

Iran's Foreign Ministry Has Condemned the Motion Passed in the Israeli Parliament (Knesset) That Seeks to Illegally Annex the West Bank and Jordan Valley in Breach of International Law as the Genocide in Gaza Persists

IRAN NEWS

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Iran's Nahid-2 Satellite Launched Into Space



TEHRAN - Iran's domestically-built Nahid-2 satellite was successfully launched into space on Friday, July 25, aboard a Russian Soyuz rocket. Iran's research and telecommunications satellite, Nahid-2, was launched into orbit from Russia's Vostochny Cosmodrome. Commissioned by the Iranian Space Agency (ISA) and developed in collaboration with the Iranian Space Research Center, the launch was part of a broader multi-satellite mission that included Russia's Ionosfera-M3 and M4 satellites, along with 18 others from various countries. One notable feature of the launch was the presence of the Iranian Space Agency's emblem on the Soyuz launch vehicle—signaling Iran's official participation in a major international space mission. The Soyuz rocket has previously carried several Iranian satellites into space, including Khayyam, Pars-1, and Hodhod. Nahid-2 is designed to remain in orbit for five years. One of the key technical challenges for long-duration satellites is gradual orbital decay due to Earth's gravity, which can affect positioning and performance. To address this, the Nahid-2 is equipped with an indigenous propulsion system capable of adjusting its altitude by up to 50 kilometers. Iranian space engineers designed and manufactured the propulsion system entirely within the country. The satellite employs home-made hot gas thrusters, incorporating advanced components such as a composite fuel tank, high-pressure valves, and precision control thrusters. Due to the sensitivity and high-tech nature of these parts, they are rarely available on the international market.

Iran Mission Slams Misleading EU-Japan Statement on U.S.-Israeli Aggression



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The Iranian Embassy in Tokyo has strongly condemned a joint EU-Japan statement regarding US-Israeli actions against Iran's peaceful nuclear facilities and civil infrastructure, labeling it as “biased and misleading.” In a statement released on Thursday, the Iranian mission said that the declaration at the end of the 30th summit of the EU and Japan in Tokyo on July 23 is demonstrably “biased and misleading” in several key aspects. “It presents the aggressor and the victim of aggression as equals, thus conspicuously failing to condemn the unlawful attacks by the Israeli regime and the US on Iran, while calling for restraint,” the embassy said. The embassy further held the 27-member European bloc accountable for the ongoing crisis regarding Iran's peaceful nuclear energy program. “The EU's purported commitment, including that of its member states, to support a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue rings hollow, as they bear substantial responsibility for the current crisis surrounding Iran's peaceful nuclear program.” The embassy emphasized that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), acting under pressure from Western powers, had issued a politicized report that provided Israel with a pretext to attack Iran. “This includes their failure to adhere to their commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and their harmful actions in the IAEA Board of Governors, which ultimately led to an overly politicized report and a subsequent resolution that was used as a pretext for the Israeli regime's criminal attacks on Iran's peaceful nuclear facilities.”

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK



TEHRAN - Following talks in Istanbul with representatives from the three European countries, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs announced that Tehran and the European Troika have agreed to continue diplomatic consultations. Kazem Gharibabadi shared a statement on social media platform X, writing: “Dr. Takht-Ravanchi and I held serious, frank, and extensive discussions with the political directors of the three European countries and the European Union. The latest developments related to sanctions relief and nuclear issues were reviewed and discussed.” Gharibabadi added, “While we strongly criticized their stance regarding the recent aggressive war against our people, we clearly presented our principled positions, including on the mechanism known as ‘snapback.’” He emphasized that both sides entered the meeting with specific proposals, which were thoroughly examined. Gharibabadi concluded by confirming that both parties agreed to continue consultations on these matters. Ahead of talks in Istanbul, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi had reiterated Iran's unwavering stance on its nuclear program, emphasizing the nation's right to pursue peaceful nuclear energy, including uranium enrichment. His remarks during a meeting with the family of Major General Mohammad Bagheri in Tehran Thursday came ahead of the sixth round of negotiations with Germany, France and the UK and the EU, scheduled for Friday in Istanbul. “The world must know that we will continue to steadfastly defend the rights of the Iranian people in peaceful nuclear energy, particularly enrichment,” Araqchi said. He added that following the recent US-Israeli aggression, in which a number of Iranian military commanders, including General Bagheri, scientists and civilians were martyred on June 13, it is essential for international parties to understand Iran's firm position. “Our enrichment will continue; we will not relinquish this right,” he affirmed. More than a week after the Israeli aggression, the United States joined the conflict by bombing three Iranian nuclear sites, an action which constitutes a grave violation of the United Nations Charter, international law, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The US and the Israeli regime have repeatedly called for an outright halt to the Islamic Republic's peaceful nuclear enrichment activities. For its part, Tehran has resolutely defended its sovereign right to engage in nuclear enrichment for peaceful and civilian purposes. Araqchi highlighted Iran's readiness to advance its nuclear program within a logical and reasonable framework, aiming to build trust with concerned nations. However, he emphasized that such trust must be reciprocal, with Iran's rights to peaceful nuclear energy, including enrichment, being respected.

Araqchi Calls for Mobilization of All Capacities to Break the Siege of Gaza



TEHRAN – Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araqchi has called for the mobilization of all capacities to break the Israeli siege of the Gaza Strip. He made the remarks during a phone conversation with Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud, his Saudi counterpart, on Friday. Araqchi highlighted the catastrophic situation in Gaza caused by intensified crimes of the Israeli regime – particularly the blockade of food and medicine and the deprivation of the oppressed people of Gaza from basic needs. He stressed the urgent need to activate all available capacities, including the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (O.I.C.) and other international mechanisms, to end the siege, deliver essential aid, and halt the genocide in occupied Palestine. Araqchi also condemned the Israeli Knesset's move to annex the West Bank, calling it another sign of the regime's expansionist and unlawful nature. He added that this move, along with the genocide in Gaza and severe human rights violations in the West Bank, reflects Israel's ominous intent to completely eliminate Palestine as a land, nation, and independent identity. He emphasized that a firm stance was by the O.I.C. and most countries worldwide in condemning this move is of great significance. Additionally, Araqchi briefed his Saudi counterpart on the latest developments in Iran's negotiations with three European countries, namely Britain, Germany, and France. During the conversation, the two ministers emphasized the need for immediate and practical measures to assist the people of Gaza and stop the crimes against Palestinians. They also explored ways to use regional and international capacities, including the O.I.C., to pursue this goal.

The Saudi foreign minister affirmed his country's readiness to help advance this goal. Earlier Araqchi and his Bangladeshi counterpart, Touhid Hossain, exchanged views on bilateral relations, as well as regional and international developments in a telephone conversation on Thursday. During the telephone conversation, Araqchi strongly condemned the crimes of the Israeli regime, especially depriving the Palestinian people of access to water and food, and emphasized the need for immediate action by the Islamic countries through holding an emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and activating other international mechanisms to stop the genocide in Gaza and confront the regime's aggressions. The Iranian Foreign Minister also considered the plan to annex the West Bank to the Israeli regime as another sign of the occupying regime's criminal plan to advance the plan to annihilate Palestine, and called for decisive and coordinated action by Islamic countries to confront the genocide in Gaza and send urgent aid to the defenseless Palestinian people. The Bangladeshi Foreign Minister condemned the continued Israeli crimes and stressed the need for urgent and effective action to support the oppressed people of Palestine, including through the mechanisms of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. During the phone call, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and emphasized the shared determination of the leaders of the two countries to develop relations and continue consultations between them.

Iran Destroyed Israel's Military, Security Centers



TEHRAN - The spokesman for Iran's Armed Forces says Iranian missiles delivered “crushing” blows to Israel during last month's war, destroying military and security centers deep inside the occupied territories despite Israel's deployment of advanced anti-missile defenses. “Despite the martyrdom of the first layer of command on the first night of the operations, the aerospace force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), with the guidelines of Leader of the [Islamic] Revolution [Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei] and rapid restructure [of command], managed to overcome the world's most advanced air defense systems,” Brigadier General Abolfazl Shekarchi said. Shekarchi made the remarks during a ceremony in Qom on Thursday commemorating the 40th day since the martyrdom of senior military commanders in Israel's aggression against Iran. He added that along the 1,200-kilometer route to the occupied territories, “hundreds of fighter jets, advanced radars, and air defense systems made by the US, Germany, the United Kingdom, and France were deployed to counter Iran's missile and drone attacks. However, Iran's missiles penetrated these defensive layers and hit their targets from the north to the south of the occupied territories.” Shekarchi said the West-backed Israeli aggression aimed “to target the country's infrastructure and pave the way for the partition of Iran” within a week by assassinating senior military commanders. “However, it [Israel] failed to achieve its objectives, despite utilizing all military capacities.” He also said that on the 17th day of the war, the Israeli regime called for direct US involvement due to “repeated battlefield defeats.”

Iran's Nuclear Industry Deeply Rooted, Poised to Rebloom



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) has reiterated that Iran's nuclear industry has its roots in the country, making it resilient to attacks and external pressure. Behrouz Kamalvandi made the remarks during an interview released on Thursday, addressing the 12-day imposed war and the US-Israeli aggression against Iran's nuclear facilities. “What is rooted will not be harmed by attack and pressure,” he said. On June 22, coinciding with the tenth day of the imposed war against Iran, the US military, in support of Israel, bombed the nuclear facilities of Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan all of which operate under the full supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). US President Donald Trump said the aim of the attack was to “destroy” the country's enrichment capability and halting its peaceful nuclear program. The senior Iranian atomic agency official underscored that “this industry will flourish again.” Kamalvandi had previously reiterated this position in the wake of the unlawful American aggression against Iran's nuclear sites in June, emphasizing that Iran's nuclear industry is deeply entrenched in the country's scientific and technological infrastructure. “They must understand that this industry is rooted in our nation. They cannot uproot it,” he said. “Given the capabilities and potential we possess, the growth of this industry must continue. It will not be stopped.”



Iran Extends Condolences to Russia Over Deadly Plane Crash

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei has expressed condolences to the Russian government and people over a deadly passenger plane crash in that country.

In a post on X on Friday, the Iranian diplomat expressed sorrow and grief over the tragic incident and conveyed sympathy with the families of the victims.

According to Russian media outlets, all 48 people aboard an Antonov An-24 passenger plane were killed after it crashed the far eastern Amur region on Thursday.

The Angara Airlines flight was en route to the town of Tynda when it crashed. The wreckage of the plane was found 15 kilometers from the town. Technical investigations are still ongoing.

Iran, Azerbaijan Emphasize Acceleration of Astara Railway Terminal Completion



TEHRAN - Senior railway officials from Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan convened in the border town of Astara to reaffirm their commitment to accelerating the completion of the Astara Railway Terminal, a key infrastructure project with regional trade significance.

According to Iran's Government Information Center, the joint meeting was held during the visit of Jabar-Ali Zakari, Iran's Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development and CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways, to Gilan Province. He was joined by the CEO of Azerbaijan Railways in the high-level discussions.

Also present were Mir-Mohammad Gharavi, Deputy Governor of Gilan for Civil Affairs, Abbas Khatibi, Deputy Head of Iran's Construction and Transportation Infrastructure Company, Rahmat Rahmat-Nejad, Director General of Northern Railway Zone 2, along with other regional officials and experts.

The delegation conducted a site visit of the Astara Railway Terminal complex, inspecting the nearly completed administrative building, the adjacent border river, and grain storage silos. They also reviewed the status of the terminal's entrance bridge—an important project aimed at easing access and resolving traffic issues for local residents. The availability of construction materials for this bridge was among the key discussion points.

Following the site tour, a joint meeting was held between Iranian and Azerbaijani officials to address critical operational issues, including land acquisition for access routes, supply of construction materials by the Iranian side, and the resolution of infrastructure challenges related to water, electricity, and gas connections.

50% Decrease in Dam Inflows Across Iran



TEHRAN - Minister of Energy, Abbas Aliabadi, has issued a stark warning about the country's worsening water and energy situation, revealing that inflows to Tehran's dams have dropped by 50%, while national rainfall has decreased by 41%.

Aliabadi made the remarks during a joint meeting held on Wednesday, July 31, with Mohammad Qomi, head of the Islamic Development Organization (IDO). The meeting aimed to strengthen collaboration on promoting energy conservation awareness across society.

Aliabadi emphasized the growing impact of climate change in Iran, noting that temperatures in some areas have risen by up to 5°C above long-term averages. He warned that "the earth's natural self-regulating capacity is no longer sufficient to handle these changes."

Highlighting the economic burden of energy production, he stated that the cost of generating one kilowatt-hour of electricity exceeds 5,000 toman. He described high consumption rates as the main challenge facing the electricity sector.

"The situation in the water sector is even more critical," he said. "The cost of desalinating and transferring one cubic meter of seawater exceeds \$5. Water-saving must become a nationwide cultural norm."

Aliabadi also mentioned ongoing strategic projects such as the transfer of water from Taleqan Dam to Tehran and called for greater involvement from cultural institutions like the IDO in managing public perception. He noted that such organizations can play a crucial role in countering "the psychological warfare of the enemy" in the realms of water and electricity.

"We need to produce targeted content for all segments of society and mentally prepare the public for the difficult conditions ahead," Aliabadi said, adding that the IDO is one of the key partners in promoting efficient water and electricity use.

Also speaking at the meeting, Mohammad Qomi affirmed the IDO's full readiness to cooperate with the Ministry of Energy in public education and awareness campaigns.

Iran Among Top Five in Heavy Livestock Farming



TEHRAN - Minister of Agriculture, Gholamreza Nouri Ghezleji, has announced that Iran is now among the top five countries in the world in heavy livestock farming. He emphasized that the country's dairy products are being utilized by internationally recognized companies, signaling a major milestone in the nation's agricultural capabilities.

Speaking during a meeting with agricultural stakeholders at the Science and Technology Park in Isfahan, Minister Nouri opened his remarks by condemning recent attacks by the Israeli regime and praising the Iranian Armed Forces for neutralizing foreign threats under the leadership of the Supreme Leader. He stressed that one of the primary targets of enemy aggression in recent hybrid warfare was Iran's food security. However, coordinated efforts by government agencies and public cooperation helped mitigate potential damage.

Minister Nouri highlighted the government's successful handling of the food supply chain during the recent 12-day crisis, which involved the displacement of millions and a surge in domestic travel. He noted that, despite these challenges, the country did not experience shortages in essential goods or long queues for basic foodstuffs—an outcome that adversaries had aimed to trigger.

"We owe a great deal to the governors, agricultural producers, farmers, livestock and poultry breeders who worked tirelessly to ensure stability," said Nouri. He also credited the Judiciary, the Government Sanctions Organization (Taazirat), and the Parliament for their swift cooperation in resolving emerging issues during the period.

"This was a shining example of national unity and integrated management under the leadership of the Islamic Revolution," the Minister stated. He expressed hope that this spirit of cooperation would be sustained to address other pressing challenges across the country.

Nouri reiterated Iran's advancement in heavy livestock farming, stating that dairy from Iranian cattle is now exported and used by top global companies. He added that plans are underway to improve the quality of light livestock as well, aiming to reduce reliance on imported meat.

He acknowledged that despite enemy efforts to destabilize Iran's food security, the nation's intelligent management and public collaboration have successfully neutralized these threats. "This is a vital step toward national self-sufficiency and long-term security," he said.

Currently, Iran imports about 20% of its meat supply, which the Minister described

as a significant burden on local producers, government logistics, and national resources. He also addressed the impact of drought conditions on wheat production, saying that this year the country will need to import an additional 1 to 2 million tons of wheat—a challenge that comes with its own logistical and supply chain complexities.

Referencing Iran's Constitution and the views of both Ayatollah Khomeini and the current Supreme Leader, Nouri stated that agricultural self-sufficiency is not just an economic necessity but a national obligation. "Even U.S. national security advisors admit that countries lacking food security have no voice on the global stage," he said.

He affirmed that Iran's food security strategy is non-negotiable, and declared the government's intention to transform Iran into the region's food production hub.

Turning to the issue of water scarcity in Isfahan, the Minister advocated for a knowledge-based approach to modern agriculture. He pointed to advanced greenhouse technology as a successful example, stating that such projects can yield returns within three years.

He encouraged investors to trust in the potential of agriculture, particularly in the tech sector. "Today, knowledge-based agriculture is profitable," he said, urging scientists, innovators, and progressive farmers in Isfahan to develop solutions for more efficient water use.

Responding to rumors that food imports might be more cost-effective than domestic production, Nouri dismissed such claims. "The world is facing food shortages, and the war in Ukraine proved that we cannot rely on global markets. We must increase productivity and reduce water consumption to support our own agriculture," he said.

Earlier, Minister Nouri arrived in Isfahan with his delegation, where they were welcomed by the Isfahan Governor, local parliamentary representatives, and members of the province's Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture Directorate.

The purpose of the visit includes inspecting a major dairy and meat complex, visiting several agricultural tech firms in the Isfahan Science and Research Town, and touring companies specializing in big data and smart farming under the Middle East AgriTech umbrella.

The Minister will also hold sessions with local farmers, livestock producers, and greenhouse operators, underscoring the importance of regional collaboration in advancing Iran's national food security agenda.

More Than 40% of Graduates Unable to Find Suitable Jobs

TEHRAN - According to Iran's Deputy Minister of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare, over 40% of university graduates in the country are unable to secure appropriate employment. This troubling statistic underscores a mismatch between educational outcomes and labor market needs.

In a televised interview marking National Skill Day, Gholamhossein Mohammadi, head of the Technical and Vocational Training Organization (TVTO), discussed the challenges facing Iran's vocational education system and its impact on youth employment. "Research shows that one out of every two job seekers lacks adequate skills or suffers from a skill deficit," said Mohammadi. "More than 30% of the education provided across the country does not align with labor market priorities."

Despite a 65-year history of vocational training in Iran, Mohammadi emphasized that the country still lacks a well-integrated and functional skills ecosystem. "Even though Iran has a rich tradition of master-apprentice systems and widespread training institutions — with 700 state-run centers, over 10,000 private academies, 7,000 technical high schools, and many applied-science universities — coordination between education providers and industry remains weak," he said.

Globally, over 80% of jobs are skill-based, and more than 70% of students are enrolled in vocational training programs that blend classroom learning with practical, industry-based instruction. Iran, however, has not yet fully embraced this model. Mohammadi noted that despite significant infrastructure, the absence of effective regulatory coordination is impeding progress. The skills being taught often do not match market



demands, leaving many graduates with certificates but few prospects.

To bridge this gap, the ministry has rolled out initiatives to increase industry participation. Last year, the TVTO introduced 100 investment opportunities, and 130 vocational centers were made available for public-private partnerships. For example, a recent agreement with the Polymer Association aims to meet sector-specific needs in three major training centers.

"If education is aligned with the needs of businesses, we can prevent skill redundancy and ensure that training leads to actual employment," said Mohammadi.

During the upcoming National Skills Week, ten vocational centers will transition to a trustee-based governance model, where they will be managed jointly by members of chambers of commerce, industry experts, and vocational trainers. The government plans to expand this model to cover 50% of public training centers over the next four years.

As part of the Seventh National Development Plan, Iran aims to ensure that at least 50% of all educational efforts are vocationally focused — a major increase from current levels. Mohammadi, however, cautioned that simply increasing participation rates will not be enough without genuine cooperation between government, industry, and educational institutions.

"In many countries, vocational training organizations play a purely regulatory role rather than directly providing training," he said. "We must evolve our ecosystem accordingly or risk continuing down the path of degree inflation without employability."

Iran Fully Reopens Airspace for Flights Following 12-Day War



TEHRAN - The Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development and CEO of the Iran Airports and Air Navigation Company announced the full reopening of the country's airspace for domestic and international flights following a recent 12-day conflict. During his visit to Hamedan on Thursday, several key projects for the expansion of Hamedan Airport were approved, including the completion of the Hajj terminal, the launch of handling services, and plans to establish a cargo terminal.

Mohammad Amirani, while visiting Hamedan Airport and meeting with the province's governor, said one of the main decisions taken was to expedite the completion of the Hajj terminal. "We hope that with the continued efforts of our colleagues, this project will become operational by the end of this year and serve the people of Hamedan," Amirani stated.

He emphasized that the lack of aircraft handling services has been a major barrier to full-scale operations at the airport. To address this, the Airports Company has been instructed to sign a contract with a reputable handling service provider to supply the necessary equipment, particularly in preparation for increased flight demand during the Arbaeen pilgrimage season.

Amirani also noted the company's readiness to support air cargo services. If a qualified investor is introduced by Hamedan's governorate, land will be allocated to construct a cargo terminal to activate this important sector within the province.

He highlighted that the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development has established a dedicated fund to encourage private sector participation. Investors willing to collaborate with airlines and establish a base in airports like Hamedan or Bojnord can benefit from special incentives through this fund.

Regarding the current status of air traffic, Amirani confirmed that Iranian airspace is now completely open following the temporary disruption caused by the recent conflict. "Just yesterday, nearly 1,000 flights — including overflights and takeoffs/landings — were managed in Iran's airspace, reflecting a return to normal operations and a promising outlook for the country's aviation industry," he said.

Explosion at Shahid Rajaei Port Causes Major Container Losses



TEHRAN - A massive explosion at Shahid Rajaei Port in Bandar Abbas has resulted in serious damage to 11,800 shipping containers, with 4,800 completely destroyed, according to Iran's Central Insurance Organization. The estimated loss so far stands at 6.9 trillion toman (around \$138 million USD), with further increases possible. Insurance companies are gradually processing the payouts.

The blast, which occurred on April 25, is considered one of the most severe industrial incidents in Iran's recent history, with wide-reaching economic effects.

Parviz Khoushkalam Khosroshahi, head of the Central Insurance Organization, described the event as unprecedented in scale and financial impact for the nation's insurance sector.

Unlike past incidents, insurance companies individually handled claims, supported by the Central Insurance Organization. Company executives were quickly dispatched to the site and empowered their local branches, leading to what officials called a successful decentralized response.

The explosion claimed 59 lives. Insurers transferred 944 million toman to the judiciary for distribution to the victims' families.

In addition, 2,545 vehicles were damaged. Of these, 958 were covered by comprehensive insurance, and 153 billion toman of the 356 billion total vehicle damage has been paid out.

The resulting fire caused an estimated 452 billion toman in damages, mostly covered by insurers. Engineering-related losses added another 20 billion toman.

Philippine Flood Death Toll Rises

MANILA (Dispatches) - Schools remained closed and electricity was down in swathes of the archipelago nation's largest island as the national disaster agency reported 25 dead and eight missing since last Friday. But those numbers did not account for three construction workers buried in a landslide as they rested Thursday in Cavite province, south of the capital Manila, according to rescuers. A wall above their construction site collapsed onto the men below after days of rain softened the soil under it, said rescue team member Rosario Jose. "All the bodies were found in the mud," she said. A lone survivor was pulled from the rubble.



Russian Plane Crashes in Russia's Far East



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - An Antonov An-24 passenger plane carrying 48 people crashed in Russia's far east on Thursday as it was preparing to land, killing everyone on board in an incident that spotlighted the continued use of old, Soviet-era aircraft.

The burning fuselage of the plane, which was made in 1976, was spotted by a search helicopter after it disappeared from radar screens. It had been attempting to land for a second time after failing to touch down on its first approach, the Far Eastern Transport Prosecutor's Office said in a statement.

Operated by the privately owned Siberian regional airline Angara, it had been en route from the city of Blagoveshchensk near the Chinese border to Tynda, an important railway junction in the Amur region. It was carrying 42 passengers, including five children, and six crew.

The regional governor and federal investigators confirmed that everyone on board had been killed.

Investigators said they had opened a criminal case into the suspected violation of air traffic and air transport rules, resulting in the death of more than two people through negligence. The plane had recently passed a technical safety inspection, Russian news agencies reported, and had been involved in four apparently minor incidents since 2018.

The crash is likely to raise new questions about the viability of continuing to fly such old planes in far-flung corners of Russia at a time when Western sanctions have crimped Moscow's ability to access investment and spare parts.

It may also prompt other countries that operate the aircraft to review their fleets. North Korea, Kazakhstan, Laos, Cuba, Ethiopia, Myanmar and Zimbabwe operate the An-24, according to the authoritative RussianPlanes web-portal.

Zelensky Approves New Bill Restoring Independence of Anti-Corruption Bodies



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky approved draft legislation on Thursday that he said would restore the independence of the country's anti-corruption agencies, reversing course after an outburst of public criticism.

causes enacted earlier this week that established greater control by the prosecutor general, a political appointee, over the two bodies had fuelled rare wartime protests and had thrown Kyiv's EU bid into question.

Zelensky said on X he had approved the draft for submission to parliament later in the day.

"It is important that we are maintaining unity. It is important that we are preserving independence. It is important that we respect the position of all Ukrainians," he said.

Zelensky, whose image as a tireless leader of the three-year-old war against Russia's invasion has been tarnished by the controversy, said the text of the new bill is "well-balanced".

He did not give further details, saying only that it "guarantees real strengthening of Ukraine's law enforcement system, independence of anti-corruption agencies, and reliable protection...against any Russian influence".

On Monday, security forces arrested two anti-corruption officials on suspicion of ties to Russia and launched sweeping searches of other employees.

Critics had decried the measures putting a Zelensky-appointed prosecutor in control over the anti-corruption agencies, saying they went too far and looked like political pressure against the agencies.

Opposition lawmakers had collected enough signatures to register their own legislation to revoke the restrictive measures, which had been fast-tracked with help from Zelensky's ruling party.

Thailand, Cambodia Exchange Heavy Artillery Fire



SURIN (Dispatches) - Thailand and Cambodia exchanged heavy artillery fire on Friday as their worst fighting in more than a decade stretched for a second day, despite calls from the region and beyond for an immediate ceasefire in an escalating border conflict that has killed at least 16 people.

Thailand's military reported clashes from before dawn in the Ubon Ratchathani and Surin provinces and said Cambodia had used artillery and Russian-made BM-21 rocket systems. Authorities said 100,000 people had been evacuated from conflict areas on the Thai side.

"Cambodian forces have conducted sustained bombardment utilising heavy weapons, field artillery and BM-21 rocket systems," the Thai military said in a statement.

"Thai forces have responded with appropriate supporting fire in accordance with the tactical situation."

Both sides blamed each other for starting the conflict on Thursday at a disputed border area, which quickly escalated from small arms fire to heavy shelling in at least six locations 209 km (130 miles) apart along a frontier where sovereignty has been disputed for more than a century.

Reuters journalists in Surin province reported hearing intermittent bursts of explosions on Friday, amid a heavy presence of armed Thai soldiers along roads and gas stations in the largely agrarian area.

A Thai military convoy, including around a dozen trucks, armoured vehicles and tanks, cut across provincial roads ringed by paddy fields and moved toward the border.

The fighting erupted on Thursday just hours after Thailand recalled its ambassador to Phnom Penh the previous night and expelled Cambodia's envoy, in response to a second Thai soldier losing a limb to a landmine that Bangkok alleged had been laid recently by rival troops. Cambodia has dismissed that as baseless.

The Thai death toll rose to 15 as of early Friday, 14 of them civilians, according to the health ministry. It said 46 people were wounded, including 15 soldiers.

Cambodia's national government has not provided details of any casualties or evacuations of civilians. A government spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the latest clashes.

Meth Meas Pheakdey, spokesperson for the provincial administration of Cambodia's Oddar Meanchey province, said one civilian had been killed and five were wounded, with 1,500 families evacuated.

Thailand had positioned six F-16 fighter jets on Thursday in a rare combat deployment, one of which was mobilised to strike a Cambodian military target, among measures Cambodia called "reckless and brutal military aggression".

Thailand's use of an F-16 underlines its military advantage over Cambodia, which has no fighter aircraft and significantly less defence hardware and personnel, according to the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies

The United States, a long-time treaty ally of Thailand, called for an "immediate cessation of hostilities, protection of civilians and a peaceful resolution."

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, the chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, of which Thailand and Cambodia are members, said he had spoken to leaders of both countries and urged them to find a peaceful way out.

"I welcome the positive signals and willingness shown by both Bangkok and Phnom Penh to consider this path forward. Malaysia stands ready to assist and facilitate this process in the spirit of ASEAN unity and shared responsibility," he said in a social media post late on Thursday.

U.S. Strongly Rejects French Plan to Recognize Palestine



"strongly rejects (Macron's) plan to recognize a Palestinian state at the UN general assembly."

In a post on X, he said, "This reckless decision only serves Hamas propaganda and sets back peace. It is a slap in the face to the victims of October 7th."

"The United States strongly rejects (Macron's) plan to recognize a Palestinian state at the UN general assembly", Secretary of State Marco Rubio posted on X.

"The United States strongly rejects Emmanuel Macron's plan to recognize a Palestinian state at the UN general assembly", Secretary of State Marco Rubio posted on X. © Screenshot, FRANCE 24

Earlier, Canada also pressed Israel to seek peace, with Prime Minister Mark Carney condemning its "failure to prevent the rapidly deteriorating

humanitarian disaster in Gaza" and reiterating support for a two-state solution.

Carney also accused Israel of violating international law over the blocking of Canadian-funded aid to civilians in the war-torn Palestinian enclave.

"Canada calls on all sides to negotiate an immediate ceasefire in good faith," he added.

"We reiterate our calls for Hamas to immediately release all the hostages, and for the Israeli government to respect the territorial integrity of the West Bank and Gaza."

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, whose country already recognizes Palestinian statehood, welcomed Macron's announcement.

"Together, we must protect what Netanyahu is trying to destroy. The two-state solution is the only solution," said the Socialist leader and outspoken critic of Israel's offensive in Gaza.

"I welcome the fact that France joins Spain and other European countries in recognizing the State of Palestine," Spanish Prime Minister said on X.

"I welcome the fact that France joins Spain and other European countries in recognizing the State of Palestine," Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said on X. © Screenshot, FRANCE 24

The Saudi Foreign Ministry welcomed Macron's "historic decision".

"The Kingdom reiterates its call for all countries that have not yet recognized the State of Palestine to take similar positive steps and adopt serious positions that support peace and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people."

In a diplomatic cable in June, the United States said it opposed steps to unilaterally recognise a Palestinian state, even saying it could go against US foreign policy interests and draw consequences.

Israel, U.S. Recall Teams From Gaza Truce Talks

CAIRO (Dispatches) - Israel and the United States recalled their delegations from Gaza ceasefire talks for consultations on Thursday, with U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff accusing the Palestinian militant group Hamas of failing to act in good faith in the talks.

It marked the latest setback in efforts to secure a deal that would bring a ceasefire to Gaza, secure the release of Israeli hostages held by Hamas, and bring respite to Palestinians suffering a sharply worsening humanitarian crisis.

Witkoff said mediators had made a great effort but "Hamas does not appear to be coordinated or acting in good faith". "We will now consider alternative options to bring the hostages home and try to create a more stable environment for the people of Gaza," he wrote on X.

Hamas said it was surprised by Witkoff's remarks, adding that the group's position had been welcomed by mediators and had opened the door to reaching a



comprehensive agreement.

"The movement affirms its keenness to continue negotiations and engage in them in a manner that helps overcome obstacles and leads to a permanent ceasefire agreement," Hamas added in a statement early on Friday.

An Israeli official with knowledge of the talks said Hamas' response to the latest ceasefire proposal "does not allow for progress without a concession" by the group but that Israel intended to continue discussions.

Both Israel and Hamas are facing pressure at home and abroad to reach a deal following almost two years of war, with the humanitarian situation inside Gaza deteriorating and Israelis worried about the conditions in which hostages are being held.

Dozens of people have starved to death in Gaza the last few weeks as a wave of hunger crashes on the enclave, according to local health authorities.



Cruises Into D.C. Quarterfinals

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - No. 4 seed Ben Shelton needed just 61 minutes to defeat Canadian No. 15 Gabriel Diallo 6-3, 6-2 in the Round of 16 at the Mubadala Citi DC Open in Washington.

Shelton smashed 16 aces and won an impressive 28 of 30 first-service points (93.3 percent) to make the match an open-and-shut case.

There were no upsets in on Thursday, when action included top-seeded Taylor Fritz ousting Italy's Matteo Arnaldi 6-3, 6-4 and home-crowd favorite and sixth seed Frances Tiafoe routing Italian ninth seed Flavio Cobolli 6-1, 6-4.

No. 8 Daniil Medvedev of Russia breezed past Chinese qualifier Yibing Wu 6-3, 6-2, and No. 12 Alejandro Davidovich Fokina of Spain and No. 14 Brandon Nakashima also won in straight sets. French lucky loser Corentin Moutet stayed alive in the draw by beating British wild card Daniel Evans 6-2, 7-6 (4).

No. 7 seed Alex de Minaur of Australia pulled out a 7-6 (4), 6-7 (6), 6-4 win over Czech 11th seed Jiri Lehecka, who saved two match points in the second-set tiebreaker to extend the match.

No. 1 seed Alexander Bublik won an all-Kazakh battle against Alexander Shevchenko 6-4, 6-2 in 75 minutes to advance to the semifinals in Kitzbuhel, Austria.

Bublik saved all five break points he faced and won a whopping 25 of 26 first-service points (96.2 percent). His next opponent will be Botić van de Zandschulp of the Netherlands, who was a 7-6 (2), 6-2 winner over Brazilian Thiago Seyboth Wild.

French No. 6 seed Arthur Rinderknech outlasted German qualifier Yannick Hanfmann 6-4, 3-6, 6-1, and his semifinal foe will be countryman Arthur Cazaux, who beat German qualifier Jan-Lennard Struff 6-3, 6-4.

No. 2 seed Luciano Darderi of Italy rallied from a poor opening set to defeat Croatian home favorite Dino Prizmic 1-6, 6-2, 6-3 in the quarters in Umag, Croatia.

Darderi hit four aces in the decisive third set and is lined up to face No. 3 seed Camilo Ugo Carabelli of

Argentina, who led Pablo Llamas Ruiz 6-4, 5-2 when the Spanish qualifier retired.

No. 4 Damir Dzumhur of Bosnia and Herzegovina charged past French qualifier Titouan Droguet 3-6, 7-5, 6-2, and Spaniard Carlos Taberner took down Jesper de Jong of the Netherlands 7-5, 6-3.

Meanwhile Venus Williams, days after becoming the oldest player to win a WTA Tour singles match in 21 years, lost in the second round of the Mubadala Citi DC Open in Washington.

The 45-year-old star fell 6-2, 6-2 to fifth-seeded Magdalena Frech of Poland.

Williams, a seven-time Grand Slam singles champion, was competing on tour this week for the first time since March 2024. She gave herself chances against Frech but lost all five of her break-point opportunities.

Joining Frech in the quarterfinals is Canada's Leylah Fernandez, who upset top-seeded Jessica Pegula of the United States 6-3, 1-6, 7-5. Both players are former U.S. Open finalists.

Great Britain's Emma Raducanu defeated Japan's Naomi Osaka 6-4, 6-2 in a clash of former U.S. Open winners. Osaka put just 46 percent of her first serves in play and committed seven double faults to Raducanu's one.

In a matchup of U.S. players, Taylor Townsend downed sixth-seeded Sofia Kenin 6-3, 6-0.

Top-seeded Linda Noskova prevailed in a matchup of Czech Republic players, topping Katerina Siniakova 6-2, 4-6, 6-3 in the quarterfinals at Prague.

Both players logged 10 double faults and just two aces, but Noskova proved better with her second serve, winning 49 percent of her points to Siniakova's 30 percent.

The day's other winners were also from the host nation. Fifth-seeded Marie Bouzkova outlasted ninth-seeded Ann Li of the United States 3-6, 6-3, 6-3, and Tereza Valentova routed France's Jessika Ponchet 6-2, 6-0.

In the last quarterfinal, fourth-seeded Xinyu Wang led the Czech Republic's Sara Bejlek 6-4 when play was halted after the first set due to darkness.

O'Connor Takes Tour Stage as Vingegaard's Plans to Unseat Pogacar Fizzle Out

COURCHEVEL (Dispatches) - Ben O'Connor stormed to a sensational victory in Stage 18 of the Tour de France, as Jonas Vingegaard's attempt to dethrone Tadej Pogacar imploded in spectacular fashion on the race's most brutal Alpine battleground.

The Australian rider, eyes blazing with determination, launched a ferocious solo attack on the fearsome Col de la Loze and never looked back, thundering towards his second career Tour stage win, following his triumph in Tignes in 2021.

"I felt much better today just from the start. I was pretty active, and I think probably the point where you realise you could have a shot was the top of the (Col de la) Madeleine when Jonas and Pogi came across, and we're still with them over the top of the summit," said O'Connor.

Pogacar defended his crown with ice-cold precision, gaining 11 more seconds on Vingegaard and stretching his overall advantage to a commanding 4 minutes 26 seconds after taking second place.

"Today was brutal. Maybe the hardest stage I've ever done in the Tour," admitted a drained Vingegaard after the finish.

"We had a big plan, you saw it, but I couldn't take a second on Tadej. The Tour isn't over, still."

Visma-Lease a Bike had come to the Alps with an all-in



strategy for a stage lined with three monstrous climbs. But what could have been a bold masterstroke unravelled spectacularly.

On the slopes of the 19.2 km Col de la Madeleine, Sepp Kuss's searing acceleration left the top contenders chasing shadows.

With Matteo Jorgenson already up the road in a breakaway, Vingegaard launched his move 5 km from the summit, but Pogacar followed him with ease.

Then came the puzzling twist.

After a blistering descent, Vingegaard, who had said he was ready to risk his second place to try to win the Tour, suddenly eased up on the valley floor, inviting rivals to regroup and stripping his team's earlier aggression of any sting.

Jorgenson, once the sacrificial pawn, dropped from the break and rejoined the group, only to be spat out again almost instantly.

Up ahead, O'Connor sensed blood and struck with ruthless precision, leaving Einer Rubio gasping for air and balance with a savage attack 16 km from the line on the lung-busting 26.4-km Col de la Loze, soaring to 2,304 metres above sea level.

Rubio cracked in his wake, and the general classification favourites' hesitation sealed the Australian's day of glory.

Behind him, Visma-Lease a Bike flogged the pace but barely clawed back a second. Then, inside the final 2 km, Vingegaard made one last desperate thrust. Pogacar, seated and serene, absorbed it before unleashing a devastating counterpunch in the last 500 metres.

In a blur of power, the Slovenian dropped Vingegaard, streaked past Rubio, and snatched a six-second bonus as he continued his march towards a fourth Tour title.

Verstappen Eyes Reset Under New Red Bull Boss Mekies



BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - Max Verstappen and Red Bull seek a successful re-set of their season as they launch a new era at this weekend's Belgian Grand Prix, their first without Christian Horner in charge.

As Formula One resumes after a mini-break McLaren duo Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris intensify their duel to succeed the Dutchman as world champion.

While Norris seeks his third consecutive win in a bid to reduce team-mate Piastri's eight-point lead it will be Red Bull under the greatest scrutiny as they embark on a new adventure under Frenchman Laurent Mekies.

Never before has a Red Bull team raced without the 51-year-old Briton Horner, who was dismissed unexpectedly two weeks ago following 20 years of success, including guiding Verstappen to four consecutive world titles from 2021-2024.

His successor Mekies, promoted from junior team Racing Bulls, faces a daunting challenge - not only in keeping the team's focus and performance at the majestic high-speed circuit in the Ardennes, but in bringing stability to Red Bull after a stormy period.

Verstappen, born in Belgium, has been linked with a move to Mercedes for 2026 and, while Horner has remained silent since his bombshell exit, the champion has welcomed the arrival of Mekies, who has an engineering background and avoids confrontation and discord.

Ter Stegen to Undergo Back Surgery, Be Out for Three Months



BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Barcelona captain and Germany keeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen will be sidelined for three months as he recuperates from back surgery, the 33-year-old said in an Instagram post.

Ter Stegen missed seven months after suffering a knee injury last year, which forced him to have surgery before making his return in May. He previously underwent back surgery in 2023, which sidelined him for over two months.

"This time, the doctors believe about three months will be necessary as a precaution, to avoid any risks," said Ter Stegen, who has been at Barcelona since 2014, winning six LaLiga titles and a Champions League with the club.

"Emotionally, it hurts a lot not being able to support the team during this time. Fortunately, the rehabilitation is manageable and the road back is clear."

Meanwhile Arsenal have signed central defender Cristhian Mosquera from LaLiga side Valencia on a long-term deal, the Premier League club said.

Details of the transfer were not disclosed but British media reported the 21-year-old Spaniard has signed a five-year contract for an initial fee of around 15 million euros (\$17.7 million), plus add-ons.

Mosquera featured in 90 matches for Valencia across all competitions and played 37 of their 38 LaLiga games last season to help them finish 12th.

He joins Martin Zubimendi, Kepa Arrizabalaga, Christian Norgaard and Noni Madueke among Arsenal's close-season signings.

Striker Viktor Gyokeres is also reported to be on the brink of joining the London club as manager Mikel Arteta looks to strengthen his squad after finishing runners-up in the last three Premier League seasons.

"We're delighted to welcome Cristhian to Arsenal. As a 21-year-old defender, Cristhian has already performed consistently well with significant experience in LaLiga," Arteta said in a statement.

"He is an intelligent player with good pace, who can play centrally and on both sides."

Crawley, Duckett Lead England Recovery After Pant's Old Trafford Heroics

MANCHESTER (Dispatches) - A superb 166-run opening partnership between Zak Crawley and Ben Duckett led England's recovery in the fourth test against India, the hosts closing day two on 225-2, trailing the tourists by 133 runs.

A gutsy half century from the injured Rishabh Pant on Thursday helped India post 358 in their first innings, with England captain Ben Stokes' first five-wicket test haul in eight years helping see off the tourists' tail.

Crawley and Duckett moved at a rapid rate before tea to eat into India's total as England's reply got underway, but neither



could convert their impressive starts into centuries, the pair falling for 84 and 94 respectively in the evening session.

Joe Root and Ollie Pope survived several close calls to see England through to the close, putting the hosts in with a chance of sealing victory in the five-match series with one test to spare.

"The boys are happy to be in a good position as a team, we bowled really well this morning," Crawley told reporters.

"I have high standards and I always want more from myself, that has certainly been the case in the last year or so. Days like today make the tougher times worth it more."