

Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)  
Strongly Condemned Israel's Decision to  
Occupy the Gaza Strip and Forcibly  
Displace Nearly One Million Palestinians  
From Gaza City and Northern Areas to the  
South, Calling It a "Crime Against  
Humanity"

# IRAN NEWS

Recent Studies Reveal Every Year, Parts of  
Iran Sink by Up to 43 Centimeters—a  
Silent Phenomenon That Poses Serious  
Threats to the Country's Infrastructure,  
Agriculture, and Water Security

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## Iran Applauds Caucasus Peace, Warns on Foreign Interference



TEHRAN - The Iranian Foreign Ministry has welcomed the recently finalized peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia, calling it a "significant step" toward lasting stability in the South Caucasus, while cautioning against any form of foreign intervention that could undermine regional security.

In a statement issued on Saturday, the ministry said the Islamic Republic of Iran is "closely monitoring developments in the South Caucasus" and is in regular contact with both neighboring states regarding recent events.

"Undoubtedly, peace and stability in the Caucasus region serve the interests of all regional countries," the statement read. "Iran welcomes the finalization of the peace agreement text between the two countries and considers this development an important step toward sustainable peace."

However, Tehran voiced concern over "the negative consequences of any foreign interference—by any means or in any form—particularly near shared borders—that could disrupt the region's lasting security and stability."

The ministry reiterated that political, legal, and economic measures must be taken to safeguard Iran's national rights and interests. It stressed that the opening of transport routes and the unblocking of regional transit networks can only promote stability, security, and economic growth if implemented based on mutual benefit, respect for national sovereignty, and territorial integrity—without the involvement of outside powers.

## Iran Denounces U.S. Intervention in Venezuela as Militant Unilateralism



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has condemned the "interventionist" policies of the United States against Venezuela, after Washington doubled its bounty on Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.

"The interventionist behavior and rhetoric of US officials in the internal affairs of sovereign States, including Venezuela, have unprecedentedly been undermining the fundamental principles of the UN Charter and international law," the Foreign Ministry wrote in a post on its X account on Friday.

On Thursday, the United States set a staggering \$50 million reward in what it called part of its ongoing efforts to combat international drug trafficking, a move Caracas sharply denounced as a political stunt.

"The United States' offensive move in threatening the legitimate president of a UN member State and leveling baseless allegations against him reflects a growing addiction among US policymakers to militant unilateralism and unlawful coercive measures in pursuit of their illegitimate foreign policy objectives," the ministry underlined.

According to the ministry, no responsible nation can "remain indifferent to this dangerous trend, which targets the collective normative and ethical foundations of the United Nations."

It also expressed Iran's "solidarity with the people and government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela" and condemned "US unlawful interventions in Venezuela's domestic affairs."

Over the past decade, successive US administrations have openly supported opposition figures, recognized parallel governments, and imposed sweeping sanctions aimed at ousting Maduro's government.

## President Calls for Preserving National Unity



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - On the occasion of National Journalists' Day, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian made an unannounced visit to the IRI News Channel studio, emphasizing the need for unity and the constructive role of the media in times of crisis.

Speaking during the visit, Pezeshkian stated: "The media is the voice of the people. We have many informed journalists in our country who convey the plight of people under Zionist aggression to the world. The media should present differences openly and transparently, but instead of magnifying them into deep rifts, we should regard them as a normal and natural part of society."

The president praised the role of the national broadcaster during the recent 12-day conflict, calling it a key factor in strengthening unity and defending Iran against attacks by Israel, which he said were carried out with U.S. support.

He noted that despite assassinations of military commanders, scientists, and attacks on civilians, the Iranian people stood firm and emerged victorious.

Pezeshkian recounted moments from the conflict that demonstrated broad-based solidarity, including support from people who previously disagreed with government policies.

"Even those in prison, or people we had treated harshly before, came out to defend the country. Women without hijab—who we might not accept in other circumstances—stood up for the Leader, for Iran, and for the nation. We must accept differences in taste and opinion without labeling them as hostility," he said.

He stressed that many journalists worked under threats and restrictions, yet continued to report

with honesty and determination. The rapid replacement of assassinated commanders, continued scientific activity, and cooperation between the people and the armed forces, he said, forced the enemy to retreat from its objectives.

The president also underlined the government's efforts during the 12 days of conflict to maintain stability in essential goods and public services. Even after the attack on the national broadcaster's headquarters, he said, the media quickly restored its operations and continued to inform the public.

Pezeshkian highlighted the unifying message sent to all Iranians: "Regardless of ethnicity, political orientation, or personal taste, people from across the country stood to defend our territorial integrity. This unity was a decisive factor in frustrating the enemy's plans."

He compared national unity to a family dynamic: "In my own family, my daughter and son-in-law stood by me during the conflict and even during my illness, despite sometimes disagreeing with me strongly. In the same way, the people of Iran may have differences, but that does not make us enemies. When the nation's security and independence are at stake, all differences fade."

The president concluded by urging the media to continue fostering solidarity and highlighting common ground: "We must accept that differences of opinion are not hostility. The media should avoid inflating disagreements into divides and instead treat them as a normal part of society. In the end, we all share the same fundamental principles and work for the honor and prosperity of Iran."

Pezeshkian congratulated journalists on their national day, honoring especially those who lost their lives in the line of duty, and expressed hope that the unity forged during the 12-day war will grow even stronger.

## Iran Envoy to UN Slams French Hypocrisy Over Nuclear Proliferation

TEHRAN - Iran has sharply denounced France at the United Nations, saying Paris is distorting facts and promoting double standards over Tehran's nuclear program while ignoring Israel's undeclared arsenal.

In a letter to UN Secretary-General António Guterres and Security Council President Eloy Alfaro de Alba, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, Amir Saïed Iravani, rejected France's remarks as "unwarranted, provocative, and politically motivated."

His response came after a French representative at the August 6 meeting on the "Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction" accused Iran of worsening what it called a "proliferation crisis."

"Such a baseless allegation is not only wholly irrelevant to the subject matter of the meeting... but also represents a deliberate distortion of facts," Iravani wrote on Thursday.

"Iran's nuclear program remains exclusively peaceful and fully transparent. Iran continues to honour its obligations under the NPT," he added.

The ambassador condemned France's selective concern. He pointed out that Paris, a nuclear-armed state and permanent member of the Security Council, has long failed to meet its own obligations under Article VI of the NPT—which requires disarmament—and has played a central role in enabling Israel's clandestine nuclear weapons program.

"It is deeply disappointing and hypocritical that France... voices concern over Iran's peaceful nuclear program while ignoring its own long-standing role in undermining the non-proliferation regime," the letter stated. "France remains silent on Israel's nuclear arsenal, and has never called for its accession to the NPT."

There is credible historical evidence that France played a significant role in helping Israel develop its nuclear capabilities during the 1950s and early 1960s.

According to declassified US State Department records, Israel received "substantial help from the French in the nuclear field" during that era.

Academic research further reveals that France provided critical support in building Israel's Dimona plutonium reactor, including supplying a research reactor, construction assistance, uranium fuel, and necessary financing.

The letter comes about two months after the Israeli regime launched an unprovoked aggression against Iran. The regime's military targeted Iranian peaceful nuclear sites on June 13, and nine days



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

later, the United States joined the aggression and bombed the nuclear facilities in a flagrant violation of international law and Iran's sovereignty.

Despite the scale and significance of the attacks, the Western states, including France, and even the IAEA, refrained from condemning the strikes, raising concerns in Tehran over the agency's impartiality and credibility.

Iravani said France's silence on the attacks was tantamount to complicity. "Such complicity not only violates international law and the UN Charter but also threatens the integrity of the global non-proliferation regime."

Israel, which has never signed the NPT, is widely believed to possess between 200 and 400 nuclear warheads. It has maintained a policy of nuclear ambiguity for decades, refusing to allow any international inspections of its military nuclear sites.

With consistent US backing, Israel has escaped scrutiny even as it remains the only state in West Asia with a nuclear arsenal.

Iran's envoy called on France to take a clear stance. "If France truly cares about the nuclear non-proliferation regime," he wrote, "it must end its double standards and hypocrisy, and unequivocally demand that Israel accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty... and place its undeclared military nuclear program under the full-scope monitoring and verification of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)."

Meanwhile, France is pushing ahead with plans to extend and modernize its nuclear arsenal—despite its obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). President Emmanuel Macron announced in March that the Luxeuil air base will undergo a sweeping upgrade to rejoin France's nuclear deterrent force.

"The Luxeuil air base is about to be upgraded in an unprecedented way and regain its full role in France's nuclear deterrent," Macron said during a visit to the site. The overhaul will require a "massive investment," he added, to accommodate two squadrons of Rafale fighter jets equipped to carry nuclear weapons.

Under the €1.5 billion plan, the base will host F5 Rafale jets and ASN4G air-launched hypersonic nuclear missiles by 2035.

## Master of Persian Miniature, Mahmoud Farshchian, Passes Away



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Renowned Iranian painter and master of miniature art, Mahmoud Farshchian, passed away on Saturday, at the age of 96. The news of his death was confirmed at 8 a.m. by his nephew in a telephone conversation with Tasnim News Agency in Isfahan.

Farshchian, born on January 24, 1930 in Isfahan, was widely regarded as one of the most influential and innovative figures in Persian miniature painting over the past century. He began his formal artistic training at the Isfahan School of Fine Arts before continuing his studies in Europe, where he deepened his knowledge of painting and art history.

Throughout his career, Farshchian developed a distinctive style that fused the traditional Persian miniature school with modern artistic techniques, breathing new life into an ancient art form. His works are celebrated for their intricate detail, flowing lines, and spiritual depth. They can be found in major museums around the world as well as in prominent cultural and religious sites in Iran—most notably in the holy shrine of Imam Reza (A.S.) in Mashhad, where his monumental paintings adorn sacred spaces.

Farshchian's artistic legacy extends beyond his paintings; he inspired generations of artists, redefined Iranian miniature in the modern era, and brought international recognition to this unique cultural heritage. His passing marks the end of an era for Iranian art, but his works remain timeless witnesses to his mastery.

Some of his well-known works include: The Fifth Day of Creation – A symbolic and spiritual interpretation of the creation narrative; The Evening of Ashura – Perhaps his most famous religious work, depicting the aftermath of the Battle of Karbala with deep emotion and symbolic imagery; Resurrection – A mystical piece reflecting spiritual awakening and rebirth; The Messenger – Celebrating divine revelation and prophetic mission; The Night of Flight – Inspired by the ascension (Mi'raj) of the Prophet Muhammad; The Pact of Friendship – Symbolizing human and divine bonds; The Last Supper – His Persian miniature reinterpretation of the biblical scene; Creation of Man – A poetic visual rendering of humanity's origin; and Gol-o-Morgh (Flower and Bird) – A recurring motif in his art representing beauty, love, and harmony in Persian culture.

## Gaza City Occupation Plan Shows Israel's Specific Intent for Genocide



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran says Israel's plan to occupy Gaza City is another clear indication of the regime's "specific intent" to commit ethnic cleansing and genocide in Gaza.

In a statement on Friday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei strongly condemned the Israeli plan to occupy Gaza City in a major escalation of the regime's 22-month war in the besieged Palestinian territory.

He said the plan will lead to the forced displacement of people in Gaza and aims to "complete the Palestinian people's genocide."

He urged the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice to heed the threat of the complete occupation of Gaza by the Israeli criminals who are ruling over the historic land of Palestine.

Israel's war cabinet on Friday approved a military blueprint to capture Gaza City and tighten its grip on the besieged enclave—an area it has relentlessly bombarded for months.

Baghaei added that all governments and the United Nations bear the legal and moral responsibility to stop Israel's genocide and heinous crimes in the occupied Palestine.

He said it was "shameful" that the United States and other Western countries continue to be complicit in Israel's crimes.

"It is a necessary step to force the Israeli regime to stop the genocide [in Gaza] and to urgently send humanitarian aid to the hungry and thirsty people of Gaza in order to end a catastrophe that has shaken the legal, normative and ethical foundations of human civilization," the Iranian spokesperson emphasized.



# IRAN NEWS



## Iran, Egypt Call for Israel's Exit From Southern Lebanon

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi and his Egyptian counterpart, Badr Abdelatty, in a telephone conversation called for the full withdrawal of Israeli regime from the occupied districts in southern Lebanon.

During the phone talk, the Iranian and Egyptian foreign ministers discussed the dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip which come as a result of the continued oppressive siege of the enclave and the Israeli regime's aggressive plans to intensify attacks and completely occupy the Strip.

The two top diplomats stressed the need for effective action by the Islamic countries to stop Israeli genocide in the Gaza Strip and the immediate flow of the international humanitarian aid to the enclave.

## Relocation of Iran's Capital "Not Feasible at Present"



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The former governor of Tehran has said that relocating Iran's capital city is currently unrealistic and remains more of a political slogan than a practical plan, as the necessary infrastructure in other locations is not yet in place.

Alireza Fakhari, speaking to ILNA about solutions to Tehran's ongoing crises and entrenched urban challenges, stated that some problems can be addressed in the short term, while others require long-term planning and new policy measures from the government.

"Unfortunately, the lifespan of governments is too short to see certain measures through to completion," Fakhari said. "In the short term, effective management and planning can help us make better use of God-given resources like water, electricity, and environmental assets."

Highlighting the problem of uneven population distribution, Fakhari stressed the need to move facilities and resources currently concentrated in Tehran to other provinces.

"When Tehran's capacity is full, the resources we distribute here should be transferred to smaller cities so others can benefit," he explained. "We must create jobs and economic opportunities in other regions so people aren't forced to move to the capital."

Fakhari criticized the concentration of banking services and production facilities in Tehran, calling it unjustifiable. He urged policymakers to relocate major industries to areas capable of absorbing more residents in order to balance population density.

"This requires long-term planning," he said. "If the government is serious, it should have a 25-year vision starting now, with decisions that future administrations are not allowed to reverse."

## One in Four Young Iranians Neither Working Nor Studying



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - A leading Iranian sociologist and public health researcher has warned that a growing number of young Iranians are falling into the NEET category - "Not in Employment, Education, or Training" - due to a combination of economic crisis, social change, and gender inequality.

Dr. Simin Kazemi, from the Social Determinants of Health Research Center at Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, told ILNA News that official figures show roughly 25% of Iranian youth are NEETs. The situation is particularly severe for women: "World Bank data for 2022 indicate that 37.8% of young Iranian women fall into this category, compared to 17.2% of young men," she said.

According to Kazemi, such gender gaps are common in economically struggling or highly unequal societies, but in Iran the divide extends beyond the 15-25 age group. "The employment gender gap affects all working-age women," she noted, adding that no significant policies have been implemented to address women's unemployment.

She argued that deep-rooted cultural attitudes within the government and society play a major role. "Employment is still seen as a male entitlement, with men viewed as breadwinners and women's expenses expected to be covered by fathers or husbands. This mindset prevents women's work from being recognized as a necessity," Kazemi explained.

In the labor market, distrust in women's abilities - especially younger women - means they are often hired only for low-paying jobs unrelated to their skills. This drives many to abandon job hunting altogether, which can artificially lower official unemployment rates without improving real employment.

The discouraging job climate also affects education, Kazemi warned: "When educated women remain unemployed, teenage girls and their families may see studying or seeking work as pointless."

## Iran and FATF to Hold First Direct Talks in Six Years



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Financial Intelligence Center has confirmed that the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has officially invited the head of the center to participate in in-person negotiations - the first such direct engagement in six years. The move follows recent steps by Tehran to address international concerns over money laundering and terrorism financing.

According to the center, the invitation was extended to Hadi Khani, Secretary of Iran's Supreme Council for the Prevention and Combating of Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing. The meeting is scheduled to take place in Madrid, Spain, and will focus on normalizing Iran's standing with FATF, suspending countermeasures, and ultimately removing the country from the so-called "blacklist" of high-risk jurisdictions.

FATF, the Paris-based global watchdog, sets standards for combating illicit financial flows and evaluates countries' compliance through regular assessments. Iran was placed on the FATF blacklist in February 2020 after failing to enact key reforms, including the ratification of certain UN conventions seen as vital for transparency and cooperation.

One of FATF's key demands has been Iran's accession to the Palermo Convention - the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime - and its complementary treaty, the Convention on Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT).

After years of political back-and-forth between Iran's parliament, the Guardian Council, and the Expediency Council, the Palermo Convention was finally ratified earlier this year. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is now working to deposit the ratification instrument with the UN's treaty office, a formal requirement for the convention to take full legal effect internationally.

In a letter dated August 5, 2025, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, Saeed Iravani, informed UN Secretary-General António Guterres that, on government orders, the ratification document for the Palermo Convention would be formally deposited. The letter noted that the convention had been signed by then-Deputy Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi on July 30, 2025.

Iran had initially signed the Palermo Convention on December 12, 2000, but the process of ratifying it into law faced repeated political and legal hurdles. The parliament approved the bill in 2017, but objections from the Guardian Council stalled progress. Only in May 2025 did the Expediency Council - which arbitrates disputes between parliament and the Guardian Council - approve the measure.

On May 21, 2025, Iran's parliament speaker formally conveyed the ratification to the president for implementation under Article 123 of the Iranian constitution.

The Palermo Convention is one of four international treaties FATF considers essential for full compliance with its standards. Iran has already joined two of the four. Ratifying the CFT treaty - which addresses terrorism financing specifically - remains the final step toward fulfilling FATF's core demands.

Experts say completing this process could significantly improve Iran's global financial reputation, making it easier to reestablish banking ties and expand economic relations despite ongoing sanctions and geopolitical tensions.

"Joining the CFT, as the complement to Palermo, would be another crucial step toward building international trust in Iran's financial transparency," analysts note. "Completing all four FATF conventions could remove major obstacles to engagement with the global banking system."

Iran's blacklisting by FATF has compounded the country's financial isolation, making cross-border payments more costly and cumbersome, even with countries not enforcing U.S. sanctions. Suspension of FATF countermeasures could give Iran a modest but tangible boost in trade facilitation, while signaling a willingness to cooperate with global anti-crime frameworks.

The upcoming Madrid meeting is therefore being viewed as a potential turning point. If progress is made, Iran could begin the process of exiting FATF's blacklist for the first time since 2019, though analysts caution that significant compliance steps - including CFT ratification - are still needed.

For now, Tehran appears to be using the Palermo ratification as a confidence-building measure to restart dialogue with FATF, breaking a diplomatic deadlock that has lasted more than half a decade.

## Iranian Civilization's Development Hinges on Public Participation

TEHRAN - Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, during a visit to the Nasser al-Din Shah-era Naseri Palace in Shahr-e Kord, emphasized the need to hand over the management of historical sites to the public. He stated that without the involvement of the private sector, not only is the restoration of cultural heritage impossible, but the progress of Iranian civilization-building will also slow down.

Seyyed Reza Salehi Amiri, speaking on Thursday, August 6, 2025, during his inspection of the historic Naseri Palace in Shahr-e Kord, Alborz Province, stressed the importance of intelligently transferring management of historical sites to the public. "Our experience in cultural heritage has proven that the government should not see itself as the sole executor of projects. Instead, by trusting the people, we must create opportunities for private sector participation in restoring historic sites," he said.

Pointing to the remarkable progress of the palace's restoration project—which in recent years was entrusted to a private investor—Salehi Amiri noted that the complex has now reached a stage where it can serve as a successful and inspiring model for similar initiatives. This example, he said, fully aligns with the official policy of the ministry and the Fund for the Development and Restoration of Historical Sites.

The minister reported that more than 70% of the palace's restoration is complete, with three key steps remaining for its final opening: Completion of infrastructure installations, Equipping spaces to meet national-level hotel standards, and Systematic promotion of the site's cultural value to the public nationwide.

Recalling the palace's historical significance dating back to the reign of Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar, Salehi Amiri said Naseri Palace—beyond its architectural and cultural identity—has the potential to



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

become an outstanding cultural and tourism complex. Plans include establishing a boutique hotel, traditional restaurant, art gallery, and cultural spaces, which could help promote public culture, attract tourists, and achieve economic sustainability in the region.

Praising the cultural approach of the project's investor, the minister added: "This is more than a purely economic venture—it reflects a responsible and committed view toward Iran's civilizational heritage. Despite no guarantee of rapid return on investment, the investor has entered the

field with a cultural vision and has borne significant costs to preserve the nation's identity."

Highlighting Iran's rich tangible heritage, Salehi Amiri pointed to provinces such as Yazd, Neyshabur, Sabzevar, and Karaj as home to unparalleled historical treasures. If paired with public and private sector involvement, these assets could resolve many development challenges in the cultural and tourism sectors.

Reaffirming the ministry's strategic policy of expanding tourism opportunities nationwide, he stressed that sustainable growth requires showcasing underutilized capacities such as historic villages, caravanserais, eco-lodges, and palaces like Naseri. "Hundreds of historic caravanserais in Iran are now on the UNESCO World Heritage list. If properly promoted and equipped, they could become engines of national development," he said.

In conclusion, the minister expressed gratitude to the Governor of Alborz Province, the project's investor, and the relevant managers, expressing hope that with collective effort, Naseri Palace will be fully operational by the end of this year. From next year, he added, it will serve the public and cultural heritage enthusiasts as a cultural, hospitality, and tourism destination showcasing Iran's proud legacy.

## Major Overhaul of SP Gas Complex's Fifth Refinery Completed Successfully



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The director of the Fifth Refinery of the South Pars Gas Complex announced that the facility's major overhaul has been successfully completed without any accidents, thanks to the round-the-clock efforts of staff and strict adherence to safety standards.

According to the Oil Ministry, Kambiz Safati emphasized that completing the overhaul incident-free is a testament to the refinery workforce's deep commitment to maintaining the highest operational and safety standards.

Highlighting the scope of the project, Safati revealed that more than 5,700 work permits were issued during the maintenance period. This, he noted, reflects not only the vast scale of activities undertaken but also the team's unwavering commitment to established safety protocols in authorizing each task. "Through the tireless dedication of all colleagues, particularly the Health, Safety, and Environment (HSE) teams, we successfully navigated this critical phase without a single incident," he said.

Safati outlined several key factors behind this achievement, including: Delivering top-quality safety training sessions for the specialized overhaul teams; Holding briefing meetings to draw lessons from past incidents in the oil and gas sector; Maintaining continuous 24/7 presence and monitoring at site entrances to prevent unauthorized access; and Conducting thorough and ongoing checks on all issued permits, especially those involving open-flame work, handled by HSE personnel.

He added that the overhaul was meticulously planned and executed to ensure the refinery's full readiness for safe and uninterrupted production during the winter season, a peak demand period. The operation also leveraged the expertise of overhaul specialists, the capabilities of the refinery's technical teams, and the products and knowledge of Iranian knowledge-based companies.

Expressing his appreciation for the operational and support teams, Safati described the successful completion as the result of teamwork, solidarity, and shared dedication among all employees. He stressed that the accomplishment reflects the refinery's culture of prioritizing safety and efficiency in all operations.

## Overhaul of 16 Offshore Platforms in South Pars Completed



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Deputy Director for Operations and Support at the Pars Oil and Gas Company announced that major overhauls on 16 offshore gas platforms in the South Pars field have been completed this year, with work on one more currently underway. The remaining platforms are scheduled for completion by the end of October.

Speaking to IRNA, Sepahdar Abbaszadeh provided detailed updates on the company's ambitious program to overhaul 35 offshore oil and gas platforms in South Pars during the current operational year.

Abbaszadeh explained that the annual overhaul of South Pars platforms is strategically scheduled in the first half of the year to ensure the company - which supplies more than 70% of the country's gas consumption and over 40% of its gasoline - is fully prepared for the colder months. "Overhauls generally start in April or early May and continue through the end of October," he said. "This year, we planned to complete 35 overhauls. So far, 16 have been finalized, one is in progress, and the rest will be completed on schedule."

According to Abbaszadeh, the duration of each overhaul varies depending on the scope of work required for each platform. Up to this stage, 6,150 work orders have been registered and executed, consuming a total of 54,759 man-hours.

Key tasks in the overhaul program include replacing 32-inch pipeline bends, repairing and replacing heavy 15-ton valves, inspecting and repairing high-pressure vessels, testing and calibrating platform control systems, inspecting and servicing flare ignition and lighting systems, and calibrating safety valves that regulate pressure.



## Lukashenko Signals This May Be His Final Term

MINSK (Dispatches) - Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said in an interview published on Friday that he did not intend to seek another term, and denied he was lining up his son as a successor.

Lukashenko, a close ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, has led Belarus through more than three decades of authoritarian rule and was re-elected in January for a seventh five-year term.

In a long interview with TIME magazine, Lukashenko, 70, said he was "not planning" to seek re-election, although he teasingly added that U.S. President Donald Trump was "looking decent" at nearly 80.

He said that whoever replaced him should "not break anything right away" but keep developing the country in order to avoid any "revolutionary breakdown".



## China's July Consumer Prices Flat, Factory-Gate Prices Miss Forecast



BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's consumer prices were unchanged in July, while producer prices fell more than expected, underscoring the impact of sluggish domestic demand and persistent trade uncertainty on consumer and business sentiment.

Factory-gate prices have been declining for more than two years, and Saturday's data suggest early-stage efforts to tackle price competition have yet to yield results.

Deflationary pressures have prompted Chinese authorities to address overcapacity in key industries. However, the latest round of industrial restructuring appears to be a pared-down version of the sweeping supply-side reforms launched a decade ago that were pivotal in ending a deflationary spiral.

The consumer price index (CPI) was flat year-on-year in July, compared with a 0.1% rise in June, National Bureau of Statistics data showed on Saturday, beating a Reuters poll forecast of a 0.1% slide.

Food prices fell 1.6%, following a 0.3% decline in June.

Extreme weather added to the economic strain, with sweltering heat gripping much of China's eastern seaboard last month and heavier-than-usual downpours lashing the country with the East Asian monsoon stalling over its north and south.

On a monthly basis, the CPI edged up 0.4%, against a 0.1% drop in June and exceeding forecasts for a 0.3% rise.

Core inflation, which excludes volatile food and fuel prices, was 0.8% in July from a year earlier, quickening from June's 0.7%.

A prolonged housing downturn and a fragile trade truce with the U.S. are weighing on consumer spending and factory activity.

## India Pauses Plans to Buy U.S. Arms After Trump's Tariffs



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - New Delhi has put on hold its plans to procure new U.S. weapons and aircraft, according to three Indian officials familiar with the matter, in India's first concrete sign of discontent after tariffs imposed on its exports by President Donald Trump dragged ties to their lowest level in decades.

India had been planning to send Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to Washington in the coming weeks for an announcement on some of the purchases, but that trip has been cancelled, two of the people said.

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Trump on Aug. 6 imposed an additional 25% tariff on Indian goods as punishment for Delhi's purchases of Russian oil, which he said meant the country was funding Russia's invasion of Ukraine. That raised the total duty on Indian exports to 50% - among the highest of any U.S. trading partner.

The president has a history of rapidly reversing himself on tariffs and India has said it remains actively engaged in discussions with Washington. One of the people said the defence purchases could go ahead once India had clarity on tariffs and the direction of bilateral ties, but "just not as soon as they were expected to."

# Trump Brokers Breakthrough Peace Deal Between Armenia and Azerbaijan

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Azerbaijan and Armenia signed a U.S.-brokered peace agreement yesterday during a meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump that would boost bilateral economic ties after decades of conflict and move them toward a full normalization of their relations.

The deal between the South Caucasus rivals — assuming it holds — would be a significant accomplishment for the Trump administration that is sure to rattle Moscow, which sees the region as within its sphere of influence.

"It's a long time — 35 years — they fought and now they're friends, and they're going to be friends for a long time," Trump said at a signing ceremony at the White House, where he was flanked by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have been at odds since the late 1980s when Nagorno-Karabakh, a mountainous Azerbaijani region mostly populated by ethnic Armenians, broke away from Azerbaijan with support from Armenia. Azerbaijan took back full control of the region in 2023, prompting almost all of the territory's 100,000 ethnic Armenians to flee to Armenia.

Trump said the two countries had committed to stop fighting, open up diplomatic relations and respect each other's territorial integrity.

The agreement includes exclusive US development rights to a strategic transit corridor through the South Caucasus that the White House said would facilitate greater exports of energy and other resources.

Trump said the United States signed separate deals with each country to expand cooperation on energy, trade and technology, including artificial intelligence. Details were not released.

He said restrictions had also been lifted on defense cooperation between Azerbaijan and the United States, a development that could also worry Moscow.

Both leaders praised Trump for helping to end the conflict and said they would nominate him for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Trump has tried to present himself as a global peacemaker in the first months of his second term. The White House credits him with brokering a ceasefire between Cambodia and Thailand and sealing peace deals between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Pakistan and India.

However, he has not managed to end Russia's 3-1/2-year-old war in Ukraine or Israel's conflict with Hamas in Gaza. Trump yesterday said he would meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska on August 15 to work on ending the war.



U.S. officials said the agreement was hammered out during repeated visits to the region and would provide a basis for working toward a full normalization between the countries.

The peace deal could transform the South Caucasus, an energy-producing region neighbouring Russia, Europe, Turkey and Iran that is criss-crossed by oil and gas pipelines but riven by closed borders and longstanding ethnic conflicts.

Brett Erickson, a sanctions expert and adviser to Loyola University's Chicago School of Law, said the agreement would help the West crack down on Russian efforts to evade sanctions.

"The Caucasus has been a blind spot in sanctions policy," he said. "A formal peace creates a platform for the West to engage Armenia and Azerbaijan ... to shut down the evasion pipelines."

Tina Dolbaia, an associate fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said yesterday's signing was a big symbolic move, but many questions remained, including which US companies might control the new transit corridor and how involved Armenia and Azerbaijan would be in its construction.

She said Russia would likely be irritated by being excluded from the agreement and the US role in the corridor. "Now the fact that ... Armenians are shaking hands with Azerbaijanis, and they are talking about US involvement in this corridor — this is huge for Russia," she said.

Olesya Vartanyan, an independent regional expert, said the deal added greater predictability to the region, but its long-term prospects would depend on continued US engagement.

"Armenia and Azerbaijan ... have a much longer track record of failed negotiations and violent escalations than of peaceful resolutions," she said. "Without proper and continued US involvement, the issue will likely get deadlocked again, increasing the chances of renewed tensions."

Senior administration officials said the agreement marked the end to the first of several frozen conflicts on Russia's periphery since the end of the Cold War, sending a powerful signal to the entire region.

Armenia plans to award the U.S. exclusive special development rights for an extended period on the transit corridor, U.S. officials told Reuters this week. The so-called Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity has already drawn interest from nine companies, including three US firms, one official said on condition of anonymity.

Azerbaijan, an oil-producing country that hosted the United Nations climate summit last November, has rejected Western criticism of its human rights record, describing it as unacceptable interference.

# Israel Plans to Take Control of Gaza City, Triggers Global Backlash

JERUSALEM (Dispatches) - Israel's military will "take control" of Gaza City under a new plan approved by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's security cabinet, touching off a wave of criticism from both inside and outside the country.

Nearly two years into the war in Gaza, Netanyahu faces mounting pressure to secure a truce to pull the territory's more than two million people back from the brink of famine and free the hostages held by Palestinian militants.

Israel's foe Hamas, whose October 7, 2023 attack triggered the war, denounced the plan to expand the fighting as a "new war crime".

Staunch Israeli ally Germany meanwhile took the extraordinary step of halting military exports out of concern they could be used in Gaza, a move Netanyahu slammed as a reward for Hamas.

Under the newly approved plan to "defeat" Hamas, the Israeli army "will prepare to take control of Gaza City while distributing humanitarian assistance to the civilian population outside combat zones", the premier's office said yesterday.

Netanyahu in a post on X said "we are not going to occupy Gaza — we are going to free Gaza from Hamas".

He said that the territory's demilitarisation and the establishment of "a peaceful civilian administration... will help free our hostages" and prevent future threats.

Israel occupied Gaza from 1967, but withdrew its troops and settlers in 2005. Netanyahu's office said the cabinet had adopted "five principles", including Gaza's demilitarisation and "the establishment of an alternative civil administration that is neither Hamas nor the Palestinian Authority".

The plan triggered swift criticism from across the globe, with China, Turkey, Britain and numerous Arab governments issuing statements of concern. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the Israeli plan a "dangerous escalation" that risks "deepening the already catastrophic consequences for millions of Palestinians".

Diplomatic sources told AFP that the UN Security Council will meet tomorrow to discuss the plan.



Announcing the suspension of military shipments to Israel, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said it was "increasingly difficult to understand" how the new plan would help achieve legitimate aims.

In Israel, there were mixed reactions to the cabinet's decision, while Defence Minister Israel Katz said the military had already begun preparing for its implementation.

The main campaign group for hostages' families also slammed the plan, saying it amounted to "abandoning" the captives.

"The cabinet chose last night to embark on another march of recklessness, on the backs of the hostages, the soldiers, and Israeli society as a whole," the Hostage and Missing Families Forum said.

Out of 251 hostages captured during Hamas's 2023 attack, 49 are still being held in Gaza, including 27 the military says are dead.

An expanded Israeli offensive could see ground troops operate in densely populated areas where hostages are believed to be held, local media have reported.

Some Israelis, meanwhile, offered their support. "As they take control of Gaza, they will eliminate Hamas completely — maybe not completely, but at least a good percentage of them," said Chaim Klein, a 26-year-old yeshiva student.

The Israeli army said last month that it controlled 75 per cent of the Gaza Strip.

Gaza residents said they feared further displacement and attacks as they braced for the next onslaught.

"They tell us to go south, then back north, and now they want to send us south again. We are human beings, but no one hears us or sees us," Maysa al-Shanti, a 52-year-old mother of six, told AFP.

Hamas said the "plans to occupy Gaza City and evacuate its residents constitutes a new war crime".

It warned Israel that the operation would "cost it dearly", and that "expanding the aggression means sacrificing" the hostages held by militants.

International concern has been growing over the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza, where a UN-backed assessment has warned that famine is unfolding.

The World Health Organization said at least 99 people have died from malnutrition in the territory this year, with the figure likely an underestimate.

Gaza's civil defense agency said a 19-year-old was seriously injured during the delivery of aid by an airdrop over Gaza City.

"There are daily injuries and fatalities caused by the heavy parcels falling on people's heads in densely populated areas," said civil defense spokesman Mahmud Bassal, adding that stampedes and overcrowding at aid drop sites frequently lead to casualties.

Bassal said Israeli strikes across Gaza yesterday killed at least 16 people.

Israel in recent months has eased some restrictions on aid entering Gaza, but the United Nations says the amount allowed into the territory remains insufficient.

Israel's offensive has killed over 61,000 Palestinians, according to Hamas-run Gaza's health ministry.

# Trump, Putin to Hold Alaska Summit on Ending Ukraine War on August 15

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) — U.S. President Donald Trump will meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin to negotiate an end to the war in Ukraine on August 15 in Alaska, Trump said.

Trump made the announcement on social media after he said that the parties, including Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, were close to a ceasefire deal that could resolve the three-and-a-half-year conflict, one that could require Ukraine to surrender significant territory.

Addressing reporters at the White House earlier yesterday, Trump suggested an agreement would involve some exchange of land.

"There'll be some swapping of territories to the betterment of both," the Republican president said.

In his evening address to the nation yesterday, Zelenskyy said it was possible to achieve a ceasefire as long as adequate pressure was applied to Russia. He said he had held more than a dozen conversations with leaders of different countries and his team was in constant contact with the United States.

Putin claims four Ukrainian regions — Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson — as well as the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea, which he annexed in 2014. His forces



do not fully control all the territory in the four regions.

Earlier, Bloomberg News reported that U.S. and Russian officials were working towards an agreement that would lock in Moscow's occupation of territory seized during its military invasion.

A White House official said the Bloomberg story was speculation. A Kremlin spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment.

Ukraine has previously signalled a willingness to be flexible in the search for an end to a war that has ravaged its towns and cities and killed large numbers of its soldiers and citizens.

But accepting the loss of around a fifth of Ukraine's territory would be painful and politically challenging for Zelenskyy and his government.

Tyson Barker, the US State Department's former deputy special representative for Ukraine's economic recovery, said the peace proposal as outlined in the Bloomberg report would be immediately rejected by the Ukrainians.

"The best the Ukrainians can do is remain firm in their objections and their conditions for a negotiated settlement, while demonstrating their gratitude for American support," said Barker, a senior fellow with the Atlantic Council.





## Toronto Champion Shelton to Start Cincy Against Argentine Outsider

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - World number seven Shelton arrived in the American Midwest on a private jet after winning his first Masters 1000 title in Toronto on Thursday night and will make his start after a first-round bye in the final major tune-up before the US Open begins on August 25.

The 47th-ranked Ugo Carabelli dominated 2014 US Open finalist Nishikori as the former top Asian in tennis succumbed to 42 unforced errors and lost serve five times.

The Japanese player was competing for the first time since retiring injured at Geneva in mid-May.

Ugo Carabelli has played his best on clay, reaching four semi-finals on the dirt this season.

As Cincinnati fifth seed and with confidence still strong, the 22-year-old Shelton could be a formidable contender for a pre-Open title double.

"I hope that this (Toronto) week kick starts me and gets me more consistent with the type of tennis that I want to play day-in and day-out," he said in Canada.

"It's certainly going to push me to work harder. I feel like I have a good grasp now on the things that really work for me against guys who are playing some of the best tennis in the world, and the things that I need to continue to work on."

Back-to-back events running 12 days each might be a fitness wild card as the bloated schedules of the ATP-WTA tournaments become commonplace.

Fellow top 10 players including Novak Djokovic -- who is skipping Cincinnati -- Alex de Minaur and world number one Jannik Sinner have all come out in favor of the old school one-week tournament format.

Borna Coric, who was ranked 152nd when he won the title in 2022, fell at the first hurdle, a 6-3, 7-5 victim of American qualifier Emilio Nava.

Coric has lost all six of his ATP-level matches in 2025, winning his last in December at the United Cup in Australia.

In WTA action, Caroline Garcia, the former top 10 player from France who has plans to retire this year, played for the first time since Roland Garros in May and beat Briton Sonay Kartal 5-7, 6-4, 6-3.

After needing more than two hours to prevail in a roller-coaster match, Garcia admitted that as she battled

in the sweltering heat she had moments when she wondered why.

"For a couple of minutes that was going on in my head," she said. "It was so hot, so tough out there, I didn't play a lot of matches in the last couple of months. At the end of the first set I was exhausted.

"I felt like I let my opportunity go away, and it was a long way to the end of the match.

"But for some reason I got a lot of support from my team and the people here, and I wanted to try to the end," added Garcia, who has a wild card for the US Open, which will be her last tournament.

French compatriot Leolia Jeanjean also advanced with 7-5, 1-6, 6-4 win over Yulia Starodubtseva.

American Taylor Townsend handed compatriot Danielle Collins her fourth first-round loss here in five appearances, 6-4, 7-6 (7/2).

Meanwhile Canadian teenager Victoria Mboko staged a stunning comeback 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.

"These past two weeks have been insane," said Mboko, who began the year ranked number 333.

"Even getting the wild card to play here ... I was super happy to be playing in Montreal for the first time ever. I just remember feeling nervous, but really taking in the moment as much as I possibly could.

"When I won my first round, I was super happy and super content. I would have never thought that I would have made it to the final let alone win the tournament.

"I have so many emotions going through my head, I can't even express it.

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.

## Reinforced Real Aim to Dethrone Barca and Their Attacking Juggernaut

MADRID (Dispatches) - Barcelona were unstoppable last season, winning a remarkable LaLiga and Copa del Rey double with 174 goals in 60 matches, but this term they face a very different Real Madrid side promising a tactical revolution under new coach Xabi Alonso.

Inspired by teenage phenomenon Lamine Yamal, Hansi Flick's Barca dominated Spanish football in the German's first season, including scoring 16 goals in four consecutive wins over Real.

They have added loanee Marcus Rashford to a loaded attack featuring Yamal, Robert Lewandowski, Raphinha and Dani Olmo.

But defensive frailties exposed in the Champions League semi-final extra-time loss to Inter Milan are a question mark.

They start the season with new goalkeeper Joan Garcia, whose signing from city rivals Espanyol has created a major feud with veteran Marc-Andre ter Stegen, who had been stripped of the captaincy amid disciplinary proceedings over his injury status.

Alonso has new weapons at his disposal to challenge the champions, including full back Trent Alexander-Arnold from Liverpool and 20-year-old Netherlands-born Spain centre-back Dean Huijsen, who arrived from Bournemouth after Real



activated his 50 million pounds (\$67.15 million) release clause.

The club also signed Spanish left-back Alvaro Carrera from Benfica for 50 million euros, wrapping up some much needed defensive additions following a trophy-less campaign under Carlo Ancelotti before he left for the Brazil job.

The new Real manager must also address attacking issues, with Kylian Mbappe and Vinicius Jr still having to show their true potential playing together, while academy forward Gonzalo's Club World Cup emergence adds more pieces to a puzzle involving Rodrygo, Endrick and Brahim Diaz who all expect playing time.

Atletico Madrid begin the season looking to end a four-year trophy drought with club great Diego Simeone under pressure like never before during his 13-year reign.

They have added Spain's Alex Baena for 50 million euros and Argentina sensation Thiago Almada from Copa Libertadores champions Botafogo to a stellar squad featuring Julian Alvarez, Antoine Griezmann, Conor Gallagher and Jan Oblak.

## Praggnanandhaa Looks to Achieve the No. 1 Chess Ranking

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India has become a major power in international chess led by its highest-ranked player, Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa. He's No. 4 in the world, one place above compatriots Gukesh Dommaraju, the current world champion, and Arjun Erigaisi, who are tied for fifth.

Praggnanandhaa, who will celebrate his 20th birthday on Sunday, has an ambition to be the best. Beating the current No. 1 Magnus Carlsen in 2022, when Praggnanandhaa was congratulated by India cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar, was an early sign that his ambition is realistic.

"I can become world No. 1 and world champion," he told The Associated Press.

He said the presence of his Indian compatriots near the top of the rankings helps.

"We all push each other. Gukesh winning the world



championship inspired me to push myself. We are growing together and it's good for all of us," he said.

At 12 years and 10 months, 'Pragg' became one of the youngest-ever grand masters, the title awarded to exceptional players by the world's chess federation.

"I think (in India) all of us have these common traits that I think comes from the Indian background. I think we are all, hard-working and we focus on improving more, rather than results ... but it is an individual sport, so people have their own strengths and weaknesses."

In 2023, he was praised by India Prime Minister Narendra Modi for beating the second- and third-ranked players to make it to the World Cup final — India accounted for four of the last eight in the tournament — where he was beaten by Carlsen.

## Kane Among Goalscorers as Dismal Tottenham Thrashed



LONDON (Dispatches) - Harry Kane was on the score-sheet as Bayern Munich thrashed Tottenham 4-0 at the Allianz Arena. The hosts dominated the game and could have won by a bigger margin.

Bayern took the lead early on through former Tottenham striker Kane, who then missed the golden chance to make it 2-0 as Josip Stanisic's run into the box was not tracked until Joao Palhinha — who moved on loan from Bayern to Spurs last week — brought him down.

Kane stepped up but blasted high over Guglielmo Vicario's crossbar in a let-off for Tottenham, but the chances kept coming.

Kingsley Coman doubled Bayern's lead on the hour mark after the hosts missed a series of great opportunities. 17-year-old Lennart Karl then extended the home side's advantage with a first-timed curled effort from just outside the box before Jonah Kusi-Asare finished the rout with a stunning finish. Luis Diaz made his first start for Bayern after signing from Premier League champions Liverpool this summer.

Tottenham take on Paris St-Germain in the Uefa Super Cup next Wednesday in Udine before kicking off their Premier League campaign against Burnley at home on August 16.

For Bayern, they will play Grasshoppers in their final friendly before facing Stuttgart in the German Super Cup. They then begin the defence of their Bundesliga crown at home to RB Leipzig on August 22.

Thomas Frank will not have appreciated having such a difficult friendly arranged so close to the season's start, with very little gained from the defeat.

## Rockets-Thunder, Warriors-Lakers on NBA Opening Night



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The opening night of the 2025-26 NBA season will star LeBron James, Stephen Curry, Kevin Durant and reigning Most Valuable Player Shai Gilgeous-Alexander in a Western Conference doubleheader.

The Houston Rockets will visit the Oklahoma City Thunder and the Golden State Warriors will play at the Los Angeles Lakers on Oct. 21 to tip off the new season, ESPN and The Athletic reported Friday.

The Rockets are Durant's newest team, and he'll have to sit and watch one of his former teams, the Thunder, raise their first championship banner before the game. The Warriors and Lakers will meet after as James enters his eighth season with Los Angeles while Luka Doncic begins his first full season with the Lake Show.

The doubleheader will serve as the first regular-season NBA games broadcast by NBC in 23 years. The upcoming season marks the start of a new media rights deal that places games on NBC and Amazon Prime Video while the league continues its relationship with Disney.

ABC and ESPN will present its customary five-game Christmas Day slate, the reports also revealed, with a heavy Western Conference influence:

- Cleveland Cavaliers at New York Knicks
- San Antonio Spurs at Oklahoma City Thunder
- Houston Rockets at Los Angeles Lakers
- Dallas Mavericks and Golden State Warriors
- Minnesota Timberwolves at Denver Nuggets

The Rockets-Lakers game will pit Durant against James, while Klay Thompson again visits Golden State as a member of the Mavericks.

The Spurs-Thunder rivalry continues to blossom, as well, with star centers Victor Wembanyama and Chet Holmgren slated to go face to face.

Meanwhile Miami Heat forward Haywood Highsmith underwent surgery on Friday to repair a meniscus tear in his right knee.