

Iran Has Opened a Major Power Plant Unit in the Persian Gulf Island of Qeshm Amid Efforts to Increase the Supply of Energy to Households and Industries in the Region

# IRAN NEWS

London Has Intensified Sanctions Against Iran After Britain, Along With Germany and France, Invoked the So-Called Snapback Mechanism to Reinstate UN Sanctions Against the Islamic Republic

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## Bringing Iranians to Their Knees Is a Pipe Dream



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The enemies are seeking to sanction Iran because the country refuses to bow and won't accept humiliation, President Masoud Pezeshkian said Monday, dismissing anti-Iran ambitions as a mere pipe dream.

"They want to force us to submit to base and vile people, but even imagining that has no place in my mind," Pezeshkian said. "Bringing Iran and our people to their knees is a pipe dream."

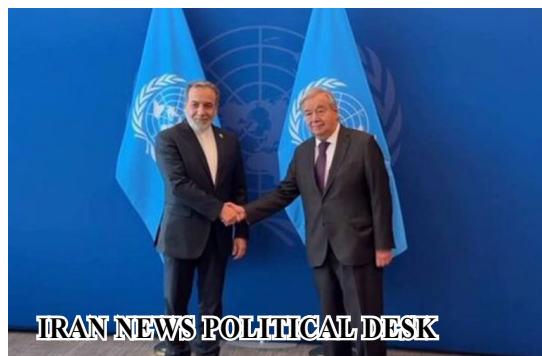
The UN Security Council restored the anti-Iran sanctions that had been lifted under the 2015 nuclear deal on Sunday at 0000 GMT. The sanctions will again freeze Iranian assets abroad, halt arms deals with the Islamic Republic and target the country's defensive missile program.

The move came nearly two days after the United States and its allies vetoed a draft resolution submitted by China and Russia on delaying the so-called "snapback" mechanism inside the deal that would return the bans.

Pezeshkian said the government will do everything for the nation's dignity, striving to solve problems and use all resources for the people, who are targeted by revived economic sanctions.

The president recalled that adversaries never expected Iranians to unite during the twelve days of the US-Israel war in June. "They assumed Iran had weakened, but the people's steadfastness upset all their calculations."

## FM Condemns Reactivation of Expired UN Sanctions by U.S. and Europeans



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has criticized the United States and three European nations for attempting to leverage the snapback mechanism of the 2015 nuclear deal to reimpose expired United Nations sanctions against Tehran.

Araqchi's remarks came during a meeting on Monday with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, where he called the reactivation of sanctions "an unprecedented blow to diplomacy" and indicative of a lack of goodwill from the involved nations.

The Iranian foreign minister condemned the actions of the US and the European powers, saying "they are unjustified and illegal."

He emphasized that all restrictions against Iran's peaceful nuclear program, established under UN Security Council Resolution 2231, were set to expire on October 18.

On September 19, the 15-member Security Council failed to adopt a resolution that would have prevented the re-imposition of UN sanctions on Iran after the E3 triggered the "snapback" mechanism and accused Tehran of failing to comply with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

A subsequent resolution, which sought to grant a six-month extension to both the JCPOA and Resolution 2231, also failed to pass at the Security Council on Friday.

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



## Oil, Petrochemical Export Outlook Remains Resilient Despite UN 'Snapback' Sanctions

TEHRAN - Iran's oil and petrochemical sector is expected to maintain stable export levels despite the reactivation of United Nations sanctions under the so-called "snapback mechanism," according to officials from the Union of Oil, Gas, and Petrochemical Products Exporters (OPEX). Seyed Hamid Hosseini, OPEX spokesperson, told reporters on Monday that the reinstated sanctions would not significantly impact major sectors of Iran's trade or daily life. "Experience from 2010-2011 shows that even under UN sanctions, Iran's oil exports actually increased," he said.

Hosseini projected that government oil revenues for 2025 would reach approximately \$43 billion, equivalent to around 530 trillion rials, though he expects daily exports may fall short of 1.8 million barrels per day.

He cited last year's record export performance, boosted by relaxed foreign-exchange regulations, and noted that customs data indicate a 6% decline in export value this year. Among petrochemical products, methanol, guar, and base oils have seen declines in both weight and value, whereas polymers have experienced a 24% increase in export value.

The spokesperson attributed this year's export slowdown to a combination of factors, including the 20-day Nowruz holiday, an explosion at Bandar Abbas port, and truck drivers' labor strikes. He expressed optimism that the export deficit could be recovered in the second half of the year once these challenges are addressed.

Hosseini stressed the need for a unified national voice, the restoration of domestic media credibility, greater activation of economic capacities, and increased responsibility for the private sector. He also emphasized the importance of expanding trade ties with regional neighbors such as Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia, and the UAE, as well as China, which remains Iran's key oil buyer.

"To overcome the current economic pressures, ongoing negotiations are crucial," he added. "Sanctions obstruct development, and we must aim beyond merely maintaining the status quo."

Hassan Fathi, OPEX vice-chairman, highlighted persistent challenges in Iran's lubricant and industrial oil sector, including frequent power outages, difficulties in foreign-exchange allocation, and regulatory instability.

"The Iranian lubricant industry has over 60 years of history and has developed significant capacity in the re-refining and recycling of used oils," he noted. These facilities collect used oil from across the country and convert it into high-value products for domestic manufacturing.

Fathi emphasized that, in addition to meeting local demand, exports of lubricant products and by-products have grown substantially over the past three to four years, thanks to effective

coordination between OPEX and the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade. "Currently, exports proceed without major obstacles and generate notable foreign currency revenue," he said.

However, he identified the government's uniform foreign-exchange commitment policy as a major constraint, arguing that obligations should be tailored to specific products. "The current blanket approach places heavy pressure on producers and requires closer coordination between the Industry Ministry and the Central Bank," Fathi explained.

He also warned that frequent power cuts disrupt production processes and that imports of specialized additives and high-grade lubricants—not produced domestically—face delays in currency allocation. "Without action, this could trigger supply shortages and price increases," he cautioned.

Fathi called on the government to create real facilitation mechanisms for importing critical raw materials, and criticized the constant changes in export, import, and tax regulations, which create operational uncertainty. He concluded that stabilizing the regulatory environment and revising foreign-exchange obligations are essential to safeguard the industry's future.

Ali-Mohammad Mousavi, OPEX auditor, dismissed media reports questioning the operations of small and medium-sized hydrocarbon "finery" units. "These are private-sector, capital-driven enterprises that aim to reduce crude sales and create value-added downstream petrochemical exports," he said.

Mousavi explained that these units require less capital than large refineries and often rely on foreign investment rather than state support, opening up regional markets and generating foreign currency. He estimated that lifting current restrictions could boost sector exports to over \$10 billion annually.

The widespread distribution of these units also helps supply feedstock to petrochemical plants facing shortages, while providing significant employment opportunities.

Importantly, all feedstock is sourced entirely through the Energy Exchange and Commodity Exchange, representing one of the most transparent and regulated supply chains in the country. The Ministry of Oil's "Samen" platform tracks every liter of raw material purchased, ensuring accountability.

Mousavi noted that production is permitted only after approvals from the National Standards Organization, the Industry Ministry, and the National Refining and Distribution Company, in line with Article 45 of the Anti-Smuggling Law. Violations, he said, account for less than 2% of annual activity and are closely monitored by regulatory authorities.

## What Should We Do About Snapback?

"Snapback" has these days become an inseparable part of urban life in Iran, and although it brings challenges — for example, its psychological aspects have led to demand for hoarding gold and foreign currency, and some link it to war — it is not fatal and can also create opportunities.

It can essentially be acknowledged that the sanctions of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1929 against Iran, passed in 2010, had relatively deep effects on the lives of Iranians. Although the main goal was to exert pressure on Iran's nuclear program, in its wake it brought sanctions on the Central Bank and the banking system, problems in international monetary transfers, a reduction in foreign-currency income, difficulties in selling oil, obstacles to the development of oil and gas fields, and in consequence, a sharp increase in the exchange rate and inflation.

For example, the shortage of medicines and medical equipment resulting from these sanctions became more evident because of problems in imports. The inflation rate above 45 percent in the month of Mordad (July-August) further demonstrated the decline in people's purchasing power.

Another problem arising from these sanctions has been difficulties in international travel, bringing restrictions in flights and financial transfers.

Another obstacle that will be created is the reduction in the quantity and quality of domestic goods, which we will face due to restrictions on the import of raw materials.

The impact on businesses will also be far from negligible, for example:

- a) problems in imports and exports,
- b) reduction or severing of relations with international partners,
- c) a sharp decrease in foreign investment,
- d) the creation of recession in many industries.

What I have enumerated has also led to heavy social consequences: increased poverty and inequality, further emigration of the country's elites and specialists abroad, and heightened psychological pressure and anxiety on families — which in the short term are less manageable.

In the medium term, of course, it is possible to focus national management on areas that will gradually neutralize the effects of the sanctions — for example, intensifying economic-resistance policies in Iran, unavoidably stimulating growth in some domestic industries, and expanding cooperation with neighboring countries instead of the West. In brief, it can be said that the aim of the United States and its "obedient European lackeys" in these sanctions is in fact the daily life of Iranians, in order to incite them against the system and the leadership. Yet these Western measures, whose source is the "Great Satan," have been applied in various ways for 47 years, but they have not had the desired results for the West and, in many cases, have even had the opposite effect.

The most crucial tool for countering Western challenges is support for low-income groups and creating social cohesion, and indeed this is exactly what the Westerners have targeted. It is quite clear that behind these pressures lies a fragile situation for the West, which they conceal by adorning its appearance. The path to survival is to create national solidarity through resistance, enlightening public opinion, and national cooperation, which must be placed on the agenda. Every discordant voice must be silenced, even at the cost of accusations, so that the enemy cannot find a crack in national unity.

This is a difficult pass, but just like previous passes, we will also get through this one, God willing.



By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

## Joining FATF Poses No Threat to Oil Sales



TEHRAN - Deputy Minister of Economy has stated that normalizing the country's relationship with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and lifting its restrictions on Iranian nationals does not threaten oil sales, even under the so-called "snapback" sanctions mechanism, but rather provides greater opportunities for managing sanctions.

Following the activation of the snapback mechanism, the head of the Parliamentary Oil Industry Oversight Committee claimed that FATF membership could lead to the leakage of national information and disrupt oil exports. He warned that care must be taken domestically to avoid "own-goals" that might compromise data or undermine the structure of oil sales, and cautioned against damaging Iran-China trade relations.

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says the two imposed wars on Iran in the 1980s and earlier this year "consolidated" the country's deterrent capability and power-building in the region.

Speaking on Monday, Brigadier General Ali Mohammad Naeini, a spokesman for the IRGC, said the Iranian nation emerged victorious in the 1980-1988 Iraqi-imposed war and the Israeli-US aggression in June 2025, both of which were launched to destroy and disintegrate the Islamic Republic.

"In both wars, the enemy was defeated, and Iran not only did not lose a single inch of its territory, but consolidated its deterrent capability and power-building."

Naeini also said the enemy assumed that Iran was weak and that it could trigger riots during both wars, but the Iranian nation won the battles relying on its defense capabilities, popular mobilization, and wise leadership.

The eight-year war, which inflicted extensive damage on Iran's infrastructure and left hundreds of martyrs, led the country to achieve self-sufficiency in producing strategic weapons and become the region's leading missile power, he said.

Iran faced a severe shortage of resources during the 1980s' war, but in the recent illegal aggression, the Islamic Republic's intelligence and military capabilities completely changed the dynamics of the battle and consolidated the country's authority in the region.

He made the remarks after the Sacred Defense Week, which commemorates the anniversary of the war launched by former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein in 1980 in a bid to seize Iran's resource-



rich Khuzestan province, less than two years after the Islamic Revolution.

With the army mostly in disarray, Iranians closed ranks under the leadership of the late founder of the Islamic Republic, Imam Khomeini, as they rushed to the warfronts to push back Iraqi forces and liberate occupied territories.

The war ended in 1988 with a ceasefire deal, with the Iraqi dictator failing to achieve any of his goals and Iran not conceding an inch of its territory.

The United States and its European and regional allies assisted the former Iraqi regime with military and intelligence support during the war.

The US also joined the Israeli regime in bombing Iran's nuclear facilities early this year.

Also speaking on Monday, Major General Yahya Rahim-Safavi, a senior military advisor to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, said Iran launched more than 500 missiles toward the occupied territories in the course of the recent war, causing extensive damage to Israeli infrastructure, including refineries, power plants, and research centers.

At least 16 Israeli pilots were killed in Iranian missile strikes on the Zionist regime's pilot training center, he added.

The impact of several missiles was so powerful that it resembled an earthquake, with tremors felt within a three-kilometer radius.

Safavi further stated that Israel has withheld information about the extent of damage and casualties resulting from Iranian strikes.





## Record Oil Production Achieved in Past Seven Years

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Oil Minister announced that the country has achieved a record level of oil production over the past seven years, beginning in 2018.

According to IRNA, Oil Minister Hassan Paknejad said in an interview on Tuesday that measures taken in the country's oil fields — including in-field drilling operations on existing wells and improvements to surface facilities — have led to record-breaking oil output. He added that this milestone was reached through a combination of in-field drilling, well maintenance, and the development of part of the Azadegan oil field over the past seven years.

“The implementation of these measures has resulted in a significant increase in oil production, which constitutes a new record,” the minister stated.

## Iran, Uzbekistan Stress Boosting Transit Volume, Expanding Comprehensive Cooperation



TEHRAN - A virtual meeting between Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development and Uzbekistan's Minister of Transport was held on Monday, focusing on increasing bilateral transit volume and maintaining the mutual removal of the \$400 road toll.

According to the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, the meeting aimed to advance transport and transit relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Uzbekistan. The two ministers addressed challenges in road transport—particularly issues concerning Iranian and Uzbek drivers—and explored ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation in this field.

During the session, both sides highlighted the growing trend of transit operations between the two countries and reaffirmed the commitment of their senior leadership to expand comprehensive relations, especially in the economic sector. They also reviewed the implementation of previous agreements within the framework of the transport cooperation roadmap and the resolutions of the 16th Joint Economic Commission.

Key topics included the continued mutual removal of the \$400 road toll, the issuance of transport permits for cargo to and from third countries, and other technical matters. Necessary decisions were made on these issues.

It was also agreed that a technical meeting involving relevant officials from both countries will be held later this week in Tashkent to examine the discussed topics in greater detail.

# Iran Showcases Smart Taxation as a Knowledge Export Platform to BRICS

TEHRAN - Iran's push toward smart taxation has positioned the country as a leading provider of tax administration expertise within the BRICS group, according to Seyed Mohammad Hadi Sobhanian, head of Iran's National Tax Administration (INTA).

Speaking after the recent meeting of BRICS tax chiefs — attended by senior officials from Iran, Russia, China, Brazil, the United Arab Emirates, South Africa, Indonesia, and Egypt — Sobhanian said digital transformation in tax systems has become essential for good governance, transparency, and sustainable development across member states.

BRICS, which now counts 10 core members including Iran, represents 30% of the world's landmass, 40% of global GDP, half the world's population, and more than \$500 billion in intra-bloc trade. Member countries have been working to reduce reliance on the US dollar in trade by expanding bilateral and multilateral monetary arrangements and by strengthening digital tax systems to support growth.

Over recent years, INTA has implemented comprehensive digitization and data-driven reforms, focusing on taxpayer-centric services and the use of modern technology to streamline compliance. Sobhanian noted that this transformation has eased domestic procedures, raised voluntary compliance, and earned praise from BRICS partners.

One innovation that drew special attention was Iran's “tax tagging initiative,” designed to make the system more transparent and encourage civic participation in funding infrastructure. BRICS countries are considering adopting aspects of this approach.

Iran's growing reputation in this field was underscored by a recent agreement with Russia to send a high-level delegation to Iran to study its systems for self-declaration and pre-filled tax returns. Sobhanian said these steps demonstrate the maturity of Iran's tax regime and its contribution to building sustainable, fair, and intelligent public-finance frameworks.

Sobhanian outlined three main pillars of Iran's approach:

**Taxpayer-Centric Management:** Taxpayers are treated as strategic partners, with services designed to simplify compliance and improve satisfaction.

Over 12 million taxpayers now have dedicated digital accounts, enabling them to submit and track returns and requests online without visiting tax offices.

Twenty licensed Tax Service Providers (TSPs) operate nationwide, handling about 80% of electronic invoices; their costs are covered by value-added tax (VAT)



revenues.

A dual-approval system requires both buyers and sellers to confirm electronic invoices, ensuring transparent transactions and mutual awareness of tax obligations.

Pre-filled VAT and income-tax returns have been widely adopted, reducing disputes and cutting processing time.

**Innovations in VAT Administration:** Iran's VAT system now operates on the backbone of electronic invoicing, with over 3.6 million goods and services coded and taxed in accordance with the law.

Pre-filled VAT returns, based on e-invoice and banking data, have lowered compliance costs and boosted declared revenues — with a reported 11% rise in declared taxes in the first year of e-invoicing.

The share of VAT credits based on paper invoices dropped from 34% in summer 2023 to just 11% by spring 2024, and paper invoices will cease to be accepted from December 2024.

Faster refund processing now benefits businesses whose transactions are fully documented electronically.

Firms can defer VAT payments on credit sales until cash is received, helping maintain liquidity.

**Data-Driven Taxation:** Iran's tax authority has logged over 16 billion e-invoices, with daily volumes growing rapidly.

Data from banks and customs authorities supplement these records, allowing the use of data-mining tools and automated debt-management systems to verify declarations, detect discrepancies, and cut enforcement costs.

Sobhanian said Iran is ready to share its experience in digital VAT administration, e-invoicing, compliance enhancement, and self-regulation models — including applications of game theory — through webinars, workshops, and in-person exchanges in Iran or abroad.

He emphasized that smart taxation is not just a domestic reform but also a strategic exportable knowledge asset, enabling Iran to play a constructive role in shaping fiscal governance across BRICS.

“The success of our digital tax transformation reflects our commitment to fairness, transparency, and sustainable revenue generation,” Sobhanian said, highlighting Iran's readiness to cooperate with BRICS partners in building next-generation tax systems.

## New Iran–Armenia Power Transmission Line Set to Launch Within Six Months



TEHRAN - Iran is preparing to commission a new high-voltage power transmission line to Armenia within the next five to six months, a move expected to expand electricity exchange between the two neighboring countries, the head of the Iran Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution Company (Tavanir) said on Monday.

Mostafa Rajabi-Mashhadi, Tavanir's managing director, told IRNA that Iran is already connected to Armenia's power grid, but the upcoming line will significantly boost cross-border electricity trade.

He added that negotiations are underway with Russia, in coordination with Azerbaijan, to establish a three-way electricity exchange network. “The technical studies for the project have been completed, and once the commercial issues are resolved, continuous power exchange between Iran and Russia will become possible,” Rajabi-Mashhadi noted.

The official highlighted Iran's and Russia's strong positions in global power technology. “Iran is among the world's top five producers of gas turbines,” he said, emphasizing that closer cooperation with Russia could further drive innovation and progress in the electricity sector.

Turning to domestic developments, Rajabi-Mashhadi pointed out that electricity demand in Iran peaked at about 79,500 megawatts during the summer of 2023. “For the first time this year, we recorded a 3 percent reduction in peak summer consumption,” he said in an interview with ILNA news agency.

## Steel Structures for Construction Drop Below 5% Amid Industry Challenges



TEHRAN - A member of Iran's Association of Steel Structure Producers and Exporters says that ongoing challenges in the country's construction and infrastructure sectors have pushed the production of steel structures for building projects down to less than 5 percent of previous levels.

According to IRNA, Golchin, speaking at a press briefing on Monday, emphasized that the construction industry is one of the key pillars of national development. “The choice of construction materials and structural systems plays a decisive role in project safety, construction speed, and economic efficiency,” he said.

Golchin noted that steel is the backbone of major projects worldwide, citing its high resistance to various loads, safety advantages—especially in earthquake-prone areas—durability, and ductility. These properties, he added, have made steel the preferred choice for high-rise buildings and construction in seismic zones.

He highlighted other advantages of steel structures, including faster project execution compared to concrete structures, lower demand for skilled labor, shorter construction timelines, design and architectural flexibility, higher quality control, potential for future modifications and expansions, long-term durability, and cost savings.

Golchin further pointed to steel's recyclability, which he said became especially evident during recent conflicts. “Steel is 100 percent recyclable, unlike concrete structures, and overall the use of steel in construction reduces energy consumption,” he stated.

The industry representative stressed that the quality of Iranian steel products—such as profiles, billets, and sheets—matches that of leading global producers. However, he acknowledged limitations in sheet thickness produced domestically and inefficiencies leading to higher production waste.

Golchin underscored that the sector faces significant hurdles, including liquidity shortages, cuts in government infrastructure spending, energy imbalances, rising steel prices due to inflation, insufficient bank lending, and a loss of skilled labor.

# Tehran Faces Severe Water Stress as Capital's Reservoirs Near “Dead Storage”

TEHRAN - Iran's capital has moved to the front line of the nation's water crisis, with most of its reservoirs approaching “dead storage” levels, the Water Industry spokesperson warned on Tuesday.

Speaking at a press briefing, Eisa Bozorgzadeh named the metropolitan areas of Tehran, Karaj, Mashhad, Tabriz, Isfahan, Arak, and Saveh as being at the “forefront of water stress.”

According to Bozorgzadeh, the combined storage behind Tehran's five main dams in October stood at 258 million cubic meters, down sharply from 485 million cubic meters a year earlier and 618 million cubic meters in the long-term average — a deficit of 227 million cubic meters compared with last year.

He reported current reservoir fill levels as follows: Amirkabir 15%, Latian 25%, Lar 2%, Taleqan 41%, and Mamloo 8%.

“Except for the Taleqan Dam, all other reservoirs in Tehran have either reached or are close to their dead storage levels,” Bozorgzadeh warned.

Although the dreaded “Day Zero” — when taps would run dry — has not yet arrived, the spokesperson stressed that the water crisis remains critical and requires strict consumption management.

Bozorgzadeh cited forecasts by both international agencies and Iran's Meteorological Organization predicting below-average rainfall and a difficult autumn.

He said two stringent programs for urban water use and one realistic plan for agriculture have been prepared in response.

He also called for economic and social support mechanisms in the 1405 (2026-27) national budget to help curb groundwater over-extraction and land subsidence. Without such tools for the Agriculture Ministry, the Environment Department, and other agencies, he said, “plans will remain only targets and wishful thinking.”

Bozorgzadeh emphasized that any reduction in water use by farmers must be voluntary and supported by livelihood alternatives, such as compensation packages that may include residential or commercial property, shares in state-owned enterprises, or other assets.

The goal, he said, is to free up agricultural land and water resources while protecting farmers' livelihoods.



The spokesperson reported that average rainfall in the last water year (Oct 2024–Sep 2025) measured 152 mm, about 40% lower than the previous year and the long-term average.

Some provinces saw rainfall decline by as much as 77%, while many others recorded 30–50% decreases.

Water inflow to the country's reservoirs fell to 24.69 billion cubic meters, down 42% from 42.46 billion cubic meters the year before.

Current storage stands at 18.76 billion cubic meters, a 24% drop compared with 24.59 billion cubic meters a year earlier.

On average, reservoirs nationwide are only 36% full, Bozorgzadeh said.

Tehran saw a 14.5% drop in water consumption in August, which Bozorgzadeh credited to public cooperation and media campaigns.

He highlighted the Talqan-to-Tehran water transfer project as “an exceptional achievement,” noting that its first phase has already delivered 2.5 cubic meters of water per second to the capital. The second phase is near completion, with less than 100 meters of work remaining.

The spokesperson urged continued public commitment to water conservation, saying the Ministry of Energy seeks to make efficient water use part of national culture.

Bozorgzadeh announced a program by the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA) to replace old, inefficient evaporative coolers with new models, reducing water use.

Another initiative promotes low-flow fixtures, with costs to be deducted in installments from customers' utility bills.

He warned that if drought persists, water supply will become even more difficult and conservation will be the only viable response.

Regarding water flows from Afghanistan's Helmand (Hirmand) River, Bozorgzadeh said the eastern neighbor had shown verbal commitment but limited practical cooperation.

Only 190 million cubic meters of water were released last year, he noted, calling for genuine efforts to honor Iran's water-sharing rights.

Finally, Bozorgzadeh said the Ministry of Energy has placed cloud-seeding operations on its agenda to help ease water stress in the country's most affected regions.

## Iran Poised to Secure Prominent Place on Global Tourism Map



TEHRAN - Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts announced that the country is set to achieve a prominent position on the global tourism map by focusing on stability, investing in infrastructure, and empowering the private sector.

Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri said on Tuesday, during a meeting of the Tourism Commission at Iran's Chamber of Commerce, that a comprehensive and long-term approach to the tourism industry is essential.

“Our perspective on tourism is comprehensive and long-term. With stability, infrastructure investment, and active cooperation between the government and the private sector, Iran can achieve a strong and sustainable position in the global tourism industry,” he stated.

Salehi-Amiri highlighted Iran's geographical advantages, noting its proximity to countries such as Iraq, Turkey, Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Russia.

“Our nation is well-positioned to become a hub for regional tourism. By leveraging our rich cultural and historical heritage, Iran can secure a distinguished place in this sector,” he added.

The minister also pointed to recent government initiatives in tourism, mentioning discussions at a recent meeting chaired by the president.

“Iran's international image must increasingly reflect that of a safe and stable country in order to attract more foreign visitors,” he emphasized.

Underscoring the pivotal role of the private sector, Salehi-Amiri said that sustainable tourism development requires reducing government control.

“Tourism cannot thrive under excessive state management. Executive responsibilities should be entrusted to the private sector and the Chamber of Commerce, while the government transitions from a managing role to that of a policymaker and supporter,” he concluded.



## Colombia Manufactures Its First Rifles to Replace Israeli Weapons

BOGOTA (Dispatches) - Colombian officials said Monday the country has produced its first combat rifle, a cheaper, lighter weapon aimed at replacing the arms that were once supplied its former military ally Israel.

Leftist President Gustavo Petro broke ties with Israel in 2024 to protest Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's ongoing military offensive in the Gaza Strip.

State-owned weapons manufacturer Indumil produced the arms -- the first combat rifle manufactured in Colombia -- to replace the Galil, a rifle that had been assembled in Colombia using Israeli components since the 1990s.

The goal is to manufacture 400,000 lighter and cheaper rifles in five years and "gradually replace current weapons in the armed forces," Indumil manager and retired Colonel Javier Carmago told AFP.



## Russia Warns of Escalation Risk If U.S. Sends Tomahawk Missiles to Ukraine



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia said that its military was analyzing whether or not the United States would supply Tomahawk cruise missiles to Ukraine for strikes deep into Russia, a step that Russian officials say could trigger a steep escalation.

U.S. Vice President JD Vance said on Sunday that Washington was considering a Ukrainian request to obtain Tomahawks.

President Donald Trump has not made a final decision, and he has been wary of escalating the Ukraine war into a direct confrontation with Russia. But the fact he is now weighing such a move shows the extent of his frustration with President Vladimir Putin's refusal to agree to a ceasefire since he hosted the Russian leader at a summit in Alaska last month.

Tomahawks have a range of 2,500 km (1,550 miles) - easily far enough to hit Moscow and most of European Russia if fired from Ukraine. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy cautioned Kremlin officials last week that they should "know where the bomb shelters are".

It was unclear how or through which countries the Tomahawks could be supplied. Zelenskyy has asked Washington to sell them to European nations that would send them to Ukraine.

For the Kremlin, the escalatory risks of U.S. involvement in firing such missiles deep into Russia are clear.

"The question... is this: who can launch these missiles...? Can only Ukrainians launch them, or do American soldiers have to do that?" Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters when asked about Vance's remarks.

"Who is determining the targeting of these missiles? The American side or the Ukrainians themselves?" Peskov added, saying "a very in-depth analysis" was required.

## North Korea Will Never Give Up Nuclear Program



UNITED NATIONS (Dispatches) - North Korea will never give up its nuclear program, the country's Vice Foreign Minister Kim Son Gyong told the United Nations General Assembly on Monday, describing it as "tantamount to demanding it to surrender sovereignty and right to existence."

It was the first time North Korea had dispatched an official from Pyongyang to address the annual gathering of world leaders for the General Assembly since the country's foreign minister traveled to New York in 2018.

"Imposition of 'denuclearization' on the DPRK is tantamount to demanding it to surrender sovereignty and right to existence and violate the Constitution," said Kim, referring to the country's formal name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. "We will never give up sovereignty, abandon the right to existence and violate the Constitution."

"Thanks to our state's enhanced physical war deterrent in direct proportion to the growing threat of aggression of the U.S. and its allies, the will of the enemy states to provoke a war is thoroughly contained and the balance of power on the Korean peninsula is ensured," he said.

U.S. President Donald Trump said last month that he wanted to meet North Korean leader Kim Jong Un this year. Since Trump's January inauguration, Kim has ignored Trump's repeated calls to revive the direct diplomacy he pursued during his 2017-2021 term in office, which produced no deal to halt North Korea's nuclear program.

# Netanyahu Supports Trump's Gaza Plan, But Hamas Has Yet to Agree

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu backed Donald Trump's plan to end the war in Gaza on Monday. The nearly two-year long conflict has gutted the Gaza Strip, and a ceasefire is contingent upon agreement from Hamas, which must now decide whether to accept terms that would see the militant group disarm in exchange for aid and reconstruction.

After Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu threw his support behind the U.S. peace plan for Gaza, the question now is whether Hamas will agree.

Hamas faces a bitter trade-off - the proposal demands that the militant group effectively surrender in return for uncertain gains. But if it rejects the deal, the US could give Israel an even freer hand to continue its punishing campaign in the already devastated territory.

Under the proposal, the militant group would have to disarm in return for an end to fighting, humanitarian aid for Palestinians, and the promise of reconstruction in Gaza - all desperately hoped for by its population.

But the proposal has only a vague promise that someday, perhaps, Palestinian statehood might be possible. For the foreseeable future, Gaza and its more than 2 million Palestinians would be put under international control. An international security force would move in, and a "Board of Peace" headed by Trump and former British Prime Minister Tony Blair would oversee Gaza's administration and reconstruction. The territory would remain surrounded by Israeli troops.

Trump and Netanyahu said they agreed on the plan Monday after talks at the White House.

The proposal includes one provision that Netanyahu and his hard-line government most strongly oppose: it says the Palestinian Authority will eventually govern Gaza. But Netanyahu is likely betting that will never come to pass. Israel also rejects any Palestinian state.

The White House issued the text on Monday of its 20-point proposal. Here is what to know:

The plan calls for all hostilities to immediately end. Within 72 hours, Hamas would release all hostages it still holds, living or dead. The militants still hold 48 hostages - 20 of whom are believed by Israel to be alive.

In return, Israel would free 250 Palestinians serving life sentences in its prisons as well as 1,700 people detained from Gaza since the war began, including all women and children. Israel would also hand over the bodies of 15 Palestinians for each body of a hostage handed over.

The plan calls for an Israeli troop withdrawal. But it would only take place after Hamas disarms and as the international security force deploys to fill in areas that Israeli forces leave.

Israel would also maintain a "security perimeter presence" - a vague phrasing that could mean it would keep a buffer zone inside Gaza.

Those terms could bring pushback from Hamas, which has said it will not release all its hostages unless it receives a



"clear declaration" that the war will end and Israel will leave Gaza completely.

Hamas would have no part in administering Gaza, and all its military infrastructure - including tunnels - would be dismantled. Members who pledge to live peacefully would be granted amnesty, and those who wish to leave Gaza would be allowed to.

The international security force would ensure Hamas' disarmament and keep order. It would also train Palestinian police to take over law enforcement. Mediator Egypt has said it is training thousands of Palestinian police to deploy to Gaza.

Meanwhile, humanitarian aid would be allowed to flow into Gaza in large amounts and would be run by "neutral international bodies", including the UN and the Red Crescent. It is unclear whether the Gaza Humanitarian Fund, a controversial alternative food distribution system backed by Israel and the US, would continue to operate.

The plan also specifies that Palestinians will not be expelled from Gaza, and that there will be an international effort to rebuild the territory for Palestinians.

In normal cases, that might not need spelling out. But Palestinians have feared mass expulsion after both Trump and the Israeli government spoke of pushing out Gaza's population -

ostensibly in a "voluntary" manner - and rebuilding the strip as a sort of international real estate venture.

The interim administration of Palestinian technocrats would run day-to-day affairs in Gaza. But it would be overseen by the "Board of Peace". The board would also supervise funding of reconstruction, a role that could give it enormous power over governing Gaza since that is the biggest task facing the territory, almost completely destroyed by Israel's campaign.

During this interim administration, the Palestinian Authority would undergo reforms so it can eventually take over governing Gaza.

The plan has only a slight nod to the issue of statehood. It says that if the Palestinian Authority reforms sufficiently and Gaza redevelopment advances, "the conditions may finally be in place for a credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood".

Qatar's prime minister and Egypt's intelligence chief shared the 20-point plan Monday evening with Hamas negotiators. The Hamas negotiators said they would review it in good faith and provide a response.

Hamas has so far rejected disarmament, saying it has a right to resist until Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands ends. Arab countries appear to back the outline. The governments of Egypt, Jordan, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates issued a joint statement applauding Trump's proposal.

# Maduro Threatens to Declare State of Emergency Over U.S. Boat Attacks



CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro threatened to declare a state of emergency on Monday in response to US attacks on suspected Venezuelan drug boats. Earlier in the day, his VP said that Madura had signed a decree increasing his authority over the military and certain public services, though this has not yet been confirmed.

Maduro said Monday he is ready to declare a state of emergency over the threat of US "aggression," following a spate of deadly US strikes on suspected Venezuelan drug boats.

"Today the consultation process began ... to declare a state of emergency in accordance with the constitution and protect our people, our peace, and our stability if Venezuela were attacked by the American empire, attacked militarily," Maduro said in a televised address.

Earlier in the day, Vice President Delcy Rodriguez told foreign diplomats that Maduro had signed a decree giving himself "special powers" as head of state to act in matters of defence and security in the event the United States "dares to attack our homeland".

A government source, however, told AFP that Maduro had not yet signed the document.

"The vice president presented the document to show that everything was ready and that the president can decree it at any time," the source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The left-wing Maduro placed Venezuela on high alert over a major US

military deployment near his country's coast.

US President Donald Trump has deployed eight warships and a nuclear-powered submarine to the southern Caribbean as part of a stated plan to combat drug trafficking, but which appears particularly aimed at pressuring Maduro.

U.S. forces have destroyed at least three suspected drug boats in the Caribbean in recent weeks, killing 14 people in a move decried as "extrajudicial execution" by UN experts.

Now, U.S. military officials are drawing up options to target drug traffickers inside Venezuela's borders, according to a report by U.S. news outlet NBC, citing four sources familiar with the discussions.

Declaring a state of emergency would allow Maduro, whose disputed re-election last year was not recognised by much of the international community, to temporarily suspend Venezuelans' basic rights.

Rodriguez was confident that Venezuelans would unite behind Maduro in the event of a US attack.

"Venezuela is united in the defence of our country," she said, vowing: "We will never surrender our homeland."

In his address, Maduro also asserted that he had "good feedback" from a private conversation he'd had with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

Maduro said that Guterres had expressed his "astonishment at an unprecedented escalation, an extravagant escalation, which, for almost seven weeks, was announced and launched against a peaceful country, Venezuela."

These assertions have not been confirmed by the UN.

# Moldova's Pro-EU Party Wins Pivotal Election in Setback for Russia

CHISINAU (Dispatches) - Moldova's pro-European ruling party won a resounding victory over its Russian-leaning rival in a key parliamentary election, results on Monday showed, in a major boost for the country's bid to join the European Union and break away from Moscow's orbit.

The surprisingly strong performance on Sunday by President Maia Sandu's Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS) against the Patriotic Bloc was a relief for the government and its EU partners, who accused Moscow of seeking to influence the vote.

"This is not just a party's victory - it is Moldova's victory. The European path is our way forward," Sandu said on X.

With all votes counted, PAS won 50.2% versus 24.2% for the Patriotic Bloc, which had sought to steer Moldova - a small former Soviet republic that lies between Ukraine and EU member Romania - closer to Russia.

"The people of Moldova... chose democracy, reform, and a European future, in the



face of pressure and interference from Russia," Antonio Costa, president of the European Council which represents the EU's 27 member states, said on X.

The leaders of France, Germany and Poland, in a joint statement, congratulated Moldova for "the peaceful conduct of the election, despite unprecedented interference by Russia, including with vote-buying schemes and disinformation".

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the election result showed that Moscow had failed to "destabilise" Moldova.

However, the Kremlin - which denies the accusations of meddling - accused Moldovan authorities of preventing hundreds of thousands of its citizens who live in Russia from voting by providing only two polling stations for the large diaspora.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, writing later on the ministry's website, said Moscow hoped Moldova would now take a balanced approach and not become an "anti-Russian appendage of NATO".





## Giants' Jaxon Dart Wins 1st Start Over Previously Unbeaten Chargers

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Rookie quarterback Jaxon Dart ran for a 15-yard touchdown on the opening drive of his first career start and the New York Giants earned a 21-18 victory over the Los Angeles Chargers in East Rutherford, N.J.

Dart was 13-of-20 passing for 111 yards and another touchdown as the Giants (1-3) won for the first time after turning away from veteran QB Russell Wilson, who started the first three games. Dart added 54 yards rushing, while rookie Cam Skattebo added 79 yards on the ground. New York became the first 0-3 team to defeat a 3-0 team in exactly 17 years.

Justin Herbert completed 23 of 41 passes for a season-low 203 yards and two interceptions for the Chargers. His two picks, which led to 11 points, came after he recorded just one over the first three games of the season. Rookie running back Omarion Hampton ran for 128 yards and scored a touchdown for Los Angeles (3-1).

Both teams lost an important player to injury during the game. Giants standout receiver Malik Nabers left the game with a knee injury that is reportedly feared to be a torn ACL. Chargers left tackle Joe Alt, who moved from right tackle to replace Rashawn Slater after his season-ending injury during training camp, left the game with a high ankle sprain, according to reports.

Brandon Aubrey of Dallas and Brandon McManus of Green Bay traded field goals in overtime as the Cowboys and Packers played to a 40-40 tie in a wild affair at Arlington, Texas.

The contest marked the return to Dallas of Micah Parsons, exactly one month after the All-Pro edge rusher was traded to the Packers. Parsons, who was involved in contentious contract negotiations with

Cowboys owner Jerry Jones, had three tackles and one sack.

Dak Prescott was 31-of-40 passing for 319 yards and three touchdowns and also ran for a score for Dallas (1-2-1). George Pickens caught eight passes for 134 yards and two touchdowns, Javonte Williams rushed for 85 yards and a touchdown and Jake Ferguson had a scoring catch for the Cowboys. Jordan Love completed 31 of 43 passes for 337 yards and three touchdowns for the Packers (2-1-1). Romeo Doubs caught a career-high three scoring receptions and Josh Jacobs had 157 scrimmage yards (86 rushing, 71 receiving) and ran for two touchdowns.

Jalen Hurts and Philadelphia Eagles started strong and held on for a tense 31-25 victory over host Tampa Bay Buccaneers in a clash of unbeaten teams.

Hurts had more touchdown passes (two) than incompletions (15 of 16) in the first half as the Eagles (4-0) built a 24-6 lead. He was shut out in the second half, finishing 15-of-24 passing for 130 yards. Dallas Goedert caught both touchdowns. Saquon Barkley was held to 43 rushing yards but scored a touchdown.

After last-minute wins in their first three games, the Buccaneers (3-1) fell behind quickly on a blocked punt returned for a TD and never led. Baker Mayfield threw for 289 yards with two TDs and one interception. Rookie Emeka Egbuka recorded his first career 100-yard game and caught his fourth touchdown pass in four games. Bucky Irving had 165 yards from scrimmage (63 rushing, 102 receiving).

Patrick Mahomes tossed four touchdowns to become the youngest quarterback to reach 250 for his career, as Kansas City Chiefs overwhelmed visiting Baltimore Ravens 37-20.

## Alcaraz Rallies Past Ruud to Book Fritz Final in Japan Open

TOKYO (Dispatches) - World number one Carlos Alcaraz recovered from a slow start to beat Casper Ruud 3-6 6-3 6-4 and reach the Japan Open final where he will meet second seed Taylor Fritz with the chance to claim his eighth title of the year.

Alcaraz will also be seeking revenge in the clash in Tokyo after a shock defeat by Fritz at the Laver Cup in San Francisco this month, his first loss to the American in four career meetings.

"He's been playing great tennis lately," said Alcaraz.

"At the Laver Cup against me, against Alexander Zverev and in this tournament ... he's feeling great and really comfortable on the court, so I'll try to change a few things. Obviously the speed of the court and everything is different.

"It's going to be another challenge for me but I'm excited about it and I will try to take the good things I've done today and the good things I did in San Francisco ... it's going to be an interesting match and I'm excited about playing it."

The six-times Grand Slam champion wasted four chances to break Ruud early and let out screams of frustration when



his Norwegian opponent closed in on the first set with sublime shot-making from the back of the court and at the net.

Having dropped the first set, Alcaraz came out all guns blazing in the next and levelled the scores with a huge ace before turning on the style to break for a 3-2 lead in the decider and secure the win.

"I had a lot of chances in the first set," said Alcaraz.

"It was really close. It's just about the tennis. A match can change on small details so I tried to be there, tried to be more positive than the first set. I was a little bit mad with myself so I just tried to play with joy again.

"That was the key to the turnaround."

American Fritz earlier saw off compatriot Jensen Brooksby with a 6-3 6-3 victory after flawless serving in tough moments to reach his third final of the season after claiming grasscourt titles in Stuttgart and Eastbourne.

"I served insanely well today," said 2022 champion Fritz, who sent down 13 aces.

## Sinner Sets Up China Open Semifinal Against De Minaur

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Jannik Sinner showed his battling qualities to reach the China Open semi-finals with a 6-1 7-5 victory over Hungarian Fabian Marozsan, as the Italian stepped up his bid to narrow the rankings gap on world number one Carlos Alcaraz.

Sinner lost the top ranking after surrendering his U.S. Open crown to the Spaniard this month but has responded well to the setback in Beijing, claiming a seventh semi-final spot in the eight tournaments he has played this year.

The world number two clinched the opening set in 26 minutes thanks to big hitting from the baseline but faced stiffer resistance in the second and had to dust himself off after falling awkwardly in the eighth game.

He then found himself a break down at 4-5 but hit back immediately to deny Marozsan the set.

Sinner held and pounced on his opponent's serve again in the 12th game, sealing his 40th tour-level match win of a season



in which he served a short doping ban.

"I feel like I started off very well in the first set. We both played well in the second set. I had some break chances at 4-3, I couldn't use them," Sinner said.

"He's someone whose peak is high, which I knew before the match. When he was serving for the set he made a couple unforced errors which helped me to come back and win in two."

Up next for the four-times major champion is Australian third seed Alex De Minaur, who reached the semis when Czech 20-year-old Jakub Mensik retired from their match with a left leg injury while trailing 1-4 in the opening set.

American teenager Learner Tien reached his first ATP Tour semi-final after fourth seed Lorenzo Musetti retired trailing 4-6 6-3 3-0. The Italian appeared to be hampered by a thigh or groin issue.

## LeBron James Undecided on Retirement as He Enters Record 23rd NBA Season



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - LeBron James said he had not decided when to retire from basketball as he prepares to become the first player in NBA history to play a 23rd season in the league.

The Los Angeles Lakers superstar told reporters at a media day that he is "excited" by the prospect of another season in the league alongside Luka Doncic and a bolstered roster.

James will turn 41 in December and plans to savour every minute of the tail-end of a glittering career that has straddled three different decades.

But the four-time NBA champion and all-time points scorer says he has no idea of when he will retire.

"I'm excited about today, I'm excited about the opportunity to be able to play the game that I love for another season," James told reporters.

"Whatever the journey lays out this year, I'm super-invested because I don't know when the end is. It's a lot sooner than later.

"I'm just super-appreciative of the fact that I come up here to do another media day and talk to you guys."

James, who averaged 24.4 points per game last season, said his love for basketball—and hunger to keep improving—remained undimmed.

"The thing still pushing me is the fact that my love for the game is still high, and the love of the process is even higher," he said.

"It's that simple—me training and working my body and trying to get my body as close to 100% as possible every year, it's a beautiful thing for me...The NBA season is a roller coaster. But no matter the good, the bad, ugly, I still love that process.

"For me personally, I love to play the game, I love to play at a high level. Age is kind of just a number. Not many guys at my age, especially going to year 23, is able to play a level like that. I try not to take it for granted."

## West Ham Show Signs of Improvement as Nuno Gets Positive Start



LIVERPOOL (Dispatches) - New West Ham United manager Nuno Espirito Santo saw signs in their 1-1 draw with Everton that his side can turn things around after a dreadful start to the Premier League season, but there is still plenty of work to do.

His predecessor Graham Potter was sacked on Saturday morning and the Portuguese coach was ushered in to quickly take over. He had little time to instill his usual defensively-sound counter-attacking style, but whatever he did manage to do paid dividends in the draw on Merseyside.

"Our message today was very clearly about competing as a team, being close to each other, and the boys did well. I think overall it is a good first, first game for us," the 51-year-old Portuguese coach said.

"This game is going to be the tool, the main tool, for us to move forward. Now we're going to analyse it. It's all about knowing the players better, trying to take the right decisions in the right moment."

Much of that analysis will focus on strengthening West Ham's defence at set pieces as they once again conceded a goal following a corner, but Espirito Santo saw plenty he can work with as his side pulled a goal back in the second half to secure the draw.

"It's all about competing, every ball matters - the message was clear, and the boys are slowly, I think, understanding that football match is also about how we close (down the route to) our own goal, how many chances we concede," he explained.

The end goal will be to create the kind of well-drilled team that has previously been his signature in the Premier League during spells with Wolverhampton Wanderers and Nottingham Forest.