

The CEO of Iran Air Says the National Airline Has Taken Legal Action to Restore International Flight Routes It Has Been Banned From Because of Foreign Sanctions on the Company

IRAN NEWS

Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi Departed for Qatar's Capital, Doha, on Sunday to Attend an Arab-Islamic Ministerial Preparatory Meeting Which Was to Be Held Later in the Day

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EX-IRGC Commander Warns Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iraq



TEHRAN (PressTV) - A former chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has warned regional countries, including Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iraq, that they risked facing Israeli aggression if the countries in the region failed to form a "military coalition" against the Zionist entity.

Mohsen Rezaei made the remarks in a post on X, former Twitter, on Saturday, advising that an extraordinary Islamic-Arab summit, which is slated to take place in the Qatari capital Doha on Sunday, take the prospect of such aggression into serious consideration.

"If the summit fails to take practical action in response to the Zionist regime's aggression against five Muslim countries and its genocide in Gaza, then Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iraq too should expect the regime's warplanes and bombs," he wrote.

Rezaei, who is also on the Expediency Discernment Council that advises Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, was referring to the regime's attacks on Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Iran, and most recently Qatar.

"Before the regime moves against each country in the region one by one, a military coalition must be formed to confront it," he added.

FM Warns UK, France, Germany Over Snapback Move



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has warned the UK, France, and Germany that if they kept up their underway intense efforts to reactivate the UN Security Council's sanctions against Iran, they would risk incurring irreparable damage.

The top diplomat passed the remarks in a post on X, former Twitter, on Saturday, addressing the trio, which is part of a 2015 nuclear agreement with the Islamic Republic, and their bid to use the deal's so-called "snapback" mechanism to reinstate the sanctions.

Iran and its allies, Russia, and China, have repeatedly asserted that the European states' refusal to commit to their obligations under the nuclear deal, including their returning of the sanctions that the deal had lifted, has robbed them of any excuse to resort to the "snapback."

Araqchi likewise underlined the troika's lack of any grounds to trigger the mechanism, besides warning of the irreversible consequences that such a move would cause. "It is not just that the E3 has no legal, political, or moral entitlement to invoke 'snapback,' and that even if they did, 'use or lose it' doesn't work," he said.

"It's that the correct expression for the E3's dilemma is 'use it *and* lose it.' Or better yet, 'use it and lose it *all*.'"

Iran has warned that the trio's potential success in having the mechanism deployed would prompt the country to take several momentous retaliatory steps.

Those include termination of an agreement between the country and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that was reached recently in order to help resumption of cooperation between the two sides.

According to Iranian officials, another option open to the country is withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).



TEHRAN - Iran has emerged as a major hub for health tourism, with cosmetic procedures and infertility treatments cited as the leading reasons foreign patients visit the country.

According to Muslem Shojaei, Director-General of the Office for Marketing and Development of Foreign Tourism at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Iran hosted between one million and 1.2 million health tourists last year. These patients sought services ranging from hair transplants and cosmetic surgeries to organ transplants and infertility treatments.

With its advanced medical infrastructure, highly skilled doctors, and well-equipped treatment centers, Iran is considered one of the most promising destinations in the global health tourism market. This growing sector, encompassing medical care, cosmetic procedures, hair restoration, and infertility treatment, is seen as both an economic opportunity and a competitive advantage for the country.

The global health tourism industry is valued at billions of dollars annually, with forecasts showing a growth rate of 20-25 percent per year. Iran's geographical location and accessibility for neighboring countries—particularly Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Gulf states—make it a strong contender for capturing a significant share of this market. Many foreign patients seek high-quality medical care at more affordable costs, and Iran, with proper safety and hygiene standards, aims to secure its position in this sector.

Another advantage is Iran's ability to combine medical services with cultural, historical, and natural attractions. Patients and their families can enrich their stay with sightseeing and tourism experiences rarely available in competing destinations.

However, Shojaei noted that the development of health tourism still requires improvements in processes, standardization, legal frameworks, and supporting infrastructure such as specialized hotels and transport services. Smart investment in this sector could not only bring substantial foreign currency revenue but also position Iran as a leading medical tourism destination in the region and globally.

"Health and medical tourism is one of our country's key competitive advantages, alongside

Iran Leads in Attracting Health Tourists

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religious and cultural-historical tourism," Shojaei told Tasnim News Agency. "It is one of our three main tourism products where we can compete with many countries around the world."

He emphasized that while Iran's medical expertise and hospital capacity are strong—boasting around 300 international patient departments (IPD) and adequate hospital beds—the main challenge lies in processes and system management. "Our doctors and specialists provide services at or even above global standards," he said. "In the private sector, we have excellent hospitals, though the quality of some public hospitals does not yet match that of countries like Oman or Turkey."

Statistics show that last year, out of 7.4 million foreign arrivals, between one and 1.2 million were health tourists. Globally, the medical tourism market is estimated at about \$47 billion, with each patient spending an average of \$2,500-\$3,000. The total market size is around 18-20 million patients.

Iran's share, while significant, has not fully returned to pre-pandemic levels. "Before COVID-19, in 2019, the situation was much better. Even short conflicts like the recent twelve-day war negatively impacted medical tourism and patient arrivals," Shojaei explained.

About 85 percent of foreign tourists in Iran come from neighboring countries, a pattern that also applies to health tourism. Priority markets include Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Bahrain, Oman, and the Gulf states.

Shojaei added that while Iran had initially targeted three or four key countries, regional instability required a reassessment of priorities. Currently, short-, medium-, and long-term strategies focus on resilient, lower-risk markets such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq.

He concluded by stressing the importance of high standards: "Health and medical tourism deals with human lives. Processes must be precise, and standards must remain high. This is a growing industry, and anyone interested should consider entering the field."

International Push to Suspend FATF Countermeasures

TEHRAN - The Secretary of Iran's Supreme Council for the Prevention and Combating of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing has warned against domestic obstruction in the process of normalizing Iran's case with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and ratifying the CFT convention, following a meeting between an Iranian delegation and Malaysian officials.

According to the National Center for Financial Intelligence, Hadi Khani expressed satisfaction with the talks held with officials in Malaysia—one of the FATF's main members—focused on suspending countermeasures and removing Iran from the blacklist. He criticized certain individuals and media inside Iran for hindering progress by raising unrelated issues such as the U.S. designation of resistance groups as terrorists, Lebanon's placement on the FATF grey list, or the claim that no reservations are allowed under the CFT.

Khani stressed that these arguments had been repeatedly disproven with evidence. The Deputy Minister of Economy vowed: "We will not allow a small group, who for years have blocked the proper handling of Iran's FATF case with misleading narratives, to further damage the country's reputation or impose additional costs on the economy and the people." He emphasized that Iran will continue to clarify facts and documents in order to secure the nation's rights, remove the country from the FATF blacklist, and resolve the pending CFT issue.

Khani lamented that delays in managing the FATF file and ratifying the CFT have made Iran an exception in the world. As a result, every Iranian abroad is treated as a high-risk individual for money laundering or terrorist financing. Global financial institutions, wary of reputational and compliance risks, impose humiliating restrictions on Iranians. Heavy due diligence costs often lead foreign banks to deny services to Iranian nationals, severely limiting business transactions.

He criticized so-called "experts" who have consistently spread fear among decision-makers, causing years of costly delays. Khani argued that instead of managing FATF-related challenges, these voices advanced misleading arguments in an attempt to dismiss an issue that cannot be ignored—since virtually all countries and international bodies comply with FATF standards.

Addressing concerns, Khani noted that under the Palermo and CFT conventions, countries



are allowed to attach reservations, just as Iran did when joining the Palermo Convention at the United Nations. Currently, only Iran, Chad, Somalia, Eritrea, Burundi, and Tuvalu remain outside the CFT—an undesirable status for a major country like Iran.

Khani added that many critics of the CFT have never even read the convention, which solely addresses terrorist financing, not the designation of terrorist groups. Definitions of terrorism, he pointed out, are already embedded in related conventions to which Iran is a party, and Iran has criminalized such acts under domestic law.

He asked opponents: "What possible benefit do they gain from prolonging Iran's dispute without any evidence, while blocking the normalization of the FATF case and the

ratification of CFT?"

Khani stressed that the CFT does not oblige Iran to accept the U.S. or any other country's list of terrorists. FATF recommendations are aimed at groups designated by the United Nations, not unilateral lists. He also explained that Lebanon's placement on the FATF grey list was a result of self-assessment within its regional body, MENAFATF. Lebanon, he said, has joined both the Palermo and CFT conventions and is working on identified shortcomings with high-level political commitments.

Khani clarified that cooperation with FATF is voluntary, and non-cooperation does not trigger UN resolutions or new U.S. sanctions. However, portraying Iranians as "high risk" serves U.S. interests, as it isolates Iran from the global financial system. Comparing FATF compliance with the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), he argued, is misleading because the consequences are very different.

He warned that refusing engagement with FATF results in economic isolation, loss of credibility, withdrawal of foreign investment, restrictions on Iranian nationals abroad, growth of unregulated financial networks, and increased fraud, money laundering, and transaction costs through informal channels.

"It is Iran—not FATF—that suffers from the failure to normalize our case," Khani concluded. While countries are free to reject FATF cooperation, he asked: "Which nation would willingly impose such comprehensive financial self-sanctions on itself?"

The Abbasids as Successors to the Umayyads

Abu al-'Abbas Abdullah ibn Muhammad (known as Abu al-'Abbas al-Saffah) was the first Abbasid caliph.

Abu al-'Abbas al-Saffah was the first caliph of the Abbasid dynasty, who came to power after the overthrow of the Umayyad caliphate. The title "Saffah" means "very generous" or "very bloodthirsty." It was given to him either because of his extensive generosity to his supporters—whether relatives or key allies—or, according to another account, due to his cruelty toward his enemies. In dictionaries, "Saffah" may also be considered a modified form of the word Saffak (slaughterer).

The Abbasids' victory and al-Saffah's rise to power was the result of a widespread, organized political and propagandist movement against Umayyad rule and the oppression of their governors across the lands. At that time, this was called the "Abbasid Revolution."

Of course, this victory was not achieved overnight; it followed a series of coordinated steps that weakened the Umayyads. The Abbasids, descendants of Banu Hashim and cousins of the Prophet, began secret propaganda against the Umayyads in the middle of their rule.

They established their main center of activity in the region of Khorasan (in today's eastern Iran), where discontent with Umayyad rule had reached its peak. They raised the slogan "al-Rida min al-Muhammad" ("Satisfaction with the family of Muhammad") in order to rally all the discontented, without naming a specific individual.

One of the key factors in the Abbasids' success was the military leadership of a charismatic and intelligent figure named Abu Muslim al-Khurasani. Today, his character could be likened to Ahmad Shah Massoud or Qasem Soleimani. As the representative of Imam Ibrahim (the Abbasid leader at that time), he went to Khorasan, united various Arab tribes and discontented Iranians, and built a powerful army.

In the year 129 AH, Abu Muslim raised the banner of revolt against the Umayyads. His forces quickly captured major cities in Khorasan, such as Merv and Nishapur. The Abbasid army, with its black banners and standards (which became their symbol—and from which the ISIS flag later borrowed its color), marched westward through Iranian lands. They fought fierce battles in each city against Umayyad forces.

The climax of these struggles was the Battle of the Zab (or the Battle of the Great Zab) in 132 AH. In this battle, the Abbasid army, led by Abdullah ibn Ali (uncle of al-Saffah), faced the army of the last Umayyad caliph, Marwan II. This battle sealed the final downfall of the Umayyad state.

After their victory at the Zab, the Abbasids entered Kufa. There, in the Great Mosque of Kufa in the year 132 AH, allegiance was pledged to Abu al-'Abbas al-Saffah as the first Abbasid caliph.

The key factors in the Abbasids' victory over the Umayyads were: the use of general slogans such as "al-Rida min al-Muhammad" to attract all the discontented, the establishment of a network of propagandists throughout the Islamic realm, and taking advantage of the deep dissatisfaction of the people of Khorasan with Umayyad discrimination.

At the same time, the decisive role of Abu Muslim al-Khurasani cannot be denied. Furthermore, the discontent of the people, the internal weakness of the Umayyads, and their internal and tribal conflicts had already weakened them.

Thus, Abu al-'Abbas al-Saffah did not come to the caliphate by election, but through a full-scale military campaign. He established the Abbasid state, which endured for more than five centuries (132-656 AH), and became the second stage of oppression after the Umayyads in usurping the rights of the family of the Messenger—peace and blessings of God be upon them.

Iran-Tunisia Ties Show Tehran's Commitment to Expanding Strong Ties With Islamic World



TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi says that the relations between Iran and Tunisia serve as a "shining example" of Tehran's commitment to expanding strong ties with the Islamic world based on "common interests and respect for national sovereignty."

Araqchi made the remarks in a note titled "Unbreakable ties; towards a common future for Iran and Tunisia" published in Tunisian media.

The publication followed his visit to the North African country, where he met with President Kais Saied and Foreign Minister Mohamed Ali Nafti to discuss key bilateral issues.

Tunisia, he said, has a "high and special position" in Iran's foreign policy, noting that the ties between the two countries, which are rooted in history, are based on "brotherhood, mutual respect, deep religious and cultural commonalities, and common international goals."

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Iran Boosts Oil Production by 120,000 bpd

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's daily oil production has increased by more than 120,000 barrels since the beginning of the 14th administration, according to the managing director of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC).

Hamid Bourd, CEO of NIOC, said on Saturday that the upward trend will continue as new projects and programs are rolled out. He emphasized the importance of long-term planning to sustain production and noted that tapping into the expertise of knowledge-based companies will help ensure stable growth and advance the country's broader energy goals.

Bourd made the remarks at a ceremony introducing new senior managers: Behzad Shams as head of finance and Saeed Sadeghi as head of international affairs, while bidding farewell to outgoing finance chief Ali-Mohammad Masoumian.

Iran Signs \$300m Deal to Build Mega Cargo Terminal at Imam Khomeini Airport



TEHRAN - The Imam Khomeini Airport City Company has signed a \$300 million contract to build a mega cargo terminal, the company's CEO announced.

According to the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, CEO Saeed Chalandari said the project comes in response to the full use of warehouse capacity in the airport's free trade zone. Construction work on the large-scale logistics facility will begin soon.

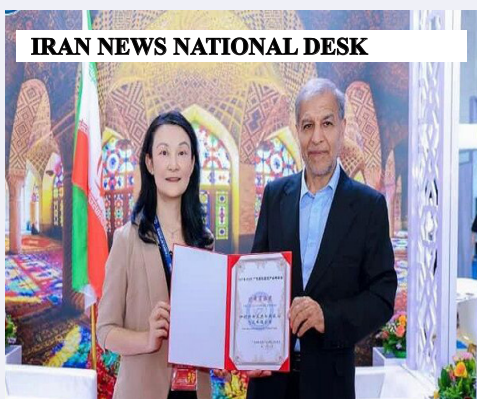
Chalandari noted that so far, investment requests totaling 2.2 quadrillion rials (about \$4.4 billion) have been registered, of which around 400 trillion rials have already been finalized and are under implementation. An additional 200 trillion rials are expected to reach contract stage by the end of autumn.

The CEO also highlighted significant progress in infrastructure development, flight operations, and preparations for renovating Terminal 1 of the airport.

As Iran's main international gateway, Imam Khomeini International Airport hosted around eight million passengers last year, serving more than 40 domestic and foreign airlines across over 70 routes. The airport also handled the majority of Hajj and pilgrimage flights, with Terminal Salam processing 55% of Hajj flights, 82% of Umrah flights, and over 70% of Karbala pilgrimage flights.

Chalandari said the airport city has officially been designated as a logistics hub under a memorandum of understanding with Iran Railways, supported by the transport ministry. He noted that while 1,500 hectares of the airport fall within the free trade zone and another 2,500 hectares in the special economic zone, a lack of infrastructure had limited activity in the past. Now, 107 hectares have been prepared as a core area, with land allocations finalized and several projects moving into the construction phase.

Iran Pavilion Named Best Booth at China Tourism Fair



TEHRAN - The Iran Pavilion, in its first-ever participation at the China International Tourism Industry Expo (CITIE) in Guangzhou, won the title of Best Booth for its creative use of historical elements, attention to local and traditional features, aesthetic design, and the remarkable reception it received from visitors.

According to Iran's Touring & Automobile Club, on Saturday, the CITIE Deputy Director presented the award to Mohammad Hossein Soufi, head of the Iran Pavilion and CEO of the Touring & Automobile Club, during an official ceremony at the pavilion. The organizers praised Iran's enthusiastic presence at the international event.

Soufi expressed his delight at the recognition, saying: "Thanks to the valuable efforts of colleagues across various departments, the Iran Pavilion was able to highlight aesthetics, cultural and civilizational themes, and engage directly with visitors, earning a special place in the exhibition. We are pleased that our participation helped increase overall visitor turnout, making this event a valuable opportunity to showcase Iran."

He added that in discussions with exhibition managers, Iran submitted a set of proposals for future editions, including separating economic and business negotiations from cultural performances to better support specialized travel agencies—a suggestion welcomed by the organizers.

The Iran Pavilion, featuring eight travel and tourism companies, a handicraft artisan, traditional clothing displays, and Iranology workshops, offered a distinctive presentation of Iranian culture and civilization. It quickly became one of the most-visited booths at the fair.

Soufi emphasized that the award, alongside coverage from Chinese national and local media, has further strengthened Iran's position in international tourism exhibitions, marking another step forward in developing tourism relations between Iran and China.

Government Should Allocate Foreign Currency Only for Essential Goods



TEHRAN - The head of Iran's Export Confederation has urged the Central Bank to refrain from imposing artificial exchange rates, stressing that government-supplied foreign currency should be limited to essential goods, while all other imports should be financed through export revenues.

In an interview with IRNA, Mohammad Lahouti, chairman of the Confederation of Iranian Exporters, commented on the performance of the Iran Currency Exchange Center and the recent revival of its second trading floor. He explained that the center was initially designed to operate with two platforms: one for importers eligible under clause one of foreign trade regulations, and a second for small and medium exporters to settle their foreign exchange obligations under market-based, negotiated rates.

"From the outset, the plan was to create a dual system without imposed rates," Lahouti said. "But shortly after launch, both floors were merged in pursuit of a single exchange rate, which drove the NIMA rate upward to nearly 670,000 rials per dollar, while negotiated rates fell to around 700,000 rials. This effectively eliminated flexibility for smaller exporters."

According to Lahouti, the merging of these platforms reintroduced a government-controlled exchange rate, restricting clause-two exporters from fulfilling their obligations. "We repeatedly warned officials this would not work," he said. "Just like in 2018, when the government's 42,000-rial fixed rate failed to unify the market, this strategy too was bound to collapse."

After nine months of disruption, the Central Bank recently revived the second trading floor, allowing clause-two exporters to resume trading. Importers are now required to purchase currency directly from exporters through this platform.

Lahouti criticized what he described as contradictory decision-making in trade policy. "Frequent changes in rules have paralyzed exporters and discouraged them from continuing operations. Importers also face uncertainty, unable to plan long term."

He added that the second trading floor has yet to reach full maturity. Importers accustomed to cheaper currency remain reluctant to buy at higher rates, while exporters, sourcing raw materials at free-market prices, cannot sell below market value. "Over time, this imbalance should stabilize—provided the Central Bank does not interfere again," he noted.

Lahouti warned that if authorities reintroduce price fixing, the policy would fail just as earlier attempts did.

Outlining a proposal from the Chamber of Commerce, Lahouti said: The government should guarantee currency only for essential goods such as food and medicine; All other imports must be financed solely through export earnings; and the Central Bank should act only as a supervisory body, overseeing transparent transactions without direct intervention in pricing.

He argued that such a system would reduce long queues for currency allocation and ease pressure on both importers and exporters. "If importers of raw materials are no longer dependent on the official exchange system, delays will diminish. With greater supply from exporters, market rates could decline naturally," Lahouti explained.

He further suggested that for major exporters such as petrochemical and steel companies—who benefit from subsidized energy—compensation could be made through unified feedstock pricing or export tariffs, ensuring fairness without distorting the currency market.

According to Lahouti, implementing this dual approach could revive Iran's foreign trade, resolving bottlenecks in both exports and imports. "If import procedures are streamlined, factories can plan reliably for raw material supply, while exporters can settle obligations at real exchange rates," he said.

The government, meanwhile, would save scarce resources by focusing subsidies only on essential goods. This, he argued, would enable greater support for low-income households through expanded subsidies or digital rationing systems.

"Even if exchange rates rise, government revenues would also increase, allowing better protection for vulnerable groups," Lahouti noted. "Ultimately, this benefits consumers while reducing opportunities for rent-seeking and corruption."

Turning to broader issues, Lahouti highlighted the involvement of 27 different institutions in Iran's import-export process. He recalled the judiciary's recent report on the Shahid Rajaei port explosion, which identified numerous organizations as contributing to procedural failures.

"This reflects the complexity of our trade system," he said. "The overlapping responsibilities of multiple agencies not only delay customs clearance but also cause cargo backlogs at ports."

Despite a sharp rise in the value of foreign currency, Lahouti warned, Iran's trade balance remains negative due to these structural inefficiencies. "The current framework has not facilitated trade but rather complicated it further," he concluded.

Iran Urges Qatar to Reframe UN Social Development Meeting

TEHRAN - Minister of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare has called on his Qatari counterpart to transform the upcoming United Nations "Social Development" meeting in Doha into a platform to denounce global warmongers, particularly the Israeli regime.

According to the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare, the response of Minister Ahmad Meydari to Qatari Labor Minister Ali bin Saeed bin Samikh Al Marri reads as follows:

At the outset, Meydari condemned what he described as the "unjust and illegal aggression" of the Zionist regime against Qatar, expressing solidarity with the families of victims and the Qatari people. He emphasized his confidence that Qatar's independence, security, and dignity will remain safeguarded, stressing that the attack on Qatar is a continuation of assaults on Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and Iran, and part of what he called a global hegemonic project.

"The Zionist regime and its supporters are not merely targeting defenseless civilians and children, nor committing genocide alone," Meydari wrote. "They are destroying ancient civilizations in the region and beyond. Their project is to impose fear upon the world."

He urged for regional and international unity against what he described as this "inhumane project," highlighting the November 4 global summit in Doha as a crucial opportunity. While world leaders and labor ministers are expected to focus on social



development, Meydari argued that such discussions should not obscure the destructive role of global powers but instead serve as a step toward transforming the existing world order.

"Today it is clear that sustainable development, decent work, and the lofty ideals of international organizations are impossible without lasting peace," he wrote. "We can turn this international gathering into a demand against global warmongers. If the countries of this region wish, they can significantly raise the cost of war."

Meydari criticized the economic system in which arms sales fuel industrial growth for some countries while bringing "death and destruction" to others. He urged Persian Gulf states to leverage their energy resources and geopolitical influence to increase the costs of war.

On labor cooperation, he pointed to the historical example of the Fertile Crescent, describing it as the world's first international market stretching from North Africa to southern Iran. He called for renewed investment, regional economic integration, and stronger labor ties, noting: "If they have united for war, why should we not unite for peace?"

Meydari concluded by reiterating his condemnation of the attack on Qatar and expressed his best wishes for the Qatari people and leadership.

Banana Production Reaches Half of Imports; Citrus Exports to China Begin



TEHRAN - Deputy Minister of Horticulture at the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad announced that domestic banana production has reached 340,000 tons, nearly half the volume of last year's imports. In 2023, Iran imported 622,000 tons of bananas valued at \$700 million.

Earlier, Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri Ghezleleh had outlined plans to achieve self-sufficiency in tropical fruit production, particularly bananas, by the end of the 14th government's term. Deputy Minister Mohammad Mehdi Boroumandi said production has nearly doubled from 180,000 tons to 340,000 tons under the ministry's programs.

He noted that pilot projects in Sistan-Baluchestan and Hormozgan provinces have been launched to increase yields, with an additional 5,000 hectares set to be cultivated with bananas. This expansion is expected to meet a significant portion of domestic demand in the coming years.

Boroumandi also reported growth in horticultural exports, with revenues rising from \$2.9 billion to \$4.3 billion during the current administration. As part of strengthened agricultural diplomacy, Iranian citrus fruits were exported to China and apples to the Philippines for the first time.

Regarding pistachios, he said the European Union had attempted to restrict Iranian exports last year due to technical disputes. However, after negotiations, Iran secured \$1.7 billion in pistachio export revenue. With 600,000 hectares of pistachio orchards, Boroumandi emphasized the crop's resilience to drought and salinity, making it a key advantage for production and export.

650 Megawatts of Solar Power Plants to Be Commissioned by Year-End



TEHRAN - Iran plans to bring 650 megawatts of solar power capacity online by the end of this year, according to the official overseeing power plant development at the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA).

Speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony of a 7-megawatt solar plant in Pakdasht, SATBA project manager Abolfazl Shiroudi said the new capacity will be achieved through a mix of large-scale projects and smaller private investments.

One of these projects, the 7-megawatt Shahid Pakdasht solar power plant, is being built with an investment of 12 trillion rials (approximately \$24 million) and is expected to be inaugurated during the Ten-Day Dawn celebrations in February.

Shiroudi noted that following SATBA's public call for investment last year, nearly 70 companies have expressed readiness to build solar facilities. Since August, Iran has been commissioning around 100 megawatts of new solar power capacity each week, much of it funded by private investors, he added.

Highlighting the strategic importance of renewables, Shiroudi said the Ministry of Energy has prioritized renewable energy development under the 14th government. "Expanding solar power not only enhances the country's energy security but also strengthens the stability of the national grid," he said.

The SATBA official emphasized that private sector engagement is crucial, both in addressing the country's electricity imbalance and in promoting local manufacturing of solar equipment. "Active participation of private investors shows their commitment to solving challenges in Iran's power sector, while also boosting domestic companies and knowledge-based industries," Shiroudi said.

Romania Says a Drone Breached Its Airspace

BUCHAREST (Dispatches) - Romania's defense ministry said Saturday that the country's airspace had been breached by a drone during a Russian attack on infrastructure in neighboring Ukraine.

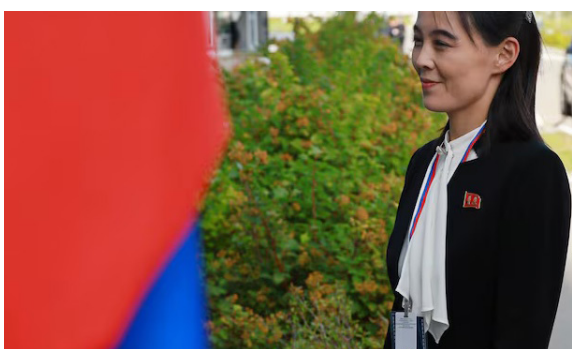
The incident came after Poland denounced the intrusion of Russian drones into its airspace this week, calling on Moscow to avoid further "provocations".

NATO member Romania has had several drone fragments crash on its soil since Moscow invaded Ukraine, especially as Russia has stepped up attacks on Ukrainian ports.

The country scrambled two F-16 fighter jets late on Saturday to monitor the situation following strikes on Ukraine, said a defense ministry statement.



North Korean Leader's Sister Warns Against U.S. Joint Drills



SEOUL (Dispatches) - Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un, warned joint military exercises of U.S., South Korea and Japan could bring about "negative consequences" for themselves, state media reported on Sunday.

South Korea, Japan and the U.S. will conduct annual defensive drills called the "Freedom Edge" starting on September 15 to upgrade aerial, naval and cyber operational capabilities against North Korea's nuclear and missile threats, South Korea's military has said.

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"This reminds us that the reckless display of power displayed by the U.S., Japan, and South Korea in the wrong places, namely around the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, will undoubtedly bring about negative consequences for themselves," Kim said via state KCNA news agency, using North Korea's official name.

South Korea and the United States also plan to stage the "Iron Mace" tabletop exercises next week on integrating their conventional and nuclear capabilities against North Korea's threats, South Korean local media reported.

If "hostile forces" continue to boast about their power through those joint drills, North Korea will take countermeasures "more clearly and strongly", North Korea's top party official Pak Jong Chon said in a separate dispatch via KCNA.

Pyeongyang has traditionally criticized those joint drills as rehearsals for invasion and in some cases responded with weapons tests, but Seoul and Washington say they are purely defensive.

New French PM Gives Up Predecessor's Idea to Cut Back Two Public Holidays



PARIS (Dispatches) - New French Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu said that he was dropping a proposal by his predecessor to cut back two public holidays as part of budget measures aimed at reducing the deficit.

Reacting to news that credit rating agency Fitch had downgraded France's sovereign credit score to A+ on Friday - the country's lowest level on record - Lecornu told local papers La Provence and Ouest France: "We are paying for the instability."

Fitch's decision piles pressure on Lecornu just days into the job as he scrambles to form a cabinet and draft a 2026 budget that can pass a deeply divided parliament.

Lecornu has already pledged to find "creative ways" to work with rivals to pass a debt-slimming budget while also promising new policy directions, after taking office on Sept 10.

"My mindset is simple: I want neither instability nor stagnation," he said in his first interview since taking office.

"The future budget may not fully reflect my convictions... In fact, that's almost certain!" he added, calling for "modern, frank and high-level parliamentary discussions" with the Socialist Party, the Ecologists and the Communist Party.

Ceasefire Hopes Fade as Gaza Bombings Escalate

TEL AVIV (Dispatches) - Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said eliminating Hamas leaders would end the war in Gaza, as top U.S. diplomat Marco Rubio said hours ahead of his visit to Israel that its strike against Hamas in Qatar would not derail their alliance.

"The Hamas chiefs living in Qatar don't care about the people in Gaza. They blocked all ceasefire attempts in order to endlessly drag out the war," Netanyahu said on X. "Getting rid of them would rid the main obstacle to releasing all our hostages and ending the war."

His comments came shortly after Rubio told reporters that while President Donald Trump was "not happy" about the Qatar strike, their alliance would be unaffected.

"It's not going to change the nature of our relationship with the Israelis, but we are going to have to talk about it - primarily, what impact does this have" on the diplomatic efforts to bring about a truce in Gaza, Rubio added.

The talk of a ceasefire, still out of reach after months of failed negotiations, came with Israel intensifying its campaign in the Gaza Strip.

In recent days it has ramped up efforts to seize control of Gaza City, the territory's largest urban area, telling residents to evacuate and blowing up numerous high-rise buildings it said were being used by Hamas.

While thousands of people have evacuated the city, according to the Israeli military and Hamas, many more remain. As of late August, the UN estimated that around one million people were living in the city and its surrounding areas, where it has declared a famine it blamed on Israeli aid restrictions.

Bakri Diab, who fled western Gaza City for the south, said Israeli strikes continued there as well.

"Bombing happens here too - the south isn't safe either," said the 35-year-old father of four.

"All the occupation has done is force people to crowd into places with no basic services and no safety."

Gaza's civil defence agency said 32 people had been killed by Israeli fire on Saturday.

Media restrictions in Gaza and difficulties in accessing many areas mean AFP is unable to independently verify the details provided by the civil defence agency or the Israeli military.

Netanyahu and his government have defied international criticism throughout the nearly two-year war, but it continued to mount this week. On Friday, the UN General Assembly voted to back a revival of the two-state solution, in open defiance of Israeli



On Saturday, the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, the main campaign group, accused the Israeli premier of being the "one obstacle" to freeing the hostages and accused him of repeatedly sabotaging ceasefire efforts.

Of the 251 people taken hostage by Palestinian militants in October 2023, 47 remain in Gaza, including 25 the military says are dead.

Brian Katulis, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute, said Rubio was unlikely to push Israel toward a ceasefire. "There is an alarming passivity in actually getting to a ceasefire in Gaza," said Katulis, who worked on Middle East policy under former president Bill Clinton.

"The administration seems to be listening more to its own base of Huckabeees and other evangelical Christians allied with right-wing Israelis," he said, referring to the US Ambassador in Jerusalem, Mike Huckabee, a Baptist pastor.

"Their views are far from the mainstream of Arab states," Katulis said, despite Trump pursuing a Saudi-Israeli diplomatic normalisation deal.

opposition.

Israeli allies Britain and France, alongside several other Western nations, are set to recognise Palestinian statehood at a UN gathering this month out of exasperation at Israel's conduct of the Gaza war and in the occupied West Bank.

London and Paris, joined by Berlin, also called for an immediate halt to Israel's offensive in Gaza City.

Nevertheless, Israel retains the backing of its most powerful ally and biggest arms supplier, the United States.

Ahead of Rubio's visit, State Department spokesman Tommy Pigott said the diplomatic chief would show "our commitment to fight anti-Israel actions including unilateral recognition of a Palestinian state that rewards Hamas terrorism".

"He will also emphasise our shared goals: ensuring Hamas never rules over Gaza again and bringing all the hostages home."

At home, opponents of the Netanyahu government have sought to put pressure on ministers to end the war in return for the release of Israeli hostages held in Gaza.

Musk's Shock Speech Ignites Chaos at Britain's Largest Far-Right Rally

LONDON (Dispatches) - Clashes erupted in London Saturday and police made 25 arrests after up to 150,000 people massed for one of the largest-ever far-right protests in Britain, organised by activist Tommy Robinson.

Police said 26 officers were injured, four seriously, after facing "unacceptable violence" while trying to control the crowds, many draped in English and British flags, during several tense hours on the rally's fringes.

The Metropolitan Police - which estimated 110,000 to 150,000 people turned out, "significantly exceeding" organisers' estimates - said the clashes broke out after some attendees tried to enter so-called "sterile areas" near counter-protesters.

Around 5,000 people had attended a Stand Up to Racism march which began around a mile to the north. About 1,000 police were deployed to keep the rival groups apart.

"There is no doubt that many came to exercise their lawful right to protest, but there were many who came intent on violence," Assistant Commissioner Matt Twist said.

"They confronted officers, engaging in physical and verbal abuse and making a determined effort to breach cordons in place to keep everyone safe."

He added arrests were made for violent disorder, assault and other offences, while officers' injuries included broken teeth, a possible broken nose, a concussion, and a prolapsed disc.

Interior minister Shabana Mahmood condemned "those who have attacked and injured police officers" and insisted "anyone taking part in criminal activity will face the full force of the law".

Protesters at Robinson's latest "Unite the Kingdom" event had marched over Westminster Bridge before rallying near Downing Street for speeches by figures associated with the far right from across Europe and North America, including billionaire X owner Elon Musk.

Anti-racism charity Hope Not Hate, which has monitored such rallies for



more than a decade, said "a number of well known far-right extremists" including Robinson spoke on-stage and were among the crowds.

Joe Mulhall, its director of Research, told the BBC it was "probably... the largest far-right demonstration ever in Britain".

King's College London assistant public policy professor Georgios Samaras agreed, saying it showed "multiple factions within the far-right" as well as newcomers had converged in London.

It comes amid growing anti-immigration sentiment, as Brexit supporter Nigel Farage's hard-right Reform UK leads in polls and protesters target hotels used to house asylum seekers.

It also follows anti-immigration riots last year in numerous towns and cities, which Robinson was accused of fuelling with incendiary online posts.

The 42-year-old, who has a string of criminal convictions and a large online following after years spearheading a fervent anti-Muslim and anti-migrant agenda, billed Saturday as a "free speech festival".

"Millions of patriots... in a show of patriotic unity like nothing seen before," Robinson, whose real name is Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, posted on X with an image of the crowds shortly after the event ended early evening.

"This one is for you Charlie Kirk," Robinson added, in one of many references at the rally to the slain right-wing American activist and ally of Donald Trump.

Some attendees attached pictures of Kirk to their placards, while other signs included slogans like "stop the boats" and derided Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

"I can't believe it," Emily Rose told AFP, taking in the crowds, after travelling from Glasgow in Scotland and donning a dress emblazoned with Britain's Union Jack flag. "I knew I needed to be here. We need to be heard".

A person wears St George's Cross face paint as supporters of British far-right activist Tommy Robinson gather during a "Free speech" march in central London on September 13, 2025. — AFP pic

A person wears St George's Cross face paint as supporters of British far-right activist Tommy Robinson gather during a "Free speech" march in central London on September 13, 2025. — AFP pic

Others there said they were motivated by immigration concerns.

Ritchie, 28, who only gave his first name, claimed Britain was seeing "an invasion" of asylum seekers arriving annually on small boats across the Channel.

At the anti-racism rally, veteran Labour lawmaker Diane Abbott accused Robinson and his allies of spreading "nonsense" and "dangerous" lies that asylum seekers were a threat.

"We need to be in solidarity with asylum seekers, and we need to show that we are united," she told Sky News.

Speakers at Robinson's event included Musk, who joined via video-link, French far-right politician Eric Zemmour and Petr Bystron of the anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany (AfD) party.

"You're in a fundamental situation here," Musk told the crowd, claiming "the left is the party of murder and celebrating murder".

Trump Calls all NATO Countries to Stop Buying Russian Oil; Slap Tariffs on China

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Donald Trump said Saturday he believes the Russia-Ukraine war would end if all NATO countries stopped buying oil from Russia and placed tariffs on China of 50 percent to 100 percent for its purchases of Russian petroleum.

Trump posted on his social media site that NATO's commitment to winning the war "has been far less than 100 percent" and the purchase of Russian oil by some members of the alliance is "shocking". As if speaking with NATO members, he said: "It greatly weakens your negotiating position, and bargaining power, over Russia."

Since 2023, NATO member Turkey has been the third largest buyer of Russian oil, after China and India, according to the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air. Other members of the 32-state alliance involved in purchasing Russian oil include Hungary and Slovakia.

Energy revenues remain the Kremlin's single most important source of cash to finance the war effort, making oil and gas exports a central target of Western sanctions. But officials and analysts warn that aggressive curbs on Russian crude



also carry risks of driving up global oil prices, a prospect that could strain Western economies and weaken public support for the measures.

Trump's post arrives after the Wednesday flight of multiple Russian drones into Poland, an escalatory move by Russia as it was entering the airspace of a NATO ally. Poland shot down the drones, yet Trump played down the severity of the incursion and Russia's motives by saying it "could have been a mistake".

While Trump as a candidate promised to end the war quickly, he has yet to hit the pressure points needed to end the violence and has at times been seen as reluctant to confront Russian President Vladimir Putin. Congress is currently trying to get the U.S. president to back a bill toughening sanctions, after Trump last month hosted Putin in Alaska for talks that failed to deliver on progress toward peace.

The U.S. and its allies are seeking to show a firmer degree of resolve against Russia. At an emergency UN Security Council meeting Friday, acting US Ambassador Dorothy Shea said America "will defend every inch of NATO territory" and that the drones entering Poland "intentionally or otherwise show immense disrespect for good-faith US efforts to bring an end to this conflict".



Arsenal Hand Postecoglou a Loss in His First Forest Game

LONDON (Dispatches) - Arsenal ensured former Tottenham Hotspur boss Ange Postecoglou endured a miserable return to English football with a 3-0 victory over his new club Nottingham Forest, while a late Brentford goal denied Chelsea moving atop the table.

Newcastle United's new signing Nick Woltemade enjoyed a dream debut, scoring in their 1-0 win over Wolverhampton Wanderers for their first victory of their campaign, while Bournemouth continued their strong start with a 2-1 victory over Brighton & Hove Albion, and Tottenham Hotspur cruised to a 3-0 win over West Ham United.

Fulham recorded their first win of the season by beating Leeds United 1-0 thanks to a late own goal, while Crystal Palace were held to a 0-0 draw by Sunderland and neither Everton nor Aston Villa could find the back of the net in a scoreless draw.

Villa have failed to score in their opening four league games of a season for the first time in their history.

Arsenal dominated at the Emirates as Martin Zubimendi's double and Viktor Gyokeres's tap-in gave Mikel Arteta's men a comfortable home victory, condemning Postecoglou to defeat in his first game as Forest boss.

Spain midfielder Zubimendi struck a stunning volley in the 32nd minute and then Arsenal doubled

their lead within a minute of the restart when Eberechi Eze, making his Gunners debut, laid it on a plate for Gyokeres to score his third of the season.

The game was petering out when Zubimendi put it to bed in the 79th minute with a simple header from Leandro Trossard's cross.

"(Zubimendi) has given us a lot of positive things: his presence, his authority on the pitch, the way he connects with the players and that composure that he's having," Arteta said.

"If he starts to add assists and goals like this, then it's another dimension of a player."

Chelsea looked poised to leapfrog Arsenal to the top of the table after Cole Palmer scored an equaliser in his return from a groin injury to cancel Kevin Schade's first-half goal, and Moises Caicedo celebrated what he thought was the winner in the 85th minute.

But Fabio Carvalho poked home the equaliser from six yards out in the 93rd after Schade's long throw-in.

"Delighted with the approach of the group, the character we constantly show," Brentford boss Keith Andrews told the BBC.

"The equaliser came very late but it's what I felt we deserved from the game in terms of the application, the quality the players showed for large parts."

Germany, France, Austria, Argentina Qualify for Davis Cup Final 8

LONDON (Dispatches) - Germany reached the Davis Cup Final 8 with a 4-0 rout of Japan, France secured a convincing win over Croatia and Argentina qualified after knocking out last year's finalists Netherlands in their second-round qualifying tie.

Austria also qualified with a dramatic 3-2 win over Hungary, while Belgium and Denmark took commanding 2-0 leads over Australia and Spain.

After Germany took a 2-0 lead on Friday in Tokyo, their victory was completed when Kevin Krawietz and Tim Puetz saved three set points in the second set to beat Japan's Yosuke Watanuki and Takeru Yuzuki 6-3 7-6(4) in the doubles. Justin Engel then beat Rei Sakamoto 6-3 6-7(2) 10-7.

Last year's semi-finalists Germany are the first team to enter the Final 8 through the qualifiers, joining hosts Italy in the culminating round set for November in Bologna.

"Right now, the locker room is dancing and singing. We're looking forward to Bologna and hopefully we're getting one step further," Germany captain Michael Kohlmann said.



Argentina also qualified when Andres Molteni and Horacio Zeballos beat the Dutch duo of Sander Arends and Botic van de Zandschulp 6-3 7-5 to take an unassailable 3-0 lead in Groningen.

Hungary, who had lost both their matches to Austria on Friday, fought back with back-to-back wins in Debrecen.

Fabian Marozsan and Zsombor Piros edged the Austrian pair of Alexander Erler and Lucas Miedler 7-6(4) 7-6(2) before Piros beat Lukas Neumayer in a singles match to bring Hungary level at 2-2.

But Austria won the tie in the fifth match, with Jurij Rodionov earning a dominant 6-2 6-1 victory over Marton Fucsovics.

France also secured their place in the Final 8 as Corentin Moutet beat Marin Cilic, securing a 3-1 victory over Croatia in Osijek.

Last year's quarter-finalists Spain are on the verge of elimination as Denmark took a 2-0 lead over them in Marbella, with world number 11 Holger Rune beating Pablo Carreno Busta and Elmer Moller defeating Jaume Munar.

Ten-Man Madrid Survive Sociedad Scare



BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Kylian Mbappe was at his brilliant best as Real Madrid showed grit to claim a 2-1 win at Real Sociedad in La Liga, despite playing for an hour with 10 men after Dean Huijsen's red card.

Mbappe and Arda Guler's first-half goals were enough for Los Blancos to maintain their 100 per cent record, with Mikel Oyarzabal pulling one back for the hosts from the penalty spot.

Xabi Alonso's side top the table on 12 points from four games, three ahead of second-placed Athletic Bilbao after they fell 1-0 against Alaves to tarnish their own perfect start.

Atletico Madrid earned their first win of the season with a 2-0 victory over fourth-place Villarreal, while champions Barcelona host Valencia on Sunday.

Madrid defender Huijsen was dismissed for pulling down Oyarzabal as he ran through on goal with Madrid leading 1-0 through Mbappe's opener, and the Frenchman set up Guler for the second.

"The red card changed the game a bit but we weren't afraid, we scored the second... we suffered as a team, but we go home with the three points," Mbappe told Real Madrid TV.

"The start to the season has been very good, and mine too, but the season is nine months, 11 with a World Cup, so I have to play well for a lot more time (to come)."

Madrid lined up with Dani Carvajal at right-back, leaving Trent Alexander-Arnold on the bench, while Fede Valverde was rested and Dani Ceballos came in.

Mbappe broke the deadlock after 12 minutes when he sprinted on to a loose back-pass, beating two defenders for pace before producing a clinical finish for his fourth league goal this season.

Madrid's task grew harder when Spanish centre-back Huijsen, signed from Bournemouth this summer, was dismissed for pulling back Oyarzabal as he ran towards goal.

"For me it was a yellow card, (Militao) was close and the ball was not under control, and seeing the replay didn't change my mind," Alonso said.

Bezzecchi Claims San Marino MotoGP Pole



MISANO ADRIATICO (Dispatches) - Marco Bezzecchi claimed pole position for the San Marino MotoGP today as the flying Marquez brothers were denied a one-two in the final seconds of qualifying.

Aprilia rider Bezzecchi delighted the Italian crowd at the Marco Simoncelli circuit in Misano Adriatico by clocking a top time of one minute and 30.134 seconds, just 0.088sec ahead of Alex Marquez.

Alex Marquez had looked to be heading for a second pole in as many weeks ahead of his sibling and runaway championship leader Marc Marquez until Bezzecchi's rapid final lap gave the 26-year-old Italian a second pole of the season.

And Marc Marquez was denied a place on the front row for both yesterday's sprint race and the Grand Prix tomorrow by Fabio Quartararo, who had to come through the first qualifying session but secured third place on the grid at the last by finishing 0.94sec behind Bezzecchi.

However the Spaniard still has a chance to further increase his whopping 182-point championship lead over Alex Marquez, as he has won 14 of this season's 15 sprints.

Barring disaster at Misano, the Spaniard will have a chance to win the title at the Japan MotoGP in a fortnight, moving level on seven championship triumphs with his great rival Valentino Rossi.

Joan Mir missed out on qualifying and will not take part in the sprint after the Honda rider failed to recover from a neck injury suffered in a crash during practice yesterday.

Ingebrigtsen's World Title Curse Continues in Tokyo

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Jakob Ingebrigtsen's bid to put an injury-plagued season behind him bombed as the Norwegian failed to make it out of his "terrible" 1,500m heat at the world championships in Tokyo on Sunday.

Ingebrigtsen, who won Olympic 1,500m gold in the Japanese capital in 2021 but was searching for a first world title over the distance, has been laid low with an achilles injury that has seen him miss all of the outdoor season.

In his heat at the National Stadium, things seemed as normal as Ingebrigtsen fell into his usual spot at the back of the pack.

But coming into the final lap, the 24-year-old was boxed in on the inside with seemingly little room to manoeuvre.

As it was, Ingebrigtsen had nothing to offer acceleration-wise and eventually finished eighth in a heat won by Britain's Jake Wightman.

Only the top six from each of the four heats qualify for Monday's semi-finals, with the final set for Wednesday.

"It's a first-time experience that I haven't got to the next



round," said Ingebrigtsen.

"Of course, it's very disappointing but at the same time it is a reality check."

Ingebrigtsen added: "This is an event that's very competitive. You need to prepare your best and of course, I'm not there."

The question now is whether Ingebrigtsen, who picked up his injury after completing a rare world indoor double over 1,500m and 3,000m in Nanjing in March, bids for a third world title in the 5,000m, with heats scheduled for Friday and final on Sunday.

But the Norwegian remained as optimistic as he could in the immediate wake of such a disappointing outing.

"I think I'm probably closer for the 5,000m race right now," he maintained.

"I'll recover and have a couple of good days until I go again (in the 5,000m heats) and try again. Everything is a test. I was trying to do my best to advance to the semi-final but it was terrible.