

Iranian Police Forces Have Struck a Significant Blow Against Foreign-Backed Terrorists in Southeastern Province of Sistan and Baluchestan, Killing Eight Terrorists Responsible for a Recent Deadly Attack on Members of Law Enforcement Forces

# IRAN NEWS

Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araqchi Condemned Australia's Decision to Expel Tehran's Ambassador Over Allegations of Attacks on Jewish Sites, Describing It as An Act of Appeasement Toward a "Regime Led by War Criminals"

## 2 DOMESTIC



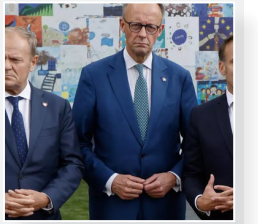
### Resolving Energy Challenges in Industry Is Gov't Top Priority for Ensuring Economic Growth

> SEE PAGE 2

## 3 INTERNATIONAL

### French, German, Polish Leaders Head to Moldova

> SEE PAGE 3



### Time for Europeans to Give Diplomacy Time and Space



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran's deputy foreign minister has called on the E3 and the UN Security Council to grant diplomacy the necessary time and space, amid European threats to invoke the JCPOA's snapback mechanism, to prevent the expiration of the UN resolution enshrining the accord.

Kazem Gharibabadi made the remarks in an X post on Tuesday after he and Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi met with senior diplomats from the three European signatories to the JCPOA, namely the UK, Germany, and France, in Geneva, focused on Resolution 2231.

Resolution 2231 is due to expire in October, officially lifting restrictions imposed on Iran's nuclear program 10 years ago after the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and the US, the E3, Russia, and China.

European countries, which have long threatened to trigger the so-called snapback mechanism, have said they will wait until the end of August to decide whether Tehran is serious about further negotiations on its nuclear work or whether they should invoke the snapback mechanism.

"Iran remains committed to diplomacy and a mutually beneficial diplomatic solution," Gharibabadi added.

Iran asserts that European states lack both the legal standing and moral authority to invoke the "snapback" mechanism, a provision of the 2015 nuclear deal that would reimpose six UN Security Council resolutions against Tehran, originally adopted between 2006 and 2010.

### Iran Expands Rail Network as 300 Freight Trains from China Set to Arrive



TEHRAN - The Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (RAI) has announced significant progress in rail infrastructure, investment, and international cooperation over the past year, with plans for 300 freight trains from China to transit through Iran by the end of the year.

Jabbarali Zakari, CEO of RAI and Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development, said the rail sector attracted 800 trillion rials (approximately \$16 billion) in investments in fleet renewal, infrastructure, and logistics under the 14th government.

He highlighted achievements including modernization of locomotives, expansion of suburban rail services, new international freight agreements, and improved passenger amenities.

Since early 2024, 636 new wagons—both passenger and freight—alongside 29 new or refurbished locomotives have been deployed. The number of operational locomotives increased 13 percent year-on-year, rising from 489 to 554. These upgrades have boosted performance: freight volumes grew 12 percent compared with last year, while passenger traffic saw a modest 1 percent increase despite constraints.

Iran recorded a new transit milestone of 5 million tons of cargo passing through its rail network last year. Passenger services have also expanded, with luxury "five-star" trains now operating in six cities, soon to be seven. Major projects are advancing, including the long-delayed second line on the busy Qazvin-Zanjan route, scheduled for completion by February, and reduced Tehran-Mashhad journey times thanks to track upgrades.

## Iran Ranks Among World's Top 10 Biotech Drug Producers

TEHRAN - Iran has secured a position among the world's top 10 producers of biotechnological medicines, according to a senior official from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Last year, the country exported nearly \$150 million worth of pharmaceutical products, primarily biotechnological drugs and active ingredients, underscoring the growing global footprint of Iran's pharmaceutical sector.

Speaking on the occasion of National Pharmacists' Day, which marks the birth anniversary of the Persian polymath Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi, Dr. Mohammad Hashemi, advisor to the head of Iran's FDA, highlighted both achievements and challenges facing the industry.

Hashemi said that over 97% of the country's pharmaceutical needs are now met domestically by volume, a figure that has steadily increased from about 95% in 2017. In terms of market value, local producers cover roughly 87% of total demand.

Despite this progress, Iran still relies on imports for certain innovative and exclusive medicines, particularly those for rare diseases, advanced oncology treatments, and next-generation biologics. "Global monopolies in technology and high investment costs mean that some level of dependency remains," Hashemi noted, while adding that localized production of several critical drugs has begun in recent years.

Another key step toward full self-sufficiency lies in raw material production. Currently, more than half of Iran's pharmaceutical raw materials are produced domestically, though reliance on imports persists for certain intermediates and key starting materials.

To address this, the FDA has launched initiatives such as creating a list of strategic raw materials, offering incentives to domestic investors, supporting knowledge-based companies, and forming production consortia. The agency's target is to reduce import dependency to below 20% within the next few years.

Hashemi emphasized that national pharmaceutical policies have increasingly focused on knowledge-based production and advanced technology transfer. Support measures have included fast-tracking approvals for innovative drugs, prioritizing foreign currency allocations, and funding strategic projects.

These efforts have already yielded results: Iran has developed dozens of biologic drugs, joined the ranks of recombinant drug producers, and now exports to more than 40 countries.



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

"Iran today is proudly among the top 10 global producers of biotechnological pharmaceuticals," Hashemi affirmed.

Despite such achievements, the industry faces serious obstacles. One of the most pressing, Hashemi explained, is the shortage and delayed allocation of foreign currency by the Central Bank, which hampers raw material imports and disrupts production planning.

On top of this, international sanctions have made financial transactions with foreign companies extremely difficult. To mitigate these issues, Iran is exploring solutions such as transparent currency allocation channels, leveraging health-sector export revenues for barter trade, pre-purchasing foreign currency, and accelerating domestic production of raw materials.

Iran's pharmaceutical quality control system is aligned with global norms. The country is a full member of the Pharmaceutical Inspection Co-operation Scheme (PIC/S), and domestic factories operate under Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP). Many Iranian companies have earned export permits to highly regulated markets, demonstrating compliance with international quality standards.

While Iran's pharmaceutical exports reached \$150 million last year, Hashemi stressed that this figure falls short of the industry's true capacity. Most exports were in biotechnology products and raw materials.

He pointed out that regulatory and political hurdles in target markets continue to restrict broader access. "The potential of Iran's pharmaceutical industry is far greater than current figures reflect. By strengthening quality standards and reducing international barriers, we expect exports to grow significantly in the coming years," he said.

Iran's pharmaceutical industry has become a strategic pillar of national health security, covering the vast majority of domestic demand while simultaneously building a growing export base. Yet, full independence and global competitiveness will depend on continued investment in technology, international cooperation, and overcoming financial barriers imposed by sanctions.

As Iran celebrates National Pharmacists' Day, the progress achieved so far reflects both the resilience of local researchers and the strategic importance of the sector in safeguarding public health and generating economic value.

### Iran Rejects Baseless UK Daily's Report on Scaling Back Uranium Enrichment Level



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran has rejected as "baseless" a report by a British daily alleging that Tehran is willing to reduce its uranium enrichment level in a bid to prevent the re-imposition of the United Nations sanctions, warning against publishing "unsubstantiated" material.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in London expressed deep concern over the repeated publication of "biased and unfounded" reports about the Islamic Republic by the Telegraph.

The embassy further emphasized that "these articles lack credibility, are based on vague and unreliable sources, and present a distorted and misleading picture of the realities in Iran."

"Such an approach is contrary to the principles of professional journalism, impartiality, and commitment to the truth," it added.

Furthermore, the embassy said it categorically rejects the baseless claims and has formally requested a correction of the published report and equal space for the publication of the embassy's official response.

The statement also highlighted the potential damage to journalistic integrity, public trust, and relations based on mutual respect if reliance on unverifiable sources persists, emphasizing that the responsibility for the consequences of such actions lies with those who publish such material.

### Russia Confirms Circulating Draft Proposal Aimed at Preventing Activation of Snapback



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MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia has confirmed circulating a draft proposal at the UN Security Council aimed at averting activation of the so-called "snapback" mechanism that would restore the council's sanctions against Iran.

The country's First Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Dmitry Polyanski made the remarks to reporters during a press conference on Tuesday.

"(The proposal) is about extending Resolution 2231," he said. "The resolution's expected expiration in October would lead to reinstatement of the coercive measures."

The European trio of the UK, France, and Germany - the United States allies in a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world countries - has been trying hard to have the measures restored.

Polyanski, however, insisted, "Russia and China want to give more breathing space for diplomacy and provide some possibilities for an active quest for a diplomatic solution to this issue."

He said Moscow and Beijing were doing so in their capacity as "as responsible members of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the nuclear deal's official name."

In 2018, the United States left the agreement in an illegal and unilateral move that was followed by its returning its sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

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.

## A Stronger Military Needed to Protect the Nation

TEHRAN - Major General Amir Hatami, Commander-in-Chief of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army, has underscored the necessity of building a stronger military force to safeguard the nation in the face of ongoing regional and global threats. Speaking at a ceremony held at the Army University of Medical Sciences to mark National Doctor's Day (honoring Avicenna) and National Pharmacist's Day (in memory of Zakariya al-Razi), Hatami praised the role of Iran's medical professionals while stressing that the country must continue to strengthen its armed forces.

"These commemorations give us the opportunity to remember the great figures of our land," Hatami said, adding that the day was also a chance to recognize medical staff who, through sacrifice and dedication, save lives. Addressing military doctors, pharmacists, and hospital directors, he emphasized their crucial role in supporting the Army's mission: "You are the guardians of the health system of the armed forces, and this responsibility is one of great pride."

Hatami recalled the role of Army medical personnel during recent conflicts, including what he described as the "12-day imposed war," when doctors and nurses served alongside frontline soldiers. "Operating rooms in some Army hospitals worked around the clock to treat the wounded and victims of aggression," he said, highlighting that dozens of Army personnel lost their lives in defense of the nation. He added that during the latest conflict, all military hospitals across Iran mobilized at full capacity, treating casualties and underscoring their deep commitment to the Islamic Republic.

The Army commander outlined the broader mission of Iran's military: to safeguard independence, territorial integrity, and the political system. While such duties exist in every



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country, he argued that Iran's strategic location makes them uniquely critical. "Throughout history, from the World Wars to the eight-year Sacred Defense, even when Iran declared neutrality or posed no threat, it was still subject to aggression from East and West," he noted.

Referring to recent attacks, Hatami criticized Israel and the United States, accusing them of violating international norms despite ongoing diplomatic negotiations. "We live in a region where an occupying, child-killing regime seeks to prevent any country from becoming stronger than itself," he said. "In such a world, where powers demand peace only through unconditional submission, we have no choice but to become stronger."

Hatami stressed that a powerful army must be comprehensive, with each component—from combat forces to medical services—fulfilling its duties effectively. Soldiers, he said, should be assured that if they are wounded in battle, they will receive the fastest and best possible medical care, while their families will also be supported.

He acknowledged progress in military healthcare over the years but said continuous investment is needed as science and technology evolve. "In the current era, the Army's health and medical system will receive full backing and support from the command structure," he pledged.

The ceremony was attended by Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, Deputy Coordinator of the Army, Brigadier General Nizami, Deputy for Health and Treatment, as well as senior military medical staff. Selected doctors, dentists, pharmacists, and paramedics were honored for their service.



# IRAN NEWS



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## Iran-Pakistan Friendship Is Deep-Rooted

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has described the friendship and brotherhood between Iran and Pakistan as deep-rooted.

Speaking in a meeting with visiting Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Hafiz Naeem Ur Rehman on Monday, Araghchi praised the firm and steadfast positions of the Pakistani government, its people, and Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP) in condemning the aggression by the Israeli regime and the United States against Iran.

He emphasized Iran's determination to strengthen friendly relations with Pakistan.

Meanwhile, Naeem Ur Rehman congratulated the Iranian people and government on their heroic defense against the Israeli aggression.

## Tehran-Mashhad High-Speed Rail Deal to Be Finalized Soon



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TEHRAN - The Minister of Roads and Urban Development has announced that the Tehran-Mashhad high-speed rail project will be finalized during the President's upcoming trip to Beijing, with the participation of a Chinese investor. The project is expected to reduce travel time on the route by 45 minutes in the near future.

According to the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, Minister Farzaneh Sadegh, speaking at the Provincial Planning Council of Razavi Khorasan on Monday, presented a report on the 14th government's one-year performance in infrastructure, transportation, energy, tourism, and rural development.

Sadegh announced that over the past year, projects worth around 600 trillion rials (approximately \$12 billion) have been implemented or inaugurated in Razavi Khorasan Province. These include initiatives in industry, mining, electrification, water supply, power plants, education, tourism, sports, youth development, solar energy, housing, and transportation.

Highlighting the importance of private-sector involvement in developing highways and transport infrastructure, the minister emphasized that all obstacles to highway investment will be lifted, and the ministry stands fully committed to supporting investors.

Sadegh underlined that routes leading to the holy city of Mashhad are not only of provincial importance but also of national and international significance, given the millions of pilgrims visiting the shrine of Imam Reza (A.S.). Completing unfinished highways, particularly the "Haram to Haram" expressway, remains a top government priority.

# Resolving Energy Challenges in Industry Is Gov't Top Priority for Ensuring Economic Growth

TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian, emphasizing the vital role of industrialists as the pioneers of sustainable development and economic security, underscored the necessity of institutional cooperation to confront energy challenges and provide comprehensive support for industrial actors. He declared that addressing the energy problems of industries remains the government's foremost priority.

Speaking on Tuesday, at the National Day of Industry and Mining ceremony, President Pezeshkian said: "The survival and resilience of our country are defined through industry and commerce." Quoting the words of Imam Ali (AS), he explained that while society consists of diverse classes, its stability ultimately depends on the activity of merchants and industrialists. He stressed that the work of all civil and military institutions derives meaning from the efforts of producers, traders, and industrial leaders.

The president highlighted existing challenges in the production sector and added: "From the very beginning of our administration, the country has been in an all-out economic war. Our adversaries are determined to prevent us from trading and developing. Yet despite their efforts, you - the nation's industrious producers and entrepreneurs - have continued to push the country forward."

Pezeshkian acknowledged structural imbalances across different sectors, noting: "I am not here to blame anyone, but the truth is we suffer from disequilibrium in water, electricity, and energy. For instance, in medicine, before a heart operation can be performed, several physicians must examine the patient and share their findings. Surgery itself is a team effort, and post-operation care is handled by yet another team. If complications arise, no one simply points fingers; instead, the medical staff work together to find the root cause and resolve it. Likewise, with our energy imbalances, we must prioritize problem-solving over assigning blame."

He explained that a group of experts and senior managers has been convened to design solutions to these imbalances. For example, academics suggest that if water consumption were reduced by three billion cubic meters, the water imbalance could be solved. However, the question remains: how should this reduction be achieved, and which sectors should bear the cut without creating new crises?

According to the president, the root of the challenge lies in the absence of balance between resources and consumption: "True development is about aligning resources with usage. If we ignore this balance, nature itself will deliver harsh consequences. Unfortunately, our country has pursued expansion without due regard to its actual capacities, and this flawed approach still persists."

He stressed that bold decisions are required to overcome the crisis: "We must take significant steps in the fields of fuel, water, and electricity to bring the country out of crisis. Yet these decisions must be carefully designed so their adverse effects are minimal."

Pointing to the administration's strategic direction, Pezeshkian underlined the importance of renewable energy: "We are actively working to install solar panels nationwide in order to harness clean, pollution-free energy. Industrialists can greatly contribute by investing in solar infrastructure. Without reliable energy, investment and development cannot be sustained. Therefore, all branches of government must join forces to resolve our energy challenges."



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

The president acknowledged shortcomings in past policymaking: "Development without energy is meaningless. Despite our efforts, we were unable to fully prevent power and gas cuts to industries. Years ago, as lawmakers, we pushed for expanding the gas network across the country, unaware that gas reserves themselves were insufficient. These sector-specific decisions, taken without considering the whole picture, have led us to today's difficulties."

He emphasized the need for responsibility rather than blame: "All of us, in one way or another, share responsibility for the current situation. But blaming each other is futile; what matters is finding real and scientific solutions."

The president also addressed the problem of illegal cryptocurrency miners consuming massive amounts of electricity: "Reports show that illegal mining operations were using as much as 2,000 megawatts of electricity before we intervened. We suspect that some remain active. We are exploring new technologies and data-driven methods to shut down these unauthorized operations. The government is fully determined to end the electricity imbalance and its consequences."

Pezeshkian praised the unprecedented level of unity among state leaders: "Today, the cooperation and harmony among the heads of the three branches of government are unmatched in recent history. We are united in our mission to resolve the challenges facing producers and industrialists. None of our decisions aim to create obstacles for you; rather, they are designed to find solutions, though this requires persistence and patience."

He linked foreign diplomacy with economic opportunities: "During every foreign trip, I invite industrialists and traders to propose ideas for trade and economic cooperation. These visits are meant to open new avenues for commerce. If you see obstacles, share them with us so we can work on removing them."

Reaffirming the government's slogan of national unity, he noted: "We need dialogue and mutual understanding, not conflict. Israel and the United States have failed to achieve their objectives largely because of our internal cohesion. This unity must be preserved. Our people are not divided into 'left' or 'right' camps, even though diverse viewpoints exist. What unites us is our collective determination to defend the dignity and independence of our nation."

The president warned against intolerance: "Differences of opinion are natural. No one should believe that others must think exactly like them, or brand those with different views as traitors or enemies. All segments of society contribute in their own way to the nation's strength and honor."

Recalling the resilience of the nation during the recent 12-day war, he said: "It was you, the industrial and economic units, who stood at the front line against the aggression of the U.S. and Israel. Your efforts denied the enemy their goals. Our duty now is to provide the conditions for your prosperity. Just as the people courageously resisted in those days, we as officials must see ourselves as servants of the people, committed solely to solving their problems."

Earlier in the day, President Pezeshkian honored 17 leading figures from the industrial and mining sectors with commemorative plaques. In total, 79 entrepreneurs and industrial actors were recognized at the event.

# Iran Announces Construction of 88 Dams and Major Infrastructure Projects

TEHRAN - The head of Iran's Planning and Budget Organization has announced that 88 dams, with a total investment of 140 trillion rials, are currently under construction. He also highlighted the government's plans for large-scale development along the country's southern coastline, particularly in the Makran region.

Seyed Hamid Pourmohammadi outlined the administration's key infrastructure initiatives in water management, healthcare, education, rail and road transport, and coastal development.

Pourmohammadi emphasized the urgency of tackling climate change and declining rainfall, noting that water scarcity represents a greater challenge than financial imbalances. "Water is an economic commodity," he said, adding that extensive planning has been undertaken to secure the nation's water future.

Currently, 88 dams with a combined annual regulation capacity of 7.5 billion cubic meters are under construction. In addition, 124 water supply projects—designed to secure drinking water for urban and rural areas for the next 25 years—are underway, with a projected cost of 240 trillion rials.

On healthcare, Pourmohammadi announced 118 hospital projects with a total of 33,281 beds across the country, stressing that the 14th administration has prioritized investments in the health sector.

The government is pursuing what it calls a "maritime economy strategy," with priority given to the Makran coast, Sistan and Baluchestan Province, the Arvand region, and southern islands. Projects in the Makran area include the southern coastal corridor, Chabahar-Khash railway, Chabahar-Zahedan highway, Jask-Mohammadabad-Rigan road, Rimdan-Bandar Abbas corridor, fishing ports, new hospitals, power transmission lines, and

expanded airport facilities. The government has allocated more than 890 trillion rials for these developments.

Private sector participation has also been encouraged, with 180 trillion rials committed to agricultural water projects, \$100 million in foreign investment for Chabahar Airport, and \$242 million for the second phase of Shahid Beheshti Port.

In Sistan and Baluchestan, 66 priority projects in transport, water, agriculture, healthcare, energy, education, industry, and housing—worth 1,160 trillion rials and \$342 million—are planned for completion before the end of the administration.

In the Arvand Free Zone, 11 hinterland projects worth 222 trillion rials are underway, alongside eight Arvand River development projects requiring 56 trillion rials.

For southern islands, including Abu Musa, the government has introduced independent budget lines, launched weekly flights and ferry services, and signed agreements with private investors in tourism and fisheries. Projects in health services, electricity, water supply, waste management, and cultural infrastructure are also being advanced.

Pourmohammadi further stressed the strategic importance of rail corridors linking Iran to global markets. The completion of the Saraks-Tabriz-Cheshmeh Soraya-Kars railway would establish the shortest land route between China and Europe.

Priority rail projects include Chabahar-Zahedan, Bafq-Zarrinshahr, and Shalameh-Basra lines, totaling 853 kilometers and requiring 162 trillion rials. On the roads, six national corridors spanning 9,826 kilometers are in progress, with 2,360 kilometers slated for completion by the administration's end at an estimated cost of 1,326 trillion rials.

## Iran, Uzbekistan Sign Cooperation Agreement in Iron and Steel Sector



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TEHRAN - The Iranian Steel Producers Association and the Uzbekistan Metallurgy Association have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to expand cooperation in the iron and steel industry.

According to the Iranian Steel Producers Association, the organization hosted the president of the Uzbekistan Metallurgy Association along with a delegation that included Iran's commercial attaché in Uzbekistan and representatives from the Trade Promotion Organization.

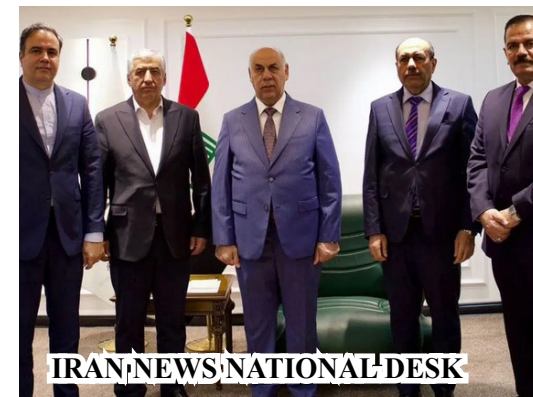
During the meeting, which led to the signing of the MoU, Bahram Sobhani, President of the Iranian Steel Producers Association, highlighted the capacities of Iran's steel industry and emphasized the readiness of Iranian iron and steel producers, as well as related engineering companies, to meet the industrial and mining needs of regional countries, particularly Uzbekistan.

Gulbahor Taji Mirzayeva, President of the Uzbekistan Metallurgy Association, introduced the potential of Uzbekistan's metal industries, including 17 member companies of the association. She described Uzbekistan's steel sector as rapidly developing and called for the transfer of knowledge and expertise from Iranian steelmakers to Uzbekistan.

The agreement covers a wide range of economic, industrial, and educational areas, including long-term cooperation in raw material and product supply, experience-sharing, joint participation in industrial projects, planning and collaboration on specialized training in the iron and steel value chain through the Iranian Steel Academy, expanding industrial cooperation, and strengthening positions in regional and global steel markets.

The MoU also includes provisions for holding joint events such as conferences, exhibitions, and industrial forums to exchange knowledge and expertise; conducting joint studies on decarbonization and energy efficiency in ferrous metallurgy; cooperating in exports and imports of products and promoting shared logistics routes; as well as collaboration in providing and analyzing statistical data, market research, forecasts, and supply chain studies.

## Iraq's Tourism Minister Signals Readiness for 10m Tourist Exchanges With Iran



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TEHRAN - Iraq's Minister of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities, Ahmed Fakak al-Badrani, has announced his country's readiness to expand tourism exchanges with Iran, aiming to increase the number of visitors between the two countries to 10 million annually.

According to a statement from Iran's Association of Travel Service Offices, Minister al-Badrani made the remarks during a meeting with Hormatollah Rafiei, head of the Iranian Association of Air Travel and Tourist Agencies. The Iraqi minister welcomed Iran's private sector proposals to boost cultural-historical tourism and health tourism alongside the already established religious tourism between the two nations.

Rafiei, who is currently in Baghdad to coordinate preparations for an upcoming tourism roadshow in Iraq, said the event will take place in early October across Baghdad, Karbala, and Basra. The program will feature business-to-business meetings and "Iran Nights" cultural events in each city.

Citing Iraqi government statistics, Rafiei noted that 3.5 million Iraqis travel to Iran annually, primarily for pilgrimage and healthcare. He added that, based on recent discussions, Tehran and Baghdad are preparing to raise the exchange to about 10 million visitors, with Iran expecting to host some 5 million Iraqi tourists as part of the plan.

## Iran, Tajikistan Hold Joint Youth Diplomacy Meeting to Boost Cooperation



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TEHRAN - The Iranian Youth Diplomacy Center hosted a high-ranking delegation from Tajikistan to strengthen cultural, scientific, and social cooperation, with a special focus on the role of young people in driving development and regional convergence.

The joint meeting took place at the Olympic Hotel in Tehran with the participation of Tajikistan's Minister of Youth and Sports, Zulfikar Gol-Ahmadzoda Ahmad, along with prominent academics and experts.

The session centered on youth engagement in social development, expanding intercultural cooperation, and advancing scientific and economic exchanges. Officials described the meeting as a milestone in enhancing public diplomacy between the two nations.

Ali Afshari, Secretary of the meeting, stressed the importance of managing bilateral interactions efficiently, noting that the gathering could serve as a practical model for shaping a roadmap for youth cooperation between Iran and Tajikistan.

Amin Banaei, Assistant to the Secretary of Iran's Supreme Council of Adolescents and Youth, welcomed the Tajik delegation, highlighting the deep cultural and civilizational ties between the two peoples. He said the visit reflects the strategic will of both governments to reinforce their historical and cultural bonds.

He added that the shared heritage of language, literature, and civilizational identity provides a strong foundation for expanding cultural, economic, and social collaboration among the younger generations of both countries.

Ramin Kiani, Secretary-General of Iran's Youth Diplomacy Center, explained that the center's mission is to strengthen youth diplomacy as a core component of public diplomacy by mobilizing academic, cultural, and civil society networks. Cooperation with Tajikistan, he said, could become a model for broader regional integration.

For his part, Zulfikar Gol-Ahmadzoda Ahmad, Tajikistan's Minister of Youth and Sports, underlined the importance of shared literary and cultural traditions, noting that Persian literature—from Rumi and Saadi to Hafez—represents a priceless resource for fostering cultural unity and regional identity. Leveraging this heritage, he said, can pave the way for joint cultural, social, and even economic projects, raising bilateral relations to a strategic level.



## Macron Rejects Netanyahu's Recent Criticism

PARIS (Dispatches) - President Emmanuel Macron strongly rejected Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent criticism over rising antisemitism in France and warned the issue should not be "weaponised", in a letter to the Israeli leader published Tuesday.

"These accusations of inaction in the face of a scourge that we are fighting with everything in our power are unacceptable and are an offence to France as a whole," Macron wrote, in a letter published in several newspapers.

"The fight against antisemitism must not be weaponised and will not fuel any discord between Israel and France."



## Ukraine Admits Russian Army Has Entered Central Dnipropetrovsk Region



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine admitted for the first time on Tuesday that Russian forces had entered the central Dnipropetrovsk region, saying fighting there was ongoing. The battlefield monitor DeepState said in a social media post that the Russian army was "consolidating its positions" and preparing "for a further advance".

Ukraine acknowledged for the first time on Tuesday that Russia's army has entered the Dnipropetrovsk region, a central administrative area previously spared from intense fighting.

"Yes, they have entered, and fighting is ongoing as of now," Viktor Tregubov, spokesperson for the Dnipro Operational Strategic Group of Forces, told AFP.

Moscow first said its forces had advanced into the region—which it has not made a formal territorial claim over—in July. It has since claimed to have captured some settlements there.

In a separate statement, Ukraine's General Staff rejected Moscow's claims to have fully captured the villages of Zaporizke and Novogeorgivka.

But battlefield monitor DeepState, which has close ties to Ukraine's military, said Tuesday that Russia had "occupied" them.

The Russian army "is now consolidating its positions, and is accumulating infantry for a further advance", it added in a social media post.

Russian forces are slowly but steadily gaining ground in costly battles for largely devastated areas in eastern and southern Ukraine, normally with few inhabitants or intact buildings left.

Dnipropetrovsk is not one of the five Ukrainian regions—Donetsk, Kherson, Lugansk, Zaporizhzhia and Crimea—that Moscow has publicly claimed as Russian territory.

## Israeli Strikes Near Syrian Capital Kill at Least Three Soldiers



DAMASCUS (Dispatches) - Syrian officials said Tuesday that Israeli strikes killed at least three soldiers across its southern regions, including one soldier, as Israel continues its consistent attacks on its neighbor since the fall of dictator Bashar al-Assad despite pursuing talks.

An Israeli attack killed three soldiers near the capital Damascus, a Syrian official said Tuesday, though an external war monitor said the toll was higher.

Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes in Syria since an Islamist-led alliance toppled longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad in December.

It has also opened talks with the interim authorities in Damascus. "An Israeli drone targeted one of the military buildings of the 44th division of the Syrian army in Kiswah, west of Damascus, killing three members of the division," an official at the defence ministry told AFP, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights later said the toll had risen to six, all members of the 44th division.

Earlier Tuesday, the official SANA news agency reported that "a young man was killed in an Israeli strike on a home in the village of Taranja", on the formerly Syria-controlled side of the armistice line on the Golan Heights.



## French, German, Polish Leaders Head to Moldova

PARIS (Dispatches) - The leaders of France, Germany and Poland were due in Moldova on Wednesday in what they describe as a show of support for the divided nation bordering Ukraine, a day before campaigning starts for next month's tense parliamentary election amid government claims of Russian interference.

French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk will meet Moldova's President Maia Sandu to celebrate the country's 34th independence day as she pushes for EU membership.

"This is a show of support by European leaders for Moldova as Russia ramps up its interference activities ahead of the high-stakes elections," the Moldovan presidency said in a statement to AFP.

Sandu and her European allies have repeatedly accused Moscow of attempts to destabilise the former Soviet republic that lies between war-torn Ukraine and EU and NATO member Romania.

A vocal critic of Russia, in particular since the start of its invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Sandu has been steering Moldova through official EU accession talks that started in June 2024.

The three EU leaders will give a press statement alongside Sandu on Wednesday afternoon, before a dinner.

They will then give speeches during the official independence day celebrations held on Chisinau's Independence Square, with a concert concluding the evening.

Macron, Merz and Tusk want to reaffirm their "support for Moldova's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity", a French presidential adviser told journalists.

They also want to support Moldova's "European trajectory". In Moldova's Transnistria region, residents survive without heating in middle of winter.

To display this content from YouTube, you must enable advertisement tracking and audience measurement. We cannot ignore the consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which directly affects Moldova,"

he said.

"Moldova is threatened by Russia," he added, referring to Moscow's "interference and meddling" and its "playbook" of "intimidation", "sovereignty obstructions" and "exploitation of separatism".

In the east of the country is the pro-Moscow separatist region of Transnistria, where Russian troops are stationed.

"The visit is really a strong sign of support, and it is a symbolic message to Russia that top European countries care and follow what happens here," political analyst Valeriu Pasha of the Chisinau-based think tank Watchdog told AFP.

He added it was the first visit of the so-called Weimar Triangle leaders together in Moldova.

Sandu's Party of Action and Solidarity now holds 61 seats in the 101-member assembly. But according to an opinion poll published last week, it is likely to win no more than 41 seats in next month's poll.

Among the 21 groups registered by the Election Commission are two blocs with broad support. The Patriotic Bloc, including Socialists and Communists who want closer ties with Russia, is projected to win 36 seats, while the Alternative Bloc, accused by the government of concealing a pro-Kremlin bias, is projected to win 13 seats.

One of the leaders of Alternative, former prosecutor general Alexandr Stoianoglo, wrote on Telegram on Tuesday that the West would soon lose interest in Moldova once the war in neighbouring Ukraine has ended.

Sandu won re-election last year over Stoianoglo by a 10-point margin, but had to rely heavily on the votes of Moldovans living and working outside the country. A referendum endorsing her EU membership campaign cleared 50 percent by a narrow margin.

Sandu has warned of attempts by Russia to influence the poll, last week saying that Moscow intended to funnel some \$100 million into the country in cryptocurrency alone to help pro-Russian political forces.

An openly pro-Russian bloc overseen by a fugitive Moldovan business magnate has been banned from taking part in the poll.

## U.S. Tariffs on Indian Goods Double to 50% Over Russian Oil Purchases

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. tariffs of 50 percent took effect Wednesday on many Indian products, doubling an existing duty as President Donald Trump sought to punish New Delhi for buying Russian oil.

Trump has raised pressure on India over the energy transactions, a key source of revenue for Moscow's war in Ukraine, as part of a campaign to end the conflict.

The latest salvo strains U.S.-India ties, giving New Delhi fresh incentive to improve relations with Beijing.

While Trump has slapped fresh duties on allies and competitors alike since returning to the presidency in January, this 50-percent level is among the highest that U.S. trading partners face.

Crucially, however, exemptions remain for sectors that could be hit with separate levies -- like pharmaceuticals and computer chips.

The Trump administration has launched investigations into these and other sectors that could culminate in further duties. Smartphones are in the list of exempted products as well.

Industries that have already been singled out, such as steel, aluminum and automobiles, are similarly spared these countrywide levies.

The United States was India's top export destination in 2024, with shipments worth \$87.3 billion.

But analysts have cautioned that a 50-percent duty is akin to a trade embargo



and is likely to harm smaller firms.

Exporters of textiles, seafood and jewelry were already reporting cancelled U.S. orders and losses to rivals such as Bangladesh and Vietnam, raising fears of heavy job cuts.

New Delhi has criticized Washington's move as "unfair, unjustified and unreasonable."

The world's fifth-largest economy is looking to cushion the blow, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi promising to lower the tax burden on citizens during an annual speech to mark India's independence.

Modi earlier vowed self-reliance as well, pledging to defend his country's interests.

The foreign ministry previously said India had begun importing oil from Russia as traditional supplies were diverted to Europe over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

It noted that Washington actively encouraged such imports at the time to strengthen stability in the global energy market.

Russia accounted for nearly 36 percent of India's total crude oil imports in 2024. Buying Russian oil saved India billions of dollars on import costs, keeping domestic fuel prices relatively stable.

But the Trump administration held firm on its tariff plans in the lead-up to Wednesday's deadline.

Trump's trade adviser Peter Navarro told reporters last week that "India doesn't appear to want to recognize its role in the bloodshed."

"It's cozying up to Xi Jinping," Navarro added, referring to the Chinese president.

Wendy Cutler, senior vice president at the Asia Society Policy Institute, told AFP: "One of the most troubling developments in the Trump tariff saga is how India moved from a promising candidate for an early trade deal to a nation facing among the highest tariffs imposed by the US against any trading partner."

## Bolsonaro Declared a Flight Risk, Placed Under 24-Hour Watch

BRASILIA (Dispatches) - A Brazilian judge on Tuesday declared far right ex-president Jair Bolsonaro, who is under house arrest while awaiting the verdict in his coup-plotting trial, a "flight risk" and placed him under round-the-clock watch.

Bolsonaro faces 40 years in prison if convicted of plotting to cling onto power after losing 2022 elections to left-winger Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

The verdict in the case is expected early next month.

Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, who is presiding over the trial, asked the police to carry out "full-time surveillance" of former army captain Bolsonaro, according to a court document seen by AFP.

Moraes was acting on a request from the Brazilian prosecutor's office.

The prosecutors pointed to recent revelations that Bolsonaro planned to seek asylum in Argentina last year as proof that the 70-year-old could seek to evade a possible lengthy jail term.

In his draft asylum request, the man dubbed the "Trump of the Tropics" during his 2019-2022 presidency claimed he was the victim of political persecution.



Bolsonaro is accused of leading a criminal organization that aimed to prevent Lula taking power after he narrowly defeated Bolsonaro in October 2022 elections.

The trial has driven a deep wedge between Lula and U.S. President Donald Trump, who has slammed the indictment of his ally Bolsonaro as a "witch hunt" and punished those responsible for putting him in the dock.

Lula announced Tuesday that the United States had revoked the U.S. visa of his justice minister, Ricardo Lewandowski, the latest official to be hit with a US visa ban or asset freeze over the case.

The U.S. State Department had yet to confirm the move.

At a cabinet meeting Lula expressed solidarity with the minister and called the visa withdrawal an "irresponsible gesture."

The Trump administration has also imposed crippling 50-percent tariffs on dozens of Brazilian imports and sanctioned Moraes, a hate figure on the Brazilian and U.S. right, among other Supreme Court justices.





## Sinner Starts Strong, Swiatek Stays Swift at U.S. Open

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - World number one Jannik Sinner began his bid for back-to-back U.S. Open titles with an emphatic victory as women's draw favourite Iga Swiatek swept into the second round.

Italian star Sinner rattled through his first round tie with Czech Vit Kopriva with a minimum of fuss, needing just an hour and 38 minutes to record a 6-1, 6-1, 6-2 victory over the world number 89.

"It feels great to be back here. Obviously it's a very special tournament," said Sinner, who is attempting to become the first man to repeat as U.S. Open champion since Roger Federer won five in a row from 2004-2008.

Sinner, 24, faces Alexei Popyrin in the third round.

"I'm very happy that I'm healthy again," said Sinner, who was forced to retire from last week's Cincinnati Open final against Carlos Alcaraz.

"I have amazing memories (from last year). Every year is different. You come here starting this tournament hopefully in the best possible way, which I did," he added.

Sinner's blistering start on the Arthur Ashe Stadium court was matched by Poland's Swiatek, who was similarly emphatic in a 6-1, 6-2 rout of Colombia's Emiliana Arango.

The 24-year-old from Poland was always in control against 84th-ranked Arango, overwhelming the Colombian with some powerful groundstrokes mixed with some deft work at the net.

The win makes Swiatek the first woman in history to win 65 consecutive WTA-level first round matches, surpassing Monica Seles' previous record of 64.

Yet Swiatek's performance was relegated to a footnote in her post-match press conference, where news of pop star Taylor Swift's engagement to NFL player Travis Kelce dominated the questions.

Swiatek is a fully paid-up "Swiftie" — the nickname given to Swift's millions of fanatical followers — and could not hide her delight at learning of the singer's looming nuptials.

"I'm just happy for her, because she deserves the best," Swiatek said. "Obviously she had a lot of boyfriends, so we know all about that. So hopefully this one will, stick forever. Travis seems like a

great guy."

The six-time Grand Slam singles champion — a winner in New York in 2022 — will face the Netherlands' Suzan Lamens in the second round.

In other women's draw results yesterday, Ukrainian 27th seed Marta Kostyuk took down Britain's Katie Boulter 6-4, 6-4. Eighth seed Amanda Anisimova of the United States ousted Australia's Kimberly Birrell 6-3, 6-2.

Brazil's 18th seed Beatriz Haddad Maia advanced with a 6-3, 1-6, 6-1 win over Britain's Sonay Kartal.

But there was disappointment for rising French star Lois Boisson. Boisson, who captivated her homeland with a run to the semi-finals of the French Open in June, exited in three sets to Switzerland's Viktorija Golubic, losing 3-6, 7-6 (7/3), 6-2.

Elsewhere former champion Coco Gauff stumbled into the second round of the U.S. Open, squeezing past Australia's Ajla Tomljanovic in an error-strewn three-hour battle.

Third seed Gauff punched her ticket to the second round after overcoming a litany of self-inflicted errors to win 6-4, 6-7 (2/7), 7-5 in a match that lasted 2hr 57min.

"It was a tough match. Ajla was tough, she was getting so many balls back," 2023 US Open champion Gauff said.

"It wasn't the best but I'm happy to get through to the next round."

Gauff, the reigning French Open champion, had prepared for the US Open by shaking up her coaching team on the eve of the tournament in an effort to fix her shaky service game.

However, on the evidence of Tuesday night, the 21-year-old American still has plenty to work on if she is to have any realistic chance of mounting a deep run in New York.

Gauff finished with a whopping 59 unforced errors and 10 double faults, was broken six times and heads to the second round knowing that a more ruthless opponent than Tomljanovic might have punished those mistakes.

## Wolves Inflict More Woe on West Ham, Leeds Crash Out

LONDON (Dispatches) - Newcastle target Jorgen Strand Larsen fired Wolves to a 3-2 League Cup win over West Ham as Premier League Leeds and Sunderland crashed out on penalties to lower league opposition.

Wolves have reportedly rejected a £50 million bid from the Magpies for Larsen, who could prove to be a replacement for Alexander Isak.

The Norwegian was only introduced 17 minutes from time as Vitor Pereira made eight changes after losing both his side's opening two Premier League games.

Larsen produced two blistering finishes in three minutes to turn the tie around at Molineux and heap more pressure on West Ham boss Graham Potter.

Tomas Soucek and Lucas Paqueta had given the Hammers the lead after Rodrigo Gomes put Wolves in front.

But West Ham, who have conceded eight goals in losing their opening two Premier League games, remain without a win this season.



Leeds have splashed nearly £100 million on new players after returning to the Premier League, while Sheffield Wednesday fans have worried for the club's survival as wages to players and staff have regularly been paid late.

The home fans were encouraged not to attend by the club's Supporters' Trust in a protest against club owner Dejphon Chansiri.

However, it was Wednesday who could celebrate at Hillsborough as Leeds missed all three of their penalties after a 1-1 draw.

Sunderland were also embarrassed by League One Huddersfield on spot-kicks after a 1-1 draw.

Brentford won the other all-Premier League tie of the night with a 2-0 victory at Bournemouth thanks to goals from Fabio Carvalho and Igor Thiago.

Burnley needed a stoppage time winner from Oliver Sonke to beat second tier Derby 2-1.

## Celtic Fluff Champions League Chance in Kazakh Shoot-Out

PARIS (Dispatches) - Scottish champions Celtic crashed out of the Champions League play-offs after missing three spot-kicks in a humiliating penalty shoot-out against Kazakh side FC Kairat.

The Kazakh Premier League champions had already come through three qualifying rounds and go into the hat for Thursday's draw for the Champions League proper for the first time.

There they can hope to rub shoulders with the likes of superpowers Paris Saint-Germain and Real Madrid.

Celtic meanwhile must console themselves with a place in the Europa League.

With neither side able to score in 210 minutes of football across the two legs, it came down to penalties which Kairat won 3-2.

Celtic, the 1967 European Cup winners, will now drop into the Europa League and face a 3,500-mile (5,600km) trip home from Kazakhstan ruing two dreadful 0-0 stalemates and a badly fluffed shoot-out.

"It's hugely disappointing and I really feel for the supporters who have travelled all the way to be here, the effort and



commitment they've shown to be here," said Celtic manager Brendan Rodgers.

"We're bitterly disappointed for them as well as ourselves."

Japan forward Daizen Maeda missed the decisive penalty after Celtic had been left reeling when Kairat's 21-year-old keeper Temirlan Anarbekov saved Adam Idah's opening effort and then Luke McCowan's weak second one.

Celtic boss Rodgers blamed the quality of the pitch for his team's failure to score, while the home side were cheered on in an electric atmosphere.

"The pitch made it awful. We were defensively okay but couldn't quite make the breakthrough," Rodgers said.

Arne Engels and Callum McGregor converted their penalties but to no avail.

"They made it stuffy and credit to them, over the two games they defended really well," said Celtic captain McGregor. "Over the two legs we didn't do enough to hurt them."

## Nothing to Prove, Perez Just Wants to Enjoy Racing Again



LONDON (Dispatches) - Sergio Perez said he had nothing to prove and just wanted to enjoy racing again after Cadillac announced the Mexican's Formula One comeback next season.

Perez, 35, has not competed since he was dropped by Red Bull at the end of a difficult 2024 season and with two years left on his contract.

On Tuesday the race winner spoke of his excitement in the Cadillac project after signing for the newcomers with similarly experienced teammate Valtteri Bottas, and also noted Red Bull's continuing problems without him.

"My main target is to enjoy it (again)," Perez told reporters in a video call with Bottas alongside. "I want to get back to the enjoyment and this project just brings me that excitement back."

"I couldn't afford to leave the way I left the sport, you know, and this is why I'm coming back with this new project."

Perez finished 285 points behind four times world champion teammate Max Verstappen in 2024 and was the only driver from the top four teams not to win.

Verstappen has had two more teammates this year and the Dutch driver has scored 187 of Red Bull's 194 points from 14 races, with the team also replacing principal Christian Horner.

"When you see the amount of points they've scored (his replacements)... I don't think I've got anything to prove in that regard," said Perez.

Bottas said there would be no rivalry between the pair.

"We're here to work together. We don't need to prove anything to each other," said the 10-times race winner and former championship runner-up to Lewis Hamilton at Mercedes.

"I have respect for Checo, I know he's got respect for me, so we are in this together and really trying to guide the team forward and give everything to the team."

Bottas said he had been talking with Cadillac principal Graeme Lowdon for some two years about being part of the project and recognised there was "a mountain of work to do" with a likely difficult start.

"But we're not there to stay at the back, we don't want to finish last and I believe with this structure and group, these people, there's no reason why we shouldn't be able to get relatively quickly up the pace and enjoy some success," he added.

## Patriots Cut 2022 First-Round Pick Cole Strange



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - If Mike Vrabel was looking to make a statement move in his first season as head coach of the New England Patriots, he certainly did so on Tuesday.

With rosters required to be trimmed to 53 players, the Patriots cut guard Cole Strange, a first-round pick in 2022.

Though offensive line is viewed as one of New England's weaker areas, the club parted ways with a player who started 29 games in three seasons with the Patriots.

According to reports, 2025 third-round pick Jared Wilson is expected to start at left guard when the Patriots open their season at home against the Las Vegas Raiders on Sept. 7.

Strange started all 17 games as a rookie but was limited to 10 games -- all starts -- in 2023 because of a knee injury. He also missed the first 14 games of last season still recovering from the injury.

New England selected Strange with the 29th pick out of Chattanooga in 2022 -- a pick that many pundits viewed with skepticism when it was made.

Meanwhile after suffering a lower left leg injury during practice last week, Atlanta Falcons starting right tackle Kaleb McGary was placed on injured reserve Tuesday and will miss the entire 2025 season.

McGary agreed to a two-year, \$30 million extension with the Falcons in early August. He's played 93 games and made 92 starts over six seasons in Atlanta, and was expected to be the blindside protector for lefty starting quarterback Michael Penix Jr. this season.