

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Has Dismissed Rumors Regarding the Closure of Foreign Embassies in Tehran, Calling the Claims Part of a Psychological Operation Led by the Israeli Regime

IRAN NEWS

Parliament Research's Center Has Announced That the Country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Grew by 1.4% in the First Two Months of the Current Iranian Year (Starting on March 21) Compared to the Same Period Last Year

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Iran Declares It “Begs Security From No One,”



TEHRAN – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf emphasized Iran's firm stance on national security during a high-level parliamentary summit held at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva. In a speech before the Iranian Parliament, he highlighted Iran's growing international stature and rejected Western media narratives portraying Iran as weakened following the recent 12-day conflict.

Qalibaf said, “At Geneva, we made it clear that Iran does not beg anyone for its security.” He noted that the parliamentary delegation represented the Iranian people in the summit, which marked Iran's first official participation at the UN headquarters following the post-war period.

Over 110 parliamentary delegations from around the world attended the event. Iran's presence, Qalibaf asserted, served to challenge the “media empire of the West” that had tried to depict Iran as the loser of the recent imposed war. “Their goal was to push Iran into accepting an imposed peace—something we strongly reject,” he added.

He stated that the Iranian delegation had two main objectives: first, to counteract misleading media portrayals and prevent potential miscalculations by Iran's adversaries; and second, to serve as a voice for the oppressed people of Gaza, who, he said, are victims of “systematic genocide.”

According to Qalibaf, Iran pursued these goals through three strategies:

Organizing a side event focused on adherence to international law and the UN Charter to promote global peace and security; Delivering formal speeches to clarify Iran's positions; and Engaging in bilateral meetings to strengthen diplomatic ties.

Iran, Pakistan Committed to Supporting Each Other on Global Stage



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh says Iran and Pakistan share a common understanding of the need to support each other on the international stage.

Nasirzadeh made the remarks while speaking to reporters following a meeting with Pakistani Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif in Islamabad on Saturday. He was accompanying Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian in his official two-day visit to Pakistan.

“Common opportunities and threats increase the need for close cooperation between the two countries,” Nasirzadeh said.

He added that Tehran and Islamabad are in “very good” positions to support each other at the international level.

He noted that both sides have prepared the ground for cooperation in various fields, including the cultural, historical, and religious sectors as well as in countering common threats, saying, “These areas have led to the development of the level of mutual relations.”

Nasirzadeh pointed to the discussions with his Pakistani counterpart about strengthening defense cooperation and establishing security in border areas and expressed confidence that “good events” will take place.

Meanwhile Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi and Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, reaffirmed their commitment to deepening the longstanding and brotherly ties between the two countries.

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



Iran, Pakistan Urged to Revive Strategic Agreements with a New Approach

TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian has called for the revival of strategic trilateral agreements between Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey, emphasizing the need for a fresh approach to implement previously unfulfilled trade and economic pacts.

During the second day of his official visit to Pakistan on Sunday, President Pezeshkian met with Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar at his residence in Islamabad.

Expressing gratitude for Pakistan's support during recent Israeli attacks on Iran, Pezeshkian stated, “We appreciate Pakistan's solidarity in the face of these inhumane and un-Islamic aggressions. The backing of our Pakistani brothers has been clearly felt.”

Quoting a Persian proverb, “A friend is known in travel and hardship,” Pezeshkian noted that Pakistan's support transcended diplomatic formality, demonstrating the deep fraternal bond between the two nations. He praised the prominent role of Pakistan's government, scholars, parliament, and people during this critical time, calling their support “highly valued by the Iranian nation.”

The president emphasized the necessity of strengthening economic, scientific, and cultural ties among Islamic countries, stating, “If the Muslim ummah can achieve true unity and cohesion, the Zionist regime will no longer dare to attack Muslim nations.”

He stressed that Islamic solidarity should not be limited to resisting Israel, but could serve as a global model of resistance against hegemonic powers, with Iran and Pakistan playing a leading role.

Highlighting the previous trilateral agreements between Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey in trade and economic fields, Pezeshkian said that despite their strategic importance, they had not been implemented and should now be revived with a new approach.

He described the expansion of economic relations among Muslim countries as a path to internal strength and added, “We must create a framework where academics, experts, industrialists, and entrepreneurs from both countries can share skills, experiences, markets, and achievements.”

Pezeshkian thanked the Pakistani government for its hospitality and concluded, “If creativity, capital, and knowledge are connected within the Islamic world, we can generate power instead of conflict and redefine the rightful place of the Islamic ummah.”

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar welcomed President Pezeshkian's visit to Islamabad and said, “It is time for our bilateral relations to enter a new phase.” He noted that several memorandums of understanding are ready to be signed.

Referring to Pezeshkian's recent visit to the mausoleum of Allama Iqbal in Lahore, accompanied by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Dar called the gesture a powerful symbol of the deep cultural ties between the two nations.

Dar also welcomed the Iranian president's proposal for renewed trilateral cooperation among Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan, noting its significant potential to strengthen regional connectivity and affirming full support from Islamabad.

He reiterated Pakistan's active role in the recent UN Security Council session addressing attacks on Iranian diplomatic missions, stating that Islamabad's participation was aimed at defending Iran's position and clearly expressing support for Tehran.

“An attack on Iran is an attack on Pakistan,” Dar said, underlining the concept of the Islamic ummah as one united body, where harm to one part affects the whole.

Concluding the meeting, Dar affirmed, “Pakistan's goal is to achieve the highest level of sustainable and strategic cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran.”

Nuclear Enrichment Capability Intact, Will Resume Based on Conditions

TEHRAN - In an exclusive interview with the Financial Times, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araqchi declared that the country retains its nuclear enrichment capabilities and reserves the right to resume its peaceful nuclear program depending on circumstances. He warned that military aggression has proven ineffective against Iran's technological progress and reiterated Iran's readiness to negotiate—if the U.S. shows genuine intent for a win-win solution.

Speaking to the Financial Times, Araqchi criticized both U.S. military strikes and the recent European activation of the “snapback mechanism,” asserting that such actions undermine diplomacy. “Military options have failed,” he said, “You can't bomb away technology. Only through negotiations can we reach a mutually satisfactory outcome.”

When asked about former U.S. President Donald Trump's threat to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities should enrichment resume, Araqchi responded, “There is no military solution to our peaceful nuclear program. If the U.S. has concerns, it should come to the table as it did in 2015.”

According to Araqchi, the recent strikes—allegedly led by Israel—severely damaged key facilities like Natanz, Fordow, and Isfahan. However, he emphasized that Iran's knowledge and infrastructure remain intact. “We still have the know-how and the scientists. Buildings can be rebuilt. Machines can be replaced.”

Although unwilling to provide a clear timeline for restarting enrichment, Araqchi affirmed Iran's right to do so: “The decision rests with our leadership and Atomic Energy Organization. We'll act based on evolving conditions.”

Responding to speculation about Iran's stockpile of 60% enriched uranium, Araqchi said he had no exact data, as much of it may have been stored in bombed facilities. Nevertheless, he stressed that Iran retains its capacity to enrich uranium, albeit potentially at reduced scale.

Addressing rumors of a new enrichment site near Isfahan, Araqchi confirmed it was hit before operations began. “It hadn't been activated yet. I don't know if it even had a name.”

Araqchi repeatedly emphasized Iran's nuclear intentions are peaceful, citing a religious fatwa against nuclear weapons and expressing openness to dialogue. “If America's main concern is that Iran never obtains a nuclear weapon, we can address that. Our program is peaceful.”

Asked whether Iran would return to talks, Araqchi said it depends on the U.S. approach: “If they come to dictate what they couldn't achieve militarily, that's not negotiation. If they come for a genuine win-win, we'll start talks tomorrow.”

He revealed indirect and direct messages from U.S. officials—including chief negotiator Steve



Whitcav—indicating interest in restarting negotiations. Still, Araqchi insisted that any future talks would require trust-building steps from Washington. “We've been betrayed before. In 2018, the U.S. unilaterally left the JCPOA despite our full compliance. And now, during negotiations, they opted for bombs.”

Araqchi said possible trust-building measures could include financial compensation for recent attacks and guarantees against further military action. “People here are mourning. Our nuclear scientists were killed. Our facilities destroyed. We can't just return to the table like nothing happened.”

He confirmed strong domestic opposition to renewed talks: “Public sentiment is heavily anti-American and anti-negotiation. People say, ‘Don't waste your time. Don't be

fooled again.’”

Despite pressure, Araqchi stated that Iran remains open to diplomacy—albeit on different terms. “This time, the path is narrower, the process more difficult. But it's not impossible.”

Regarding European involvement, Araqchi was skeptical. He criticized the EU for activating the snapback mechanism, saying it would effectively end their role in nuclear talks. “If they proceed, we won't negotiate with them anymore. They've already failed to meet their obligations. Why talk to those who can't lift sanctions or stop aggression?”

When asked if a regional enrichment consortium based in Iran could be a viable compromise, Araqchi called it a “good idea” but emphasized it couldn't replace domestic enrichment. “We're open to discussing it, but only if it's located inside Iran.”

On cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Araqchi said a new framework must be established, citing serious security concerns. “We were transparent before, but now that we've been attacked, all future cooperation must prioritize safety—for our facilities, scientists, and materials.”

He confirmed that Iran has begun talks with the IAEA to establish new inspection protocols, in line with a law passed by Iran's parliament requiring Supreme National Security Council oversight. As for regional tensions, Araqchi described the current situation as a “pause in hostilities” rather than a ceasefire. “There's no formal truce. They stopped the aggression, so we stopped our defense. But it can restart at any moment.”

When asked for a final message to his American counterparts, Araqchi was clear: “Recent events prove there's no military solution. If you want peace, come to the table—prepared to give and take.”

Gazans’ Resilience Reveals Their Commitment to Liberation of Palestine



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has hailed the resilience and steadfastness of the residents of the Gaza Strip in the face of unrelenting Israeli strikes, describing the resistance as a sign of their commitment to the cause of liberating occupied Palestinian lands and the holy city of al-Quds.

The elite force, in a statement released on Saturday to commemorate the first martyrdom anniversary of Ismail Haniyeh, head of the political bureau of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas, warned that the architects of the ongoing genocide in Gaza have more overriding ambitions, rooted in the plunder of the world's strategic and rich regions, particularly the Muslim world.

“The escalation of the Zionist regime's crimes in preventing the oppressed people of Gaza from accessing basic needs of life, such as water, food, and medicine, is a blatant violation of human rights and international law. In fact, it can be called a new genocide,” the statement noted.

The IRGC highlighted that such horrendous and inhuman crimes, which are being perpetrated in light of the silence and support of the self-proclaimed Western advocates of human rights, have made it inevitable for international institutions to respond to these medieval crimes, and have put them to their greatest litmus test in history.

The statement also praised the global wave of support for Palestinians and the growing condemnation of the occupying Israeli regime, describing the phenomenon as the product of the enlightening effect of the blood of the martyrs and the resilience of the oppressed people of Gaza.

Iranian Intelligence Operatives Uncover Full Profiles of Israeli Air Force Pilots, Commanders



TEHRAN - Iranian intelligence operatives have uncovered the full profiles of the Israeli air force pilots, commanders, and drone operators, who partook in the Israeli regime's unprovoked war on the Islamic Republic in June.

The development was reported by official Iranian broadcast channels and the country's various news outlets on Saturday.

According to the reports, the discovery had laid bare the air force personnel's complete personal details, including their identities, places of residence, operational units, military bases, and roles in other crimes.

The reports highlighted that the intelligence coup was realized, despite the regime's strict efforts to conceal the personnel's identities as witnessed by Israeli outlets routine blurring of their faces during televised coverage.

The reports named two of the pilots as “Major Yael Ash, deputy commander of Squadron 119 (the “Bat” Squadron)” and her husband Bar Prince. Ash was identified as the paternal granddaughter of Major Shimon Ash, a pilot who went missing during the Yom Kippur War that was fought between the regime and a coalition of Arab countries in 1973.

One Iranian channel reported that the country's intelligence apparatus was now in possession of “satellite images revealing the exact locations” where the personnel lived.

It referred to Ash's comments in a televised interview, during which she had claimed “she wanted to restore security” to the Zionists.

IRAN NEWS



IRANNEWS/ECONOMICDESK

NIDC Completes 48 Oil, Gas Wells Drillings in Four Months

TEHRAN (Shana) - The National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) has drilled and completed 48 oil and gas wells onshore and offshore across Iran during the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year, a company official said.

According to Hamidreza Shafiei-Makvand, NIDC's deputy managing director for drilling operations, the total number of wells drilled marks an increase of 17 compared to the same period last year.

Of the wells completed, 11 were developmental and exploratory, while 37 were workover and completion wells, he said.

The official added that 40 of the wells were located in the operational area of the National Iranian South Oil Co., two in the Iranian Offshore Oil Co., two in the Petroleum Engineering and Development Co., one in the Iranian Central Oil Fields Co., and three were drilled as part of specific project contracts.

Non-Oil Trade Exceeds \$34b in First Four Months of the Year



IRANNEWS/ECONOMICDESK

TEHRAN - Iran's non-oil trade reached a total value of \$34.175 billion in the first four months of the current Iranian year (starting March 20), according to a report released by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

Citing the government's official news portal, the report states that the country's non-oil trade volume during this period amounted to 61.02 million tons — a 0.48% increase in weight but a 10% decrease in value compared to the same period last year.

Out of the total, 48.811 million tons of goods valued at \$16.549 billion were exported, while 12.209 million tons worth \$17.627 billion were imported.

Non-oil exports saw a 1.46% rise in volume but a 5.51% decline in value. Imports also dropped 3.23% by volume and 14.20% by value, reflecting changing trade dynamics and possibly currency or pricing pressures.

The report highlights that 17.402 million tons of petrochemical products were exported in this period, generating \$6.894 billion in revenue — representing an 8.30% decline in volume and a 10.22% drop in value year-over-year.

The top exported items included natural gas, liquefied propane, methanol, liquefied butane, and petroleum bitumen. On the import side, the leading goods were raw gold, livestock corn, rice, sunflower oil, and soybeans.

Iran's key non-oil export destinations during this period were China, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Oman. The main import partners were the UAE, China, Turkey, India, Germany, Russia, and the Netherlands.

War-Damaged Units in Capital 20 Times Higher Than National Average



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Mayor of Tehran has revealed that the capital city sustained significantly higher damage during the recent 12-day conflict, with the number of residential units in need of reconstruction in Tehran estimated at 600—20 times more than the total reported across the rest of the country.

Speaking at a ceremony held at Milad Tower to honor key municipal staff who played a vital role during the conflict, Alireza Zakani said, “In these 12 sacred days, we stood tall. While the entire country experienced the impact, Tehran was the frontline, both symbolically and physically.”

The ceremony, titled “Servants of Behesht”, also marked the first time the “Behesht Medal” was awarded within Tehran Municipality to recognize outstanding contributions during the war period.

Zakani compared the recent 12-day war to the eight-year Iran-Iraq War, saying the nature of this new conflict was fundamentally different. “During the eight-year war, we fought against a proxy supported by global superpowers. This time, we directly confronted the superpowers themselves—namely NATO, the U.S., and Israel,” he stated.

He highlighted that during the eight-year war, 1,340 kilometers of the country's borders were involved. However, in this short but intense conflict, “Tehran became the epicenter and the primary target of attacks.”

Zakani noted that while around 30 housing units across the country suffered damage requiring reconstruction, Tehran alone saw approximately 600 units damaged. He emphasized that Tehran's municipal management took the lead in organizing response efforts, with the city's firefighting services, public utilities, and district managers all mobilized rapidly.

“Although various organizations were involved,” he said, “it was the municipal system that was placed at the heart of operations. From firefighters to district managers, everyone had a role. Even our Crisis Management Organization ensured smoother coordination.”

Zakani also pointed out that the municipality had played a role in past conflicts, notably during the Iran-Iraq War, by transferring heavy equipment to the front lines. However, in this recent war, “the municipality itself became the main battlefield commander”.

Health Official Warns of Looming Demographic Crisis



IRANNEWS/NATIONALDESK

TEHRAN - Iran's population is aging rapidly, with the average age now reaching 35, a senior health official has revealed, warning that if current trends continue, the country will soon face structural demographic challenges and a significant decline in the workforce.

Dr. Alireza Raeisi, Deputy Minister of Health for Public Health, made the announcement during a meeting at the National Population Youth Headquarters. He emphasized the urgency of addressing the aging trend and announced the establishment of a demographic monitoring center, “Omide Population Observatory,” within the ministry to facilitate comprehensive population data analysis.

“With this observatory, we can analyze fertility rates, childlessness, and family structures by region and university, which will greatly enhance our policy-making,” Raeisi stated.

In the area covered by Iran University of Medical Sciences, 20% of couples are childless, 32% have one child, and the remainder have two or more.

Birth registrations have dropped in recent months: 3,158 births in April, 3,200 in May, and 2,700 in June.

The average age of first-time mothers is now 27.5 years, and 32.3 years for fathers. 60% of married women of reproductive age are between 35-49 years old — a group nearing the end of their fertility window.

Raeisi said a new SMS-based satisfaction survey system for postpartum mothers has been launched to assess the quality of maternity services, covering factors such as hospital facilities and staff behavior.

Raeisi revealed a striking contrast in birth rates over time:

In 1986, 2 million births occurred among 10 million married women of reproductive age.

Today, with 16 million married women, annual births have dropped below 1 million.

“The decline in births is a serious warning for Iran's future. We have missed the golden window for intervention by about 10–15 years,” Raeisi said.

He stressed that while births of third or higher-order children have increased

slightly, the major focus should be on supporting the first and second child.

Tehran, Khorasan Razavi, and Sistan and Baluchestan reported the highest birth rates.

In urban areas, Tehran, Mashhad, Ahvaz, and Zahedan topped the list.

Cesarean deliveries remain high, with rates over 50% nationally, peaking at 80% in Gilan Province.

“In contrast, Europe has reduced cesarean rates to under 20%. We must reform our maternal care systems to lower unnecessary surgeries,” Raeisi urged.

Marriage rates have been declining across most provinces since 2019.

While divorce rates have slightly decreased in the past two years, this is attributed more to fewer marriages than to improved marital stability.

Raeisi drew comparisons with other countries:

Japan has an average age of 48.6 and over 30% of its population over 65, entering what is known as a “super-aged” society.

China, with a fertility rate of 0.8 in Shanghai, faces severe demographic decline.

In contrast, India (average age 28.7) and Uzbekistan are considered successful in their proactive demographic policies.

Iran, he warned, is heading toward the “demographic trap” — a condition that becomes irreversible once fertility rates fall below 1.2.

“We are at a historic turning point. If we don't act decisively today to reverse the demographic trend, tomorrow will be too late,” he said.

To address the demographic decline, Raeisi outlined several initiatives:

Employment incentives for government workers with three to five children.

Tax breaks for families with three or more children.

Updated guidelines and budgets for infertility treatment and midwifery services.

Support for 69 population-related research projects across 31 medical universities.

Raeisi concluded by stressing that a nation's true wealth lies not only in its resources but in its human capital.

“We must use the limited time remaining, base decisions on data and science, and build a secure future for the next generations.”

Iran, Iraq Stress Resolution of Gas Export and Financial Claims Issues



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad emphasized the need to resolve gas export and financial claim issues in a meeting with Iraq's Electricity Minister Ziyad Fadhil, stating that both countries are close to finalizing agreements on gas export volumes and settling outstanding payments.

Speaking on the sidelines of the meeting, Paknejad told Shana News Agency that Iran and Iraq have reached a mutual understanding regarding the volume of gas exports to Iraq. The gas is supplied through two border points—Shalamcheh and Naft Shahr—to power Iraqi power plants.

“There had been some discussions over the quantity of exported gas, but fortunately, we have reached a consensus,” the minister said. “We also had productive talks about Iraq's outstanding payments for previous gas imports, and I believe both issues—the volume of gas exports and the recovery of receivables—will be resolved soon.”

Describing the atmosphere of the meeting as positive, Paknejad also expressed appreciation to the Iraqi minister and his delegation for their efforts in hosting Iranian pilgrims, especially during the Arbaeen pilgrimage.

“I thanked the Iraqi people and officials for their warm hospitality toward our compatriots who travel to Iraq for pilgrimage and to participate in the Arbaeen march,” he added.

In response, Iraq's Minister of Electricity reaffirmed his country's commitment to providing the best possible conditions for accommodating Iranian pilgrims.

Ministry of Agriculture Emphasizes Continued Pistachio Exports to EU



TEHRAN - In a recent meeting held by the Agricultural Commission of the Kerman Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture, officials from the Ministry of Agriculture reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining and improving pistachio exports to the European Union. The session focused on strategies for contract farming and managing pistachio export processes, particularly in light of EU regulations.

Nabi Hedavand, Deputy Director General of the Department for Cold and Dried Fruits at the Ministry of Agriculture, addressed concerns raised by exporters regarding the EU pistachio export protocol. Exporters criticized aspects of the regulation such as packaging requirements and the frequency of product sampling. In response, Hedavand emphasized that these policies were developed in consultation with all relevant governmental and private sector bodies.

Despite previous challenges—including a suspension of pistachio exports to the EU—Hedavand noted that through collaborative efforts and multiple meetings, the ban was successfully lifted. He urged the private sector to continue submitting proposals to refine and revise export guidelines if necessary.

Hedavand also stressed the importance of exporters obtaining a “production ID” for pistachio orchards exporting to the EU. This requirement currently applies to orchards over 5 hectares—an area that includes the majority of Kerman's pistachio-producing land (approximately 150,000 hectares of the province's 280,000 hectares under pistachio cultivation).

The Ministry is calling on exporters to provide lists of the orchards from which they source pistachios. According to Hedavand, identifying production areas and methods through the production ID system will help address ongoing challenges and will also support the implementation of contract farming models.

“Exporters are the greatest supporters of production,” he said. “We in the government and the private sector must work together with a shared purpose.”

Seyed Mohammadreza Torabi Mousavi, Chair of the Agricultural Commission at the Kerman Chamber of Commerce, highlighted the successful efforts made to lift the EU export ban on Iranian pistachios. These efforts included coordination between exporters and officials at the Ministry of Agriculture.

40m Iranians at Risk From Land Subsidence



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Over 40 million people in Iran—spread across 750 cities and 9,200 villages—are living in areas at risk of land subsidence, a growing environmental and infrastructural threat linked to declining groundwater levels, according to a leading geotechnical expert.

Dr. Ali Beitollahi, a member of the faculty at the Road, Housing, and Urban Development Research Center, told IRNA in an exclusive interview on Saturday that the phenomenon of land subsidence is strongly tied to the depletion of underground aquifers. “As groundwater levels drop, the earth's surface gradually sinks—a process we define as subsidence,” he said.

Beitollahi explained that Iran's groundwater depletion began in the 1970s, with the first recorded signs of subsidence observed near Rafsanjan in Kerman Province. “Back then, satellite imagery wasn't available, but physical indicators like exposed well pipes made the issue visible,” he said.

He added that since the mid-1990s, the problem has worsened due to reduced precipitation and a shift in weather patterns—from consistent snowfall to erratic, heavy rainfall and flash floods. “Snowmelt used to provide a gradual and effective means of replenishing groundwater. Now, rain runs off quickly, with little time to seep into aquifers.”

Beitollahi warned that beyond hydrological causes, population growth, industrial development, and water-intensive agriculture have also placed enormous demand on water resources. “Due to this imbalance in groundwater recharge, we've lost around 140 billion cubic meters of water. In some areas, groundwater levels drop by up to 1.5 meters per year.”

He likened the shrinking aquifers to a dried fruit: “As water is removed, the porous structure collapses and compresses, turning into an impermeable, cement-like layer. This destroys the aquifer's ability to recharge, leading to the gradual death of fertile plains.”

Land subsidence has now been recorded in every Iranian province except Gilan, though Beitollahi warned that even Gilan is likely to experience it soon due to increasing water extraction and consumption. “This is a man-made hazard and therefore

controllable,” he emphasized, citing successful global interventions in places like Tokyo, Shanghai, and California.

Measures such as reducing groundwater extraction, recharging aquifers, growing less water-intensive crops, and curbing water waste in agriculture and industry are vital. He pointed out that 30% of Iran's agricultural produce is wasted due to inefficiencies—an issue requiring urgent reform.

Tehran is one of the most affected regions, with land subsidence reaching up to 36 cm per year in some southern districts. Beitollahi highlighted areas such as districts 17 through 21 as particularly vulnerable. “Roughly 3 million people live in subsiding zones of Tehran,” he said, attributing the problem to heavy reliance on groundwater, especially as dams like Karaj, Latian, and Mamloo struggle to meet demand.

This situation is exacerbated in southern and peripheral parts of the city, where the rate of subsidence has tripled in the past two years.

The consequences are stark. Beitollahi warned that over half of Iran's historical urban fabric lies in areas prone to subsidence. Additionally, approximately 10,000 kilometers of gas pipelines and critical railway infrastructure are at risk. “This poses a serious threat to urban stability, national assets, and public safety,” he said.

Beitollahi called for sustainable, expert-driven policymaking to control the crisis. He noted that 40% of Iran's population resides in just 10 major urban centers, mostly drawn by economic opportunities. “But many regions in Iran have no water problems. If we can distribute jobs and resources more evenly, we'll relieve pressure on major cities and reduce risk.”

While temporary solutions like seawater desalination may help, he stressed that such approaches must be environmentally and economically sound.

“Our window of opportunity to act is shrinking,” Beitollahi concluded. “Without immediate, coordinated measures, the environmental, social, and economic impacts of land subsidence will become irreversible.”

SpaceX Crew Dragon Docks With ISS Just 15 Hours After Launch

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - A SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule carrying an international team of four astronauts docked on Saturday with the orbiting International Space Station (ISS) just 15 hours after it launched.

The four US, Russian and Japanese astronauts pulled up in their SpaceX capsule just 15 hours after launching from NASA's Kennedy Space Center.

"Docking confirmed!", SpaceX posted on social media, along with a video showing the spacecraft making contact with the ISS at 2:27am Eastern Time (0627 GMT), far above the southeast Pacific Ocean.

American astronauts Zena Cardman and Mike Fincke, Japan's Kimiya Yui, and Roscosmos cosmonaut Oleg Platonov are joining the ISS on a six-month mission at the orbiting lab, swapping places with colleagues up there since March.



India to Still Buy Oil From Russia Despite Trump Threats



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Indian oil refineries will continue to buy oil from Russia, officials have said, before threatened US sanctions next week against Moscow's trading partners over the war in Ukraine.

Media reports on Friday had suggested India, a big energy importer, would stop buying cheap Russian oil. Trump later told reporters that such a move would be "a good step" if true.

"I understand that India is no longer going to be buying oil from Russia," he said. "That's what I heard. I don't know if that's right or not. That is a good step. We will see what happens."

However, official sources in India, quoted by the news agency ANI, rebutted Trump's claim, saying Indian oil companies had not paused Russian imports and that supply decisions were based on "price, grade of crude, inventories, logistics and other economic factors".

Trump's remarks came a day after the White House announced tariffs of 25% on all Indian goods, along with a penalty for buying arms and energy from Russia amid the war in Ukraine.

Trump has given an 8 August deadline for Vladimir Putin to stop the war or risk further sanctions on countries that import Russian oil.

Earlier this week, Reuters reported that Indian state-owned refineries had suspended Russian oil purchases amid the tariff threats and narrowing price discounts.

But on Saturday, the New York Times cited two unnamed senior Indian officials who said there had been no change in Indian government policy related to importing Russian oil. One said the government had "not given any direction to oil companies" to cease buying oil from Russia.

Trump Fires U.S. Labor Official Over Data



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Donald Trump fired a top Labor Department official on the heels of a market-shocking weak scorecard of the U.S. job market, accusing her without evidence of manipulating the figures and adding to already growing concerns about the quality of economic data published by the federal government.

In a second surprise economic policy development, the door for Trump to make an imprint on a Federal Reserve with which he clashes almost daily for not lowering interest rates opened much earlier than anticipated when Fed Governor Adriana Kugler unexpectedly announced her resignation on Friday afternoon.

The two developments further rattled a stock market already reeling from his latest barrage of tariff announcements and the weak jobs data. The benchmark S&P 500 Index sank 1.6% in its largest daily drop in more than two months.

Trump accused Erika McEntarfer, appointed by former President Joe Biden, of faking the jobs numbers. There is no evidence to back Trump's claims of data manipulation by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the statistical agency that compiles the closely watched employment report as well as consumer and producer price data.

A representative for the BLS did not respond to a request for comment.

Friday began with BLS reporting the U.S. economy created only 73,000 jobs in July, but more stunning were net downward revisions showing 258,000 fewer jobs had been created in May and June than previously reported.

"We need accurate Jobs Numbers. I have directed my Team to fire this Biden Political Appointee, IMMEDIATELY. She will be replaced with someone much more competent and qualified," Trump said in a post on Truth Social.

Hamas Will Not Disarm Until Independent Palestine State Formed With Jerusalem as Capital

GAZA (Dispatches) - Hamas said yesterday that it would not disarm unless an independent Palestinian state is established — a fresh rebuke to a key Israeli demand to end the war in Gaza.

Indirect negotiations between Hamas and Israel aimed at securing a 60-day ceasefire in the Gaza war and deal for the release of hostages ended last week in deadlock.

On Tuesday, Qatar and Egypt, who are mediating ceasefire efforts, endorsed a declaration by France and Saudi Arabia outlining steps toward a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and saying that as part of this Hamas must hand over its arms to the Western-backed Palestinian Authority.

In its statement, Hamas — which has dominated Gaza since 2007 but has been militarily battered by Israel in the war — said it could not yield its right to "armed resistance" unless an "independent, fully sovereign Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital" is established.

Israel considers the disarmament of Hamas a key condition for any deal to end the conflict, but Hamas has repeatedly said it is not willing to lay down its weaponry.

Last month, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described any future independent Palestinian state as a platform to destroy Israel and said, for that reason, security control over Palestinian territories must remain with Israel.

He also criticized several countries, including the UK and Canada, for announcing plans to recognise a Palestinian state in response to devastation of Gaza from Israel's offensive and blockade, calling the move a reward for Hamas' conduct.

The war started when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on October 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people and taking 251 hostages back to Gaza.

Israel's subsequent military assault on Gaza has turned much of the enclave into a wasteland, killed over 60,000 Palestinians and set off a humanitarian catastrophe.

Israel and Hamas traded blame after the most recent round of talks ended in an impasse, with gaps lingering over issues including the extent of an Israeli military withdrawal.

Meanwhile the amount of humanitarian aid that Israel is allowing to enter the besieged Gaza Strip is "very insufficient", the German government said Saturday, noting "limited initial progress" in getting more aid into the enclave. Aid agencies say that more than two million Palestinians are facing starvation as Israel continues to restrict the amount of food and other vital supplies allowed into the devastated territory.

The amount of aid entering Gaza remains "very insufficient" despite a limited improvement, the German government said on Saturday after ministers discussed ways to heighten pressure on Israel.

The criticism came after Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul visited the region on Thursday and Friday and the German military staged its first food airdrops into Gaza, where aid agencies say that more than two million Palestinians are facing starvation due to Israel's severe restrictions on the amount of food entering the besieged territory.

Germany "notes limited initial progress in the delivery of humanitarian aid to the population of the Gaza Strip, which, however, remains very insufficient to alleviate the emergency situation", government spokesman Stefan Kornelius said in a statement.

"Israel remains obligated to ensure the full delivery of aid," Kornelius added.

Israel enforced a complete blockade on food and other supplies for two-and-a-half months beginning in March. Though the flow of aid resumed in May under mounting international outrage, the amount that Israel is letting into the besieged territory is a fraction of what aid organisations say is needed.

The United Nations has said that 6,000 trucks are awaiting permission from Israel to enter the occupied Palestinian territory.

Seven Palestinians died of malnutrition-related causes in the Gaza Strip over the past 24 hours, the territory's health ministry said on Saturday.

They include a child, it said in a statement, bringing total deaths among children from causes related to malnutrition in Gaza to 93 since the war began. The ministry said 76 adults in Gaza have died of malnutrition-related causes since late June, when it started counting deaths among adults.

The German government, traditionally a strong supporter of Israel, also expressed "concern regarding reports that large quantities of humanitarian aid are being withheld by Hamas and criminal organisations".

Although Israel has alleged that much of the aid arriving in the territory is being siphoned off by Hamas, which runs Gaza, the UN has repeatedly rejected these claims.

A German government source told AFP it had noted that Israel has "considerably" increased the number of aid trucks allowed into Gaza to about 220 a day.

Berlin has taken a tougher line against Israel's actions in Gaza and the occupied West Bank in recent weeks. The source said that a German security cabinet meeting on Saturday discussed "the different options" for putting pressure on Israel, but no decision was taken.

A partial suspension of arms deliveries to Israel is one option that has been raised.

OPEC+ Slated to Increase Oil Output in Bid to Regain Market Share



LONDON (AFP) - Saudi Arabia, Russia and six other key members of the OPEC+ alliance are expected to further hike oil production in a meeting, a move analysts say is aimed at regaining market share amid resilient crude prices.

The anticipated output increase by the group of eight oil-producing countries known as the "Voluntary Eight" (V8), would be the latest in a series of hikes that began in April.

In a bid to boost prices, the wider OPEC+ group -- comprising the 12-nation Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies -- in recent years had agreed to three different tranches of output cuts that amounted to almost 6 million barrels per day (bpd) in total.

Analysts expect the V8 group -- namely Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Algeria and Oman -- to agree on another output increase of 548,000 bpd for September, a target similar to the one approved in August.

According to UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo, the likely "quota increase is largely priced in" already, with the price of Brent, the global benchmark for oil, expected to remain near its current level of around \$70 per barrel after Sunday's decision.

Since April, the V8 group has placed increased focus on regaining market share over price stability, a policy shift after years of enforcing production cuts to prop up prices.

But it remains unclear which strategy the group intends to pursue after the meeting.

According to Warren Patterson, an analyst at ING, the V8 nations will likely "take a pause in supply hikes after September".

However, the market is "set to move into large surplus" of oil supply from October, Patterson noted, warning that OPEC+ should remain careful not to be "adding to this surplus".

"OPEC+ is doing the balancing act of regaining market share and not sending oil prices plummeting", which would lead to a drop in profits, Tamas Varga, an analyst at PVM, told AFP.

Saudi Arabia, the group's most influential member, relies heavily on oil revenues to finance its ambitious plan aimed at diversifying the economy.

The unwinding of another set of production cuts of around 3.7 million bpd is to be discussed at the next OPEC+ ministerial meeting in November.

With demand being unstable in the face of US President Donald Trump's erratic policymaking on trade and supply under threat by geopolitical risks, experts say it is difficult to predict what is next for the oil market.

In the latest twist in late July, Trump gave Moscow ten days to end the war in Ukraine, saying that his country would otherwise impose sanctions on Russia.

"We're gonna put on tariffs and stuff," he vowed.

Trump had previously hinted to an indirect 100-percent surcharge on countries that continue to buy Russian products, particularly hydrocarbons, in order to dry up Moscow's revenues.

He has specifically targeted India, the second largest importer of Russian oil at around 1.6 million bpd since the beginning of the year.

The developments could prompt OPEC+ to make further policy decisions.

However, "OPEC+ will react only to real supply disruptions" and not to price increases linked to risk premiums, said Staunovo.

Ukraine Anti-Corruption Agencies Uncover Major Drone Procurement Graft Scheme

KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine's anti-corruption bodies said on Saturday they had uncovered a major graft scheme that procured military drones and signal jamming systems at inflated prices, two days after the agencies' independence was restored following major protests.

The independence of Ukraine's anti-graft investigators and prosecutors, the National Anti-Corruption Agency (NABU) and the Specialised Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office (SAPO), was reinstated by parliament on Thursday after a move to take it away resulted in the country's biggest demonstrations since Russia's invasion in 2022.

In a statement published by both agencies on social media, NABU and SAPO said they had caught a sitting lawmaker, two local officials and an unspecified number



of National Guard personnel taking bribes. None of them were identified in the statement.

"The essence of the scheme was to conclude state contracts with supplier companies at deliberately inflated prices," it said, adding that the offenders had received kickbacks of up to 30 percent of a contract's cost.

NABU said it has made four arrests so far but did not identify those detained.

The interior ministry said it had suspended the suspected members of the National Guard.

"There can only be zero tolerance for corruption, clear teamwork to expose corruption and, as a result, a just sentence," President Volodymyr Zelensky wrote on Telegram.



Cerundolo Retires vs. Zverev in Toronto

TORONTO (Dispatches) - Argentine Francisco Cerundolo was forced to retire early into the second set of his night match with Alexander Zverev in Toronto Saturday night due to an injury.

The No. 24 in the PIF ATP Rankings began the match with kinesiology tape on his abs and was treated by the physio after the fifth game, after which he was unable to serve anywhere near top speed.

Later, in highly unusual scenes, Zverev embraced and consoled Cerundolo on the 5-4 changeover before serving out the set.

Cerundolo, who had only retired twice in his tour-level career (both times in 2023), played one additional game in the second set before stopping play.

Zverev advances to play defending champion Alexei Popyrin.

World No. 3 Zverev improved to 38-14 on the year as he continued his quest for an eighth ATP Masters 1000 and second in Canada (2017 Montreal). He is the third active male to reach five quarter-finals at the event.

The victory also lifted the two-time Nitto ATP Finals champion past Novak Djokovic to third in the PIF ATP Live Race to Turin.

Meanwhile Canadian teenager Victoria Mboko earned the biggest win of her career, beating top seed Coco Gauff 6-1 6-4 to reach the quarterfinals of the Canadian Open in Montreal.

Mboko dropped her racket and covered her face in disbelief as the packed crowd leapt to their feet after the 18-year-old tournament wild card sealed the victory in just over an hour.

"Thank you, you helped me so much," she told the home crowd in French during an on-court interview.

She called her first-ever appearance in the quarterfinals of a WTA 1000 event "incredible," especially after toppling reigning French Open champion Gauff.

Mboko was helped along the way by her error-prone opponent, who never found her rhythm on

serve and failed to convert any of her five break point opportunities.

Gauff's sixth double fault set up match point, which Mboko converted when the American's backhand slice drifted into the net.

Despite her disappointment, Gauff hugged Mboko at the net and will look to regroup as she prepares to make a run at a second U.S. Open crown next month.

Mboko will face either Lin Zhu of China or Spaniard Jessica Bouzas Maneiro - both unseeded players - in the quarters.

Earlier, ninth seed Elena Rybakina edged Dayana Yastremska 5-7 6-2 7-5 in their fourth-round battle and will next face another Ukrainian, 24th seed Marta Kostyuk, who came from behind to take out American McCartney Kessler 5-7 6-3 6-3.

On the men's side of the tournament, which is being held in Toronto, 20-year-old Alex Michelsen reached his first quarterfinal of a Masters 1000 event with a 6-3 6-3 win over fellow American Learner Tien.

"It feels really good," Michelsen said.

"It's uncharted territory from this point on, and I'm super happy to be in the quarters for the first time."

Michelsen, seeded 26th, will face hard-hitting 11th seed Karen Khachanov of Russia, who upset eighth seed Casper Ruud in their fourth round match 6-4 7-5.

Khachanov, who has twice reached the semifinals of the tournament, lost to Michelsen in their only prior meeting.

Alex de Minaur, who triumphed at last month's Washington Open, advanced to the quarterfinals over fellow Australian Christopher O'Connell via walkover.

Ninth seed De Minaur will next face seventh-seeded American Frances Tiafoe.

Ferrari's First Hungary Pole Since 2017 as Leclerc Edges McLaren Duo



BUDAPEST (Dispatches) - Charles Leclerc grabbed the first pole position of the season for Ferrari on Saturday for the Hungarian Grand Prix.

The Monegasque driver will share the front row on Sunday with McLaren's Oscar Piastri. McLaren's Lando Norris will start from the second row alongside fellow Briton George Russell who was fourth for Mercedes.

"I honestly have no words, it's probably one of the best pole positions I've ever had because it's the most unexpected for sure," said Leclerc.

The 27-year-old went late in the final minutes of a closely-contested session to clock a best lap in one minute and 15.372 seconds in changing conditions, leaving his rivals frustrated as they failed to improve on their first run times.

He took pole by 0.026 seconds ahead of series leader Piastri and by 0.041sec ahead of the Australian's team-mate and title rival Norris, with Russell 0.053sec adrift in a breathtakingly close finish.

It was Leclerc's first pole of the year, his first in Budapest and the 27th of his career. It was Ferrari's first pole in Hungary since Sebastian Vettel in 2017.

"The whole qualifying has been extremely difficult and when I say that I'm not exaggerating," said Leclerc of the windy conditions at the Hungaroring.

"It was super difficult for us to get to Q2 and Q3, in Q3 the conditions changed a little bit and everything became a lot trickier and I knew I had to just do a clean lap to target third.

"At the end of the day it's pole position and I definitely did not expect that."

Doncic Embraces Championship Hopes After Inking \$165m Contract Extension



LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Luka Doncic said he felt privileged to shoulder championship expectations after officially signing a three-year, \$165 million contract extension with the Los Angeles Lakers.

Doncic, 26, arrived in Los Angeles in a stunning February trade that sent Anthony Davis to the Dallas Mavericks. Since then the Slovenian superstar has focused on helping the Lakers add another title to their storied collection.

"It's an honor to play for this organization," Doncic told a press conference at the team's training center in El Segundo.

"Many great players played here and obviously I want to add one more up there. That's what we're working for."

Doncic made an immediate impact on joining the Lakers, averaging 28.2 points, 8.1 rebounds, 7.5 assists and 1.6 steals over 28 regular-season games.

His stellar play helped propel Los Angeles to the third seed in the Western Conference, though the team ultimately suffered a first-round playoff exit.

Known for his dazzling skills and basketball IQ, five-time All-Star Doncic has occasionally faced criticism over his conditioning.

However, a recent profile in Men's Health magazine showcased a noticeably leaner and more muscular Doncic, with increased definition in his arms - a testament to his off-season commitment.

"For the first month I didn't play basketball at all, we were more focused on other things, so I think that provided a spark," he said.

"Weight lifting, balancing ... and after one month we started playing basketball."

Lakers President of Basketball Operations and General Manager Rob Pelinka called Doncic's extension a "monumental moment" for the franchise.

Inter Miami Rallies to Beat Necaxa on Penalty Kicks in Leagues Cup

FORT LAUDERDALE (Dispatches) - Luis Suárez had the winning penalty kick, and Inter Miami rallied to beat Necaxa in the Leagues Cup on after losing Lionel Messi to a hamstring injury in the opening minutes.

Jordi Alba had the tying goal on a header that made it 2-2 in the second minute of stoppage time to force the shootout, which Inter Miami won 5-4.

Inter Miami converted all five of its penalty kicks, and goalkeeper Rocco Ríos Novo denied Tomás Badaloni in the third round of the shootout. Suárez hit the winning shot into the top left corner.

Messi was injured around the eighth minute when he fell while being challenged by a pair of defenders near the penalty area. He walked slowly toward the Inter Miami bench before sitting down on the pitch. Trainers came out and worked on his right upper thigh area before he subbed out in the 11th.

Inter Miami coach Javier Mascherano said after the match that Messi was not necessarily in pain but felt a pull. He indicated that Messi will be examined on Sunday to determine the severity of the



injury.

"There's probably something there," Mascherano said through an interpreter.

Inter Miami played down a man for much of regulation after Maxi Falcón was ejected with a red card in the opening minutes. Necaxa defender Cristian Calderón was sent off in the 60th after being shown

a second yellow card, so both clubs played with 10 men the rest of the way.

Telasco Segovia put his side ahead 1-0 minute after Messi exited on a feed from Inter Miami newcomer Rodrigo De Paul, who had two assists in just his second match with the club. It was Segovia's second goal of the tournament.

Badaloni tied it at 1 on a shot that he tapped past Ríos Novo to the bottom left corner in the 33rd.

Ricardo Monreal put the Mexican club ahead in the 81st before veteran left back Alba snapped a header into the back of the net on De Paul's free kick.

Inter Miami won its first two Leagues Cup matches but can only advance if it has enough points in the tournament's Major League Soccer standings. Saturday's victory gave Inter Miami five points, and the Herons sit atop the MLS table, though there are several more matches that will be played the rest of the weekend.

The tournament is divided between teams from MLS and Liga MX. Only the top four teams in each league's table after three matches will qualify for the knockout round.

Siraj Strikes After Jaiswal Helps India Set England Daunting Target

LONDON (Dispatches) - Yashasvi Jaiswal made a sparkling hundred and Washington Sundar a blistering fifty before Mohammed Siraj struck with the last ball of the play to bolster India's hopes of a series-levelling win in the fifth and deciding Test against England at the Oval.

India were dismissed for 396 in their second innings on the third day as they set England a target of 374 to win with just over two days' remaining.

Fast bowler Siraj, ever-present in all five matches of a gruelling series, yorked Zak Crawley for 14 with just two balls left to spark joyous celebrations among the tourists.

England were 50-1 at stumps, still requiring a further 324



runs to win, with Ben Duckett 34 not out.

No side have made more to win in the fourth innings of a Test at the Oval than England's 263 in a one-wicket victory over Australia back in 1902.

However, the most England have made to win any Test in the fourth innings was their 378 against India at Edgbaston in 2022, while they also chased down 371 at Headingley in the opening match of this series.

"It is a replay from Headingley," England fast bowler Josh Tongue, who took 5-125 on Saturday, told the BBC.