

The United States Imposed Sanctions Thursday on 18 Entities and Individuals to Target What the Treasury Department Called “a Network Helping Iran Evade Sanctions

IRAN NEWS

Foreign Minister Says That Now the IAEA Knows and Its Director General Should Know That Completely New Conditions Have Been Created, Adding That Now the Country Has New law and the Conditions

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2 DOMESTIC

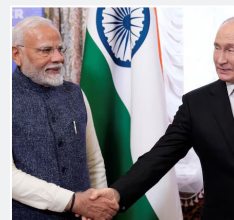


Private Sector Urged to Engage Europe to Help Ease Tensions

> SEE PAGE 2

3 INTERNATIONAL

Russia, India Talk Up Strategic Partnership After Trump Tariff Hike



> SEE PAGE 3

FM Calls for Emergency OIC Meeting Over Humanitarian Catastrophe in Gaza Strip



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has called for an emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to address a “humanitarian catastrophe” unfolding in the Gaza Strip.

In a letter addressed to OIC Secretary General Hissein Brahimi, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, and Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan, Araghchi urged the intergovernmental body to convene an extraordinary session in response to the “rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation” in the besieged Palestinian territory.

“The appalling situation in Gaza has now become one of the gravest crises facing the Islamic Ummah and the international community,” Araghchi said.

“The conditions in Gaza have exceeded the limits of human endurance. What is unfolding is not merely a humanitarian crisis — it is the systematic destruction of a besieged civilian population. The scale and intensity of the crimes being committed call for immediate and coordinated action.”

His letter came as the war-ravaged territory is gripped by famine, with international agencies reporting catastrophic hunger levels—at least 193 people, including 96 children, have died of starvation in recent months—while aid convoys remain blocked or severely restricted by the Israeli regime and more than 1,500 Palestinians have been killed while trying to access food.

Iran Objects to IAEA’s Political Conduct But Remains Committed to Its Obligations



TEHRAN (IRNA) - The spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has emphasized that Iran strongly objects to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)’s conduct but remains committed to its obligations.

Speaking to a radio program on Thursday, Esmail Baghaei said that the upcoming visit by an IAEA delegation is not for inspections but for discussions on drafting a new protocol for interactions under the current unprecedented circumstances.

Baghaei reiterated Iran’s strong objections to the IAEA’s recent measures, saying that Western countries, particularly the U.S. and the European trio, have exploited the Agency to pressure Iran and distort realities.

He also criticized the latest IAEA report, which was based on a resolution pushed by these countries, saying that the report contained inaccuracies and served as a pretext for Israeli attacks.

Despite these objections, Baghaei affirmed Iran’s continued commitment to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and said that the upcoming IAEA visit is intended to discuss a new protocol for engagement under the current exceptional circumstances.

He emphasized that attacks on peaceful, monitored nuclear facilities is an unprecedented situation that requires new protocols reflecting on-the-ground realities and parliamentary statute.

Iran Needs No One's Permission to Defend Its Rights



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Major General Mohammad Bagheri Mousavi, declared during a ceremony marking the 40th day since the martyrs of the 12-day war that Iran’s hands are “full for both negotiation and war.” He emphasized that while the Iranian nation is not war-seeking, if enemies attempt another act of aggression, Iran’s response will be “more crushing and different than in the past,” adding, “We have the ability to respond instantly, and we do not seek anyone’s permission to defend our rights.”

The memorial ceremony, held Thursday morning at Tehran’s Imam Khomeini Mosalla, was attended by senior government and military officials, families of martyrs and veterans, and members of the public.

Mousavi honored the fallen, noting that their sacrifice comes as the nation approaches the religious observance of Arbaeen for Imam Hussein. He linked the commemoration to the Iranian people’s deep-rooted spiritual beliefs and their vision of the eventual appearance of the savior of humanity.

Reflecting on the 12-day imposed war, Mousavi said, “The world saw that Iran cannot be defeated, because the spirit of this nation is rooted in divine belief.” He credited the guidance of the Supreme Leader and the vigilance of the people for opening a new chapter in the Islamic Revolution’s history.

He stressed that Iran has the capability to generate power even in the most complex arenas, and that the martyrs’ sacrifices are living proof of this. “When one of our beloved nuclear scientists attains the great honor of martyrdom, the message is clear: knowledge and science serve the homeland and the Islamic Revolution,” Mousavi said.

Any Threat to Iran's Security and Territorial Integrity Will Face a Severe Response

TEHRAN - The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has declared in a statement marking the Arbaeen (40th day) memorial for the “Martyrs of Iran’s Power” that any threat to the country’s security or territorial integrity will be met with a severe response — far beyond the enemies’ expectations and harsher than what aggressors faced during Promise Fulfilled 3.

According to IRGC News, the statement honors the memory of notable martyrs of the Islamic Revolution and the Sacred Defense — including senior commanders Lt. Gen. Mohammad Bagheri, Lt. Gen. Gholamali Rashid, Lt. Gen. Hossein Salami, Lt. Gen. Ali Shadmehi, Maj. Gen. Amirali Hajizadeh, and other distinguished IRGC martyrs — as well as scientists, women, and children who died in the recent 12-day war. These sacrifices, the IRGC says, forged a new chapter of courage, sacrifice, resistance, and power in Iran’s history.

The statement outlines seven key points:

1. Honoring the Martyrs

The martyrs of Iran’s power engraved courage and self-sacrifice into the nation’s history. The IRGC pledges continued loyalty to their ideals, stressing that Iran’s pride and standing in modern history are rooted in these sacrifices.

2. The Leader’s Guidance as a Compass for Resistance

Referring to the strategic and wise guidance of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei during the 12-day war and the U.S.-Israeli imposed conflict, the IRGC emphasizes how his leadership demonstrated Iran’s resolve against the global arrogance led by the United States and the Zionist regime. This leadership turned defense into an opportunity to impose Iran’s power internationally.

3. Direct Confrontation with the U.S. and Israel

For the first time in history, Iran directly faced an imposed war from the world’s major imperial powers — the U.S. and the “child-killing, racist” Zionist regime — and emerged victorious. This triumph strengthened national pride and established a new path for countering enemy threats, showing Iran as an undeniable global power.

4. The Power of “Promise Fulfilled 3” and Imposing a Ceasefire

Among the most notable achievements of Iran’s armed forces during the 12-day anti-American and anti-Zionist defense were the precise and intelligent operations Promise Fulfilled 3 and Glad Tidings of Victory. Despite global pressure, Iran successfully imposed a ceasefire on Israel and the U.S., proving its defensive and offensive capabilities. The IRGC vows to continue strengthening deterrence with even greater speed and determination.

5. Global Support and Condemnation of Aggression

The world has witnessed Iran standing against the U.S.-Zionist alliance in pursuit of independence, gaining significant international support in condemning their brutal aggressions. No criminal act or threat, the statement says,

can shake the Iranian nation’s iron will.

6. Failure of U.S. and Israeli Plans to Overthrow the Islamic Republic

The enemies’ failure to destroy or destabilize the Islamic Republic — due to the wise leadership of the Supreme Leader, unity among the people, and nationwide support for the armed forces — stands as a historic lesson. This defeat, the IRGC notes, reaffirms the legitimacy and strength of the Islamic system and the need for respectful engagement with Iranians.

7. IRGC’s Readiness to Respond

The IRGC, alongside other branches of Iran’s armed forces, stands ready to deliver a decisive and regret-inducing response to any threat or attack from the U.S., Israel, or their allies. Any threat to Iran’s security or territorial integrity, they warn, will face a reaction far beyond the enemy’s imagination and harsher than what aggressors experienced in Promise Fulfilled 3.

Call to Attend the Memorial

The statement concludes by inviting all Iranians — especially the youth — to participate in Thursday’s Arbaeen ceremony for the “Martyrs of Iran’s Power” at Imam Khomeini’s prayer complex in Tehran. This gathering, the IRGC says, will showcase national unity, reaffirm loyalty to the Supreme Leader, and declare the nation’s determination to continue the proud path of the martyrs, particularly the commanders, scientists, and defenders who fell in the recent war.

Israel Trying to Drag Europe Into Snapback Trap



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The head of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Intelligence Organization, Major General Majid Khadami, has issued a stern warning that the Israeli regime is attempting to draw European countries into a strategic error regarding the “snapback” sanctions mechanism.

Speaking on recent regional developments, General Khadami referenced past intelligence failures by Israel and the United States in late 2019, which led to the assassination of IRGC Quds Force commander, Lieutenant General Qasem Soleimani.

He said Israeli intelligence and hardliners within the CIA falsely claimed that General Soleimani was planning an operation in Baghdad, while he had simply entered the city on a routine commercial flight.

This misinformation, Khadami asserted, paved the way for the US assassination of General Soleimani.

Khadami referred to recent Israeli efforts to manipulate European countries into adopting hostile measures against Iran under the snapback mechanism.

“Today, the Zionist regime is once again seeking to lead the Europeans into the same strategic error in the snapback mechanism issue,” he said.

“The enemies of the revolution, just as what happened in December 2019, are once again attempting—with flawed intelligence analyses—to undermine the fabric of the system through the assassination of commanders, cognitive warfare, and spreading despair,” he explained.

“Just as they misled the United States, they are now trying to steer Europe into the same strategic mistake. We issue this warning clearly.”

The European trio, party to the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, has sought to activate the deal’s “snapback” mechanism to restore sanctions. The three European signatories, along with China and Russia, are the only remaining parties to the 2015 nuclear deal after the US withdrawal in 2018.

Axis of Resistance More Powerful Than Before



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - A senior Iranian military commander says that while Israel seeks to shift regional equations in its favor, the Axis of Resistance stands strong and is demonstrating greater operational strength than ever before.

Iran’s Armed Forces spokesman Brigadier General Abolfazl Shekarchi made the remarks at a ceremony on Thursday, marking the 40th day since the martyrdom of several Iranian military commanders during the unprovoked Israeli-US aggression in June.

He noted that Lebanon’s Hezbollah, Hamas, Yemen’s Ansarullah, and Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) and resistance forces in other countries are operating more powerfully than ever.

“This resistance front remains undefeatable—and will deliver a proportionate response to all threats,” he underscored.

“The martyrdom of resistance fighters fortifies this front even further,” he said, adding that far from weakening the movement, martyrs amplify its power and unity.

General Shekarchi emphasized that martyrs serve as the strategic backbone of the resistance front, standing firm against global arrogance—specifically the United States and the Israeli regime.

On June 13, Israel launched a blatant and unprovoked act of aggression against Iran, assassinating many high-ranking military commanders, nuclear scientists, and killing hundreds of civilians.

The United States also entered the war by bombing three Iranian nuclear sites in a grave violation of international law.

In response, the Iranian Armed Forces targeted strategic sites across the occupied territories as well as the al-Undead air base in Qatar, the largest American military base in West Asia.

On June 24, Iran, through its successful retaliatory operations, managed to impose a halt to the illegal aggression.



IRISL Rises to 16th Place Among World’s Largest Container Shipping Lines

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) has climbed three spots to rank 16th among the world’s largest container shipping lines, according to the latest Alphaliner rankings.

As reported by IRNA citing IRISL, this rapid advancement in just a few months reflects a significant improvement in the company’s operational capacity and fleet expansion.

Key factors contributing to the rise include an increase in TEU (Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit) capacity, fleet optimization, development of regional and international logistics corridors—particularly through Chabahar—implementation of domestic ship repair and modernization programs, and enhanced operational efficiency despite the constraints of international sanctions.

Iran Expresses Readiness to Expand Multimodal Transport With Regional Countries



TEHRAN - Minister of Roads and Urban Development, Farzaneh Sadegh, has announced the country’s full readiness to expand multimodal transport systems in cooperation with regional landlocked and transit countries, emphasizing the importance of integrated infrastructure planning and financing strategies, including public-private partnerships.

Speaking at the panel on “Financing Transport Infrastructure for Landlocked Countries” held in Turkmenistan, Minister Sadegh highlighted the critical role of collaborative efforts in achieving sustainable and resilient transport systems across the region.

“This specialized meeting, with participation from both landlocked and transit countries, provides a vital opportunity for regional integration and strengthening transport infrastructure,” she stated. “It can serve as a launching platform for developmental goals and increased transit trade between our nations.”

Minister Sadegh expressed appreciation for the event, describing it as a significant step toward strengthening connectivity and regional cooperation. She emphasized that the meeting could serve as a roadmap for developing regional transit and transport infrastructure.

She underlined that achieving sustainable and resilient transport requires robust infrastructure. “Developing a cohesive and continuous infrastructure network between landlocked and coastal countries, along with innovative financing approaches—especially through public-private partnerships—can reinforce transport linkages,” she said.

Outlining Iran’s goals, Sadegh noted the country plans to facilitate the transit of 20 million tons of cargo east of the Caspian Sea by 2028 and 15 million tons west of the Caspian Sea by 2030. These targets, she said, would contribute to stronger regional infrastructure and increased trade and transit flows.

Iran Aims to Safeguard National Interests, Plastic Production Chain From Bans and Restrictions



TEHRAN - The sixth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) on the development of a legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution has officially opened in Geneva, Switzerland. Among the participants is a representative from the National Association of Polymer Industries of Iran (NAPI), along with relevant Iranian government officials. The conference runs through August 14.

The INC was established at the request of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) to draft a global, legally binding treaty to combat plastic pollution. The first session was held in Uruguay in 2022, followed by meetings in France, Kenya, Canada, and South Korea. The Islamic Republic of Iran has participated in all INC sessions, with the NAPI joining as a formal stakeholder starting from the third session.

In Geneva, Sahaf Amin, a board member of the National Association of Polymer Industries of Iran, is representing the association in the negotiations, alongside officials from Iran’s Ministries of Oil and Foreign Affairs and the Department of Environment.

Amin emphasized the importance of Iran’s expanded delegation, which now includes representatives from the Presidential Office and senior officials from key ministries. “The production of polymers is a central issue in these talks, and the outcomes of the treaty will significantly impact the economies of countries like Iran. We are working to ensure our industry is preserved,” he said.

He also noted that the previous INC session in South Korea in late 2024 failed to reach a consensus, prompting the scheduling of this additional round in Geneva. “We hope that this time, progress will be made toward alignment,” Amin added.

The Iranian delegation is particularly focused on ensuring that the advantages of oil-producing nations are considered in the treaty’s framework. “We are striving to steer the treaty in a rational direction that accounts for the interests of petrochemical and downstream industries,” Amin stated.

Private Sector Urged to Engage Europe to Help Ease Tensions



TEHRAN - In a significant move aimed at reviving commercial ties between Iran and Europe, the first gathering of heads of Iran’s joint chambers of commerce with European countries was held under the theme: “Rebuilding Iran-Europe Trade Relations.” The event, organized by the Iran-Germany and Iran-Italy joint chambers of commerce, saw the participation of high-ranking diplomats, chamber heads, and private sector representatives.

The meeting was attended by Saeed Khatibzadeh, Deputy Foreign Minister and head of the Center for Political and International Studies at Iran’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Shahin Asghari, head of the Iran-Germany Chamber; Ahmad Pourfallah, head of the Iran-Italy Chamber; Hossein Selahvarzi, head of Iran’s Entrepreneurship Foundation; Abdolreza Rezaei Hanjani, head of the Iran-Sweden Chamber; Mohammad Taheri, head of the Iran-Spain Chamber; Ali Majedi, former Iranian ambassador to Germany and Japan; and Diako Hosseini, senior international relations expert.

Among the key issues on the agenda were the potential reactivation of the EU’s snapback mechanism (trigger mechanism), ways to counter it, and the drafting of a roadmap for repairing ties with Europe in coordination with Iran’s Foreign Ministry. Participants also proposed forming expert working groups to help the private sector better understand modern Europe.

Shahin Asghari emphasized the need for solidarity among the heads of joint chambers amid the country’s current challenges. “Now is the time for us to stand together to navigate these difficult and complex circumstances,” he stated.

Ahmad Pourfallah stressed the importance of ongoing communication among chamber leaders and called for regular meetings to share concerns and streamline coordination.

Hossein Selahvarzi noted that the economic impact of sanctions imposed on Iran since 2011 rivals the damage inflicted during the Iran-Iraq War. “As representatives of the private sector, it is our duty to ensure policymakers fully understand the gravity of this impact,” he said. He also recommended launching international campaigns to highlight the economic harm inflicted by recent attacks on Iran, especially in relation to public livelihoods.

Deputy Foreign Minister Khatibzadeh affirmed the ministry’s full readiness to assist the private sector in devising a new roadmap for Iran-Europe relations. He lamented that the Iran-Germany Chamber – once the only officially registered Iranian chamber in Germany – ceased operations due to political tensions, a situation not seen even during the Iran-Iraq War.

In a strategic analysis, Diako Hosseini pointed to the current decline of the EU’s influence, describing it as split between a modern Europe (primarily Eastern countries with right-leaning tendencies and reliance on the U.S.) and a post-modern Europe (Western nations like Germany and France still tied to the original EU ideals).

He proposed that Iran’s private sector engage more actively with both European blocs through targeted diplomacy, forming task forces to better understand each group’s political language and institutional expectations. Hosseini also introduced five key transport corridors connecting Europe and emerging Asia, emphasizing that the Iran-Europe-Asia route is the cheapest and fastest—but currently underutilized due to sanctions.

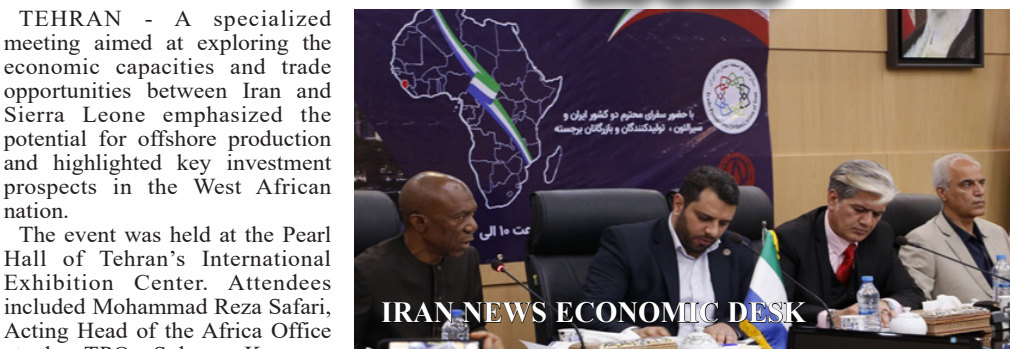
“Europe stands to benefit greatly from Iran’s unique geopolitical position if it pursues de-escalation,” Hosseini said.

Echoing Hosseini’s remarks, former ambassador Ali Majedi emphasized the power of economic arguments. “By highlighting the cost-efficiency of the Iranian corridor, chambers of commerce can persuade their European counterparts to reconsider its potential,” he said.

Mohammad Taheri raised concerns about Europe’s threats to trigger the snapback mechanism, calling for more decisive action from Iran’s Foreign Ministry in this critical period.

In closing remarks, Abdolreza Rezaei Hanjani stressed the private sector’s role in leveraging existing capacities to improve Iran’s international economic standing.

Iran Explores Offshore Production, Investment Opportunities in Sierra Leone



TEHRAN - A specialized meeting aimed at exploring the economic capacities and trade opportunities between Iran and Sierra Leone emphasized the potential for offshore production and highlighted key investment prospects in the West African nation.

The event was held at the Pearl Hall of Tehran’s International Exhibition Center. Attendees included Mohammad Reza Safari, Acting Head of the Africa Office at the TPO, Salamo Karoma, Sierra Leone’s Ambassador to Tehran, Seyed Khalil Sadati Amiri, Iran’s Ambassador to Sierra Leone, as well as a group of Iranian and Sierra Leonean business representatives.

In his opening remarks, Mohammad Reza Safari outlined the demographic and social landscape of Sierra Leone, noting a population of 8.5 million — 70% Muslim and 30% Christian. He stated that Sierra Leone’s economy, valued between \$2 to \$3 billion, had faced setbacks during the COVID-19 pandemic between 2015 and 2024. However, recent figures show a recovery, with GDP reaching \$6.3 billion.

Safari described Sierra Leone as a net importer, with annual imports of \$2 billion and exports of \$1.5 billion. Major imports include rice, petroleum derivatives, medicine, cement, poultry, wheat flour, steel, sauces, cigarettes, vaccines, sugar, household appliances, fruits, tomatoes, and vehicles. Its exports consist primarily of iron ore, titanium ore, timber, cocoa, bauxite, aluminum ore, scrap metal, palm oil, seafood, coffee, gold, plastic waste, and diamonds.

China is Sierra Leone’s leading trade partner, followed by Europe, India, and the UAE.

Safari highlighted numerous investment opportunities for Iranian companies, especially in agriculture, livestock, poultry, and fisheries. “Thanks to its coastal location, Sierra Leone offers port activity prospects and enjoys six months of rainfall annually, making offshore production highly feasible,” he stated.

He also pointed out the country’s economic vulnerabilities, such as low public income, inadequate infrastructure, and susceptibility to climate change. However, he believes Iran can make significant strides in exporting technical and engineering services to Sierra Leone.

Ambassador Salamo Karoma expressed his enthusiasm for expanding commercial ties with Iran, emphasizing Sierra Leone’s friendly policies toward Iranian investors. “Iranian businesses can invest without concern and repatriate profits freely,” he said.

He added that Sierra Leone offers tax incentives, a favorable customs system, and the potential to become a regional trade hub for global goods. Karoma also pointed to the country’s untapped tourism potential due to its pristine beaches and natural landscapes.

Iran’s Ambassador to Sierra Leone, Seyed Khalil Sadati Amiri, underscored the country’s vast agricultural potential, including 5 million hectares of arable land and consistent rainfall. He described West Africa as a largely unexplored commercial zone for Iranian businesses, primarily due to distance and lack of awareness.

“There are tangible opportunities in animal husbandry, fisheries, and mining — particularly gold, diamonds, lithium, and bauxite,” Amiri said.

The session also featured a presentation by Iran’s Trade Center in Sierra Leone, detailing plans to send a commercial delegation and open a product showroom in the country. However, weak energy infrastructure was identified as one of the major challenges to economic development in Sierra Leone.

Iraq Becomes Iran’s Gateway to a 500-m Person Market



TEHRAN - The Secretary-General of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce has highlighted Iraq’s strategic role as a bridge for Iran to access a broader market of 500 million people, including the Arab world and North Africa.

In an interview with ILNA, Jahanbakhsh Sanjabi Shirazi, Secretary-General of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, outlined the growing investment ties between the two countries. He emphasized that while both nations have worked to increase mutual investments, the Chamber has initiated a program titled “Foreign Investment Support Partners in the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber” in collaboration with Iran’s Foreign Investment Attraction Organization to further promote foreign investments.

Sanjabi Shirazi noted that the program has successfully clarified investment opportunities and legal frameworks for investing in Iran, which has encouraged small-scale Iraqi investors to enter the Iranian market. However, he acknowledged ongoing challenges, primarily due to U.S. sanctions, the lack of banking relations, and restrictions on currency transfers within Iran.

According to Sanjabi Shirazi, Iraqi investments in Iran have grown significantly, reaching \$416 million by 2023 and now approaching \$700 million. He attributed this growth to Iraq’s investment law, known as Law No. 13 (2006), which regulates projects based on value—either above or below \$250 million—with respective approvals required from local or central investment boards.

Iranian investors have targeted various regions of Iraq, particularly the southern provinces like Basra, Samawah, and Hillah, followed by Karbala and Najaf, and northern provinces such as Sulaymaniyah, Erbil, and recently Kalar and Halabja. While there have also been investments in central Iraq and Baghdad, these remain more limited.

One of the major incentives for Iranian businesses investing in Iraq, according to Sanjabi Shirazi, is access to Iraq’s 48 million-strong consumer market, along with the potential to export goods to other Arab nations and North Africa, encompassing a market of approximately 480 million people.

Iran, Kazakhstan Emphasize Expanding Transit Via North-South Corridor



TEHRAN - The Ministers of Transport of Iran and Kazakhstan have agreed to expand bilateral cooperation in the transportation sector and to draft a joint roadmap to facilitate this collaboration.

Iranian Minister Farzaneh Sadegh, who is accompanying First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref at the third UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in the port city of Awaza, Turkmenistan, held a bilateral meeting with Kazakhstan’s Minister of Transport, Nurlan Sauranbayev.

In the meeting — aimed at strengthening transport ties and drafting a joint strategic roadmap — Minister Sadegh congratulated her Kazakh counterpart on his recent appointment and expressed appreciation for Kazakhstan’s supportive stance toward Iran, including during the recent 12-day imposed war. She highlighted the reciprocal high-level visits between the two countries as evidence of their strong cooperation.

Minister Sadegh emphasized the importance of enhancing transit and joint infrastructure projects, specifically referencing the eastern route of the North-South Transport Corridor. She called on Kazakhstan to take necessary actions and show strong commitment to accelerating the implementation of the cooperation agreement, which was previously signed by deputy ministers from Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkmenistan, and Iran.

The two sides also discussed the need to strengthen all modes of transport between their countries and reviewed key mutual concerns. A proposal to draft a comprehensive five-year plan covering all transport sectors was welcomed by Minister Sauranbayev, who also reaffirmed Kazakhstan’s openness to Iranian flights without any restrictions.

France's Huge Wildfire Is Under Control

PARIS (Dispatches) - France's biggest wildfire in decades will burn for several more days even though it has been brought under control, authorities said Friday as hundreds of firefighters kept up a battle against the flames.

The giant blaze in the southern department of Aude has burned through more than 17,000 hectares of land – an area bigger than Paris – killing one person, injuring 13 and destroying dozens of homes.

About 2,000 firefighters are still on duty around the blaze, which was declared under control on Thursday night. The fire will not be “declared extinguished for several days”, said Christian Pouget, the prefect for Aude. “There is still a lot of work to be done.”

Authorities have banned access to the forests that were devastated by the fire until at least Sunday.



Nearly 12,000 Children Under Five in Gaza Have Acute Malnutrition



GENEVA (Dispatches) - Around 12,000 children aged under five in Gaza are suffering from acute malnutrition, and hunger-related deaths are rising, the Director General of the World Health Organization said on Thursday.

“In July, nearly 12,000 children under five years were identified as having acute malnutrition in Gaza, the highest monthly figure ever recorded,” Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said at his organisation's headquarters in Geneva.

At least 99 people have died, including 64 adults and 35 children, of whom 29 were younger than five, from the start of this year to July 29.

Between June and July, the number of admissions for malnutrition almost doubled - from 6,344 to 11,877 - according to the latest UNICEF figures available. Some 2,500 of those children are suffering from severe malnutrition.

Tedros called for greater volumes of sustained aid, via all possible routes.

The WHO said it was supporting Gaza's four malnutrition centres, but that supplies of baby formula and nutritional foods were very low.

“The overall volume of nutrition supplies remains completely insufficient to prevent further deterioration. The market needs to be flooded. There needs to be dietary diversity,” said Rik Peepkorn, WHO's representative for the occupied Palestinian Territory, via video link.

A global hunger monitor has said a famine scenario is unfolding in the Gaza Strip, with starvation spreading, children dying of hunger-related causes and humanitarian access to the embattled enclave severely restricted.

China Accuses Philippines of Playing With Fire on Taiwan



BEIJING (Dispatches) - China accused the Philippines on Friday of “playing with fire” after President Ferdinand Marcos Jr said the Southeast Asian nation would be drawn into any conflict between China and the United States over Taiwan.

It was responding to remarks by Marcos during a state visit to India that the Philippines' closeness to Taiwan and the large Filipino community there would make involvement necessary in such a conflict.

“Geographical proximity’ and ‘large overseas populations’ are not excuses for a country to interfere in the internal affairs of others,” China's foreign ministry said in a statement.

“We urge the Philippines to earnestly adhere to the one-China principle ... and refrain from playing with fire on issues concerning China's core interests.”

Marcos' remarks came amid heightened tension between Beijing and Manila over territorial disputes in the busy waterway of the South China Sea.

Both countries have traded accusations of aggressive manoeuvres and sovereignty violations there, prompting the United States to reaffirm its commitment to defend the Philippines.

Russia, India Talk Up Strategic Partnership After Trump Tariff Hike

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia and India stressed their commitment to a “strategic partnership” in bilateral security talks in Moscow on Thursday, a day after U.S. President Donald Trump announced higher tariffs on imports from India because of its purchases of Russian oil.

Interfax news agency quoted Indian national security adviser Ajit Doval as saying that New Delhi was looking forward to a visit from President Vladimir Putin by the end of the year.

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At Doval's meeting with Sergei Shoigu, secretary of Russia's Security Council, both sides emphasised the importance of the countries' relations.

Later on Thursday Doval met Putin at the Kremlin, where official footage showed the two men shaking hands. Shoigu, Kremlin foreign policy adviser Yuri Ushakov, and India's Ambassador to Russia, Vinay Kumar, also attended the meeting.

The Kremlin did not disclose what they discussed.

Trump's imposition of an additional 25% tariff on goods from India, coming into force on August 28, signals the most serious downturn in U.S.-India relations since his return to office in January, threatening to disrupt India's access to its largest export market.

“We are committed to further active cooperation in order to form a new, more just and sustainable world order, ensure the supremacy of international law, and jointly combat modern challenges and threats,” Shoigu told Doval in televised comments.

Interfax quoted Doval as saying: “We have now established very good relations, which we value very much, a strategic



air missile systems, which New Delhi says it needs to counter a threat from China.

But deliveries of the systems have been delayed several times. Moscow is expected to deliver units of the final two S-400 systems to India in 2026 and 2027.

New Delhi has traditionally relied heavily on arms imports from Russia, although it has dramatically reduced those imports and shifted to Western buyers in recent years.

partnership between our countries”.

India and China have become the top buyers of Russian seaborne crude oil since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, precipitating Western efforts to choke the Russian economy.

Trump had threatened measures against countries buying Russian oil before he announced the new tariff on Indian goods, which raised the total duty to 50%.

On Tuesday, the Kremlin accused the United States of exerting illegal trade pressure on New Delhi, saying India has the right to trade with whomever it chooses.

India's state refiners have stopped Russian oil purchases as the discounts narrowed and Trump warned countries not to buy Moscow's oil, industry sources said. Private refiners Reliance Industries and Nayara are Russia's top oil clients in India, trade data shows.

An Indian official familiar with the matter said Doval would discuss India's purchases of Russian crude during his visit to Moscow. He was also expected to discuss India's defence collaboration with Russia, the official said.

India signed a \$5.5 billion deal with Russia in 2018 for five S-400 Triumf long-range surface-to-

Israel's Security Cabinet Approves Plan to Take Over Gaza City

GAZA CITY (Dispatches) - Israel said early Friday that it plans to take over Gaza City in another escalation of its 22-month war with Hamas. The decision, taken after a late-night meeting of top officials, came despite mounting international calls to end the war and protests by many in Israel who fear for the remaining hostages held by Hamas.

Israel's air and ground war has already killed tens of thousands of people in Gaza, displaced most of the population, destroyed vast areas and pushed the territory toward famine. Another major ground operation would almost certainly exacerbate the humanitarian catastrophe.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had earlier outlined more sweeping plans in an interview with Fox News, saying Israel planned to take control of all of Gaza. Israel already controls around three quarters of the devastated territory.

The final decision, which came after Israel's Security Cabinet met through the night, stopped short of that, and may be aimed in part at pressuring Hamas to accept a ceasefire on Israel's terms.

It may also reflect the reservations of Israel's top general, who reportedly warned that it would endanger the remaining 20 or so living hostages held by Hamas and further strain Israel's army after nearly two years of regional wars.

The military “will prepare to take control of Gaza City while providing humanitarian aid to the civilian population outside the combat zones,” Netanyahu's office said in a statement after the meeting.

Israel has repeatedly bombarded Gaza City and carried out numerous raids there, only to return to different neighborhoods again and again as militants regrouped. Today it is one of the few areas of Gaza that hasn't been turned into an Israeli buffer zone or placed under evacuation orders.



A major ground operation there could displace tens of thousands of people and further disrupt efforts to deliver food to the hunger-stricken territory.

It's unclear how many people reside in the city, which was Gaza's largest before the war. Hundreds of thousands fled Gaza City under evacuation orders in the opening weeks of the war but many returned during a ceasefire at the start of this year.

Palestinians were already anticipating even more suffering ahead of the decision, and at least 42 were killed in Israeli air strikes and shootings on Thursday, according to local hospitals.

“There is nothing left to occupy,” said Maysaa al-Heila, who is living in a displacement camp. “There is no Gaza left.”

Asked in the interview with Fox News ahead of the Security Cabinet meeting if Israel would “take control of all of Gaza,” Netanyahu replied: “We intend to, in order to assure our security, remove Hamas (from) there.”

“We don't want to keep it. We want to have a security perimeter,” Netanyahu said in the interview. “We want to hand it over to Arab forces that will govern it properly without threatening us and giving Gazans a good life.”

Israel's military chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir, warned against occupying Gaza, saying it would endanger the hostages and put further strain on the military after nearly two years of war, according to Israeli media reports on the closed-door Security Cabinet meeting.

Israel's military offensive has killed over 61,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many were fighters or civilians. The ministry is part of the Hamas-run government and staffed by medical professionals.

The United Nations and independent experts view the ministry's figures as the most reliable estimate of casualties. Israel has disputed them without offering a toll of its own.

Of the 42 people killed on Thursday, at least 13 were seeking aid in an Israeli military zone in southern Gaza where UN aid convoys are regularly overwhelmed by looters and desperate crowds. Another two were killed on roads leading to nearby sites run by the Israeli-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, an American contractor, according to Nasser Hospital, which received the bodies.

Lebanese Cabinet Holds Second Meeting on Hezbollah Disarmament

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Lebanon's cabinet met on Thursday for the second time in days to discuss the thorny task of disarming Hezbollah, a day after the Iran-backed group rejected the government's decision to take away its weapons.

The more than four-hour meeting considered a US proposal that includes a timetable for Hezbollah's disarmament, with Washington pressing Beirut to take action.

Information Minister Paul Morcos said the cabinet endorsed the introduction of the US text without discussing provisions relating to specific timelines. The government said on Tuesday that disarmament should happen by the end of this year.

The introduction endorsed in Thursday's meeting lists 11 “objectives” including “ensuring the sustainability” of a November ceasefire with Israel, and “the gradual end of the armed presence of all non-governmental entities, including Hezbollah, in all Lebanese territory”.

It also calls for the deployment of Lebanese troops in border areas and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the five places in the south they have continued to occupy since last year's war with Hezbollah.

The November ceasefire that sought to end more than a year of hostilities between



Israel and Hezbollah stipulated that weapons in Lebanon be restricted to six military and security agencies.

Following the cabinet decision on Tuesday, Morcos said the Lebanese government was waiting to review an “executive plan” on Hezbollah's disarmament.

The army was tasked with presenting the plan to restrict the possession of weapons to government forces by the end of August.

Only then would the government review the full provisions of the US proposal, whose implementation “is dependent on the approval of each of the concerned countries”, the information minister said.

Four Shiite Muslim ministers, including three directly affiliated with Hezbollah or its ally the Amal movement, walked out of Thursday's meeting in protest at the government's disarmament push, Hezbollah's Al Manar television reported.

They also refused to discuss the proposal submitted by US envoy Tom Barrack, the report said.



Shelton Outlasts Khachanov to Win Canadian Open

TORONTO (Dispatches) - American fourth seed Ben Shelton battled from a set down to clinch his first ATP Masters 1000 title at the Canadian Open in Toronto on Thursday, defeating Russian 11th seed Karen Khachanov 6-7(5) 6-4 7-6(3).

The world number seven capped off an impressive week that saw him beat Italian 13th seed Flavio Cobolli, Australian ninth seed Alex de Minaur and American second seed Taylor Fritz on his way to achieving his first Masters 1000 title and the biggest crown of his career.

The 22-year-old is the youngest American man to win a Masters 1000 since former world number one Andy Roddick at Miami in 2004. His other two titles came in Tokyo in 2023 and Houston in 2024.

"It's a surreal feeling," Shelton said. "It's been a long week, not an easy path to the final. My best tennis came out when it mattered most. I was clutch, I persevered, I was resilient. All the qualities I like to see in myself."

With the triumph, Australian Open semi-finalist Shelton will rise to a career-high ranking of sixth.

Khachanov seemed to be on course for victory when he took a 5-3 lead in the opening set, but Shelton fought back to break serve and take a 6-5 lead. Khachanov, 29, then recovered to force a tiebreak and capitalised on a series of errors from Shelton to claim the first set.

The second set brought its own twist, when technical issues halted play at 2-2 with players unable to hear audio calls from the electronic line-calling system.

Once play resumed and after Shelton complained, Khachanov surged to a 4-3 lead. However, the resilient Shelton broke again to edge ahead 5-4 and saved four break points to clinch the second set, forcing a decider, which ended in a tiebreak dominated by Shelton.

Shelton banged down 16 aces and struck 38 winners in the contest that lasted for two hours and 47 minutes.

"Karen was bullying me around the court. The way he hit his forehand tonight, the way he was cutting off the court, the way he was serving, it felt like I had a freight train coming at me," Shelton said.

"So, it was uncomfortable to move forward. The ball was coming at me even faster.

"But I started being able to redirect, get some big shots off of my own, and kind of flip the momentum of that match. So, that was huge for me."

Khachanov was chasing a second Masters 1000 title, having won the 2018 Paris Masters by upsetting Novak Djokovic.

"It's painful to lose in the final ... yesterday I won 7-6 in the third. Today I lost," said Khachanov, who knocked out top seed Alexander Zverev in the semis after a near three-hour battle.

Meanwhile Canadian teenager Victoria Mboko staged a stunning comeback on Thursday to beat four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka 2-6 6-4 6-1 and secure her maiden WTA Tour title at the Canadian Open in Montreal.

The 18-year-old wild card rallied after dropping the first set to the Japanese former world number one, who had established a 3-0 lead, and held firm to cap a remarkable fortnight at home.

It was Mboko's fourth win over a Grand Slam champion in the tournament after the world number 85 defeated Sofia Kenin, Coco Gauff and Elena Rybakina en route to the final.

Local favourite Mboko found her rhythm in the second set, breaking serve to establish a 5-2 lead as Osaka struggled with her returns, and she capitalised to level up the contest and force a decider.

The decisive moment came in the third set, when Mboko took a 3-1 lead after saving four break points in a pivotal fourth game that gave her a firm grip on the match as she went on to claim the title after two hours and four minutes of play.

Refreshed Sinner Ready for Cincinnati Title Defense



LONDON (Dispatches) - World number one Jannik Sinner said he had taken the right decision by opting for a long break following his Wimbledon triumph, and the recharged Italian is ready to fire at the Cincinnati Open where he will defend his title.

The 23-year-old lost a marathon French Open final to rival Carlos Alcaraz in June before gaining revenge over the Spaniard at the All England Club last month to secure his fourth Grand Slam title overall and second of a difficult season in which he served a short ban for an inadvertent doping offence.

Sinner opted to prioritise his health following that victory and will return after a near month-long absence from the circuit when he takes to the court over the weekend in Cincinnati after getting a first-round bye.

"The body and mind need to recover and need to understand what happened," Sinner told reporters in Ohio on Wednesday as he explained his scheduling.

"I'm very happy I took some time off, seeing my family and friends and very important people I have around. In the past, I made some mistakes sometimes, starting too early at times.

"I had conversations with the whole team, trying to understand what's best. When you win big titles, they're very special moments and then you have to leave them."

Sinner sported a protective sleeve on his right elbow when he practised with Christopher Eubanks on Wednesday, sparking concerns that he was still feeling the effects of an injury sustained during his title run at Wimbledon.

The Italian said, however, that he was only using it as it gave him more stability.

Nine PSG Players on Ballon d'Or Shortlist

PARIS (Dispatches) - Nine players from treble-winning Paris St Germain have been nominated for the men's Ballon d'Or this year along with the club's coach Luis Enrique as France Football announced the list of nominees on Thursday.

Ousmane Dembele, Gianluigi Donnarumma, Desire Doue, Achraf Hakimi, Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, Nuno Mendes, Joao Neves, Fabian Ruiz and Vitinha are all on the list of 30 players nominated for the big prize.

Dembele scored 35 goals and claimed 16 assists in all competitions as PSG won the Ligue 1 title, French Cup and Champions League and were Club World Cup runners-up to Chelsea.

Other nominees include Barcelona's Raphinha (34 goals, 25 assists), Liverpool's Mohamed Salah (34 goals, 23 assists), who was named Premier League Player of the Season, and Manchester City striker Erling Haaland (34 goals, five assists).

Scott McTominay, Serie A's Most Valuable Player after guiding Napoli to the title, was also nominated as the first Scotsman in 38 years to make the shortlist.

Barca's Lamine Yamal (18 goals, 25 assists) made the cut while the 18-year-old winger was also nominated for the Kopa Trophy for best Under-21 player, an award he won last year.

Five England players were nominated for the women's Ballon d'Or after their Euros triumph, including goalkeeper Hannah Hampton, Lucy Bronze, Alessia Russo, Chloe Kelly



and Leah Williamson.

Marta, who came out of retirement to lead Brazil to the women's Copa America title at the age of 39, was also nominated.

Along with Luis Enrique, Enzo Maresca, who guided Chelsea to the Club World Cup title, and Liverpool's Arne Slot, who won the Premier League crown in his first season at the club, were nominated for the men's Coach of the Year award.

The women's coach nominees are led by Sonia Bompastor, who won a domestic treble at Chelsea, Renee Slegers, who took Arsenal to their second Champions League crown, and Sarina Wiegman after she helped England retain their Euros title.

Men: Jude Bellingham, Ousmane Dembele, Gianluigi Donnarumma, Desire Doue, Denzel Dumfries, Serhou Guirassy, Viktor Gyokeres, Erling Haaland, Achraf Hakimi, Harry Kane, Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, Robert Lewandowski, Alexis Mac Allister, Lautaro Martinez, Kylian Mbappe, Scott McTominay, Nuno Mendes, Joao Neves, Michael Olise, Cole Palmer, Pedri, Raphinha, Declan Rice, Fabian Ruiz, Mohamed Salah, Virgil van Dijk, Vinicius Jr, Vitinha, Florian Wirtz, Lamine Yamal

Mercedes Upbeat After Binning Suspension Upgrade



LONDON (Dispatches) - Former champions Mercedes hope to be challenging for wins again when they return from Formula One's August break after binning a rear suspension upgrade that made the car slower.

The upgrade was introduced at Imola in May after George Russell had finished in the top three in four of the first six races.

The Briton finished only seventh in that Italian race and Mercedes dropped the upgrade for the next two rounds before bringing it back for Canada, a race Russell won.

That proved misleading, and Russell struggled in the following four races until Mercedes reverted to the old package for Hungary last weekend and he finished third.

Rookie teammate Kimi Antonelli was also back in the points at the Hungaroring, finishing 10th after three races without scoring.

Mercedes boss Toto Wolff said the upgrade would "be ending up in a bin somewhere."

"We were misled a bit by the Montreal win... we came to the conclusion it needed to come off, it went off and the car's back to solid form," said the Austrian.

Trackside engineering director Andrew Shovlin said in a Hungarian GP debrief on Wednesday that the car was now easier to work with and the drivers more confident in attacking the corners.

"If we make a new suspension, we're doing it to make the car go quicker... and clearly there's something that wasn't right," he added.

"And it's not something that was dead obvious. Otherwise, we wouldn't have had the issue in the first place."

Shovlin said the learning would help Russell in his battle with Red Bull's Max Verstappen for third place overall behind the McLaren drivers, and Mercedes chasing second in the constructors'.

Man United Seal €85m Deal for Benjamin Sesko

MANCHESTER (Dispatches) - Manchester United have agreed a deal worth up to 85 million euros to sign striker Benjamin Sesko from RB Leipzig on Thursday, according to multiple reports in England.

The BBC, Athletic and Sky Sports reported United will pay an initial 76.5 million euros for the 22-year-old with a further 8.5 million euros due in add-ons.

Newcastle were also interested in signing the Slovenian, possibly to replace wantaway star Alexander Isak, a target for Liverpool.

However, Sesko has been wooed by the enduring stature of the 20-time English champions despite a lack of European football in the coming season.

His arrival will complete an overhaul of the Red Devils' blunt attack.

Only four other teams scored fewer than United's 44 goals in



38 Premier League games last season as the English giants endured their worst campaign for 51 years, finishing 15th in the table.

Matheus Cunha and Bryan Mbeumo were signed earlier in the window, taking United's total spend on forwards in recent months to over £200 million.

Sesko had also previously been linked with Arsenal after impressing during his two-year spell in Germany, where he scored 39 times in 87 appearances for Leipzig, including 21 last season.

Standing 1.95 metres (6ft 4ins) tall, Sesko's towering physique, electric pace and eye for goal have earned comparisons with Manchester City's Erling Haaland.

Like Haaland, he also made his name at RB Salzburg before moving to Germany in 2023.