

Energy Ministry Is Completing a Massive Project to Transfer Water From a Dam Located More Than 140 Kilometers to the Northwest of Tehran to the Capital City Amid Efforts to Ease Water Shortage in the Region

IRAN NEWS

Attending a Commemoration Ceremony at the Imam Khomeini Hussainiya in Tehran on Tuesday to Mark the 40th Day Since the Martyrdom of Those Who Lost Their Lives in the War, Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi Said No Plan Been Set for Negotiations With the United States

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President Emphasizes Collaboration With Experts to Achieve National Goals



TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian has underscored the importance of working closely with the nation's experts and empowering capable individuals as part of a broader strategy to realize Iran's national objectives and long-term policies.

During a visit to the Vice-Presidency for Science, Technology, and Knowledge-Based Economy on Tuesday, President Pezeshkian met with the vice president and senior officials of the department. He listened to their concerns and ideas, and outlined his vision for the role of this office in shaping Iran's future.

He stressed that the allocation of resources should be based on productivity and effectiveness, stating, "I deeply believe that what can truly save this country is our ability to learn, act, and commit ourselves to using knowledge in the service of our nation."

Reflecting on personal determination, Pezeshkian said he has always sought self-improvement and encourages others to do the same. "If we believe in continuous growth, there will be no limits to what we can achieve, especially in solving national challenges," he noted.

The president reiterated his support for decentralizing decision-making by empowering local authorities. "Many provinces and agencies have the capacity to resolve major issues without waiting for directives from the capital," he said.

Highlighting the power of collective effort, Pezeshkian shared an example: "Even without sufficient funding, we are currently building over five million square meters of schools. If we can unite public capacities like drops forming a flood, no obstacle will be insurmountable."

No Trust in U.S., Israel; Fully Prepared to Confront Any Aggression



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's top military commander says the country places absolutely "no trust" in the promises of the United States and the Israeli regime and stands "fully prepared" to decisively confront any renewed aggression on their part.

Speaking in a phone conversation with Tajikistan's Minister of Defense Emomali Abdur Rahim Sobirzoda, Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi, Chief of Staff of Iran's Armed Forces, expressed gratitude for Tajikistan's steadfast support during Israel's 12-day aggression against Iran.

He noted that Major General Mohammad Baqeri, martyred during the Israeli aggression, consistently prioritized Tajikistan, stressing the importance of strengthening military ties and bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

"Positive and effective steps have been taken in this direction, and I will continue this path," he added.

He said the enemy's outrageous actions proved that despite 12 days of brutal attacks violating all international norms, the US and Israel "did not achieve their goals and received heavy blows, which is why they called for a ceasefire to save the Zionist regime."

"We place absolutely no trust in the promises and commitments of the Americans and Zionists, and we stand fully prepared to decisively confront any potential renewed aggression from them," he underlined.

The Tajik official, for his part, offered his country's condolences for the martyrdom of Iranian commanders and civilians during the 12-day imposed war against Iran.

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



Nuclear Issue and Human Rights Are Just Pretexts, U.S. Opposes Iran's Strength

TEHRAN - In a ceremony commemorating the 40th day since the martyrdom of those killed in the recent 12-day war, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said that the true reason behind Western hostility toward the Islamic Republic is not nuclear activities or human rights, but rather Iran's religious foundation, scientific capabilities, and national unity under Islam.

The event was held on Tuesday at the Imam Khomeini Hosseiniyeh in Tehran, attended by the families of the martyrs, citizens from all walks of life, and several government officials. Ayatollah Khamenei described the 12-day conflict with the Zionist regime as a demonstration of the Islamic Republic's resolve and strength. "This war revealed the unshakable foundations of the Islamic Republic and the determination of the Iranian nation," he stated.

He emphasized that the main causes of global arrogance's opposition to Iran—especially from the United States—are rooted in Iran's religious commitment, scientific progress, and unity. "Our nation, with God's help, will never abandon the path of faith and knowledge. Against all odds, we will elevate Iran to the peak of progress and honor," he said.

Offering condolences to the families of military commanders, scientists, and civilians killed in the recent conflict, Ayatollah Khamenei praised the Iranian people's display of strength, perseverance, and determination. "The whole world now acknowledges the significant achievements of the Iranian nation during these 12 days," he said.

He noted that while the recent events were significant, Iran has faced many such challenges over the past 46 years—from the eight-year imposed war to various political, military, and security conspiracies. "Despite all the enemy's efforts, the Islamic Republic has neutralized

their plots every time," he asserted.

Highlighting that the foundation of the Islamic Republic is built upon "religion and knowledge," the Leader noted that Iranian youth and people have repeatedly forced the enemy to retreat across various arenas. "They will continue to do so," he added.

Ayatollah Khamenei dismissed Western claims about Iran's nuclear program and human rights as mere pretexts. "Their real grievance is the emergence of a new voice and the growing capabilities of the Islamic Republic in scientific, technical, human, and religious fields," he said.

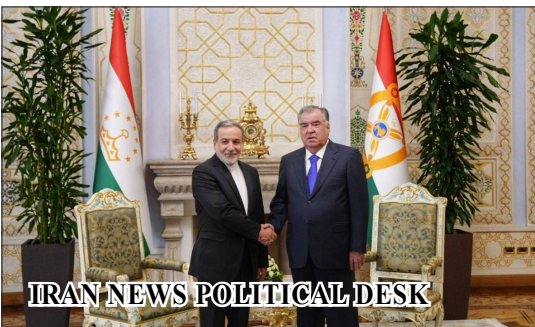
He reaffirmed Iran's commitment to advancing religion and knowledge. "We will take major steps forward, and despite the enemies' blindness, we will raise Iran to great heights," he declared.

The ceremony also featured Quranic recitations and a speech by cleric Hojatoleslam Rafiei, who drew parallels between the martyrs of the recent conflict and those of the historic Battle of Siffin, referencing sermon 182 of Nahj al-Balagha. He outlined eight characteristics of the martyrs, including steadfastness, righteousness, adherence to religious duties, revival of divine traditions, and loyalty to leadership.

Rafiei emphasized that, according to the Quran, faith and reliance on God are the two key elements of divine victory—both of which, he said, were evident in Iran's resistance during the 12-day war.

Poet Mohammad Reza Bazri also recited verses honoring the martyrs and mourned the tragedies faced by the Prophet's family.

FM Meets with Tajikistan President in Dushanbe



TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araqchi met with Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon on the first day of his official visit to the Central Asian nation. The high-level meeting took place at the Palace of the Nation in Dushanbe.

Minister Araqchi conveyed the warm greetings of Iran's Supreme Leader and President to the government and people of Tajikistan. He emphasized the Islamic Republic of Iran's firm commitment to expanding bilateral ties with Tajikistan across all areas of mutual interest.

Highlighting the historical, linguistic, and cultural bonds between the two Persian-speaking nations, Araqchi described the relationship as rooted in deep friendship and shared heritage. He expressed Iran's intention to make full use of these unique commonalities to enhance cooperation in various sectors, including economy, trade, diplomacy, culture, and education.

President Rahmon welcomed the Iranian delegation and returned the greetings to Iran's leadership. He described the ties between Tajikistan and Iran as "special" and grounded in a long history of mutual respect and affection. Stressing the importance of strengthening these bonds, Rahmon called for increased collaboration between the two countries.

During the meeting, both sides reviewed the current status of bilateral relations and explored new opportunities for further development. The discussions also covered regional issues of mutual concern, including the latest developments in the Caucasus, Central Asia, Afghanistan, and West Asia.

Iran, Turkey Can Be the Key to Regional Stability



TEHRAN - In a high-level meeting on the sidelines of the 6th World Conference of Parliamentary Speakers in Geneva, Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf emphasized the importance of Iran-Turkey cooperation in ensuring regional stability. Qalibaf met with his Turkish counterpart, Numan Kurtulmus, to discuss geopolitical developments and bilateral ties.

Qalibaf asserted that many of the region's challenges stem from U.S. interference and called for unity among Islamic and regional nations in confronting the United States and Israel.

"The region is going through sensitive times, and both global and regional developments can give rise to new challenges," Qalibaf said. "These issues are rooted in the direct involvement of the United States. Iran and Turkey have influential bilateral and regional relations that can positively impact the region."

He expressed gratitude to Turkey—its government, parliament, political parties, and public—for their stance during the recent 12-day conflict involving the U.S. and Israel's attacks on Iran.

"Iran has been engaged in confrontation with the U.S., the Zionist regime, and their allies," Qalibaf stated. "Our people and armed forces stood firm. For the first time in its history, Israel experienced the bitter taste of a serious military response."

The Iranian Speaker warned that Israel continues to threaten the Islamic world, seeking to destabilize neighboring nations for its own expansionist goals. He likened Israel to "21st-century Nazis" committing atrocities, particularly in Gaza.

"In Gaza, they're not just destroying infrastructure and committing genocide—they're weaponizing hunger and thirst. We must stand united," he added.

Israel's Systematic Massacre of Palestinians in Gaza Reminiscent of Nazi Crimes

TEHRAN - Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf has condemned the Israeli regime's "systematic massacre" of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, which he likened to atrocities the Nazis committed during the Second World War.

Addressing the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament in the Swiss city of Geneva on Tuesday, Qalibaf stated that high-profile parliamentarians from all regions of the world have come together at the event, which takes place from July 29 to 31 at the Palais des Nations, to promote justice against a spate of aggression that is pushing the humankind towards an abyss.

He said a catastrophe is unfolding in Gaza, which is unparalleled and could only be compared to the darkest pages of human history.

"We are witnessing the emergence of the Nazis of the 21st century. A regime, which through cold-bloodedness and a [grim] scenario, is waging a campaign of aggression that seems to have sprung from the nightmares of the most horrific crimes in history," the senior Iranian legislator noted.

Qalibaf said that Zionists, as the Nazis of the 21st century, must be stopped before humanity is drowned forever in the whirlpool of oppression.

He also underlined the need to address the root causes, repercussions, and factors affecting the ongoing Gaza war, and to take proper action to resolve the issue.

"Gaza today is not simply an expanse of land, but rather an abattoir and a crime scene. It is a slaughterhouse built out of a terrible and wicked mentality that swallows humanity within itself. What is happening in Gaza is not war; it is a systematic massacre," Qalibaf stated.

At least 60,034 Palestinians have been killed, mostly women and children, and another



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

148,870 individuals injured in the brutal Israeli onslaught on Gaza since October 7, 2023, according to the Gaza Health Ministry figures.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants in November 2024 for Benjamin Netanyahu and former minister of military affairs Yoav Gallant, citing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza.

Israel also faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for its war on the besieged coastal territory.

During the recent 12-day Israeli aggression against Iran, Qalibaf said the Zionist regime, with the support and coordination of the United States, carried out direct attacks on the critical infrastructure of the Islamic Republic of Iran, including peaceful nuclear facilities registered and supervised by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), just as Tehran and Washington were engaged in indirect diplomatic negotiations.

"The attacks were not only a threat to Iran's sovereignty and territorial integrity, but also a worrying warning for the destabilization of collective security in the region and across the globe.

"The inaction of international institutions in response to these actions raised serious questions about the credibility and effectiveness of international peacekeeping structures, including the UN Security Council," he stated.

Qalibaf said Iran's retaliatory response to Israeli assaults was within the framework of its right to self-defense, emphasizing that the Islamic Republic neither relied on international institutions nor on hollow promises of great powers during the June 13-25 war.

IRAN NEWS



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

Reason Behind Decline in Iran's Exports to Neighbors Announced

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) has announced the reasons behind a noticeable drop in the country's exports to neighboring countries during the first quarter of the current Iranian year (Spring 1404 / March-June 2025). Mohammad Ali Dehghan Dehnavi, the head of the TPO, stated that part of the decline in exports is due to a reduction in natural gas exports and falling prices for petrochemical products. "One portion of the decrease can be attributed to lower prices in petrochemical goods, while the remaining factors include issues related to policy decisions," Dehnavi said.

Iran and Russia Establish Joint Working Group to Boost Economic Cooperation



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - In a bid to deepen bilateral economic relations, a joint working group is being established between Iran and Russia to identify and resolve trade barriers, according to a recent meeting held at the Tehran Chamber of Commerce.

Alexey Yefimov, Head of the Russian Federation's Trade Representative Office in Tehran, met with Fereydoon Verdinnejad, Secretary-General of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce. During their discussions, the two sides emphasized the importance of enhancing economic ties and agreed to set up a joint working group aimed at fostering economic cooperation and removing trade obstacles.

In this specialized meeting, both officials explored avenues for closer collaboration between their respective institutions and the private sectors of the two countries. Verdinnejad highlighted the untapped potential in bilateral trade and noted that Tehran's strategic plan places the expansion of economic ties with eight key countries, including Russia, at the top of its agenda.

According to a statement from the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Verdinnejad stressed the necessity of sustained engagement between Iranian and Russian businesses. He suggested that regular in-person and virtual meetings could provide a clearer understanding of commercial needs and capabilities.

He proposed the creation of a "Joint Economic Cooperation Working Group" involving the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, the Russian Trade Representative Office in Tehran, and the Iran-Russia Joint Chamber of Commerce. The group would facilitate expert-level dialogue and draft practical solutions to overcome trade barriers. Verdinnejad added that the group could also help streamline barter trade mechanisms and transactions using national currencies, in coordination with the Moscow Chamber of Commerce and Business Russia.

Yefimov, for his part, underscored the role of the Free Trade Agreement between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in boosting trade volume between Tehran and Moscow. He affirmed the Russian trade office's commitment to collaborating closely with the Tehran Chamber to create an environment in which traders from both nations can navigate banking and currency-related challenges.

Tehran-Baku Flight Launched to Boost Tourism, Regional Cooperation



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran Air, the national flag carrier of the Islamic Republic of Iran, has launched a direct flight from Tabriz to Baku as part of efforts to enhance tourism and strengthen regional ties under the guidelines of the country's Seventh Development Plan.

Hossein Khanlari, CEO of Iran Air, announced the launch in an interview with IRNA, highlighting that the new route is designed to improve regional connectivity, facilitate travel, and promote economic cooperation with neighboring countries.

The new Tabriz-Baku service will operate weekly on Tuesdays using an Airbus A319 aircraft. The inaugural flight, which took place on July 28, received a warm reception from local residents and provincial officials.

Khanlari noted that the recent visit of Iran's President to the Republic of Azerbaijan and the emphasis on expanding bilateral cooperation were key motivations behind the new service. He also cited the limited availability of land visas and the competitive pricing of the flight compared to similar routes as contributing factors.

In addition to the new Tabriz route, Iran Air currently operates direct flights from Tehran to Baku on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

"The enthusiastic reception of the first Tabriz-Baku flight confirms the strong potential for this route to foster economic and tourism growth between the two nations," Khanlari said. "If this demand continues, we anticipate increasing the frequency of flights on this route."

He concluded by expressing hope that with the continued expansion of this service and the addition of other high-demand routes in East Azerbaijan Province—an area with significant potential—Iran Air will play a meaningful role in advancing tourism, strengthening its position, and boosting regional cooperation.

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



TEHRAN - In a call for a cultural shift, Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Seyyed Reza Salehi Amiri, stressed the need for the concept of "Iran" to evolve from an identity crisis into a powerful, future-oriented discourse—particularly for the younger generation. Speaking at the second policymaking council session for the 4th International Multimedia Cultural Heritage Festival, held at the Ministry's Fajr Hall on Tuesday, he urged the transformation of the festival into a platform for civilizational storytelling.

"In its current form, our youth lack a clear understanding of what 'Iran' means," the minister said. "We have failed to articulate the values this identity should convey and the balance between Iranian and Islamic components of our national identity. It is time we addressed this with clarity and scholarship."

Salehi Amiri described the festival as having reached a "strategic maturity," and called for its elevation from a typical cultural event to a thought-driven, civilization-building occurrence. "National events are living entities that mature through history," he noted, "and this festival now stands at the threshold of such transformation."

He emphasized the festival's role in generating meaning, stating that its content must engage directly with young people, not society at large. "We must translate the idea of Iran into the language of the new generation, or we will fail to create collective emotional investment," he added.

Highlighting the need for conceptual branding, Salehi Amiri proposed that the festival be centered on three core ideas: national solidarity, cultural convergence, and organic social cohesion. "Iran today, more than ever, needs these concepts to be redefined through cultural frameworks," he said.

He also pointed to the strategic potential of Khuzestan Province in realizing these goals. "As a multi-layered, multi-ethnic civilizational hub, Khuzestan can serve as a

viable model of internal cohesion. The festival could begin designing such a model based on the region's lived experience—where Elamite, Achaemenid, and Sassanid civilizations converge."

As a practical initiative, Salehi Amiri proposed organizing a cultural-civilizational tour ahead of the festival, involving 200 experts from various fields, including culture, art, media, and archaeology. "From Susa to Chogha Mish, and Arjan to lesser-known cultural mounds, this journey could generate 200 meaningful narratives about Iran's cultural identity. These narratives are intellectual nourishment for our youth," he said.

Addressing the generational shift in cultural tastes, the minister stressed that the festival's content must be fresh, engaging, and reflective of youth sensibilities—moving away from repetitive and slogan-driven productions. He urged for the use of digital platforms not just for dissemination, but as interactive arenas for cultural engagement.

Tying the concept of war to national identity, Salehi Amiri said that Iran's Sacred Defense (the Iran-Iraq war) should be reinterpreted as a civilizational experience. He proposed the launch of a "Twelve-Day National War Orchestra"—a narrative-artistic project to be unveiled during the festival's closing ceremony.

He concluded by advocating for the decentralization of the festival's executive structure, stressing that the government's role should be limited to support rather than direct management. "The burden of organizing this event should fall on civil society, cultural institutions, scholars, and artists. Only then can the festival become a genuine reflection of society's true voice."

At the end of the session, the festival's official guidebook was unveiled, and appointment letters for committee members were distributed by the Minister.

Tourism Industry Sector Urges Majlis to Step Up Support

TEHRAN - The head of Iran's Association of Air and Travel Services Agencies has called on the Iranian Parliament to actively support the tourism sector—not through loans or subsidies, but by removing barriers and creating a more enabling environment for growth.

Speaking at a high-level meeting on Tuesday with lawmakers from the Parliament's economic, cultural, and agricultural commissions—as well as representatives from Tehran Province—the association presented a detailed list of challenges threatening the future of Iran's tourism industry.

Among the most urgent issues were government orders during the recent 12-day Israel-Iran conflict that required agencies to fully refund travelers, despite non-refundable hotel and flight bookings already paid for abroad. Agency officials warned that such directives, issued by officials unfamiliar with the tourism business, fuel customer disputes and damage trust in travel companies.

Skyrocketing airfares: One airline charged 39 million toman for a round-trip ticket to Yazd, raising serious concerns about price gouging and lack of oversight.

Deliberate cancellations: Some carriers reportedly canceled flights only to reissue tickets at full price while charging passengers penalties.

Neglect of inbound tourism: Authorities continue to focus almost exclusively on domestic tourism, ignoring the economic impact of international visitors.

No power for private sector: The Ministry of Cultural Heritage has failed to delegate responsibilities to private tourism bodies.

Health tourism mismanagement: Iran's absence from regional health tourism exhibitions and unchecked middlemen hinder growth.

Lack of qualified leadership: The appointment of inexperienced consultants in tourism policymaking was also criticized.

Hormatollah Rafiei, President of the Association, stressed that tourism differs fundamentally from sectors like oil and foreign affairs. "Tourism is run by the private sector. It moves forward with or without the state. The truth is, past governments haven't helped this sector at all," he said.

He urged lawmakers to cut red tape and empower the industry: "We don't want loans or grants. We just need your backing. With Parliament's support, tourism can become a real driver of foreign exchange earnings."

Rafiei also cautioned against the spread of inflated or misleading tourism statistics, warning that they mask deeper structural problems.



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

Seyyed Ali Yazdikhah, Deputy Chair of Parliament's Cultural Commission and head of the Tehran delegation, endorsed the creation of a joint task force with the association to hold regular strategy meetings and address pressing issues in tourism.

He acknowledged that government overreach and state-owned enterprises continue to stifle private-sector growth, despite Parliament's efforts. "We keep circling back to the same problems," he said. Yazdikhah also backed proposals to: Attract 20 million tourists annually; and Open Iran's domestic air routes to foreign airlines.

He criticized Iran's economic and cultural attachés abroad for failing to promote the country's tourism assets, describing their performance as either absent or ineffective.

Yazdikhah lamented Iran's underperformance in health tourism, particularly the failure to attract wealthier medical tourists from nearby countries such as Pakistan.

Peyman Falsafi, Deputy Chair of the Agriculture Commission, argued that Iran is well positioned but invisible in the global halal market. "Everything here—from hotels to food and beach access—is halal. We just haven't marketed it," he said.

He also highlighted the potential of agricultural logistics, particularly in leveraging Iran's role in the North-South trade corridor for transporting Russian goods.

Falsafi urged the association to document and report any failures by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage to Parliament so that legal action can be taken if necessary.

Arash Shavardian, a member of the Economic Commission representing Iran's Armenian and Jewish communities, criticized the failure to capitalize on Iran's vast tangible and intangible cultural heritage—much of which is world-renowned.

He listed high domestic travel costs, safety concerns for foreign tourists, weak transport infrastructure, and a lack of amenities as serious deterrents. Shavardian backed the idea of bi-monthly joint meetings with the association to propose practical solutions and address gaps in tourism legislation. He also encouraged introducing relevant bills to Parliament as needed.

All attending lawmakers expressed their commitment to involving key government agencies in the working group and to ensuring that any agreed-upon reforms are advanced through legislation—either by the government or through Parliament.

Iran Strengthens Agricultural Diplomacy at SCO Ministerial Meeting in China



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Minister of Agriculture Jihad, Gholamreza Nouri, has traveled to China to participate in the 10th Meeting of Agriculture Ministers from the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), as part of Tehran's ongoing push to expand agricultural diplomacy in Asia.

The two-day summit, which begins Wednesday in the southwestern Chinese city of Kunming, aims to explore ways to enhance agricultural cooperation among SCO member countries. According to Iran's government news agency, Minister Nouri is scheduled to deliver a speech outlining Iran's perspective on agricultural development and is expected to hold bilateral talks with several of his counterparts on the sidelines of the meeting.

Founded in 2001, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a major regional alliance that includes China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Belarus. Iran became a full member of the organization in 2022, after previously holding observer status.

Agricultural cooperation has been a standing item on the SCO agenda, particularly since the adoption of an intergovernmental agreement in 2010. This agreement calls for regular ministerial meetings to coordinate policy and promote collaboration in areas such as food security, agricultural research, technology exchange, and trade facilitation.

Minister Nouri is expected to propose concrete strategies to expand agricultural trade, enhance scientific collaboration, and promote joint research projects among member nations. His participation signals Iran's broader ambition to position itself as a regional agricultural hub amid growing food security concerns and shifting geopolitical dynamics.

The SCO summit comes at a time when Iran is seeking to diversify its international partnerships, particularly in the face of Western sanctions and climate-related challenges affecting its agricultural output. Deeper ties with neighboring and allied countries through forums like the SCO are viewed as strategic opportunities to gain access to new markets, share technological expertise, and improve resilience in the agricultural sector.

Handicrafts Exhibition Records \$100m in Sales



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Deputy Minister of Handicrafts at Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage announced that the 37th National Handicrafts Exhibition achieved over 100 billion toman (approximately \$2 million USD) in sales, marking a historic milestone in the country's cultural and artistic events.

Maryam Jalali, Deputy for Handicrafts at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, shared the news during a policy council meeting for the 38th National Handicrafts Exhibition, held on July 30, 2025. The meeting, attended by Minister Seyyed Reza Salehi Amiri, senior officials, industry representatives, and private sector stakeholders, took place at the ministry's Nowruz Hall in Tehran.

Jalali presented an analytical review of last year's event, noting that the 37th edition had undergone significant structural and thematic transformations. "With the Minister's guidance and collective coordination, the exhibition evolved into a new model for national events. It became not just a commercial venue, but a platform to showcase the cultural power of Iran," she stated.

Key highlights of the event included: Held from November 13-16, 2024; Participation from over 1,038 artisans, experts, and organizers; Attendance of 80,000 visitors from across the country; 50% discount on booth rental fees negotiated for participants; and Free accommodation provided for 259 artists from underserved regions.

Based on artists' self-reported figures, total sales reached an impressive 100 billion toman. The event also witnessed: 15 billion toman in contracts signed with public sector institutions; and A \$50 million memorandum of understanding with a visiting trade delegation from a regional country.

Bessent Warns China on Russian Oil Purchases

STOCKHOLM (Dispatches) - U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said he warned Chinese officials that continued purchases of sanctioned Russian oil would lead to big tariffs due to legislation in Congress, but was told that Beijing would protect its energy sovereignty.

Wrapping up two days of U.S.-China trade talks in Stockholm, Bessent said he also expressed U.S. displeasure at China's continued purchases of sanctioned Iranian oil, and its sales of over \$15 billion worth of dual-use technology goods to Russia that have bolstered Moscow's war against Ukraine.

Bessent said legislation in the U.S. Congress authorizing Trump to levy tariffs up to 500% on countries that purchase sanctioned Russian oil would draw U.S. allies into taking similar steps to cut off Russia's energy revenues.



Russian Airstrikes on Prison, Hospital Kill 19 in Ukraine



ZAPORIZHZHIA (Dispatches) - Russian airstrikes on a prison and hospital in southeastern Ukraine killed at least 19 people, officials said on Tuesday, while U.S. President Donald Trump said he would start imposing punitive measures on Russia within 10 days if Moscow showed no progress toward ending its war in Ukraine.

Sixteen of the people were killed when Russia bombed a prison in the frontline Zaporizhzhia region in an attack Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said was deliberate. He said 43 people were injured in the incident.

"The Russians knew it was a civilian facility. They could not have been unaware," Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address.

"Each such Russian strike, each instance of Russian arrogance in response to global calls to end the war, all this only confirms that pressure is necessary."

Separately, a missile strike on a hospital in the neighbouring Dnipropetrovsk region killed a 23-year-old pregnant woman and two others.

Zelenskyy earlier said a total of 22 people had been killed over the past 24 hours.

Russia, which denied targeting civilians in Tuesday's attacks, has intensified airstrikes on Ukrainian towns and cities behind the front lines of its full-scale invasion, now in its fourth year, as it gradually pushes ahead on the battlefield. Russian forces hold around a fifth of Ukrainian territory.

Trump, underscoring his frustration with Putin, said in Scotland on Monday he was shortening his earlier deadline of 50 days to 10 or 12 days for Russia to make progress towards ending the war.

On Tuesday, aboard Air Force One, he said he had heard no reply from Russia and could begin slapping tariffs and other measures on Moscow within 10 days.

The Kremlin said on Tuesday that it had "taken note" of Trump's earlier statement. "The special military operation continues," said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, employing the term that Moscow uses for its war effort in Ukraine.

Thailand Slams Flagrant Truce Violation After Border Clash With Cambodia



BANGKOK (Dispatches) - Thailand accused Cambodia on Wednesday of a "flagrant violation" of a truce deal to end cross-border fighting, saying Cambodian troops launched an overnight attack on the frontier.

The nations agreed a ceasefire starting Tuesday after five days of clashes killed at least 43 on both sides, as a long-standing dispute over contested border temples boiled over into open combat on their 800-kilometre (500-mile) frontier.

But Thailand's foreign ministry said its troops in Sisaket province "came under attack by small arms fire and grenade assaults launched by Cambodian forces" in an offensive which continued until Wednesday morning.

"This represents a flagrant violation of the ceasefire agreement," said a foreign ministry statement.

Thai government spokesman Jirayu Huang said also reported overnight clashes but said in a statement "the Thai side maintained control of the situation" and "general conditions along the border are reported to be normal" from 8am (0100 GMT).

Cambodia has previously denied breaking the truce, designed to end fighting which has seen the two countries evacuate a total of more than 300,000 people from the border region.

An AFP journalist on the Cambodian side who heard a steady drumbeat of artillery fire since fighting began last Thursday reported hearing no blasts between the start of the truce and Wednesday morning.

The armistice got off to a shaky start in the early hours of Tuesday, with Thailand accusing Cambodia of continuing attacks in "a clear attempt to undermine mutual trust" — before peace generally prevailed.

Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Egypt Back Global Call for Hamas to Disarm



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Arab countries including Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Egypt joined calls Tuesday for Hamas to disarm and end its rule of Gaza, in a bid to end the devastating war in the Palestinian territory.

Seventeen countries plus the European Union and Arab League threw their weight behind a seven-page text agreed at a United Nations conference on reviving the two-state solution for Israel and the Palestinians.

"In the context of ending the war in Gaza, Hamas must end its rule in Gaza and hand over its weapons to the Palestinian Authority, with international engagement and support, in line with the objective of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State," said the declaration.

It followed a call Monday by the Palestinian delegation at the United Nations for both Israel and Hamas to leave Gaza, allowing the Palestinian Authority to administer the coastal territory.

The text also condemned the deadly October 7, 2023 attacks by Hamas against Israel, something the UN General Assembly has yet to do.

France, which co-chaired the conference with Saudi Arabia, called the declaration "both historic and unprecedented."

"For the first time, Arab countries and those in the Middle East condemn Hamas, condemn October 7, call for the disarmament of Hamas, call for its exclusion from Palestinian governance, and clearly express their intention to normalize relations with Israel in the future," said French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot.

The text, co-signed by France, Britain and Canada among other western nations, also called for the possible deployment of foreign forces to stabilize Gaza after the end of hostilities.

Israel and its ally the United States did not take part in the meeting. The document was issued at the second day of the conference in New York at which Britain announced it may recognize a

Palestinian state in September.

British Foreign Secretary David Lammy said London would proceed with recognition if Israel did not fulfil conditions including implementing a ceasefire in Gaza and allowing in sufficient aid.

French President Emmanuel Macron last week said he would formally announce France's recognition of Palestinian statehood at the UN General Assembly in September.

For decades, most of the global body's members have supported a two-state solution with Israel and a Palestinian state existing side-by-side.

But after more than 21 months of war in Gaza, the ongoing expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, and Israeli officials declaring designs to annex occupied territory, it is feared a Palestinian state could become geographically impossible.

The current war in Gaza started after the Hamas attacks on Israel, in which more than 1,200 people were killed.

Israel responded with large-scale military action that has claimed tens of thousands of Palestinian lives and destroyed most infrastructure in the enclave.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said at the meeting Monday "the two-state solution is farther than ever before."

In a statement issued late Tuesday, 15 Western nations including France and Spain, affirmed their "unwavering support to the vision of the two-state solution."

Among the signatories, nine that have not yet recognized a Palestinian state expressed "willingness or positive consideration of their countries" to do so: Andorra, Australia, Canada, Finland, Luxembourg, Malta, New Zealand, Portugal, and San Marino.

Powerful Quake in Russia's Far East Causes Tsunami

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - A magnitude 8.8 earthquake struck off Russia's Far Eastern Kamchatka Peninsula on Wednesday, damaging buildings and generating a tsunami of up to 4 metres (13 feet) that prompted warnings and evacuations stretching across the Pacific Ocean.

Several people were injured in the remote Russian region, while much of Japan's eastern seaboard - devastated by a powerful earthquake and tsunami in 2011 - was ordered to evacuate.

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"Today's earthquake was serious and the strongest in decades of tremors," Kamchatka Governor Vladimir Solodov said in a video posted on the Telegram messaging app.

A tsunami with a height of 3-4 metres (10-13 feet) was recorded in parts of Kamchatka, said Sergei Lebedev, regional minister for emergency situations, urging people to move away from the shoreline.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the earthquake was shallow at a depth of 19.3 km (12 miles), and was centred 119 km (74 miles) east-southeast of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, a city of 165,000. It revised the magnitude up from 8.0 earlier, and reported a strong aftershock of magnitude 6.9 soon after.

Japan's weather agency upgraded its warning, saying it expected tsunami waves of up to 3 metres (10 feet) to reach large areas of its coast.

Tsunami alarms sounded in coastal towns across Japan's Pacific coast with authorities urging people to seek higher ground.

Footage on public broadcaster NHK showed scores of people in the northern island of Hokkaido on the roof of a building, sheltering under tents from the beating sun, as fishing boats left harbours to avoid potential damage from the incoming waves.

Workers evacuated the stricken Fukushima nuclear plant, where a meltdown following the 2011 tsunami caused a radioactive disaster, operator TEPCO said.

Only small waves were recorded and Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi said there were no injuries or damage reported so far, and no irregularities at any nuclear plants.

The U.S. Tsunami Warning System also issued a warning of "hazardous



tsunami waves" within the next three hours.

Waves reaching more than 3 metres were possible along some coasts of Russia and Ecuador, while waves of 1-3 metres were possible in Japan, Hawaii, Chile and the Solomon Islands, it said. Smaller waves were possible along coastlines across much of the Pacific, including the U.S. West Coast.

"Due to a massive earthquake that occurred in the Pacific Ocean, a Tsunami Warning is in effect for those living in Hawaii," U.S. President Donald Trump said in a social media post.

"A Tsunami Watch is in effect for Alaska and the Pacific Coast of the United States. Japan is also in the way. Please visit tsunami.gov/ for the latest information. STAY STRONG AND STAY SAFE!"

Hawaii ordered evacuations from some coastal areas. "Take Action! Destructive tsunami waves expected," the Honolulu Department of Emergency Management said on X.

The Hawaii warning urged residents of low-lying areas to either move to higher ground or to the fourth floor of a building.

A resident in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky said the shaking started slowly but built up and rumbled for several minutes.

"Considering its strength and how long it lasted ... I decided to leave the building," said Yaroslav, 25.

"The building is very flimsy and light, which might be why it survived. But it felt like the walls could collapse any moment. The shaking lasted continuously for at least 3 minutes."

Several people sought medical assistance following the quake, Oleg Melnikov, regional health minister, told Russia's TASS state news agency.

"Unfortunately, there are some people injured during the seismic event. Some were hurt while running outside, and one patient jumped out of a window. A woman was also injured inside the new airport terminal," Melnikov said.

Russia's Ministry for Emergency Services said on Telegram that the port in the Sakhalin town of Severo-Kurilsk and a fish processing plant there were partially flooded by a tsunami. The population was evacuated.

While a kindergarten was also damaged, most buildings withstood the quake and no serious injuries or fatalities had been reported, the ministry added.

Kamchatka and Russia's Far East sit on the Pacific Ring of Fire, a geologically active region that is prone to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

The Russian Academy of Sciences said it was the strongest quake to hit the region since 1952.

"However, due to certain characteristics of the epicentre, the shaking intensity was not as high ... as one might expect from such a magnitude," said Danila Chebrov, director of the Kamchatka Branch of the Geophysical Service, on Telegram.

"Aftershocks are currently ongoing ... Their intensity will remain fairly high. However, stronger tremors are not expected in the near future. The situation is under control."

Netherlands Bars Two Israeli Ministers Over Incitement, Ethnic Cleansing Accusations

AMSTERDAM (Dispatches) - The Netherlands has declared Israel's finance and national security ministers persona non grata for inciting violence and urging ethnic cleansing in Gaza.

In June, the Netherlands backed a failed Swedish proposal to impose EU sanctions on Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir.

"They repeatedly incited settler violence against Palestinians, promoted illegal settlement expansion, and called for ethnic cleansing in Gaza," Dutch Foreign Minister Caspar Veldkamp told parliament in a letter released late Monday.

Smotrich responded on X, saying European leaders had succumbed to "the lies of radical Islam that is taking over" and "rising antisemitism".

Ben-Gvir said he would continue to act for Israel, even if he was banned from



entering "all of Europe".

"In a place where terrorism is tolerated and terrorists are welcomed, a Jewish minister from Israel is unwanted, terrorists are free, and Jews are boycotted," he wrote on X.

Veldkamp said the Netherlands wanted to "relieve the suffering of the population in Gaza" and was exploring further ways to contribute to humanitarian aid.

"Airdrops of food are relatively expensive and risky," he said.

"This is why the Netherlands is also taking steps to further support land-based aid delivery."

Aid drops resumed in Gaza on Sunday as Israel announced temporary humanitarian pauses in parts of the besieged territory.



OTTAQA (Dispatches) - Top seeds Alexander Zverev of Germany and American Coco Gauff advanced to the third round of the Canadian Open after both players were pushed hard by their opponents.

World number three Zverev, playing in his first match since his first-round loss at Wimbledon, was far from his best but emerged with a 7-6(6) 6-4 win over Adam Walton under the lights in Toronto.

Momentum shifted firmly in Zverev's favour when he won a 52-shot rally in the first set tiebreak, and he sealed the win on a double fault by the Australian in the second set.

"It was a very important moment, very important point for me," Zverev said. "Lucky to get through in the first set and finish it off in two."

Zverev said he did not play his "prettiest" match but was proud of how he battled after taking a break from the game following his early Wimbledon exit.

"I took some time off, which I needed also for myself. I'm happy to be playing again," he added. Zverev next plays 32nd seed Matteo Arnaldi on Thursday.

On the women's side, top seed Gauff was two points from defeat but battled back to beat fellow American Danielle Collins 7-5 4-6 7-6(2) in a nearly three-hour battle to reach the third round.

French Open champion Gauff overcame 23 double faults and 74 unforced errors to beat Collins in their first career meeting.

"I was practicing well and I don't think I transferred it today, but hopefully I got my bad match of the tournament out of the way," Gauff said.

Several top players withdrew ahead of the Masters and WTA 1000 tournament including world number ones Aryna Sabalenka and Jannik Sinner, Carlos Alcaraz, Novak Djokovic and Jack Draper.

Meanwhile in a lengthy first-round battle between two players from Germany, Laura Siegemund came out on top over Tatjana Maria at the National Bank Open in Montreal.

Similar to their three-set thriller in 2023 at Warsaw, Siegemund came away with the victory. This time, she prevailed 7-5, 6-7 (6), 7-6 (2) despite Maria earning eight aces to her one -- and registering seven double faults to Maria's three during their nearly three-and-a-half-hour match.

Great Britain's Emma Raducanu, ranked No. 33 in the world, eased into the second round with a 6-2, 6-4 victory over Romania's Elena-Gabriela Ruse. Coming off a trip to the semifinals in last week's DC Open, Raducanu staved off five break points in her opening service game before winning the last five games to close out the first set. She then earned a crucial break to take a 5-4 lead in the second before serving out for the match.

"Elena is a good friend of mine and it's difficult to play someone you know, but I'm happy with how I put that to one side," Raducanu said, per Sky Sports. "It's also good to back up a good week last week in DC."

Russian qualifier Kamilla Rakhimova lost the first set to 20-year-old Canadian wild card Kayla Cross before finding her groove and finishing out the last two sets to win 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 in just under two hours. Ukraine's Yuliia Starodubtseva also needed three sets to defeat China's Wang Yafan, 7-6 (6), 6-4, 6-4.

Most early first-round matches ended in straight sets. Hailey Baptiste, Russia's Anna Blinkova, Japan's Naomi Osaka, New Zealand's Lulu Sun, Czechia's Marie Bouzkova, Germany's Eva Lys, China's Guo Hanyu and 34-year-old Canadian Rebecca Marino each earned straight-set triumphs.

Wiebes Claims Tour de France Fourth Stage, Vos Maintains Lead



PARIS (Dispatches) - Dutch cyclist Lorena Wiebes won the fourth stage of the women's Tour de France, outpacing her compatriot and yellow jersey-holder Marianne Vos at the end of a bunch sprint.

Just as in the previous day's stage, the SD Worx team sprinter once again beat the overall leader by a wheel to claim her second consecutive stage victory.

"On the final straight it was a big chaos and I was really fighting for position," said Wiebes, 26.

"It's really nice to win again and it's really nice to finish it off for the girls after their hard work at the end again."

Ireland's Lara Gillespie completed the podium at the end of a stage which was thankfully much cleaner than Monday's in Angers, when several riders found themselves caught up in a mass crash.

The main victim of that crash, Dutch rider Demi Vollerling, appeared apprehensive at the start in Saumur on Tuesday.

But the overall favourite for the Tour finished in the peloton in the same time as Wiebes.

Vollerling sits sixth overall, 25sec behind leader Vos and 13sec behind second-placed Wiebes.

Tuesday's stage was led by Franziska Koch of Germany and Brazilian Ana Vitoria Magalhaes, after they made a break just over an hour into the day's racing.

They were caught 3km from the finish line by the SD Worx team, who catapulted Wiebes to her 16th victory this season and the 109th of her career.

"She's (Wiebes) just the best sprinter in the world, she's a phenomenon in the sprint and every time she shows it again," said veteran Vos.

Müller Finalizing Deal With Vancouver Whitecaps After 25 Years at Bayern Munich



BERLIN (Dispatches) - German soccer legend Thomas Müller is set to join MLS club Vancouver Whitecaps, Fabrizio Romano reported on Tuesday. The details of the deal have yet to be revealed.

Tom Bogert of GiveMeSport previously connected the 35-year-old to Vancouver, and reported that the Whitecaps agreed in principle to acquire Müller's "discovery rights" from FC Cincinnati before closing the deal.

According to GiveMeSport, Cincinnati will receive \$400,000 in guaranteed allocated money after letting go of Müller's rights, which allowed the club to negotiate with players. Cincinnati reportedly tried to sign Müller earlier in the summer but failed to reach a deal due to the lack of a designated player spot. Since he would not be a DP, Cincinnati could only offer Müller under \$2 million, which he did not accept.

Müller will not be a designated player upon his arrival in Vancouver but will become one the following season.

His MLS move comes after Müller spent 25 years with German giants Bayern Munich. Müller arrived at the club in 2000 and spent seven years of his youth career there before playing for the second team from 2007 to 2009. He then joined the first team and helped them win 12 Bundesliga titles.

Before his last game for the club, Müller released a statement about his departure, while clarifying that he is not retiring.

"It's clear that today is not like any other day for me," Müller said. "My 25 years as an FC Bayern Munich player will come to an end in the summer. It's been an incredible journey, shaped by unique experiences, great encounters and unforgettable triumphs."

"I feel immense gratitude and joy that I got to make this career with my beloved club. The special connection to the club and our fantastic fans will always remain. What I want as a farewell should be clear: titles we can celebrate together, and moments we'll remember fondly for a long time."

Teenager Antonelli Paying Price for Wrong Steps by Mercedes

LONDON (Dispatches) - Mercedes have made mistakes in developing their Formula One car and teenage Italian rookie Kimi Antonelli's struggles are a consequence of that, according to technical director James Allison.

Antonelli, 18, finished third in Canada in June for his first F1 podium but has since failed to score.

He has had two retirements since Montreal as well as 17th in a sprint race in Belgium last Saturday and then 16th in Sunday's main grand prix.

The Italian, who took a sprint pole in Miami and is the sport's youngest ever race leader, has retired four times in the last seven rounds and admitted in Belgium he was lacking confidence in the car and not driving as he would like.

"I think he's, like the rest of us, massively fed up with a string of results that are well below what we were collectively achieving earlier in the year," Allison said in a Belgian race debrief on Tuesday.

"I hope he takes some solace from the fact that we tell him, and it's demonstrably a fact, that we have taken the wrong steps with the car, making our team less competitive, and that he is paying



the price for that, as is George (Russell).

"If the car isn't where it needs to be, then it will be a struggle getting through the qualifying stages in your rookie season in F1."

Allison said it was "utterly clear" to everyone that the car needed to be better and Antonelli's fortunes would improve when

it was.

"Hopefully he's listening to us as we say those reassuring words because we absolutely know that he is putting in the effort on his side of that bargain," he added.

Mercedes are third overall, 28 points behind second-placed Ferrari, with one win by Russell in Canada. Russell has been on the podium five times and is fourth overall with 157 points to Antonelli's 63.

Seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton, whose seat Antonelli took when the Briton moved to Ferrari, showed his support for the Italian after Saturday qualifying at Spa.

"He was telling me to keep my head up, and that it's normal to have bad weekends, and to just keep believing," the Italian told reporters.

Hamilton told Sky Sports television he could not imagine what the rookie was going through.

"He's been doing fantastic. But to be thrown in at the deep end at 18... he hadn't even had his driving licence when he first started racing," he said.

Felix Joins Ronaldo at Al Nassr in Saudi, to Earn \$10m a Year

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Portuguese forward Joao Felix has signed a two-year deal with Saudi Arabia's Al Nassr, where he will join Cristiano Ronaldo, the club announced Tuesday.

Felix, now 25, made a blockbuster move from Benfica to Atletico Madrid in 2019, but has since seen his fortunes decline.

"I'm here to spread joy. Let's win together," said Felix in a video posted on the Riyadh club's X account. A separate post said he had signed until 2027.

Felix remains one of the most expensive transfers in history, following his move to Atletico for €127.7 million six years ago.

He has since failed to score more than 10 goals a season, despite stints at Barcelona, AC Milan and Chelsea.



According to Arryadia, a Riyadh sports newspaper, Felix will earn US\$10 million a year.

Saudi Arabia has shaken up football by spending heavily on stars from Europe, starting with Ronaldo's arrival in 2023, and the conservative desert nation will host the World Cup in 2034.

Many of the signings have been ageing stars, but Felix bucks the trend along with Mateo Retegui, 26, the Serie A top-scorer who joined Al Qadsiah last week.

French international Theo Hernandez, 27, left AC Milan for Al Hilal in a reported US\$29 million deal earlier this month.

Top coaches have also been lured to Saudi Arabia, including Italy's Simone Inzaghi who led Al Hilal to an upset win over Manchester City at the Club World Cup.