

Iran's Tax Revenues Rose by More than Half in the Calendar Year to Late March Amid Efforts by the Government to Diversify the Economy and Reduce Its Dependence on Oil Exports

IRAN NEWS

Iran's Permanent Mission to the UN Has Sent a Report to the U.N. Security Council Detailing Crimes Committed by the Israeli Regime During Its War of Aggression Against the Islamic Republic Last Month

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22% Growth in Iran's Exports to Eurasia in Spring 2025



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - A senior official from Iran's Trade Promotion Organization has announced a 22% growth in exports to the Eurasian region in the first quarter of the Persian year 1404 (March-June 2025), highlighting strong interest from traders following the implementation of the Iran-Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) Free Trade Agreement.

According to a report from the Trade Promotion Organization, Elham Haji Karimi said the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Iran and the EAEU, which came into effect on May 14, 2025, has already demonstrated significant impact on Iran's exports. Under the deal, tariffs on 87% of traded goods have been eliminated, making it one of Iran's most influential trade agreements to date.

Karimi emphasized the strong response from traders on both sides and noted that the implementation of the agreement signals a promising future for expanding trade relations. She attributed the positive outlook to the commitment of both Iranian and EAEU member state officials, as well as support from the Eurasian Economic Commission, the governing body of the union.

Trade data from the first quarter of the year shows that Iranian exports to the EAEU rose by 22% in value compared to the same period last year, reaching \$532 million. Russia and Armenia saw the highest increases in imports from Iran, with 33% and 28% growth respectively.

Imports from the Eurasian bloc stood at over \$380 million, reflecting a 3% year-on-year decline. Following Iran's first-ever positive trade balance with the EAEU last year, the trend continued in the first quarter of 1404, with a trade surplus of \$152 million in Iran's favor.

24 Provinces in Iran Facing Water Stress Amid Second-Driest Year in 57 Years



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran is grappling with a severe water crisis as 24 provinces face significant water stress, affecting 50 cities across the country, according to officials from the Ministry of Energy.

Speaking at a press conference, Isa Bozorgzadeh, spokesperson for Iran's water industry, revealed alarming statistics about the country's declining rainfall. "As of July 18, total precipitation has reached just 147.2 millimeters – a 40% decrease compared to last year and a 38% deficit compared to the long-term average," Bozorgzadeh said.

The provinces of Sistan and Baluchestan, Hormozgan, Bushehr, and Khuzestan have experienced the sharpest drops in rainfall, with precipitation levels plunging by more than 50%. Tehran, the nation's capital, is now in its fifth consecutive year of drought.

Bozorgzadeh warned that the accumulated effects of yearly droughts are leading to what he called "induced drought," making it increasingly difficult to manage water shortages. "Water inflow into dams this year reached 22.76 billion cubic meters, down 43% compared to the 39.63 billion cubic meters recorded last year," he noted.

This year ranks as the second-driest in Iran over the past 57 years, placing 56th in terms of water scarcity since national records began.

In response, authorities have launched 169 projects aimed at managing water stress in the affected cities. "These projects are currently underway, and the Tehran metropolitan area, home to over 20 million people, is at the forefront of this crisis," Bozorgzadeh added.

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK



Iran Vows Global Legal Push Against Aggressors

TEHRAN - In a strongly worded press briefing on Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ismail Baghaei declared that Iran would exhaust every diplomatic and legal avenue to hold aggressors accountable, particularly in light of the ongoing crisis in Gaza and recent attacks on Iranian citizens.

"We will not neglect a single opportunity to defend Iran's rights and bring perpetrators to justice," Baghaei stated during his weekly press conference in Tehran.

Baghaei opened with a harsh condemnation of the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, describing events over the past two years as an "unprecedented genocide." He accused Israel of using starvation as a method of warfare and highlighted the devastating blockade that has left the territory completely cut off for more than 140 days.

"In just the past 24 hours, 150 innocent people were killed in Gaza," Baghaei said, denouncing what he called the international community's "absolute numbness" to the suffering of Palestinians.

Iran has called on the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to urgently convene an emergency session on the matter. Baghaei also criticized the intimidation of international legal bodies, referencing recent U.S. sanctions on International Criminal Court prosecutor Fatou Bensouda as evidence of political interference in justice mechanisms.

In a deeply emotional segment of the briefing, Sediqi Saber—the sole surviving member of a family reportedly targeted in Israeli attacks—gave personal testimony. His brother, a mechanical scientist, and his nephew, a mathematics prodigy, were both killed in strikes on their home in Astaneh Ashrafieh, according to Saber.

"I collected the bodies of my family with my own hands," he said. "They were not military, not weapons experts. They were scholars, and yet they were killed."

Saber accused Israel of systematically targeting not just scientists but the Iranian people at large, and called for a practical Iranian strategy to confront such threats. "Trump and Netanyahu lied—none of these individuals were building nuclear weapons," he added.

Baghaei emphasized that Iran has been actively documenting what it views as Israeli military crimes since the beginning of the latest escalation. He said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has compiled extensive correspondence with international organizations and will continue to build its

case through every available diplomatic and legal channel.

"This is our responsibility—not just politically, but historically—to ensure every crime and loss is recorded," he stated.

Responding to recent comments by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev regarding the proposed Zangezur Corridor, Baghaei reiterated Iran's support for regional cooperation, but with firm conditions.

"We welcome increased connectivity in the region, but it must never come at the expense of national sovereignty or territorial integrity," he said, warning against geopolitical misinterpretations in the Caucasus region.

Baghaei also addressed emerging media reports implicating Israeli involvement in the Jeffrey Epstein case, stating that the "Zionist regime" has historically used blackmail and influence operations to manipulate powerful figures in Washington.

"These tactics are not new and show the extent to which Israel will go to preserve its influence," he alleged.

Regarding ongoing nuclear negotiations, Baghaei confirmed that discussions with three European countries continue at the deputy foreign minister level. He reiterated Iran's commitment to using diplomacy as a tool for protecting national rights.

He also refuted former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's claim that Iran had previously agreed to limit uranium enrichment to below 1%. "That's simply untrue," Baghaei said, dismissing the remark as part of U.S. domestic political infighting.

On the issue of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) "snapback" sanctions mechanism, Baghaei was unequivocal.

"Invoking snapback now is baseless, unjustifiable, and without legal merit," he said. He emphasized that Iran's reduction of commitments under the deal was within the agreement's provisions and in direct response to the West's failure to uphold their end.

"Europe didn't just fail to meet its obligations—they tried to justify Israeli aggression. Now they lack any moral or legal standing to invoke mechanisms they themselves neglected," he concluded.

E3 Lacks Legal, Political or Moral Standing to Invoke Snapback Mechanism



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran says that France, Germany, and the UK lack the legal, political, and moral authority to invoke the snapback mechanism of the 2015 nuclear deal.

In a letter addressed to UN Secretary-General António Guterres, along with the President of the Security Council and its members, and EU High Representative Kaja Kallas, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi underscored Tehran's position on Sunday.

Araqchi emphasized that the three European nations have supported Israel's aggression toward Iran, rejected the fundamental tenets of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and failed to honor their commitments to the JCPOA agreement.

The foreign minister noted that Iran had exhausted the JCPOA's dispute resolution process following the US withdrawal from the deal. However, instead of collaborating, the E3 aligned themselves with Washington's so-called "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran.

He stated that through their actions and statements – such as providing political and material support for the recent unprovoked military aggression of the Israeli regime and the US, rejecting the main pillars of the JCPOA, and their ongoing failure to meet their commitments – the E3 have forfeited their status as "Participants" in the JCPOA.

Consequently, any attempts to reinstate terminated UNSC resolutions are rendered null and void, Araqchi emphasized.

Iran initially responded to the unilateral US withdrawal from the JCPOA by fully utilizing the accord's dispute resolution mechanisms before gradually implementing remedial measures as outlined in Paragraph 36 of the JCPOA, the foreign minister noted.

Iran endeavored to encourage the other "Participants" to return to compliance, Iran's top diplomat said.

"However, the E3 have reneged on their commitments and actively contributed to the so-called US 'maximum pressure' policy, and recently, the military aggression against our people too. Actors with such a record ought to be the last to claim 'good faith,'" Araqchi noted.

The E3 must not be permitted to undermine the credibility of the UN Security Council by misusing a resolution that they themselves have not honored, Araqchi added.

"The E3 must heed their own advice to the US in their letter of 20 Aug 2020 and refrain from any action that would only deepen divisions in the Security Council or that would have serious adverse consequences on its work," he said.

In conclusion, Araqchi reaffirmed that Iran has consistently demonstrated its capability to confront any misguided "dirty work," while remaining open to reciprocating sincere diplomatic efforts in good faith.

In talks with his German, French, and British counterparts and Kallas on Thursday, Araqchi said the EU and European troika need to abandon their "worn-out policies" of threat and pressure if they seek to play a role in any new round of nuclear talks between Iran and the United States.

Pointing to repeated European threats about the activation of a mechanism that would re-impose hefty sanctions on the Islamic Republic, Araqchi said, "If EU/E3 want to have a role, they should act responsibly, and put aside the worn-out policies of threat and pressure, including the 'snapback' for which they lack absolutely no moral and legal ground."

Snapback would bring into force six previous Iran-related Security Council resolutions adopted between 2006 and 2010. It would reinstate the expired UN arms embargo that barred countries from supplying, selling, or transferring most military equipment to Iran and prohibited Tehran from exporting any weapons.

It would also impose export controls, travel bans, asset freezes, and other restrictions on individuals, entities, and banks.

Iran and the United States held five rounds of indirect talks on Tehran's peaceful nuclear program before June 13, when the Israeli regime launched an unprovoked act of aggression on the Islamic Republic, assassinating many high-ranking military commanders and nuclear scientists in addition to ordinary civilians.

Mediated by Oman, the 6th round of talks was planned to be held in the Omani capital of Muscat on June 15, but was called off due to the anti-Iran attacks.

On June 22, the United States officially joined the war against Iran by launching attacks on three nuclear facilities in the country in violation of the United Nations Charter and the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Around One Million Illegal Foreign Nationals Expelled From Iran



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Mohammad-Saleh Jokar, Chairman of the Iranian Parliament's Councils Committee, has announced that approximately one million undocumented foreign nationals have been expelled from Iran. He emphasized that enforcement measures against unlicensed and offending foreign nationals will be intensified.

Jokar outlined the government's ongoing efforts to regulate the presence of foreign nationals in the country. "So far, nearly one million unauthorized foreigners have been deported," he said. "However, due to the openness of some border points, there is still a risk of these individuals reentering the country. Therefore, completing the border wall and strengthening border controls remain of critical importance."

Jokar noted that the effectiveness of the border wall can only be assessed once the project is fully implemented. He added that accurate statistics regarding the number of foreign nationals in Iran will only be possible once identity data is properly registered in official databases. "Currently, only estimates are available, and we lack precise figures," he explained.

He stressed that the ultimate goal is to organize and manage the presence of foreign nationals. "We must identify them, register their identity data, and then, using the occupational atlas developed by the Ministry of Labor, determine how many foreign workers are actually needed in the country. Only those whose presence is necessary will be allowed to stay; the rest must leave."

Jokar further stated that harsher penalties are now in place for those residing in Iran without proper documentation, including possible prison sentences in some cases. He also highlighted illegal practices such as the renting of bank cards by foreign nationals from Iranian citizens, calling it unlawful and unacceptable.

Larijani Meets Putin in Kremlin to Discuss Nuclear, Regional Issues



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ali Larijani, a senior advisor to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, have discussed the latest issues regarding Tehran's nuclear program and tensions in the region.

During the surprise meeting in Moscow on Sunday, Larijani "conveyed assessments of the escalating situation in the Middle East and around the Iranian nuclear program", Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

He added that the Russian president had expressed Moscow's "well-known positions on how to stabilize the situation in the region and on the political settlement of the Iranian nuclear program".

Meanwhile, the Russian presidency also confirmed the meeting and said that, at the instruction of Ayatollah Khamenei, Larijani presented Iran's views on the current escalation in the region and, notably, surrounding Iran's nuclear program.

Putin expressed support for stabilizing the situation in the region and resolving any issues pertaining to Iran's nuclear program via political means, it added.

The meeting was held amid reports that Iran and the European troika – France, Germany, and Britain – have agreed in principle to hold fresh nuclear negotiations next week.

In a statement last week, Russia's Foreign Ministry dismissed a report claiming that President Putin had urged Iran to agree to a zero enrichment agreement with the United States, describing it as "defamation."

The statement came after the American news website Axios, citing three sources familiar with the matter, reported that Putin had "encouraged" Iran to accept a nuclear deal that would exclude uranium enrichment.



Iran Army to Host Hybrid Rescue Operation in Caspian Sea

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Islamic Republic of Iran Army plans to host the hybrid maritime rescue exercise 2025 (CASAREX 2025) in the Caspian Sea. The exercise will run for three days, starting Monday. Naval vessels from the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy and the Russian Federation Navy are scheduled to participate in the drills. The event will be held under the slogan “Together for a Safe and Secure Caspian Sea.” Participating forces will include the naval branches of Iran’s Army, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (I.R.G.C.), the Law Enforcement Force, along with the Russian Federation Navy. Observers from other littoral states of the Caspian Sea will also be in attendance.

Iran to Hold 25th International Building Industry Exhibition as Scheduled



TEHRAN - The President of the Iran Chamber of Cooperatives announced on Sunday that, despite recent developments, the 25th International Building Industry Exhibition will be held on schedule and with full strength, thanks to strong domestic and international participation.

Bahman Abdollahi stated that the exhibition, scheduled to take place from August 17 to 20, 2025, at the Tehran International Permanent Fairground, will be organized with enhanced coordination and the full capacity of construction industry professionals, along with the support of relevant government institutions.

“This event presents a unique opportunity to showcase domestic capabilities, expand export markets, and exchange technical knowledge in the construction sector,” Abdollahi said, according to a statement from the Chamber.

He emphasized that the Chamber of Cooperatives, in line with efforts to boost non-oil exports, support domestic production, and elevate the construction sector’s national standing, is fully committed to organizing this exhibition. As one of the region’s largest and most specialized events in the field, the exhibition will offer a vital platform for industry professionals to display their latest products, services, technologies, and achievements.

Underscoring the central role of the construction industry in economic growth, job creation, and sustainable development, Abdollahi said the exhibition aims to foster synergy among producers, contractors, investors, housing cooperatives, tech-based companies, and policymakers.

“This event will not only create opportunities for domestic collaboration but will also serve as a gateway to international engagement and the expansion of Iranian technical and engineering service exports,” he said.

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President Calls for Rooted, Regional Solutions to Water Scarcity Crisis

TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian has called for comprehensive, scientific, and region-specific strategies to address the country’s growing water crisis, stressing the urgent need for a balance between water resources and consumption as a cornerstone of sustainable development.

Speaking at a high-level forum held Monday morning with academic leaders and ministers from the energy, agriculture, and science sectors, President Pezeshkian underscored the importance of coordinated action involving government bodies, universities, and local administrations.

“The failure to observe a fundamental balance between our water resources and their usage is at the root of many of our current problems,” Pezeshkian stated. “We must critically evaluate the effectiveness of the water-saving initiatives we’ve undertaken in recent years and determine how much impact they’ve truly had.”

The President called for the formation of specialized joint task forces between the government and academia, emphasizing that water scarcity is a cross-sectoral challenge and cannot be resolved in isolation. These groups, he said, must be both comprehensive and deep-rooted in approach to avoid unintended consequences in other areas.

He proposed that these task forces be established at the provincial level in close coordination with local universities and governorates and then extended to the county level, noting that each region’s unique climate and geography demands tailored solutions.

Pezeshkian stressed the importance of raising awareness among government officials, policymakers, and the public about the seriousness of the water situation. He proposed combining data from the Ministry of Energy and academic research to present a unified and impactful picture of the crisis.

He also highlighted the essential role of national media in informing and mobilizing the public to support preventive measures and policy implementation.

Education in schools, he added, is another key factor in instilling a water conservation culture among younger generations.

“Solving the water crisis requires a fundamental change in perspective. This is not a short-term project, but a long-term, ongoing effort,” Pezeshkian said.

He outlined five pillars that should guide this transformation: Scientific management of water, soil, and agriculture; Effective education; Incentive-based policies; Legal action against violators; and a system of continuous monitoring and evaluation.

President Pezeshkian pointed to global trends where third- and fourth-generation universities have expanded their roles beyond education to focus on solving real-world problems. He urged Iranian universities to play a more active role in addressing national challenges such as water scarcity, so that their research and educational output contributes directly to sustainable and balanced development.

During the session, a detailed report was presented outlining how universities have engaged with the water crisis and exploring the long-term causes of the issue. The forum also delved into the many interrelated factors contributing to Iran’s water imbalance, including: Significant water loss in the urban supply sector; Disproportionate agricultural water use compared to returns; Ineffective and expensive water transfer projects; Over-extraction from underground reserves; Incomplete implementation of water policies; Aging distribution networks; Outdated cooling systems; Climate change impacts; Lack of smart data systems for water monitoring; Political and security considerations; Poor inter-agency coordination, and Unregulated demands on limited water sources.

The President concluded by urging all stakeholders to recognize the water crisis as a national priority requiring scientific, integrated, and localized solutions backed by public participation and informed governance.

Today’s Heroes Are Those Who Improve the Nation’s Economy



TEHRAN - Vice President and Head of the Plan and Budget Organization, Seyed Hamid Pourmohammadi, emphasized that in today’s world, true heroes are those who contribute to improving the country’s economic situation. He made the remarks during a gathering of Iran’s National Team for the 2025 International Economics Olympiad in Azerbaijan.

Speaking at the Young Scholars Club on Sunday, Pourmohammadi praised the team’s dedication and their coaches’ efforts, wishing them success in the upcoming global competition.

Referring to Iran’s long tradition of honoring its heroes, he stated:

“Throughout history, Iranians have looked up to their champions — from Rostam and Arash the Archer to Nader Shah and others. But today, our society needs new kinds of heroes — those who can enhance our economy.”

He stressed that anyone who can contribute to improving the country’s welfare, increasing production, and raising per capita income is walking in the footsteps of Iran’s historical champions.

Pourmohammadi also highlighted Iran’s ancient heritage, mentioning the recent UNESCO World Heritage inscription of the prehistoric Khoramabad Valley, one of the oldest human settlements. “With such a rich history and legacy of civilization, our nation deserves better economic and social conditions. We must overcome existing inequalities and challenges,” he said.

Encouraging the young Olympiad participants, he noted: “Iran’s past heroes were once students like you. I hope that with the knowledge and skills you gain from this global competition, you will become pioneers in the field of economics and help solve the country’s economic challenges.”

The Vice President announced the readiness of the Plan and Budget Organization to fully support Olympiad participants. “We support all Olympiad contenders, but those in the field of economics will receive special attention due to the organization’s close ties to economic policy and planning,” he added.

Iran Ranks 64th Globally in Railway Network Development



TEHRAN - Iran ranks 64th in the world in railway network development, according to Mohammadreza Rezaei Kouchi, head of the Iranian Parliament’s Civil Commission. Speaking at a private sector investment ceremony in the country’s passenger rail industry, Kouchi emphasized the need for a more strategic focus on expanding the rail sector as part of Iran’s broader economic and infrastructure goals.

“Rail transport plays a vital role in energy consumption, travel speed, and reducing air pollution,” he said, noting that railway development is now considered a key indicator of a country’s progress. “We must set our goals based on this understanding and allocate resources accordingly.”

Kouchi criticized the current approach to managing the country, pointing out that Iran spends around 5,000 trillion rials annually on fuel subsidies. He argued that such funds should instead be directed toward infrastructure development, including the long-neglected railway sector.

Citing World Bank statistics, Kouchi noted that Iran ranks 64th among 90 countries in railway development. However, he added that recent investments mark a positive shift in direction.

Referring to Iran’s Seventh Development Plan, Kouchi stated that one of the key mandates is to shift 30% of passenger and freight transportation to the rail network by the end of the plan period. “Out of 50 million tons of cargo and 35 million passengers transported annually, 30% should move through rail,” he explained.

He also praised private sector involvement in rail investments, stressing that such initiatives align with the Seventh Development Plan. “We need support from both Parliament and the government in funding and coordination,” he said.

ICCIMA President Proposes Formation of Special Economic Measures Taskforce



TEHRAN - In a significant policy proposal at a recent meeting of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), its President, Samad Hassanzadeh, called for the establishment of a Special Economic Measures Taskforce, led by the Government-Private Sector Dialogue Council, to address the country’s economic challenges amid ongoing conflict and international sanctions.

Speaking on July 20 during the ICCIMA board meeting, Hassanzadeh extended condolences for the recent loss of military commanders, scientists, and civilians in what he described as the “aggression of the Zionist regime.” He emphasized that the recent conflict, managed through national unity and leadership, served as a test for the resilience of Iran’s economic infrastructure and private sector capacity.

Highlighting the coordinated response by Iran’s three chambers—the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Cooperatives, and the Chamber of Guilds—Hassanzadeh praised their early action in ensuring continuity in production and foreign trade during the crisis. He noted that the experience, although rooted in conflict, revealed the potential of collaborative and strategic efforts.

The ICCIMA president urged a reassessment of centralization policies, stating that past decisions have weakened the private sector by concentrating authority within the government. He advocated for a stronger embrace of the “people-centered economy” model emphasized by Iran’s Supreme Leader, which he interpreted as a call to enhance the role of private enterprise.

Hassanzadeh stressed the strategic importance of regional and international economic engagement, proposing that the private sector take a lead role in economic negotiations. He revealed that formal proposals on this matter had been submitted to both the Supreme Leader and the President, suggesting that regional alliances and economic diplomacy could be pivotal in mitigating the effects of war and sanctions.

Tehran Lacks Emergency Shelters

TEHRAN - Amid rising regional tensions and concerns over the possibility of conflict, a senior seismic risk expert has warned that Tehran is dangerously unprepared for emergencies due to the lack of proper civil defense shelters. Dr. Ali Beitollahi, head of the Earthquake and Risk Department at the Road, Housing, and Urban Development Research Center, stressed that using metro stations or underground parking lots as makeshift shelters could actually intensify a crisis rather than mitigate it.

In an interview with ILNA, Beitollahi highlighted the absence of suitable shelters in Iran’s major cities, especially in Tehran, which has no designated emergency refuge infrastructure. He noted that while some deep metro lines with proper ventilation and structural reinforcement may offer limited protection, they were never designed for this purpose and could present serious safety hazards in the event of war or natural disaster.

“Shelters are not the same as emergency housing. A shelter must be deeply constructed, fortified, and equipped with critical life-support systems, whereas emergency housing is temporary and surface-based,” he said.

Beitollahi recalled that during the Iran-Iraq war, efforts to build shelters began under Prime Minister Mir-Hossein Mousavi but were eventually abandoned. Despite recognition at the time that civil defense should not be limited to wartime conditions, those initiatives did not continue.

He criticized the current approach of presenting public facilities such as metro stations, schools, and mosques as emergency shelters, arguing that these structures are not built to withstand explosions or major seismic events and are often structurally outdated.

“Suggesting that people shelter in underground parking garages during wartime is dangerously misleading and increases



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the risk to civilians,” he warned.

Beitollahi pointed out that the responsibility for shelter construction lies with Iran’s Passive Defense Organization. However, he said there has been no serious action from the agency to implement or enforce shelter-building standards.

“Unless shelter construction becomes a mandatory legal requirement, like building codes for earthquake safety, there’s little hope for progress,” he said. “Otherwise, like many other urban planning priorities, it will simply be forgotten over time.”

Following the 2003 Bam earthquake, the idea of “safe rooms” within residential units was introduced as a partial substitute for shelters. These rooms, designed to protect residents from structural collapse, could provide some level of refuge. However, the higher construction costs deterred widespread adoption.

Beitollahi emphasized that civil defense shelter construction is a complex urban planning issue requiring coordinated action across multiple agencies. Factors such as location, depth, life-support infrastructure, and integration into urban development must be addressed.

“This isn’t just an engineering challenge—it’s a national security concern,” he added.

He also noted that while the Passive Defense Organization often issues stringent directives for less critical issues, it has yet to implement binding regulations for public shelters. He questioned why, despite having authority, the organization has failed to act on such a vital need.

“Tehran is the capital city and yet, we have no official shelters. That fact alone is alarming,” Beitollahi stated.

In conclusion, Beitollahi reiterated that although some metro tunnels might offer limited refuge, relying on them in a real crisis could be dangerous. Without purpose-built, reinforced shelters, the population remains highly vulnerable.

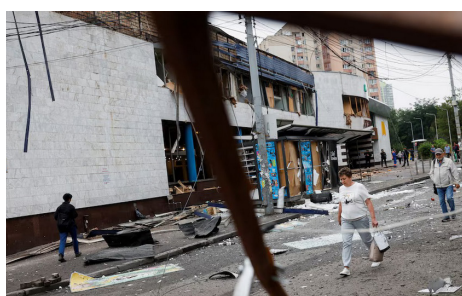
Russia Launches New Barrage of Drones, Missiles at Ukraine

KYIV (Dispatches) - Russia launched a new barrage of drones and missiles at Ukraine in an overnight attack on Monday, killing at least one person and causing multiple fires in the capital Kyiv, city officials said.

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said rescuers and medics were working on sites across four districts of the capital. A subway station in central Kyiv, commercial property, shops, houses and a kindergarten were damaged, city officials said.

In another tense and sleepless night for Kyiv residents, many rushed to take shelter in underground stations. Explosions were heard across the city as air defence units engaged in repelling the attack.

Oleh Synchubov, the governor of the Kharkiv region, reported multiple explosions in Kharkiv, the country's second-largest city, but gave no immediate details on the damage.



UK Consumer Sentiment Suffers First Big Fall in Nearly 3 Years



LONDON (Dispatches) - British consumer sentiment had a marked fall for the first time in nearly three years last month, reflecting increased worries about job security, a Deloitte survey showed on Monday.

Deloitte said its consumer confidence index dropped by 2.6 percentage points to 10.4% in the second quarter, its lowest since the first quarter of 2024.

The fall was the first since the third quarter of 2022 - when inflation hit a double-digit peak and financial markets reeled from former Prime Minister Liz Truss' budget plans - apart from a 0.2 point decline last year which Deloitte did not view as statistically significant.

"Concerns of a slowing labour market have left consumers worried about job security and income growth prospects, while persistent inflation and a high cost of living have negatively impacted sentiment towards personal debt," said Deloitte consumer insight lead Celine Fenech.

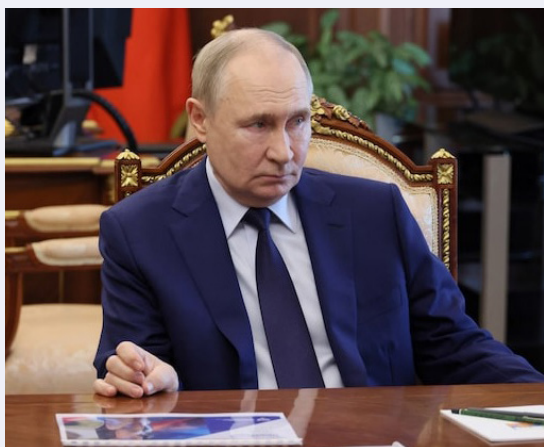
Businesses have blamed increased employment taxes and a higher minimum wage which took effect in April, as well as planned law changes to make it harder to dismiss new employees, for making them more reluctant to hire.

Official data last week showed Britain's unemployment rate rose to 4.7% in the three months to May, its highest since 2021, while inflation picked up to 3.6% in June, the highest since January 2024.

The Deloitte figures paint a slightly different picture to Britain's longest-running survey of consumer sentiment, from GfK, which drifted in the second half of last year but rose to its highest since December last month.

Deloitte's survey of 3,200 consumers was conducted between June 13 and June 16 and the consumer sentiment index is based on six questions about job security, job opportunities, income, debt, children's welfare, and general health and wellbeing.

Putin Ready to Discuss Peace in Ukraine But Wants to Achieve Goals



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian President Vladimir Putin is ready to move toward a peace settlement for Ukraine but Moscow's main objective is to achieve its goals, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told state television in a clip published on Sunday.

Peskov said that the world was now accustomed to U.S. President Donald Trump's sometimes "harsh" rhetoric but pointed out that Trump had also underscored in comments on Russia that he would continue to search for a peace deal.

"President Putin has repeatedly spoken of his desire to bring the Ukrainian settlement to a peaceful conclusion as soon as possible. This is a long process, it requires effort, and it is not easy," Peskov said told state television reporter Pavel Zarubin.

"The main thing for us is to achieve our goals. Our goals are clear," Peskov said.

On Monday, Trump announced a tougher stance on Russia, pledging a new wave of military aid to Ukraine, including Patriot missile defence systems. He also gave Russia a 50-day deadline to agree to a ceasefire or face additional sanctions.



Japan's Ruling Party Suffers Stunning Defeat as Trump-Style Populists Surge

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's future is unclear after his coalition appeared to have disastrously lost its upper house majority in elections that saw strong gains by a right-wing populist party.

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which has governed almost continuously since 1955, and its partner Komeito had to win 50 seats in Sunday's vote but they secured only around 41, according to local media projections.

Voters angry at inflation turned to other parties, notably the "Japanese first" Sanseito, which made strong gains with its "anti-globalist" drive reminiscent of US President Donald Trump's agenda.

The debacle comes only months after Ishiba's coalition also lost its majority in the lower house, suffering the LDP's worst result in 15 years.

Ishiba, 68, a self-avowed policy "geek" seen as a safe pair of hands when he won the LDP leadership in September - on his fifth attempt - was tight-lipped late Sunday about his future.

"It's a difficult situation, and we have to take it very humbly and seriously," Ishiba told broadcaster NHK. Asked about his future, he said only that he "cannot speak lightly of it".

"We can't do anything until we see the final results, but we want to be very aware of our responsibility," Ishiba added.

If he goes, it was unclear who might step up as the LDP's 11th premier since 2000 now that the government needs opposition support in both chambers.

"Ishiba may be replaced by someone else, but it's not clear who will be the successor," Hidehiro Yamamoto, politics and sociology professor at the University of Tsukuba, told AFP.

After years of stagnant or falling prices, consumers in the world's fourth-largest economy have been squeezed by inflation since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

In particular, the price of rice has doubled, squeezing many household budgets despite government handouts.

Voter Hisayo Kojima - one of legions of older people in Japan's falling and ageing population - said outside a voting station

on Sunday that her pension "is being cut shorter and shorter".

"We have paid a lot to support the pension system. This is the most pressing issue for me," the 65-year-old told AFP in Tokyo.

Not helping is lingering resentment about an LDP funding scandal, and US tariffs of 25 per cent due to bite from August 1 if there is no trade deal with the United States.

Japanese imports are already subject to a 10 per cent tariff, while the auto industry, which accounts for eight per cent of jobs, is reeling from a 25 per cent levy.

Weak export data last week, which showed plummeting US-bound auto deliveries, stoked fears that Japan could tip into a technical recession.

Despite Ishiba securing an early meeting with Trump in February, and sending his trade envoy to Washington seven times, there has been no accord.

The last time the LDP and Komeito failed to win a majority in the upper house was in 2010, having already fallen below the threshold in 2007.

That was followed by a rare change of government in 2009, when the now-defunct Democratic Party of Japan governed for a rocky three years.

Today, the opposition is fragmented, and chances are slim that the parties can form an alternative government.

Populist opposition party Sanseito wants "stricter rules and limits" on immigration, opposes "globalism" and "radical" gender policies, and wants a rethink on decarbonisation and vaccines.

Last week, it was forced to deny any links to Moscow - which has backed populist parties elsewhere - after a candidate was interviewed by Russian state media.

"They put into words what I had been thinking about but couldn't put into words for many years," one voter told AFP at a Sanseito rally.

Gaza Officials Say Israel Killed at Least 93 Civilians Desperately Seeking Food Aid

GAZA CITY (Dispatches) - Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli forces opened fire on crowds of Palestinians trying to collect humanitarian aid in the war-torn Palestinian territory on Sunday, killing 93 people and wounding dozens more.

Eighty were killed as truckloads of aid arrived in the north, while nine others were reported shot near an aid point close to Rafah in the south, where dozens of people lost their lives just 24 hours earlier.

Four were killed near another aid site in Khan Yunis, also in the south, agency spokesman Mahmud Basal told AFP.

The UN World Food Programme said its 25-truck convoy carrying food aid "encountered massive crowds of hungry civilians which came under gunfire" near Gaza City, soon after it crossed from Israel and cleared checkpoints.

Israel's military disputed the death toll and said soldiers had fired warning shots "to remove an immediate threat posed to them" as thousands gathered near Gaza City.

Deaths of civilians seeking aid have become a regular occurrence in Gaza, with the authorities blaming Israeli fire as crowds facing chronic shortages of food and other essentials flock in huge numbers to aid centres.

The UN said earlier this month that nearly 800 aid-seekers had been killed since late May, including on the routes of aid convoys.

In Gaza City, Qasem Abu Khater, 36, told AFP he had rushed to try to get a bag of flour but instead found a desperate crowd of thousands and "deadly overcrowding and pushing".

"The tanks were firing shells randomly at us and Israeli sniper soldiers were shooting as if they were hunting animals in a forest," he added.



"Dozens of people were martyred right before my eyes and no one could save anyone."

The WFP condemned violence against civilians seeking aid as "completely unacceptable".

Media restrictions in Gaza and difficulties accessing many areas mean AFP is unable to independently verify tolls and details provided by the agency and other parties.

The army says it works to avoid harm to civilians, and that this month it issued new instructions to its troops on the ground "following lessons learned" from a spate of similar incidents.

Israel on Sunday withdrew the residency permit of head of the OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) office in Israel, Jonathan Whittall, who has repeatedly condemned the humanitarian conditions in Gaza.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar, in a post to X, accused him of spreading lies about the war in Gaza.

Most of Gaza's population of more than two million people have been displaced at least once during the war and there have been repeated evacuation calls across large parts of the coastal enclave.

On Sunday morning, the Israeli military told residents and displaced Palestinians sheltering in the Deir el-Balah area to move south immediately due to imminent operations in the area.

Whole families were seen carrying what few belongings they have on packed donkey carts heading south.

"They threw leaflets at us and we don't know where we are going and we don't have shelter or anything," one man told AFP.

The displacement order was "another devastating blow to the already fragile lifelines keeping people alive across the Gaza Strip", the UN OCHA said on Sunday.

According to the aid agency, 87.8 per cent of Gaza is now under displacement orders or within Israeli militarized zones, leaving "2.1 million civilians squeezed into a fragmented 12 per cent of the Strip, where essential services have collapsed."

Ceasefire Calms Syria's Sweida After Sectarian Clashes Kill 1,120

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) - Calm returned to southern Syria's Sweida province on Sunday, a monitor and AFP correspondents reported, after a week of sectarian violence between Druze fighters and rival groups that killed more than 1,120 people.

A ceasefire announced on Saturday appeared to be holding after earlier agreements failed to end fighting between longtime rivals the Druze and the Bedouin that spiralled to draw in the Islamist-led government, the Israeli military and armed tribes from other parts of Syria.

AFP correspondents on the outskirts of Sweida city reported hearing no clashes on Sunday morning, with government forces deployed in some locations in the province to enforce the truce.

According to a Red Crescent official, a first humanitarian aid convoy entered Sweida on Sunday.



The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that since around midnight (2100 GMT Saturday), "Sweida has been experiencing a cautious calm", adding government security forces had blocked roads leading to the province in order to prevent tribal fighters from going there.

The Britain-based Observatory gave an updated toll on Sunday of more than 1,120 killed since the violence erupted a week ago, including 427 Druze fighters and 298 civilians from the minority group, as well as 354 government security personnel and 21 Sunni Bedouin.

Witnesses, Druze factions and the Observatory have accused government forces of siding with the Bedouin and committing abuses including summary executions when they entered Sweida days ago.

Hanadi Obeid, a 39-year-old doctor, told AFP that "the city hasn't seen calm like this in a week".



Bublik Wins in Gstaad for First Title on Clay

GSTAAD (Dispatches) - Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan won his first tournament on clay Sunday, topping Juan Manuel Cerundolo 6-4, 4-6, 6-2 at the EFG Swiss Open Gstaad.

Bublik, the second seed, won his sixth tour title at the ATP 250 event in the Swiss Alps, in his first final on clay courts. It also was his first meeting with Argentina's Cerundolo.

Bublik had 13 aces among his 47 winners in the two-hour, eight-minute match. Cerundolo posted 21 winners against 25 unforced errors.

In June, Bublik won the ATP 500 event in Halle, Germany.

No. 6 seed Luciano Darderi of Italy captured the championship in Bastad, Sweden, with a 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 win over unseeded Dutchman Jesper De Jong.

De Jong was in search of his first career ATP Tour title. It was the third for Darderi, all on clay. He won at Marrakech, Morocco, earlier this season and in Cordoba, Argentina, in 2024

Darderi won 81 percent (38-of-47) of the points on his first serve and converted three break points, compared to two for De Jong. In the end, just three points separated the two, with Darderi winning 80 and De Jong 77.

The first round in Umag, Croatia, began Sunday with a pair of three-set matches.

Czech eighth seed Vit Kopriva rallied past Belgium's Raphael Collignon 3-6, 6-4, 6-3. Kopriva edged Collignon in aces 7-6 while saving 11 of 16 break points and converting 6 of 12 chances to break his opponent's serve.

Italy's Francesco Passaro also came from behind in a 4-6, 6-1, 6-2 victory over Croatian wild card Matej Dodig. Passaro limited himself to 17 unforced errors to Dodig's 33.

Meanwhile French Open semi-finalist Lois Boisson clinched her first tour-level title at the Hamburg Open on Sunday after a 7-5 6-3 win over Hungarian Anna Bondar.

In a The clash of first-time WTA singles finalists, fifth seed Boisson came back from 4-0 down in the first set and a break down in both sets to secure the WTA 250 claycourt title.

The 22-year-old made waves last month in her Grand Slam main draw debut when she, ranked 361st, soared through the French Open as a wild card entrant, bowing out at the semi-final stage to eventual champion Coco Gauff.

"This is the first time I've given a (winner's) speech, so please bear with me," Boisson said before offering a simple "Danke" (Thank you) to the German crowd.

Boisson faced heartbreak with a first-round qualifying loss at Wimbledon, but found her form again on clay and is set to rise above her career best ranking of number 63 in Monday's updated WTA rankings.

Meanwhile former world number one Venus Williams said she was embracing the challenge and joy of tennis after a difficult year marked by health concerns and time away from the court as the 45-year-old prepares for her return at the Washington Open.

The seven-time Grand Slam champion declined wildcard entries into the tournament in the nation's capital in the past but said she felt up to the challenge this year.

"Most of the time I don't (take up the offer to play as a wildcard)," she said with a laugh on Sunday.

"But this time I had been hitting the ball. And of course I love the game and the hard courts, it's my favourite surface, what I feel comfortable on. So all those different factors."

Williams is setting new personal goals, prioritising enjoyment over results.

"My personal goal is to have fun and enjoy the moment, not put too much pressure on myself," she said.

"I don't know if I define success at this moment in any sort of way other than believing in myself and sticking to my process. That's not easy to do, especially after a layoff. So those are my goals."

New-Look Man United Struggle for Pace in Goalless Draw With Leeds



LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester United have plenty to improve on and need more pace in their midfield, manager Ruben Amorim said after the Premier League side began their pre-season preparations with a goalless draw against Leeds United.

United had their worst-ever Premier League campaign in the 2024-25 season, finishing 15th in the standings, and also failed to qualify for the Champions League as they lost the Europa League final 1-0 to Tottenham Hotspur.

The Old Trafford side failed to impress in the draw with newly promoted Leeds in Stockholm on Saturday, despite the inclusion of new signing Matheus Cunha in the starting lineup.

"We suffered a little bit when we tried to press high, they kick the ball, win the second ball and they were a danger in that moment," Amorim told MUTV.

"We have a lack of pace, especially in the middle of the park, and you can feel it, (so) that's hard to bring the ball (forward). But we created chances. We have a lot to do but it was a first test against a Premier League team, with two different teams, so it was a good test..."

"As a group, we have a lot to improve, the speed of the game, all the details, so, yeah, we are going to improve."

United next play West Ham United at the MetLife Stadium in New Jersey on July 26.

Owen Shines on Debut as Australia Beat Windies in First T20



LONDON (Dispatches) - Mitchell Owen made an impressive debut as Australia beat West Indies by three wickets to take a 1-0 lead in the five-match Twenty20 International series in Jamaica on Sunday.

Owen took a wicket with his medium pace bowling before returning to smash 50 off 27 balls as Australia chased down a 190-run target with seven balls to spare.

West Indies, who lost the preceding test series 3-0, got off to a strong start after being put into bat at Sabina Park.

Captain Shai Hope (55), Roston Chase (60) and Shimron Hetmyer (38) laid the platform for a 200-plus score but the late flourish they expected never materialised.

Andre Russell, who will quit international cricket after the second T20 on Tuesday, made only eight.

Australia's Ben Dwarshuis (4-36) mowed down the middle and lower order as West Indies were forced to settle for a modest 189-8.

While Australia lost both their openers, captain Mitchell Marsh and Jake Fraser-McGurk, inside the powerplay they were propped up by a breezy 80-run stand by Cameron Green (51) and Owen.

Green belted five sixes in his 26-ball blitz, while Owen smacked six of them before holing out in the 17th over with Australia on the cusp of victory.

Meanwhile the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) will continue to host the biennial final of the World Test Championship for the next three editions till 2031, global governing body ICC said on Sunday.

The match, which crowns the world champions in the longest format of the sport, has been held in England since it was introduced, with Southampton hosting the first edition in 2021 and the two subsequent finals taking place in London.

"We are absolutely delighted that England and Wales has been chosen to host the next three ICC World Test Championship finals," the ECB chief executive Richard Gould said.

"It's a testament to the passion that fans in this country have for this treasured format of the game and the willingness of supporters from around the world to travel here for these games."

Scheffler's Wire-to-Wire Victory Leaves McIlroy and the Rest in His wake

PORTRUSH (Dispatches) - A relentless Scottie Scheffler sealed his first British Open triumph by four shots as he turned the final day of the tournament into a procession at Royal Portrush on Sunday.

The 29-year-old American world number one started out with a four-stroke lead and apart from one blip, never looked like relinquishing his iron-like grip on the chasing pack.

Scheffler resembled a towering giant amongst men all week on the glorious Causeway Coast, rekindling memories of 15-times major winner Tiger Woods in his pomp as he rubber-stamped his fourth major title with a clinical final-round 68.

After tapping in for par in front of a packed 18th green grandstand, Scheffler's laser-focus finally cracked and he threw his white cap skywards, tearfully embracing caddie Ted Scott and wife Meredith and scooping up his toddler son Bennett.

"Thanks to the fans for all the support. I know I wasn't the fan favourite today so I appreciate you guys coming out to support, overall it's been a great week," the under-stated Scheffler, the third successive American to win the Open and fourth in five years, said after lifting the Claret Jug.

Take the dominant Scheffler out of the equation and the 153rd Open would have been a thriller with the leaderboard underneath him chopping and changing all weekend.

In the end, Harris English was the best of the rest on 13 under after a 66 with fellow American Chris Gotterup, winner of last



week's Scottish Open, a further shot back.

Huge galleries descended on the course all week and thousands arrived on a sunny Sunday hoping to witness a Rory McIlroy miracle.

But Northern Ireland's favourite sporting son, who began six shots behind Scheffler, was unable to mount a charge and ended up in a tie for seventh on 10 under along with 2024 champion Xander Schauffele and Scotland's Robert MacIntyre.

"I wish I had have been closer to Scottie going into today and been able to make a real push," said McIlroy, who completed his career Grand Slam by winning this year's Masters.

"But he's been on a different level all week and he's been on a different level for the last two years to the rest of us."

Li Haotong, the first Chinese man to go out in the final group

of a major, finished tied fourth on 11 under with England's Matt Fitzpatrick and American Wyndham Clark.

Scheffler now has three legs of his career Grand Slam and needs a U.S. Open crown to complete the set.

He is also the first player in more than 100 years to win his first four majors by three strokes or more and the first world number one to win the Open since Tiger Woods in 2006.

"When you play against the best they make it look easy and you can't quite figure out why they are so good," said England's Justin Rose, who finished on seven under.

Those who thought that Texas-based Scheffler might stumble on a layout featuring holes known as Calamity Corner and Purgatory should probably have known better.

On the last nine occasions Scheffler had gone into the final round of a PGA Tour event ahead, he emerged victorious. His three previous major wins also came after a 54-hole lead.

A sense of anticipation brewed as the leading groups reached the first tee but when Scheffler birdied the first, fourth and fifth holes the only question seemed to be whether he could eclipse Woods's modern era Open record winning margin of eight strokes at St Andrews in 2000.

When he double-bogeyed the eighth after needing two attempts to escape a bunker, his first dropped shots since the 11th hole on Friday when his majestic 64 put him in control, Scheffler looked like a mere mortal.

His lead was suddenly sliced to four strokes but any hope proved an illusion for pursuers, and a birdie at the ninth and another at the 12th hole steadied the ship.

Wellens Wins Tour de France Stage 15

PARIS (Dispatches) - Tim Wellens raced clear on the descent toward Carcassonne to win the 15th stage of the Tour de France on Sunday while three-time champion Tadej Pogacar tightened his hold on the yellow jersey.

Wellens, a teammate of Pogacar at UAE Team Emirates-XRG, was in a four-man leading group with Michael Storer, Quinn Simmons and Victor Campenaerts as they climbed the 2.9-kilometre, 10.2-percent incline Pas du Sant.

Carlos Rodriguez, Warren Barguil, Aleks Vlasov and Alexey Lutsenko were chasing, and Wellens waited for the trailing group to catch up before he attacked with 43.5 kilometres to go,



knowing his rivals would find it hard to react with the downhill to come.

The Belgian rider finished 1 minute, 28 seconds ahead of Campenaerts and 1:36 ahead of Julian Alaphilippe, Wout van Aert, and Axel Laurance.

Pogacar and his closest general classification rivals, Jonas Vingegard and Florian Lipowitz, finished in a large group 6:07 behind Wellens.

Pogacar maintained his overall lead of 4:13 over Vingegard and 7:53 over German rider Lipowitz.