

The Permanent Mission of Iran to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations in Vienna Presented Its Views and Observations on the Director General's Reports to the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

# IRAN NEWS

Iran, India, and Armenia Have Held Trilateral Talks in Tehran to Discuss Increased Cooperation on Issues of Interest, Including on the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)

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2 DOMESTIC



## ICB Gold Reserves Grow by 37%

> SEE PAGE 2

3 INTERNATIONAL

## Poland Downs Drones, First NATO Member to Open Fire During Ukraine War



> SEE PAGE 3

## Israel Sabotages Any Attempt at Diplomacy



TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian says Israel sabotages any attempt at diplomacy, following the regime's airstrikes on a Hamas headquarters in Doha, Qatar.

In a statement released on Tuesday, Pezeshkian condemned Israel's aggression against Qatari territory as "illegal, inhuman and anti-peace."

On Tuesday, Israeli warplanes launched airstrikes on the headquarters of the Hamas resistance movement in the Qatari capital, Doha, in what Israeli media described as an "assassination operation."

The airstrikes came as Hamas leaders had convened to discuss the latest US proposal for a ceasefire in Gaza.

Pezeshkian urged the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and other international institutions "to respond immediately, decisively, and practically to this blatant aggression."

He added that "lasting peace in the region is only possible by ending the occupation and aggression."

"This terrorist act reflects the fact that the Zionist regime recognizes no boundaries for crime and terror, and on the other hand, it sabotages any attempt at diplomacy," he said.

## Iran's Nuclear Industry Cannot Be Obliterated Through Bombardment



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) has reminded enemies that the nation's homegrown civilian nuclear industry cannot be obliterated through bombardment.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the inauguration ceremony of the depreciation management laboratory in Tehran on Tuesday, Mohammad Eslami stated that Iran's nuclear industry is completely indigenous and developed through research-based efforts.

Enemies view such an industry as sustainable, which cannot be destroyed with bombardment, he said.

"The nuclear industry is the driving force of advanced science and technology, and is urgently needed in all spheres. No one can take this industry away from the Iranian nation."

The AEOI chief said Iran's atomic agency is pursuing a program-oriented development process.

He stated that among the core requirements of the ambitious plan are the identification of the safety requirements of radiation environments in the fields of design, construction, and maintenance, and their advancement on the basis of precise calculations and in accordance with safety standards.

Eslami said there is a standard and common method of estimating the fatigue of a structure in the process of building nuclear installations, stating that no one has made an accurate measurement of the effects of radiation, and the durability of a structure, product, system, or component under the influence of radiation has not been analyzed up to now.

"Accordingly, this issue was studied using laboratory methods in the depreciation management laboratory," he said.

## Iran-IAEA Agreement Fully in Line With Parliament Law

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said the new agreement reached between Tehran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) fully complies with the Iranian Parliament's law and the approvals of the Supreme National Security Council, stressing that the accord acknowledges Iran's security concerns and establishes a new framework for cooperation.

Speaking to IRIB at the end of his visit to Egypt, Araqchi explained that the negotiations with the IAEA had reached a stage requiring high-level talks to finalize the text. With an initiative from Egypt's foreign minister, the final round of discussions took place in Cairo, alongside bilateral meetings with Egyptian officials, including the president.

Araqchi said the agreement followed more than three hours of talks with IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi. He emphasized that relations with Egypt are improving, with many obstacles resolved and mutual understanding growing.

The minister underlined that the validity of the accord is conditional on the absence of hostile actions against Iran: "If the so-called 'snapback mechanism' is activated, the implementation of this agreement will certainly stop."

According to Araqchi, the agreement was shaped by new circumstances created after the U.S. attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. He said Iran, as a member of the NPT, has always maintained peaceful nuclear activities under IAEA supervision, but the changed conditions required a new framework.

He noted that both the initiation of talks and the text of the agreement were reviewed and approved by the Supreme National Security Council. The document, he said, recognizes Iran's rights, legitimizes its security concerns, and outlines a new model of cooperation with the agency, fully consistent with parliamentary legislation.

Addressing the details, Araqchi stressed that the agreement does not grant new access to IAEA inspectors, except for the Bushehr nuclear plant where fuel replacement has been ongoing under prior council approval. Future inspection modalities, he added, will be negotiated separately after Iran submits its reports.

Calling the deal "a new step in the right direction," Araqchi argued that it removes pretexts for pressure and prevents misuse by those seeking political leverage against Iran. He reiterated that the accord's continuation depends on the absence of hostile measures: "If the snapback mechanism is triggered, this document will no longer be implemented, and Iran's response will be decided accordingly."

Araqchi thanked Egypt's president and foreign minister for their role in facilitating the agreement, saying their political support gave the deal greater legitimacy. He expressed hope that the accord would pave the way for a diplomatic solution, provided the other side demonstrates sincerity.

He also noted that the IAEA Board of Governors' ongoing session, and the positions taken



there, would be decisive in determining the future path of the agreement.

Iran and the IAEA reached an agreement aimed at paving the way for resumption of cooperation between the two sides.

The agreement was signed between Foreign Minister Araqchi and the United Nations nuclear watchdog's Grossi on Tuesday in Cairo, which had undertaken to host talks between the two sides.

The agreement came about after the Islamic Republic suspended cooperation with the agency in the aftermath of unprovoked Israeli-American attacks against key Iranian nuclear facilities in June.

The suspension came into force in line with a law passed by Majlis (the Iranian Parliament) that had been passed in protest at an anti-Iran resolution ratified by the IAEA under Western and Israeli pressure that was used by the aggressors

to try to justify the attacks.

Speaking alongside Grossi during a press conference that followed conclusion of the agreement, the top diplomat described it as culmination of negotiations on realization of "an understanding on how Iran's safeguards obligations will be implemented" in light of the developments arising from the unlawful aggression.

The deal features "practical steps" for implementing the safeguards and establishing a framework for continuation of the cooperation, while also addressing the Islamic Republic's concerns regarding its security and national sovereignty, Araqchi said.

Additionally, the deal guarantees Tehran's inalienable rights to peaceful nuclear energy activities under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), while also taking into account the IAEA's technical and verification requirements, he added.

"The message is clear: Iran will never compromise on its sovereignty, rights, or security," Iran's positive steps leading to conclusion of the deal testifies to its sustained good will aimed at resolution of any issues pertaining to its exclusively peaceful nuclear program through diplomacy and dialogue, Araqchi asserted.

These steps, he added, also prove the Islamic Republic's readiness to engage in genuine and meaningful dialogue for implementation of its relevant commitments.

In exchange, Araqchi underlined, the agency and the international community had to abide by the international law, condemning the attacks that had rendered it impossible for the Islamic Republic to continue its cooperation with the body as before.

"There is no precedent for cooperation between the agency and a member state under conditions where its safeguarded facilities have been deliberately attacked and damaged."

The official also underscored that the perpetrators had to be held accountable and compensate the Islamic Republic for the human and material losses of the aggression.

He noted that during the 12-day war, the private sector and state-owned enterprises also provided significant assistance in supplying essential goods, which he called "a spiritual asset for the country."

Arif inaugurated 12 new Etkra projects worth 20 trillion rials across nine provinces via video conference. He stressed that these initiatives, carried out without government funding, represent valuable contributions to public service. He also pointed out that last year's defense and economic planning ensured there were no shortages on the first day of the war.

The vice president reiterated the need for constant readiness in both defense and food security, emphasizing self-sufficiency alongside cooperation with other countries. He said the government is pursuing expanded trade, particularly rail connections and barter deals with neighboring states, as part of its food security strategy.

He further underlined that Etkra must go beyond military families and define its role in providing essential goods nationwide, while the government remains committed to stabilizing prices of ten key commodities to protect citizens from market fluctuations.

Defense Minister Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh also addressed the ceremony, praising Arif's support for the armed forces. He explained that the economic strategies of Sata and Etkra are fully aligned with government policies and emphasized Etkra's focus on knowledge-based approaches to support economic resilience and meet public needs.

## India Also Forced Into Political Transformation ...

The 25th Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit was held over two days in Tianjin, China.

At this gathering, China's long-standing rival, India, delivered a historic speech declaring, "The era of elephants uniting with the dragon has arrived!"

Meanwhile, the Siberian Tiger—Russia—also made a strong show of support for Iran, and in the final resolution, China, Russia, India, and Pakistan collectively condemned the United States' aggression against Iranian territory.

According to the official statement of the summit, the Chinese leader expressed such satisfaction with the newly forged alliance that he announced \$280 million in gifts and \$1 billion in low-interest loans for joint projects. One interpretation of this declaration is that it constitutes a calculated and tangible rebuke to the delusional American president.

Furthermore, the message underlines that the political arena is not a playground for clowning around and that the fates of nations cannot be treated as a joke. Asia is positioning itself to assert its influence more strongly than ever, leveraging India's labor force, China's technology and communications, Russia's military power, Iran's oil and gas, and a ready market of 3.5 billion people eager to free themselves from dollar dominance.

All of this signals that American hegemony is showing cracks. Even Europe, aggrieved by the humiliations inflicted by former President Trump during his recent White House visit, no longer shows confidence in the U.S. Europe's condemnation of Israel's attack on Hamas offices in Qatar is a manifestation of this anger.

The SCO summit, recognized as one of the most significant diplomatic events in Eurasia, carries multiple layers of importance, primarily centered on security, economic, and geopolitical cooperation.

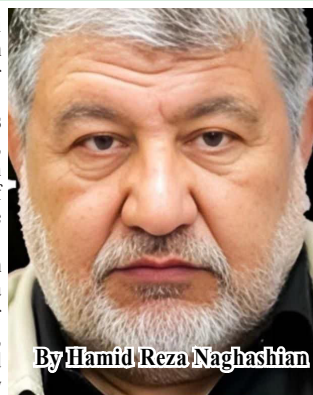
The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is largely viewed as a mechanism to counter U.S. and NATO influence in Eurasia. It serves as a clear example of emerging regional powers striving to establish a multipolar global order, where decision-making is no longer concentrated exclusively in Western capitals.

Security cooperation and counterterrorism remain among SCO's founding objectives, with a focus on combating the so-called "three evils"—terrorism, extremism, and separatism. Member states, particularly Russia, China, and Central Asian countries, share common interests in addressing these threats. Within the SCO framework, they coordinate intelligence sharing, joint military exercises, and border security operations.

Beyond political and security measures, economic collaboration and trade corridors are increasingly becoming a critical platform for cooperation, gaining added significance in light of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Optimally leveraging these opportunities requires a harmonized and coordinated approach from the Iranian government. The administration must guard against any missteps that undermine Iran's structural de-Westernization.

Until Iran comprehends the necessity of hegemonic solidarity in Asia and aligns itself with this framework, the West will continue to exploit its own interests at Iran's expense.



By Hamid Reza Naghashifan

## VP: Ensuring Food Security Is a Core Responsibility of the State

TEHRAN - First Vice President Mohammad Reza Arif has stressed that the Etkra Organization must define its share and role in providing the country's essential goods. He noted that Etkra, in addition to supplying the needs of military families, should also plan for the production of basic commodities for the wider public, ensuring that all sectors' roles in the "farm-to-table" supply chain are clearly determined.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of Etkra's new development and infrastructure projects, Arif congratulated the nation on the Unity Week and the celebrations of Rabi al-Awwal. He said that although it is not expected of defense organizations to take on responsibilities outside their core mission, "we are pleased that the defense sector, due to its close ties with the people, also accepts the mission of contributing to food security." Arif described Etkra as a well-established brand in Iran, recognized for producing high-quality products.

The vice president praised the armed forces for their role in the recent 12-day conflict, describing it as a "cruel, violent, and inhumane imposed war." He said the military responded with resilience and competence, noting that even though some of the country's top commanders were martyred on the first day, capable successors quickly led successful operations against a technologically advanced enemy backed by the United States.

Arif underlined that the military, having learned from past experiences, is now fully prepared to respond firmly to any future provocations. He reassured citizens that "people should have no worries, as the 12-day war showed the competence and sacrifices of our soldiers."

He also highlighted the critical role of the civilian front during the conflict, saying: "The second front—the people—stood shoulder to shoulder with the armed forces. This proves that securing food supplies is a duty of the state, and we cannot neglect this responsibility under any circumstances."

Referring to recent remarks by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, Arif said that while supporting the military remains a duty of government, addressing the economic and livelihood concerns of the people is of paramount importance. "The Supreme Leader has repeatedly



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

emphasized that essential goods must be sufficiently stocked and strategic reserves maintained at approved levels. This reflects his view that the people, who created such epic achievements during the 12-day war, deserve strong support and priority."

Arif stated that food security and defense are of equal importance in national planning and resource allocation. He thanked Etkra for its efforts to provide essential supplies to military families, adding that if Etkra did not exist, the government would have to assume those responsibilities directly.

He noted that during the 12-day war, the private sector and state-owned enterprises also provided significant assistance in supplying essential goods, which he called "a spiritual asset for the country."

Arif inaugurated 12 new Etkra projects worth 20 trillion rials across nine provinces via video conference. He stressed that these initiatives, carried out without government funding, represent valuable contributions to public service. He also pointed out that last year's defense and economic planning ensured there were no shortages on the first day of the war.

The vice president reiterated the need for constant readiness in both defense and food security, emphasizing self-sufficiency alongside cooperation with other countries. He said the government is pursuing expanded trade, particularly rail connections and barter deals with neighboring states, as part of its food security strategy.

He further underlined that Etkra must go beyond military families and define its role in providing essential goods nationwide, while the government remains committed to stabilizing prices of ten key commodities to protect citizens from market fluctuations.

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## Iran Urges Muslims to Act in Unison to Confront Israel's Looming Hegemony



TEHRAN - Iran has condemned the Israeli regime's aggression on Qatari soil, stressing the need for Muslim nations to "act in unison" to confront the illegal entity's atrocities and its "looming hegemony."

The secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), Ali Larijani, said the Israeli aggression on Qatari soil bears a message for the regional countries that they should brace themselves for the regime's "looming hegemony."

"The Zionist entity's latest crime message in Qatar: O countries of the region! Prepare yourselves for my looming hegemony!!" Larijani wrote in an Arabic post on X.

Israel launched airstrikes on the headquarters of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas in the Qatari capital, Doha, in what was described as an "assassination operation" that claimed the lives of several Hamas officials as well as civilians in the Persian Gulf Arab country.

# IRAN NEWS



## Iran-Russia Gas Import Talks to Be Finalized Next Week

TEHRAN (ILNA) - Negotiations on importing Russian gas to Iran are expected to be finalized next week during Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Tehran, according to Iran's ambassador to Moscow, Kazem Jalali. Speaking at the 19th IranPlast Exhibition, Jalali announced that a Russian energy delegation, acting on Putin's orders, will travel to Iran to conclude the gas transfer deal. He noted that while most issues have already been settled, pricing remains the only outstanding matter. If an agreement is reached, the first phase of gas imports—albeit in limited quantities—will begin in the coming months. Jalali added that the second and third phases of the project will require infrastructure development, to be carried out with Russian investment, marking a significant step in energy cooperation.

## Foreign Investment Permits in Iran Increase Sevenfold



TEHRAN - Foreign investment permits in Iran have surged sevenfold this year, though only 40% have been effectively implemented, according to the head of the Investment and Financing Commission of Iran's Chamber of Commerce.

Farshid Shekarkhodaei, chair of the commission, told ILNA that while 2025 (Iranian year 1404) has been declared the "Year of Investment for Production," political and economic challenges continue to cast a shadow over the country's prospects.

Shekarkhodaei noted that Iran's economic growth is forecast by the International Monetary Fund at 2.5-3.1% for 2025, with potential to reach 4-5% if nuclear negotiations yield results. However, regional tensions with Israel and the possible activation of the "snapback" sanctions mechanism by the United States have raised investor concerns.

He cited World Bank data showing political instability can cut investment by up to 20%. "If sanctions are eased, energy and mining will thrive," he said, "but uncertainty pushes capital toward safer assets such as gold and cryptocurrencies."

Official data show that approved foreign investment during the first five months of 2025 (Farvardin-Mordad) reached \$15 billion, up 30% from \$11.5 billion in the same period last year. This was largely driven by 180 new permits issued early in the year, with a focus on ties with China and Russia.

In contrast, domestic investment fell 5% to 180 trillion rials, pressured by inflation above 30% and energy imbalances that reduce productivity. A report by Iran's Parliament Research Center also estimated that capital flight amounted to around \$10 billion.

Shekarkhodaei identified sanctions, banking restrictions, chronic inflation, and bureaucratic hurdles as the main obstacles to attracting foreign capital. International sanctions have complicated money transfers and raised technology transfer costs by 40%. Meanwhile, administrative corruption and frequent regulatory changes continue to undermine investor confidence.

## Iranian Firms Express Readiness for Construction Projects in Kazakhstan



TEHRAN - A high-level Iranian business delegation has met with the Union of Builders of Kazakhstan during the KazBuild international construction exhibition in Almaty, signaling Tehran's readiness to expand cooperation in the Central Asian nation's booming construction sector.

The delegation, led by Iraj Rahbar, head of the Construction and Infrastructure Commission of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, included representatives from the Tehran Association of Mass Builders, the Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Chamber of Commerce, members of the Iranian parliament, and executives from private construction firms.

Opening the meeting, Janibek Qasaba, president of the Union of Builders of Kazakhstan, highlighted the union's role since its founding in 2011 in supporting the country's construction industry. He stressed the organization's cooperation with the Kazakh Presidency, Ministry of Industry and Infrastructure Development, and various NGOs, while noting the existence of several similar unions across Kazakhstan.

Rahbar emphasized Iran's extensive experience in road construction, dam building, housing, and engineering services, stating that Iranian firms are prepared to participate both as investors and as contractors and consultants in joint projects. He also underlined Iran's capability to transfer modern technologies and implement pilot projects showcasing its technical expertise.

Echoing this, Abdoljalal Airi, parliamentary representative from Golestan Province, described the meeting as an opportunity to deepen bilateral engagement in the construction sector. Conveying greetings from Kazakhstan's ethnic community in northern Iran, he called for the formation of a joint economic committee to exchange expertise, particularly in urban development and large-scale housing projects.

Amir Abedi, president of the Iran-Kazakhstan Chamber of Commerce, praised Kazakhstan's recent economic growth and reiterated the two nations' historical ties and political will to strengthen trade. He invited the Kazakh delegation to visit the Iranian pavilion at KazBuild to explore Iranian capabilities in construction technology and building materials.

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



## ICB Gold Reserves Grow by 37%

TEHRAN - The Governor of the Central Bank of Iran announced that the country's gold reserves have grown by 37% following increased purchases on global markets, supported by trade and balance of payments surpluses.

Speaking at the 53rd Board of Directors Meeting of the Asian Clearing Union (ACU), held online and hosted by the Central Bank of Iran, Governor Mohammad Reza Farzin outlined Iran's latest economic developments and policies for 2024 and early 2025. The chairmanship of the ACU was officially transferred from Bangladesh to Iran at the start of the meeting.

The ACU includes the central banks of Bangladesh, Belarus, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Mauritius, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The central banks of Afghanistan and Russia also participated as observers. A representative of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) attended the session, with a video message from the ESCAP Secretary-General broadcast as well.

Farzin highlighted that Iran's trade surplus reached \$21 billion in 2023 (1402 in the Iranian calendar), which rose by \$5.8 billion in 2024 (1403) to \$26.8 billion. Meanwhile, the country's balance of payments surplus increased from \$8.6 billion to \$13.8 billion over the same period.

He emphasized that these surpluses enabled Iran to allocate more foreign exchange resources toward gold purchases, making the Central Bank of Iran one of the world's top five central banks in terms of commodity purchases last year.

The Governor added that despite sanctions and geopolitical pressures, Iran has expanded its economic cooperation with regional countries, neighbors, ACU members, and BRICS nations.

Farzin explained that Iran's economy has faced multiple challenges due to

sanctions and what he described as "aggressive and unlawful actions by the U.S. and Israel." He said the Central Bank's policies have focused on stabilizing the economy, curbing liquidity growth, reducing currency volatility, and supporting households and production sectors.

Key measures included: Strengthening the role of the Iran Currency and Gold Exchange to stabilize exchange rates; Launching a commercial currency market with separated commodity groups; Facilitating official foreign exchange transactions; Enforcing regulations to ensure the return of export earnings; Expanding use of foreign assets via monetary diplomacy; and Introducing new financial tools to reduce exchange rate risks.

Farzin also noted that conventional monetary tools—such as open market operations, repo agreements, and interbank corridor facilities—were actively used to manage liquidity. These measures, he said, significantly slowed money supply growth compared to previous years.

According to preliminary estimates, Iran's GDP growth in 2024 reached 3.1% including oil and 3.0% excluding oil, based on constant 2021 prices. This marked the country's 20th consecutive quarter of positive growth.

Growth by sector in 2024 was recorded as follows: Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries: 3.6%; Oil and gas: 4.6%; Industry and mining: 2.4%; and Services: 3.3%

Farzin concluded that Iran's consistent economic performance under sanctions demonstrates resilience and the effectiveness of domestic-based policies. He expressed hope that the ACU platform would further strengthen monetary, banking, and trade cooperation among member states.

## Indian Operator Fails to Meet Commitments in Chabahar Port



TEHRAN - A member of the Iranian Parliament's Civil Commission has criticized the performance of the Indian operator in Chabahar Port, stating that reports indicate New Delhi has not fulfilled its contractual obligations. He warned that if the current situation continues, Parliament will use its supervisory powers, and the government should move to terminate the agreement in order to safeguard the development of eastern Iran and protect public interests.

Mojtaba Yousefi, a member of the Civil Commission, voiced strong criticism of the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development and the Ports and Maritime Organization regarding the status of the foreign operator at Chabahar. He stressed the importance of supporting both domestic and international investors, noting that the way the government treats domestic investors serves as a "showcase" for how foreign investors judge Iran's investment environment.

He added that although Iran has proper laws to attract investors—such as the law on removing barriers to production, financing infrastructure, and issuing business permits—the problem lies in weak implementation. "We have failed in facilitating investments and engaging properly with both domestic and foreign private sectors," Yousefi said.

On the Indian involvement in Chabahar, Yousefi pointed out that this is not a new issue. "For years we have had ups and downs with the Indian company, and they have consistently delayed their commitments despite Iran's strong potential to attract foreign investment," he said.

He highlighted the regional strategic importance of Chabahar,

particularly given China's massive investment in Pakistan's Gwadar Port. "Transport corridors cannot be sanctioned. Reducing transportation costs is one of the most critical factors in global competitiveness, as it has a direct impact on final product prices," he said.

Referring to Chabahar's location, Yousefi noted: "The distance between Gwadar and Chabahar is less than 10 hours. From Chabahar, goods can reach Latakia and the Mediterranean by road in under four days, while the sea route takes more than 15 days. This shows Chabahar's unique potential, in line with the Supreme Leader's emphasis on developing Iran's eastern coasts and the Makran region."

He further explained that Parliament has already addressed the issue of international arbitration for the Chabahar project. "We gave the government permission to refer disputed parts of the contract to an international arbitrator. According to law, Parliament must be involved in such arbitration when foreign projects are concerned. If the foreign party fails to meet its obligations, Parliament can push for a resolution."

Yousefi stressed that closer monitoring of the Indian operator is now necessary. "Unfortunately, there has been no tangible progress in Chabahar. Reports clearly show that the foreign side has not honored its commitments. If required, the government must replace the Indian investor and operator with alternatives."

He concluded: "If this current trend continues, Parliament will exercise its supervisory tools. The contract with the Indians should be annulled if necessary, and the government must not allow delays in eastern Iran's development or violations of the people's rights."

## Iran Targets 20m Tons of Transit by Year-End



TEHRAN - The Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization of Iran has set ambitious targets for the remainder of the year, aiming to complete 3,000 kilometers of rural roads and reach 20 million tons of goods in transit, according to the organization's head.

Reza Akbari, Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development and head of the Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization, outlined the ministry's one-year performance and upcoming plans. He said that over the past year, significant steps had been taken in developing transport infrastructure — from rural road construction and safety improvements to transit growth and fleet modernization — all designed to enhance safety, efficiency, and service quality in public and road transport.

Since September last year, 2,413 kilometers of rural roads have been built. Officials expect this figure to reach 3,000 kilometers by year-end, marking a notable increase compared to the 2,800 kilometers recorded in 2023.

Akbari reported that 714 high-risk accident sites have been fixed over the past year, with the number expected to reach 900 by the end of 2025. Plans are also in place to address another 1,000 hazardous locations in cooperation with the traffic police. Additionally, 880 dangerous points identified in the past two years have now been fully corrected.

In terms of major road upkeep, more than 17,000 kilometers have been resurfaced using 10 million tons of asphalt — the largest such effort to date, aimed at improving road quality and durability.

Iran's road freight transport reached 570 million tons in the past year, showing a 5% increase compared to the previous year. Transit also hit a record 17.5 million tons, with non-oil transit growing by 20% in the first five months of the current year. The overall transit target for 2025 across road, rail, and sea is 20 million tons.

## 22nd Iran-Pakistan Joint Economic Commission to Convene in Tehran



TEHRAN - The Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) will host a high-level trade delegation from Pakistan on the sidelines of the 22nd Joint Economic Commission between Iran and Pakistan.

The 46-member Pakistani delegation, led by Pakistan's Minister of Commerce Jam Kamal Khan, will arrive in Tehran on Tuesday, September 15 (24 Shahrivar) at the invitation of the Iranian government. The visit follows the recent trip of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and his senior delegation to Pakistan, during which both sides agreed to hold the joint commission meeting in Tehran.

According to TCCIMA's public relations office, strengthening bilateral economic ties with Pakistan is a strategic priority for the chamber. In recent years, TCCIMA has worked closely with Iranian authorities and Pakistani counterparts on the draft product list for a planned free trade agreement between the two nations. The chamber has now been tasked with organizing the trade forum and bilateral meetings that accompany the commission.

The Tehran Chamber, in collaboration with the Iran-Pakistan Joint Chamber of Commerce, national trade associations, provincial chambers, and government bodies, will host a Business Forum and B2B matchmaking sessions on Tuesday, September 15, at the Kouh Noor Hall of Parsian Evin Hotel in Tehran.

Speakers at the event will include Ferial Mostofi, First Vice President of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce; Farzaneh Sadegh Malvajerd, Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development; Mohammadali Dehqan Dehnavi, Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade and head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization; Jam Kamal Khan, Pakistan's Minister of Commerce; and Muhammad Mudassir Tipu, Pakistan's Ambassador to Iran, alongside other senior officials and business leaders from both countries.

## Gaza Aid Flotilla Struck by Drone in Tunisian Waters

GAZA CITY (Dispatches) - The organizers of a Gaza-bound flotilla carrying humanitarian aid and pro-Palestinian activists said late Monday that one of their boats was hit by a suspected UAV but Tunisian authorities said “no drones” had been detected.

The flotilla, which aims to deliver aid to Gazans in defiance of Israel’s blockade, arrived in Tunisia over the weekend and was anchored 50 miles from the port of Sidi Bou Said when it reported the incident. “The Global Sumud Flotilla (GSF) confirms that one of the main boats... was struck by what is suspected to be a drone,” the organisers said on social media, adding no one had been hurt.



## Von der Leyen Calls on EU to Defend Role in Hostile World



BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - EU chief Ursula von der Leyen on Wednesday warned that Europe must stand on its own in an increasingly “hostile” world, blasting Russia over a drone strike in Poland and demanding tougher action against Israel for its offensive in Gaza.

In her annual State of the EU address, Ursula von der Leyen warned that “battlelines for a new world order based on power are being drawn right now”.

“So, yes, Europe must fight. For its place in a world in which many major powers are either ambivalent or openly hostile to Europe,” she said.

Framing the challenge as “Europe’s independence moment”, the Commission president issued a rallying call as she fends off backlash over a trade deal with US President Donald Trump.

Her warning comes with the EU weighed down by the fourth year of the Ukraine war – now threatening to spill over its borders – and a lack of unity on how to confront the worsening crisis in Gaza.

In the face of sporadic heckling from some lawmakers, von der Leyen gave a trenchant defence of her deal with Trump arguing that it had helped avert the “chaos” of a trade war.

But it was the actual war happening just beyond the bloc’s eastern flank that focused attention after Poland and NATO scrambled their defences to counter an incursion by Russian drones.

“Just today, we have seen a reckless and unprecedented violation of Poland and Europe’s airspace by more than 10 Russian Shahed drones,” von der Leyen said. Building up its defences is a central part of the EU’s agenda and von der Leyen said “Europe will defend every inch of its territory”.

## Soldiers Guard Nepal’s Parliament After Two Days of Deadly Protests



KATHMANDU (Dispatches) - Armed soldiers guarded Nepal’s parliament, amid streets deserted after indefinite curfew was clamped on the capital, Kathmandu, following two days of deadly anti-graft protests that spurred Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli to resign.

The worst upheaval in decades in the poor Himalayan nation was unleashed by a social media ban announced last week but rolled back after 19 people died on Monday as police fired tear gas and rubber bullets to control crowds.

Burnt vehicles and twisted metal heaps littered the area around parliament, where army firefighters battled to douse a blaze in the main hall, while the exterior was charred after angry protesters set it ablaze.

“We are trying to normalise the situation first,” army spokesman Raja Ram Basnet said. “We are committed to protect the life and property of people.”

Armoured vehicles kept vigil in streets deserted except for a few strollers, with shops and markets shut.

Several other government buildings, from the supreme court to ministers’ homes, including Oli’s private residence, were also set ablaze in yesterday’s protests, with the unrest subsiding only after the resignation.

Flights were disrupted, with the main airport in Kathmandu shut until 6pm (1215 GMT), an airport spokesperson said.

# Poland Downs Drones, First NATO Member to Open Fire During Ukraine War

WARSAW (Dispatches) - Poland shot down drones in its airspace on Wednesday with the backing of military aircraft from its NATO allies, the first time a member of the Western military alliance is known to have fired shots during Russia’s war in Ukraine.

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk told parliament it was “the closest we have been to open conflict since World War Two”, although he also said he had “no reason to believe we’re on the brink of war”.

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Moscow denied responsibility for the incident, with a senior diplomat in Poland saying the drones had come from the direction of Ukraine.

European leaders, who have lately been trying to persuade U.S. President Donald Trump to join them in tightening sanctions on Russia and boosting support for Kyiv, said it justified a collective response. There was no immediate response from Washington.

Poland said 19 objects had entered its airspace during a large Russian air attack on Ukraine, and that it had shot down those that posed a threat. Tusk called the incident a “large-scale provocation” and said he had activated Article Four of NATO’s treaty, under which alliance members can demand consultations with their allies.

A NATO spokesperson said NATO chief Mark Rutte was in touch with Polish leadership and the alliance was consulting closely with Poland.

A source said NATO was not treating the incident as an attack but as an intentional incursion. Polish F-16 fighter jets, Dutch F-35s, Italian AWACS surveillance planes and mid-air refueling aircraft jointly operated by NATO were involved in the overnight operation, according to the source.

Andrey Ordash, Russia’s charge d’affaires in Poland, was cited by RIA state news agency as calling accusations of an incursion “groundless” and said Poland had not given any evidence that the drones shot down were of Russian origin.

The Kremlin declined comment to comment directly on the downing of the drones but spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said: “The leadership of the EU and NATO accuse Russia of provocations on a daily basis. Most of the time, without even trying



drones into European airspace was intentional, not accidental, she added in her post on X.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Russia used 415 drones and 40 missiles in attacks on Ukraine overnight, adding that at least eight Iranian-made shahed drones had been aimed towards Poland.

“An extremely dangerous precedent for Europe,” he said. “A strong response is needed – and it can only be a joint response by all partners: Ukraine, Poland, all Europeans, the United States.”

Russia has long said it has no intention of stoking a war with NATO and that Western European countries suggesting it is a threat were trying to worsen relations.

# Protesters in France Bid to Block Everything, Scores Arrested

NANTES (Dispatches) - Protesters across France disrupted traffic, burnt rubbish bins and at times clashed with police on Wednesday in a bid to “Block Everything” in a show of anger against President Emmanuel Macron, the political establishment and planned budget cuts.

Tens of thousands of security forces who had been deployed across the country removed blockades as fast as possible, officials said, meaning that France was, for now, not blocked despite some scuffles.

Nearly 300 protesters were arrested across the country.

Many demonstrators vented their anger against Macron, who is already facing political turmoil after the parliamentary opposition united to defeat his government on Monday.

The president appointed a close ally as his new prime minister, conservative Sebastian Lecornu, who took office on Wednesday facing the same challenge to rein in France’s ballooning debt as his predecessor.

“It’s the same shit, it’s the same, it’s Macron who’s the problem, not the ministers,” Fred, a representative for the RATP public transport branch of the CGT union said at a protest in Paris. “He has to go.”

In Paris, police fired tear gas on youths blocking the entrance to a high school and firefighters removed burnt objects from a barricade.

Police said they had stopped a large group of about 1,000 protesters from entering the Gare du Nord train station in the city.

“I was expecting either a dissolution (of parliament) or a left-wing prime minister and we have neither, it’s frustrating,” said 18-year-old student Lisa Venier, who was among the protesters near the Gare du Nord.

Protesters torched a bus in the western city of Rennes, Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau told reporters. He also said some protesters had attacked police with heavy cobblestones, but did not specify where.

Retailleau warned that protest rallies scheduled for later in the day could be infiltrated by hard-line, ultra-left groups and become violent.



The “Block Everything” movement - a broad expression of discontent that has no centralised leadership and is organized in ad hoc fashion on social media - sprung up online in May among right-wing groups, researchers and officials said, but has since been taken over by the left and far-left.

The movement reflects popular discontent with what protesters deem a dysfunctional ruling elite preaching a painful gospel of austerity. It is drawing comparisons to the 2018 “Yellow Vest” protests, which arose over fuel price hikes but morphed into a broader movement against Macron and his plans for economic reform.

A teacher taking part in the protests in Paris said he was against the budget cuts that Prime Minister Francois Bayrou had planned and that led to his defeat in Monday’s parliamentary confidence vote.

“Bayrou was ousted, (now) his policies must be eliminated,” said teacher Christophe Lalande, calling for more funding for schools and hospitals.

At another protest in the city, unionist Amar Lagha said: “This day is a message to all the workers of this country: that there is no resignation, the fight continues.”

In the western city of Nantes, protesters blocked a highway with burning tires and bins. Police used teargas to disperse people trying to occupy a roundabout.

In Montpellier, in the southwest, police threw teargas at protesters who had set up a barricade to block traffic at a roundabout. Some of the protesters threw various objects at them. A large banner at the protest read: “Macron resign”.

Highway operator Vinci reported traffic disruptions on highways throughout the country, including Marseille, Montpellier, Nantes and Lyon.

About 50 hooded people tried to start a blockade in Bordeaux, while in Toulouse, in the southwest, a fire was quickly extinguished but still disrupted train traffic, the interior minister, Retailleau, told reporters.

He said 80,000 security forces had been deployed throughout the country, including 6,000 in Paris. French media had reported that 100,000 people were expected to take part in the demonstrations.

Meanwhile France’s new Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu promised a “profound break” in substance and “not just in form” as he took office during a handover ceremony on Wednesday. His inauguration came as protests across France underscored the depth of the country’s political crisis.

# Israel Defends Qatar Strike as Targeting Hamas

TEL AVIV (Dispatches) - Israel’s UN envoy defended targeting Hamas leaders in Qatar as the “right” decision on Wednesday, after the strikes on the U.S. ally’s soil drew a rare rebuke from President Donald Trump.

The White House said Trump did not agree with Israel’s decision to take military action on Tuesday and had warned Qatar in advance of the incoming strikes.

But Qatar, which hosts a large U.S. military base and has spearheaded repeated rounds of Gaza truce efforts, said it had not received the warning from Washington until the deadly attack was already under way.

Israel’s ambassador to the United Nations on Wednesday justified the decision, telling an Israeli radio station: “We don’t always act in the interests of the United States.”

“We are coordinated, they give us incredible support, we appreciate that, but sometimes we make decisions and inform the United States,” Danny Danon said.

“It was not an attack on Qatar; it was an attack on Hamas. We are not against Qatar, nor against any Arab country, we are currently against a terrorist organisation,” he told 103FM.



Palestinian militant group Hamas said six people were killed in the strikes, including a son of its top negotiator Khalil al-Hayya, but that its senior leaders had survived. Qatar said one of its security officers also died.

Danon said Israel was “still waiting for the results” of the operation. “It is too early to comment on the outcome, but the decision is the right one,” he added.

According to sources close to Hamas, six Hamas leaders including Hayya and former top leader Khaled Meshal were in the building targeted by Israel at the time of the strike. AFP has been unable to reach any of them since then. Qatar said the strikes targeted the homes of several members of Hamas’s political bureau residing in the Gulf country.

Three bodyguards and negotiator Hayya’s aide and son were all killed in the attack, Hamas said, affirming “the enemy’s failure to assassinate our brothers in the negotiating delegation”.

The emirate’s prime minister said it reserved the right to respond to the Israeli attack, which it said constituted a “pivotal moment” for region.



## Ronaldo Scores as Portugal Edge Hungary in World Cup Qualifier

BUDAPEST (Dispatches) - Joao Cancelo slotted home from the edge of the box to snatch Portugal a thrilling 3-2 win at Hungary, sending them top of their 2026 World Cup qualifying group.

Cristiano Ronaldo was also on target as Roberto Martinez's side secured their second win from their two opening games against the spirited hosts, for whom Barnabas Varga netted twice in Budapest.

Portugal lead Group F on six points from Armenia on three after their win over the Republic of Ireland earlier on.

Nations League champions Portugal were high on confidence after thumping Armenia 5-0 on Saturday and dominated possession.

However it was Hungary who took the lead as Ferencvaros striker Varga found a gap in Portugal's defence and nodded home Zsolt Nagy's cross.

Portugal responded by pouring forward and Hungary goalkeeper Balazs Toth made a stunning save to deny Ronaldo from close range after half an hour.

The visitors levelled six minutes later with Manchester City midfielder Bernardo Silva lashing into the roof of the net after the ball broke his way in the box.

Portugal took the lead after 58 minutes through veteran striker Ronaldo, aiming to become the first player to feature at six different World Cup finals.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner won the spot-kick when his shot was handled by Loic Nego, and he squeezed it into the bottom left corner beyond Toth's outstretched fingertips.

Ronaldo became the player who has scored the joint-most goals in World Cup qualifying history, level with retired Guatemala international Carlos Ruiz as he bagged his 39th.

Hungary, who last qualified for the World Cup in 1986 and have never beaten Portugal in 15 attempts, equalised with another Varga header from Nego's cross after 84 minutes.

Just two minutes later Portugal stole the ball back high up the pitch and Cancelo stroked home to claim the three points.

Meanwhile England sent out a warning to their World Cup rivals with a brilliant 5-0 thrashing of Serbia in qualifying, while Erling Haaland scored five as Norway emphatically maintained their 100-percent record.

The quality of Thomas Tuchel's England was questioned after a laborious 2-0 win over Andorra at Villa Park on Saturday, but they produced a resounding answer.

"The players did excellent. The credit goes to them, they did amazing. That's the bar," manager Tuchel told ITV Sport.

England dominated the early stages in Belgrade and took the lead in the 33rd minute when Harry Kane headed home his 74th international goal from a Declan Rice corner.

## Parsons Warns Daniels, Touts Packers' Horse Engine Pass Rush



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Packers linebacker Micah Parsons has more sacks against the Washington Commanders than any other opponent and plans to be more involved Thursday night in his second game in Green Bay since being traded by the Dallas Cowboys.

Parsons sacked Jared Goff of the Lions in his debut, pushing beyond a pregame snap count determined by coaches and medical personnel because of a back injury.

"At the end of the day, you've got to let me push through some things," Parsons said of negotiating on the sideline to get more snaps in the 27-13 win over Detroit on Sunday. "You've got to let me get tired and get wore out there so that way I can become better and get better."

"That's when it was like, 'OK, your reps can go up.' Sometimes you've got to fight for your own right to play."

Defensive coordinator Jeff Hafley said the Packers immediately got to work on packages that feature Parsons, but he's put plenty of pelts on the wall in his career against Washington.

Parsons pulled down Offensive Rookie of the Year Jayden Daniels 4.5 times in two matchups with the Commanders last season to push his career total to 10.5 sacks against Washington.

Discussing Daniels as a division foe prior to being traded, Parsons had only praise.

"I think he has the potential to be a (Patrick) Mahomes caliber. I got my hands full for the next eight years," he said.

## Adidas to Become Official Apparel Partner of Audi F1 Team



BERLIN (Dispatches) - German sportswear maker Adidas will become the apparel partner of the Audi Formula One team from next year in a multi-year partnership, Audi announced on Wednesday.

Swiss-based Sauber are becoming the factory Audi team in 2026, when Formula One starts a new engine era with major rule changes and an 11th team on the grid with the arrival of Cadillac.

"We are very proud to partner with the future Audi F1 team and support their debut into the highest level of competition for the sport," Adidas CEO Bjorn Gulden said.

Audi and Adidas, who are also kit suppliers to the Mercedes Formula One team, will jointly release a product line featuring apparel, footwear, and accessories before the beginning of the 2026 season.

"Our partnership in Formula 1 goes far beyond the pursuit of innovation and peak performance: it combines the strengths and visions of two progressive brands," Gernot Doellner, chairman of the Volkswagen-owned Audi, said in a statement.

Sauber are eighth in the 10 team standings.

Meanwhile Renault will be "staying in Formula 1 for a long time" with the Alpine team, new CEO Francois Provost said in an interview with French broadcaster Canal+.

In his third month in charge of Renault, Provost sought to lessen speculation about the team's commitment to F1 ahead of the team abandoning its own power unit in favor of a Mercedes partnership beginning next year.

Provost appeared at an F1 paddock for the first time last weekend at the Italian Grand Prix in Monza.

"My visit aims mainly to reaffirm we're staying in Formula 1," Provost said in the interview.

He touted the recent contract extension that Pierre Gasly, Alpine's top driver, received, tying the 29-year-old Frenchman to the team through 2028. Steve Nielsen also joined Alpine as managing director last week, joining executive adviser Flavio Briatore.

## Bolivia Seal Playoff Spot With Win Over Brazil, Argentina Stunned by Ecuador

LONDON (Dispatches) - Bolivia shocked Brazil 1-0 to secure a spot in the intercontinental play-offs for next year's World Cup while Argentina suffered a 1-0 defeat by Ecuador in the final round of South America's 2026 qualifiers.

Bolivia's Miguel Terceros converted a penalty in first-half stoppage time to secure the home win over five-times World Cup winners Brazil in La Paz, a result which saw Carlo Ancelotti's side drop to fifth in the standings.

Bolivia will be joined in the playoffs by two teams from CONCACAF as well as one each from the African, Asian and Oceania confederations in the hunt for two places at the World Cup in Canada, Mexico and the United States.

The playoffs will take place in Monterrey and Guadalajara in March.

While Ecuador and reigning champions



Argentina had already qualified for the World Cup, there was no shortage of intensity in their match in Guayaquil.

Argentina's Nicolas Otamendi was sent off in the 31st minute and the hosts capitalised on their numerical advantage when Enner Valencia scored a penalty in first-half stoppage time.

Ecuador were also reduced to 10 men when Moises Caicedo was dismissed in the 50th minute, but they held firm to claim victory and go second in the table.

Despite the loss, Argentina retained top spot in the standings with 39 points, nine ahead of Ecuador.

Colombia secured third place with a 6-3 victory over Venezuela in Maturin, with Luis Suarez stealing the show by scoring four goals to extinguish Venezuelan hopes of clinching the playoff place.

## Draper Ends Season Early After Arm Injury Setback

LONDON (Dispatches) - Britain's Jack Draper has called time on his season after an arm injury that also forced him to withdraw from the U.S. Open, he said.

Fifth seed Draper pulled out of the tournament before his second-round meeting with Zizou Bergs in late August after first overcoming Argentine qualifier Federico Agustin Gomez.

Draper's appearance at Flushing Meadows was his first singles event since a second-round exit at Wimbledon last month, with the 23-year-old admitting he had been unsure whether he would recover in time from a bruised humerus in his serving arm.

It now appears the comeback may have come too soon for the world number seven.

"Unfortunately, the injury to my arm is something I have to rest and means I'll be sitting out the rest of 2025," he said in a message on social media.

Draper also reached the semi-finals of last year's U.S. Open



before losing to eventual winner Jannik Sinner.

Meanwhile no. 3 seed Alexandra Eala of the Philippines won the first nine games of her first-round match against Yasmine Mansouri of France en route to a 6-0, 6-2 victory at the SP Open in Sao Paulo.

Eala, 20, saved all four break points she faced while thoroughly dominating, winning 69.4 percent of her service points (34 of 49) along with 60.8 percent of her return points (31 of 51). Eala won her first WTA Challenger tournament last week at the Guadalajara 125 Open and is seeking her maiden tour-level win.

Mexican No. 5 seed Renata Zarazua cruised past Brazil's Luiza Fullana 6-2, 6-1; No. 6 Francesca Jones of Great Britain rallied past Israel's Lina Glushko 4-6, 6-2, 6-3; and Hungarian eighth seed Panna Udvardy swept Anna Rogers 6-2, 6-3. Other winners included Turkey's Berfu Cengiz and a pair of Brazilians, Laura Pigossi and Ana Candiotto.