

President Masoud Pezeshkian Has  
Denounced the Reimposition of United  
Nation Sanctions Against the Country  
Through the So-Called Snapback  
Mechanism, Calling It an “Immoral and  
Illegal” Move

# IRAN NEWS

Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Said That,  
in the UN General Assembly, While  
Netanyahu, a War Criminal Wanted by the  
International Criminal Court, Repeated His  
Fascist Rhetoric in Front of Almost Empty  
Seats, These Were Images of Innocent  
Iranian Children Representing the Nation  
of Iran

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### Iran Will Give Strongest Response to Aggressors



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's president says his American counterpart's policies are on course to trigger a wholesale configuration throughout the entire West Asia region, while warning that Iran would face potential aggressors with maximum force if faced with renewed military escalation.

"President [Donald] Trump has said that his administration has come to create peace, but the path that they have embarked upon will set fire to the entire region," Masoud Pezeshkian told NBC News in an extended interview on Friday.

Under Trump's former and current administrations, the US has either retained or expanded its military interventionism across the region, including through full-scale and sporadic direct escalations against the regional nations, such as Iran and Yemen.

Pezeshkian's remarks additionally addressed Washington's unprecedented military and intelligence support for the Israeli regime, its most important regional ally. Using the support, which has been cranked up to the tune of billions of dollars under Trump, Tel Aviv has intensified implementation of its expansionist schemes and deadly aggression against the Gaza Strip, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Iran, and most recently Qatar.

### VP Criticizes Excessive Bureaucracy at Borders, Calls Transit a Key National Advantage



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's First Vice President emphasized the need to resolve transit-related issues and prioritize the sector, stating that coordination at border terminals is essential to ensure a unified approach.

Speaking at the "National Border-to-Border Transit Headquarters" meeting, Mohammad Reza Aref highlighted that transit has been one of the country's most important issues and priorities for several decades. He noted that drafting a National Transit Plan is one of the obligations under the Seventh Development Plan. "Transit is a strategic, political, economic, commercial, and cultural matter," he said.

Aref stressed that transit is a national advantage, and Iran's geographical position necessitates serious development of transit routes. "Alongside economic benefits, developing transit corridors can help preserve Iran's rich and authentic cultural heritage. Therefore, this priority issue must be actively pursued," he added.

The First Vice President underscored the need to resolve management challenges to improve the country's transit situation. "Structural reforms are a key goal of the Seventh Development Plan, and this must be applied to transit as well. Excessive bureaucracy at Iran's borders, compared to neighboring countries, has hindered our ability to benefit from transit opportunities. Paperwork and red tape have reduced Iran's revenue from transit. At times, disagreements over specific legal provisions prevent proper implementation of the law," Aref explained.

## IRGC Say Support for Resistance Will Continue Until the Liberation of al-Quds

TEHRAN - The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has issued a statement on the anniversary of the deaths of senior Hezbollah leaders and IRGC commander Major General Abbas Nilforoushan, reaffirming its commitment to support the "Axis of Resistance" until what it called the "end of occupation and the liberation of al-Quds (Jerusalem)."

According to Iran's Tasnim News Agency, the strategic statement was released ahead of the anniversary of the killing of prominent Lebanese resistance leaders, including Hezbollah's late Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah; senior Hezbollah cleric Seyyed Hashem Safieddine; key commanders such as Abdul-Monem Karki, Samir Dib, and Ibrahim Jazini; and Iran's senior military adviser, Maj. Gen. Abbas Nilforoushan. They were killed in an Israeli airstrike on Beirut's southern suburb (Dahiyeh).

The IRGC extended condolences to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the families of the slain leaders, resistance fighters, and the peoples of the region, while reiterating its commitment to the "principles and ideals of resistance" and the legacy of the fallen leaders.

Key points highlighted in the statement include:

1: Security and Dignity Through Resistance

The IRGC asserted that the security and dignity of the Islamic world and the region are not products of political compromise or submission to external pressure but are the result of the sacrifices of resistance fighters in battles against threats such as ISIS and what it described as "Zionist aggression."

2: Resistance as the Rational Path Against Imperialism

The statement argued that "active and intelligent resistance" remains the only effective and rational choice for regional nations in confronting what it called "the expansionism of global arrogance and Zionism," warning that any retreat or reliance on imposed political solutions



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

would embolden adversaries.

3: Resilience of the Resistance Movement

The IRGC claimed that recent Israeli military actions against Gaza underscore the "steadfastness and resilience" of the resistance front and reflect Israel's inability to extinguish the movement. It described resistance as a deeply rooted cultural and ideological force that continues to grow.

4: Martyr Leaders as Disciples of Iran's Revolution

Nasrallah and Safieddine were hailed as "distinguished students" of the school of Iran's late leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and current Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, credited with shaping the resistance into a regional and strategic power.

5: Support for Sheikh Naim Qassem's Leadership

The IRGC expressed full support for the "courageous and principled leadership" of Sheikh Naim Qassem, Hezbollah's acting leader, praising his role in safeguarding Lebanon's security and continuing the resistance path.

6: Failure of U.S. and Israeli Plans

The statement declared that U.S. and Israeli attempts to weaken or dismantle the resistance have repeatedly failed and would once again result only in "humiliation and disgrace" for their architects, while the resistance continues to grow as a "balancing force" in the region.

7: IRGC's Enduring Mission

The IRGC reaffirmed its commitment to continue supporting resistance forces across the region until, in its words, "the end of occupation and the liberation of al-Quds," describing this as a divine and national mission that cannot be halted.

Concluding, the IRGC stated that the deaths of the resistance leaders mark "a turning point in the path of Islamic awakening and strengthening of the anti-Zionist front," calling on regional nations to remain vigilant and united in their struggle.

## "Snapback" Vote Carries No Legal Force

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi asserts that the European trio of the UK, France, and Germany's efforts at reviving the UN Security Council's sanctions against Iran are "null and void" and carry no legal force.

The top diplomat made the remarks on Friday, addressing the Security Council after a vote on whether to activate the so-called "snapback" mechanism inside a 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and others that would return the bans.

The United States and its allies, including the troika, vetoed a draft resolution on the matter as a means of trying to trigger restoration of the sanctions by the weekend.

Araqchi noted how the Islamic Republic had invariably acted in full compliance of the nuclear deal, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and the NPT's Safeguards Agreement as verified by 15 International Atomic Energy Agency reports.

The compliance, he stated, has rendered all attempts at tarnishing Iran's peaceful nuclear energy program illegal.

The foreign minister also reminded that the US and the trio have been trying hard to bring pressure to bear on Iran over their false allegations concerning the Islamic Republic's nuclear program, despite their own numerous violations of either the nuclear accord or the international law to target the country.

He cited the U.S.'s illegal and unilateral withdrawal from the deal in 2018, the E3's breaking its promise of returning Washington to the accord, and the unlawful and unprovoked American attacks on Iran's nuclear facilities in June as some examples.

Accordingly, Araqchi described the push to return the Security Council's sanctions as a "stark abuse of power."

The Friday vetoes, cast in this context, are likewise "legally void, politically reckless, and procedurally flawed," he added.

Additionally, the official underlined that October 18 would mark the automatic "Termination Day" under Resolution 2231, which has endorsed the nuclear agreement.

All nuclear-related restrictions "will end permanently" on that day, he added.



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

Araqchi, hence, called on the UN secretary-general "to avoid any attempt to revive sanctions-related mechanisms within the Secretariat."

The official denounced the U.S.'s actions for "betraying diplomacy," but called the E3 the actual side responsible for "burying it."

Araqchi also condemned the Western allies for misrepresenting Iran's peaceful nuclear program and echoing "the Israeli regime's baseless allegations."

He denounced the American attacks on the nuclear sites that took place to boost Israeli aggression against Iran, despite the Islamic Republic's openness to diplomacy, as an instance where the country's pursuit of diplomacy had been "met with aggression."

The West's actions "obliterated whatever remaining trust" of the Iranian people, he said, urging the Western allies to correct course.

The foreign minister underscored that "Iran will never respond to threats or pressure. We respond only to respect."

Addressing reporters following the vote, Araqchi said diplomacy "never dies," but "has become more difficult" in light of the hostile actions taken against the Islamic Republic.

The official pointed to the drawn-out history of the Islamic Republic's being betrayed by the US, despite giving diplomacy a chance.

"We have had very bad experiences negotiating with the US, and there is no reason to trust America."

Araqchi cited Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei as describing negotiations with Washington as a complete dead end.

The Leader "was entirely correct in saying so," he stated.

The official, meanwhile, praised the countries that had voted in favor of extension of sanction relief - China, Russia, Pakistan, and Algeria - for their "choosing the right side of history" by keeping the door to dialogue open.

### Iran Favors Engagement, But the West Chooses Confrontation



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Mohammad Eslami, Vice President of Iran and head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), criticized Western countries for what he described as their confrontational stance, saying the Islamic Republic has consistently sought dialogue and cooperation while the West has failed to honor its commitments and instead pursues baseless accusations.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the "Atom Expo 2025" in Russia, Eslami described his visit as "timely, constructive, and impactful," noting that it provided an opportunity to advance Iran's future nuclear projects "with greater ease and speed."

Marking the 80th anniversary of Russia's nuclear industry, Eslami highlighted speeches by Russian President Vladimir Putin and other officials, saying these discussions outlined a clear roadmap for future cooperation between Tehran and Moscow.

"In this trip, we reviewed our past performance and the difficult stages we have overcome in developing our nuclear program. We are now at a point where coordination is at the highest possible level. Our plans are progressing more smoothly than ever," Eslami said.

He added that during the visit, Iranian officials toured several major industries and institutions, signing a number of memoranda of understanding (MoUs) that he said will create new opportunities for mutual cooperation, including both the export of Iranian expertise and the import of necessary technologies.

Eslami emphasized that one of the key issues discussed was the development of small modular reactors (SMRs).

"Russia is currently a global leader in SMR development. While many countries are still in the design phase, Russia has already built and is operating these reactors," he noted.

Earlier, Eslami and Alexey Likhachev, head of Russia's state nuclear corporation Rosatom, signed a MoU on SMR cooperation. According to Eslami, President Putin was briefed on the agreement and welcomed the progress.

### Netanyahu's UN Speech a Stain on Justice



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Iranian representative to the United Nations strongly criticized Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent speech at the UN General Assembly, calling it "a stain on the forehead of justice and humanity." He asserted that the attempts to target Iran in international forums are merely a cover-up for the crimes of the Israeli regime.

Speaking at the UN General Assembly, Iran's envoy described Netanyahu—a figure currently under investigation by the International Criminal Court—as a criminal whose hands are "stained with the blood of thousands of innocent children," and argued that such a person should not have a platform at the United Nations.

The representative highlighted that since its establishment, Israel has been built on occupation, aggression, terror, and apartheid. Over the decades, it has waged multiple wars and attacks against its neighbors and even countries beyond the region. In the past two years alone, Israel has launched assaults on Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Iran, and Qatar, while openly discussing a so-called "Greater Israel" expansion plan requiring further territorial occupations.





## BRICS Tax Chiefs Hold Joint Meeting to Share Best Practices

TEHRAN (IRNA) - A joint meeting of the heads of tax authorities from Iran, Russia, China, Brazil, and the United Arab Emirates was held to exchange experiences and review the latest achievements in tax administration systems. According to Iran's National Tax Administration (INTA), the meeting focused on key topics including electronic invoicing, pre-filled tax returns, modern taxpayer services, and credit-based taxpayer ranking systems. Participants emphasized the importance of expanding joint cooperation, enhancing transparency, improving tax processes, and strengthening tax fairness, highlighting international knowledge-sharing as a crucial factor in boosting the efficiency of tax systems.

## Iran Highlights Role of Free Trade Zones in Advancing BRICS Digital Economy Integration



TEHRAN - At the 2025 BRICS Summit held in Hangzhou, China, Iran underscored the strategic role of its free trade zones in strengthening economic and digital integration among BRICS member states.

Speaking at the summit, Esfandiar Shah-Mansouri, Deputy for Economic Development and Investment at the Secretariat of Iran's Supreme Council of Free and Special Economic Zones, described Iran's geographic location as a "crossroads between East and West." He stressed that Iran's free trade zones, with their access to major CIS and Eurasian markets, have the potential to become one of the region's most important logistical and economic hubs, serving as gateways for international trade corridors.

Shah-Mansouri highlighted the significance of southern free trade zones such as Kish, Qeshm, Chabahar, and Arvand, which provide access to open waters and Gulf markets, as well as northern zones including Anzali, Aras, and Maku, which link Iran to Russia and the broader Eurasian market. He described Iran as a strategic bridge connecting the global North and South.

He added that the railway network linking these zones offers the fastest and most cost-effective route for moving goods between northern and southern countries.

Shah-Mansouri proposed several practical measures to expand cooperation with BRICS members, including joint development of transport corridors, establishment of shared free zones, investment in energy projects, bunkering services, knowledge-based industries and innovation hubs, collaboration in medical tourism, and facilitation of financial and banking exchanges.

During the summit, the Iranian delegation — which also included Meysam Safarzadeh, Deputy for Legal Affairs at the Secretariat — held meetings with representatives of BRICS countries and senior officials of China's free trade zones. Their engagements included sending a draft memorandum of understanding and negotiating its finalization in the presence of Reza Masroor, the top official overseeing Iran's free and special economic zones.

The participation of the Iranian delegation emphasized the country's intent to leverage its free trade zones as engines of regional connectivity and digital economy integration within the BRICS framework.

## Broadband and Computing Infrastructure Must Be Developed Through Private Sector



TEHRAN - Minister of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Seyyed Sattar Hashemi, said the country's broadband and computing infrastructure must be developed with the support of the private sector, as the government alone cannot meet the growing national demand.

Speaking to reporters on Friday during a visit to the 28th International ELECOMP Exhibition in Tehran, Hashemi reflected on the evolution of the country's technology landscape between 2013 and 2021.

"We need to look at what happened that enabled the country's tech ecosystem to emerge. Most of the progress came from the development of mobile broadband infrastructure," he said.

Hashemi noted that the ICT Ministry did not directly enter into running businesses but instead provided the services framework that allowed private firms to flourish — a move he described as effective.

On artificial intelligence, however, the minister observed that government intervention in managing the sector had limited success, stressing the need for a shift in approach.

"We must build the infrastructure by relying on the private sector," he said. "We are now preparing a comprehensive package because the country, including educational and research institutions, the private sector, and even some government bodies, is not yet able to fully meet current needs."

Hashemi emphasized that the country still lacks adequate computing platforms aligned with its communication demands.

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



## Iran's Pharmaceutical Industry Seeks Stronger Global Economic Ties

TEHRAN - The Deputy Minister of Health and head of the Iranian Food and Drug Administration (IFDA) said the 10th edition of the Iran Pharma Exhibition has achieved significant success this year despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in recent years, drawing strong participation from both domestic and international companies.

According to the Ministry of Health, Mehdi Pirsalehi said on Friday, at the close of the Iran Pharma event, that the exhibition has seen remarkable engagement from various stakeholders. "Despite the pandemic-related challenges of previous years, this year's exhibition was highly successful and saw enthusiastic participation from domestic and foreign companies," he noted.

Pirsalehi added that visitors included physicians, pharmaceutical industry professionals, students, and representatives from neighboring countries. "We hope this event will lead to effective economic interactions and the establishment of productive international connections, enabling the pharmaceutical sector to achieve significant economic and social success," he said.

Pirsalehi also provided an update on influenza vaccine imports, stating that the IFDA's policy for the current year is to import five million doses of the vaccine. "The import and supply of vaccines are managed by importing companies, which plan based on market needs and shortages experienced in previous years," he explained. He said that about 1.5 million doses have been imported so far, and an additional two million doses are expected to arrive by the end of October.

Of the vaccines already brought in, around one million doses will be allocated to the Health Ministry's public health division for use by healthcare workers and high-risk groups. The remaining 2 to 2.5 million doses will be distributed through pharmacies for public use.

Pirsalehi assured the public that the available supply will be sufficient to meet

demand, based on experiences from previous years. He also emphasized that the optimal time for receiving the flu vaccine is typically from late September to mid-November, and with the current import schedule, there will be no shortage.

The 10th Iran Pharma International Exhibition of Pharmaceuticals and Related Industries, held under the slogan "Sustainability in Medicine Supply, Resilience, and Innovation," hosted 373 domestic companies and 370 foreign companies from 28 countries (a total of 743 booths).

In this year's Iran Pharma Exhibition, pharmaceutical manufacturers from Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, France, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, the United States, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Portugal, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, Taiwan, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates participated.

The Iran Pharma Exhibition was held as the first international healthcare industry event in Iran after the 12-day defensive war against the Zionist regime, an event that, thanks to the active and extensive presence of foreign countries, stood as a remarkable symbol of diplomacy and international engagement in the Islamic Republic of Iran's healthcare system.

According to the organizers, the number of visitors to this edition of the exhibition increased by more than 30% compared to previous editions. Exhibitors also noted that this year's exhibition was livelier and more dynamic than in past years.

More than 140,000 people are employed in the country's pharmaceutical industry. Last year, exports of domestically produced medicines grew by 16% compared to the previous year, and in the first five months of this year, exports increased by 11% compared to the same period last year.

## Agricultural Exports Grow 33% Amid Push for Technology and Self-Sufficiency

TEHRAN - Minister of Agriculture Jihad, Gholamreza Nouri-Qazaljah, announced that the country's agricultural exports have increased by 33% over the past year, attributing the growth to the policies of the 14th government and the tireless efforts of farmers, producers, and exporters.

Speaking at a specialized meeting with agricultural business leaders in Malayer County, Nouri-Qazaljah underlined the crucial role of exports in advancing technology and improving productivity.

"If well managed, we can connect even small-scale rural livestock production to export chains. Exports drive technology transfer, enhance efficiency, regulate markets, and integrate us with the global economy," the minister said.

Nouri-Qazaljah clarified that issues related to illegal water wells lie outside his ministry's authority.

"According to the law, we plan agricultural activity based on the water resources allocated by the Ministry of Energy," he noted, underscoring the need for coordinated water management.

He also announced plans to reform the "Bazargah" platform—an online marketplace for agricultural inputs—describing current operations as disorganized.

"Bazargah should function like a commodities exchange, yet today producers must buy through intermediaries. We are redesigning it to link directly with banks for financing," he said.

Despite logistical challenges, the minister stated that no shortages of agricultural inputs currently exist.

"Supply of essential inputs has increased by 10–15% compared with previous years," he said.

He also highlighted progress in facilitating the purchase of farm machinery:

"After three years of delays, the tractor loan program has resumed thanks to new policy measures."

Nouri-Qazaljah stressed the importance of supporting smallholder and rural producers, noting a 22% increase in the distribution of subsidized inputs to rural areas over the past year.

He reassured farmers that chemical fertilizers are now fully available and that restrictions on subsidized fertilizer distribution, previously in place, were lifted last year.

Reiterating the country's long-standing emphasis on self-sufficiency in food production, the minister said: "Food security



cannot be achieved through imports alone. We must move toward technologies that, for example, allow us to produce one kilogram of crops using as little as three liters of water."

He pointed to the expansion of greenhouse farming as a key strategy for sustainable production.

"Greenhouses produce six times more crops while using one-sixth the water compared to traditional farming," he explained.

Nouri-Qazaljah also said that the government had successfully managed the New Year holiday market supply without imposing additional costs on the state budget.

The minister emphasized the government's commitment to combatting corruption and inefficiency in the agricultural sector. "We are reforming any processes that waste national resources," he said.

While pledging support for high-tech agribusinesses, he also stressed that small rural producers must not be marginalized.

"We are committed to practical and equitable policies to ensure fair opportunities for all producers," he stated.

Nouri-Qazaljah highlighted the role of agricultural exports in generating foreign currency and expressed optimism about the potential removal of foreign-exchange commitments on agricultural exports in the near future.

He called for a focus on "national cohesion" to advance the country's development agenda.

"The slogan of national cohesion and sacred unity paves the way for progress. Today, it is evident that the Iranian people support the nation's system, and we must move forward in harmony, free from political divisions," he said.

The minister praised the spirit of cooperation and synergy in Malayer, describing it as a source of "prosperity and blessing" for the region.

"The history and civility of this city are evident everywhere," he added.

Nouri-Qazaljah's remarks underscore the Iranian government's focus on leveraging exports as a driver of innovation and market integration, while reinforcing its commitment to self-reliance, equitable rural development, and efficient resource management as the foundation for sustainable growth in the agricultural sector.

## 11% Rise in Agricultural Exports in Spring 2025



TEHRAN - Agricultural and food trade balance improved in the first quarter of the Iranian year 1404 (March–June 2025), driven by an 8% increase in the value of agricultural and food exports and a 2% decline in imports of these products.

According to a report released by the National Center for Strategic Studies of Agriculture and Water at the Iran Chamber of Commerce, the trade deficit for agricultural and food products stood at \$2.2 billion in the first quarter of 1404 — about \$200 million less than the same period last year. The narrowing deficit reflects stronger export performance alongside lower import spending.

Data show that imports of agricultural products alone still exceeded exports, leading to a \$2.3 billion trade gap for the sector. However, this deficit also improved by roughly \$200 million year-on-year, mainly due to an 11% rise in agricultural exports and a 2% drop in agricultural imports.

The report notes that a large share of agricultural imports consists of intermediate goods and production inputs, especially for livestock farming, making shifts in these import categories particularly significant for the sector's overall trade performance.

In contrast, exports of food industry products fell 4.9%, dropping from \$263 million in the first quarter of 1403 to \$250 million during the same period in 1404. Imports of food products also declined, from \$190 million to \$181 million, marking a 4.7% decrease. As a result, the food industry's trade surplus narrowed from \$73 million to \$69 million, a 5.5% decline.

## Iranian Traders Increase Focus on Commerce with Uzbekistan



TEHRAN - Mousa Aghaei, President of the Iran-Uzbekistan Joint Chamber of Commerce, highlighted the growth in bilateral trade between the two countries in an interview with Otagh Iran Online.

Citing data from the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), Aghaei said that the total value of goods imported from Uzbekistan in the first four months of the current year reached \$32.9 million, up 29% compared to about \$25.5 million in the same period last year. He noted that the volume of imported goods had nearly doubled, which indicates a 36–37% decrease in the unit value of imports.

On the export side, Aghaei reported positive progress: "Our exports to Uzbekistan climbed to \$169 million, representing a 42% increase compared to the same period last year. In terms of volume, exports reached 261.8 thousand tons, up 45% year-on-year."

He emphasized that unlike the significant change in the unit value of imports from Uzbekistan, the unit value of Iranian exports to the country saw only a slight 2% decrease.

"Taken together, these figures clearly show that bilateral trade between Iran and Uzbekistan has experienced steady and meaningful growth compared to the previous year," Aghaei said.

According to Aghaei, Iranian businesses are increasingly focusing on the Uzbek market. "This shift has multiple reasons — ranging from more effective efforts by both the public and private sectors to disruptions in global supply chains and the narrowing of global trade routes."

The chamber president stressed the determination of both private and public sectors in Iran to sustain this upward trend: "We, alongside government institutions, will do our utmost to expand exports and facilitate imports to meet the country's needs. The tougher the international conditions become, the harder we will strive."



## North Korea's Kim Calls for Sharpening Nuclear Shield and Sword

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un directed all resources to be used to support the country's nuclear programme to "sharpen the nuclear shield and sword" to safeguard its national sovereignty and security, state media reported on Saturday.

Kim met with key officials and scientists of North Korea's nuclear weapons research institutes on Friday and said it was the country's "essential top priority" to further develop a nuclear response posture, KCNA state news agency said. "Comrade Kim Jong Un said we must constantly sharpen and renew the nuclear shield and sword that can reliably guarantee national sovereignty, security and interests and the right to development," KCNA said.



## Bangladesh Calls for Urgent Action to Prevent Catastrophic Rohingya Aid Crisis



DHAKA (Dispatches) - Bangladesh's interim leader Muhammad Yunus told the United Nations General Assembly on Friday that the Rohingya refugee crisis is on the brink of collapse as international aid dries up, urging immediate global action to prevent "a catastrophic situation."

Bangladesh is now sheltering about 1.3 million Rohingya, most of whom fled a brutal 2017 military crackdown in Myanmar that U.N. investigators described as a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing." In the southeastern district of Cox's Bazar, near the border with Myanmar, the refugees live in overcrowded bamboo shelters, facing shrinking aid, closed schools, and little prospect of returning home.

"The ongoing conflict in our neighboring country, Myanmar, threatens not only regional stability, but also the prospects for the safe return of the forcibly displaced Rohingya sheltered in Bangladesh," said Yunus, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate who took power after mass protests toppled former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

He warned that ration cuts could soon slash food support to "a paltry \$6 per person," deepening hunger and insecurity in the camps. "I call upon existing donors to come forward with enhanced contribution and potential donors to make announcements of generous contribution to prevent this catastrophic situation," he said.

Eight years into the crisis, Yunus said persecution in Rakhine state continues unchecked. "Reversal of the process of marginalization of the Rohingya cannot wait any further," he told the U.N.'s General Assembly, stressing the need for a political settlement that secures equal rights and citizenship for the minority.

Describing Bangladesh as "the second victim after the persecuted Rohingya," Yunus insisted the issue is not bilateral. He urged neighboring countries and the wider international community to assume responsibility and press Myanmar's military and ethnic armed groups for change.

## EU Eastern States Agree on Need for Drone Wall



HELSINKI (Dispatches) - Countries on the European Union's eastern flank have agreed on the need for a "drone wall" with advanced detection, tracking and interception capabilities, EU Defense Commissioner Andrius Kubilius said.

Drones now play a major role in the war in Ukraine, with both Moscow and Kyiv boosting their domestic production, while increased drone activity has exacerbated security concerns in several EU member states in recent weeks.

"Russia is testing the EU and NATO, and our response must be firm, united, and immediate," Kubilius told reporters in Finland after a videoconference with defence ministers mostly from the EU's eastern flank and representatives of Ukraine and NATO.

Participants have agreed to move from "discussions to concrete actions" and that the planned "drone wall", will be part of a broader Eastern Flank Watch that will also include ground defences and maritime security, he said.

"We shall look how to build a comprehensive European Union industrial policy and financial toolbox to make the shield a reality," he told a press conference.

Kubilius gave no details on funding but an EU official told Reuters that EU heads of state and government were expected to hold "intensive" discussions on the issue in October.

Representatives from Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Denmark attended Friday's video conference.



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Donald Trump said talks on Gaza with Middle Eastern nations were intense and that Israel and Palestinian Hamas militants were aware of the discussions, which he said would continue as long as required.

Trump met leaders and officials from multiple Muslim-majority countries this week to discuss the situation in Gaza, which has been under a mounting assault from Washington's ally Israel.

U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff said Trump presented proposals to those leaders that included a 21-point Middle East peace plan.

"Intense negotiations have been going on for four days, and will continue for as long as necessary in order to get a Successfully Completed Agreement. All of the Countries within the Region are involved," Trump wrote on Truth Social. Trump had promised a quick end to the war, but a resolution remains elusive eight months into his term. Trump's term began with a two-month ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, which ended when Israeli strikes killed 400 Palestinians on March 18.

"Hamas is very much aware of these discussions, and Israel has been informed at all levels," Trump wrote. His post did not mention any further details but called the discussions "inspired and productive."

Trump officials said this week a Gaza breakthrough was likely soon despite Israeli bombardments in the coastal territory.

Images of starving Palestinians, including children, have sparked global outrage against Israel's assault on Gaza, which has killed tens of thousands of people and internally displaced Gaza's entire population. Multiple rights experts, scholars

and a U.N. inquiry say it amounts to genocide.

Israel calls its actions self-defense after the October 2023 attack by Hamas that killed 1,200 people and in which over 250 were taken hostage.

Meanwhile Hussam al-Masri, the Reuters journalist killed by Israeli fire on Monday while operating a live video feed at Gaza's Nasser Hospital, reported on the war's civilian suffering while living in a tent and struggling to find food for his family.

Masri, 49, was an experienced cameraman whose positive approach in the most dangerous situations made him popular among Gaza's tight-knit community of reporters, journalist colleagues said.

"Tomorrow will be better," he would say, even as conditions in the Palestinian enclave descended further into hunger and desperation in the months leading up to his death.

That was how he ended his last conversation with Mohamed Salem, a senior visual journalist for Reuters who had known Masri since 2003 and worked alongside him in Rafah, in the south of Gaza, last year.

Salem, who left Gaza earlier this year but was in daily contact with Masri until Monday morning, said his optimism and smiles made him a pleasure to work with.

Reuters editor in chief Alessandra Galloni said "Hussam was deeply devoted to telling the story of Gaza to the world." "He was strong, steady and courageous in the most challenging of circumstances. His loss is deeply felt by all of those in this newsroom who worked with him."

## Madagascar Sacks Energy Minister After Repeated Power Cuts Spark Protests

PARIS (Dispatches) - Madagascar's President Andry Rajoelina on Friday sacked his energy minister a day after police used rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse protesters angered by persistent power cuts and water shortages in the capital Antananarivo. Five protesters were killed in Thursday's violence, a hospital source told AFP.

Madagascar's president on Friday sacked his energy minister in a bid to calm protests over power cuts and water shortages, which had left wreckage strewn across the capital a day earlier.

Police used rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse crowds of mostly young people in Antananarivo on Thursday, in protests President Andry Rajoelina branded "acts of destabilization in the form of a coup d'état" in his first on-camera comments.

Protest organizers on Friday urged people unhappy with Rajoelina's government to "come in numbers" for a "peaceful demonstration" on Saturday morning, distancing themselves from the scenes of looting on Thursday.

Protesters have voiced anger over persistent water and power cuts that often leave homes and businesses without electricity for more than 12 hours each day across one of the world's poorest countries.

Some people accuse Rajoelina's government of failing to improve living conditions.

The authorities imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew after banks and shops were robbed and set on fire and the houses of three pro-government parliamentarians were torched.



Five protesters were killed in the violence, a hospital source said. AFP has not been able to verify the toll from official sources.

A station of Antananarivo's new cable car system - one of the government's flagship infrastructure projects - was also set on fire.

Besides the capital, the authorities on Friday placed four other major cities - Antsiranana, Majunga, Toliara and Antsirabe - under an extended nighttime curfew.

Stunned Antananarivo residents - some in tears - assessed the damage Friday morning, an AFP journalist at the scene reported.

One young activist, who had returned to clean up a looted bookstore, said he

had left before the unrest escalated but conceded that other youngsters might have been responsible for the destruction.

"Maybe they were frustrated. Maybe they were sent to break things. They're already poor and have nothing. So they take what little they see," he told AFP, requesting anonymity for fear of reprisals.

While the situation appeared calm in the centre, reports of looting continued in a commercial district on the outskirts of Antananarivo.

Hundreds of young people carrying the body of a fellow student marched in Antsiranana on Friday, a local source told AFP, confirming images of the event spread on social media.

The French embassy advised avoiding non-essential travel in the capital and in Antsirabe, Madagascar's third-largest city. The British embassy warned that "further protests and disorder are expected and may spread to other parts of Madagascar".

Rajoelina, who was in New York this week for the UN General Assembly, acknowledged on Friday that "the energy minister was not doing his job" but "firmly condemned" the "pillaging and violence".

The 51-year-old was re-elected late last year for a third term in a ballot boycotted by the opposition in which less than half of registered voters took part.

He first came to power in the world's top producer of vanilla in 2009, leading a popular movement and benefiting from a coup that ousted former president Marc Ravalomanana.

## New French PM Rules Out Wealth Tax, Casting Doubt on Support From the Left

PARIS (Dispatches) - New French Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu ruled out on Friday introducing a wealth tax or suspending an unpopular pension reform, giving some of the first indications of his policy plans as he tries to pull together a 2026 budget, and a government.

Since President Emmanuel Macron made Lecornu his fifth prime minister in less than two years amid a deepening political crisis, Lecornu has said little on his intentions, instead focusing on consultations with party leaders and unions.

"I am starting from a blank script," he told Le Parisien newspaper in an interview. His predecessor, François Bayrou, was ousted by parliament over plans for a €44 billion budget squeeze next year.

Lecornu said he aimed for a budget deficit of around 4.7% of GDP in 2026, not much changed from Bayrou's target of 4.6%, from a forecast 5.4% this year.

He said the draft budget would take into account the French people's demand for



more fiscal fairness. It would fall on parliament to determine the budget's final package, he said, urging lawmakers to enter into a spirit of consensus finding.

"It is parliament which will shape the nation's budget," he said, later adding: "In the end it will not be Lecornu's budget: compromises will have to be found in the chamber."

That will not be easy to find. Macron's ruling alliance does not have a majority and likely needs the support of both conservatives and socialists to get a budget over the line. Two of the policies he ruled out - a wealth tax and a suspension of the pension reform - are key Socialist Party demands.

"There is political and societal demand for greater fiscal justice, particularly in order to restore our public finances. We cannot dismiss this debate out of hand," he said. "Next, is the Zucman tax the right answer? The only answer? Personally, I do not believe so."





## Kane Becomes Fastest Player to Score 100 Goals for a Top European Club

MUNICH (Dispatches) - Harry Kane scored twice to reach 100 goals for Bayern Munich yesterday as the German champions continued their perfect start to the Bundesliga season with a 4-0 win over Werder Bremen.

Playing his 104th game for Bayern, Kane became the fastest man to 100 goals with a club in Europe's top-five leagues, breaking the record of 105 matches jointly held by Cristiano Ronaldo and Erling Haaland.

The England striker is averaging two goals a game in the current Bundesliga campaign. "It's crazy even for me to be honest. It's an honour to reach 100 goals for this great club and to do it so quickly is something I'm really proud of," Kane told Sky Germany.

Bayern coach Vincent Kompany also hailed his striker's performance, noting that it was not just goals that Kane delivered.

"I always remind people to look at his defensive work and how much he tracks back as well. He's broken this record but he's done so while giving so much to the team," said the Belgian.

Bayern celebrated the first weekend of Oktoberfest in style as a brace from Kane and goals from Jonathan Tah and Konrad Laimer saw them claim their fifth win in five league games.

Kane had two early chances to score as he and Michael Olise carved through the Bremen defence in the opening minutes.

He skewed the first chance wide and was denied on the second by Arsenal loanee and Bundesliga debutant Karl Hein in the Bremen goal.

Tah gave Bayern the lead on 22 minutes, flicking in an elegant backheel off Luis Diaz's knee after a fizzing cross from Olise.

The visitors were looking to hit Bayern on the break, but became increasingly fenced into their own penalty area as the first half progressed.

Kane struck just before the break, drawing a foul from Marco Friedl in the box and slotting the penalty coolly into the bottom corner.

That was his 99th goal in a Bayern shirt and 20 minutes after the break, he sidefooted in a pass from Diaz to bring up his century.

Laimer added a fourth after a well-worked move three minutes from time, but not for the first time in the Allianz Arena, it was Kane's night.

The former Tottenham striker now has 15 goals in eight games across all competitions so far this season.

His breathtaking run of form comes amid rumours linking him with a move either to Barcelona or a return to the Premier League next summer.

Yet Kane himself dismissed the transfer gossip after yesterday's game, insisting Bayern was "absolutely" the best place for him to win titles.

"I'm really happy here at Bayern. I've got two years left on my contract and I'm loving every minute. I enjoy playing here in front of the fans, I enjoy the team and the manager, so it's not in my thought process at all," he said.

## India Overcome Nissanka Ton, Super Over Drama to Edge Out Sri Lanka



DUBAI (Dispatches) - Defending champions India survived Pathum Nissanka's blistering hundred and some intense Super Over drama before beating Sri Lanka in a dead rubber to maintain their unbeaten run in the Asia Cup on Friday.

With India having already secured their place in Sunday's final against Pakistan and Sri Lanka eliminated, the Super Fours clash was of merely academic interest but it turned out to be the most exciting game of this year's tournament.

Sri Lanka gave a good account of themselves and matched India's 202-5 to force the Super Over after Nissanka (107) smashed the first individual hundred of this year's tournament.

Sri Lanka, however, managed only two runs in the Super Over before losing both the wickets in five deliveries from Arshdeep Singh.

India skipper Suryakumar Yadav took three runs from the first delivery from Wanindu Hasaranga to seal their victory in a matter-of-fact way.

Earlier, put into bat, 20-overs world champions India racked up the tournament's first 200-plus total riding opener Abhishek Sharma's third consecutive fifty in the tournament.

Abhishek, the world's top-ranked T20 batter, maintained his red-hot form with a sizzling 61 off 31 balls.

Opening partner Shubman Gill fell for four and skipper Suryakumar's (12) slump in form continued but India did not really suffer as Abhishek raced to a 22-ball fifty.

Sri Lanka captain Charith Asalanka removed Abhishek but Tilak Varma, who made 49 not out, and Sanju Samson (39) maintained the pressure on the Sri Lankan bowlers.

In their chase, Sri Lanka lost Kusal Mendis for a duck in the first over but cruised to 72-1 after the six powerplay overs.

India rested pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, while Hardik Pandya bowled just one over before leaving the field.

Nissanka needed 25 balls to bring up his fifty and Kusal Perera (58) could not be denied his half-century either.

Spinner Varun Chakravarthy broke the 127-run stand when he dismissed Perera.

## Clarke Set for Knee Procedure



LONDON (Dispatches) - Memphis Grizzlies forward/center Brandon Clarke will undergo an arthroscopic procedure to address knee synovitis and is expected to be re-evaluated in six weeks, ESPN reported on Friday.

The Grizzlies announced Friday that Clarke was completely healed from a high-grade right PCL sprain that was sustained on March 19, an injury that caused him to miss the rest of the season.

The Grizzlies didn't stop there on Friday. They announced two-time All-Star Jaren Jackson Jr. is expected to be sidelined four-to-six more weeks with a toe injury, and center Zach Edey will be out six-to-nine more weeks as he recovers from his left ankle surgery on June 7.

Clarke, 29, averaged 8.3 points and 5.1 rebounds while shooting 62.1 percent from the field in 64 games (18 starts) last season.

He is averaging 10.2 points for his career with 5.5 rebounds, 1.3 assists and 20.8 minutes in 307 regular-season games (48 starts) in parts of six seasons with Memphis.

The Oklahoma City Thunder selected Clarke 21st overall in the 2019 NBA Draft and traded him the same summer to the Grizzlies. He was voted to the NBA All-Rookie first team that season.

Jackson, 26, was the NBA Defensive Player of the Year for the 2022-23 season. He was an All-Star that season and again in 2024-25.

## Fritz, Korda Meet in American Battle in Tokyo

LONDON (Dispatches) - Taylor Fritz came back from a break down in both sets to defeat Nuno Borges of Portugal 7-5, 7-6 (4) and advance to the quarterfinal of the Japan Open in Tokyo on Friday.

Fritz counted 15 aces among his 29 winners in the match, which lasted one hour, 54 minutes. For Fritz, the second seed, it was his tour-leading 30th win since the grass season started in June, and he next will take on Sebastian Korda in his quest to win his third title this season.

Korda qualified for his fourth quarterfinal of the season by defeating Japanese wild card Sho Shimabukuro 6-1, 6-4. Fritz and Korda have gone head to head three times, with Fritz winning twice.

Fourth seed Casper Ruud of Norway set up a quarterfinal contest against Australia's Aleksandar Vukic with his 7-6 (4), 6-2 victory over Italy's Matteo Berrettini. Vukic dispatched Daniel Altmaier of Germany 6-4, 6-2.

Third seeded Alex de Minaur moved to the third round in Beijing with a 6-4, 6-0 win over home favorite Yunchaokete Bu, giving him a tour-leading 32 wins on



hard courts this season.

The Australian struck 19 winners against six unforced errors, while Bu recorded 12 and 17, respectively.

No. 2 seed Alexander Zverev of Germany defeated Italian Lorenzo Sonego 6-4, 6-3 to move on against Corentin Moutet of France, who ousted Tallon Griekspoor of the Netherlands in straight sets.

Two other seeded players also advanced with Italian Lorenzo Musetti, the fourth seed, defeating Frenchman Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard 7-6 (3), 6-7 (4), 6-4. Eighth-seeded Daniil Medvedev of Russia topped Brit Cameron Norrie 6-3, 6-4, buoyed by nine aces, five service breaks and only 10 unforced errors.

Other winners were Czech Jakub Mensik, who won 7-5, 6-4 over Serb Miomir Kecmanovic. French qualifier Arthur Cazaux defeated Chinese wild card Juncheng Shang 0-6, 7-6 (5), 7-5. Frenchman Adrian Mannarino topped Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan 6-3, 6-2. American Learner Tien needed three sets to dispatch Argentina's Francisco Cerundolo.

## Sinner Taking Time With Tactical Tweaks to Tackle Alcaraz

LONDON (Dispatches) - World number two Jannik Sinner said he is making small tweaks to his game following his defeat by Carlos Alcaraz in the U.S. Open final earlier this month and the Italian is confident it is only a matter of time before he implements the changes in matches.

Sinner fell 6-2 3-6 6-1 6-4 at Flushing Meadows to surrender his crown and the top ranking to Alcaraz before admitting he had to be a lot more unpredictable to become a better player against his main rival.

"We've been reflecting a lot on that final," Sinner said on Wednesday, ahead of his China Open campaign in Beijing.

"We're working on new things and changing a lot of small things. The amount of mistakes at the moment is a little bit higher, but I hope that this recovers.

"It's just a question of time. I don't know how much I'm able to (implement changes) on the actual match court because one thing is practice and one thing is match.

"I'm very motivated. It's great to work on something new, then we see how this ends up."



While the Australian Open and Wimbledon champion sharpens his skills ahead of another potential encounter with Alcaraz at the Shanghai Masters next month, the Spaniard is gearing up for a tournament in Tokyo.

Alcaraz, who also beat Sinner in an epic French Open final this year, improved his head-to-head record to 10-5 at New York but believes that the Italian will be a better player the next time they meet.

"I know he's going to change," Alcaraz said.

"He's going to change something from the last match. It's the same thing that I did when I lost to him a couple of times. I tried to be a better player.

"The next time I face him ... I have to be focused and I have to be ready for the changes. I'll try to overcome those changes and be ready for that rivalry.

"It's getting better for me and for tennis. We'll see in the future how many times I'm going to play against him and in which circumstances we play. Right now it's going great."