troops in the war-torn territory were holding up a deal for a 60-day pause.

But on the Israeli side, a senior political official, also speaking on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivities of the talks, accused the militants of inflexibility and deliberately trying to scuttle an accord.

On the ground, Gaza’s civil defence agency said more than 20 people were killed across the territory on Saturday, including in an overnight air strike on an area sheltering the displaced.

“While we were sleeping, there was an explosion... where two boys, a girl and their mother were staying,” Bassam Hamdan told AFP after the attack in an area of Gaza City.

“We found them torn to pieces, their remains scattered,” he added.

In southern Gaza, bodies covered in white plastic sheets were brought to the Nasser hospital in Khan Yunis while wounded in Rafah were taken for treatment by donkey cart, on stretchers or carried.

In Tel Aviv, thousands took to the streets urging the government to seal a hostage release deal. “The window of opportunity... is open now and it won’t be for long,” said Eli Sharabi, who was freed in February.

Both Hamas and Israel have said that 10 hostages held since the militants’ October 7, 2023 attack that sparked the war would be released -- if an agreement is reached.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he was prepared then to



enter talks for a more permanent end to hostilities.

But one Palestinian source said Israel’s refusal to accept Hamas’s demand for a complete withdrawal of troops from Gaza was holding back progress in the talks.

A second source said mediators had asked both sides to postpone discussions until US President Donald Trump’s special envoy, Steve Witkoff, arrives in the Qatari capital.

The first source said Israel was proposing to maintain its military in more than 40 percent of the Palestinian territory, forcing hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians into a small area near the city of Rafah, on the border with Egypt.

“Hamas’s delegation will not accept the Israeli maps... as they essentially legitimise the reoccupation of approximately half of the Gaza Strip and turn

Gaza into isolated zones with no crossings or freedom of movement,” they said.

Israeli media reported that new maps would be presented on Sunday, quoting an unnamed foreign official with knowledge of the details.

A senior Israeli political official countered later that it was Hamas that rejected what was on the table, accusing the group of “creating obstacles” and “refusing to compromise” with the aim of “sabotaging the negotiations”.

“Israel has demonstrated a willingness to show flexibility in the negotiations, while Hamas remains intransigent, clinging to positions that prevent the mediators from advancing an agreement,” the official added in a statement sent to AFP.

The Hamas attacks on Israel in 2023 resulted in the deaths of at least 1,219 people, most of them civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli figures.

Of the 251 hostages seized, 49 are still being held, including 27 the Israeli military says are dead.

At least 57,882 Palestinians, also mostly civilians, have been killed since the start of the war, according to the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza.

The Israeli military said on Saturday it had attacked “approximately 250 terrorist targets throughout the Gaza Strip” in the previous 48 hours.

It said fighter jets hit “over 35 Hamas terror targets” around Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza.

Two previous ceasefires -- a week-long truce beginning in late November 2023 and a two-month one from mid-January this year -- saw 105 hostages released in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners.

The second Palestinian source said “some progress” had been made in the latest talks on plans for releasing Palestinian prisoners held by Israel and getting more aid to Gaza.

## Russia Attacks West Ukraine With Drones and Missiles, Kills Two

KYIV (Dispatches) - Russia pounded Ukraine with hundreds of drones and dozens of missiles, in the fourth major attack this month, targeting western cities and killing at least two people in Chernivtsi on the border with Romania.

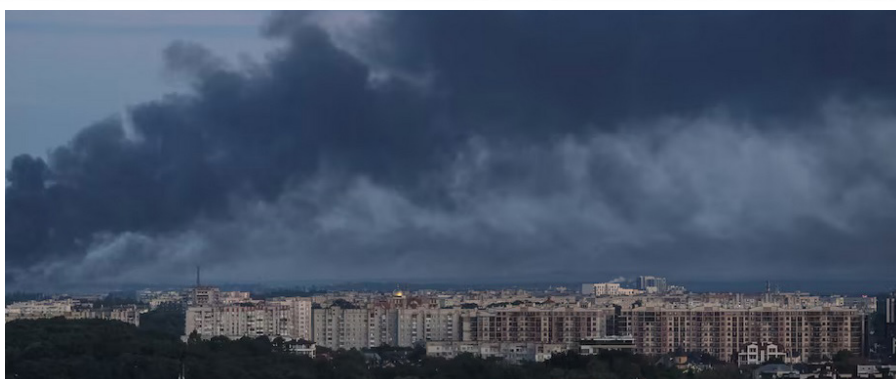
President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Russia launched 597 drones and 26 missiles, killing two people, wounding 20, and damaging civilian infrastructure from Kharkiv and Sumy in the northeast to Lviv, Lutsk, and Chernivtsi in the west.

Ukrainian air defence units shot down 25 missiles and 319 Shahed drones and jammed 258 other drones with electronic warfare, the air force said.

“The pace of Russia’s aerial strikes demands swift decisions -- and it can be curbed now by sanctions,” Zelenskyy said on the Telegram app, issuing a fresh call for tough sanctions on Russia and more air defence for Ukraine.

“This war can only be stopped through strength. We expect not just signals from our partners, but actions that will save lives.”

The attack is the latest in a series of massive aerial strikes over recent weeks. Russia



has significantly ramped up its drones and missile strikes on Ukraine since June.

The UN Human Rights monitoring mission in Ukraine said that June saw the highest monthly civilian casualties in three years, with 232 killed and 1,343 injured.

Ukraine’s Western cities of Lviv, Lutsk, and Chernivtsi suffered the most during the overnight attack, officials said.

Ruslan Zaporaniuk, the governor of the Chernivetskyi region, said that a 26-year-old woman and a 43-year-old man were killed and 14 others wounded as Russian drones and a missile struck the city, located about 40 km (24 miles) from Ukraine’s border with Romania.

Several fires broke out across the city, and residential houses and administrative buildings were damaged, regional officials said.



## Swiatek Stuns Wimbledon With historic 6-0, 6-0 Demolition of Anisimova in Final



LONDON (Dispatches) - Iga Swiatek demolished Amanda Anisimova 6-0, 6-0 in the most one-sided women's Wimbledon final for 114 years to win her sixth Grand Slam title.

The Polish eighth seed was in charge from the first point and wrapped up victory in just 57 minutes in a brutal display of precision hitting on Centre Court.

It is the first time a woman has won a final at Wimbledon without dropping a game since 1911, when Britain's Dorothea Lambert Chambers triumphed by the same scoreline.

And Swiatek, 24, is just the second player in the Open era to win a major without losing a game in the final since Steffi Graf humbled Natalia Zvereva at the 1988 French Open.

"It seems super surreal," said Swiatek, who is the first Wimbledon singles champion from Poland and has now won majors on all surfaces.

"I didn't even dream, for me it was way too far. I feel like I am already an experienced player after winning the Slams before but I never expected this one.

"This year I really, really enjoyed it and feel I improved my form here.

"I am always going to remember the opening of champagne bottles between serves. It is a sound that will keep me awake at night."

Swiatek lost just one set during the entire tournament as she won her first trophy on grass, two weeks after reaching the final of the grass-court event at Bad Homburg.

US 13th seed Anisimova was expected to prove a stern test after ousting world number one Aryna Sabalenka in the semi-finals, but Swiatek performed a demolition job.

Anisimova made a nervous start in hot conditions on Centre Court, with Catherine, Princess of Wales, watching from the Royal Box.

She was broken in the first game, soon slipping 2-0 behind and the signs looked ominous.

The American appeared to have found her feet in her next service game but the merciless Swiatek refused to give ground and recovered to move 3-0 ahead when Anisimova double-faulted.

At 4-0 down Anisimova was facing a first-set wipe-out but she was powerless to halt the rampant Swiatek, who sealed the opener 6-0 in just 25 minutes.

The American won just six points on her serve in the first set and committed 14 unforced errors.

An increasingly desperate Anisimova could not stem the tide in the second set, double-faulting again in the third game to give her opponent game point and then netting a backhand.

The crowd got behind her but to no avail as Swiatek kept up her level, serving out to win and celebrating before consoling her devastated opponent.

Anisimova made 28 unforced errors in the 12 games.

Swiatek is Wimbledon's eighth consecutive first-time women's champion since Serena Williams won her seventh and final title at the All England Club in 2016.

She has won all six major finals in which she has competed.

Swiatek, who now has 100 career Grand Slam match wins, has won the French Open four times and also the US Open, in 2022.

Her previous best performance at Wimbledon was a run to the quarter-finals in 2023.

The distraught Anisimova left court briefly before returning for the trophy presentation.

The American, who lost in qualifying last year, broke down in tears again during her speech on court, calling Swiatek an "incredible player".

"I know I didn't have enough today but I'll keep putting in the work," she said.

"I keep believing in myself and I hope to be back here one day. Thank you everyone."

## Infantino Hails Club World Cup as Most Successful Despite Criticism Over Heat, Player Fatigue

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - FIFA president Gianni Infantino triumphantly declared the Club World Cup to be "the most successful club competition in the world" yesterday ahead of this weekend's final between Paris Saint-Germain and Chelsea.

The first 32-team edition of the tournament faced criticism in the build-up for stretching demands on elite players and has been played out in baking temperatures in the United States that have raised concerns for the health of those involved.

There were also doubts about the level of interest the competition would generate among fans but Infantino said he was satisfied with the attendances at matches — despite many games being far from sold out — and claimed it had been a major success financially.

"The golden age of club football has started. We can definitely say this FIFA Club World Cup has been a huge success," Infantino told reporters at Trump Tower on New York City's Fifth Avenue, where FIFA has just opened an office.

"We heard that financially it would not work, that nobody is interested, but I can say we generated almost 2.1 billion dollars in revenues, for 63 matches," he said.

"That makes an average of US\$33 million per match — no



other club competition in the world comes close.

"It is already the most successful club competition in the world."

Former Liverpool coach Jurgen Klopp has been one of the leading voices against the tournament, calling it "the worst idea ever implemented in football" in a recent interview.

But the head of world football's governing body dismissed suggestions that Klopp might be speaking for most observers in Europe.

"We shouldn't say that the opinion of Europe on this is very bad because it is not true," said Infantino, who was appearing on a stage alongside numerous footballing greats including the Brazilian Ronaldo.

"All the teams who have come here have been happy — some teams who didn't come here because they didn't qualify were calling us to see how they could qualify.

"Of course I would have liked to have Liverpool here, Arsenal, Manchester United, Barcelona, Tottenham, AC Milan, Napoli... but you have to qualify and there are different criteria."

## Milan Claims Victory in Stage 8 of the Tour de France

PARIS (Dispatches) - Italian rider Jonathan Milan timed his attack perfectly to win the eighth stage of the Tour de France in a sprint finish.

Milan overtook Australian Kaden Groves on his left and held off Belgian rider Wout van Aert to beat him by about half a bike length.

Defending champion Tadej Pogačar kept the yellow jersey after finishing in the main pack.

After Friday's tough grind, the peloton set off at a slower pace on a sun-baked Stage 8, starting from the Brittany commune of Saint-Méen-le-Grand and taking riders 171 kilometers (106 miles) to Laval in western France.

The main teams had no will to set a high pace, so the peloton trundled along through country roads until two riders — French teammates Mathieu Burgaudeau and Matteo Vercher — broke away with about 80 kilometers left.



The peloton did not respond, continuing to roll at a lethargic pace for a long time with no team deciding to lead the chase.

But sprinters realized they were in danger of missing out on a stage win, so the peloton's speed had to increase eventually, and the two riders were finally caught with nine kilometers left.

After a sinewy route near the finish, Stage 2 winner Mathieu van der Poel accelerated to put his Alpecin-Deceuninck teammate Groves into a good position, but they attacked a little too soon.

Milan anticipated this, made his own move and withstood Van Aert's late attack behind him. The trio clocked 3 hours, 50 minutes.

In the overall standings, double Olympic champion Remco Evenepoel remained 54 seconds behind Pogačar in second place. Frenchman Kevin Vauquelin was third at 1 minutes, 11 seconds, and two-time Tour champion Jonas Vingegaard sat 1:17 behind in fourth spot.

## Djokovic Will Definitely Plan to Play at Wimbledon at Least One More Time



LONDON (AP) — Novak Djokovic wanted to make this much clear after losing to Jannik Sinner in the Wimbledon semifinals Friday: This was not a farewell performance. Djokovic intends to compete again at the All England Club.

"I'm not planning to finish my Wimbledon career today," the 38-year-old Djokovic said. "I'm planning to come back definitely — at least one more time."

His 6-3, 6-3, 6-4 defeat at Centre Court against the No. 1-ranked Sinner put an end to Djokovic's latest attempt to tie Roger Federer's men's record of eight championships at Wimbledon and to claim an unprecedented 25th Grand Slam title overall.

Djokovic was not fully able to compete at his best level, two days after taking what he described as a "nasty" and "awkward" fall in the last game of his quarterfinal victory.

"I don't want to talk in details about my injury and just whine about not managing to play my best," Djokovic said Friday. "I do feel disappointed that I just wasn't able to move as well as I thought or hoped that I would."

He was visited by a trainer before the third set for treatment on his upper left leg, won the next three games and was a point from a 4-0 lead, but lost six of the last seven games.

"We all saw, especially in the third set, that he was a bit injured," said Sinner, who will meet No. 2 Carlos Alcaraz in Sunday's final. "He's been in a very difficult situation."

Before this fortnight, Djokovic said he figured the grass-court tournament gives him his best chance at another major. His most recent came at the 2023 U.S. Open.

At the next Slam event, the 2024 Australian Open, Djokovic lost to Sinner. At the French Open a few months later, Djokovic needed to withdraw before the quarterfinals because he tore the meniscus in his right knee and needed surgery. Then, a month later at Wimbledon, he lost to Alcaraz in the final, his sixth consecutive appearance in the tournament's title match — and second straight loss to Alcaraz.

## India Equal England's First-Innings Score of 387 With Test in Balance



LONDON (Dispatches) - Opener KL Rahul scored a century while Ravindra Jadeja and Rishabh Pant pitched in with crucial fifties as India posted 387 on day three, equalling England's first innings, with their third test hanging in the balance at Lord's.

An injury to Shoaib Bashir blunted England's pace-spin attack strategy when India looked vulnerable with five wickets down after losing Pant and Rahul in quick succession, before Jadeja steadied their innings with his third fifty-plus knock in a row.

England opens Zak Crawley and Ben Duckett played a single over before stumps, remaining unbeaten at 2-0 as the five-match series remains tied with both sides looking to go 2-1 up with a win.

"Pretty even. You toil away for three days and you sit here with a two-run lead. Looking forward to a two-day shoot-out," England bowling coach Tim Southee told the BBC.

India started well from an overnight score of 145-3 with Rahul accompanied by left-handed batter Pant, who scored twin centuries in the first test, battled through an injured finger on his left hand as he hooked England captain Stokes for six to bring up his fifty.

The two added 141 runs for the fourth wicket before Pant was run out for 74 on the last ball before lunch as he played Bashir towards cover point, where Stokes made a quick turn to hit the stumps on the non-striker's end with a swift, direct throw.