

The Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Ali Larijani, Reportedly in a Meeting With Members of the Commission, Has Emphasized Maintaining National Unity and Social Cohesion in Society

IRAN NEWS

The Transit of Goods Through Sarakhs Checkpoint on the Border With Turkmenistan Has Increased by 40% This Year, Says the Director General of the Shahid Shushtari Sarakhs Customs in Khorasan Razavi Province, Northeastern Iran

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2 DOMESTIC



Iran's Trade Ties with Eurasian Economic Union Members Growing Rapidly

> SEE PAGE 2

3 INTERNATIONAL

Hamas Under Pressure as Trump Issues Deadline on Gaza Peace Plan

> SEE PAGE 3



FM Blames Impossible Demands for Snapback Deadlock



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran's foreign minister has blamed the "completely unreasonable and impossible" demands put forward by the United States and its European allies for the failure in resolving the snapback sanctions dispute.

Speaking at the end of his visit to the UN headquarters in New York, Abbas Araqchi said Iran can handle the economic and legal challenges posed by the activation of the mechanism.

The minister said he engaged in multiple meetings with the E3, the UN secretary-general, and the chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) over the past week in an effort to find middle ground.

Araqchi said Tehran had put forward "entirely reasonable" proposals, acknowledged as such even by European officials, but, he added, Washington's excessive demands and European alignment left no room for agreement.

"Efforts were made to reach a compromise between the two sides' proposals, but due to the excessive demands of the Americans, and the support given to them by the European countries, we could not reach a compromise."

"Why? Because we are here to defend the rights and interests of the Iranian people, and certainly no agreement that does not secure Iran's interests will ever be acceptable to us."

Iran Introduces Stricter Rules on Drone Operation



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Iranian government has introduced stricter regulations on the operation of privately-owned drones just three months after the Israeli regime used small drones for attacks against the country.

Iran's Civil Aviation Organization said in a statement on Tuesday that it had launched an online platform for registration of civilian drones.

It said that owners of all types of civilian drones, including those used for agriculture, filming, and surveying purposes, are required to register their devices on the platform and receive ID numbers to display them on the drones.

The statement said operating any drones without an ID number would be illegal and would lead to judicial punishment for the owners.

The announcement comes after Iran suffered drone attacks by the Israeli regime during a 12-day war in June that left more than a thousand people dead in the country.

Iranian authorities said at the time that attacks carried out by small unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) had targeted the homes of military commanders and nuclear scientists.

The new regulations also address concerns raised by Iranian security officials about drones flying over or near sensitive sites in the country.

Most of the privately-owned drones being operated in Iran are used for spraying pesticides in farms or for filming activities.

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



Pezeshkian Vows to Stand for Iran Until Last Breath

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Masoud Pezeshkian has reaffirmed Iran's resolve in the face of foreign pressure, declaring that the nation will never bow to coercion.

Speaking on Tuesday at a ceremony honoring the national freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling teams for their recent world championship victories in Croatia, Pezeshkian praised the athletes for setting an example for the country's youth.

"You can be role models for the young generation through your conduct and character," he said, stressing that Iran remains determined despite mounting challenges.

"The world is pressuring us to surrender, but surrendering is not in our nature. We will stand for Iran until the last breath and will not bow our heads."

The president referred to economic sanctions and restrictions imposed on the country, urging reliance on domestic potential. "When we draw on our capabilities and capacities, we will certainly achieve our goals," he added.

In similar remarks on Monday, Pezeshkian said the enemies are seeking to sanction Iran because the country refuses to bow and won't accept humiliation.

"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."

Meanwhile later in the day, The President emphasized the need for mission-oriented universities and called for the assessment and integration of low-performing academic centers to concentrate support on reputable and efficient universities. He stressed that this approach would strengthen the motivation of distinguished faculty members and prevent the wastage of national resources, urging the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution to develop and present a comprehensive plan on the matter.

Pezeshkian outlined the achievements of his recent participation in the United Nations General Assembly during the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution session. He detailed his meetings with world leaders, discussions with international media, interactions with U.S.-based anti-war movements, and personal engagements with the Iranian diaspora in the United States. Pezeshkian described the trip as an important opportunity to present Iran's principled positions and expose the crimes of the Israeli regime against the oppressed people of Gaza amid the inaction of

some international bodies and governments.

Referring to his encounters with Iranians living in the United States, Pezeshkian noted that one of their most frequent requests was facilitating their return to Iran and creating conditions for their professional and economic participation. "The government is prioritizing this issue and will soon issue regulations to increase trust and encourage the engagement of overseas Iranians, especially investors," he said.

The President also criticized the irrational and illegitimate behavior of U.S. officials toward Iran's constructive proposals on the nuclear issue. He stated that their actions revealed a lack of genuine diplomatic intent, citing the use of the snapback mechanism to increase pressure on Iran and foster domestic dissatisfaction. He added, however, that through institutional cohesion, prioritizing citizens' livelihoods, reducing costs, managing energy, and expanding trade with neighboring countries, these hostile measures will not succeed.

Highlighting higher education, Pezeshkian reiterated the need for mission-oriented universities and called for the strategic assessment and merger of low-performing academic institutions. This initiative aims to channel resources toward effective universities, encourage top-tier faculty, and prevent the inefficient use of national resources. He requested that the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution prepare a comprehensive plan for implementation.

The session also reviewed a proposal from the Armed Forces General Staff aimed at accelerating scientific, defense, and national collaboration. Council members praised the President's assertive representation of Iran at the United Nations General Assembly and his firm stance on behalf of the Iranian nation.

Last month, France, Britain, and Germany triggered the snapback of all UN sanctions against Iran that the 2015 nuclear agreement had lifted under the pretext of non-compliance on Tehran's part, despite Washington's unilateral withdrawal and violation of the terms of the pact.

The UN Security Council restored the bans on Sunday. It 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.

ECO Considers Common Currency by 2035 as Intra-Regional Trade Remains Low at 8%

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



TEHRAN - The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), home to over half a billion people and rich in energy and mineral resources, currently accounts for less than 5% of global trade, with intra-regional trade comprising only 8% of member states' total exchanges. In an exclusive interview with Tasnim News Agency, ECO Secretary-General Asad Majed Khan revealed that the organization is developing a Strategic Vision 2035 aimed at reducing customs barriers, enhancing connectivity, and potentially introducing a common currency to strengthen economic cooperation.

Khan reported that ECO's total trade in 2023-24 reached approximately \$1.016 trillion, or 4-5% of global trade, but only \$110 billion occurred within the bloc — around 8-9% of total trade.

"This share has barely changed over the years and lags far behind other regional blocs," he noted. "For comparison, intra-EU trade accounts for 60-65%, while ASEAN's is 30-35%."

Khan attributed this gap to the region's reliance on raw materials and fossil fuel exports, emphasizing the need to shift toward higher-value goods and services. He added that ECO's 2015-2025 roadmap achieved progress in freer movement of goods, capital, and people, as well as regional transport connectivity, though large-scale infrastructure remains capital-intensive. The forthcoming Strategic Vision 2026-2035 will set the course for the next decade.

Khan praised Iran's role in reactivating ECO's long-dormant ministerial meetings. "The trade ministers' meeting had not been held for 14 years. This year, we successfully convened transport and tourism ministers, with sessions for interior and agriculture ministers scheduled as well," he said.

A regional customs agreement is also expected to be finalized at the next trade ministers' summit on November 26, aiming to digitize procedures, reduce transport costs, and harmonize customs operations. "Landlocked members rely on countries with sea access, such as Iran, Pakistan, and

Turkey, to lower transit costs and time," Khan noted.

Khan highlighted ECO's vulnerability to floods, droughts, wildfires, and glacial melt, stressing the need for coordinated action. ECO's Energy Center in Baku is working to promote sustainable and circular economic practices across the region.

He acknowledged challenges in coordinating diverse economies — including differing WTO membership, tariff structures, and technical barriers like rail gauge differences — but saw these differences as opportunities for complementary economic growth.

On relations with other regional organizations, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Khan emphasized complementarity rather than rivalry. "ECO focuses on trade and economic cooperation, while SCO prioritizes security. We see potential for collaboration, not competition," he said. ECO also works with CICA, the Organization of Turkic States, and the CIS to exchange best practices.

Khan underlined the interconnection of trade, transport, and tourism. "Connectivity alone is meaningless without goods to move or visas for drivers," he said.

He also stressed cooperation in food security, science, technology, and AI, pointing to the region's youthful population. He welcomed Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's proposal at the recent ECO Summit to establish a regional AI cooperation center and a youth start-up fund. ECO's Science Foundation in Pakistan will play a key role in research and educational collaboration.

Khan confirmed that ECO is examining shared payment systems and potentially a common currency, particularly to facilitate trade with members under international sanctions.

"We need reliable mechanisms to trade without obstacles," he said, noting that reducing border transit times and harmonizing standards — especially in agriculture — remain critical.

"ECO's unique historical, cultural, and linguistic ties give us a strong foundation," Khan concluded. "By aligning strategies and modernizing trade mechanisms, we can unlock the region's full potential and strengthen economic integration for all members."

We Must Compensate for Lag in the Application of Emerging Technologies

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



TEHRAN - The First Vice President emphasized the need to address the country's lag in applying emerging technologies, stating that in the development and use of artificial intelligence, ethical principles, security, privacy, and decentralization must be upheld.

According to a report from the Presidential Office, Mohammad Reza Aref made the remarks during a meeting of the Task Force for the Development and Application of Artificial Intelligence. He stressed that the country's pace in advanced technologies must multiply several times over the current situation. "Our goal is to achieve the objectives of the 20-year Vision Document in emerging technologies, meaning that within three years, we must attain the top regional position in this field," he said.

Aref added that the country is behind in applying emerging technologies across various sectors and that there must be a stronger focus on operationalizing these technologies.

The First Vice President emphasized the importance of ensuring that the nation is on the right path to achieving the goals of the Seventh Development Plan in the field of emerging technologies, adding that progress reports should be provided monthly. "Our country has significant capacities, including educated and motivated young people. We must open the field for them to drive the nation forward," he said.

UN Restoration of Sanctions Against Iran Has No Legal Basis



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Russia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Vasily Nebenzia, has formally rejected the reinstatement of UN sanctions against Iran, arguing that the measures lack legal and procedural legitimacy under international law. In a letter addressed to the UN Secretary-General and the Security Council President, Nebenzia stressed that the so-called "snapback" mechanism invoked by Western states is invalid and contradicts the UN Charter.

The letter, dated September 29, follows a Security Council vote three days earlier to reimpose sanctions that had been lifted under the 2015 nuclear agreement, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), between Iran and major world powers, including Britain, France, and Germany (the E3). The E3 countries had initiated the snapback process in late August by notifying the Security Council of their intent to restore the sanctions.

Nebenzia highlighted that during recent Council votes, drafts proposed by South Korea, China, and Russia to extend the suspension of sanctions were rejected by the United States, United Kingdom, and France. These Western states, he argued, chose an escalatory approach rather than engaging in diplomatic compromise, despite Iran's willingness to negotiate.

According to the Russian ambassador, the E3's claims that the snapback was triggered are legally flawed. The Western states did not follow the dispute resolution procedures established under the JCPOA, which forms part of Security Council Resolution 2231. Furthermore, prior violations of these agreements by the E3, Nebenzia noted, invalidate their right to invoke the snapback mechanism. He concluded that the draft resolution put to the Council on September 19 fails to meet the requirements of Resolution 2231, making any sanctions reinstatement legally null.

IRAN NEWS



Iran Records \$54b in Trade in First Half of 2025

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's total foreign trade reached \$54.31 billion in the first six months of the current Iranian year (March–September 2025), according to the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA). Faroud Asgari, Deputy Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance and head of IRICA, said on Wednesday that during this period, the country exported \$25.94 billion worth of non-oil goods. According to Asgari, the volume of exports stood at 74.99 million tons, while imports amounted to 18.76 million tons. Comparing this year's figures with the same period last year, Asgari noted that the volume of non-oil exports increased by 6 percent, although the total export value showed no significant change.

75% of Iran's Mineral Production Driven by Private Sector



TEHRAN - The President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) emphasized that investment in the mining and mineral industries is a cornerstone of strengthening the country's economy, noting that more than 75 percent of Iran's mineral production is currently carried out by the private sector.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the 14th International Exhibition on Investment Opportunities in Mining and Mineral Industries, held at the Imam Khomeini Mosalla in Tehran, Samad Hassanzadeh, President of ICCIMA, said the exhibition serves as an important platform to review national strategies for the mining sector and to facilitate dialogue among private sector actors, policymakers, and government officials on the future of this key area of Iran's economy.

Hassanzadeh referred to the Supreme Leader's remarks a decade ago that "one of the best alternatives to oil is the mining sector," highlighting ongoing efforts led by the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade (MIMT) and private sector organizations—particularly the Iran Mine House under the leadership of Mr. Bahraman—to advance the "mining instead of oil" agenda. Despite these efforts, he noted, Iran has yet to fully benefit from the significant potential of its mineral resources.

"Iran, with only one percent of the world's population, holds around seven percent of global mineral reserves," Hassanzadeh said, stressing that optimal use of these abundant resources, combined with the country's skilled workforce, is vital for achieving the goals of a resilient, self-reliant economy. He lamented that these national assets have often been underutilized.

The ICCIMA president underscored that investment in mining and mineral industries is central to driving economic recovery and industrial growth, emphasizing the need to empower genuine private sector players.

Citing research by the ICCIMA's Research Center, Hassanzadeh revealed that over 75 percent of the country's mineral production is currently handled by the private sector, demonstrating its strong capacity. However, he argued that further support and facilitation are required for sustained growth and meaningful impact.

Iraq's Ban on Agricultural and Livestock Imports Not Limited to Iran



TEHRAN - The recent ban by Iraq on the import of 44 agricultural and livestock products applies to multiple countries and is unrelated to United Nations sanctions against Iran, according to the head of the Iran–Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce.

Speaking to IRNA, Yahya Al-Eshaq clarified that the restrictions stem from a directive issued by Iraq's Ministry of Agriculture and do not specifically target Iranian goods. "Out of the 44 restricted items, only a small portion concerns Iranian exports; the rest involve products from other exporting nations," he said.

Al-Eshaq described the measure as seasonal and temporary, explaining that it reflects Iraq's efforts to regulate its domestic agricultural market.

He noted that Iran itself occasionally imposes similar restrictions on exports of certain crops, such as rice, to safeguard domestic supply and stabilize prices.

"This is not a sanction-driven policy but a cyclical measure that many countries, including Iran, adopt to protect their domestic markets," he added.

However, Al-Eshaq acknowledged that such abrupt restrictions can create serious challenges for exporters, especially those dealing with perishable goods.

"These sudden bans disrupt trade flows and can cause financial losses for exporters," he said, urging the development of mechanisms to ensure predictability and better communication between the two countries' trade authorities.

Iraq has long been one of Iran's major agricultural export destinations. According to trade officials, cooperation between Tehran and Baghdad is crucial to maintaining stability in cross-border commerce.

Al-Eshaq emphasized the importance of establishing clearer regulations and long-term planning to avoid disruptions in the future, particularly given the perishable nature of most agricultural exports.

Iran's Trade Ties with Eurasian Economic Union Members Growing Rapidly

TEHRAN - Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade announced that the country's trade relations with members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) are expanding at an accelerating pace.

Speaking at the meeting of the EAEU Intergovernmental Council, Minister Seyed Mohammad Atabak highlighted that the implementation of the Iran–EAEU Free Trade Agreement, which began in May this year, has opened new avenues for cooperation. He reaffirmed Iran's full readiness to play a more active role in the union's mechanisms and to contribute fresh ideas for further collaboration.

"Trade relations between Iran and the EAEU member states are growing rapidly, although from our perspective there is still a significant gap before reaching the desired level," Atabak said.

The minister emphasized that expanding cooperation with neighboring and regional countries is a core principle of Iran's economic diplomacy. He stressed that Iran's active participation in EAEU meetings reflects both the bloc's importance in Tehran's foreign policy and Iran's commitment to strengthening mutual partnerships.

Atabak noted that the expansion of such cooperation in various fields would contribute to greater prosperity for regional nations, strengthen multilateralism, and promote lasting peace.

He also recalled that Iran's First Vice President had presented Tehran's views on deepening regional integration and boosting ties with the EAEU at recent council meetings in Almaty and Cholpon-Ata. Furthermore, President Masoud Pezeshkian delivered a virtual address at the latest EAEU summit in Minsk, despite Iran facing "aggressive actions by the Israeli regime and the United States."

The minister described the implementation of the free trade agreement and the creation of a free trade zone between Iran and the EAEU as a historic milestone, marking a new chapter in economic and commercial relations among the bloc's members.

"This development offers vast opportunities for national economies, business communities, and sustainable economic growth while deepening constructive regional cooperation," Atabak added.

Speaking to the prime ministers of EAEU member states, ministers, and officials at the opening ceremony of the Minsk International Industry Innovations Exhibition, Atabak, said the future of the region depends on the will of today's leaders and their decisions in the interests of their nations.

Atabak emphasized the need to harness new technologies and strengthen regional scientific cooperation, highlighting the role of innovation in sustainable development.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran, relying on its scientific and technological capacities and guided by a forward-looking approach, is determined to work alongside its neighbors and partners to pave a new path toward equitable, sustainable, and peaceful development," he said.

Atabak stressed that this path leads to "a future where science, industry, and technology serve the well-being of nations and foster peaceful coexistence."

He added that emerging technologies and their industrial prospects will shape the



region's sustainable development, the future of its nations, and its standing in the global arena.

The minister highlighted that knowledge-sharing, experience exchange, and joint investments in artificial intelligence (AI) would strengthen technological supply chains and advance the development of indigenous technologies.

"Moreover," he noted, "Eurasian cooperation in establishing common standards, training skilled labor, and developing digital infrastructure will accelerate the realization of the Fourth Industrial Revolution."

Atabak concluded by stressing that countries, through synergizing their scientific and industrial capabilities, can build industries that are not only sustainable and smart but also remain competitive and innovative on the global stage.

Meanwhile Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, whose country hosted the latest session of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council, noted Iran's accession as an observer member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in December 2024 and announced that similar membership requests have been submitted by Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Myanmar.

Lukashenko made these remarks at a meeting attended by the heads of government delegations participating in the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council and the Council of Heads of Government of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

The Belarusian leader underlined that since the creation of the EAEU and the CIS—more than 10 and about 35 years ago respectively—a genuine internal market for trade in goods has emerged among the member countries, albeit with certain exceptions and limitations.

He emphasized that the convergence of the two frameworks—the EAEU and the CIS—helps member nations expand the potential for economic cooperation within a broader integration platform and collectively tackle the most complex challenges facing the real sectors of their economies.

Lukashenko reported that CIS and EAEU countries have demonstrated solid growth, noting that in 2024 their combined GDP rose by 4.5%, with industrial output growing at a similar pace. Inflation, he said, remained under control, unemployment posed no significant issues, and household incomes were on the rise.

The Belarusian president cited food security as one of the key drivers behind regional economic convergence.

"Not only agricultural development but also food security is a vital component of social stability and the survival of our peoples and states," he said. "We realized the seriousness of this issue long ago, and the unjust sanctions imposed on Belarus confirmed the correctness of our path toward self-sufficiency in the most critical areas of food production."

Lukashenko also welcomed proposals to expand the current mechanisms of the EAEU by providing subsidies from the union's budget to support industrial cooperation projects in the agricultural sector.

Imports of Pakistani Rice Halted, Driving Up Prices of Iranian Rice

TEHRAN - The head of the Tehran Food Wholesalers' Union says the suspension of Pakistani rice imports, combined with speculative buying and reduced supply by farmers, has triggered a sharp rise in the price of Iranian rice.

According to Reza Kangari, the union's chief, the price of Hashemi rice, one of Iran's premium varieties, has surged to 350,000 toman per kilogram, up from 190,000 toman in July, the peak harvest month.

"The Iranian rice market has become volatile again," Kangari told ILNA. "While prices fell by 20–25% during the harvest season in July and August, in September they started climbing due to rising demand and limited supply."

Kangari attributed the surge in Iranian rice prices to several factors: political uncertainty related to negotiations and the activation of the UN snapback mechanism, heavy purchasing by large companies, supermarket chains, cooperatives, and speculative investors outside the rice trade, and farmers' reluctance to sell their produce after last year's experience of low profits.

He noted that many farmers, having seen their rice resold at much higher prices in previous seasons, are now releasing their stock "sparingly and drip by drip," creating a demand-supply imbalance.

Adding to the pressure, Pakistani rice imports—which once met part of domestic demand and was often blended with Iranian rice by restaurants and catering businesses—have ceased altogether, driving up prices of both local and imported varieties.

"Pakistani rice, which was supposed to retail at the official price of 66,300 toman per kilogram, now sells for 130,000 toman at wholesale and up to 150,000 toman in retail outlets due to scarcity," Kangari said.

The union head identified three main challenges behind the instability in the rice market: The preferential exchange rate policy (28,500 toman per US dollar); Restrictions and bans on imports;



Monopolies held by a few companies in importing essential goods.

Kangari criticized the preferential exchange rate, saying it distorts the market because goods rarely reach consumers at the official prices.

"We recommend replacing the preferential rate with a market-based or negotiated exchange rate and redirecting the savings to support low-income households," he said.

Kangari revealed that some importers use "back-of-invoice" pricing to evade regulations.

"For example, Pakistani rice is officially invoiced at 59,000 toman per kilo for wholesalers," he explained. "But before delivery, an extra 30,000–35,000 toman per kilo is added informally, raising the price above 80,000 toman. Due to the limited supply, some wholesalers end up paying as much as 130,000 toman."

This practice, Kangari said, leaves both wholesalers and consumers disadvantaged.

"Wholesalers cannot show regulators the real price they paid because it exceeds the official invoice. If they present the official invoice, they're accused of overpricing; if they disclose the actual payment, authorities say they shouldn't have bought at that price. Meanwhile, the profiteers benefiting from the manipulated system go unpunished."

Kangari argued that the government's restrictions on imports exacerbate price volatility by concentrating import licenses in the hands of a few companies that can manipulate supply and prices.

"If import restrictions were removed and traders could import at market rates, competition would drive down prices and stabilize the market," he said.

According to Kangari, even the cheapest domestic rice varieties are now unaffordable for many consumers.

Iran Seeks to Redefine Its Position in Afghan Market



TEHRAN - Afghanistan remains a key trading partner for Iran, and redefining Iran's role in this market requires proactive measures such as hosting trade fairs and facilitating business delegations, according to Alireza Khamseh, President of the Birjand Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture.

Khamseh announced that the Iran–Afghanistan Joint Investment Opportunities Exhibition will be held October 17–20 in Birjand, the capital of South Khorasan Province, which hosts Mahirood, Iran's third official border crossing with Afghanistan. The exhibition will be held under the theme "Birjand: Gateway to the Future of Iran–Afghanistan Trade."

"With our provincial capacities, we can provide border and customs services to all Iranian provinces engaged in trade with Afghanistan," Khamseh told Iran Chamber Online.

Highlighting Afghanistan's importance, Khamseh noted that the two neighbors share more than 1,000 kilometers of border, and Iran exports \$2–3 billion worth of goods annually to Afghanistan.

With a population of around 40 million, Afghanistan imports about 90 percent of its needs, roughly \$3 billion of which has historically come from Iran.

He pointed out that much of Iran's eastern industrial base—such as cement plants—was established with a focus on supplying the Afghan market, underlining Afghanistan's significance as a strategic partner.

Khamseh added that South Khorasan Province shares a 331-kilometer border with Afghanistan, and the Mahirood crossing handles 35–40 percent of Iran's exports to Afghanistan by value and about 50 percent by weight.

FATF Standards Not Designed to Target Iran



TEHRAN - The head of Iran's Financial Intelligence Center stressed the need for the country to join the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), saying that the organization's standards were not created to "trouble Iran," but rather represent a global challenge that all countries must address through proper structures and frameworks.

Hadi Khani, Secretary of the High Council for the Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing, had earlier stated that adopting FATF's recommendations is not mandated under Chapter VII of the UN Charter and therefore not obligatory for Iran.

Khani previously compared engagement with FATF to obtaining a driver's license, saying:

"If we aim to accelerate our path to economic development, we should secure this license. If we choose not to, no one can force us, but we must accept the costs and move forward on foot."

He emphasized that a country can halt cooperation with FATF at any time, the worst consequence being inclusion on the FATF blacklist and the imposition of countermeasures—but not UN resolutions or military action.

According to Khani, failure to cooperate with FATF leads to financial and monetary isolation, reduced foreign investment, lower risk ratings, and growing costs for the country's economic system.

Highlighting the importance of normalizing Iran's standing with FATF, Khani stated that the goal is not merely to gain the favor of a single organization, but to build trust and demonstrate the effectiveness of Iran's anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing framework to a wide range of regional, international, and technical institutions.

Central Philippines Hit by Powerful 6.9-Magnitude Earthquake

MANILA (Dispatches) – A 6.9-magnitude earthquake struck the central Philippines late Tuesday, killing dozens of people at a sports arena and raising fears of major damage, officials said. The quake hit around 10 pm local time at a shallow depth near Palompon, close to Bogo city in Cebu province, the US Geological Survey reported.

Up to 60 people were killed in a powerful earthquake that struck the central Philippines, a senior rescue official said Wednesday. “We are receiving additional numbers of reported casualties so this thing is very fluid. We are receiving reports (that) as high as 60 individuals are reported to have perished in this earthquake,” Rafaelito Alejandro, deputy administrator of the government’s Office of Civil Defence told reporters in Manila.



Hegseth Slams Fat Generals, Trump Touts Cities as Troop Training Grounds



WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth slammed “fat generals” and diversity initiatives that he said led to decades of decay in the military and told a rare gathering of commanders on Tuesday they should resign if they do not support his agenda.

Joining Hegseth was U.S. President Donald Trump, who also delivered an address to the assembled admirals and generals in Quantico, Virginia that floated the idea of using deployments to U.S. cities as “as training grounds for our military.”

The remarks by Hegseth, a former Fox News personality, and Trump, a former reality television star, had a made-for-TV element to them after top U.S. military officials were summoned on short notice last week to the impromptu event.

“Foolish and reckless political leaders set the wrong compass heading and we lost our way. We became the ‘Woke Department,’” Hegseth said as he kicked off the event. “But not anymore.”

Addressing an auditorium full of top brass who flew in from around the world, Hegseth defended his firings of flag officers, including the top U.S. general, who is Black, and the Navy’s top admiral, who is a woman. He said the officers he relieved were part of a broken culture.

He promised sweeping changes to how the Pentagon handles discrimination complaints and investigates accusations of wrongdoing. He said the current system has top brass walking on “egg shells.”

“If the words I’m speaking today are making your hearts sink, then you should do the honorable thing and resign,” Hegseth said.

“I know the overwhelming majority of you feel the opposite. These words make your hearts full.”

Pope Leo Criticizes Inhuman Treatment of Immigrants in U.S.



VATICAN CITY (Dispatches) - Pope Leo on Tuesday appeared to offer his strongest criticism yet of U.S. President Donald Trump’s hard-line immigration policies, questioning whether they were in line with the Catholic Church’s pro-life teachings.

“Someone who says I am against abortion but I am in agreement with the inhuman treatment of immigrants in the United States, I don’t know if that’s pro-life,” the pontiff told journalists outside his residence in Castel Gandolfo.

The Catholic Church’s position that life is sacred from conception until natural death is one of the 1.4-billion-member denomination’s strongest teachings.

Leo, the first U.S. pope, was responding to a question from a U.S. journalist who asked about the country’s politics.

The White House said Trump was elected based on his many promises, including to deport criminal illegal aliens. “He is keeping his promise to the American people,” spokesperson Abigail Jackson responded in a statement.

Elected in May to replace the late Pope Francis, Leo has shown a much more reserved style than his predecessor, who frequently criticized the Trump administration.

Leo was asked about a decision by the archdiocese of Chicago to give an award to Illinois Senator Dick Durbin, a Democrat who supports abortion rights. The move has attracted vocal criticism from conservative Catholics, including several U.S. bishops.

Hamas Under Pressure as Trump Issues Deadline on Gaza Peace Plan

DUBAI (Dispatches) - U.S. President Donald Trump gave Hamas three to four days on Tuesday to accept a U.S.-backed peace plan for Gaza, warning of “a very sad end” if the group rejected the proposal that he said was close to ending the two-year-old conflict.

Mediators Qatar and Egypt shared the 20-point plan with Hamas late on Monday after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had appeared alongside Trump at the White House and endorsed the document, saying it satisfied Israel’s war aims.

Hamas was not involved in the negotiations that led to the proposal, which calls on the Islamist militant group to disarm, a demand it has previously rejected. However, an official briefed on the talks told Reuters that the group “would review it in good faith and provide a response”.

Speaking to reporters in Washington, Trump said Israeli and Arab leaders had already endorsed the plan and that “we’re just waiting for Hamas” to make its decision. He gave the group “three or four days” to respond.

“Hamas is either going to be doing it or not, and if it’s not, it’s going to be a very sad end,” Trump said as he left the White House. Asked whether there was scope for further talks on the proposal, he replied: “Not much.”

The plan specifies an immediate ceasefire, an exchange of all hostages held by Hamas for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel, a staged Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, the disarmament of Hamas and the introduction of a transitional government led by an international body.

A source close to Hamas told Reuters the plan was “completely biased to Israel” and imposed “impossible conditions” that aimed to eliminate the group.

Many elements of the 20 points have been included in numerous ceasefire deals proposed over the last two years, including those accepted and then subsequently rejected at various stages by both Israel and Hamas.

One of Hamas’s main conditions since the outset of the war has been a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in return for the release of the remaining hostages. And while the group has indicated its readiness to relinquish administrative authority, it has consistently ruled out disarming.



“What Trump has proposed is the full adoption of all Israeli conditions, which do not grant the Palestinian people or the residents of the Gaza Strip any legitimate rights,” a Palestinian official, who asked not to be named, told Reuters.

However, Hamas faces considerable pressure to accept the plan, with the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Egypt all welcoming the initiative.

Turkey’s head of intelligence will join Qatari and Egyptian mediators in Doha to discuss the peace proposal later on Tuesday, a spokesperson for Qatar’s foreign ministry said. Turkey has not previously been involved as a key mediator during efforts over the last two years to bring peace to Gaza.

It was unclear if Hamas officials would join Tuesday’s meeting. The last time Hamas leaders gathered to discuss a U.S. peace plan in Qatar, Israel tried, and failed, to kill them with a missile strike.

Netanyahu apologised on Monday to his Qatari counterpart for the September 9 attack, the White House said.

Although he initially backed the Trump plan, Netanyahu later expressed doubts about elements of the proposal, including the prospects for eventual Palestinian statehood -- something he has repeatedly ruled out.

Netanyahu is under mounting pressure from a war-weary Israeli public to end the conflict. But he also risks the collapse of his governing coalition if far-right ministers believe he has made too many concessions for a peace deal.

In Gaza itself, some Palestinians hailed Trump’s peace plan, saying it could end the bombardment and deaths, but they wondered whether it would end Israel’s control of the enclave.

“We want the war to end, but we want the occupation army that killed tens of thousands of us to get out and leave us alone,” said Salah Abu Amr, 60, a father of six from Gaza City.

“We hope the plan will end the war, but we are not sure it will, neither Trump nor Netanyahu can be trusted,” he told Reuters via a chat app.

U.S. on Brink of Gov’t Shutdown as Last-Ditch Vote Fails

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The U.S. government barreled towards its first shutdown in six years Tuesday, with funding expiring at midnight after Democrats fought a war of words with Donald Trump and senators rejected a last-ditch bid to keep the lights on.

Despite frenetic negotiations in Congress, there has been no breakthrough between Democrats and Republicans to fund the government beyond yesterday—which marks the end of the fiscal year.

With just hours to spare, Senate Republicans tried to rubber-stamp a House-passed temporary funding patch—but could not get the handful of Democratic votes required to send it to Trump’s desk.

“We’ll probably have a shutdown,” the Republican president had told reporters in the Oval Office before the vote, seeing the writing on the wall.

Trump’s assessment came after a last-gasp meeting at the White House on Monday yielded no deal, with top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer saying afterward that “large differences” remained between the sides.

Beyond the lack of progress, the negotiations have been unusually bitter, with House Democratic Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries berating Trump over a “racist and fake” AI-generated video the president posted after the meeting.

“Mr President, the next time you have something to say about me, don’t cop out through a racist and fake AI video,” Jeffries told a news conference. “When I’m back in the Oval Office, say it to my face.”

The clip mocked Schumer and Jeffries in vulgar terms, falsely depicting them announcing plans to entice illegal immigrants with benefits, while showing Jeffries wearing a sombrero and bushy mustache as mariachi music plays.



Trump in turn blamed Democrats over the stalled talks and threatened to punish the party and its voters during any stoppage by targeting progressive priorities and forcing mass public sector job cuts.

“So we’d be laying off a lot of people that are going to be very affected. And they’re Democrats, they’re going to be Democrats,” Trump added at a later White House event.

He said a “lot of good can come down from shutdowns,” and suggested he would use the pause to “get rid of a lot of things we didn’t want, and

they’d be Democrat things.”

The move would add to the pain of government workers after large-scale firings orchestrated by tycoon Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency earlier this year.

Democrats, in the minority in both chambers of Congress, have been seeking to flex rare leverage over the federal government, eight months into Trump’s barnstorming second presidency that has seen entire government agencies dismantled.

The 100-member Senate requires 60 votes to pass government funding bills—seven more than the Republicans control.

A shutdown would see nonessential operations grind to a halt, leaving hundreds of thousands of civil servants temporarily without pay, and payment of many social safety net benefits potentially disrupted.

US government shutdowns are deeply unpopular, and Democrats and Republicans alike try to avoid the scenario—while blaming the other camp in the event of a closure.

House Republicans have passed a stopgap measure to extend funding until late November, pending negotiations on a longer-term spending plan.

But Democrats want to see hundreds of billions of dollars in healthcare spending for low-income households restored, which the Trump administration is likely to eliminate.

The gridlocked Congress regularly runs into deadlines to agree on spending plans, and while the negotiations are typically fraught, they do not result in shutdowns.

The longest shutdown in history—and the latest—came during Trump’s first term, when government functions were halted for 35 days beginning December 2018.

Morocco Rocked by Violent Clashes as Youths Protest Health, Education System

PARIS (AFP) - Violent clashes erupted in several Moroccan cities late Tuesday between youths and security forces, local media reported, after days of protests calling for reforms in the public health and education sectors.

Videos published by news outlets which AFP was unable to verify showed masked demonstrators in Inezgane, near Agadir, hurling stones at police, setting fires near a shopping center and damaging a local post office.

Similar scenes were reported in nearby Ait Amira, in central Morocco’s Beni Mellal and in Oujda in the northeast.

It remained unclear whether there were any injuries.

The youth-led protests were initiated by a collective known as “GenZ 212”, whose founders remain unknown.

In a statement posted late Tuesday on its Facebook page, the group expressed “regret over acts of rioting or vandalism that affected public or private property”.



It also urged participants to remain strictly peaceful and avoid any behaviour that could “undermine the legitimacy of our just demands”.

The new protests marked the fourth consecutive day of demonstrations, though there were no reports of violence before today.

Moroccan prosecutors have said they will try 37 people for participating in the protests, one of their lawyers said.

“Thirty-four individuals will be prosecuted while free on bail, with their trial scheduled to begin on October 7, while three others will face prosecution in detention,” lawyer Souad Brahma told AFP, adding that the exact charges against them were not yet known.

More than 200 mainly young demonstrators have been arrested over the past three days in Rabat during gatherings that were dispersed by police, said the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH). Most were later released.



PARIS (Dispatches) - A Victor Osimhen penalty gave Galatasaray victory over Liverpool in the Champions League, while Chelsea edged out Jose Mourinho's Benfica and Kylian Mbappe hit a hat-trick for Real Madrid in Kazakhstan.

Elsewhere in the second round of matches in the league phase of Europe's elite club competition, Tottenham battled back to draw with Bodo/Glimt as Bayern Munich, Atletico Madrid, Marseille and Inter Milan recorded big wins.

In Istanbul, Osimhen beat Alisson Becker from the spot in the 16th minute, giving Galatasaray a 1-0 win and condemning Liverpool to a second straight loss after their defeat by Crystal Palace in the Premier League.

The English champions thought they had a chance to equalise late on when Ibrahima Konate went down and a penalty was given, but the referee overturned his decision on review.

Liverpool, who finished first in the league phase last season, also saw Alisson go off injured in the second half before the introductions off the bench of Mohamed Salah and Alexander Isak failed to have the desired impact.

"The margins were very small last season but then we were a lot of times on the right side of the score," coach Arne Slot said.

"Today again the margins were really small, but for the second time in a row on the wrong side."

Liverpool will now hope to bounce back on Saturday away to Chelsea, who themselves got back to

winning ways with a 1-0 success against Benfica as the Portuguese giants' new coach Mourinho came back to Stamford Bridge.

Richard Rios turned an Alejandro Garnacho cross into his own net for the only goal of the game in the 18th minute, with Benfica unable to recover as Mourinho returned to face the club he coached over two separate spells.

Chelsea had substitute Joao Pedro sent off in stoppage time but Enzo Maresca's side were delighted to get the win after losing their opening European game of the campaign at Bayern.

"A defeat is always a defeat but this one can be a start for us. It was a stable performance," Mourinho said of his team.

Spurs escaped Norway with a point in a 2-2 draw with Bodo/Glimt in a game played north of the Arctic Circle.

Kasper Høgh missed a penalty for the hosts before a brilliant second-half brace from Jens Petter Hauge had them two goals in front.

However, Micky van de Ven pulled one back on 68 minutes for last season's Europa League winners, and Spurs then got a lucky 89th-minute equaliser when a Nikita Haikin save smashed into the stomach of Jostein Gundersen from close range and trickled over the line.

Record 15-time European champions Real made the long trip east to face Kairat Almaty and ran out 5-0 winners.

Rummenigge Says Newcastle Were Idiots to Pay So Much for Woltemade



BERLIN (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich board member Karl-Heinz Rummenigge said Newcastle United were "idiots" for meeting VfB Stuttgart's asking price for Nick Woltemade after they stumped up a reported 63 million pounds (\$84.74 million) for the German striker.

Bayern had also been interested in signing the 23-year-old but dropped out of the running due to the fee quoted by their Bundesliga rivals.

"I can only congratulate those in Stuttgart that they — and now I will use inverted commas — found an idiot who will pay that much money," Rummenigge told BR broadcaster.

"Because we would have certainly not done that in Munich.

"We should not meet any demand to make someone happy, especially those financiers in Stuttgart."

Woltemade, capped four times by Germany, has scored two goals in five appearances since joining the Premier League side.

In response to Rummenigge's comments, VfB Stuttgart CEO Alexander Wehrle told Bild newspaper on Monday: "We are always happy when we get congratulations from Munich."

Meanwhile Newcastle United need to win the Champions League clash at Union Saint-Gilloise or risk having to play catch-up in the group phase, manager Eddie Howe warned.

Newcastle lost their opening group phase clash at home to Barcelona earlier this month but are fancied to get the better of the Belgian champions on Wednesday, even if they have won only one of their past four outings and that was against third-tier Bradford City in the League Cup.

"It's never been lost on me as a manager that winning is the be-all and end-all. You can play as well as you want but you have to try and win," Howe told a pre-match press conference.

Steve Kerr Very Comfortable Coaching on Final Year of Deal



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Despite 2025-26 being the final year of Steve Kerr's contract, the Golden State Warriors' head coach said he's comfortable with where things stand.

"I don't anticipate any negotiation during the season," Kerr told reporters Tuesday on the opening day of training camp. "Who knows, maybe it all comes up at some point and they come to me. But I'm not the slightest bit concerned about it. I don't think about it. I just think it makes perfect sense for all of us (to wait)."

Kerr has coached the Warriors to four NBA titles (2015, 2017, 2018, 2022) in his 11 seasons at Golden State. In 2023-24, he was also coaching on an expiring deal until he and the Warriors negotiated a two-year, \$35 million extension to take him through the 2025-26 campaign.

"I'm very comfortable going into the season with a year left," Kerr said. "I'm so aligned with (general manager) Mike (Dunleavy) and (owner) Joe (Lacob). We talked about this -- there's no reason for discussion or concern. This is kind of a point in our relationship where let's just see how it is at the end of the year."

The Warriors' current window to win more championships centers on three aging stars in Stephen Curry, Draymond Green and Jimmy Butler, the latter of whom was acquired at the trade deadline last winter.

Kerr, who did television work prior to coaching, could also choose to retire on his own terms -- he turned 60 on Saturday -- but told reporters he is still fully invested in coaching.

Alcaraz Wins Eighth Title of Season in Tokyo

TOKYO (Dispatches) - World number one Carlos Alcaraz won his eighth title of a sensational season after beating American Taylor Fritz 6-4, 6-4 in the Japan Open final.

The Spaniard has struggled with an ankle injury this week in Tokyo but he was still too hot for the rest of the competition to handle, including world number five Fritz.

The US Open champion gave another breathtaking display of power and athleticism to lift the trophy in his first appearance in Japan.

He clinched victory with a cleverly disguised drop shot before strolling to the net to give Fritz a warm embrace.

It was the Spaniard's ninth straight final and his 10th of the season overall.

No man since his legendary countryman Rafael Nadal in 2017 had reached 10 finals in a season.

The win gave Alcaraz a measure of revenge after losing to Fritz for the first time at the Laver Cup in San Francisco two weeks ago.



Alcaraz squandered several chances to break Fritz in the first set but he made the breakthrough in the ninth game.

That left the Spaniard serving for the set, and he sealed the deal when Fritz dumped a return into the net.

Alcaraz kept his foot on the gas and broke his opponent to start the second set.

He broke him again to take a 4-1 lead and continued to punish Fritz with a series of brutal forehands.

Fritz hit back for his first break of the match but it was too little, too late as Alcaraz clinched the championship on his next service game.

Fritz was looking to capture his third title of the season after wins at Stuttgart and Eastbourne.

The American won the Japan Open title in 2022.

Both Alcaraz and Fritz are in the draw for the Shanghai Masters this week.

Sinner Storms Into China Open Final

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Jannik Sinner reached his third China Open final in a row as defending women's champion Coco Gauff fought back to beat Belinda Bencic in a spicy contest.

The world number two Italian Sinner beat Australia's Alex de Minaur 6-3, 4-6, 6-2 and is one victory away from a second title in Beijing.

Top seed Sinner will face either American teenager Learner Tien or eighth-seeded Daniil Medvedev in the final.

His only loss on Beijing's centre Diamond Court has been to great rival Carlos Alcaraz, who won last year's championship match in three gripping sets.

"It's a very special place for me. This court has always been amazing," Sinner, beaten by Alcaraz in the recent US Open final, said.

"Many things were positive finding myself again here, playing the last match of the tournament, it's great," he added.

"I'm very happy to be here on court tomorrow."

Alcaraz is not defending his title in the Chinese capital and is instead playing in Tokyo.



De Minaur, who had never beaten Sinner in 10 previous meetings, forced a deciding set but Sinner reset and claimed victory when the third-seeded Australian fired long.

"He was playing some great tennis in the second set," the 24-year-old Sinner said.

"The third set, luckily, I started very well, which gave me the confidence to continue."

In the women's draw, Gauff beat Bencic 4-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 and plays 66th-ranked Eva Lys of Germany in the quarter-finals.

"It was a tough match," Gauff, the American second seed, said.

"I had chances in the first to close it out but overall I'm happy with how I fought. She was being really aggressive."

There were frustrations on both sides of the court at a largely empty stadium as the players switched between one half darkened by shade and the other in the blazing sun.

There was a flashpoint between the two players during a changeover in the second set when Switzerland's 15th seed Bencic said: "Your team is chatting. I'm too old for these mind games, okay?"

"You're the one playing the mind games," Gauff shot back.