

Members of the Iranian Parliament's Judiciary and Legal Committee Called on Dozens of Countries to Work Towards Imposing Sanctions on Israel Over the Regime's "Systematic Violation of International Rules and Human Rights.

IRAN NEWS

The IRGC Chief Says Iran Will Resume Its Retaliatory War Against the Invaders From Where It Left Off in the Event of Further Aggression, Emphasizing Full Preparedness of the Islamic Republic to Strike the Enemy Once Again

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Iran Condemns EU's New Sanctions as Illegal Attempt to Cover Up Own Terror Support



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran has condemned the European Union's recent move to make accusations and impose new sanctions against the country as an "illegal, destructive, and unjustified" attempt meant to deflect public attention from the 27-nation bloc's own sponsorship for terrorism.

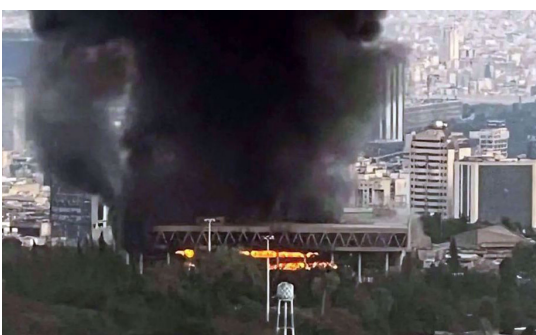
Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei made the remarks on Thursday, two days after the European Council slapped restrictive measures on eight persons and one entity, alleging that they are responsible for committing rights abuses on behalf of the Iranian government outside its borders.

Baghaei said the Council's claim about Tehran's support for terrorist acts in Europe are "ridiculous and baseless," noting that some European governments insist on making anti-Iran accusations and spreading lies about the country as part of a blatant blame game aimed at diverting domestic and international attention from their own systematic support for terrorism, as well as Israel's crimes in Gaza and the entire West Asia region.

"The EU and some of its member states criticize and sanction Iran under false pretexts, while they remain silent about the Zionist regime's military aggression against Iran and the killing of Iranian citizens, and even seek to justify and support it (the Israeli assault)," he added.

The spokesman also denounced the European Union's decision to impose sanctions on Iranian citizens based on unfounded claims as an arbitrary move that contradicts fundamental human rights norms and principles.

UNESCO Head Condemns Israeli Killing of Iranian Media Workers



GENEVA (Dispatches) - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has condemned the killing of two Iranian media workers during Israeli airstrikes on the IRIB headquarters in Tehran last month.

On Thursday, UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay called for a thorough and transparent investigation into the incident.

She emphasized that the media infrastructure of every country is protected under international humanitarian law, as it is classified as a civilian institution.

Azoulay referenced UN Security Council Resolution 2222, which mandates the protection of media workers during armed conflicts.

The Israeli strike claimed the lives of Nima Rajabpour, the editor-in-chief of IRIB's news channel, and Masoumeh Azimi, an administrator. The attack also injured several other media personnel.

On June 16, the Israeli regime executed an act of aggression by targeting a building belonging to the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) in Tehran.

The assault involved at least four bombs, striking the main facility housing IRIB's news department while a live broadcast was in progress. The transmission was briefly interrupted before Hassan Abedini, IRIB's news director and deputy for political affairs, went on air to condemn the attack.

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



Israel clung to U.S. for Ceasefire With Iran

TEHRAN - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says Israel was compelled to "bow down and cling to the United States" in desperation during the recent 12-day aggression against Iran, as it proved incapable of facing the Islamic Republic alone.

Speaking at a high-level meeting with Iran's judiciary officials in Tehran, Ayatollah Khamenei said the confrontation revealed not only Iran's military and strategic strength, but also the resilience, awareness, and national unity of the Iranian people.

"The great achievement of the people during the 12-day war was their determination, willpower, and national self-confidence, because the very essence of having the spirit and readiness to confront a power like the United States and its chained dog, the Zionist regime, is extremely valuable," he said.

Ayatollah Khamenei touched on Iran's transformation from a submissive client under the former Pahlavi regime to an assertive and independent nation.

"Back then, even in private, officials didn't dare criticize America. Today, Iran has reached a point where it not only does not fear the United States but also instills fear in it.

"This spirit and national will is exactly what makes Iran proud and leads it to achieve its great aspirations," he said.

Ayatollah Khamenei stressed that Iran will never enter any arena—diplomatic or military—as the weaker side, addressing Western leaders who mistakenly believe the recent aggression has given them the opportunity to diplomatically pressure Iran.

"We possess all the necessary tools such as reason and military power; therefore, whether on the diplomatic field or the battlefield, whenever we engage, by God's grace, we will enter with full hands," he said.

The Leader cited Israel's desperate appeal to the United States for a ceasefire after 12 days of aggression as clear evidence of Iran's strong and decisive response to the Zionist regime.

"If the Zionist regime had not bowed down and clung to the ground, and if it were capable of defending itself, it would not have turned to America like that. But it understood that it could not stand against the Islamic Republic."

The Leader described Iran's retaliatory strike against the US attack as a highly sensitive one. "The target hit by Iran was an extremely sensitive American center in the region, and once media censorship is lifted, it will become clear what a significant blow Iran delivered. Of course, even greater strikes could be dealt to the US and others if necessary."

The Leader stated that the enemy's strategy was to weaken Iran through targeted assassinations and psychological operations, then mobilize internal saboteurs and agitators to trigger unrest, but it was fully defeated by public awareness and nationwide solidarity.

"The aggressors' calculation and plan were that by targeting certain individuals and sensitive centers in Iran, the system would be weakened, and then—by activating their sleeper cells made up of mercenaries, from the hypocrites [MKO] and monarchists to thugs and criminals—they could provoke the people, bring them into the streets, and bring down the Islamic Republic.

"In reality, the exact opposite of the enemy's plan occurred, revealing that many of the assumptions held by some individuals in political and related spheres were also incorrect.

"God nullified their plot and brought the people into the field in support of the state and the system. Contrary to the enemy's expectations, the people rose to defend and support the Islamic establishment—both with their lives and their resources."

Ayatollah Khamenei called on Iran's Judiciary to vigorously follow up on recent crimes committed against the country, both in domestic and international courts.

"The issue of the Judiciary pursuing these recent crimes in legal tribunals, whether domestic or international, is among the most necessary and important tasks," the Leader said.

He acknowledged past shortcomings in this regard, noting, "We should have done this in many previous cases, but we failed in the past years. This time, we must not fall short."

"If the pursuit of this issue and referral to international and domestic courts takes even twenty years, it does not matter. The criminal must be held accountable."

The Leader argued that even if today a court is under the influence of a certain power, one day a judge may emerge who is independent.

Iran Calls Israeli Aggression Against Syria Dangerous Escalation



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has strongly condemned Israel's military attacks on Syria, calling them deliberate acts of aggression.

Iranian UN ambassador Amir Saeid Iravani on Thursday described these actions as a dangerous escalation by a regime occupying parts of Syria in blatant violation of international law and the UN Charter.

Iravani made these statements during a UN Security Council meeting addressing the situation in Syria.

He asserted that Israel poses the most serious and dangerous threat to regional peace and security due to its ongoing acts of aggression and the unconditional political and military support it receives from the US and its Western allies.

Iravani contended that Israel's attacks on Syria are a direct consequence of the Security Council's silence and the international community's failure to implement effective deterrent measures.

He noted that Israel has never faced repercussions for its repeated violations of international law, allowing it to continue its aggressive actions with complete impunity.

Iravani urged the Council to fulfill its responsibilities and hold Israel accountable for its violations, stressing that continued inaction will only embolden aggressors to persist in their transgressions.

On Wednesday, Israeli Occupation Forces launched airstrikes on key military facilities in Damascus and conducted drone raids around Suwayda in southern Syria.

Syrian state media reported that several people were killed in the Damascus assault, which targeted areas near the Ministry of Defense headquarters and the outer palace grounds.

UN Envoy Rejects Baseless U.S. Claims Regarding Situation in Yemen, Red Sea



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations has dismissed as "baseless" the recent anti-Iran accusations by the US regarding the situation in Yemen and the Red Sea, slamming the US military involvement in Yemen.

In a letter to the UN Security Council, Amir Saeid Iravani said Iran "categorically" rejects the baseless allegations once again made against the country by the US representative during Security Council meetings held on July 9 and July 15 under the agenda items "The Situation in the Middle East" and "Maintenance of International Peace and Security," respectively.

"The claim that Iran violates Security Council resolution 2216 (2015) is entirely unfounded, unsubstantiated, and devoid of credible evidence," he added.

Back in April 2015, the Security Council adopted Resolution 2216 on Yemen, which imposed sanctions on individuals allegedly undermining the stability of Yemen, calling on all Yemeni parties to end violence and refrain from further unilateral actions that threatened the political transition.

The Iranian diplomat once again reiterated his country's commitment to its international obligations and relevant Security Council resolutions, saying Tehran continues to support a peaceful, inclusive, and Yemeni-led political process.

"It is deeply regrettable that the United States abuses the Security Council platform to deflect attention from its own destabilizing actions, including its military involvement in Yemen and support for Israel's aggression in Yemen and the entire region," Iravani added.

Iran Rejects Argentine's Baseless Accusations in 1994 AMIA Case, Urges Fair Probe



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has dismissed "baseless" accusations leveled by Argentina at Iranian nationals in connection with the deadly 1994 AMIA bombing, urging the country's judiciary to handle the case fairly without third-party influence.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Friday, marking the 31th anniversary of the bombing attack on the Argentine Israeli Mutual Association (AMIA) community centre in Buenos Aires on July 18, 1994, that killed 85 people and injured over 300 others.

It said that elements and currents linked to Israel exploited the "suspicious" explosion from the very beginning and diverted the case into a misleading and incorrect path, disrupting the longstanding Iran-Argentine relations.

It also noted that over the past three decades, Iran has repeatedly declared its position in condemnation of any act of terrorism and stressed the need for a transparent and fair trial into the incident.

"Completely rejecting the accusations against its citizens, the Islamic Republic has condemned the insistence of certain domestic circles in Argentina to pressure the country's judicial system into issuing baseless charges and seemingly judicial rulings against Iranian citizens," it said. "Iran has called for the real masterminds and perpetrators of the explosion to be identified."

Meanwhile, the Foreign Ministry added that in the past years, clear and undeniable evidence has emerged indicating that the Zionist regime and its affiliated currents are exerting

influence and pressure on the Argentinean judicial system to make accusations against Iranians.

It further highlighted frequent changes in the judicial team investigating the AMIA case, the revelation of corruption among some judicial elements, the resignation of judges and even attempts on their lives, as an evidence of a "purposeful will to divert the Argentinean judicial system from a transparent and fair probe into the case."

With the sole aim of protecting bilateral ties and restoring the dignity of Iranian citizens, the Islamic Republic entered into talks with Argentina, which resulted in the signing of a memorandum of understanding in 2013, the ministry said. Less than two years later, however, Buenos Aires unilaterally

canceled the deal and prevented the formation of a transparent process aimed at revealing the truth and identifying those behind the blast.

"The Islamic Republic strongly emphasizes the baseless nature of claims against Iranian citizens, insists on the restoration of the accused citizens' dignity and demands an end to the show trial, while expecting the Argentinean judicial authorities to handle the case in a transparent and fair manner free from politicization and undue influence by third parties," it asserted.

"In accordance with international law, the Islamic Republic reserves its legal and legitimate rights to respond to any inappropriate and unreasonable action against itself and its citizens."



Iran Seizes Foreign Vessel Carrying Smuggled Fuel in the Sea of Oman

BANDAR ABBAS (IRNA) - The Islamic Republic of Iran has seized a foreign oil tanker in the Sea of Oman on charges of transporting two million liters of smuggled fuel.

The vessel carrying smuggled fuel in the Sea of Oman was impounded after inspectors discovered irregularities in its cargo documentation, said Hormozgan's Chief Justice Mojtaba Ghahremani.

The operation was part of maritime surveillance targeting suspicious fuel trafficking activities along Iran's southern naval borders, he said.

Iran Rises to Among the Top 20 Travel Destinations Worldwide



TEHRAN - According to a recent report by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Iran has ranked among the top 20 global travel destinations prior to the 12-day war, a milestone that the Deputy Minister of Tourism described as a sign of matured policymaking, resilient tourism industry, and a fresh window for public diplomacy through the official "Visit Iran" website.

Anoushirvan Mohtesen Bandpey, Deputy Minister of Tourism, announced this achievement during the Policy Council meeting of the international "Visit Iran" website. The meeting was held with senior government officials, private sector representatives, and media activists in the Persian Gulf Hall of the Tourism Deputy Ministry.

He highlighted that Iran is projected to be among the top 20 global destinations in the first quarter of 2025. Referring to the detailed analysis published by UNWTO, Mohtesen Bandpey noted that the data covers December 2023 through February 2024—the period before Iran's 12-day preemptive war—during which Iran experienced its best regional performance in attracting international tourists, establishing itself as a model of stability, attraction, and diversity.

He emphasized that this ranking not only reflects Iran's inherent tourism potential but also validates smart policymaking, private sector synergy, infrastructure development, and the effective portrayal of Iran's true image on the global stage. He stressed the need to continue and deepen international marketing efforts.

Mohtesen Bandpey underscored the vital role of the official "Visit Iran" website as Iran's primary link to global tourists. He stated that this platform should evolve beyond an informational site into a comprehensive hub for public diplomacy, destination marketing, perception management, and national tourism branding.

He outlined upcoming activities for the platform, including redesigning its structure and content based on tourist preferences and behavior analysis, developing an intelligent and interactive travel guide, leveraging social media to craft indigenous narratives about Iran, establishing performance evaluation metrics, and creating multimedia content with the participation of elites, local activists, and international marketing experts.

The Deputy Minister highlighted that the presence of representatives from both the public and private sectors in the website's Policy Council is a unique opportunity to utilize collective capacities and strategic vision to transform "Visit Iran" into a powerful brand in the global tourism industry.

In closing, Mohtesen Bandpey expressed hope that, following recent crises, Iran's global tourism position can be recovered—not as an distant ideal, but as a feasible and attainable goal—through national synergy and intelligent storytelling about Iran.

Expansion of Trade in Various Cities Across Iran Essential



TEHRAN - The Minister of Cooperatives, Labour, and Social Welfare stated that expanding trade across different cities in Iran is crucial for achieving balanced regional development.

Ahmad Midiria, on Tuesday, during a brainstorming session titled "Second Step of Regional Development," emphasized that the ministry underscores the importance of balanced regional growth as a fundamental necessity for the country.

He added that policies such as centralizing bank accounts of companies, employment, and VAT management in various counties have been implemented as part of this effort.

Midiria highlighted a key initiative: "facilitating domestic transit of goods," based on the recent government resolution. This plan enables the swift transfer of goods from ports like Shahid Rajaei to cities such as Isfahan, Shiraz, and Yazd, with customs procedures and warehousing handled within those cities.

The Minister of Cooperatives emphasized that the Ministry of Welfare can complete this supply chain by leveraging its resources, including maritime shipping companies, public warehouses, and transportation firms.

He also called on parliament members, in cooperation with chambers of commerce and governors, to advance this project across provinces.

Russia Supports Iran's Membership in the BRICS New Development Bank

TEHRAN - The Deputy Minister of Finance of Russia announced the country's support for the Islamic Republic of Iran's membership in the BRICS New Development Bank.

According to IRNA reports from the Iranian Embassy in Moscow on Wednesday evening, Ivan Chepckov made these remarks during a meeting with Iran's ambassador to Russia, Kazzem Jalali, who had requested Russia's support for Iran's accession to the BRICS New Development Bank.

Chepckov also called for increased cooperation between Russia and Iran in countering Western sanctions that he described as unjust. He expressed satisfaction with the development of bilateral cooperation, especially in banking and finance sectors, and stated Russia's readiness to continue and deepen these efforts.

Iran's ambassador in Russia also highlighted the expanding cooperation between the two countries across all sectors, emphasizing that banking and financial collaborations have seen significant growth over the past two years. Jalali added that Iran-Russia relations in insurance and taxation are also developing at a promising pace.

Referring to both countries' membership in BRICS, the ambassador stated that bilateral cooperation in banking and finance could serve as a successful model for the BRICS group.

According to IRNA, the New Development Bank (NDB) was established by BRICS member countries under an intergovernmental agreement signed during the sixth BRICS summit in Brazil in 2014. The bank was created to support various projects within BRICS nations and developing countries.

BRICS was founded in 2010 in Yekaterinburg, Russia, with Brazil, Russia, India, and China as founding members. South Africa joined the group a year later. Subsequently, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates joined BRICS at the start of 2024 (equivalent to December 2022). It was also announced that



Indonesia would join BRICS from the beginning of 2025 (equivalent to December 2023). BRICS also introduced a list of partner countries.

The BRICS finance ministers and central bank governors held their 13th and 14th meetings in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on July 13-14 of this year. During the summit, Iran's central bank delegation emphasized the importance of facilitating the admission of new members into the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) and highlighted the bank's role in financing infrastructural and sustainable development projects.

Earlier, in May 2024, Mohammad-Reza Farzin, Governor of the Central Bank of Iran, announced that Iran's relations with BRICS had begun over three years ago. He also stated that Iran is currently applying for membership in the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB), which he expected to be operational soon. Negotiations with BRICS members, including India, South Africa, and China, are already underway.

Dilma Rousseff, President of the BRICS New Development Bank, recently expressed her positive stance regarding Iran's accession during a meeting with Farzin in Beijing. She said that the bank is considering Iran's membership favorably in upcoming BRICS decision-making sessions.

Rousseff had previously announced that the bank intends to use national currencies for investments in the private sectors of BRICS economies. She emphasized that the bank prioritizes sustainable development, technology transfer, expanding its activities in the Global South, and maximizing the use of national currencies for financing private sector projects.

She also noted that the BRICS New Development Bank will support infrastructure projects that particularly address climate change impacts. The bank's focus areas include renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, hydroelectric power, and energy transmission networks, along with waste recycling initiatives.

760 Kilometers of Freeways Under Construction Nationwide

TEHRAN - The Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development announced that Iran has 6,500 kilometers of major roads and main routes within its defined corridor network. Of these, 3,300 kilometers are railway lines and 760 kilometers are freeways.

According to the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, that Hossein Bazvand made these remarks during the groundbreaking ceremony for Phase One of the Arak - Khorramabad Freeway, held in Shazand with the participation of officials from Markazi and Lorestan provinces on Thursday, July 26.

Bazvand noted that the initiation of the Arak - Khorramabad freeway project was among the priorities of the Minister of Roads and Urban Development. Although the minister emphasized his presence at the groundbreaking ceremony, he was unable to attend at the last moment due to a meeting with the Cabinet, despite the project's seven-year pause and the minister's persistent efforts to restart it.

He emphasized that future wars among nations will be fought over corridors, not energy resources. Iran has defined and prioritized the construction of 11 major highway corridors, nine rail corridors, and six freeway corridors—some of which have been handed over to provinces—highlighting their strategic importance.

Bazvand added that Iran's corridor network includes 6,500 km of major roads, 3,300 km of railway lines, and 760 km of freeways. Currently, about 5,000 workers are working more than 15 hours daily at construction sites across the country.

Despite the challenging conditions, the President has emphasized the importance of continued road construction. Currently, more than 11,000 km of freeways, highways, and rail lines are under development nationwide.

He explained that the South-to-North Corridor, part of which is the Arak - Khorramabad Freeway, is part of the "From Sea to Sea" project—stretching from the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman—with some sections completed and others under construction.

About 134 km of the "Sea to Sea" project are underway, with 284 km remaining, and 533 km of freeway are already operational. Additionally, 34 km of the Khorramabad - Andimesh - Ahvaz bypass remains to be completed.

Bazvand highlighted that the "Sea to Sea" freeway plays a critical role in transit, transportation, exports, and imports, facilitating traffic for approximately 20,000 vehicles daily and reducing traffic fatalities.

He also noted that the project reduces the Arak - Khorramabad route by 32 km, shortens travel time by 55 minutes, and saves 70 liters of fuel. About 2,500 workers are directly involved in the project.

Referring to over 1,100 martyrs of the 12-day war, he emphasized that Iran will never halt its development path.



The governor of Markazi Province stated that the start of Phase One of the Arak - Khorramabad Freeway is a national effort that will help reduce traffic accidents.

Mehdi Zendian Vekili explained that 67% of traffic fatalities in Markazi Province involve travelers from Lorestan and Khuzestan, and this freeway will effectively reduce that statistic.

He praised the capable "Khatam al-Anbia" Construction Headquarters, noting its extensive construction experience in the province, comparable to the entire history of infrastructure development there. He expressed confidence that the project could be completed within two years.

The governor also highlighted that the province's older infrastructure and factories date back to before the Islamic Revolution, and post-revolution efforts have focused on rebuilding and improving these facilities, especially in deprived regions. He insisted that development during the 12-day war continued without interruption, emphasizing that Iran's progress does not halt.

Javad Lanjabi, Acting Director of Roads and Urban Development in Markazi Province, stated that this freeway is the missing link in the North-South Corridor.

He explained that the 135 km freeway is being constructed through a joint investment by the Khatam al-Anbia Construction Headquarters and the public sector, involving six lanes.

The project includes four segments: from Shazand Petrochemical to Borujerd (68 km), and from Borujerd to Khorramabad (67 km), with the first segment completed in 2021.

Lanjabi added that the total investment exceeds 140 trillion rials, funded jointly by the government and Khatam al-Anbia.

A representative of Shazand, criticizing the absence of the Minister of Roads and Urban Development at the ceremony, noted that completing this freeway had been neglected for nearly 50 years. Persistent efforts from the ministry and support from the minister and his deputies have been instrumental in advancing the project.

Hossein Hadianpour emphasized that this freeway will free Shazand County from transportation deadlocks. He also pointed out that the project is one of the country's largest, completed with collaboration between the then-Minister of Roads and the Khatam al-Anbia Headquarters. He suggested that the absence of the minister at the event warrants additional consideration for future improvements to Shazand's main roads.

The Arak - Khorramabad Freeway spans 135 km, with the first segment from Shazand Petrochemical to Borujerd covering 68 km, featuring six lanes and a width of 35.3 meters. The project's total investment involves 60% from the government and 40% from Khatam al-Anbia. The remaining sections include the 67 km stretch from Borujerd to Khorramabad.

Urgent Need to Enhance Iran-Iraq Communication Cooperation During Arbaceen



TEHRAN - The Minister of Communications and Information Technology emphasized the importance of expanding Iran-Iraq cooperation to ensure high-quality communication networks for Arbaceen Hussaini pilgrims.

He also announced the dispatch of an Iranian delegation to Iraq for further coordination.

Sardar Sattar Hashemi, during a meeting with Nisr Abdulmohsen Abdullah, the Iraqi ambassador to Tehran, highlighted the shared ties between the two countries. He stated that in recent years, Iran and Iraq have collaborated effectively to provide quality communications and bandwidth during Arbaceen, achieving satisfactory progress.

He underscored that increasing communication cooperation during Arbaceen is a necessary step to improve the connectivity experience for pilgrims. Hashemi added that representatives from his ministry will travel to Iraq for further coordination and meetings with Iraqi officials and telecom operators.

Hashemi pointed to the ministry's strategic plan to bolster international cooperation under the umbrella of technology diplomacy. He stressed the importance of leveraging the shared capacities of Iran and Iraq to serve as a vital link in international transit routes through Iran's infrastructure.

He also highlighted the capabilities of Iranian knowledge-based companies and the growth of Iran's digital economy, considering these sectors as suitable platforms for joint private-sector cooperation. He expressed hope that closer engagement between Iranian and Iraqi private sectors would facilitate more active and joint presence in international markets.

Increase of 38,000 Barrels per Day in South Azadegan Oil Field Production



TEHRAN - The CEO of Petropars Group announced that over the past ten months, drilling, completion, and commissioning of 17 wells in various reservoir layers of the South Azadegan Oil Field has increased the field's daily production by 38,000 barrels.

Hamidreza Saqafi stated that, additionally, with the completion of acidizing operations on six more wells, approximately 14,000 barrels could be added to the daily production capacity.

He continued that during the last ten months, Petropars, as the largest exploration and production (E&P) company in Iran's oil industry, has successfully carried out drilling and completion operations in the Sarvok, Khozdam, Gdovian, and Fahlian layers, relying on domestic capabilities and the expertise of its specialists. Notably, the highest daily production rate was from the Fahlian layer wells, averaging 4,800 barrels per day.

The CEO of Petropars highlighted that, to achieve maximum production, acidizing operations on six wells have been conducted with precise selection of acids and additives. The commissioning of these wells is expected to significantly boost production capacity. Additionally, two other wells have been successfully drilled and completed; after acidizing, they are expected to add about 3,000 barrels per day to the production capacity.

Saqafi expressed special appreciation for the dedication, knowledge, and tireless efforts of all Petropars employees. He emphasized that the achievements are a direct result of the relentless efforts of the hardworking team, who, with a sense of responsibility, technical commitment, and organizational cohesion, have elevated the development of South Azadegan to prominent milestones.

He also recalled that, on the subsurface front, Petropars has taken a significant step toward self-sufficiency by holding a tender for the supply of 50 in-well pump sets (ESP) and managing the manufacturing process using Iranian capacities and transferring technology from reputable foreign partners.

Torrential Rain Pounds South Korea for Third Day

SEOUL (Dispatches) - More than 5,000 people in South Korea have been forced into shelters as heavy rain pounded parts of the country for a third day, with the deluge killing at least four people and destroying property and infrastructure, the safety ministry said on Friday.

Torrential rain warnings remain in effect for most of the country's western and southern regions and the weather service has advised extreme caution against landslides and flooding through Saturday.

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U.S. Shifts Patriot Missile Exports to Kyiv, Postponing Swiss Defense Plans



GENEVA (Dispatches) - Delivery of U.S. Patriot weapons systems to Switzerland will be delayed as Washington reprioritizes to provide more support to Ukraine, the Swiss government said Thursday.

The U.S. defense department informed Bern this week "that it will reprioritize the delivery of Patriot systems to support Ukraine, focusing on ground-based air defense" there, the Swiss defense ministry (DDPS) said in a statement.

"This also affects Switzerland, which will receive its production batches later than planned," it said.

U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday announced a deal with NATO chief Mark Rutte for European Nato states to buy US weaponry – particularly advanced Patriot systems – and give it to Kyiv.

The move marked a pivot for Trump as his patience has worn thin with Russia's President Vladimir Putin for frustrating efforts to halt the war in Ukraine.

European countries – including Germany, Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden – have expressed willingness to buy the weaponry for Kyiv.

The Swiss government statement said that the US decision to "reprioritize the delivery of Patriot ground-based air defense systems" to ensure they get to Ukraine would impact a Swiss order made three years ago.

Switzerland, which is not in NATO, had ordered five Patriot systems in 2022, with delivery scheduled to begin next year and to be completed in 2028.

With its traditional position of well-armed military neutrality, Switzerland would not pass on weapons systems to Ukraine.

But it said that "on July 16, the U.S. Department of Defense informed the DDPS that Switzerland would also be affected by the new prioritization and that deliveries intended for Switzerland would be delayed".

UK, Germany Hail Wide-Ranging Treaty, Deepening Ties in Face of Threats



STEVENAGE (Dispatches) - Prime Minister Keir Starmer and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz hailed a major treaty to deepen ties in areas ranging from defense to immigration on Thursday, the latest step in Britain's push to reset UK relations with the European Union.

On his first trip to London as chancellor, Merz described the Kensington treaty as historic, the first major bilateral agreement between Britain and Germany to deepen defence cooperation and to try to boost economic growth in both nations.

Merz's day trip follows a three-day state visit to Britain by French President Emmanuel Macron, signalling greater cooperation between Europe's top three powers at a time of threats to the continent and uncertainty about their U.S. ally.

"We see the scale of the challenges our continent faces today, and we intend to meet them head on," Starmer told a press conference after the two leaders signed the treaty in the Victoria and Albert Museum, co-founded by Britain's Queen Victoria and her husband Prince Albert, of German origin.

"The Kensington treaty ... is an expression of our shared aims and values. But more than that, it's a practical work plan setting out 17 major projects where we will come together to deliver real results which will improve people's lives."

Standing next to Starmer at an Airbus plant, Merz again lamented Britain's departure from the EU, but said the agreement would cement ties between the two nations and complement an agreement London struck with France.

"We are jointly determined to shape this new era with new leadership opportunities - the United Kingdom and Germany side by side," Merz said.



GAZA CITY (Dispatches) - Israeli forces killed at least 27 people in attacks in the Gaza Strip on Thursday, including three people who died in a strike on a church that late Pope Francis used to speak to regularly, medics and church officials said.

Eight men tasked with protecting aid trucks were reported among the dead in airstrikes that were carried out while mediators continued ceasefire talks in Doha.

A U.S. official said this week the talks were going well but two officials from the Palestinian militant group Hamas told Reuters there had been no breakthrough as the Israeli military continued to pummel Gaza.

Two women and one man died and several people were wounded in a strike by the Israeli army on Gaza's Holy Family Church, said the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which oversees the small parish.

"The Latin Patriarchate strongly condemns this tragedy and this targeting of innocent civilians and of a sacred place," a statement by the Patriarchate said, adding that the victims had turned to the church compound as a safe haven "after their homes, possessions, and dignity had already been stripped away".

"This horrific war must come to a complete end," it said.

Photos released by the church showed its roof had been hit close to the main cross, scorching the stone facade, and that windows had been broken.

Father Gabriele Romanelli, an Argentine who used to regularly update the late Pope Francis about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, was lightly injured in the attack. TV footage showed him sitting receiving treatment at Al-Ahly Hospital in Gaza, with a bandage around his lower right leg.

"The attacks against the civilian population that Israel has been carrying out for months are unacceptable. No military action can justify such an attitude," Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said in a statement.

Pope Leo XIV on Thursday renewed his call for an immediate ceasefire in response to the attack.

In a telegram of condolences for the victims, Leo expressed "his profound hope for dialogue, reconciliation and enduring peace in the region." The pope said he was "deeply saddened to learn of the loss of life and injury caused by

the military attack," and expressed his closeness to the wounded priest and the entire parish.

President Donald Trump called Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to express his frustration over the strike on the church, the White House said. Netanyahu later released a statement saying Israel "deeply regrets that a stray ammunition hit Gaza's Holy Family Church."

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said it was aware of reports of casualties and was reviewing the incident.

Israel's foreign ministry said in a statement on X that the results of the investigation would be published.

"The IDF makes every feasible effort to mitigate harm to civilians and civilian structures, including religious sites, and regrets any damage caused to them," it added.

Israel has been trying to eradicate Hamas in Gaza in a military campaign that began after the group's deadly attack on Israel in October 2023 and has caused widespread hunger and privation in the tiny enclave.

Palestinian medics said one airstrike on Thursday had killed a man, his wife and their five children in Jabalia in northern Gaza, and that another in the north had killed eight men who had been handed responsibility for protecting aid trucks.

Three people were killed in an airstrike in central Gaza and four in Zeitoun in eastern Gaza, medics said.

Arab mediators Qatar and Egypt, backed by the United States, have hosted more than 10 days of talks on a proposed US 60-day truce.

As part of the potential deal, 10 hostages held in Gaza would be returned along with the bodies of 18 others, spread out over 60 days. In exchange, Israel would release detained Palestinians. The exact number is not clear.

A Hamas source with knowledge of the matter said Israel had presented new maps to the mediators, pledging to pull the army further back than had previously been offered. The source said this partially met Hamas' demands, but was still insufficient.

Lula Not to Take Orders From Foreigner Trump, Calls Tariffs Blackmail



SAO PAULO (Dispatches) - Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said he would not take orders over tariffs from a foreigner, referring to U.S. President Donald Trump, and later called the United States' threatened duty "unacceptable blackmail."

The comments, made during two separate events, mark a continuation of a spat between the two leaders that escalated when the U.S. announced a 50% tariff on Brazil last week.

Trump attributed the tariff, set to start in August, to Brazil's treatment of former President Jair Bolsonaro and to trade practices against U.S. companies that he said are unfair. The tariff announcement came days after Lula called Trump an "emperor" the world does not want.

Lula and members of his cabinet have rejected the reasoning behind the tariffs and insisted on Brazil's sovereignty, while calling for trade negotiations with the United States.

"No foreigner is going to give orders to this president," Lula said in a speech, using the slang word 'gringo', which in Brazil is a common term for foreigners without the pejorative sense it carries in other parts of Latin America.

He added that Brazil would go ahead with regulation and taxation of U.S. tech firms, telling a gathering of

leftist student activists in the state of Goias that tech firms are conduits of violence and fake news disguised as freedom of expression.

Later on Thursday, during an evening TV and radio address to the nation, Lula said the defense of Brazil's sovereignty extends to protecting itself against the actions of foreign digital platforms.

During the near five-minute address, Lula said Brazil has been negotiating with the U.S. over tariffs, and repeated that the Latin America country had sent a proposal in May.

"We expected a response, and what we received was unacceptable blackmail, in the form of threats to Brazilian institutions and false information about trade between Brazil and the United States," Lula said.

Brasilia has been holding discussions with industry groups and companies that will be affected by the U.S. tariff, while also readying potential retaliatory measures if talks fall through.

Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira told CNN Brasil separately on Thursday that Lula was open to talks with Trump, who had not yet met each other.

"If the circumstances are given, they will speak," he added.

Lula, who is in his third non-consecutive term as president of Latin America's largest economy, saw his approval ratings start to rebound after the trade spat with Trump last week.

Ukraine Appoints New Gov't in Biggest Wartime Overhaul

KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine's parliament appointed the country's first new prime minister in five years on Thursday, part of a major cabinet overhaul aimed at revitalizing wartime management as prospects for peace with Russia grow dim.

Yulia Svyrydenko, 39, has been tasked by President Volodymyr Zelenskiy with boosting domestic weapons production and reviving Ukraine's loan-dependent economy.

In a speech to parliament, Zelenskiy said he expected his new government to increase the share of domestic weapons on Ukraine's battlefield to 50% from 40% within six months.

He also singled out deregulation and expanding economic co-operation with allies as other key aims of the biggest government reshuffle since Russia's February 2022 invasion.



Svyrydenko, an experienced technocrat who had served as first deputy prime minister since 2021, pledged to move "swiftly and decisively".

"War leaves no room for delay," she wrote on X.

"Our priorities for the first six months are clear: reliable supply for the army, expansion of domestic weapons production, and boosting the technological strength of our defense forces."

Svyrydenko is also well known to the Trump administration, having negotiated a deal giving the U.S. preferential access to Ukraine's mineral wealth. It was considered crucial to bolstering relations between Kyiv and Washington.

Addressing lawmakers on Thursday, Zelenskiy said further deals with the U.S. would be forthcoming but did not offer any specific details.



Griekspoor Saves Five Match Points, Prevails in Bastad

LONDON (Dispatches) - Second-seeded Tallon Griekspoor fended off five match points and rallied to defeat Italian qualifier Andrea Pellegrino 4-6, 7-6 (6), 6-3 to advance to the quarterfinals of the Nordea Open in Bastad, Sweden.

Griekspoor, a three-time winner on the ATP Tour, trailed 6-3 in the second-set tiebreaker but won five consecutive points to overtake Pellegrino and extend the match. The Dutchman will now face countryman Jesper de Jong, who upset Czech eighth seed Vit Koprivá 7-6 (3), 7-5. de Jong defeated Griekspoor in their lone meeting in Montpellier in February.

In other second-round matches, fourth-seeded Sebastian Baez of Argentina edged Norwegian qualifier Nicolai Budkov Kjaer 3-6, 6-2, 7-5, while sixth-seeded Luciano Darderi of Italy breezed past Sweden's Elias Ymer 6-2, 6-2.

The first round also wrapped up, with Austria's Filip Misolic, Botić van de Zandschulp of the Netherlands and Argentines Mariano Navone and Camilo Ugo Carabelli advancing.

After a six-week layoff, top-seeded Casper Ruud encountered a tough return, but was able to knock off Swiss wild card Dominic Stricker 7-5, 7-6 (6) to reach the quarterfinals in Gstaad, Switzerland.

The former World No. 2 from Norway saved two set points in the second-set tiebreaker to prevail.

On Ruud's side of the draw, Ignacio Buse, a qualifier from Peru, rallied from a set down, then dominated the third set in a 1-6, 7-5, 6-1 victory over Poland's Kamil Majchrzak. Buse will take on Argentina's Roman Andres Burruchaga in the quarterfinals. Burruchaga also came from behind, eliminating

Germany's Patrick Zahraj 4-6, 6-4, 6-1.

Top-seeded Andrey Rublev of Russia and Mexican Juan Alejandro Hernandez squared off in the second round in Los Cabos, Mexico, on Wednesday night, with Rublev prevailing 6-3, 6-2 in 1:15. It was their first-ever meeting. Rublev had 31 winners compared to two for Hernandez.

In other second-round action, Canadian Denis Shapovalov, the third seed, easily topped American Govind Nanda 6-1, 6-2, while fellow American Emilio Nava upset six-seeded Yunchaokete Bu of China 3-6, 7-5, 7-6 (6) in a little over three hours.

Meanwhile world number one Aryna Sabalenka has decided to skip the U.S. Open tune-up event in Montreal due to fatigue, Tennis Canada announced.

The 27-year old Belarusian's decision to sit out the July 26-August 7 Canadian Open follows her semi-final appearances at Wimbledon and Berlin and after losing in the French Open final.

"I'm looking forward to kicking off the North American hard-court swing, but to give myself the best chance for success this season, I've decided it's in my best interest to skip Montreal," Sabalenka said in a Tennis Canada press release.

"I'll miss my amazing Canadian fans, but I'm already looking forward to seeing you all next year. Thanks for your understanding and support it means the world to me!"

Tennis Canada also said Spanish world number 10 Paula Badosa, who announced this week that she has a fresh back injury, has also withdrawn from the Canadian Open.

Messi Blanked as Inter Miami Slump to 3-0 Defeat

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Lionel Messi's Major League Soccer-record streak of multi-goal games ended at five as his Inter Miami squad was blanked 3-0 at FC Cincinnati.

The 38-year-old Argentine star forward had scored a brace, two goals, in five consecutive matches for Miami, giving him 16 goals on the season as Inter managed four wins and a draw in the run.

Not since 2012 when he played for Barcelona had Messi netted a brace or more in five consecutive matches.

But Cincinnati kept Miami to only two shots on goal in the contest.

"Clearly today we were outplayed from the beginning of the match," Inter Miami head coach Javier Mascherano said through a translator.

"It was very difficult for us to win the individual duels. Maybe one of the reasons is that physically we come with a very big hustle and bustle and in the long run we end up paying.

"Leo suffered a knock at the end but it ended well." US 20-year-old midfielder Gerardo Valenzuela opened the scoring for Cincinnati in the 16th minute.

Brazilian striker Evander followed with a goal in the 50th minute and struck again in the 70th to provide all the scoring the hosts needed.

"We didn't play the game we wanted. They put us under pressure all the time, we weren't fresh or lucid and they beat us very well," Mascherano said.

Miami fell to 11-4 with five drawn for 38 points, fifth in the Eastern Conference and eight points adrift of first-place Philadelphia,



the overall MLS leader which beat Montreal to stay one point ahead of Cincinnati in the overall MLS standings.

Inter Miami has three games in hand on both clubs but would need to win them all to overtake their rivals for the overall league lead.

"The opponent outplayed us from start to finish," Mascherano said. "The result and the way they beat us obviously worries us. Now we have to rest and think about the next game."

That will come on Saturday when Miami will visit the New York Red Bulls, who got two goals each from Cameroon's Eric Choupo-Moting and Sweden's Emil Forsberg in a 5-3 home win over New

England on Wednesday.

A source close to negotiations told AFP on Wednesday that Inter Miami has agreed on terms with Argentine international Rodrigo De Paul, a midfielder for Atletico Madrid.

The deal is for the next four seasons with De Paul to play the remainder of 2025 in Miami on loan from Atletico Madrid with a subsequent purchase option for Inter worth more than \$12 million.

De Paul could play for Miami for the first time on July 30 against Mexican side Atlas in Inter's debut match in the Leagues Cup, a tournament between MLS and Mexican League clubs.

He will leave Europe after four seasons in Madrid to join countryman Messi 11 months before the World Cup to be hosted by the US, Canada and Mexico.

Messi has not said if he will play in the World Cup.

De Paul and Messi were teammates on Argentina's 2022 World Cup champions and reuniting them could help entice Messi to sign a new contract with Inter, whose deal with the superstar expires at the end of this year.

The club wants Messi to stay for the 2026 season, in which Inter will open a new stadium in Miami.

DePaul, 31, joins a Miami core that includes Messi, Uruguayan Luis Suarez and Spaniards Jordi Alba and Sergio Busquets.

Charlotte was named host city for the 2026 MLS All-Star Game yesterday. This year's all-star matchup will be in Austin, Texas, next Wednesday with the MLS All-Stars facing the Mexican League All-Stars. —

Deal Being Finalized to Return Lillard to Trail Blazers



NEW YORK (Dispatches) – Nine-time All-Star Damian Lillard is finalizing a three-year, \$42 million contract to return to the Portland Trail Blazers, ESPN reported on Thursday.

Per ESPN, Lillard now will receive a salary of \$70 million between his existing deal with the Milwaukee Bucks and his new contract with the Trail Blazers. He also will have a player-option in 2027 and a no-trade clause in a deal that returns Lillard to the franchise with which he spent his first 11 NBA seasons.

Lillard, who turned 35 on Tuesday, saw his season come to an abrupt end on April 27 after an excruciating torn left Achilles tendon knocked him out of the rest of the playoffs.

He is expected to miss the 2025-26 season.

Lillard was hurt in the first quarter of the Bucks' 129-103 loss to the Indiana Pacers in Game 4 of the Eastern Conference first-round series in just his third game back after dealing with a blood clot in his right calf. He missed the final 14 games of the regular season and the first contest of the playoff series against the Pacers.

Lillard requested a trade out of Portland in the summer of 20xx and the team obliged. The Trail Blazers were entering a transition into a rebuild and Lillard wanted to go to a team in which he could compete for a championship.

Lillard averaged 24.9 points, 7.1 assists and 4.7 rebounds in 58 regular-season games during his second season with the Bucks. He was waived by Milwaukee on July 7.

Lillard owns career averages of 25.1 points, 6.7 assists and 4.3 rebounds in 900 regular-season contests. His 2,804 3-pointers rank fourth in NBA history and his 22,598 points rank eighth among active players.

Meanwhile the Milwaukee Bucks, after waiving Chris Livingston earlier this month, are re-signing the forward to a guaranteed one-year, \$2.3 million contract, ESPN reported.

Livingston, 21, was released on July 2 before his contract became guaranteed for his third season on Tuesday. Milwaukee selected Livingston in the second round (58th overall) in the 2023 NBA Draft out of Kentucky. He signed the largest contract ever for a second-round pick – \$7.7 million over four years, with the first two years fully guaranteed.

Martin Returns at Brno MotoGP After Injury Hell



BRNO (Dispatches) - Reigning world champion Jorge Martin of Spain will return to racing at the Czech MotoGP this weekend as the Brno circuit hosts its first grand prix since 2020.

Marc Marquez is threatening to run away with the title after four straight wins, which have allowed the Spaniard to open up a sizeable gap at the top.

The 32-year-old factory Ducati rider has 344 points after 11 of 22 races, and he has won both the sprint and the main race on seven occasions.

His younger brother Alex, on a Gresini Ducati, is second with 261 points, ahead of Marc's Italian teammate Francesco Bagnaia – the 2022 and 2023 world champion – with 197.

But it is Martin, who has yet to score his first point this season, that will likely steal the limelight on the circuit in the second Czech city of Brno.

Outgoing MotoGP world champion Jorge Martin announced on July 17, 2025, that he would ultimately stay with Aprilia in 2026 after previously stating he was considering leaving the Italian team. — AFP pic

Outgoing MotoGP world champion Jorge Martin announced on July 17, 2025, that he would ultimately stay with Aprilia in 2026 after previously stating he was considering leaving the Italian team. — AFP pic

Martin sat out the first three races following two pre-season crashes and when he returned at Qatar in April, he crashed heavily again and missed the next seven races.

"I feel prepared. In terms of the physical condition, I feel better than any time in my life for sure," the 27-year-old Martin said having recovered from 11 broken ribs.

Pogacar Gears Up for Tour's Second-Week Showdown

TOULOUSE (Dispatches) - The second week of the Tour de France may be short, but it will be crucial, defending champion Tadej Pogacar said on rest day when he went to the barber, had a burger and enjoyed a French cafe, but was raring to get back on the bike.

Here AFP breaks down the Slovenian's views on the challenges of the week ahead.

Pogacar has been unusually serious during the opening week of the Tour which he described on Tuesday as "explosive, nervous, stressful and super-hard".

He has also complained about the heat, tiredness and how annoyed he can get by the stonewall tactics from Jonas Vingegaard's Visma team.

"Week two will be really fast," he predicted. But he was not talking about the speed of the wheels, rather that it will be over



more quickly due to being a day shorter after the 10-day slog before the first rest day.

Pogacar said it was refreshing to see some new faces like current leader Ben Healy and emerging French star Kevin Vauquelin, and suggested their arrival had muddled the waters.

"The field is packed, it's going to be a huge fight even for the podium and especially for the yellow jersey," the 26-year-old said.

"It's not just the big teams, everyone has proved they can stay up front," he added, explaining the race is harder to control than it usually is.

He also forecast the overall lead would change hands.

"Not tomorrow on the flat, but at the Hautacam," he said of the Pyrenean giant mountain.