

The Commander-in-Chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Says the IRGC Navy's Forces Are Fully Prepared to Give a Decisive Response to Any Threatening Move by the Enemy in the Persian Gulf Or on Its Islands

IRAN NEWS

The Yemeni Armed Forces Claimed Responsibility for Launching a New “Hypersonic Ballistic Missile” Attack Against Sensitive Targets Deep Inside the Israeli-Occupied Territories in Support of the Besieged Palestinian People in Gaza

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Iran Backs Palestinian Decision on Gaza Ceasefire, Warns of Israel’s Bad Faith



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The Iranian Foreign Ministry says that it will back any decision by the Palestinian people and resistance regarding the US-backed ceasefire proposal for Gaza, while warning the international community about the plan's dangerous dimensions and Israel's history of bad faith.

In a statement, the ministry said Iran has always supported initiatives aimed at halting war crimes and ethnic cleansing and in the Gaza Strip and securing Palestinian self-determination, citing the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the legal and moral responsibility of states to support the legitimate struggle of Palestinians to achieve freedom.

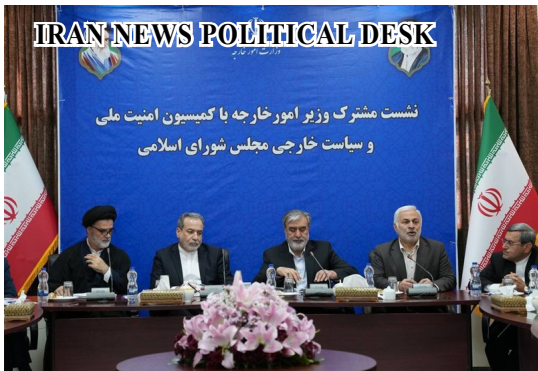
The statement said that decisions over any ceasefire or political settlement must rest with the Palestinians themselves, including the armed resistance.

It said Tehran welcomes any decision by them that “entails stopping the genocide of Palestinians, the withdrawal of the occupying Zionist army from Gaza, respect for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, the entry of humanitarian assistance and the reconstruction of Gaza.”

Tehran also warned that a cessation of hostilities would not absolve international actors of their duty to pursue legal accountability.

The ministry stressed that stopping the violence must be accompanied by “legal and judicial” action to hold the regime accountable, and to “identify and prosecute the commanders and perpetrators of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip, with the aim of ending the decades-long impunity of the Zionist regime.”

FM Stresses Efforts to Protect Iran’s Rights in Peaceful Nuclear Energy Use



TEHRAN - In a meeting with members of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, Iran's Foreign Minister emphasized the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' ongoing commitment to safeguarding the country's rights in benefiting from peaceful nuclear energy through consultations with like-minded nations.

Seyed Abbas Araqchi, Iran's Foreign Minister, hosted the chairman and members of the National Security and Foreign Policy Commission of the Islamic Consultative Assembly at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Monday.

During the session, held at the ministry's headquarters, Araqchi briefed parliamentarians on the latest developments in Iran's foreign policy and updated them on the diplomatic initiatives aimed at protecting the country's national interests. He highlighted the Ministry's efforts over the past year, focusing on key areas including nuclear diplomacy, strengthening ties with neighboring countries, enhancing South-South cooperation, leveraging multilateral organizations such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, active diplomacy to counter war-mongering and genocidal acts by the Israeli regime, protection of Iranian citizens abroad, and promoting economic diplomacy.

FM Condemns European Countries' Demands for U.S. Talks as Unreasonable

TEHRAN - In a press briefing, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Esmail Baqaei strongly criticized the approach of three European countries regarding their recent demands for renewed negotiations with the United States, describing the conditions imposed as “unreasonable” and detrimental to diplomatic progress.

Speaking at the weekly press conference, Baqaei first addressed the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Palestine, highlighting what he described as continued acts of genocide against innocent Palestinians. “Despite claims of promoting peace, Palestinian civilians remain exposed to indiscriminate bombings and imposed starvation. Over the past two years, approximately 80,000 civilians have been killed, and double that number have been injured,” he said. He added that the United Nations Security Council remains paralyzed due to the United States' comprehensive support for measures that fail to stop the ongoing atrocities. Baqaei condemned the detention of nearly 500 activists from the Palestinian “Steadfastness Caravan,” calling it a terrorist act intended to ensure the continuation of the genocide.

Turning to nuclear diplomacy, Baqaei described the European approach to activating the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) snapback mechanism as “irresponsible and destructive,” particularly over the past three months. He accused the three European nations of exploiting the dispute resolution mechanism to advance American demands. “All three conditions proposed by these countries were illogical. Despite this, Iran agreed to engage with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to explore a new cooperation framework, which initially met with the agency's approval but was later rejected,” he said. Baqaei added that the Europeans failed to demonstrate themselves as independent negotiating partners, suggesting that future conditions for engagement will differ.

Baqaei stressed that diplomacy remains open for Iran whenever it deems it effective, but the recent behavior of the three European countries shows that constructive dialogue with them has proven unproductive.

He also clarified Iran's position on the issue of reinstating UN Security Council sanctions, following meetings between Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi and UN Secretary-General António Guterres. “The action of the three European countries to bring back sanctions resolutions lacks legal legitimacy and has caused unnecessary confusion. There is no Security Council decision mandating this; it is a unilateral action by these countries under U.S. pressure, ignoring the interests of other European nations. China and Russia have explicitly supported Iran's position,



confirming the illegality of these actions,” Baqaei explained.

On the IAEA, Baqaei criticized both the agency and the European states for enabling U.S. and Israeli aggression against Iranian nuclear facilities. “The IAEA has issued no report suggesting any diversion of Iran's nuclear program. The agency should have condemned attacks by the Israeli regime and the U.S., which violate international norms prohibiting any interference with peaceful nuclear sites,” he said.

Regarding the possibility of future negotiations with Europe, Baqaei said that Iran currently has no plans for talks, focusing instead on assessing the implications of European and American actions. “Diplomacy in the sense of ongoing consultations will continue, but we will not engage under conditions that are legally or

diplomatically unjustified,” he added.

He also addressed recent U.S. criticisms of Iran, stating: “Every time the U.S. boasts of its illegal acts, it increases its own legal liability. This only confirms for the Iranian people that the U.S. acts as a lawbreaker.”

Baqaei further detailed Iran's legal objections to European actions at the UN, noting that six Security Council members opposed European demands and abstained from supporting them on two occasions. He stressed that Iran's reduction of its JCPOA commitments in response to the U.S. withdrawal in 2019 was fully justified under international law.

On bilateral issues, Baqaei discussed ongoing efforts to resolve cases involving Iranian and French detainees, emphasizing that Iran is committed to facilitating the release of the French nationals and ensuring fair legal procedures.

Other matters addressed included the U.S. refusal to issue visas for members of Iran's football federation. Baqaei criticized the politicization of sports by the U.S., calling on the American government to fulfill its obligations to international sports delegations.

Regarding recent statements by the governor of Ardabil about trade and travel restrictions with Azerbaijan, Baqaei said the issue is under review. He also reaffirmed the validity of Iran's bilateral agreements, including the recently enacted Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with Russia, which he described as resilient and independent of global political developments.

Finally, Baqaei addressed the issue of Iranian citizens returning from the U.S., noting that 53 individuals have already returned. He rejected the term “extradition,” framing the return as the Iranian government's effort to protect its citizens from discriminatory treatment abroad. “The doors of the homeland are always open to Iranians,” he emphasized.

Costly, Useless, Theatrical

The representatives of the Majlis (Parliament) approved the removal of four zeros from the national currency.

With this resolution, the fate of the zeros on the banknotes has finally been decided, and in the future we will have to say goodbye to the zeros on our bills.

Previously, in Mordad 1404 (July-August 2025), Mohammad Reza Farzin, the Governor of the Central Bank, had said about removing four zeros from the national currency:

While the national monetary unit of the country is the rial, in practice the people use the word toman and do not use the term rial in their transactions and conversations. Therefore, the national currency will be the toman, and its smaller unit will be the qeran.

According to him, with the increase of inflation and the fall of the current value of money, the ratio of the value of the national currency to foreign currencies has declined in a shocking way, and this has damaged national pride. Therefore, it is necessary to remove the extra zeros from the national currency in order to restore national pride.

Thus, Clause A of Article 58 of the Central Bank Law of the Islamic Republic of Iran was amended in Parliament as follows:

The phrase “which is equal to 10,000 current rials and equivalent to 100 qerans” was added to the end of Clause A of Article 58 of the Central Bank Law of the Islamic Republic of Iran, ratified on 30/03/1402 (June 19, 2023), and five notes (sub-articles) were added to this article as follows:

Note 1: The exchange rate of foreign currencies against the rial and the purchase and sale rates of foreign exchange by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran shall be calculated and determined within the framework of the prevailing exchange-rate system and in compliance with the country's foreign-exchange reserves and legal obligations.

Note 2: The period of parallel circulation and simultaneous validity of the rial and the current rial — called the transitional period in this law — shall be a maximum of three years, in compliance with Note 4 of this article. The method of collecting and conditions for withdrawing the current rial banknotes and coins from circulation shall be determined and implemented in accordance with clauses (kh) and (d) of this article.

Note 3: After the end of the transitional period, obligations that were previously created based on the current rial shall be settled only with the rial or its subdivisions, the qeran.

Note 4: The Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran is required, within two years from the date this law comes into force, to make the necessary executive arrangements to begin the transitional period. The Central Bank is obliged to publicly announce the start of the transitional period through the official gazette, electronic portals, and the national radio and television (IRIB).

Note 5: The executive bylaw of this article shall be prepared by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran within three months from the date this law comes into force and, after the approval of the High Council, shall be ratified by the Cabinet.

Now, with this resolution, the Parliament has changed the form of money, but the value of money continues to decline toward insignificance.

The plight of entrenched inflation in the structure of the national economy is day by day gnawing away at people's livelihoods and the nation's economic vitality, like a moth, while everyone sits and watches.

The Seventh Development Plan has, for a year now, been gathering dust in the potholes of drafting executive directives under the government's indifference.

This resolution of Parliament has solved none of the crushing problems of high living costs for the people; instead, it has increased the costs of changing software systems and the structure of accounting for both the public and the state.

If only Parliament, instead of passing this resolution, had compelled the government to expedite the implementation of the Seventh Plan. The government is observing the economy instead of managing it.

The most optimistic accusation that can be leveled at this government in this regard is the term indifference.

This bloated, costly, sluggish, and exhausted government not only fails to alleviate the suffering of the people's purchasing power but adds to their crushing burdens day by day.

Now Parliament has given it yet another four-zero distraction to be busy with for five years.



Hamid Reza Naghashbani

VP Says Economy Should Be Entrusted to the People

TEHRAN - Vice President for Executive Affairs, Mohammad-Jafar Qaempanah, emphasized the central role of citizens in the country's economic development, saying on Monday that the economy must be placed in the hands of the people, who are capable of solving the nation's challenges.

Speaking at the National Investment Opportunities Conference in North Khorasan Province, Qaempanah noted that President [name not provided in the report] has consistently highlighted two key priorities in both campaign messages and development plans: adherence to the policies outlined by the Supreme Leader and the objectives set out in the Seventh National Development Plan.

“Throughout the Seventh Development Plan, there is a clear focus on transferring the economy to the private sector,” he said.

The Vice President described citizens as the engine of economic growth, stressing that the private sector can play a pivotal role in job creation and regional development.

“The government's role in the economy should be limited to guidance and facilitation,” he stated, identifying the state's core responsibilities as education, healthcare, and security. Expanding educational opportunities and improving healthcare services, he added, are the foundations for sustainable growth.

Qaempanah underscored the need to create a more favorable environment for investment. Supporting investors and enabling private-sector activity, he said, not only boosts employment and reduces poverty but also accelerates economic growth and promotes social equity.

The Vice President called for a change in attitudes toward investors and entrepreneurs:

“If an investor walks into any government office, they must be treated with respect and dignity,” he stressed.

He emphasized that the government's main role is to provide infrastructure for investors. Qaempanah criticized previous policies that focused development efforts mainly on central regions, leaving peripheral areas underdeveloped.

“In the past, major bank loans went to urban tower projects while peripheral regions faced soaring unemployment,” he said, adding that the current administration seeks to reverse that trend by prioritizing investment in disadvantaged regions.

Development, he explained, requires both hard infrastructure—such as permits, land, electricity,



and gas—and soft infrastructure, including effective management and human capital.

Highlighting the importance of skilled professionals, Qaempanah said: “Above all, it is capable human beings who drive development. A country can only progress by attracting skilled and competent talent.”

He urged provinces to identify and retain their most talented individuals, warning that without knowledgeable experts, genuine development cannot be achieved.

“No province can achieve real progress without drawing on its mathematicians, scientists, and entrepreneurs,” he said. “Even with permits and funding, no transformation is possible without capable human resources. It is people—the nation's brainpower—who drive change.”

Qaempanah called for stronger efforts to attract and support talented individuals and investors, rather than

undermining them.

“While we oppose rent-seeking and corruption, investors, entrepreneurs, thinkers, and scientists must be protected and respected,” he noted.

Qaempanah stressed that work, production, and investment form the foundation of national development, urging society to recognize the importance of these sectors—including tourism—as key sources of real wealth for Iran.

He called for bipartisan support for entrepreneurs and producers, irrespective of political or religious affiliation, and highlighted the crucial role of women in economic development, noting that empowering female entrepreneurs can further accelerate economic and social progress.

Referring to Iran's long intellectual and cultural heritage—from Avicenna and Hafez to Omar Khayyam and Imam Reza—he said these assets should be transformed into tangible economic value through cooperation across all sectors.

Qaempanah arrived in Bojnourd on Monday morning to attend the investment conference, where he was welcomed by the province's religious leader, governor, and other local officials.

During his one-day visit, he inaugurated 56 new schools as part of the “Educational Justice Development Initiative,” visited the Faculty of Pharmacy and Imam Hassan Hospital in Bojnourd, and opened 13 solar power plants. His itinerary also included an inspection of a local water-supply project, a meeting with economic stakeholders, and participation in the provincial administrative council session.

IRAN NEWS



Iranian Ambassador Meets with Iraqi National Wisdom Leader

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Mohammad Kazem Al-e Sadeq, Iranian Ambassador to Iraq, has met with Ammar al-Hakim, head of the Iraqi National Wisdom Movement, to discuss issues of mutual interest.

The two officials discussed ways to enhance bilateral relations between Iraq and Iran. Their dialogue focused on fostering cooperation that would benefit both nations and their peoples, aiming to deepen Islamic, cultural, economic, and political ties. Highlighting the upcoming parliamentary elections in Iraq, al-Hakim described this electoral event as crucial and transformative, with the potential to shift the country from a fragile stability to a more enduring one. He emphasized that establishing stability and tranquility in the region is essential for achieving international security.

Iran–Netherlands Trade Reaches \$500m in 2024



TEHRAN - According to a report by the International Affairs Department of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, the volume of trade between Iran and the Netherlands reached \$500 million in 2024. The report notes that the Netherlands imported over \$150 million worth of oil from Iran last year.

The study reviews the historical trajectory of bilateral trade, highlighting that the trade volume between the two countries peaked at \$3.8 billion in the 1970s and further climbed to \$5.5 billion in 2010. However, the imposition of international sanctions led to a sharp decline, bringing the figure down to about \$500 million in 2024.

The report describes the Netherlands as a strategic partner for Iran, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, energy, and logistics. Yet, sanctions, competition from China, and occasional political tensions have posed significant obstacles to expanding these relations.

The report suggests that lifting sanctions, resolving oil payment disputes, and strengthening cooperation could help restore trade volumes to historical levels and enhance collaboration in key areas such as oil, agriculture, and transportation. However, in the short term — until the end of 2025 — growth is expected to remain limited due to existing restrictions.

Historically, before the sanctions, the Netherlands imported around \$3 billion worth of Iranian oil annually during the 2000s, with the Port of Rotterdam serving as the main hub for processing Iranian crude. In 2024, that figure dropped to \$150 million, and Rotterdam no longer plays a central role in Iranian oil trade.

The agricultural sector has faced similar challenges. The Netherlands, once a major supplier of seeds and agricultural technology to Iran — with exports valued at \$400 million in 2016 — saw its share shrink to \$250 million after the sanctions imposed in 2018.

The report concludes that, if sanctions are lifted, bilateral trade could rise to \$5 billion annually, approaching pre-2010 levels (adjusted for inflation). Key sectors with significant potential include oil and gas, greenhouse agriculture, and logistics.

Iran’s FATF Membership Paves the Way for Greater Benefits From BRICS and SCO



TEHRAN - The head of Iran’s Export Confederation has welcomed the approval of Iran’s accession to the Convention on Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) and the facilitation of the country’s membership in the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), saying the move will positively affect not only Iran’s trade relations but also its ability to fully benefit from international blocs such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

“Without joining the FATF, it would not be possible to take full advantage of these economic alliances,” said Mohammad Lahouti, president of the Iranian Export Confederation, in an interview with IRNA.

Following the approval by the Expediency Council of the bills related to Iran’s FATF membership, one of the main obstacles to the country’s foreign trade has been removed. For years, the lack of alignment with FATF standards, alongside international sanctions, had restricted the activities of Iranian businesses abroad. Economists believe that Iran’s accession to the Palermo Convention and the CFT — and its subsequent removal from FATF’s blacklist — will significantly reduce the credit risk faced by Iranian traders and companies in international transactions.

Lahouti explained that joining the CFT had been stalled for years but was finally passed by the current administration with the support of the Expediency Council. He added that with Iran’s accession and submission of the required documents to the FATF, banking and trade relations with target countries are expected to become easier.

He noted that only a few countries remain outside FATF membership and that Iran’s delay in joining the body had hampered efforts to expand economic ties. “Even after the lifting of some international sanctions following the JCPOA, our lack of membership in the FATF prevented foreign banks and traders from engaging with Iran,” he said.

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



Sanctions “No Barrier” to Iran’s African Trade

TEHRAN - Iranian businesses can expand in African markets despite Western sanctions if they combine market knowledge with flexible financing, according to Masoud Barhaman, head of the Iran–Africa Joint Chamber of Commerce.

Speaking at a trade forum in Ahvaz, organized by the local Chamber of Commerce under the theme “Understanding Packaging Needs and Standards in African Markets”, Barhaman dismissed sanctions as a justification for inaction.

“Exporters can use cash payments, barter deals, local exchange houses, or register firms in third countries to bypass restrictions,” he said.

Barhaman described Africa as a continent of opportunities and complexities rather than a single market.

With 1.45 billion people across 55 countries and abundant resources, including 30% of global mineral reserves, 65% of diamonds, 60% of gold, and significant lithium, uranium, and titanium deposits, Africa is “one of the most attractive global markets,” he noted.

Despite being often labeled “under-developed,” many African economies are growing faster than the global average, driven by foreign investment.

“If we delay, we will hand these opportunities to others,” Barhaman warned.

Africa’s heavy reliance on traditional agriculture, which accounts for about 80% of GDP, leaves gaps in processing and manufacturing industries.

“The continent exports mostly raw materials and lacks industries in processed foods, appliances, textiles, cars, and decorative goods,” Barhaman said. “Almost every Iranian product — from building materials to carpets, chandeliers, and costume jewelry — has potential in Africa.”

Barhaman recommended several steps for Iranian firms: Trade fairs: Participation in African exhibitions to connect with buyers; Trade missions: Organizing B2B meetings and delegations; Market research: Understanding demand, logistics, and customs rules; Local presence: Establishing production or trading bases for sectors such as construction; He cited China’s early investments in Africa as a model for securing market share; Bypassing Sanctions and Financing Trade; and Barhaman argued that financial hurdles are manageable.

“African buyers, like Iraqi or Afghan partners, often pay in cash. Barter is also common,” he said, citing transactions in which Iran imported African precious metals in exchange for goods.

Other solutions include using local money-exchange networks or setting up firms in the UAE or Turkey to issue invoices and facilitate letters of credit.

He added that negotiations with Iran’s Central Bank aim to establish correspondent banking links with African banks, allowing settlements without physical money transfers — “a step that bypasses sanctions while enhancing security for traders.”

Government support is also available. The Export Guarantee Fund of Iran covers up to US\$4.5 billion in trade with Africa and provides partner credit ratings. The National Development Fund has allocated €2 billion in concessional loans at about 8.5% interest for Iranian projects in Africa, several of which are already underway.

Iran’s annual trade with Africa stands at around \$1.5b, with \$1b in exports and about \$500m in imports, according to Barhaman.

Gilan Positioned as Key Hub for Expanding Iran–Russia Trade



TEHRAN - The northern Iranian province of Gilan is set to play a central role in deepening economic relations between Iran and Russia under the framework of the recently implemented Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation Agreement between the two countries, senior Iranian and Russian officials said at a joint business meeting in Rasht.

Speaking at the session hosted by the Gilan Chamber of Commerce, Saman Nazari Mo’afi, head of the Rasht Chamber, emphasized the province’s unique geographical and logistical advantages, noting that Gilan serves as a critical gateway for Iran’s trade with Russia and the wider Eurasian region.

“Gilan’s land, sea, and air routes already handle much of our bilateral trade and transit. With further development of rail infrastructure, these exchanges will expand significantly,” Nazari said.

He acknowledged logistical, financial, and regulatory challenges but expressed confidence that the new cooperation framework will help resolve them. “The Gilan Chamber is fully prepared to facilitate implementation of the agreement and to welcome Russian investors and traders,” he added.

Gilan has been designated by Tehran as the lead province for fostering economic ties with Russia and members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). To strengthen these connections, Rasht will host a Caspian Littoral Governors’ Summit in November, with participation from senior national officials, governors of three northern and four southern Iranian provinces, and business leaders from Caspian Sea countries.

On the sidelines of the summit, two major events will take place in the Anzali Free Zone: a B2B forum and an international trade and production expo, featuring 200 booths for domestic

and foreign firms. Nazari invited Russian companies in sectors such as foodstuffs, agricultural products, environmental technologies, detergents, auto parts, animal feed, construction materials, grains, cooking oils, and wood-based industries to participate.

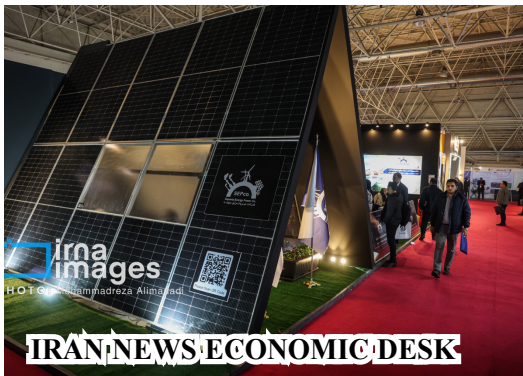
The Rasht Chamber plans to launch a smart digital platform to connect Iranian and Russian businesses and establish a bilateral commercial database. Special cultural events, including “A Day of Russia in Iran” and “A Day of Iran in Russia,” are also planned to foster people-to-people ties.

Addressing concerns from the Russian delegation over high fees for Russian truck drivers at Iranian border terminals, Nazari pledged to work with provincial authorities to reduce costs and streamline cross-border transit. “Both countries are under unjust sanctions and must avoid creating additional barriers for each other,” he said.

Andrey Vadov, Russia’s Consul General in Rasht, underlined the strategic importance of Gilan in the North–South Transport Corridor, noting that more than 400 Russian truck drivers apply daily for transit permits to Iran.

Vadov called the upcoming Caspian summit and expo a “golden opportunity” to strengthen commercial partnerships and investment flows between the two countries. He highlighted ongoing Russian exports to Iran, including wheat, barley, corn, and 900,000 tons of sunflower oil in the first half of 2025, as well as pulses, meat, and potentially confectionery products under the new cooperation framework.

Iran, Norway Explore Deeper Cooperation in Renewable Energy



TEHRAN - Iran and Norway are seeking to expand bilateral cooperation in the renewable energy sector, with a focus on technical knowledge exchange, power grid management, and joint investment in sustainable projects. The discussions come as both nations prioritize cleaner energy sources to address climate change and ensure long-term energy security.

According to Iran’s Ministry of Energy, Mohsen Tarzatab, head of the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization of Iran (SATBA), highlighted these prospects during a meeting on Sunday with Paul Bjørnstad, Norway’s ambassador to the Islamic Republic. Tarzatab emphasized that Norway’s advanced experience in integrating renewable energy into national power grids offers valuable lessons for Iran.

“Iran is implementing extensive programs to expand renewable energy capacity,” Tarzatab said. “Given Norway’s remarkable achievements in grid management and renewable deployment, we see strong potential for collaboration in education, technical exchanges, and operational expertise in power networks that increasingly rely on clean energy sources.”

Tarzatab also noted that Iran has created supportive legal and financial frameworks to encourage investment in renewables. These include the introduction of a “Green Board” on the Iranian Energy Exchange and various incentive schemes to attract private and foreign investors.

“Iran is ready to leverage its existing capacities in partnership with Norway to boost energy efficiency and carry out innovative renewable energy projects,” he added.

Ambassador Bjørnstad expressed Norway’s readiness to share its expertise and technology in renewable energy, particularly in offshore wind and solar power. He pointed out that Norwegian companies have a proven record of designing, constructing, and operating advanced renewable power plants, including projects in neighboring countries.

Saffron, Pistachios Lead Agricultural, Food Trade Between Iran and Spain



TEHRAN - The Joint Iran–Spain Chamber of Commerce has highlighted saffron and pistachios as the leading agricultural and food commodities driving trade between the two countries. According to the chamber’s official platform, these two products dominate bilateral agricultural exchanges, underscoring Iran’s strong foothold in high-value specialty crops.

A report published by Iran Chamber Online, citing data from the Joint Iran–Spain Chamber of Commerce, shows that the agricultural and food trade between the two nations is marked by a substantial trade deficit for Spain. In 2024, Spain’s agricultural and food imports from Iran significantly outpaced its exports to the Islamic Republic, leaving Madrid with a negative trade balance of €52 million.

Figures reviewed by the Spanish agricultural news agency Efeagro reveal that Spain exported a total of €16.57 million worth of agricultural and food products to Iran last year. The largest single category in these exports was vegetable seeds, accounting for €4 million. Other notable exports included €3.37 million in processed food industry residues, €2.14 million in live laying hens, €1.63 million in fishery products, and €1.47 million in eggs.

However, these exports were far outweighed by Spanish imports from Iran. In 2024, Spain imported €68.52 million worth of agricultural goods from Iran, with saffron and pistachios dominating the list. Saffron accounted for €48.4 million of the total, while pistachios made up €14.9 million.

Further data show that most pistachios imported by Spain were shelled, valued at €11.4 million, compared to €3.5 million for in-shell pistachios. The strong demand for these Iranian products reflects their role in Spain’s food processing and culinary sectors, particularly in confectionery and gourmet industries.

Syria Selects Members of First Post-Assad Parliament

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) - Local committees in Syria cast their ballots for members of a transitional parliament in a process criticised as undemocratic, with a third of the new lawmakers to be appointed directly by interim leader Ahmed al-Sharaa. The assembly's formation is expected to consolidate the power of Sharaa, whose Islamist forces led a coalition that toppled longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad in December after more than 13 years of civil war.

Members of the local committees queued up to vote at Syria's National Library, formerly the Assad National Library, with the electoral commission saying in the evening that "the voting has ended and the counting is underway".

A member of the Damascus elections committee told AFP that while some early results could trickle in Sunday night, the final list of winners was not due until Monday.



Georgian PM Accuses EU of Meddling



TBILISI (Dispatches) - Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze said that protesters who sought to force entry to the presidential palace the previous evening had been trying to topple the government and accused the European Union of meddling in Georgia's affairs.

Georgian riot police used pepper spray and water cannons to drive demonstrators away from the presidential palace in the capital Tbilisi on Saturday, and detained five activists, as the opposition staged a large demonstration on a day of local elections.

On Sunday, the State Security Service said it had discovered a large cache of weapons, ammunition, explosives and a detonator in a forest outside Tbilisi it said were intended for "subversive acts" at Saturday's protest.

It said a Georgian citizen, whom it identified only by the individual's initials, had purchased the arms at the behest of another Georgian fighting in Ukraine, according to the statement cited by the Interpress news agency.

Kobakhidze said that up to 7,000 people attended Saturday's rally but their "attempt to overthrow the constitutional order" had failed despite what he said was support from Brussels.

He accused EU Ambassador Pawel Herczynski of meddling in Georgian politics and urged him to condemn the protests.

"You know that specific people from abroad have even expressed direct support for all this, for the announced attempt to overthrow the constitutional order," Interpress cited Kobakhidze as saying.

"In this context, the European Union ambassador to Georgia bears special responsibility. He should come out, distance himself and strictly condemn everything that is happening on the streets of Tbilisi."

GenZ 212 Anti-Corruption Youth Protests Sweeps Morocco



RABAT (Dispatches) - Young Moroccans took to the streets on Sunday for the ninth straight night of demonstrations calling for an end to corruption and a change of government. The rallies, organised online by the anonymous GenZ 212 collective, have spread across cities nationwide since September 27, shaking one of North Africa's most stable countries.

Young Moroccans took to the streets on Sunday in cities across the kingdom for the ninth consecutive night of protests calling for an end to corruption and a change of government.

Organised online by the GenZ 212 collective, whose founders have remained anonymous, the rallies have swept the usually stable North African country since September 27.

Protesters have demanded reforms to social services, especially health and education, and voiced anger over social inequality.

In Casablanca, crowds gathered in the working-class El Fida district, demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch, according to live broadcasts from Moroccan media.

Similar slogans were chanted in the northern city of Tetouan, where hundreds of protesters gathered, the broadcasts showed.

In the capital, Rabat, around a hundred demonstrators rallied in front of the country's parliament, shouting "The government is corrupt."

Hamas Pushes for Swift Prisoner Swap as Trump Urges Rapid Gaza Talks

CAIRO (Dispatches) - Hamas yesterday called for a swift start to a hostage-prisoner exchange with Israel, as negotiators from both sides headed to Egypt for crucial talks aimed at ending the nearly two-year war in Gaza.

The diplomatic push follows Hamas's positive response to Donald Trump's roadmap for an end to the fighting and the release of captives in Gaza in exchange for Palestinians held in Israeli jails, with the US leader urging both sides to "move fast".

"There have been very positive discussions with Hamas, and Countries from all over the World (Arab, Muslim, and everyone else) this weekend, to release the Hostages, end the War in Gaza but, more importantly, finally have long sought PEACE in the Middle East," Trump posted Sunday on his Truth Social platform.

"I am told that the first phase should be completed this week, and I am asking everyone to MOVE FAST."

Foreign ministers from several countries, including Egypt, said the talks at the Egyptian resort town of Sharm El-Sheikh were a "real opportunity" to achieve a sustainable ceasefire, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu expressed hope that the hostages could be released within days.

A senior Hamas official told AFP on condition of anonymity that the Palestinian militant group "is very keen to reach an agreement to end the war and immediately begin the prisoner exchange process in accordance with the field conditions".

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio yesterday urged Israel to stop bombing Gaza ahead of the discussions in Egypt.

"You can't release hostages in the middle of strikes, so the strikes will have to stop," Rubio told CBS.

"There can't be a war going on in the middle of it."

Netanyahu said the Israeli delegation would be departing for Egypt today for the talks, due to start on the eve of the second anniversary of the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack that sparked the war.

Hamas's chief negotiator, Khalil al-Hayya, arrived in Egypt late yesterday at the head of the delegation, the group said in a statement.

The White House said Trump had also sent two envoys to Egypt — his son-in-law Jared Kushner and Middle East negotiator Steve Witkoff.

"During communications with mediators, Hamas insisted that it is essential for Israel to halt military operations across all areas of the Gaza Strip, cease all air, reconnaissance, and drone activity, and withdraw from inside Gaza City," a



have slightly pulled back, but I believe this is a tactical move, not a withdrawal," said Muin Abu Rajab, 40, a resident of the city's Al-Rimal neighbourhood.

Hamas has insisted it should have a say in the territory's future, though Trump's roadmap stipulates that it and other factions "not have any role in the governance of Gaza".

The US plan, endorsed by Netanyahu, calls for a halt to hostilities, the release of hostages within 72 hours, a gradual Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Hamas's disarmament — something the group has described as a red line in the past.

Under the proposal, administration of the territory would be taken up by a technocratic body overseen by a post-war transitional authority headed by Trump himself.

"We hope Trump will pressure Netanyahu and force him to stop the war," said Ahmad Barbakh, a resident of the Al-Mawasi area.

"We want the prisoner exchange deal to be completed quickly so that Israel has no excuse to continue the war."

Palestinian source close to Hamas said, adding the group would "also halt their military operations" in parallel.

Militants seized 251 hostages during their October 7 attack, 47 of whom are still in Gaza. Of those, the Israeli military says 25 are dead.

According to Trump's plan, in return for the hostages, Israel is expected to release 250 Palestinian prisoners with life sentences and more than 1,700 detainees from the Gaza Strip who were arrested during the war.

Trump has warned he will "not tolerate delay" from Hamas, urging the group to move quickly towards a deal "or else all bets will be off".

Noting that the "operational situation has changed", Israeli military chief Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir warned Sunday that if the negotiations failed, the military would "return to fighting" in Gaza.

Israel, meanwhile, has continued to carry out strikes. AFPTV footage showed thick smoke billowing over the skyline of the coastal territory on Sunday.

Gaza's civil defence agency, a rescue force operating under Hamas authority, said Israeli attacks killed at least 20 people across the territory on Sunday, 13 of them in Gaza City.

"There has been a noticeable decrease in the number of air strikes (since last night). The tanks and military vehicles

France Unveils New Gov't Amid Political Deadlock



PARIS (Dispatches) - French President Emmanuel Macron named a new government, putting together a team of largely familiar faces under Prime Minister Sebastien Lecormu as he struggles to pull the country out of a political crisis.

The new cabinet lineup was unveiled nearly a month after the appointment of Lecormu, Macron's seventh prime minister.

The latest premier risks being toppled by the opposition in a deeply divided parliament despite his efforts to obtain cross-party support, and opposition leaders on the right and left were livid on Sunday night.

Bruno Le Maire, who served as economy minister from 2017 to 2024, was named defence minister at a deeply sensitive time of tension with Russia over Ukraine.

Roland Lescure, a Macron loyalist, was named to take over the economy portfolio, with the difficult task of delivering an austerity budget plan for next year.

But many of the other key ministers kept their jobs.

Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot retained his post, the presidency said.

Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau, who has vowed to crack down on illegal immigration, and Justice Minister Gerald Darmanin both stayed put.

Rachida Dati, a scandal-ridden culture minister who is set to stand trial for corruption next year, also remained in place.

The presidency unveiled a total of 18 names, with more appointments to be announced at a later stage.

Far-right leader Marine Le Pen said the new cabinet lineup was "pathetic".

Jordan Bardella, the 30-year-old leader of Le Pen's National Rally party, also mocked the government and reiterated the threat of censure.

"We made it clear to the prime minister: it's either a break with the past or a vote of no confidence," he said on X.

Bardella said the cabinet lineup was "decidedly all about continuity and absolutely nothing about breaking with the past".

Le Pen, whose party senses its best chance to come to power, has said she is

waiting to hear Lecormu's general policy speech on Tuesday before deciding on any further course of action.

Boris Vallaud, head of Socialist lawmakers, accused Macron's supporters of seeking to plunge France "further into chaos".

"They lose elections but they govern. They don't have a majority but refuse to compromise," he said on X.

The head of the hard-left France Unbowed group, Jean-Luc Melenchon, slammed what he described as a "procession of revenants" mostly hailing from the right, which he said "will not last."

"The countdown to get rid of them has begun," he said on X.

Some opposition leaders have urged Macron to call snap legislative elections or even resign.

Macron, who has just 18 months left in power and is enduring his worst-ever popularity levels, has insisted he will serve out his term in full.

Lecormu might be toppled by the end of next week, Mujtaba Rahman, Europe director at risk analysis firm Eurasia Group, told AFP.

"His odds of surviving are dwindling," he said. "The mood is darkening."

Paul Taylor, a senior visiting fellow at the European Policy Centre, said that French politics was increasingly driven by "anger and emotion rather than rationality".

"If Lecormu fails, I don't see much alternative to a dissolution," he told AFP. "What a mess France is stuck in until 2027, and maybe longer."

Lecormu's two immediate predecessors, Francois Bayrou and Michel Barnier, were ousted in a legislative standoff over France's austerity budget.

France's public debt has reached a record high, official data showed last week.

France's debt-to-GDP ratio is now the European Union's third-highest after Greece and Italy, and is close to twice the 60 percent permitted under EU rules.

France has been mired in deadlock since Macron gambled on snap elections in the middle of last year in the hopes of bolstering his authority.

The move backfired, with voters electing a parliament fractured between three rival blocs.

In appointing Lecormu in early September, Macron plumped for one of his closest allies rather than seeking to broaden the appeal of the government across the political spectrum.

For the past month, the new prime minister has held a series of consultations with centrist allies and opposition leaders on the right and left in a bid to agree on a non-aggression pact in parliament and adopt the budget.

In recent days, he has announced a number of concessions, including a pledge not to ram his austerity budget through parliament without a vote, but opposition leaders said they wanted more.

Republicans Warn of Pain Ahead as U.S. Shutdown Facing Second Week

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Donald Trump administration officials and top Republicans warned Sunday that Americans will increasingly feel the pain of an ongoing US government shutdown as most federal operations remained shuttered.

With Democrats refusing to give in over their demands for continued government health care subsidies in the budget, the White House says plans are being finalized for the firing of thousands of federal workers.

Shutdowns are a periodic feature of gridlocked Washington when the two parties cannot agree on budget priorities. All non-essential workers are temporarily furloughed, or left without pay, while the parties work out their differences.

This time, the stakes are higher, with President Donald Trump telling reporters Sunday that the administration had already started to permanently fire -- not merely furlough -- government employees.

"It's taking place right now. It's all because of the Democrats. The Democrats are causing the loss of a lot of jobs," Trump said, blaming his rivals as he has done since the start of the impasse.

The shutdown, in its fifth day, has shown no signs of ending, with a top Democrat



saying there had been no talks between congressional leaders since Monday.

Kevin Hassett, who directs the White House's National Economic Council, told CNN that there was hope for progress in talks in the coming week.

Trump himself sounded resigned to the shutdown dragging on.

Talks will center on addressing expiring Obamacare health subsidies. The Senate's Republican majority leader acknowledged the two sides were currently "at a stalemate."

"It's going to get uncomfortable," Senator John Thune told Fox News show "Sunday Morning Futures," adding that some behind-the-scenes discussions were addressing the potential extension of subsidies for Obamacare.

How long could the shutdown last? "Just as long as the Democrats want it to," Thune said.

But Republicans control the levers of power in Washington, and Democrats have laid the failure to keep the lights on squarely at the feet of Trump's party.

The minority Democrats seek to force Republicans to address the health care subsidies issue by blocking a Trump-backed temporary funding resolution that needs a handful of their votes.

Russell Wins Singapore Grand Prix



SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - George Russell drove a flawless race from pole position to win the Singapore Grand Prix for Mercedes on Sunday, leaving Red Bull's world champion Max Verstappen and the two McLarens to fight it out for the other podium spots.

Briton Russell took the chequered flag under the lights of the Marina Bay street circuit 5.4 seconds clear of Verstappen to claim his second victory of the season.

"It feels amazing," said Russell. "We don't really know where this performance came from, but really, really happy."

"I was really nervous at the beginning when I saw Max on the soft (tyres), but that first stint was great from us."

Lando Norris put pressure on Verstappen towards the end of the race but had to settle for third ahead of teammate Oscar Piastri, the pair earning enough points to seal a second consecutive constructors' title for McLaren.

"It was a tough race," said Norris. "Max didn't make any mistakes. I gave it my all today, and got close. "I'm happy with today. I got forward two positions. We won as a team, the constructors' once again."

Piastri's lead over Briton Norris in the drivers' standings was cut to 22 points, while Verstappen is 63 points behind the Australian with six races remaining in the season.

"I think second was the maximum result today," said Verstappen.

"I think the whole race was quite difficult, more difficult than I hope for, for a lot of different reasons."

The celebrations for the constructors' title in the McLaren garage might be muted, however, with Piastri fuming at the way Norris forced his way past his teammate on the opening corner.

Kimi Antonelli was a distant fifth in the other Mercedes with Charles Leclerc finishing sixth ahead of his Ferrari teammate Lewis Hamilton.

Hamilton was later docked a five-second penalty for repeatedly leaving the track as he struggled with a braking issue, dropping him to eighth with Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso moving up to seventh.

Haas driver Oliver Bearman was ninth and Carlos Sainz, who started at the back of the grid after the Williams cars were disqualified from qualifying, took the final points in 10th.

Russell got away to a clean start from pole with Verstappen behind him but Norris, who started fifth, clipped the back of the Dutchman's Red Bull as he forced his way up the inside of Piastri on the first corner.

Norris sustained some damage to the front end of his car and Piastri expressed his discontent on the team radio at his teammate's manoeuvre, accusing the Briton of "barging him out of the way".

"It's racing, I put it on the inside, I had a small correction, but nothing more than that, it was good racing," Norris said.

The stewards gave the incident the all-clear and McLaren said they would look at it after the race with Piastri again railing at what he said was the unfairness of the decision.

"I thought that in the moment, obviously first lap, tensions are high," said Piastri. "We're obviously encouraged to share our views on what happened, and I did that, and I'm sure we'll discuss it more."

Verstappen was the first of the leaders to pit and tore around the track to ensure Norris would not be able to undercut him when the Briton changed his tyres seven laps later.

Norris asserted his right as McLaren's lead driver to pit ahead of Piastri, whose discontent with the team would not have been improved by a notably slower stop than his teammate.

Verstappen was 3.5 seconds behind Russell at the halfway stage and ended the race clinging on to keep second place from Norris rather than chasing a third straight race win.

Marquez Crashes Out as Aldeguer Wins Indonesia MotoGP



LOMBOK (Dispatches) - Newly crowned world champion Marc Marquez and polesitter Marco Bezzecchi crashed out in the opening lap as Spanish rookie Fermin Aldeguer won a chaotic Indonesia MotoGP today.

Ducati-Gresini rider Aldeguer, 20, pulled away after Marquez and Bezzecchi collided to cruise to victory.

He finished more than six seconds ahead of KTM's Pedro Acosta in second and nearly eight seconds in front of teammate Alex Marquez in third.

Bezzecchi had dominated in qualifying yesterday with a lap record at the Mandalika track, but had a disastrous start today in humid conditions on Lombok island.

After slipping from pole to seventh behind Marquez, he tried to overtake Ducati's Spanish champion but slammed into the back of him.

It sent the pair sliding into the gravel. Both walked away from the collision with Marquez seen clutching his right shoulder.

Marquez was already crowned MotoGP champion last week at Japan's Motegi and had already set a single-season points record for a MotoGP rider of 545 before today's race.

His points total was boosted by a sixth-place finish in the sprint because Luca Marini was hit with a post-race tyre pressure penalty.

Despite Aldeguer storming to victory today there was a dramatic battle for the podium places between half a dozen riders.

Alex Rins' Yamaha began to falter and he fell out of podium contention as Alex Marquez rose to take third and increase his grip on second place in the overall standings behind his brother.

Brad Binder finished in fourth, followed by Marini, Raul Fernandez and Fabio Quartararo.

Francesco Bagnaia, who started a lowly 16th on the grid, crashed out when he was last on the track in what was a dismal weekend for the two-time world champion.

Joan Mir and Enea Bastianini also crashed out.

Sinner Retires, Djokovic Advances in Shanghai

SHANGHAI (Dispatches) - Jannik Sinner's bid to retain his Shanghai Masters title ended in agonizing fashion when the world number two was forced to retire mid-match against Tallon Griekspoor due to debilitating cramp in humid conditions.

Griekspoor was leading the third-round clash 6-7(3) 7-5 3-2 when Sinner suffered cramp in his thigh, forcing him to retire after more than 2-1/2 hours on court.

"This is definitely not the way you want to win. Brutal conditions here in Shanghai all week," said Griekspoor, who had lost all six encounters against Sinner prior to Sunday's match.

"I thought we were still a little bit lucky to play in the evening without the sun. But two hours and 36 minutes on the clock, middle of the third set... I'm sorry for him, I wish him a speedy recovery."

Sinner had begun to struggle in the second set, leading him to frantically apply an ice towel around his neck at changeovers.

The defending champion was visibly limping and



massaging his thigh in the decider and in the sixth game, he limped back to his chair with the help of the physio before he was forced to make the call to retire.

Sinner's retirement and world number one Carlos Alcaraz's withdrawal due to an ankle injury blows the draw wide open, with Novak Djokovic in the hunt for a record-extending fifth title in Shanghai.

The 38-year-old fourth seed battled past Yannick Hanfmann with a 4-6 7-5 6-3 victory in a match that lasted two hours and 45 minutes.

"It's the same for every player out on the court, but it's brutal," Djokovic said when describing the conditions in Shanghai.

"It's brutal when you have over 80% of humidity day after day, particularly for the guys when they're playing during the day with heat, with sun, it's even more brutal."

Forest Lose Again, Haaland Seals Man City Win

NEWCASTLE (Dispatches) - Newcastle United beat Nottingham Forest 2-0 to heap more pressure on Ange Postecoglou while Crystal Palace's club-record unbeaten run came to an end with defeat at Everton in the Premier League.

Erling Haaland's sizzling start to the season continued as his goal sealed a 1-0 win for Manchester City at Brentford that lifted his side into fifth place in the table.

Bottom side Wolverhampton Wanderers were denied their first win of the season when Brighton & Hove Albion scored a late equaliser in a 1-1 draw at Molineux in which home manager Vitor Pereira was shown a red card in the first half.

But it was Postecoglou who found himself under fire after Newcastle midfielder Bruno Guimaraes curled a long-range strike into the top corner before earning the penalty put away by German striker Nick Woltemade.

Postecoglou has yet to win a game since taking over at Forest last month, a run of seven games in all competitions that includes five defeats -- the worst start by a Forest manager in a century.

"I knew it was a big challenge walking in, there is nothing wrong with that. I don't get why people think it is a burden but I love a challenge. The alternative is sitting at home watching



the game and I don't want to do that," Postecoglou told the BBC.

"We just have to get the results now and we have two weeks to get it right. If people want to assess me three-and-a-half weeks in there is nothing I can say that will change that."

Manchester City extended their unbeaten run to seven games in all competitions but had to dig deep at Brentford as they almost paid for not killing off their hosts.

Haaland powered through to score his ninth league goal of the season in the ninth minute -- taking his tally for the season for club and country to an incredible 18.

But City were unable to extend their advantage in a dominant first-half display and came under pressure after the break with Igor Thiago wasting a golden chance to equalise.

City moved fifth, three points behind leaders Arsenal, but suffered a blow as midfielder Rodri went off in the first half with a hamstring injury.

"In the first half we were our best for many months but we couldn't score the second goal," Pep Guardiola, who chalked up his 250th Premier League win faster than any other manager, said.

Sevilla Stun Horrendous Barcelona 4-1



BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Spanish champions Barcelona collapsed in a shock 4-1 demolition at Sevilla in La Liga, with Alexis Sanchez scoring against his former side and Robert Lewandowski missing a penalty for the visitors.

The Catalans sit second in the table after their first league defeat of the campaign, two points behind bitter rivals Real Madrid following Los Blancos' victory over Villarreal on Saturday, while Sevilla rise to sixth.

Real Betis moved fourth with a 2-1 win at Espanyol, thanks to a stoppage-time penalty save by their goalkeeper Pau Lopez, who formerly played for the Catalans.

Atletico Madrid stumbled to a 1-1 draw at Celta Vigo after having Clement Lenglet sent off in the first half and sit fifth.

Veteran Chilean winger Sanchez put Sevilla ahead from the penalty spot early on against Barca and Isaac Romero doubled the hosts' lead after having already missed two good chances.

Marcus Rashford pulled a goal back before half-time, but Lewandowski fired wide from the spot to spurn his team's best chance of an equaliser.

Jose Carmona and Akor Adams wrapped up Sevilla's emphatic win in the final stages, as Hansi Flick's side fell to an unusually heavy defeat.

"The team's first 45 minutes were horrendous. I think we've not played a game as bad as that and we must be self-critical," Barca midfielder Pedri Gonzalez told the club's media channel.

Flick defended his team despite their loss, saying that he was pleased with their reaction in the second half.

"It's one match and we lost it, and we have to keep going," he said.