

Iran's Agriculture Minister Says the Country Has Cut Its Agricultural Imports Bill by More Than a Half Amid the Government's Tighter Currency Controls

IRAN NEWS

Governor of Ilam Ahmad Karami Says a Total of 2,056,215 Arbaeen Pilgrims Have Crossed the Mehran International Border Into Neighboring Iraq

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Iran to Ink Security Agreement With Iraq Soon



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Ali Larijani, says that a security agreement between Iran and Iraq is currently being drafted and will be signed soon.

Larijani said on Monday, before embarking on a regional tour to Iraq and Lebanon, that Iran's security is dependent on the security of its neighbors.

The official said that his upcoming visit consists of two parts, with the first leg taking place in Iraq—a friendly neighboring country with which Iran maintains close trade relations.

Larijani expressed appreciation for the cooperation between the two nations, particularly during the Arbaeen pilgrimage, and thanked the Iraqi government in advance for its significant support in facilitating services for pilgrims.

He noted that an important security agreement has been drafted with Iraq, emphasizing that Iran's approach to its relationships with neighbors prioritizes the security of the Iranian people while also considering the security of neighboring nations.

As to Lebanon, he termed the Arab country as a significant and influential state in West Asia that shares civilizational ties with Iran and has extensive cooperation on regional issues.

In Lebanon, discussions will be held with officials and influential figures regarding the ongoing development, national unity, Lebanon's independence, enhanced trade relations, and security developments, he said.

World Urged to Strive to End Israel's Crimes, Blockade of Gaza



TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian says all countries in the world must make serious efforts to end Israel's crimes in Gaza and lift the blockade of the Strip.

Pezeshkian made the remarks on Sunday as he received the credentials of new ambassadors of Ethiopia, Estonia, Djibouti, Laos, Cambodia, Burundi, Latvia, Myanmar, and Nepal.

He said the Israeli regime is proceeding with and even escalating its crimes against the defenseless and oppressed people of Palestine in the Gaza Strip.

"All world countries, especially Muslim nations, must make more serious efforts and cooperate to stop these crimes [in Gaza], lift the blockade, and provide unlimited and extensive aid to the innocent people of Gaza," the Iranian president emphasized.

He warned that an "inhumane catastrophe" was unfolding in Gaza, where Israel is killing innocent people and blocking access to food, water, and medicine in the name of self-defense.

"The greater tragedy is that these crimes are being committed in front of the eyes of those who claim to advocate for human rights, democracy, and the freedom of humanity," Pezeshkian said.

Israel stopped all aid deliveries to Gaza on March 2, after baselessly claiming that the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas is "diverting aid" to justify its weaponization of food against its 2.3 million civilians.

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK



FM Spokesman: "We Have Never Trusted the U.S."

TEHRAN - oreign Ministry Spokesman Esmacil Baghaei reaffirmed Tehran's deep mistrust toward the United States, asserting that Washington's conduct during past negotiations had "left no room for even zero trust." Speaking at his weekly press conference, Baghaei also emphasized Iran's long-standing commitment to Lebanon's independence, defended the right of resistance movements to remain armed, and confirmed that a high-level security agreement between Iran and Iraq will be finalized during the current visit of National Security Council Secretary Ali Larijani to Baghdad.

Asked whether Iran could ever trust the U.S., Baghaei responded bluntly: "We have no trust in America. Even while we were negotiating, we did not trust them. What they did in the middle of the talks removed any possibility for even zero trust. The guarantee for our independence is our own capabilities, which our armed forces continue to strengthen." He accused Washington of green-lighting Israeli military actions against Iran during negotiations, calling U.S. claims about Iran being a threat "ridiculous."

Turning to regional issues, Baghaei reiterated Iran's "proven stance" in support of Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence. Responding to questions about proposals to disarm Lebanese resistance groups, he said, "It is Lebanon's inherent right to defend itself against the aggressions of the Zionist regime, and exercising this right is impossible without weapons. Any decision in this regard belongs solely to the Lebanese people."

He added that Tehran had always stood by the Lebanese nation in resisting Israeli "malice," rejecting outside interference that undermines Beirut's defense capabilities.

On Larijani's trip to Iraq, Baghaei said the visit is part of ongoing consultations with neighbors, rooted in Iran's "policy of good-neighborliness." He confirmed that the text of a bilateral security understanding had already been finalized and would be signed during the visit. Talks would also address regional developments and matters potentially affecting the security of both countries.

Larijani's itinerary also includes a trip to Lebanon, aimed at "protecting peace in West Asia" through dialogue with relevant Lebanese officials.

Condemning Israeli operations in Gaza, Baghaei accused Tel Aviv of pursuing the total destruction of Palestine, both in Gaza and the West Bank. "The excuses offered to justify the massacres are absurd," he said, adding that many nations had condemned the plan. He urged the international community to block what he called "the continuation of genocide in Gaza."

Baghaei also decried recent killings of journalists in Palestine, calling such attacks war crimes, and lamented the global community's "inaction" in the face of such abuses.

Addressing developments in the South Caucasus, Baghaei said Iran maintains close contact with

President Dismisses Media Overstatements About Zangezur Corridor



TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Masoud Pezeshkian has dismissed "media overstatements" regarding the so-called Zangezur corridor, which could connect Azerbaijan and Armenia, noting that Iran's concerns regarding the issue have been largely taken into account.

The chief executive made the remarks while addressing reporters on the sidelines of a meeting of his administration in the capital, Tehran, on Sunday.

"Regarding this corridor, I must say it is not what has been reported in an overstated manner in the news, and according to what the foreign minister has explained, the demands of the Islamic Republic have been met," he said.

Speaking earlier, the top diplomat, Abbas Araqchi, defined those demands as respect for regional countries' sovereignty, respect for their territorial integrity, and opposition to any change in regional borders.

Araqchi had also said the issue of the "corridor" had been completely set aside, noting that the matter at hand rather concerned potential construction of a transit road under Armenian sovereignty and jurisdiction.

The official, however, had raised concerns about potential involvement of an American company in the project, saying the Islamic Republic had broached the issue with Armenian and Azerbaijani officials. "We closely monitor [various] developments [on the ground]."

Pezeshkian likewise expressed Tehran's concern only about potential involvement of an American company in the project.

According to Araqchi, a phone call was expected to take place between him and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan within the framework of the countries' ongoing mutual consultations.

He also said he expected another call by Armenia's Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan on Monday, while Mirzoyan's deputy was scheduled to travel to Tehran on Tuesday.

The plan to set up the transit road has reportedly been included in a United States-coordinated "peace deal" signed recently between Yerevan and Baku at the White House.

In reaction to the agreement, the Islamic Republic has welcomed regional peace, but invariably warned about the repercussions of foreign intervention in the region, stressing that it constantly observes ongoing regional developments as a means of guarding against uncalculated meddling.

Tehran has cited the drawn-out precedence of dangerous military and political meddling by Washington and its allies, underlining that the regional nations were able to ensure the region's stability and prosperity independently and by relying on their own resources and mutual cooperation.

IAEA Official Due in Tehran, No Nuclear Sites Inspection Planned



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi says the deputy head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will travel to Tehran for talks, but visits to nuclear sites will not be part of the agenda.

Speaking to reporters, Araqchi said during the UN nuclear agency's official trip, the sides are scheduled to hold talks about a new framework for Iran-IAEA cooperation.

"There is no plan for any inspection. We have not yet reached an agreement on a new framework [for cooperation] and until we reach this new framework, no cooperation will begin," he added.

He emphasized that the new framework will be based on a parliamentary law suspending Tehran's full cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog.

On June 25, the Iranian Parliament unanimously passed a law mandating the government to suspend all cooperation with the IAEA. Under the law, the agency's inspectors will not be permitted to enter Iran unless the security of the country's nuclear facilities and that of peaceful nuclear activities is guaranteed, which is subject to the approval of the Supreme National Security Council.

In response to a question about fresh negotiations between Iran and the United States, Araqchi said the next round of talks has not been fixed yet.

He noted that indirect Tehran-Washington talks have not yet been finalized, adding that he does not confirm any country as the host of the negotiations.

Iran and the United States had held five rounds of indirect talks on Tehran's peaceful nuclear program before the Israeli regime launched a war of aggression on June 13.

Mediated by Oman, the 6th round of talks had been planned to be held in the Omani capital of Muscat on June 15, but was called off due to the Israeli attacks.

Enemies Cannot Tolerate Iran's Scientific Progress



TEHRAN - The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) and Vice President Mohammad Eslami has said that Iran's scientific and technological advancements lie beyond the tolerance of its adversaries.

Eslami stated: "The point of Iran's power lies in its achievements at the frontiers of knowledge—achievements that the enemy cannot bear. They want Iran to remain under domination, but God has clearly outlined our path in the Holy Qur'an, and the enemies of God and the Iranian people fear our science and progress."

Eslami emphasized that Iran has always advanced along the path of science and culture, and expressed confidence that, with the wisdom and leadership of the Supreme Leader, the nation will overcome the current challenges with dignity.

He further alleged that Israel and the United States have attacked nine Iranian facilities under constant monitoring by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), calling the actions a violation of all international laws. "We have consistently pursued knowledge and the development of peaceful technologies, and today the entire world is witnessing the criminal behavior of the Zionist regime in opposing scientific progress in Iran," he said.

Meanwhile he announced the launch of nine specialized clinics for plasma-based wound treatment across the country.

During the official opening ceremony of a new clinic at Rasoul Akram Hospital in Iran's capital, Tehran, Eslami said that five new centers were inaugurated. Currently, there are eight wound treatment centers operating in Tehran and one in Sabzevar, a northeastern city of Iran, providing services to patients, he added.

IRAN NEWS



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

Azerbaijan Says Will Launch Direct Flights to Tabriz

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Azerbaijan Airlines said that direct flights will be launched from Baku to Tabriz, and regular flights will be resumed to Tehran, starting early September.

Azerbaijan Airlines, known as AZAL, will launch direct flights to Iran's northwestern city of Tabriz.

According to Azer News, Azerbaijan's national flag carrier will launch direct flights on the new Baku-Tabriz-Baku route starting from September 3, 2025.

Flights on this route will be operated on Wednesdays and Sundays, according to the report.

In addition, starting from September 1, AZAL will resume its regular flights to Tehran, the capital of Iran.

Flights on the Baku-Tehran-Baku route will now be operated on Mondays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays.

Iran Earns \$7b From Tourism in 2023



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - According to a recent report by the Tourism Commission of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Iran generated only \$7 billion in tourism revenue in 2023. This figure stands in stark contrast to neighboring countries such as Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, which earned \$50 billion and \$52 billion respectively from tourism in the same year.

The report analyzed Iran's tourism sector performance, referencing data from the Sixth Development Plan's implementation report by the Planning and Budget Organization. The plan had targeted \$21 billion in tourism revenue for 2023 (Iranian year 1402), meaning Iran achieved only about 23% of this goal, falling short by approximately \$14 billion.

In comparison, the UAE and Turkey significantly outpaced Iran, underscoring a substantial gap in tourism income despite Iran's potential.

The report also highlights Saudi Arabia's ambitious tourism development strategy. The kingdom aims to boost leisure travel through large-scale projects and plans to guarantee \$80 billion in private investment by 2030. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia intends to inject around \$800 billion into the sector over the next decade, strengthening its commitment to expanding tourism.

Among Saudi Arabia's initiatives is the \$500 billion "NEOM" project — a planned megacity envisioned as a global tourism hub. Officials expect NEOM and other mega projects to position the country as a premier international destination.

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Saudi Arabia experienced a 56% increase in inbound tourists in 2023 compared to 2019. The organization also reported a 156% recovery rate in tourism arrivals for Saudi Arabia over the same period, signaling rapid growth post-pandemic.

Threefold Increase in Export Value Possible by Eliminating Raw Material Sales



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Deputy for International Business Development at Iran's Trade Promotion Organization announced the launch of an "Export Readiness Assessment" (ERA) program aimed at supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), backed by the organization. He highlighted that the current average export value per ton of Iranian goods stands at \$370 to \$380, but this figure could rise to approximately \$1,200 if raw material exports were eliminated.

Amir Roshanbakhsh spoke on Saturday about research conducted by the organization. He noted that globally, especially in China, 60% of exports are carried out by SMEs, which account for 90% of China's GDP and 80% of its employment. Similarly, in countries like Germany, 99% of companies are SMEs. These countries have built their exports on high-value-added and final products, resulting in not only increased national income but also sustainable employment.

Roshanbakhsh explained that Iran's Trade Promotion Organization has fundamentally launched the ERA scheme to support SMEs in export activities. The program found that many SMEs lack export knowledge but have the desire to enter this field. Companies that successfully complete the export readiness assessment can enter export markets directly, while those lacking readiness will collaborate with Export Management Companies (EMCs) to carry out their exports.

This cooperative model is being implemented nationwide for the first time. For example, a company aiming to export to Russia can utilize EMCs based in Russia who understand the market well. These EMCs analyze the target market, packaging needs, standards, and consumer preferences and relay this information to producers to tailor their goods accordingly.

Roshanbakhsh emphasized that this approach strengthens SMEs and encourages export-oriented production, which also improves domestic product quality. When quality export-oriented products are produced, more markets open up, and employment grows. Currently, the average export value per ton of Iranian goods is \$370-\$380; eliminating raw material exports could boost this figure to around \$1,200—nearly three times higher.

Passports Stalled at Embassies; Waiting for Refunds

TEHRAN - Recent regional events and the 12-day attack by the Zionist regime on Iran have not only led to the cancellation of over 250 international flights and caused a debt of 600 billion tomans owed by airlines and accommodation providers to travelers, but also, due to embassy closures, left many travelers stranded. These are individuals who had applied for visas long ago and needed to be in another country by a certain date.

According to IRNA, with the closure of some embassies during the 12-day Sacred Defense period, many Iranian passports submitted for visa applications remain stuck at embassies with no one to answer the public's inquiries. Among all travelers with specific travel goals, students holding student visas who must be in their study countries at scheduled times, and athletes needing to travel abroad for competitions or training camps, have been hit hardest by this disruption.

Omid Mohammad Ali Khan, a member of the Iranian Association of Travel Service Offices, said that during the 12-day Sacred Defense period, many people were in the process of obtaining visas. With the embassies closing, the passports of 3,000 to 4,000 people remain stuck and inaccessible at the embassies.

He added: "Embassies of Germany, France, Switzerland, and Spain usually receive about 3,000 visa applications. Now that these embassies have stopped accepting tourist visa applications, about 40,000 to 50,000 people are left in limbo."

Ali Khan emphasized: "Many who had appointments for visa interviews found their slots suspended due to embassy closures and are unsure whether to reschedule or what steps to take. Some embassies have responded that as soon as possible, they will reissue appointment times and visas to those who had appointments."

Most embassies remain affected by the conflict, have not resumed normal operations, and consular and visa issuance services remain halted in many of them. Currently, the Swiss Embassy in Iran has stopped issuing tourist visas, the French Embassy continues limited activities, the South African Embassy remains closed, the Brazilian Embassy has yet to reopen, and the Japanese Embassy announced it will reopen in a few days.

The head of the Iranian Association of Air Travel and Tourism Services Offices said: "Simultaneous with the Zionist regime's attack on Iran, over 250 international flights were canceled in two weeks, leaving more than 30,000 people stranded. Airlines and accommodation providers owe travelers more than 600 billion tomans."

Hormatollah Rafieci told IRNA: "Turkey and the UAE are busy routes for Iranian travelers, with about 70 flights weekly to Turkey and a similar number to Gulf countries. However, over 250 international flights were canceled in two weeks during the attack."

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He added: "After the conflict and flight cancellations, the government issued a directive asking travel agencies to refund travelers. However, this directive should have targeted airlines and accommodation providers, since travel agencies are only intermediaries between travelers and ticket sales. They cannot refund customers until these companies and platforms transfer money to the agencies."

"Refunds for canceled tickets must be urgently paid to travelers through agencies and platforms," he stressed.

Rafieci also said: "Travel agencies in Iran suffered over 2 trillion tomans in losses due to cancellations during the 12-day conflict. Moreover, they now owe a large number of travelers who had prepaid for airline tickets and hotel stays domestically and abroad."

Calling on regulatory bodies to expedite the return of money from airlines and

hotels to travel agencies, Rafieci said: "Many airlines still owe money to travel agencies and must refund them so agencies can return funds to travelers. Despite claims that 80% of refunds were made 10 days ago, this has not happened."

Referring to airline companies' claims that refunds have been returned to online ticket platforms, some of which travel agencies use to purchase tickets, he noted: "Even if true, no money has yet been returned from ticket and hotel platforms to travel agencies to pass on to travelers."

The Deputy Minister of Tourism at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts also told IRNA: "The suspension of visa issuance mainly affects European countries and is related to Foreign Ministry policies and bilateral relations. Currently, new visas for tourists are not being issued by these embassies."

Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpei stated that travel between Asian countries, Turkey, Russia, and China continues.

He noted: "Over 330,000 foreign tourists visited Iran in July, representing a 53% decrease compared to the same period last year."

Mohseni Bandpei attributed the drop in foreign tourists to the 12-day Zionist regime conflict and widespread false anti-Iran propaganda, adding: "These figures show that returning to pre-conflict conditions will not only take time but also require trust-building and comprehensive support for tourism facilities."

He said the ministry's programs focus on religious and cultural tourism, emphasizing regional and neighboring countries. Cultural and tourism food events have been added to the tourism calendar to boost both domestic and international tourism.

Regarding the refund of canceled flight and hotel bookings during the conflict, he said: "Hotel room refunds are processed through the booking channels, mostly via agencies. Flight ticket refunds are pursued through the Civil Aviation Organization, and foreign companies coordinate with agencies holding the necessary licenses."

Communications Minister Not Satisfied With Internet Quality

TEHRAN - Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Seyed Sattar Hashemi, said he is not satisfied with the quality of the country's internet services and stressed the need to provide citizens with higher-quality connectivity.

Speaking on Sunday evening in a meeting with members of the media, Hashemi referred to the recent wartime situation and its aftermath, noting that the communications sector had experienced worse internet quality in the past. He explained that disruptions occurred in the data network following reports from certain institutions regarding GPS systems and drone guidance.

"These disruptions, which are documented, also affected voice communications," he said. "We are determined to improve the quality of communications services and minimize disruptions, but security considerations cannot be ignored."

Hashemi said that some of the current issues stem from the recent conflict, and that the government is working to avoid a repeat of the situation in 2022. He noted that in the days following the recent war, problems such as network outages, dependency on foreign infrastructure, and the need to counter drones and cyberattacks had contributed to reduced service quality.

The minister stated that over the 12 days of the conflict and afterward, efforts were made to improve conditions, but cyberattacks and access restrictions persisted. He stressed that improving internet quality and restoring access to popular platforms will require international cooperation, which is progressing step by step but will take time.

Hashemi also underlined the importance of restoring hope to society and the country's talent pool, calling it a key factor in national protection and development. He pointed to the potential of 5G mobile technology and fiber-optic expansion to address challenges and improve infrastructure.

Addressing the use of VPNs and their implications for policy-making, Hashemi called for serious attention to technology and infrastructure development. He also highlighted rural connectivity projects and the need to provide internet access to remote areas, stressing the importance of advancing "smart government" services using modern technologies.

Hashemi said that the problems with internet quality and disruptions have been conveyed to decision-making bodies, along with the political and social consequences of the situation. "We must restore hope to society," he said. "If hope disappears, young people and experts will not remain in the country."

He emphasized that the Israeli attack on Iran, supported and participated in by the United States, had been unpredictable, and without it conditions would have been better. "Step by step, we are working to improve service quality. In our meetings, we have



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

insisted that those who stood with dignity and honor during the war deserve better services," he said.

Hashemi added that he had reiterated in cabinet meetings that neglecting the quality and security of the network could itself become a security issue. He acknowledged there are many obstacles, but said the government is trying to proceed with consensus.

Hashemi said expanding 5G and fiber-optic networks is a key strategy for improving internet services. He urged

media outlets to monitor the progress of projects and hold the ministry accountable. "Access to the internet is a key indicator of quality of life," he said, stressing that disruptions must be minimized given that much of daily life now depends on internet connectivity.

He also highlighted rural communications and space technology in telecommunications as priorities, encouraging the media to explain the benefits of space technology in public services.

Hashemi said developing a "smart government" is among the president's main demands of the ministry. Electronic government services will be pursued with a fresh approach, leveraging private-sector capabilities, and several major initiatives have been defined across various fields.

Recalling the wartime role of the postal service, he noted that during the conflict, Tehran's population temporarily relocated to other cities, and efforts were made to ensure communications remained intact despite infrastructure limitations in host areas.

The meeting, held on the occasion of National Reporter's Day on August 10, brought together senior ministry officials, journalists, and media activists. Hashemi congratulated reporters on their day and emphasized the media's role as a bridge between the public and officials. He said he preferred to listen more during the session to better understand the concerns of journalists and to make more effective decisions to improve communications services.

Journalists raised issues including the quality of the country's network, the ministry's authority in easing restrictions, and the need for openly addressing problems. They also proposed regular interactive meetings with ministry officials, clearer project updates, stronger engagement with foreign media, and regular public reporting on network conditions.

Some called for transparency regarding filtering policies and ongoing restrictions, as well as greater support for media businesses in the digital economy. Hashemi responded that such meetings would continue to enhance dialogue and cooperation between the ministry and the media.

The informal and open nature of the session, participants said, provided a valuable opportunity for direct engagement and could pave the way for broader collaboration in the future.

Business Environment Index Sees Slight Improvement in Spring



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Research Center of Iran Chamber of Commerce has reported a modest improvement in the country's business environment during spring, with the National Business Environment Index reaching 5.95, compared to 6.01 in the winter of the previous year. (In this index, 10 represents the worst possible evaluation.)

According to the Chamber's latest monitoring report, economic participants surveyed identified the five most problematic factors for doing business in Iran as: Unpredictability and fluctuations in the prices of raw materials and products; Difficulty in obtaining financing from banks; Instability in policies, laws; regulations, and executive procedures related to business; Unfair tax auditing and collection practices; and the relatively free production and distribution of substandard and counterfeit goods in the market.

The report also assessed the business environment using the general Shane Entrepreneurship Model, producing a score of 6.13, slightly better than the 6.16 recorded in the previous winter. Under this model, the economic environment—which covers macroeconomic conditions, the financial environment, geographical setting, and production structure—was rated at 6.64, down slightly from 6.68 in winter.

The institutional environment—which includes political, educational, cultural, technological, legal, and governmental structures—scored 5.72, compared to 5.74 previously. Within these categories, the legal environment received the best rating at 5.36, while the financial environment was judged the worst at 8.22.

The Shane Index is considered more precise than the overall national index, as it assigns weighted importance to different contributing factors.

25th Int'l Building Industry Exhibition to Open on August 17



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The 25th International Building Industry Exhibition, the largest and most prestigious event of its kind in Iran and the Middle East, will be held from August 17 to 20 at the Tehran International Permanent Fairground.

Known by its commercial name Iran Confair, the exhibition serves as a prime platform for industry professionals, specialists, and enthusiasts to explore the latest achievements, technologies, and trends in the building sector. Each year, it attracts hundreds of domestic and international companies and tens of thousands of visitors, offering unparalleled opportunities for knowledge exchange, networking, and business development.

The 2025 edition will bring together manufacturers, service providers, trading companies, and engineering firms, showcasing their capabilities and innovations to a broad market. The event runs daily from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The exhibition will serve as a hub connecting suppliers and buyers across the construction industry, enabling direct discussions with senior executives of major construction companies, leading material distributors from across Iran, and trade delegations from various countries.

Senior officials from the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, along with representatives from chambers of commerce nationwide, are expected to visit the event.

Covering the full supply chain of the building industry, the exhibition will feature sectors such as: Basic and structural materials; Architecture, facades, and interior decoration; Doors, windows, and hardware; Mechanical installations and HVAC systems; Electrical and electronic systems; Elevators and escalators; and tools, machinery, and engineering services.

Australia Will Back Palestinian Statehood at UN

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Australia will recognise a Palestinian state at the UN General Assembly in September, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Monday.

"Until Israeli and Palestinian statehood is permanent, peace can only be temporary," he told reporters.

"Australia will recognise the right of the Palestinian people to a state of their own."

Several countries, including France, Britain and Canada, have announced plans to recognise statehood for Palestinians since Israel launched a bombardment of Gaza nearly two years ago in response to the Hamas attacks.

Albanese added that he had received assurances from the Palestinian Authority that there would be "no role for the terrorists of Hamas in any future Palestinian state".



North Korea Warns of Reprisal Against South Korea-U.S. Drills



SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korea has denounced a major joint exercise planned by the South Korean and U.S. militaries as "direct military provocation" and warned of counteraction, despite signs of easing tension across the border under a new leader in Seoul.

North Korea's Defence Minister No Kwang Chol said its military has an "absolute mission" to defend national security against the large-scale 11-day drills by South Korea and the United States, which he said posed a real and dangerous threat.

"The armed forces of the DPRK will cope with the war drills of the U.S. and the (South) with thoroughgoing and resolute counteraction posture and strictly exercise the sovereign right," No said in a statement issued via the KCNA state news agency on Monday.

DPRK is short for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, North Korea's official name.

No said the drills staged under the pretext of defence against threats were additional proof of the confrontational intent by the two countries that raises hostility and further destabilises regional security.

North Korea routinely denounces military drills by the South and the United States, having called some previous exercises "a rehearsal" for nuclear war on the Korean peninsula, even as Pyongyang conducted a range of missile tests and live fire artillery exercises.

Philippines Can't Avoid Taiwan War



MANILA (Dispatches) - Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos warned Monday that his country would be dragged "kicking and screaming" into any war over Taiwan, but must prepare for it.

China considers self-ruled Taiwan, Manila's closest neighbour to the north, to be part of its territory and has threatened to seize it by force.

"If there's a war over this it is near us. What are we supposed to do?" Marcos told a news conference, adding: "We can't ignore it."

"So inevitably, despite our fervent wish to avoid any confrontation with anybody, anywhere, a war over Taiwan will drag the Philippines, kicking and screaming into the conflict," he said.

"I hope it doesn't happen... But if it does we have to plan for it already," he said, citing the large numbers of Filipinos working in Taiwan.

In an interview with Indian news agency Firstpost during a state visit to New Delhi last week, Marcos said that in the event of a confrontation between China and the United States over Taiwan, "there is no way that the Philippines can stay out of it simply because of our physical geographic location".

"If there is an all-out war, then we will be drawn into it," Marcos said in the interview, which was uploaded on YouTube.

The reported comments angered Beijing, with the Chinese foreign ministry lodging a diplomatic protest and accusing Marcos of "playing with fire" over the issue.

China and the Philippines have engaged in a series of confrontations in the South China Sea, which Beijing claims almost entirely despite an international ruling that the assertion has no legal basis.

EU Leaders Push for Kyiv to Be Part of Trump-Putin Talks

PARIS (Dispatches) - European leaders on Sunday pushed for Ukraine to be a part of negotiations between the United States and Russia, ahead of talks between presidents Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump.

The two leaders will meet in the US state of Alaska Friday to try to resolve the three-year war, but the European Union has insisted that Kyiv and European powers should be part of any deal to end the conflict.

The idea of a US-Russia meeting without Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has raised concerns that a deal would require Kyiv to cede swaths of territory, which the EU has rejected.

EU foreign ministers will discuss the talks in a meeting by video link on Monday, joined by their Ukrainian counterpart.

"The path to peace in Ukraine cannot be decided without Ukraine," leaders from France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Britain and Finland and EU Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said in a joint statement, urging Trump to put more pressure on Russia.

In a flurry of diplomacy, Zelensky held calls with 13 counterparts over three days including Kyiv's main backers Germany, Britain and France.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said Sunday he hoped and assumed that Zelensky would attend the leaders' summit.

Leaders of the Nordic and Baltic countries - Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden - also said no decisions should be taken without Kyiv's involvement.

Talks on ending the war could only take place during a ceasefire, they added in a joint statement.

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Asked on CNN on Sunday if Zelensky could be present, US Ambassador to NATO Matthew Whitaker responded: "Yes, I certainly think it's possible."

"Certainly, there can't be a deal that everybody that's involved in it doesn't agree to. And, I mean, obviously, it's a high priority to get this war to end."

Whitaker said the decision would ultimately be Trump's to make, and there was no word Sunday from the White House.

Top EU diplomat Kaja Kallas said any deal between the United States and Russia to end the war in Ukraine had to include Kyiv and the bloc.



"President Trump is right that Russia has to end its war against Ukraine," Kallas said in a statement Sunday.

"The US has the power to force Russia to negotiate seriously. Any deal between the US and Russia must have Ukraine and the EU included, for it is a matter of Ukraine's and the whole of Europe's security," she added.

"I will convene an extraordinary meeting of the EU foreign ministers on Monday to discuss our next steps."

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andriy Sybga will also take part in the Monday afternoon meeting, the ministry said.

NATO chief Mark Rutte told ABC's "This Week" broadcast on Sunday that Trump was "putting pressure on Putin".

"Next Friday will be important because it will be about testing Putin, how serious he is on bringing this terrible war to an end," he added.

Ukraine's military said on Sunday it had taken back a village in the Sumy region from the Russian army, which has made significant recent gains.

The village is on the frontline in the north of the country and about 20 kilometres (13 miles) west of the main fighting between the two armies in the northern region.

As a prerequisite to any peace settlement, Moscow has demanded Kyiv pull its forces out of the regions and commit to being a neutral state, shun US and EU military support and be excluded from joining NATO.

Kyiv said it would never recognise Russian control over its sovereign territory, though it acknowledged that getting land captured by Russia back would have to come through diplomacy, not on the battlefield.

The EU's Kallas backed Kyiv's position on Sunday.

"As we work towards a sustainable and just peace, international law is clear: All temporarily occupied territories belong to Ukraine," the EU foreign policy chief said.

NATO's Rutte said it was a reality that "Russia is controlling some of Ukrainian territory" and suggested a future deal could acknowledge this.

"When it comes to acknowledging, for example, maybe in a future deal, that Russia is controlling, de facto, factually, some of the territory of Ukraine. It has to be effectual recognition and not a political de jure recognition," Rutte told ABC.

Zelensky thanked those countries backing Ukraine's position in his Sunday evening address.

"The war must be ended as soon as possible with a fair peace," he said. "A fair peace is needed."

"Clear support for the fact that everything concerning Ukraine must be decided with Ukraine's participation. Just as it should be with every other independent state."

Five Al Jazeera Media Personnel Killed in Israeli Airstrike on Gaza

GAZA CITY (Dispatches) - Al Jazeera said two of its correspondents, including a prominent reporter, and three cameramen were killed in an Israeli strike on their tent in Gaza City on Sunday.

The Israeli military admitted in a statement to targeting Anas al-Sharif, the reporter it labelled as a "terrorist" affiliated with Hamas.

The attack was the latest to see journalists targeted in the 22-month war in Gaza, with around 200 media workers killed over the course of the conflict, according to media watchdogs.

"Al Jazeera journalist Anas al-Sharif has been killed alongside four colleagues in a targeted Israeli attack on a tent housing journalists in Gaza City," the Qatar-based broadcaster said.

"Al-Sharif, 28, was killed on Sunday after a tent for journalists outside the main gate of the hospital was hit. The well-known Al Jazeera Arabic correspondent reportedly extensively from northern Gaza."

The channel said that five of its staff members were killed during the strike on a tent in Gaza City, listing the others as Mohammed Qreiqeh along with camera operators Ibrahim Zaher, Mohammed Noufal and Moamen Aliwa.

The Israeli military confirmed that it had carried out the attack, saying it had struck Al Jazeera's al-Sharif and calling him a "terrorist" who "posed as a journalist".

"A short while ago, in Gaza City, the IDF struck the terrorist Anas Al-Sharif, who posed as a journalist for the Al Jazeera network," it said on Telegram, using an acronym for the military.

"Anas Al-Sharif served as the head of a terrorist cell in the Hamas terrorist organisation and was responsible for advancing rocket attacks against Israeli civilians and IDF troops," it added.

Al-Sharif was one of the channel's most recognisable faces working on the



ground in Gaza, providing daily reports in regular coverage.

Following a press conference by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday, where the premier defended approving a new offensive in Gaza, al-Sharif posted messages on X describing "intense, concentrated Israeli bombardment" on Gaza City.

One of his final messages included a short video showing nearby Israeli strikes hitting Gaza City.

In July, the Committee to Protect Journalists issued a statement calling for his protection as it accused the Israeli military's Arabic-language spokesperson Avichay Adraee of stepping up online attacks on the reporter by alleging that he was a Hamas terrorist.

Following the attack, the CPJ said it was "appalled" to learn of the journalists'

deaths.

"Israel's pattern of labelling journalists as militants without providing credible evidence raises serious questions about its intent and respect for press freedom," said CPJ Regional Director Sara Qudah.

"Journalists are civilians and must never be targeted. Those responsible for these killings must be held accountable."

The Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate condemned what it described as a "bloody crime" of assassination. Israel and Al Jazeera have had a contentious relationship for years, with Israeli authorities banning the channel in the country and raiding its offices following the latest war in Gaza.

Qatar, which partly funds Al Jazeera, has hosted an office for the Hamas political leadership for years and been a frequent venue for indirect talks between Israel and the militant group.

With Gaza sealed off, many media groups around the world, including AFP, depend on photo, video and text coverage of the conflict provided by Palestinian reporters.

Media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said in early July that more than 200 journalists had been killed in Gaza since the war began, including several Al Jazeera journalists.

International criticism is growing over the plight of the more than two million Palestinian civilians in Gaza, with UN agencies and rights groups warning that a famine is unfolding in the territory.

The targeted strike comes as Israel announced plans to expand its military operations on the ground in Gaza, with Netanyahu saying on Sunday that the new offensive was set to target the remaining Hamas strongholds there.

He also announced a plan to allow more foreign journalists to report inside Gaza with the military, as he laid out his vision for victory in the territory.

Trump Vows to Evict Homeless From Washington

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Donald Trump pledged on Sunday to evict homeless people from the nation's capital and jail criminals, despite Washington's mayor arguing there is no current spike in crime.

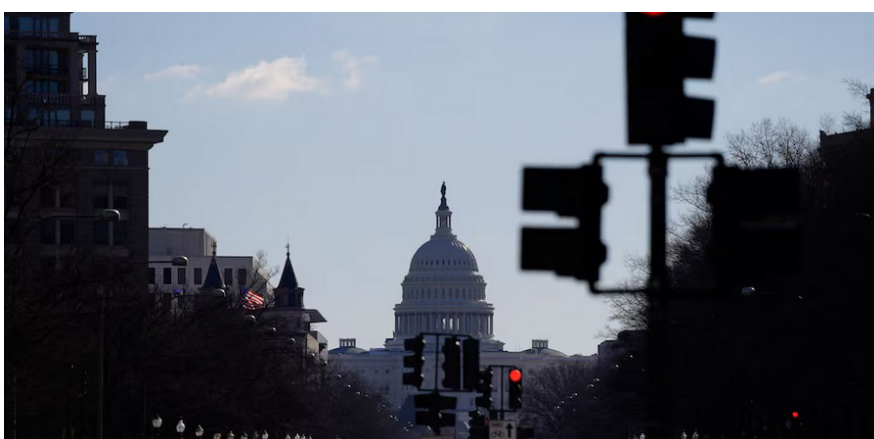
While details of the plan were unclear, the administration is preparing to deploy hundreds of National Guard troops to Washington, a U.S. official told Reuters, a controversial tactic Trump used recently in Los Angeles to tackle immigration protests over the objections of local officials.

Trump has not made a final decision, the official said, adding that the number of troops and their role are still being determined.

Unlike in California and every other state, where the governor typically decides when to activate Guard troops, the president directly controls the National Guard in Washington, D.C.

Past instances of the Guard's deployment in the city include in response to the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol by a mob of Trump supporters.

"The Homeless have to move out, IMMEDIATELY," Trump posted on his Truth Social platform. "We will give you places to stay, but FAR from the Capitol. The



Criminals, you don't have to move out. We're going to put you in jail where you belong."

The White House declined to explain what legal authority Trump would use to evict people from Washington. The Republican president controls only federal land and buildings in the city.

Trump plans to hold a press conference to "stop violent crime in Washington, D.C." It was not clear whether he would announce more details of his eviction plan then.

There are 3,782 single persons experiencing homelessness on any given night in the city of about 700,000, says the Community Partnership, an organization working to reduce homelessness in D.C.

Most such individuals are in emergency shelters or transitional housing, rather than on the street, it says.

A White House official said on Friday more federal law enforcement officers were being deployed in the city following a violent attack on a young administration staffer that angered the president.

Henderson the Hero as Palace Win Community Shield



LONDON (Dispatches) - Crystal Palace beat Premier League champions Liverpool 3-2 on penalties to win the Community Shield after an entertaining 2-2 draw at Wembley, with keeper Dean Henderson reprising his penalty-saving heroics from their FA Cup final triumph.

Substitute Justin Devenny scored the winning spot kick, after Mohamed Salah skied the Reds' first penalty and Henderson – who saved an Omar Marmoush penalty as Palace won their first major trophy against Manchester City in May – then saved efforts from Alexis Mac Allister and Harvey Elliott.

“They were 2-1 up, you would think we were out of the game,” Henderson said. “The manager said we would get chances in the second half ... and we deserved that in the end.”

New recruit Hugo Ekitike had put Liverpool ahead inside four minutes after he and record signing Florian Wirtz combined beautifully before the Frenchman produced a superb finish.

But Palace deservedly levelled in the 17th minute, Jean-Philippe Mateta sending Alisson the wrong way from the penalty spot after Virgil van Dijk brought down Ismaila Sarr.

Close-season signing Jeremie Frimpong restored the Reds' lead, as Liverpool fans marked the death of Portugal forward Diogo Jota with 20 minutes on the clock in honour of his shirt number, sending an attempted cross looping in off the post.

Palace boss Oliver Glasner has said his side need additions to remain competitive and will have been concerned to see midfielder Daichi Kamada go off injured inside half an hour.

The Eagles posed a threat on the counter and kept themselves in the game, although Ekitike spurned two decent chances to extend Liverpool's lead in the early stages of the second half.

“We could have maybe scored the third one in the first 15 to 20 minutes after halftime but we didn't, we kept them alive,” Liverpool boss Arne Slot said.

Palace's England forward Eberechi Eze tested Alisson with a low shot before the Londoners equalised again with 13 minutes to play, Sarr slotting past the onrushing Alisson.

Palace nearly grabbed a winner at the end, with Mac Allister perhaps fortunate to have a VAR referral for handball in the box go his way before Devenny nearly scored in added time, as the traditional season curtain-raiser went to penalties.

Devenny got the winner in the shootout with an emphatic penalty to give Palace a third victory at Wembley in a row.

Glasner said he was “very happy with the squad”, though he added that this season's European campaign – with Palace expected to find out on Monday if it will be in the Europa League or Conference League – will increase demands.

He revealed that Northern Ireland midfielder Devenny had even volunteered for the pressure penalty. “Justin came (to me and said) ‘I'll take it, I'll take the last one’,” the Palace manager said, complimenting the 21-year-old's confidence.

Wirtz Crowned Germany's Player of the Year



BERLIN (Dispatches) - Liverpool's club-record signing Florian Wirtz has been named Germany's player of the year, further cementing the attacking midfielder's status as a rising star.

Wirtz, whose £100 million transfer fee with add-ons could rise to £116 million in what would be a British record, secured 191 votes among German sports journalists, putting him comfortably ahead of runner-up Michael Olise of Bayern Munich, who garnered 81 votes.

The 22-year-old attacking midfielder arrived at Anfield from Bayer Leverkusen in June, part of a spending spree that has seen players including French forward Hugo Ekitike and Hungarian leftback Milos Kerkez join the squad as Liverpool bid to retain the Premier League title.

Wirtz has been hailed as one of the “top players in the world. He is world class,” by former Leverkusen coach and ex-Liverpool midfielder Xabi Alonso, who is the new boss of Real Madrid.

After joining, Wirtz told Liverpool's website that he “would like to win everything every year!”

“In the end, we want to be successful,” he said.

“Last season they won the Premier League so my goal is for sure to win it again and also to go further in the Champions League. I'm really ambitious,” he added.

Wirtz played a key role in Leverkusen's greatest season as they claimed a first-ever Bundesliga title and the German Cup in 2023/24 without losing a single game domestically under Alonso.

Their only defeat that season, during which Wirtz was crowned Bundesliga player of the year, came in the Europa League final to Italian side Atalanta, denying Leverkusen a memorable treble.

Alcaraz Survives Rollercoaster Ride in Cincinnati Opener

CINCINNATI (Dispatches) - Carlos Alcaraz had to fight his way out of a second-set slump to escape with a 6-1, 2-6, 6-3 victory over Damir Dzumhur in his opening match at the ATP-WTA Cincinnati Open.

The Spaniard, playing his first tournament since a runner-up finish to Jannik Sinner at Wimbledon, raced through the first set but completely lost his way in the second, dropping his serve twice against the 33-year-old Bosnian.

But he regained his intensity—and cut down his errors, in the third. Alcaraz fired his seventh ace to set up a match point and advanced to the third round seconds later as his opponent fired wide.

Alcaraz, seeded second, claimed his 12th consecutive match at the Masters 1000 level after titles in Monte Carlo and Rome.

“It was a relief to get this win,” Alcaraz said after committing 44 unforced errors. “It was a rollercoaster of good feelings and bad feelings.

“I was happy to get the win in the end. I know that I have chances to do better. “I will use the day off tomorrow to get my confidence back. It was a little tricky, I need to play smart



tennis.”

Alcaraz, runner-up in Cincy in 2023, next faces Serb Hamad Medjedovic, a 6-4, 7-6 (7/3) winner over Dutchman Tallon Griekspoor.

American Ben Shelton, coming off his first Masters 1000 title in Toronto, eased through his opener 6-3, 3-1 as opponent Camilo Ugo Carabelli was unable to continue because of a right knee problem.

The Argentine who beat Kei Nishikori in the first round, pulled up short after the first point of the third game of the second set, gripping his knee.

With a tournament supervisor translating from Spanish, the South American then took a medical time out. Once back, he only lasted three more points.

Shelton had less than an hour on court, something of a favor after a draining Toronto tournament which only ended on Thursday.

“It's not easy to play a couple of days after winning any title,” he said. “I feel for Camilo. I hope he has a quick recovery.



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The Boston Celtics waived two-way forward Miles Norris.

The 6-foot-10 Norris appeared in three games for the Celtics last season, averaging 2.3 points, 3.0 rebounds, and 0.7 steals.

After going undrafted in 2023, Norris began his career on a two-way contract with the Atlanta Hawks. He played for the College Park Skyhawks in the G-League but was waived before making his NBA debut.

In 2024, Norris played in the Basketbol Super Ligi in Turkey for Cagdas Bodrumspor. After four games overseas, he returned to the United States, signing a two-way contract with the Memphis Grizzlies. The forward averaged 17.1 points, while shooting 39.3 percent from deep in 22 games, for the Memphis Hustle in the G-League.

Meanwhile San Antonio Spurs forward Jeremy Sochan injured his calf while training with Poland's national team, which will keep him out of the FIBA EuroBasket 2025 tournament that starts Aug. 27.

In an announcement by the Polish Basketball Federation, Sochan confirmed that he would miss EuroBasket but added that “doctors predict that I will be fully healthy” in time for the start of Spurs training camp.

The 22-year-old expects to return to San Antonio to continue his recovery.

“In the face of injury, Jeremy received professional help in Poland,” Spurs general manager Brian Wright said in the statement. “Cooperation with the staff and management of KoszKadry has always been exemplary. In this situation, however, the best option is to return to San Antonio.”

The ninth overall pick out of Baylor in 2022, Sochan has been a steady presence in the Spurs' rotation. He has averaged 11.4 points, 6.1 rebounds and 2.8 assists in his first three seasons while shooting 46.8 percent from the field.

Bears, Dolphins Open With Tie

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Tua Tagovailoa made a rare appearance in a preseason opener as the Miami Dolphins and host Chicago Bears forged a 24-24 tie.

Tagovailoa, who hadn't seen action in an opener since 2021, completed 5 of 6 passes on the game's opening drive that ended at the Bears' goal line.

He then gave way to Zach Wilson (5-of-9, 96 yards) -- who directed two touchdown drives -- and rookie Quinn Ewers (5-of-18, 91 yards), who led the Dolphins to 10 fourth-quarter points that erased a pair of three-point deficits.

Starting quarterback Caleb Williams did not play for the Bears in Ben Johnson's head-coaching debut. Tyson Bagent hit 13 of 19 passes for 103 yards, one touchdown and one interception in the first half.

Case Keenum went 8-of-10 for 80 yards and two scores in the second half. His 14-yard strike to Jahdae Walker gave the Bears a 24-21 lead with 8:38 to play. Ewers



directed a 23-yard drive that set up Jason Sanders' 56-yard field goal with 6:22 left that made it 24-24.

Quarterback Trey Lance led Los Angeles Chargers in passing and rushing 27-13, including a 5-yard touchdown run, as the host Chargers improved to 2-0 in the preseason while New Orleans Saints dropped its opener in Inglewood, Calif.

Lance was 7 of 14 for 55 yards through the air and had seven carries for 48 yards as the Chargers rested starter Justin Herbert.

The Saints started Spencer Rattler, who was 7 of 11 for 53 yards, before second-round pick Tyler Shough made his debut. Shough was 15 of 22 for 165 yards, including a 54-yard scoring strike to Mason Tipton in the third quarter. Shough gave up a 43-yard interception return for a score to rookie Eric Rogers earlier in the quarter.