

Tehran's Ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Says Iranian Representatives and the Agency Have Made Progress in Their Latest Round of Talks in Vienna

IRAN NEWS

The Commander-in-chief of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army, Says That Iran's Military Will Respond With Increased Force to Any Aggressor, Noting Armed Forces Ready to Punish Foes

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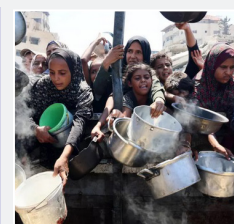
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12-Day U.S.-Israeli Aggression Set Roadmap for Iran's Defense Industry



TEHRAN (PreSSTV) - Iran's defense minister says that the 12-day US-Israeli aggression against Iran served to clarify the roadmap for the country's defense industry, which would include research and innovation for new technologies against the enemy.

Speaking during an interview on Saturday, Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh emphasized that Iran's defense ministry's mandate is to fully support the armed forces by building essential infrastructure, producing and stockpiling equipment, and ensuring timely supply as operational needs require.

The recent U.S.-Israeli-imposed war "showed us in which areas we need to work more. The future of the defense industry must be shaped and structured in accordance with this process," he added.

The Iranian defense minister said that during the war, the country faced an extraordinary threat backed by the world's most powerful military force, with the US and several Western nations providing Israel with equipment and logistics.

Despite this, Iranian forces controlled and advanced the battlefield in key operational areas, he noted.

He attributed victory in the 12-day war to a combination of hard and soft power—specifically, decisive offensive strikes, alongside the unifying force of national solidarity—emphasizing that this dual approach is fundamental to effective deterrence.

Envoy Calls on UN Chief, UNSC to Condemn Terror Attack in SE Iran



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations Amir Saeed Iravani has called on the UN chief and the UN Security Council to condemn in the strongest terms possible a recent deadly terrorist attack on police forces in the country's southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan.

Iravani made the appeal on Friday in identical letters addressed to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and rotating UN Security Council President Eloy Alfaro de Alba, while emphasizing that any double standards or selective approach in condemning terrorism is unacceptable and only undermines the credibility of the Security Council.

Earlier in the day, five members of the Iranian law enforcement forces were killed in a terror attack. The terrorists targeted two police patrol units in the Daman District of Iranshahr County as the security forces were on duty.

A manhunt has been launched to arrest the assailants, who escaped the scene after the shooting attack.

Iravani pointed out that the so-called Jaish al-Adl terrorist group has openly and unequivocally claimed responsibility for the deadly assault.

This crime follows another vicious terrorist attack on July 26, when three armed assailants from the Jaish al-Adl militant outfit attacked the Sistan and Baluchestan provincial courthouse in Zahedan, Iran's permanent representative to the United Nations said.

"These appalling crimes, which have deliberately targeted law enforcement officers, civilians, and even children, are a flagrant violation of international law, including international humanitarian law. They expose once again the inhumane, terrorist, and extremist nature of the Jaish al-Adl and the serious threat it poses to peace and security in the region," Iravani stressed.

Unity Between People, Officials, Armed Forces Must Never Be Undermined

TEHRAN (Dispatches) – Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has stressed the need to preserve national unity and support the country's officials, warning that the enemies are seeking to create divisions after failing to defeat Iran through war.

Speaking at a mourning ceremony marking the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Reza (AS) in Tehran on Sunday, the Leader told thousands of people from various walks of life that "the invincible shield of solidarity between the people, officials, and the Armed Forces must never be undermined."

Ayatollah Khamenei said the Iranian nation has stood firm against the United States' insulting demand for submission and will continue to resist with strength.

He noted that the enemies, having realized through their military defeats that Iran cannot be forced into obedience by war, are now pursuing the goal of weakening the country through discord.

The Leader was referring to the Israeli-US war of aggression against Iran, which was launched on June 13. The war came to a halt on June 25 due to Iran's relentless retaliatory missile strikes against Israel that had overwhelmed the occupying regime's defense systems.

According to Ayatollah Khamenei, all Iranians, including intellectuals and media figures, need to safeguard the unity achieved in the wake of the war and support public servants, particularly the "hardworking and tireless president."

In response to a question about the root cause of US enmity toward Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei said the issue goes beyond simple explanations and has persisted for more than four decades under successive American administrations.

He noted that Washington has long masked its enmity under pretexts such as terrorism, human rights, women's issues, or democracy, but the current US president has openly revealed the true reason.

"He said our confrontation with Iran is because we want Iran to be obedient to America,"



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the Leader stated, clarifying that he was paraphrasing remarks by US President Donald Trump.

Ayatollah Khamenei emphasized that this expectation is an insult to the Iranian nation with its long history, honor, and achievements.

"America wants Iran to be at its command, and the Iranian nation is deeply offended by such a demand and will stand firmly against those who harbor it," he said.

He also criticized those who say direct negotiations with Washington could solve the country's problems, saying such views are superficial.

Ayatollah Khamenei also recalled that following a recent attack on Iran on June 13, certain US-linked circles convened the very next day in a European capital to discuss a "post-Islamic Republic" government.

He said they were so confident the strike would destabilize Iran and turn the people against the system that they even went as far as designating a would-be monarch.

"Among that group of fools plotting a replacement for the Islamic Republic sat an Iranian as well—shame on him," the Leader remarked.

He emphasized that the Iranian people, standing alongside the Armed Forces, the government, and the system, dealt a firm blow to such schemes through their resilience.

Turning to the Israeli regime, Ayatollah Khamenei condemned its ongoing atrocities in Gaza, describing the mass starvation and killing of children as "unprecedented in history."

Elsewhere in his speech, the Leader said verbal condemnations by Western governments were insufficient and urged concrete steps to cut off all forms of support to Israel.

He also praised the actions of the Yemeni people in confronting Israel as a "correct" response and reaffirmed Iran's readiness to take any possible measures in support of the cause.

"We hope God Almighty will bless the movement of the Iranian nation and truth-seekers worldwide and uproot this malignant cancer," he said.

Deep Bond Between Gov't, Nation, and Armed Forces Key to a Strong and Advanced Iran

TEHRAN - The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has described the deep bond between the government, the nation, and the armed forces as a vital guarantee for the realization of a strong and advanced Iran. The IRGC emphasized that it prioritizes maintaining and enhancing the country's defense and security capabilities in light of the complex security environment and emerging threats.

In a statement issued on Sunday, marking the start of Government Week, the IRGC extended its congratulations to all government officials and contributors who are committed to the dignity, progress, and advancement of Iran, as well as to the high aspirations and civilization-building goals of the Islamic Revolution.

The statement noted that Government Week is an important opportunity to revisit and highlight the model of faithful, selfless, and sincere service exemplified by the late martyrs Mohammad Ali Rajaei, Mohammad Javad Bahonar, and Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi. It described this period not only as a symbol of loyalty to the lofty ideals of the Islamic Revolution but also as a lasting reflection of the deep connection between serving the people, adherence to divine values, and the defense of national independence and honor.

The statement continued: "Today, as the region and the world experience complex developments and multifaceted confrontations among influential actors, the Islamic Republic of Iran, with reliance on the faith, insight, and resilience of its people and under the wise guidance of the Supreme Leader (may his shadow be extended), continues its path of progress and dignity with determination. In this context, the efforts of the 14th government in addressing the nation's various needs and effectively supporting the armed forces in crucial arenas of power-building and defensive deterrence—particularly during the recent 12-day Sacred Defense against the imposed war by the vile Zionist regime and the criminal United States, which served as a clear example of synergy between the government and the armed forces in defending Iran's security and honor and that of the Resistance Front—are commendable."

The IRGC further emphasized: "As part of its historical and divine mission, the IRGC actively pursues the strategic approach of 'supporting the government' and 'contributing to the country's construction and development,' alongside its other legal and assigned duties. The experience of over four decades has demonstrated that the IRGC's strategic and effective role in executing major



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national projects—from infrastructure development to poverty alleviation—has been decisive in advancing the goals of the Revolution and improving the standard of living and welfare of the people. This path, based on long-term vision and careful planning, remains on the agenda of the 14th government and will be pursued with even greater determination."

The statement reiterated that: "It is essential to recognize that the IRGC, with a deep understanding of the complexities of the security environment and new threats, has prioritized preserving and enhancing defense and security capacities. While fully prepared to carry out critical missions in protecting the Revolution, territorial integrity, and national interests, the IRGC continues to actively participate in the country's development and nation's needs and government requests."

The statement concluded: "The powerful and people-based IRGC firmly believes that the deep connection between the government, the nation, and the armed forces ensures the realization of a strong and advanced Iran. In pursuit of this goal, we stand with the government and nation with all our capabilities and capacities. With trust in Almighty God and obedience to the commands of the Leader of the Revolution, Ayatollah Imam Khamenei (may his shadow be extended), we envision a bright and proud future for the Islamic Republic of Iran."

The IRGC also honored the memory and sacrifices of the martyrs of service and those who brought strength to the Islamic Republic, especially the historic martyrs of the recent 12-day Sacred Defense. It offered prayers for the success and honor of all devoted and committed government officials, particularly the esteemed and hardworking President, and all public servants across various executive sectors of the country.

European States Lack Legal, Moral Authority to Activate Snapback



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran and Russia have underlined lack of all legal and moral authority on the part of the European trio of the UK, France, and Germany to try to have the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reinstate its sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

The countries' top diplomats, Abbas Araqchi and Sergei Lavrov, made the remarks in a phone call on Friday.

The officials referred to the trio's increasingly incremental efforts to have the Security Council restore the bans on the eve of expiration of UNSC Resolution 2231. The resolution was issued after conclusion of a 2015 nuclear agreement between the Islamic Republic and world countries, including the three European parties, endorsing the deal and lifting the sanctions.

Accusing the Islamic Republic of "diverting" its peaceful nuclear energy activities towards "military purposes," the European countries have been trying to trigger the deal's so-called "snapback" mechanism. The mechanism enables the sanctions' return before the resolution's expected expiration in October.

Araqchi and Lavrov reminded that the European states' refusal to commit to their obligations under the JCPOA, and their alignment with the United States in the latter's aggression against Iran's peaceful nuclear facilities in June, had robbed them of any excuse to resort to the "snapback."

In 2018, the U.S. left the nuclear agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in an illegal and unilateral move that was followed by Washington's returning its sanctions against Iran. The European trio, not only failed to live up to their promise of returning the US to the deal, but also followed in Washington's footsteps by returning their own economic bans targeting the Islamic Republic.

Europe Lacks Strategy to Break Snapback Deadlock



TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior Russian diplomat says the European troika—Britain, France, and Germany—lack a clear strategy to break the "deadlock" they are poised to create if they follow through on their threat to invoke the "snapback" mechanism against Iran.

Russia's permanent envoy to international organizations in Vienna, Mikhail Ulyanov, made the remarks in a post on his X account on Saturday.

He proposed to put aside legal and procedural issues which definitely do not give the E3 the right to trigger the snapback mechanism and to address the issue from a purely political viewpoint.

The Russian diplomat asked whether the trio has an exit strategy and a vision of how to find a way out if the deadlock they are going to create.

"The answers to these questions seem to be negative," Ulyanov emphasized.

Snapback would bring into force six previous Iran-related Security Council resolutions adopted between 2006 and 2010. It would reinstate the expired UN arms embargo that barred countries from supplying, selling, or transferring most military equipment to Iran and prohibited Tehran from exporting any weapons.

It would also impose export controls, travel bans, asset freezes, and other restrictions on individuals, entities, and banks.

In a Friday phone conversation with the EU high representative for foreign and security policy and his British, French, and German counterparts, whose countries are the European signatories to the 2015 nuclear agreement, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi warned that triggering the snapback would have consequences.

The top Iranian negotiator once again emphasized that the European countries lack the legal and moral authority to resort to the mechanism.

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Foreign Supervisors Exit Power Plant Projects During 12-Day War

TEHRAN (ILNA) - The managing director of Tavanir announced that during the 12-day imposed war, when embassies in Iran were closed and their staff left the country, foreign supervisors responsible for overseeing the construction of thermal power plants also departed.

Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi explained that the departure of these foreign specialists coincided with the closure of embassies. He noted that their absence caused delays in new power plant projects since part of the development work required their presence for supervision, warranty validation, and adjustment periods. "With their return and approval, the power plants could finally be commissioned and connected to the grid," he added.

Iran's Building Materials Meet International Standards



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TEHRAN - The President of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture has stressed that Iranian building materials are produced at international quality standards and are fully competitive in global markets. He urged the government to remove internal barriers and mitigate the impact of sanctions in order to boost exports.

Speaking on the sidelines of the International Building Materials Exhibition, Chamber President Samad Hassanzadeh said the event provides an important opportunity to showcase Iran's capabilities in the construction sector.

"Iranian producers have the ability to manufacture building materials in line with international standards, comparable with European products and beyond," Hassanzadeh told Otagh Iran Online. "But restrictions—especially sanctions in recent years—have deprived Iran of a stronger presence in global markets."

He noted that, in addition to sanctions, regulations related to foreign currency commitments and financial constraints have restricted exporters. "The Chamber has submitted proposals to the Central Bank, the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade, and the Ministry of Economy to address these obstacles. If these issues are resolved, exports can generate wealth, create jobs, and introduce Iran to global markets," he added.

Addressing Iran's limited success in Eurasian markets, Hassanzadeh said tariff conditions in that region actually provide "an ideal opportunity" for Iran. "Our products can be exported at competitive prices, and their quality exceeds the expectations of markets like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Eurasia. The standards applied in Iran's construction sector are among the highest globally," he emphasized.

Hassanzadeh also pointed to the significant potential for exports to Europe, highlighting the dual advantage of high quality and low production costs in Iran. "If domestic shortcomings are resolved, these products can succeed in creating jobs, generating foreign exchange, and producing national wealth," he said.

Iran Engages in Talks with Neighboring Countries on Exporting Domestic Messaging Apps



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TEHRAN - Iran is holding negotiations with neighboring countries aimed at exporting its homegrown messaging applications, according to a senior government official.

Mohammad Mohsen Sadr, Deputy Minister of Communications and Information Technology and head of the Information Technology Organization of Iran, confirmed that discussions are progressing and expressed the government's commitment to supporting and enhancing these platforms.

Speaking to ILNA, Sadr explained that the Ministry's Department of Technology, Innovation, and International Affairs is the main body responsible for engaging with foreign governments regarding the potential export of Iranian messaging services.

Sadr revealed that a number of countries have shown interest in adopting Iranian-developed platforms. "We have showcased the capabilities of our domestic messengers, and several countries have expressed willingness to make use of this capacity," he said.

He added that negotiations have been constructive so far, involving document exchanges and online meetings, and voiced optimism about reaching concrete outcomes.

According to the Deputy Minister, the export of Iranian messaging apps would represent a significant step for the country's technology sector. However, he acknowledged that turning this into a reliable revenue stream will be a long process.

"We have not calculated the exact foreign currency revenue these exports could generate," Sadr said. "The export process involves transferring technical knowledge, and will require ongoing support and development by Iranian companies. Because these are knowledge-based and innovation-driven exports, the path to significant financial returns is a long one."

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Iran Prioritizes Branding and Regulation in Health Tourism Strategy

TEHRAN - Iran is taking decisive steps to strengthen its growing health tourism sector by focusing on brand development and regulatory frameworks, according to Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpey, Deputy Minister of Tourism at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts.

Speaking at the pre-event of the First International Congress and Exhibition on Dentistry in Tehran, Bandpey emphasized that the Health Tourism Steering Council is actively pursuing two strategic measures: creating a national health tourism brand and launching a comprehensive health tourism system. These initiatives, he said, will pave the way for the sector to become a gateway for Iran's wider tourism industry.

The event, hosted at Tehran's Evin Hotel, brought together representatives from regional organizations such as D-8, ECO, ACD, and IORA, alongside health and tourism specialists, academics, and officials. Bandpey welcomed international guests from neighboring and allied countries, while acknowledging the role of medical associations, university faculties, and research centers in supporting Iran's healthcare and tourism capacities.

Bandpey, who has decades of experience in the country's health sector, highlighted the natural synergy between tourism and healthcare. "Tourism is a young industry with political, economic, social, and cultural dimensions. With its potential to generate foreign currency and create jobs, it also plays a growing role in improving physical and mental well-being," he said.

Iran, he noted, has made significant progress in medical and dental equipment production, while also boasting extensive research facilities and highly skilled human resources. "Based on our capabilities, health tourism is one of the country's strongest competitive advantages, and we must make the most of this opportunity," he added.

The Deputy Minister stressed that maintaining standards in both healthcare and tourism requires close cooperation between ministries. The Health Tourism Steering Council has therefore brought together the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Intelligence to coordinate policies.

Despite Iran's high-quality services and skilled workforce, Bandpey admitted that issues such as lack of transparency, inadequate coordination, and insufficient trust-building have hindered progress. To address these, the government is implementing a national digital platform for health tourism, designed to manage patients' journeys

from arrival to treatment.

Under this system, the Ministry of Tourism will oversee logistics such as travel and accommodation, while the Ministry of Health will supervise medical services. The platform has already been piloted in Mashhad, with plans to expand to Tehran and Fars Province during the upcoming Government Week.

Bandpey also pointed to Iran's role within the ECO health framework, referencing a recent event in Hamedan where member states shared their capacities in tourism and healthcare. He described health tourism as "a valuable, growing, and elevating sector" that could serve as Iran's main tourism gateway.

Key challenges remain, however. According to Bandpey, the sector must tackle issues such as international payments and insurance coverage, compliance with global standards and accreditations, post-treatment care and follow-up, human resource training, and international marketing. He stressed the need for branding, noting that "every leading country in health tourism has its own distinct brand."

To this end, the Health Tourism Steering Council has assigned the branding process to the Ministry of Health, with the Iran Chamber of Commerce and Medical Council as partners. A competitive process will soon be launched to select a branding model through a national festival.

Bandpey underscored Iran's ambition to attract \$6 billion in health tourism revenue under the Seventh Development Plan, calling on all member organizations of the council to contribute. He argued that despite negative portrayals by Western media, the health and religious tourism sectors remain resilient. "One of the ways to counter Iranophobia is by strengthening these two fields," he said.

Following his remarks, Bandpey toured the dentistry exhibition and praised the contributions of specialists and industry leaders in advancing both dentistry and health tourism.

The First International Dentistry Congress and Exhibition showcasing Iran's achievements in dental care, medical equipment, software, and insurance coverage will officially take place this autumn. Representatives from D-8, ECO, ACD, and IORA countries, along with a wide range of health and tourism professionals, are expected to participate.

Many Registered Inventions in Iran Do Not Qualify as Patents

TEHRAN - A legal expert has raised concerns that a significant portion of inventions registered in Iran do not meet international standards for patentability, particularly the requirement of novelty.

Mohammad-Hadi Mirshamsi, professor of private law at Allameh Tabataba'i University, told ILNA that while Iran has an active record of registering inventions, "many of the so-called patents filed by Iranian startups and knowledge-based companies could not be patented in other countries, because they lack the essential condition of being new." He noted that some of these inventions may already have been registered abroad years earlier.

Mirshamsi explained that under global intellectual property law, an invention must be new, involve an inventive step, and have industrial applicability. "It is not enough for an idea to be unregistered. Even if an invention was disclosed or used publicly without registration, it cannot later be patented elsewhere," he said.

He emphasized that the novelty requirement is universal: "For an invention to be granted patent rights, it must not have existed anywhere in the world before. If the idea has already been made public in any form, it no longer qualifies."

The comments came in the context of Iran's recent accession to the Strasbourg Agreement, an international treaty on the classification of patents. The agreement, formally known as the International Patent Classification (IPC), was adopted in 1971 and is overseen by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). Iran officially joined in March 2025, becoming one of 66 member states.

According to Mirshamsi, the agreement helps patent examiners by dividing technology into eight major categories with about 80,000 subcategories. This allows faster and more precise evaluation of whether an invention is genuinely new. He noted that although Iran has now formally joined the agreement, its patent office had already been informally using the classification system.

Mirshamsi described the practical steps of patent registration in Iran: applicants submit forms to the national patent office, where



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experts evaluate claims against existing knowledge and prior inventions—known as "prior art." If this process is not carried out rigorously, he warned, patents may later be invalidated.

"Comparing an invention against prior art is a heavy and precise scientific task," he said. "If an examiner fails to properly assess novelty, the registration can be annulled."

While Iran is a member of the Paris Convention and WIPO, and has joined the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) allowing international filings, Mirshamsi said Iranian inventors face

practical barriers in registering abroad. Chief among them are banking sanctions, which make it difficult to pay filing and attorney fees overseas. However, he stressed that the sanctions themselves do not prevent foreign patent offices from accepting Iranian applications.

Statistically, he said, the number of patents registered inside Iran is "acceptable for a developing country," but foreign inventors rarely register their patents in Iran due to investment restrictions and lack of incentives. This contrasts with China and the United States, which lead the world in patent filings.

Mirshamsi acknowledged that many Iranian inventions fall short of global standards because they often involve only minor modifications of existing technologies. "Some startups may replicate a foreign invention with slight, non-patentable changes and present it as new," he said.

This, he argued, undermines the credibility of Iran's patent statistics compared to countries with stricter and more specialized evaluation systems.

The professor linked these shortcomings to Iran's limited integration in global trade. "The purpose of patents is to give inventors exclusive rights so they can attract investment and bring products to market, ideally beyond national borders," he said. "When a country's share in international trade is small, and its high-quality products cannot easily reach global markets, the motivation for stronger, more innovative patents diminishes."

New International Markets for Iranian Handicrafts



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TEHRAN - The Iranian Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts announced that new international markets—including the Persian Gulf states, East Asia, and Europe—are set to become major destinations for Iranian handicrafts.

During an official visit to Gilan Province, Minister Seyed Reza Salehi-Amiri toured the village of Qasemabad in Chaboksar, calling it "a symbol of authenticity, creativity, and Iranian culture on the global stage." He emphasized that Qasemabad should be recognized not only as a tourism hub but also as a center of cultural and artistic identity that deserves both national and international support.

According to the Ministry's public relations office, Salehi-Amiri, accompanied by local officials including the Governor of Gilan, the Governor of Rudsar, and the parliamentary representative for Rudsar and Amlash, visited the Creativity and Innovation Center for Chadorshab weaving in Qasemabad.

Speaking to reporters, the minister highlighted the strategic role of Gilan in Iran's cultural and tourism landscape. "Our focus here is to harness the unique tourism and handicraft potential of Qasemabad," he said, describing the village as both a national and international landmark for tourism and cultural production.

Salehi-Amiri praised the role of local women artisans and outlined three strategic priorities for the ministry in the handicraft sector:

Artist Insurance – Ongoing negotiations with the Social Security Organization are expected to yield promising results soon.

Domestic and International Marketing – Expanding sales channels and consumer markets.

Iran to Launch 854 Solar Power Plants Alongside Major Water, Electricity Projects



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TEHRAN - Minister of Energy, Abbas Aliabadi, announced that 854 solar power plants across the country are now ready to be inaugurated. The projects, collectively valued at 432 trillion tomans (approximately 432,000 billion tomans), are being rolled out alongside 305 additional initiatives in the water and electricity sectors.

Speaking at a ceremony in Mashhad marking the launch of six new regional power projects in Khorasan, Aliabadi emphasized that investment in renewable energy and infrastructure is advancing rapidly despite economic pressures. He added that construction on 266 new projects, worth 2.68 trillion rials, will also begin before the end of the year.

The minister highlighted the achievements of the "Iran Abad" campaign, under which 117 major projects worth 760 trillion rials were inaugurated last year. According to him, these initiatives demonstrate the country's determination to rely on domestic capabilities in meeting the growing demands of its water and electricity sectors. "Challenges exist, but they will be overcome," Aliabadi said, stressing the need to create an environment that encourages investment in energy infrastructure.

At the same event, the Governor of Razavi Khorasan, Gholamhossein Mozaffari, drew attention to the region's critical water situation, warning that Mashhad faces increasing risks unless immediate solutions are implemented. "If we fail to act today, tomorrow the conditions here could be worse than in Tehran," he cautioned.

Mozaffari acknowledged the nationwide imbalance in energy supply and demand, but insisted that all available capacities are being used to address the shortages. He underlined the strategic importance of the province, noting that Khorasan is positioned on a key north-south corridor and offers 20,000 hectares of land in the Kaviyan area, near Mashhad, ready for development and investment.

Nigerian Airforce Kills at Least 35 Jihadists Near Border With Cameroon

PARIS (Dispatches) - Nigeria's airforce said it killed at least 35 jihadist fighters in air strikes on Saturday near the Cameroon border, following an attempted assault on ground troops in the country's conflict-hit northwest.

Nigeria's airforce said it had killed more than 35 jihadists in raids Saturday on militant fighters that had gathered near the Nigeria-Cameroon border following an attempted attack on ground troops.

The air strike was the latest by the Nigerian military, which is battling a resurgence of attacks in the country's embattled northwest.



India's Modi Dangles Tax Cuts as U.S. Tariffs Loom



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's push to slash consumption taxes on everyday goods could deliver billions of dollars in annual relief and boost demand in an economy bracing for painful US tariffs, experts say.

U.S. President Donald Trump has threatened to double import duties on India from 25 to 50 percent to punish New Delhi for buying oil from Russia, saying the purchases help Moscow fund its invasion of Ukraine.

The prospective measure has clouded the outlook for the world's fifth-largest economy, with Indian exporters warning of plunging orders and severe job losses.

New Delhi has called Washington's move "unfair, unjustified and unreasonable" but is already seeking to cushion the blow, with Modi last week promising to "bring down the tax burden on the common man" during an annual speech to mark India's independence.

His proposed cuts to the goods and services tax (GST) would make everything from small cars to air conditioners cheaper for consumers, economists say.

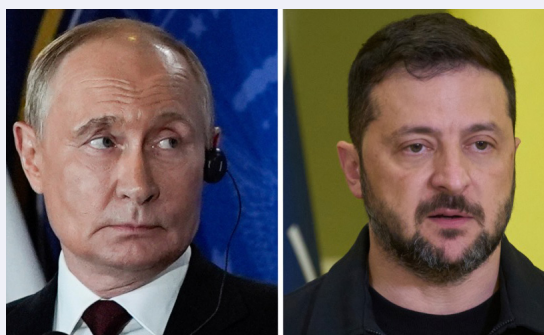
Currently, the tax operates under a complex four-tier structure, with rates ranging from five to 28 percent.

Under Modi's reforms, most goods would fall into just two tiers, taxed at either five or 18 percent.

The Indian leader has called the change a "Diwali gift", a reference to the annual Hindu festival of lights when consumers splurge on everything from gold and clothes to consumer electronics.

Trump's tariffs -- and their impact on ordinary Indians -- will hinge on how much progress is made towards a Russia-Ukraine peace deal, and whether New Delhi can secure alternative oil suppliers before the U.S. president's August 27 deadline.

Russia Rejects Zelensky Meeting as Diplomatic Tension Simmers



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia ruled out an immediate meeting with Volodymyr Zelensky, as diplomatic tension escalated with the Ukrainian president and U.S. mediation efforts appeared to stumble.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said "no meeting" between Vladimir Putin and Zelensky was planned, as NATO chief Mark Rutte visited Kyiv, largely to discuss security guarantees for Ukraine.

US President Donald Trump raised expectations for a swift summit between the Russian and Ukrainian presidents by saying they had both agreed to meet after Zelensky, Rutte and Kyiv's European allies visited the White House on Monday.

But on Friday, Lavrov dashed hopes for direct Putin-Zelensky talks to resolve the conflict, now in its fourth year, by questioning the Ukrainian president's legitimacy and repeating the Kremlin's maximalist claims.

"There is no meeting planned," Lavrov said in an interview with NBC's "Meet the Press with Kristen Welker".

Lavrov told the U.S. broadcaster Putin was "ready to meet Zelensky" as soon as an agenda was prepared, adding that the agenda was "not ready at all".



Palestinian Despair Mounts After UN Declaration of Famine in Gaza

GAZA CITY (Dispatches) - Conditions in the Gaza Strip continue to deteriorate after the United Nations on Friday officially declared a famine there. Palestinians recounted feeling like "the end is near" amid "absolutely catastrophic" scenes of destruction Saturday as Israel continued its bombardment of the enclave.

Desperate Palestinians clutching pots and plastic buckets scrambled for rice at a charity kitchen in Gaza City on Saturday, a day after the United Nations declared a famine in the war-battered territory.

AFP footage from Gaza's largest city, which Israel plans to seize as part of an expanded military offensive, showed women and young children among the chaotic jostle of dozens clamouring and shouting for food.

One young boy used his hands to scrape a few leftover grains from the inside of a cooking vat.

"We have no home left, no food, no income... so we are forced to turn to charity kitchens, but they do not satisfy our hunger," said Yousef Hamad, 58, who was displaced from the northern city of Beit Hanoun.

Further south at a charity kitchen in Deir el-Balah, 34-year-old Umm Mohammad said the UN's declaration of a famine had come "far too late".

The children are "staggering from dizziness, unable to wake up because of the lack of food and water", she said.

The UN officially declared a famine in Gaza on Friday, blaming the "systematic obstruction" of aid by Israel during more than 22 months of war.

The Rome-based Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Initiative (IPC) said famine was affecting 500,000 people in Gaza governorate, which covers about a fifth of the Palestinian territory including Gaza City.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected the report as "an outright lie".

On Saturday, the head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees said it was "time for the government of Israel to stop denying the famine it has created in Gaza".

"All of those who have influence must use it with determination & a sense of moral duty," UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini posted on X.

The IPC projected that the famine would expand to Deir el-Balah and Khan Yunis governorates by the end of September, covering around two-thirds of Gaza.

Israel, meanwhile, kept up its bombardment of the Palestinian territory, with AFP footage showing heavy smoke billowing above the Zeitoun district of Gaza City as Palestinians picked through the wreckage of buildings.

The spokesman for Gaza's civil defence agency, Mahmud Bassal, called the situation in the Sabra and Zeitoun neighbourhoods "absolutely catastrophic", describing the "complete levelling of entire residential blocks".

"We are trapped here, living in fear, with nowhere to go. There's no safety anywhere in Gaza. Movement now leads to death," said Ahmad Jundiye, 35, who was displaced to the northern outskirts of Zeitoun.

"We constantly hear the sound of bombing... we hear fighter jets, artillery shelling and even drone explosions," he told AFP by telephone.

"We're extremely afraid - it feels like the end is near."

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz vowed Friday to destroy Gaza City if Hamas did not agree to disarm, release all remaining hostages in the territory and end the war on Israel's terms.

Downed Ukrainian Drone Causes Short-Lived Fire at Russian Nuclear Power Plant

KYIV (Dispatches) - A Ukrainian drone shot down by Russian air defense systems caused a short-lived fire at the Kursk Nuclear Power Plant, the facility's press service said Sunday, stressing that background radiation around the power plant remained at "natural levels". The detonation reportedly damaged an auxiliary transformer, cutting the plant's capacity.

A fire broke out Sunday at a Russian nuclear power plant after the country's military downed a Ukrainian drone, the facility said after the blaze was put out.

"A combat unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) belonging to the Armed Forces of Ukraine was shot down by air defence systems near the Kursk Nuclear Power Plant," the plant's press service said in a statement on the Telegram messaging app.

"Upon impact, the drone detonated, resulting in damage to an auxiliary transformer."

The press service added that there were no injuries, but as a result of the detonation, unit three of the plant was reduced to 50 percent capacity. The destroyed drone also sparked a fire that has since been extinguished, the press service said.

"The radiation background at the industrial site of the Kursk NPP and the surrounding area has not changed and corresponds to natural levels," the press service said.

The International Atomic Energy Agency has repeatedly warned of the



dangers of fighting around nuclear plants following Russia launching its military offensive on Ukraine in February 2022.

The plant is near the Russia-Ukraine border and sits to the west of Kursk city, the region's capital with a population of around 440,000 people.

There was no immediate comment from Ukraine. Kyiv has said its

strikes inside Russia are in response to Russia's continued attacks on Ukraine and are aimed at destroying infrastructure deemed crucial to Moscow's overall military efforts.

The attack appears to be part of an overnight wave of Ukrainian drone assaults partly targeting Russia's energy infrastructure. Russia has consistently targeted Ukraine's own energy grid since its full-scale invasion in 2022.

About 10 Ukrainian drones were downed over the port of Ust-Luga in Russia's northern Leningrad region, with debris sparking fire at the Novatek-operated terminal -- a huge Baltic Sea fuel export terminal and processing complex, regional governor said.

"Firefighters and emergency services are currently working to extinguish the blaze," Alexander Drozdenko, governor of Russia's Leningrad region where the Ust-Luga port is located, said on the Telegram messaging app. There were no injuries, he added.

According to Novatek, the Ust-Luga complex, which opened in 2013, processes gas condensate into light and heavy naphtha, jet fuel, fuel oil and gasoline, and enables the company to ship oil products as well as gas condensate to international markets.

Russian units destroyed a total of 95 Ukrainian drones overnight over 13 regions, including Leningrad and Samara, as well as the Russian-annexed Crimean Peninsula, the defence ministry said.

Trump Crime Crackdown Deploys Troops in Washington's Safest Sites

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Hundreds of National Guard soldiers in military fatigues and combat boots mingled with tourists, posed for selfies, and treated themselves to ice cream from food trucks on Thursday along Washington's National Mall, one of the safest parts of America's capital.

On occasion an angry local would hurl verbal abuse at them, but the soldiers simply shrugged and carried on what appeared to be an undemanding assignment.

Outside the National Museum of African American History and Culture, five members of the West Virginia National Guard were standing on the street corner far away from the city's crime hot spots.

"It's boring. We're not really doing much," said Sergeant Fox, who declined to give his first name.

Fox is among almost 2,000 troops, including 1,200 from six Republican-led states, who are being deployed in Washington as part of an extraordinary militarization inside the Democratic-led city.

The soldiers, some of whom told Reuters they did not get involved in arrests, are officially in Washington to support a federal crackdown on what President Donald Trump calls a crime epidemic. But that depiction appears to run counter to the fact that



crime rates overall have shrunk in recent years.

That disconnect, combined with the troop concentration near the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial and in view of the U.S. Capitol, highlights criticism by the city's Democratic leaders that this massive deployment is more a show of power by Trump, rather than a serious effort to fight crime.

Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser said this week she did not think the arrival of troops was about tackling crime. She also expressed concern about the presence of "an armed militia in the nation's capital."

The soldiers seen by Reuters on Thursday were not armed, but the Pentagon said on Friday the troops will soon be on mission with their service-issued weapons.

By contrast with central Washington, residents of Ward 8 in the city's southeast - the area with the highest crime rate - said there was not a guardsman in sight. With the ward's murder rate dwarfing that of most other neighborhoods, many locals said they would welcome troops on their streets.



Medvedev, Sabalenka Face Tricky Tests in U.S. Open First Round

NEW YORK (Dispatched) - The U.S. Open's first round begins on Sunday with defending women's champion Aryna Sabalenka looking to recapture top form, while former men's champion Daniil Medvedev faces a familiar foe whom he has failed to beat in previous meetings.

Sabalenka finally won the U.S. Open last year, after two semi-final exits then loss in the 2023 final. But defending the crown has proven tough for most, with the women's singles tournament producing 10 champions in the last 11 years.

The world number one's quest for a fourth Grand Slam win has also been plagued by disappointment as she lost in the finals of the Australian Open and the French Open this year, before bowing out from the semis in Wimbledon.

"I think it's a lot of pressure, definitely. Just because this place is so big, and it feels bigger than the other slams in some ways," said the 27-year-old, aiming to become the first player to defend the title in a decade.

Sabalenka will look for a quick win over Rebeka Masarova on Sunday, but may be in for a fight as her Swiss opponent forced a tiebreaker in the second set before going down in their first meeting in June.

The Belarusian said she was aware of the odds against her.

"I would love to finish the season with a Grand Slam and world number one. But if this goal is not to be, I'll still think this season has been really amazing," she said.

The U.S. Open has been the Grand Slam of choice for Medvedev, with the three-time finalist winning his only major in New York in 2021.

But the 29-year-old Russian has struggled this year, losing in the first round at the French Open

and Wimbledon after a second-round exit from the Australian Open.

The 13th seed faces a tough test in the very first round at Flushing Meadows this year, against Benjamin Bonzi, the same opponent who knocked him out at Wimbledon.

Medvedev has failed to beat the Frenchman in both their meetings, having retired during their first match at Roland Garros in 2017.

"I was surprised by his level," Medvedev said after his loss to Bonzi in June. "Whatever I did on the court, it was not bothering him too much. Everything he did was tough for me to play."

Bonzi, ranked 51st, has never gone beyond the third round in a Grand Slam, but picked up wins over some notable opponents in the last year, including Casper Ruud and Lorenzo Musetti.

Last year's finalist Jessica Pegula is hoping to win her first major in the state where she was born and believes the New York crowd can help her.

The 31-year-old, who faces Egypt's Mayar Sherif in the first round, said the spectators at the U.S. Open can have an effect unlike any other Grand Slam.

"I think of the crowd kind of taking people and carrying them through in whatever way you kind of embrace them," Pegula said on Friday.

"It's just very electric, rowdy, fun, a little bit chaotic. But I feel like it's just New York kind of in a nutshell."

Pegula has been a crowd favourite at the U.S. Open since her Grand Slam main draw debut at Flushing Meadows in 2015.

"I think you know that if you can play well and find ways to win, you can go deep here and anything can happen," she added.

Djokovic Rolls Into U.S. Open Cold



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic will open the U.S. Open without a competitive match since Wimbledon, a risk he's willing to take after banking "a lot of training in last three, four weeks" and reshaping his priorities around the four majors.

The Serbian world number seven, chasing an unprecedented 25th Grand Slam title, has eased off the gruelling schedule that once defined his career, skipping this month's hard-court tune-ups in Toronto and Cincinnati.

Djokovic, who claimed his fourth U.S. Open and last major title in 2023, said he has "earned the right" to pick his schedule.

"I decided not to play because I wanted to spend more time with my family," the 38-year-old Djokovic told reporters on Friday.

"To be honest, I think I earned my right and have the luxury of kind of choosing where I want to go and what I want to play.

"To be quite frank with you, I don't enjoy the two-week Masters events anymore. It's just way too long for me. My focus is mostly on the slams."

Djokovic, co-founder of the Professional Tennis Players Association, also weighed in on the debate over the extended two-week Masters events, a change criticised by players and fans alike.

He called the contracts "quite solid... 30-year contracts," making a reversal unlikely. While he supports players opposing the schedule, he noted that top athletes often fail to engage fully in negotiations.

"This is an ongoing story of the players expressing their feelings, but when you really need to put in the time and energy into conversations and meetings... it's necessary because you're doing something not only for yourself but future generations," he added.

On prize money, Djokovic called recent increases at the Grand Slams a "step in the right direction", but said more work is needed for players worldwide to make a sustainable living.

"Not many tennis players live out of this sport globally. That's not something that I see has been talked about enough," he said.

Man City Revamp Rocked by Spurs, Arsenal Thrash Leeds

LONDON (Dispatches) - A new-look Manchester City showed familiar frailties as Tottenham strolled to a 2-0 win at the Etihad, while Viktor Gyokeres scored his first Arsenal goals in a 5-0 hammering of Leeds.

Brennan Johnson and Joao Palhinha struck for the Europa League winners just before half-time as Spurs continued a perfect start for Thomas Frank after two league games in charge.

City's run of four consecutive Premier League titles came to a spectacular end last season as they finished a distant third behind Liverpool and Arsenal.

A 4-0 thrashing of Wolves on the opening weekend of the campaign showed glimpses of a revamped City back to their best.

However, they were again easily exposed on the counter-attack, while manager Pep Guardiola must decide who will be his number one goalkeeper after a day to forget for James Trafford.

Ederson was left on the bench amid rumours the Brazilian could join Galatasaray before the transfer window closes. City have been linked with a move for out-of-favour Paris Saint-Germain 'keeper Gianluigi Donnarumma.

Tottenham took the lead on 35 minutes when Richarlison



squared for Brennan Johnson to power past Trafford.

The England goalkeeper then had a moment of madness when he attempted a pass to Nico Gonzalez inside his own box.

Pape Matar Sarr intercepted and, even though the goalkeeper recovered to deny Richarlison, Palhinha smashed home the rebound.

Spurs let a two-goal lead slip late on against PSG to lose the UEFA Super Cup in Frank's first game in charge earlier this month, but rarely looked in danger of suffering a similar fate.

"From every game you learn and games where you don't get the result you learn even more," said Frank.

"Defensive principles and the mentality is the key thing. We need this mentality to win games like this."

Arsenal moved ahead of their north London rivals at the top of the table on goal difference, but a comprehensive victory over Leeds came at a cost as Martin Odegaard and Bukayo Saka hobbled off injured.

Ravens Wreck Commanders to Finish 3-0

NEW YORK - The yardage totals were close, but the final was anything but as Baltimore rolled past Washington 30-3 in Landover, Md. on Saturday to complete its NFL preseason a perfect 3-0.

Rasheen Ali and D'Ernest Johnson rumbled for first-half rushing scores, rookie Tyler Loop drilled three long field goals, including a 61-yarder in the fourth quarter, and Keyon Martin returned an interception 26 yards for a touchdown late in the second that gave Baltimore a 24-3 lead.

With Jayden Daniels sitting this one out, Washington's backup quarterbacks failed to distinguish themselves, as Sam Hartman and Josh Johnson combined to throw three interceptions and lead one scoring drive capped off by a Matt Gay 47-yard field goal.

The Ravens open their season with the Bills in Buffalo Sept. 7, while the Commanders (0-3 in the preseason) host the New York Giants that same day.



Laquon Treadwell paced Indianapolis Colts with 116 yards receiving as Indianapolis (1-2) ran away from host Cincinnati Bengals 41-14.

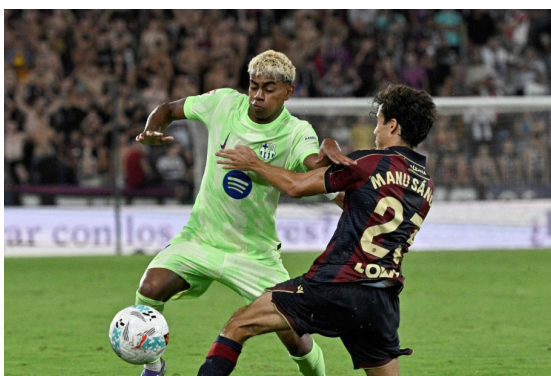
Treadwell grabbed six catches on six targets, including a 59-yard scoring play from Riley Leonard at the end of the second quarter.

Leonard, a rookie out of Notre Dame, completed 15 of 20 passes for 189 yards, while Daniel Scott returned an interception for a 35-yard touchdown to hand the Colts an early 10-0 lead. Ulysses Bentley IV had two scoring runs.

The Bengals (1-2) had little to smile about with just 228 total yards and a pair of turnovers. Desmond Ridder and Quali Conley scored on the ground.

Recently tabbed for the starting role, quarterback Joe Flacco completed 9 of 10 passes for 71 yards and a 15-yard touchdown to Harold Fannin Jr. as host Cleveland Browns defeated Los Angeles Rams 17.

Barca Complete Late Comeback Win



VALENCIA (Dispatches) - Barcelona fought back from two goals down at newly-promoted Levante to win 3-2, while Atletico Madrid dropped more points from a winning position.

First-half goals by Ivan Romero and Jose Luis Morales gave Levante a shock lead against the champions in Valencia, before Pedri and Ferran Torres struck twice in quick succession after half-time to level the match.

Hansi Flick's side looked destined for a draw on a near-waterlogged pitch until an Unai Elgezabal own-goal in injury time gave them a second win to start the new season.

"They made it very difficult for us, we have to improve a lot," Flick told his post-match press conference.

Levante went ahead on 15 minutes when the ball was knocked across the Barcelona box to Romero, who bamboozled Pau Cubarsi with a superb shoulder-drop before rifling past new signing Joan Garcia.

Torres looked certain to level in the 37th minute when Pedri's deft first-time pass found the forward unmarked in the box, but his fierce strike rattled the bar rather than the net.

After Lamine Yamal lost the ball on the edge of the Levante box, the hosts broke and as Roger Brugue prepared to shoot Alejandro Balde appeared from nowhere to save his side with an excellent piece of last-ditch defending.

However, as Balde got back to his feet another shot was fired at him which the referee decided struck the 21-year-old's arm in an unnatural position following a VAR intervention.