

A Senior Iranian Official Responsible for Internet Monitoring Operations Says the Country Is Still Under Recurrent Cyberattacks More Than Two Months After the End of a 12-Day War

# IRAN NEWS

Iranian Foreign Minister Said That in Accordance With Its Responsibilities Under UN Security Council Resolution 2231 and the Iran Nuclear Deal, Europe Is Expected to Counter Measures That Undermine Diplomacy

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DOMESTIC



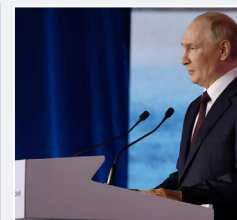
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## Enemy Incapable of Starting New War



TEHRAN (PressTV) - A spokesperson for Iran's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) says Israel and its allies lack the ability to launch a new war against Iran, and hence, are resorting to psychological operations.

"The enemy cannot start a new war, but it wants to keep the country in a warlike atmosphere filled with worry and tension," said Brigadier General Ali Mohammad Naeini on Thursday.

"For this purpose, it pursues psychological operations. We are not the initiators of war, nor do we fear it. We tell the people of Iran not to worry; if war occurs, we hold the upper hand and possess a deterrent power that will make the enemy regret."

The remarks came after the 12-day war that erupted on June 13, when Israel launched an unprovoked act of aggression, assassinating senior commanders, nuclear scientists, and killing hundreds of civilians. The United States also joined the war by bombing three Iranian nuclear sites in a clear violation of international law.

On June 24, Iran, through its successful retaliatory operations against both the Israeli regime and the US, managed to impose a halt to the terrorist aggression.

Naeini said Israel's security doctrine had collapsed during the war, saying the regime miscalculated Iran's strength and wrongly believed Iranians would capitulate after an initial strike. Instead, he said, "the people gave a crushing response to the delusional enemy."

According to Naeini, the war demonstrated the unity of the Iranian nation, the strength of the armed forces, and the effectiveness of the country's leadership. He added that Iran emerged "more stable, cohesive, and powerful" after the 12-day US-Israeli aggression.

## Iranian Forces Stronger Than Ever After Recent War



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Major General Ali Abdollahi, newly appointed commander of the Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, says Iran's Armed Forces are now "more prepared" and possess enhanced capabilities following the recent 12-day war with Israel and the US.

General Abdollahi was appointed by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei after the martyrdom of Major General Gholam Ali Rashid and his successor Major General Ali Shadmani, both of whom were assassinated during Israeli strikes on Iran in June.

The Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters serves as the unified combatant command of Iran's armed forces. It functions under the General Staff and is responsible for planning and coordinating joint military operations among the branches of the Iranian military.

In a statement marking the birth anniversary of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him) and the start of Unity Week — an annual event promoting Sunni-Shia unity — General Abdollahi emphasized the importance of national cohesion and religious solidarity.

He praised the "sacred unity" displayed by Iranians during the recent war, saying it was key to thwarting the "hostile objectives of the Zionist enemy and the United States against the country".

## Iran Will Continue to Support Palestinian Resistance Against Israeli Occupation

TEHRAN - Iran's foreign minister has reaffirmed the country's commitment to supporting the Palestinian people's legitimate resistance against Israeli occupation until their rights are fully restored.

Abbas Araqchi made these comments on Thursday during a meeting with Hamas's political bureau members in Doha, Qatar.

He also met with Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Emir of Qatar, where discussions focused on strengthening Iran-Qatar bilateral relations and addressing regional and international developments, particularly the ongoing genocide committed by the Israeli regime in occupied Palestine.

Araqchi highlighted the urgent need for regional countries and the international community to take concerted action to halt the genocide, prosecute those responsible, and confront the warmongering and hegemony of the Israeli regime.

He pointed to the escalation of violence in Gaza and the West Bank, including the imposition of hunger on the innocent people of Gaza and the killing of women and children at food distribution lines.

He noted that mass protests around the world against these atrocities demonstrate a growing global awareness of the crisis in occupied Palestine.

Araqchi called for a coordinated effort among Islamic nations to end the genocide in Gaza, deliver humanitarian aid to those affected, and hold Israeli leaders accountable for their actions.

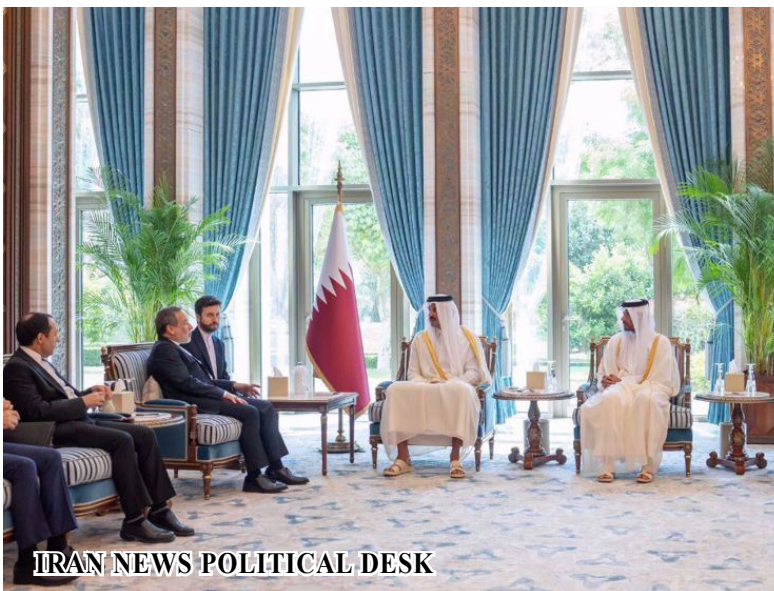
In response, Khalil al-Hayya, a Hamas leader in Gaza, praised Iran's support for the Palestinian cause, asserting that Israel's crimes will not diminish the Palestinians' resolve to resist and defend their rights.

Meanwhile in Doha, Araqchi said Iran is not afraid of engaging in new negotiations towards resolution of whatever outstanding issues, but does not fear facing up to any fresh war that could be imposed on the country by its adversaries either.

The top diplomat made the remarks in an interview on Wednesday after accompanying President Pezeshkian during his trip to China.

"We have no fear of negotiations, just as we have no fear of war," he said.

The remarks came amid the United States allegations of interest in entering new talks with the Islamic Republic.



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Tehran has not completely ruled out the prospect of joining a new diplomatic process, but has warned, at the same time, that it cannot comfortably trust Washington given the latter's drawn-out history of betrayals.

Iranian officials have cited the US's illegal and unilateral withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), a 2015 nuclear deal, during Donald Trump's previous tenure.

They have also mentioned the incumbent Trump administration's providing the Israeli regime with unprecedented political, military, and intelligence support during Tel Aviv's unprovoked war on Iran in June as well as Washington's joining the assault by attacking the Islamic Republic's nuclear sites.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Araqchi noted that joint initiatives were underway to address the way the country was to deal with European states' efforts at invoking the JCPOA's so-called "snapback" mechanism.

"There are joint initiatives with Russia and China regarding how to deal with the 'snapback,' and our diplomats in New York are in contact with their Russian and Chinese counterparts over the matter," he said.

"We will take every necessary step to make the world understand that this European move is illegal and lacks legitimacy," he noted.

The mechanism would restore the United Nations Security Council's sanctions against Iran.

Tehran has reminded that the drive by the European trio — the UK, France, and Germany — to have the sanctions reinstated contradicts the states' refusal to live up to their commitments under the JCPOA.

The troika returned their sanctions against Iran after the American withdrawal. It also lent support to the Israeli-American aggression by both endorsing the war and forcing the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) into passing an anti-Iranian resolution that was used as a pretext to launch the aggression.

Araqchi, meanwhile, addressed Pezeshkian's trip, saying the visit "will go down as one of the most important ones in our history."

The president's participation in China's major military parade during the visit carried the message of solidarity with Beijing and opposition to world powers' warmongering tendencies, he noted.

## Iran Downgrades Diplomatic Ties With Australia in Tit-for-Tat Move



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran has reduced the level of Australia's diplomatic presence in Tehran in response to Canberra's decision to downgrade diplomatic relations, the spokesperson for Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs says.

"We do not welcome the reduction of relations because we believe there was no reason or justification for this action, and it affects the relations between the two nations," Esmail Baghaei said Thursday.

Baghaei confirmed the departure of the Australian ambassador from Iran, noting that the reciprocal move follows established diplomatic norms and international law.

"According to diplomatic customs and international law, in response to Australia's action, the Islamic Republic of Iran has also reduced the level of Australia's diplomatic presence in Iran," Baghaei said.

He added that despite the diplomatic constraints, Iran's consular section in Canberra remains operational and efforts continue to provide necessary consular services to Iranian nationals living in Australia.

In closing, Baghaei dismissed accusations of anti-Semitism against Iran as "ridiculous and baseless."

On August 25, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese alleged that Tehran was involved in what he called two anti-Semitic attacks in his country, ordering that the Iranian ambassador in Canberra — Ahmad Sadeghi — and three other diplomats must leave Australia within seven days.

## Snapback Won't Add Pressure on Iran's Oil Exports



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TEHRAN - Iran's Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad says a potential return of UN sanctions on Iran, a process known as "snapback" under a 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers, will not increase restrictions on the country's oil exports.

Speaking to reporters after a Cabinet meeting, Paknejad said that Iran's oil exports have successfully resisted a barrage of sanctions imposed by the United States in recent years, adding that a return of UN sanctions won't increase the pressure.

"It is not expected that the snapback would create any restriction on top of the unilateral restrictions imposed on our oil sales by the US and its Treasury Department," he said.

The minister added, however, that Iran is prepared to adopt the necessary measures to deal with new emergencies.

Iran's nuclear agreement with world powers, known as the JCPOA, allows a return of six United Nations sanctions resolutions that were adopted between 2006 and 2010 in response to Iran's alleged non-compliance with UN nuclear regulations.

France, Britain, and Germany, as parties to the JCPOA, announced last week that they had started a 30-day process to snap back sanctions on Iran before a late October deadline when a UN Security Council resolution enshrining the deal expires.

Iran has condemned the announcement, saying the three countries have been influenced by the US, which withdrew from the JCPOA in 2018, and its attempts to force Iran to dismantle its peaceful nuclear program.

## U.S., Israeli Attacks on Iran's Nuclear Sites Violate UN Charter

TEHRAN - Iran's Permanent Representative to the United Nations says the recent US-Israeli attacks on the country's peaceful nuclear sites violate the UN charter, urging the international community to hold violators of international law accountable.

Amir Saeed Iravani made the remarks at the UN General Assembly, as it met on Thursday to commemorate and promote the International Day against Nuclear Tests.

Noting that the occasion is aimed to remind the people of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear tests on humans, the environment and the international peace and security, the ambassador referred to new forms of nuclear risks, including deliberate attacks on nuclear facilities.

"Dangers posed by nuclear tests are not confined to deliberate explosions alone; the threat or use of force against nuclear facilities entails equally grave risks."

Iravani added that the recent "reckless" Israeli-US attacks against Iranian nuclear facilities, which operate under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and are devoted exclusively to peaceful purposes, bring attention to this urgent concern.

The June attacks constitute "a blatant violation of international law, including the principles of the UN charter," and are considered "a direct assault on the foundations of multilateralism," he said.

They also pose a "grave threat" to international peace and security and undermine trust in the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, the envoy stressed.

Referring to Israeli attacks on Iranian cities hosting International Monitoring System (IMS) stations, Iravani said these "unlawful actions" are equally alarming, jeopardize the safety and integrity of those facilities, endanger the lives of their technical personnel, and strike at the very



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infrastructure that underpins the global verification regime.

"The international community must therefore unequivocally condemn these actions, demand accountability for those who violate international law, and strengthen legal protections for nuclear installations," he stressed, noting that the perpetrators must know that they cannot enjoy impunity for such "grave violations."

"It would be a clear hypocrisy and double standard to condemn nuclear testing while turning a blind eye to actions that carry similar consequences."

The Iranian envoy emphasized that remaining silent on new nuclear risks would be a betrayal to the memory of the victims of nuclear tests.

He warned that the attacks on safeguarded nuclear facilities not only violate the "inalienable" rights of a sovereign state, but also "undermine the credibility" of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

and the trust that underpins it.

"If peaceful nuclear facilities can no longer be considered safe from threat or use of force, what meaning remains in the guarantees the Treaty promises?" Iravani wondered.

On June 13, Israel launched a blatant and unprovoked aggression against Iran, triggering a 12-day war that killed at least 1,064 people in the country, including military commanders, nuclear scientists, and ordinary civilians.

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

On June 24, Iran, through its successful retaliatory operations against both the Israeli regime and the US, managed to impose a halt to the terrorist aggression.





## Iran, China Strengthen Cooperation on Energy Projects

TEHRAN (ILNA) - The Managing Director of Iran's Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution Company (Tavanir) has announced expanded cooperation with Chinese firms in areas such as smart grid technologies, gas switchgear equipment, energy storage systems, and related innovations. He noted that some production lines have already begun operating inside Iran. Speaking at a joint meeting with representatives of Chinese state and private companies, Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi highlighted the need to adopt advanced technologies in renewable energy, electrical storage, and pumped-storage power plants. He stressed that transferring technical expertise to Iran is as important as importing equipment.

## Tehran on Track to Become a Hub for Health Tourism in Islamic Countries



TEHRAN - The Secretary-General of the Center for the Development of Health Tourism in Islamic Countries stressed the crucial role of government support, announcing that Tehran is moving toward becoming a central hub for health tourism among Islamic nations.

Speaking at the Fourth International Conference on Health Tourism in Islamic Countries, held at IRIB's conference hall, Majid Zangouei highlighted the proposal to designate Tehran as the "Capital of Health Tourism in Islamic Countries," calling it a unique opportunity for expanding Iran's tourism industry.

Criticizing traditional economic approaches that still dominate the healthcare sector, Zangouei said that despite the country's real potential, restrictive mindsets continue to hinder comprehensive growth in health tourism.

He added that although successful programs with international participation have been organized even in the aftermath of the recent 12-day conflict, some institutions continue to adopt a passive stance. Zangouei called for reducing direct state intervention and transferring management of the sector to professional associations such as the Iranian Medical Council.

According to him, engaging medical students in the international health tourism arena can reduce the motivation for emigration. Considering the untapped potential in Islamic countries as well as in Europe and Africa, he emphasized the need for broader support.

Zangouei also noted that the Tehran Municipality has been one of the leading institutions in cooperating with tourism entrepreneurs, a capacity that, when combined with sound policymaking, could strengthen Tehran's position in global health tourism.

## IME Transactions Hit 5.29 Quadrillion Rials



TEHRAN - The total value of transactions at the Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) reached 5.29 quadrillion rials (\$10.5 billion), with the share of the financial market surging from 9% in 2022 to 35% in the first half of this year.

Speaking at a specialized forum on the "Outlook for Commodity Deposit Certificates," IME CEO Seyed Javad Jowhari emphasized that the future of the exchange depends on the expansion of financial tools and markets. He noted that the sharp rise in the financial segment reflects growing public and institutional interest in securitization of commodities and investments in the real economy.

Jowhari highlighted the vital role of the state-owned Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) and the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade in the development of IME over the past decade. He pointed to milestone initiatives such as the launch of premium discovery contracts and the introduction of gold bar deposit certificates. IMIDRO's initial offering of three tons of gold bars through the exchange has since grown into a market with over 25 tons traded, demonstrating the tangible benefits of cooperation in creating new markets.

According to Jowhari, the leap from a 9% to a 35% financial market share underscores the capacity of financial instruments to attract both small- and large-scale investments and channel them into production. IME's roadmap, he said, is centered on expanding securitization tools, with new certificates for iron ore pellets and copper currently in the pipeline.

## Engines of Social Justice, Sustainable Development, and Environmental Protection



TEHRAN - The second International Conference on Cooperative Economics was held in Tehran with the participation of senior government officials, international organizations, and foreign ambassadors. The event highlighted the pivotal role of cooperatives in driving social and economic justice, sustainable development, and environmental protection.

Bahon Abdollahii, President of the Iran Chamber of Cooperatives and member of the Board of Directors of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), delivered the keynote address. He stressed that cooperatives are not merely an economic model but a "philosophy of action" based on fairness, solidarity, and shared prosperity.

"We can create wealth without crushing others, grow without destructive competition, and support the well-being of our members—the people—without relying on rent-seeking or harming the national economy," Abdollahii said.

The conference was attended by Dr. Mehرداد Meidari, Minister of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare; Dr. Mohammad Ali Nouri, Minister of Agriculture Jihad; Dr. Agha Mohammadi, Head of the Economic Group in the Supreme Leader's Office; Dr. Ariel Guarco, President of the ICA; Dr. Hosseini, Head of the Economic Commission of Parliament; Dr. Babaei Karamneh, Head of the Parliament's Social Commission; representatives of the United Nations; and ambassadors from various countries.

Abdollahii emphasized that cooperatives share success collectively and operate as "businesses with a conscience." He underlined their potential as engines of social justice, economic equity, and sustainable development.

He offered examples: farmers selling their products directly through cooperatives, rural women creating handicraft cooperatives, and housing cooperatives providing secure homes. "These are not just transactions or construction projects," he said, "but acts of dignity, independence, and human flourishing."

According to ICA data, more than 3 million cooperatives worldwide serve 1.2 billion members and have generated over 280 million jobs. The 300 largest cooperatives reported a combined turnover of \$2.6 trillion in 2024, with most of them

based in Western economies.

In Iran, Abdollahii noted, there are more than 105,000 active cooperatives across agriculture, services, and industry, accounting for about 9 percent of national employment. They are organized under over 500 provincial and national unions, offering major potential to reduce government dominance in economic sectors.

Despite their strengths, cooperatives face significant challenges, including competition with state monopolies and large private corporations. Abdollahii called for reduced government interference in cooperative management, stronger parliamentary oversight, and modernization of cooperative governance through new managerial knowledge and global best practices.

He also highlighted Iran's efforts to integrate cooperatives into international frameworks such as Eurasia, BRICS, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, while deepening ties through ICA.

Since the Islamic Revolution, Iran has passed progressive legislation to support the cooperative sector, including the Cooperative Sector Law, the Law on Implementing Article 44 of the Constitution, and the Law on Establishing Development Cooperatives. Abdollahii described this legal foundation as "rare, if not unique, in the world."

The conference also showcased research contributions: over 220 academic papers were submitted, with 80 accepted for presentation. These findings, compiled into a bilingual book in Persian and English, underline the potential of cooperatives in Iran's national development planning.

Abdollahii concluded by honoring the late President Ebrahim Raisi, under whose leadership the first edition of the conference was inaugurated. He thanked the Ministry of Cooperatives, ICA, Parliament commissions, the UN office in Tehran, and foreign participants for their support.

"We hope that conferences like this will enhance the role of people's participation in solving economic challenges and strengthen the global presence of Iranian cooperatives," he said.

## Iran Positioned to Become a Hub for Trade and Transit of Essential Goods

TEHRAN - Minister of Agriculture Jihad has underscored the need for investment in modern farming methods, including greenhouse cultivation and vertical farming, highlighting the country's geopolitical location and surplus production capacity in key commodities as factors that could transform the Islamic Republic into a regional hub for the transfer and trade of essential goods.

Speaking Thursday at the National Summit of Agricultural Research, Education, and Extension Institutions, as well as the inauguration of the National Center for Agricultural Production Monitoring, Minister Gholamreza Nouri praised the efforts of agricultural researchers and parliament's agricultural commission. He emphasized that despite climatic constraints and drought, food security can be achieved through research and applied science in agriculture.

Nouri noted that agricultural output has increased from 30 million tons before the Islamic Revolution to around 130 million tons today—marking a 350% rise, despite only a 40% increase in cultivated land. He attributed this growth to advances in efficiency driven by agricultural research, education, and extension programs led by the Agricultural Research, Education and Extension Organization (AREEO) and other innovation-driven institutions.

Highlighting progress in the poultry industry, the minister said that feed conversion ratios have improved significantly over the past decade, placing Iran among the world's top five in this field. He added that global conditions have elevated food security into a critical issue for all countries, a priority also reflected in Iran's Constitution, the directives of the late Imam Khomeini, the Supreme Leader, and the President's administration.

The minister stressed that reliance on local expertise has consistently yielded success. He urged a shift toward cultivating drought-resistant, high-yield crops, noting that Iran's limited water resources necessitate more efficient farming practices.

Nouri also announced the launch of a new national cropping



pattern monitoring system designed to integrate both local farmer input and scientific data, ensuring orderly production that balances domestic needs with potential exports. He called on lawmakers, government officials, and local authorities to support its implementation, warning that neglecting crop planning could lead to either domestic shortages or unsellable surpluses.

Emphasizing the need for solution-driven research, the minister pointed out that this year's rainfall is already 41% lower than last year—which was itself a drought year—underscoring the urgency of rapid adaptation. He called for agricultural foresight studies to address future change, geopolitical shifts, and international developments.

Nouri reiterated the importance of investing in advanced farming methods, particularly greenhouses and vertical farming. He said greenhouse cultivation produces six times more yield while using six times less water than traditional farming, with faster returns on investment compared to other sectors.

Thanks to its unique geographic position—with access to seas in both the north and south and connections to neighboring countries—combined with surplus production capacity and strong transport infrastructure, Iran, he said, is well-placed to become a regional hub for essential goods.

The minister also referred to recent discussions with the Administrative and Employment Affairs Organization, noting disagreements over limiting the ministry's authority. He stressed that food security cannot be compromised under the guise of administrative downsizing.

During the ceremony, two cooperation agreements were signed: one between AREEO and Iran's Mobile Telecommunications Company to expand digital infrastructure and smart agriculture through the Internet of Things (IoT), and another between AREEO and the National Library and Archives of Iran to digitize agricultural resources and enhance knowledge management.

## Iran, Japan Hold Joint Meeting on Road, Housing, and Urban Development Research



TEHRAN - A consultative meeting between representatives of the Japanese Embassy in Iran and the Road, Housing and Urban Development Research Center was held in Tehran with the participation of the center's president, senior officials, and the embassy's First Secretary and Head of the Economic Section, along with an accompanying delegation. The session aimed to enhance the scope and quality of bilateral cooperation in research and development.

The session on September 2 brought together Ghazal Raheb, President of the Research Center; Atefeh Jahanmohammadi, Head of Structures and Technical Buildings; Mehta Mirmoghtadaci, International Affairs Advisor; Hamid Alavi, Head of the Office of Communications and Public Relations; and Oekusa Kana, First Secretary and Head of the Economic Section at the Japanese Embassy, along with her delegation. The meeting focused on creating synergy through joint scientific, research, and educational initiatives.

At the opening, Jahanmohammadi presented a detailed report on past collaborations, particularly the "Iran-Japan Knowledge Transfer Program on Seismic Design of Steel Structures." She emphasized the importance of continuing joint research, highlighting Japan's valuable expertise in strengthening resilience and retrofitting buildings and engineering structures.

Oekusa Kana expressed appreciation for the organization of the meeting and underscored the embassy's interest in advancing scientific and technical cooperation between the two countries, especially in engineering, architecture, urban development, and transportation. She described international partnerships in research as highly valuable for knowledge exchange and effective in addressing global challenges.

## Iran Boosts Fuel Reserves by 60%, Ensures Stable Supply



TEHRAN - Iran has significantly increased its fuel reserves this year, strengthening the country's energy security and ensuring uninterrupted supply. According to Deputy Oil Minister Mohammad Sadegh Azimifar, gasoline reserves have risen by 60% and diesel reserves by 70% compared to last year.

Speaking at the inauguration of a fuel quality upgrade project at the Isfahan refinery, Azimifar highlighted the environmental and economic importance of recent initiatives. He noted that the new project will reduce sulfur content in kerosene and make the refinery independent of water supplies from the Zayandeh Rud river, which has long faced severe water stress. "Eliminating dependence on the Zayandeh Rud helps preserve the river's flow and contributes to environmental sustainability," he said.

Azimifar praised the successful implementation of the Ajdarai water transfer project from Oman, describing it as a symbol of collective national effort involving the Isfahan steel industry and the refinery sector. He argued that such joint initiatives are essential to tackle environmental challenges and maintain energy stability.

Addressing critics of water projects, the deputy minister stressed that alternatives are limited. He pointed out that similar challenges had previously threatened operations at Tehran refinery, which were resolved by using treated wastewater, reducing freshwater consumption by 1.5%.

Azimifar also underlined the interconnected nature of Iran's energy sector. Electricity shortages, he explained, increase gasoline consumption, while natural gas shortages force reliance on fuel oil. "When hydropower dams cannot operate, the burden shifts to thermal plants, requiring more fuel," he said.



## U.S. Deploying 10 Fighter Jets to Puerto Rico for Drug Cartel Fight

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The U.S. has ordered the deployment of 10 F-35 fighter jets to a Puerto Rico airfield to conduct operations against drug cartels, two sources briefed on the matter said, in a move likely to further inflame tensions in the region. The advanced fighter jets will be added to an already bristling U.S. military presence in the southern Caribbean as President Donald Trump carries out a campaign pledge to crack down on groups he blames for funneling drugs into the United States. Friday's development comes three days after U.S. forces attacked a boat that Trump said was carrying "massive amounts of drugs" from Venezuela, killing 11 people. The strike appeared to set the stage for a sustained military campaign in Latin America.



## Israel's Army Says It Controls 40% of Gaza City



TEL AVIV (Dispatches) - The Israeli military on Thursday said it controls 40 percent of Gaza City, the largest urban center in the Palestinian territory which it is preparing to conquer after nearly two years of devastating war.

Israel has intensified in recent days its bombardments of the area of Gaza City, in the territory's north, ahead of the planned offensive, despite mounting international pressure to halt the campaign.

Gaza's civil defense agency said Israeli strikes on Thursday killed more than 30 people in the city, out of at least 64 Palestinians killed across the Gaza Strip.

As concern grows over the dire humanitarian conditions for Gaza's population of more than two million, one of the European Union's top officials called the war a "genocide" - a term strongly rejected by Israel, but which several governments and numerous rights groups have adopted.

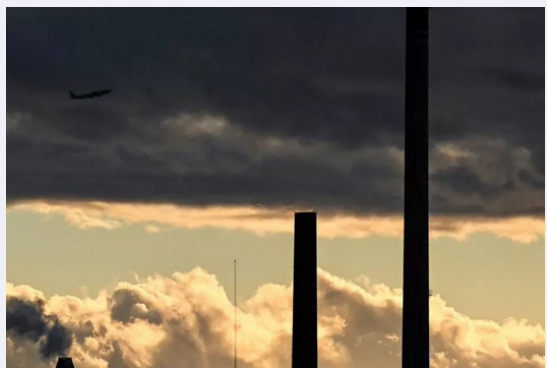
In a televised briefing, Israeli military spokesman Brigadier General Effie Defrin said that "we hold 40 percent of the territory of Gaza City", adding that the offensive "will continue to expand and intensify in the coming days".

Defrin vowed to "increase the pressure" on Palestinian militant group Hamas, whose October 2023 attack on Israel sparked the war, "until it is defeated".

With the vast majority of Gazans already displaced at least once during the war, a senior Israeli military official told journalists on Wednesday that authorities expected the new offensive to push an estimated one million Palestinians south, away from Gaza City.

The United Nations last month declared a famine in and around Gaza City, where it estimates nearly one million people live.

## German Factory Orders Drop in New Blow to Economy



BERLIN (Dispatches) - New orders, closely watched as an indicator of future business activity, dropped 2.9 percent month-on-month, according to preliminary figures from federal statistics agency Destatis, after declining 0.2 percent in June.

The July figure was pulled down by a decrease in transport equipment orders, and came despite expectations for a slight rebound.

Economy Minister Katherina Reiche, a member of the coalition government that took power in May vowing to boost the eurozone's traditional growth engine, stressed that orders had dropped for three straight months.

"We do not need any further warning signals to realise that we must now act decisively and consistently to gear all our policies towards competitiveness," she said in a statement.

"It's about jobs and the preserving of production sites." Germany has been stuck in a long downturn as its manufacturers face high energy costs and weak demand for their key products.

US President Donald Trump's tariff blitz is also weighing heavily on the export powerhouse.

The July figure was hit by a near 40 percent fall for orders of transport equipment such as aircraft, ships and trains.

There was also a heavy drop for electrical equipment orders. But there were increases for the country's troubled auto sector as well as pharmaceuticals and clothing, Destatis said.

## Putin Says Any Western Troops in Ukraine Would Be Fair Targets



VLADIVOSTOK (Dispatches) - Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Friday that any Western troops deployed to Ukraine would be legitimate targets for Moscow to attack, in a warning to Kyiv's allies as they discuss measures for its future protection.

Putin was speaking a day after French President Emmanuel Macron said 26 countries had pledged to provide postwar security guarantees to Ukraine, including an international force on land, sea and in the air.

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Russia has long argued that one of its reasons for going to war in Ukraine was to prevent NATO from admitting Kyiv as a member and placing its forces in Ukraine.

"Therefore, if some troops appear there, especially now, during military operations, we proceed from the fact that these will be legitimate targets for destruction," Putin told an economic forum in Vladivostok.

"And if decisions are reached that lead to peace, to long-term peace, then I simply do not see any sense in their presence on the territory of Ukraine, full stop."

Putin's comments highlighted the gulf between Moscow's position and that of Kyiv and its Western allies on the shape of future security guarantees for Ukraine under any agreement to end the three-and-a-half-year war.

Ukraine seeks robust backing from the West to protect it against any future attack. France and Britain, which co-chair a "coalition of the willing" in support of Ukraine, have signalled they are open to deploying troops to Ukraine after the war ends.

U.S. President Donald Trump has said that Washington will not put troops on the ground but may provide other support such as air power.

Putin said security guarantees must be set in place for both Russia and Ukraine.

"I repeat once again, of course, Russia will implement these agreements. But, in any case, no one has discussed this with us at a serious level yet," he said.

Trump, who took office in January with a pledge to end the war quickly, hosted Putin for a summit in Alaska last month that failed to achieve any breakthrough.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has long been pushing for a direct meeting with Putin in order to make progress towards ending Europe's deadliest war for 80 years.

Putin said on Friday that he did not see much point in such a meeting because "it will be practically impossible to reach an agreement with the Ukrainian side on key issues".

However, he reiterated an offer he made earlier this week to host Zelenskyy for talks in Moscow.

"I said: I'm ready, please, come, we will definitely provide working conditions and security, a 100% guarantee.

"But if they tell us: 'we want to meet with you, but you have to go somewhere else for this meeting', it seems to me that these are simply excessive requests on us."

Zelenskyy, without directly addressing the possibility of Moscow as a venue, said on Friday: "We are ready for any kind of meetings. But we don't feel that Putin is ready to end this war. He can speak but it's just words, and nobody trusts his words."

## 26 Nations Vow to Give Ukraine Postwar Security Guarantees

PARIS (Dispatches) - Twenty-six nations have pledged to provide postwar security guarantees to Ukraine, which will include an international force on land, sea and in the air, French President Emmanuel Macron said after a summit meeting of Kyiv's allies on Thursday.

Macron said he, fellow European leaders and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy held a call with U.S. President Donald Trump after their summit and U.S. contributions to the guarantees would be finalised in the coming days.

Later, asked if he planned to speak to Russian President Vladimir Putin in the near future, Trump said: "Yeah, I will be. We are having a very good dialogue."

The meeting of 35 leaders from the "coalition of the willing" - of mainly European countries - was intended to finalise security guarantees and ask Trump for the backing that Europeans say is vital to make such guarantees viable.

Security guarantees are intended to reassure Ukraine and deter Russia, which launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, from attacking its neighbour again.

"The day the conflict stops, the security guarantees will be deployed," Macron told a press conference at the Elysee Palace in Paris, standing alongside Zelenskyy.

European officials say peace looks a distant prospect for now but they want to be ready whenever the war ends. They also see the planning of security guarantees as a way to reassure Kyiv of their support and hope Trump will join their efforts.

Macron initially said the 26 nations - which he did not name - would deploy to Ukraine. But he later said some countries would provide guarantees while remaining outside Ukraine, for example by helping to train and equip Kyiv's forces.



He did not say how many troops would be involved in the guarantees.

Germany and other countries pledged they would be involved in that effort. But Berlin said it would decide on a military commitment only when conditions were clear, including the extent of U.S. involvement in security guarantees.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni made clear she would not send troops to Ukraine but said Italy was open to monitoring a ceasefire and training Ukrainian troops outside the country.

France and Britain, which co-chair the coalition of the willing, have indicated they are open to deploying troops to Ukraine after the war ends.

"We are working out which countries will take part in which security component," Zelenskyy said.

"Twenty-six countries agreed to provide security guarantees. Today, for the first time in a long time, this is the first such serious, very specific substance."

On his call with the coalition leaders, Trump said Europe must stop

purchasing Russian oil that he said is helping Moscow fund its war against Ukraine, a White House official said.

"The president also emphasized that European leaders must place economic pressure on China for funding Russia's war efforts," the official said.

Macron said the coalition and the United States had agreed to work more closely on future sanctions, notably on Russia's oil and gas sector, and on China.

Bulgaria's Prime Minister Rosen Zhelyazkov said his country has no plans to send troops to Ukraine, but that it is willing to contribute to the naval efforts in the Black Sea such as de-mining.

"We will stay within maritime domain," Zhelyazkov said in Sofia after meeting Antonio Costa, the head of the European Council.

Bulgaria also wants to form a regional security alliance with neighbouring Romania and Turkey, he said.

European governments have said European forces in Ukraine would need their own U.S. security guarantees as a "backstop". Trump has made no explicit commitment to go that far.

His special envoy, Steve Witkoff, met French, British, German, Italian and Ukrainian senior diplomats ahead of the summit, before briefly attending the opening session.

European officials also wanted to highlight a lack of progress toward direct peace talks between Putin and Zelenskyy since Trump hosted Putin in August, and to prod Trump to raise pressure on Moscow now.

Having rolled out the red carpet in Alaska, Trump on Wednesday accused Putin of conspiring with China and North Korea after the three countries' leaders staged a show of unity in Beijing at a lavish commemoration of the end of World War Two.

## Venezuelan Military Planes Buzzed U.S. Ship in Highly Provocative Move

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The Pentagon said two Venezuelan military planes flew near a U.S. Navy vessel in international waters Thursday in a "highly provocative" move that marked a new escalation in the standoff over Washington's Caribbean deployment.

"The cartel running Venezuela is strongly advised not to pursue any further effort to obstruct, deter or interfere with counter-narcotics and counter-terror operations carried out by the U.S. military," the Defense Department said on X.

Washington has deployed warships in the south Caribbean as tensions rise between U.S. President Donald Trump and Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro, whom the United States accuses of leading a drug cartel.

On Tuesday, U.S. forces blew up an alleged drug boat in the Caribbean that Trump said belonged to the Tren de Aragua, a Venezuelan criminal organization he tied to Maduro, killing 11 people.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, during a trip to Latin America, defended the new aggressive approach in a joint press conference with Ecuador Foreign Minister Gabriela Sommerfeld in Quito on Thursday.

"Now, they're going to help us find these people and blow them up if that's



what it takes," Rubio said.

In remarks made in Mexico on Wednesday, Rubio said: "These cartels know they're going to lose two percent of their cargo ... What will stop them is when you blow them up, when you get rid of them."

In Mexico, Rubio emphasized that Trump has designated Venezuelan groups like the Tren de Aragua and Cartel de los Soles as "narcoterrorist organisations".

"These are not stockbrokers. These are not real estate agents who on the side deal a few drugs," Rubio said.

"If you're on a boat full of cocaine or fentanyl headed to the United States, you're an immediate threat to the United States."

Caracas accused Washington of committing extrajudicial killings in the attack, saying "they murdered 11 people without due process".

The attack, whose details could not be independently verified by AFP, marks a dramatic escalation by the United States, which has for decades relied on routine policing operations rather than deadly force to seize drugs.





## Messi Shines in His Final Home World Cup Qualifier

BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - Lionel Messi signed off in style by scoring twice in his final World Cup qualifier on home soil as Argentina beat Venezuela 3-0 on Thursday, while Paraguay and Colombia also secured berths at the 2026 tournament in North America.

The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner has not given an indication as to when he plans to retire but the 38-year-old has said that the match against Venezuela would be his last World Cup qualifier at home.

The reigning World Cup champions, who have already qualified for the tournament in Canada, Mexico and the U.S., controlled proceedings from the opening whistle, creating chances through Nicolas Tagliafico and Franco Mastantuono only to be thwarted by Venezuela goalkeeper Rafael Romo.

Messi broke the deadlock in the 39th minute, the Argentine captain latching onto a pass from Julian Alvarez on a swift counter-attack and firing home into the top-right corner of Romo's net.

Argentina maintained their relentless pressure in the second half, with Messi remaining the focal point of their attack, but the hosts had to wait until the 76th minute for a second goal, Nico Gonzalez delivering from the left for Lautaro Martinez to score with a diving header.

Four minutes later, Messi capped off another excellent performance with a third goal, assisted by Thiago Almada.

"Being able to finish this way here with my people is what I always dreamed of," an emotional Messi said after the match.

"For many years I had the affection of Barcelona fans and my dream was to have it here in my country

too."

Asked about his possible retirement, Messi who has scored a record 36 goals in South American qualifying, said: "It's not something I like, want or expect. But time is passing, and it's been many years."

The Albiceleste top the South American qualifying table for the 2026 World Cup in North America with 38 points and visit Ecuador on Tuesday in their final group match.

Venezuela, seventh in the standings on 18 points, will host Colombia aiming to stay in the intercontinental playoff spot, with Bolivia just a point behind.

In other matches on Thursday, Brazil moved up to second place with 28 points after a 3-0 win over Chile at the Maracana stadium.

Estevao opened the scoring, while Lucas Paqueta and Bruno Guimaraes added further goals for Carlo Ancelotti's side.

Uruguay moved to third on 27 points following a 3-0 victory over Peru thanks to goals from Rodrigo Aguirre, Giorgian de Arrascaeta and Federico Vinas.

Ecuador dropped to fourth on 26 points after a goalless draw against Paraguay, who secured their first World Cup appearance in 16 years.

Colombia also sealed qualification with a 3-0 victory over Bolivia. James Rodriguez, Jhon Cordoba, and Juan Fernando Quintero were on target for "Los Cafeteros", who sit fifth in the standings with 25 points.

## Anisimova Stops Osaka to Book Sabalenka Showdown in U.S. Open Final

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Amanda Anisimova rallied from a set down to defeat four-times Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka 6-7(4) 7-6(3) 6-3 and reach the U.S. Open final, where she will take on holder Aryna Sabalenka for another shot at a maiden major crown.

World number one Sabalenka came through her own thriller, beating home hope Jessica Pegula 4-6 6-3 6-4 , but it was Anisimova's stunning display two months after her brutal Wimbledon final defeat that lit up Arthur Ashe Stadium.

"Oh my God. It means the world," the 24-year-old Anisimova said after reaching her first final at Flushing Meadows.

"I'm trying to process that right now. It's absolutely a dream come true. This has been a dream of mine like forever to be in the U.S. Open final and the hope is to be the champion."

Twice New York winner Osaka was playing in her first Grand Slam semi-final since 2021 and embraced the big occasion in the prime-time glare of Arthur Ashe Stadium.

The pair twice traded breaks in a tight opening set, and after a delayed line call by the automated system disrupted play Osaka refocused and let out a big roar when Anisimova hit a shot into the net on set point in



the tiebreak.

The 23rd seed struggled to carry the momentum forward in the next set, however, with Anisimova matching Osaka's intensity.

After the players traded ferocious hits for 12 games in the next set, Anisimova pounced in the tiebreak to drag the match to a deciding set.

The eighth seed, who lost 6-0 6-0 to Iga Swiatek at the All England Club, powered ahead 4-1 thanks to a forehand winner and held her nerve from there to secure the victory and reach back-to-back Grand Slam finals.

"It just shows that I've worked really hard, especially on my mental game and not giving up," Anisimova said.

"Like today, I could have easily said, 'Oh she's playing better than me, and I can't really do anything'. I really tried to find a way any way I could to stay in the match, even though it was extremely tough, and she was playing great tennis."

"I've really worked on myself to really be able to handle those moments and to believe in myself ... and especially since the Wimbledon final. I've shifted with my attitude, as well."

## Germany Fall Flat in Slovakia as Spain Sparkle in Sofia

PARIS (Dispatches) - Germany went down to a shock 2-0 defeat in Slovakia in their opening World Cup qualifier on Thursday, while Spain kicked off their bid to reach next year's finals with a comfortable 3-0 victory in Bulgaria.

Atletico Madrid's David Hancko burst untracked into the penalty box to fire Slovakia into the lead just before half-time against Germany in Bratislava.

David Strelec, who has just signed for Middlesbrough in the English Championship, then made it two with a brilliant strike high into the top corner 10 minutes into the second half.

The result gives Slovakia a dream start in Group A as they attempt to qualify for a first World Cup since 2010.

Germany, meanwhile, find themselves immediately under pressure even if this game was their hardest fixture in the group on paper.

"We haven't had a great history in recent years and we should have realised that if we want to go to the World Cup and play a



good role. Today, we were miles away," said Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann.

Germany have gone out of each of the last two World Cups in the group stage, but have never failed in a qualifying campaign.

"If we perform like we did today, we'll definitely not qualify," warned captain Joshua Kimmich.

Nagelsmann's side came into the start of their World Cup qualifying campaign off the back of losing both of their matches in the Uefa Nations League Final Four in June, against Portugal and France.

They must now react quickly when they entertain Northern Ireland on Tuesday, with Luxembourg their other opponents in the four-team group.

Only the group winners qualify directly for the 48-team finals in North America.

Northern Ireland won 3-1 in Luxembourg, with Jamie Reid, Shea Charles and Justin Devenny scoring their goals.

## Hamilton Faces Worst F1 Slump as Ferrari Hopes Rest on Monza Turnaround



MILAN (Dispatches) - Lewis Hamilton is in the midst of a crisis of confidence and results that the Formula One icon has never known in his storied career as Ferrari's fans hope for a sharp turnaround at the Italian Grand Prix.

Seven-time F1 champion Hamilton's arrival at Maranello made Ferrari's vociferous support dream of an end to an 18-year wait for a world title to be won by a driver in red.

Instead the 40-year-old trails championship leader Oscar Piastri by a whopping 200 points after a disastrous campaign with Ferrari which not only hasn't brought him any GP wins, but not even a single podium finish.

Last weekend's Dutch GP was the lowest point of the year for the Scuderia, with both Hamilton and Charles Leclerc crashing out of a race which had been preceded by the Briton twice spinning his car in practice.

Nonetheless Hamilton still appears to be happy to be with the sport's most famous team, telling Sky in Italy on Wednesday that it was "really special to remember that I'm a Ferrari driver" every time he comes to Italy.

Hamilton and Leclerc, who delighted fans by winning at Monza last year, were greeted enthusiastically by hordes of supporters at an event held in the shadow of Milan's famous Gothic cathedral.

"I saw with Charles what the atmosphere is like when you win at Monza with Ferrari, I was right by his side. It's the race you're waiting for," said Hamilton who has won at the "Temple of Speed" five times in his career, four times with Mercedes.

"Winning here with another team is a fantastic experience because you can still see the sea of red and the fans. But it must be really special receiving all that affection from the fans like Charles and other drivers who've won here with Ferrari did."

## Quality Football Needs More Recovery Time, Not More Matches



WROCLAW (Dispatches) - France captain Kylian Mbappe said Thursday that top footballers do not necessarily play too many matches but do need more time off in a crowded schedule which offers little time for a break.

"It is not only a matter of the number of games, but more about recovery. We just need a bit more rest, time off for our bodies to regenerate and recover from the number of matches we have to play," Mbappe told reporters in Poland, where France begin their 2026 World Cup qualifying campaign against Ukraine.

Mbappe played 59 matches last season in his first campaign with Real Madrid, from making his debut in the Uefa Super Cup on August 14 last year to the Club World Cup semi-final defeat by Paris Saint-Germain on July 9.

He also made six appearances for France in that time, and was back in action for Real in La Liga as this season started on August 19.

If France qualify for the World Cup, it could be mid-July next year before he gets any significant time off again.

"Do we play too much? No, my thinking has evolved," Mbappe insisted.

"I did think that, but I don't anymore, because I can understand that the people watching on their sofa think we earn a lot of money and so we should play."

Mbappe, who scored 44 goals for the Spanish giants last season, admitted that the introduction of the Club World Cup had hugely increased the demands on players.

"We were only just getting to the quarter-finals while teams were already starting to play friendly matches. They had started the 2025/26 season while it was still 2024/25 for us," he said.