

Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi Warned That Despite a Fragile Ceasefire in Gaza, Zionist Expansionism and Israel's Possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction Remain Key Sources of Instability and Insecurity in the Region

# IRAN NEWS

Foreign Ministry Summoned Poland's Chargé d'Affaires in Tehran, Marcin Wilczek, to Protest False Claims Made by Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski Against Tehran in the UK Parliament

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### President Warns of Enemies' Plots to Sow Discord Among Muslim Nations



TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian says enemies always seek to sow discord among Muslim states to weaken them, following a recent flare-up between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Pezeshkian made the remarks during a Wednesday session as he elaborated on Iran's stance regarding the tensions between its two eastern Muslim neighbors.

He said Muslim nations do not favor conflict and disagreement, which are the result of plots by enemies and international Zionism.

He added that the recent tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan caused deep concerns among all regional countries, including Iran, which has common borders with the two nations.

The Muslim nations, especially those with shared roots and cultures in the region, enjoy an unbreakable bond of faith and culture and are duty-bound to strive as a unified body to promote peace, justice, and progress, Pezeshkian noted.

He reiterated that Iran will utilize all its resources and make its utmost efforts to reduce tensions, promote dialogue, and strengthen brotherly bonds between the two neighboring countries, stating that dialogue and the promotion of fraternal ties will help ease tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The region needs peace, cohesion, and cooperation more than ever, Pezeshkian said, expressing confidence that the governments and peoples of Afghanistan and Pakistan will overcome their challenges through prudence.

### Larijani Meets Putin, Conveys Leader's Message



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Larijani met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Thursday.

Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Larijani has met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, delivering a direct message from Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Larijani, who also serves as an adviser to the Leader, traveled to Russia on Thursday morning.

The two sides discussed a range of issues, including bilateral relations, economic cooperation, regional developments, and international affairs.

Last week, Putin said that Israeli authorities have asked him to deliver a message to Iran that they are not seeking further confrontation with Iran and wish to ease tensions.

"We continue confidence-based contacts with Israel and receive signals from Israeli leadership asking that this be conveyed to our Iranian friends that Israel intends and is determined to further resolve the issue, and is not interested in any form of confrontation," he said, addressing the Central Asia-Russia summit in Dushanbe on Thursday.

Tensions between Iran and Israel soared after the occupation regime launched an unprovoked aggression on Iran on June 13, which triggered a 12-day war.

The regime assassinated top commanders and nuclear scientists and also killed hundreds of civilians across the country. The United States also intervened, bombing three Iranian nuclear sites in a breach of international law.

## NAM States Support Iran Against E3's Snapback Move

TEHRAN - Iran's foreign minister says Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) member states have voiced support for the Islamic Republic in opposing a European bid to reinstate UN sanctions.

Abbas Araqchi made the remarks in an interview with the IRIB news agency in Kampala, Uganda, where the 19th Midterm Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement took place in Uganda's capital, Kampala, on October 15-16.

The comments came less than a month after the conclusion of the so-called snapback process initiated by the UK, Germany, and France (collectively known as the E3) aimed at restoring all UN Security Council sanctions against Iran previously lifted under the US-abandoned 2015 nuclear deal.

Under Resolution 2231, which endorsed the agreement, all nuclear-related restrictions against Iran will end permanently on October 18, 2025.

Araqchi said that the NAM summit's final statement includes a clause, which is of "exceptional importance: the declaration of support for the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding the snapback issue in the Security Council."

"It states that, from the perspective of the Non-Aligned Movement, Resolution 2231 is still in effect and its provisions and timeline must be respected. According to paragraph 8, the resolution must be terminated on its scheduled date, October 18," he added.

He also noted that Iran, Russia, China, and several other countries in the Security Council share the same position in this regard and oppose a claim by the US and the Europeans about the snapback activation.

"This is truly a major achievement for the Islamic Republic of Iran, as nearly all NAM members—over 100 countries—have supported this position," he emphasized.

On August 28, the E3 invoked the 30-day snapback process. Tehran rejected the move as illegitimate, citing the US's unilateral withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2018 and the European trio's decision to align with unlawful anti-Iran sanctions.

On September 28, the US and the Europeans alleged that the anti-Iran UN resolutions and the associated sanctions were re-imposed, urging all UN member states to implement the restrictive measures.

Additionally, in his interview, Araqchi said NAM condemned June's Israeli-U.S. aggression against Iran as "heinous" and "unacceptable" and expressed solidarity with the nation in the face of the illegal assault. At least 1,064 people, including military commanders, nuclear scientists, and civilians were killed during the 12-day war against Iran.

He further referred to NAM's denunciation of the Israeli attacks in September 2014, in which thousands of pagans distributed to members of the Hezbollah resistance group exploded simultaneously across Lebanon, followed by booby-trapped walkie-talkies.

Earlier Araqchi says the re-imposition of UN sanctions against Iran is "groundless and illegitimate."

The Iranian minister called on the member states of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) to reject such "invalid" maneuvers by the United States and the three European countries known as the E3 (Britain, France, and Germany.)

Araqchi made the remarks at the 19th Midterm Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement in Uganda's capital, Kampala, on Wednesday.

"The United States and the European permanent members of the Security Council tried to misuse the UN Security Council to reinstate terminated UN Security Council resolutions against



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the Islamic Republic of Iran," Araqchi said.

The move, he added, constitutes a "clear breach" of the provisions laid out in Resolution 2231, which endorsed the 2015 nuclear agreement between Tehran and six world powers, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Iran's top diplomat said, while the resolution is due to expire on October 18, "the revival of these terminated measures is completely groundless and illegitimate, amounting to nothing more than a means of political extortion."

"Given these circumstances, we urge fellow NAM members to stay true to the movement's bedrock principles and refuse to go along with such invalid and illegal maneuvers, which are purely aimed at gaining political leverage by flouting international law and norms."

Araqchi said adopting such a stand "not only renews our joint dedication to NAM's core values but also signals loud and clear to the world that independent nations, united in solidarity and purposeful resolve, will not bow to bullying or coercive pressures."

Britain, France, and Germany triggered the so-called snapback mechanism on August 28, setting in motion a 30-day process to restore all UN sanctions on Iran.

Despite last-minute efforts by Russia and China to preserve diplomacy, the Security Council failed to reach a consensus on September 26.

Two days later, the E3 and the United States declared the sanctions reinstated and urged UN member states to enforce them.

Tehran has categorically rejected the claim, saying it was the United States and its European allies who undermined the 2015 nuclear deal by failing to honor their commitments.

Iranian officials maintain that no UN member state is obliged to comply with the unilateral and unlawful measure.

Iran's position is anchored in UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorsed the JCPOA and formally lifted earlier sanctions on Tehran's nuclear program.

Iranian officials say the resolution established a clear, time-bound framework under which all nuclear-related restrictions are set to expire permanently on October 18, 2025.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Iran's foreign minister referred to the suffering of the Palestinian people, particularly after Israel's campaign of genocide in Gaza.

As a fragile ceasefire is currently in place in Gaza, he said Tehran "supports any measure to stop the genocide, remove occupying soldiers from the strip, provide humanitarian access to the Gazans and rebuild Gaza."

"Any solution for the issue of Palestine would be doomed to failure without recognizing the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination," Araqchi stated.

"The Israeli criminals must be held accountable, prosecuted, and punished."

Araqchi also said Palestine "has every right to continue its legitimate and lawful struggle" for self-determination and to free itself from the Israeli occupation.

Pointing to Israel's unprovoked aggression against Iran in June, the minister said the assault "proves that it [the Israeli regime] knows no ethical or legal boundaries."

"It is vital to leverage every national and international legal mechanism at our disposal to bring war criminals and genocide perpetrators to justice, averting future recurrences and ensuring that no one escapes accountability."

## Iran Open to Negotiation but Rejects Imposition

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian diplomat has reaffirmed Tehran's readiness for dialogue while emphasizing that the Islamic Republic will not tolerate any form of coercion in negotiations.

Kamal Kharrazi, head of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations and member of the Expediency Council, made the remarks in an interview published Wednesday on the official website of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

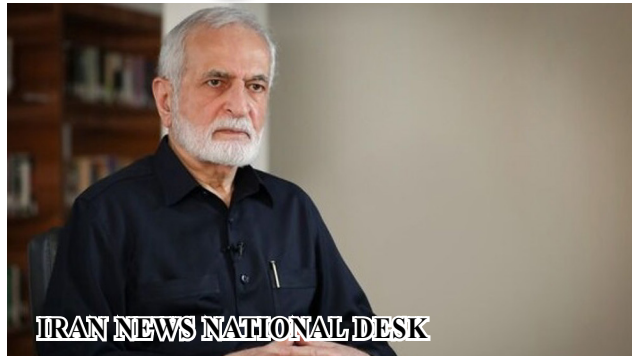
Kharrazi underscored that Iran's approach to diplomacy is guided by three principles defined by the Leader—dignity, wisdom, and expediency. "If negotiations are conducted on logical grounds and the dignity of the Islamic Republic is respected, we are ready to talk, provided that nothing is imposed upon us," he said. "If there is any attempt at imposition, we will stand against it."

Citing Ayatollah Khamenei's recent comments rejecting U.S. demands in nuclear talks, Kharrazi said that entering negotiations under pressure was unacceptable. "Accepting talks under threat is something no honorable nation would ever do," he added, quoting the Leader as saying that Washington's approach to talks was not negotiation but "dictation and imposition."

Kharrazi elaborated on the Leader's framework, explaining that dignity means preserving national honor, wisdom requires logic and reason, and expediency involves realistic flexibility to secure mutual benefit. He noted that Iran's participation in indirect talks with the United States earlier this year demonstrated these principles in action.

"Despite skepticism about the sincerity of the other side, the Leader approved indirect negotiations to prove Iran's goodwill and logical approach," Kharrazi said. He emphasized that Iran maintained its core rights throughout five rounds of talks, including its right to uranium enrichment, while showing flexibility where national interests allowed.

However, he said the outbreak of a 12-day conflict—described as the "Israeli-American war"—during the negotiations exposed Western insincerity. "The war proved that Western parties were not committed to logical dialogue and instead sought to impose broader



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restrictions beyond the nuclear issue," he remarked. "Iran will never negotiate over its missile capabilities or its support for the Resistance Axis."

Kharrazi stressed that diplomacy remains a central pillar of Iran's foreign policy. "For us, diplomacy is not a sign of weakness, but of rationality and strength," he said, recalling Iran's history of engagement under previous administrations and its measured responses to Western violations of agreements. "While Iran must always be ready for negotiations, it should never accept imposition."

He also discussed recent European efforts to activate nuclear-related sanctions, describing them as "counterproductive," despite Iran's

demonstrated flexibility.

Turning to Western accusations about Iran's nuclear program, Kharrazi said such claims stem from a lack of understanding of Iran's religious and cultural foundations. He cited the Leader's fatwa—a religious decree—banning the development or use of nuclear weapons. "Westerners do not take this fatwa seriously because they fail to understand our religious culture," he said, adding that Iran's record of transparency with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) disproves any weaponization claims.

Kharrazi dismissed the nuclear dispute as a political pretext used to pressure Iran, insisting that uranium enrichment is central to the country's energy independence. "Just as we achieved independence in the missile and defense sectors, we must be self-sufficient in energy," he stated. Iran's long-term goal, he said, is to produce 20,000 megawatts of nuclear electricity, for which domestic fuel production is essential.

Reflecting on the recent conflict, Kharrazi said Israel's "initial aggression" was met with a powerful and swift Iranian response that "forced the enemy to seek a ceasefire." He credited Ayatollah Khamenei's leadership for maintaining stability and public morale during the crisis. "The enemy aimed to undermine Iran's defense system, but the Leader's prudence and decisive action thwarted that plan," he concluded.

### Benefits and Harms of Two Years of Killing and Bloodshed

The Sharm El-Sheikh summit is a farcical display of the end of two years of bombing defenseless, innocent people in Gaza.

The Gaza confrontation in October 2023 (coinciding with Mehr 1402 in the Iranian calendar) began with a large-scale and unprecedented attack by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) called "Al-Aqsa Storm" against Israel.

This operation, which resulted in the killing and capture of a large number of Jewish military personnel and settlers in Israel's occupied areas, is considered a turning point in the 77-year Palestine-Israel conflict.

In response, Israel launched extensive air strikes and then a comprehensive ground operation against the Gaza Strip. After weeks of intense fighting and international pressure, a new round of negotiations mediated by Egypt, Qatar, and the United States in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, resulted in a temporary ceasefire agreement. Analyzing this path—from "Al-Aqsa Storm" to "Sharm El-Sheikh"—requires an examination of the military, political, and humanitarian dimensions of all these events.

The strategic surprise of that operation showed that Israel's powerful security and intelligence apparatus (Shin Bet and Mossad) was unable to predict and prevent such a broad attack. This surprise, in itself, delivered a major strategic blow to the security reputation of the fragile Zionist regime. With this operation Hamas proved it has the ability to plan complex, coordinated, cross-border attacks. The action changed the balance of power on the battlefield of resistance and made Hamas's role as a decisive actor many times more prominent. Because after years of the Palestinian issue being marginalized during the normalization of relations between some Arab countries and Israel (the Abraham Accords), Al-Aqsa Storm returned the Palestinian issue to the center of global attention.

The Zionist regime, under the slogan of "complete destruction of Hamas" and the recovery of the captives, launched an unprecedented onslaught: the Gaza Strip was completely besieged and relentless air bombardments shattered infrastructure, mosques, hospitals, schools, and residential areas. The number of Palestinian fatalities quickly rose into the thousands, including large numbers of women and children. Regime ground forces carried out several stages of advance in northern and central Gaza, which met fierce resistance from Palestinian groups and yielded nothing but slaughter. These attacks produced a full-scale humanitarian catastrophe. Severe shortages of water, food, medicine, and fuel, together with the displacement of more than one million people, created an unbearable situation for Gaza residents. The Islamic Republic of Iran, Hezbollah of Lebanon, Yemen's Houthis, and Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces supported the Al-Aqsa Storm operation and, through limited border clashes and missile attacks, increased pressure on the Zionist army and regime. This showed that the axis of resistance is a unified and capable force.

The United States and its European allies provided unconditional support to Israel and, by sending weapons, contributed to prolonging the war. In contrast, Arab governments such as Saudi Arabia and Jordan took cautious positions and, while condemning the killing of civilians, emphasized the necessity of forming a Palestinian state. Popular uprisings in Arab countries—and indeed worldwide—also put considerable pressure on their governments to cut ties with Israel. With rising international pressure and the worsening humanitarian situation, negotiations in Sharm El-Sheikh, mediated by the United States and marked by the ostentatious presence of 22 countries, were intensified. Trump's 20-point ceasefire plan defined the basis of a ceasefire as follows:

to render this strip of Gaza free of Hamas's military presence at Hamas's own expense and with the participation of Arab countries, in such a way that the poison of the resistance front for Israel would be destroyed in that place. This plan, of course, was not publicized in the media and was disclosed and signed only for a limited number of countries.

But on careful study of the text of the 20-point plan, this issue is quite apparent between the non-black lines of the plan.

One should not be deceived by the outward show of Netanyahu's reaction, because the plan had previously been signed by Netanyahu and it is even said that he changed some of its clauses; therefore his theatrical reaction fits more into the category of arousing Gaza supporters' emotions and colluding with Trump. What Gaza needs today is investment in rebuilding a devastated Gaza. It is illogical for an offer of \$60 billion to be put on the table and yet not convince Hamas and Islamic Jihad and especially the people harmed by the war, slaughter, and destruction to accept it.



By Hamid Reza Naghashifan

# IRAN NEWS



## 3.5m Foreign Tourists Visited Iran in H1

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts announced that 3.5 million foreign tourists entered Iran during the first six months of the year.

Seyyed Reza Salehi Amiri told reporters, on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting that, based on official data from the national police (FARAJA), 3.5 million tourists visited Iran in the first half of this year, with Mashhad being their top destination.

He added that the number of foreign tourists in April and May increased by an average of 30 percent compared to the same period last year. However, tourist arrivals declined in June, July, and August due to the 12-day war.

Salehi Amiri noted that the number of visitors returned to normal levels in September and October.

## Emphasis on Expanding Joint Cooperation Between Iran and Vietnam



TEHRAN - In a high-level meeting, the head of Iran's Trade Development Organization, Mohammad Ali Dehghan Dehnavi, met with Nguyen Luong Ngoc, the Ambassador of Vietnam to Iran, to stress the importance of stepping up collaborative efforts in production and sharing export-oriented know-how between the two nations.

The meeting, reported by Iran's Trade Development Organization and carried by the Iranian Labour News Agency (ILNA), focused on removing barriers and deepening bilateral ties under the existing memoranda of understanding between Tehran and Hanoi. Dehghan Dehnavi underscored the need to simplify travel and exchange of business delegations, saying there is "ample capacity" for enhanced trade relations. He also expressed a wish that Vietnam's successful practices in export promotion be made accessible to Iranian economic actors.

Turning to Iran's strengths, Dehghan Dehnavi highlighted the country's pool of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as well as knowledge-based and technology-driven companies. He asserted that joint production, particularly in innovative and knowledge-intensive sectors, offers fertile ground for cooperation between the two nations. According to him, by leveraging Iran's SMEs, the volume of trade could be significantly increased—and Iran is ready to benefit from Vietnam's experience in this regard.

On his part, Ambassador Nguyen Luong Ngoc invited Dehghan Dehnavi to visit Vietnam to assess the potential for shared production and export ventures. He confirmed that Vietnam is prepared to engage in joint manufacturing and strengthen commercial ties. He further stated that although many bilateral cooperation agreements have been signed in various fields, their implementation remains a priority.

While this meeting is focused on trade, it fits into a broader pattern of expanding Iran-Vietnam relations. In June 2025, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian publicly affirmed that Iran seeks to deepen cooperation with Vietnam across political, security, economic, and cultural areas.

Despite this ambition, trade between the two countries remains relatively modest. Analysts note that the bilateral trade turnover is still only in the low hundreds of millions of U.S. dollars—far below what many observers deem commensurate with their complementary capacities.

## Iran, Russia Take First Step Toward Energy Exchange Union



TEHRAN - The Iran Energy Exchange (IEE) and the St. Petersburg International Mercantile Exchange (SPIMEX) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) aimed at establishing the necessary framework for joint trading operations—an initiative both sides believe could pave the way for a regional energy exchange union.

According to reports from the 8th Russian Energy Week International Forum, the MoU was signed on Wednesday by Mohammad Nazifi, CEO of the Iran Energy Exchange, and Igor Artemyev, CEO of the St. Petersburg International Mercantile Exchange, on the sidelines of the event.

Under the agreement, the two exchanges committed to accelerating processes required to launch joint energy market operations. The cooperation framework also includes reciprocal registration and acceptance of market participants from both exchanges, joint educational and research programs, and the exchange of technical and operational expertise—all aimed at strengthening regional cooperation in the energy sector.

Nazifi, speaking at the signing ceremony, described the agreement as "the first step toward the unification of regional energy exchanges," adding that such an alliance "could lead to a more influential and decisive role in the global energy market."

SPIMEX CEO Igor Artemyev called the agreement "a great honor," noting that while the two exchanges deal in similar commodities, "our Iranian colleagues have unique technologies and methods, and we are eager to learn from their experience."

## Iran Leads the World in Eliminating Physical Cash

TEHRAN - Iran has achieved the world's top rank in reducing the use of physical money, with more than 98 percent of all transactions now carried out electronically, according to a senior government official. This, he said, reflects the nation's readiness to embrace digital transformation in all aspects of economic life.

Speaking at the National E-Commerce Day ceremony titled "724," held in Tehran, Mohammad Sadegh Mofatteh, Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade for Commerce Affairs, said Iran has made remarkable progress in the fields of technology and e-commerce. "We are witnessing significant growth and advancement in this sector," Mofatteh said. "Reports indicate double-digit growth rates, exceeding 30 percent in some cases. This shows the strength of our digital infrastructure and the expertise of the country's talented professionals."

The deputy minister highlighted that Iran's young population plays a leading role in the country's digital and economic development. "Ours is a young nation," he said. "This demographic advantage provides a great opportunity for innovation and growth in e-commerce. Although we still have a long way to go to reach the ideal point, the youth are at the forefront of driving innovation and opening new opportunities in digital trade."

Mofatteh emphasized that sustaining and expanding the e-commerce sector requires continuous effort and close coordination between the public and private sectors. "The private sector is currently the main driver of these activities, while regulatory bodies guide the process," he explained. "We must continue to support and strengthen this collaboration."

Turning to digital currencies, Mofatteh noted that cryptocurrencies have yet to gain a solid footing in Iran. "There is still a fear rooted in ignorance among senior officials," he remarked. "However, cryptocurrencies represent one of the most effective ways to bypass sanctions because they cannot easily be disrupted or controlled by external forces."

He added that if Iran had advanced in cryptocurrency use at the same pace as it has in e-commerce, the country would be in a stronger position to withstand external economic pressures. "Had our progress in crypto matched that of e-commerce, we could have managed current economic challenges more effectively," he said.

Mofatteh announced the ministry's readiness to cooperate with experts and innovators in the digital finance field. "We invite specialists, entrepreneurs, and elites in this area to collaborate with us," he stated, underscoring the ministry's openness to joint efforts in expanding Iran's digital economy.

Mofatteh also pointed to Iran's fragmented economic structure as a major challenge to national development. "One of our key problems is fragmented trade," he said. "More than 90 percent of drivers in the transportation sector are owner-operators, and the average rice paddy size in the country is only half a hectare. In agriculture and many other sectors, we are dealing with small-scale ownership."

He added that such fragmentation means most decision-making happens at the



individual level, making it harder to implement collective strategies and improve efficiency. "The small-scale ownership system limits coordination," he noted. "To overcome this, we must empower trade associations to organize and support these fragmented sectors."

Emphasizing the importance of organized cooperation, Mofatteh said strengthening trade and professional associations within the digital commerce ecosystem could deliver significant economic benefits. "If associations take on management roles, it will bring wide-ranging advantages for the economy, government, and even consumers," he said.

He further noted that the government is ready to delegate greater authority to these associations if necessary. "The ultimate goal is to simplify processes and enhance the efficiency of economic activities," he added.

However, Mofatteh also acknowledged that associations active in e-commerce are still underdeveloped. "Their activities are not yet institutionalized, and these organizations have not been properly established," he said. "While the government issues licenses, the initiative for action must come from the associations themselves. Their participation in e-commerce should become more systematic and effective."

Mofatteh announced that October 15 (Mehr 24 on the Iranian calendar) has been officially designated as National E-Commerce Day. This year marks the first time the occasion is being celebrated formally. "This day symbolizes the importance of e-commerce in Iran's economic growth," he said. "The establishment of National E-Commerce Day was approved and announced several months ago."

Reflecting on recent challenges, the deputy minister referred to the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade's performance during the recent 12-day "economic war," a period marked by heightened market instability. He recalled that during that time, former deputy minister Seyed Mohammad Atabak played an active role in ensuring that citizens' needs were met. "Through coordinated efforts between ministry officials and private-sector managers, we were able to stabilize key areas such as transportation, online services, insurance, and logistics," Mofatteh explained.

He added that the Minister of Industry has since held several meetings with major retail chain executives, private-sector representatives, and the heads of the three national chambers — Commerce, Cooperatives, and Guilds — to ensure market stability and maintain normal operations.

Concluding his remarks, Mofatteh reiterated the government's commitment to supporting innovation, private-sector leadership, and the development of digital trade. "E-commerce is not merely a trend — it is the foundation of Iran's economic future," he said. "By empowering our youth, strengthening associations, and embracing technologies such as cryptocurrencies, we can transform challenges into opportunities and build a resilient, self-reliant economy."

## ICCIMA Designs Roadmap for Digital Exports

TEHRAN - The president of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) announced during GITEX 2025 that Iran is developing a national roadmap for digital exports aimed at facilitating the entry of technology-based companies into international markets.

Speaking at the Iran Technology Day forum held alongside GITEX 2025 in Dubai, Samad Hassanzadeh, President of ICCIMA, said the initiative seeks to promote dialogue, knowledge exchange, and international cooperation in digital transformation.

"The Chamber plays a key role in supporting technology development, industrial digitalization, and the expansion of technology-based exports," Hassanzadeh said, emphasizing ICCIMA's strategic role in the country's digital economy.

Hassanzadeh explained that the Chamber, in collaboration with specialized organizations such as the Iran ICT Federation (FAWA), has been instrumental in organizing international events, B2B meetings, and joint research and development projects that connect Iranian technology companies with global markets.

He revealed that the Digital Export Roadmap will offer services such as consultancy, tax facilitation, and identification of target markets. Iran, he added, is ready to engage in joint R&D projects, technology transfer, mutual investments, specialized training, and the exchange of tech data with international partners.

According to Hassanzadeh, Iran sees strong potential for cooperation in fields including artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), smart cities, cloud computing, and industrial electronics.

Highlighting Iran's young, educated, and creative population, Hassanzadeh noted that the country is one of the region's leaders in information and communications technology (ICT).

Official statistics show that as of 2024, over 73% of Iran's population has access to high-speed internet, while smartphone penetration has surpassed 116%.

Currently, more than 10,000 knowledge-based and tech-driven



companies operate in Iran, about 24% of which are active in ICT and electronics. Hundreds of startups have already exported products and services in areas such as AI, fintech, digital health, cloud services, IoT, and cybersecurity.

Hassanzadeh said the digital economy accounts for 8.2% of Iran's GDP in 2024—almost double its share from five years ago—demonstrating the country's accelerating digital transformation.

In the WIPO Global Innovation Index 2024, Iran ranks 64th worldwide and fourth in the Middle East, while it holds the 79th position in the Network Readiness Index (NRI), indicating steady progress in innovation and tech

infrastructure.

The ICCIMA president also pointed to major achievements in Iran's electronics industry, including advances in telecommunications equipment, electronic components, and smart systems. Production capacity for electronic parts has increased by more than 40%, and several Iranian knowledge-based firms have successfully developed competitive sensors, microprocessors, and telecom equipment.

In the public sector, over 8 billion electronic transactions were conducted through e-government and national data exchange systems last year, reflecting the tangible growth of Iran's digital economy.

Hassanzadeh added that a new generation of Iranian firms is now engaged in international projects ranging from cloud infrastructure development to chip design and AI software.

"We believe the future of Iran's economy depends on technological progress, innovation, and international collaboration," he said. "With its scientific base, skilled workforce, and tech enterprises, Iran is ready to play an active role in the global digital economy."

He expressed hope that the GITEX forum would serve as a starting point for joint technological ventures and a foundation for a sustainable, digitally empowered future across the region and beyond.

## Iran, Russia Expand Cooperation in Electricity Transmission and Advanced Energy Technologies



TEHRAN - The managing director of Tavanir (Iran Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution Management Company) announced intensive discussions with Russian energy officials and leading technology companies, highlighting new areas of cooperation in electricity transmission, renewable energy, and artificial intelligence.

Mostafa Rajabi-Mashhadi, who attended the opening session of the Russian Energy Forum chaired by Alexander Novak, the First Deputy Prime Minister of Russia, stated that energy ministers from countries including Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Hungary, Venezuela, and Belarus exchanged views on global energy policies through 2030 and the need for joint investments in the sector.

Rajabi-Mashhadi noted that ensuring energy security in both supply and demand, diversifying energy sources, and expanding renewable energy were among the main themes emphasized during the forum.

The Tavanir CEO also participated in a specialized session on artificial intelligence (AI) and energy, which examined whether the development of AI would increase energy consumption or serve as a tool for optimizing energy use.

He added that with the rapid growth in electricity demand driven by electric transportation and digital technologies, such discussions will play a key role in shaping the future of energy management.

Rajabi-Mashhadi described his visit to the Russian Technology Center as one of the key parts of his trip, noting that the center has created significant capacities to support innovative companies and startups.

He said that discussions were held on cooperation between Iranian and Russian knowledge-based companies in software and substation automation systems. A meeting was also held with Iran's Presidential Center for Scientific and Technological Cooperation in Russia to explore future collaboration.

## Need for Diversification in Repatriation of Export Earnings



TEHRAN - The Deputy for Trade Services at Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), Hamed Salari, emphasized the importance of diversifying methods for repatriating export earnings, calling it a long-standing and internationally accepted principle.

Speaking on Thursday at a specialized panel titled "The Role of Foreign Exchange Policies in the Development of Iran's Non-Oil Exports" at the Kerman Chamber of Commerce, Seyed Mohammad Sadegh Ghanadzadeh said: "Currency repatriation has always been a recognized obligation across the world. No country allows its foreign exchange to be taken out freely; in some countries, it is even criminalized. However, we must broaden the mechanisms for bringing export proceeds back into the country."

Ghanadzadeh noted that the logic of exports must be respected. "Foreign currency supports the main production sectors. We cannot expect exporters to necessarily return their proceeds through banks alone," he said.

He explained that exporters are not refusing to return foreign currency but have differing views on how it should be returned. The Central Bank, he added, has approved several repatriation channels—except for gold bullion—allowing for flexibility in most other methods.

## Takaichi Poised to Become Japan's First Female PM

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan's lower house scheduling committee board has agreed to hold a parliamentary vote to select the next prime minister on October 21, a senior committee member told Reuters.

While the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), led by its new leader Sanae Takaichi, proposed the date, opposition parties objected to the schedule, citing ongoing coalition talks.

The LDP has approached the right-leaning opposition Japan Innovation Party in a bid to secure a majority vote and expand its coalition, which would enable Takaichi to become Japan's first female prime minister.

A number of diplomatic events await the new prime minister toward the end of the month, from international summits in Malaysia and South Korea to US President Donald Trump's expected visit to Japan.



## IMF's Georgieva Urges Countries to Keep Trade as Engine of Growth



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - International Monetary Fund chief Kristalina Georgieva on Thursday urged member countries to keep trade as an engine of growth for the world economy despite President Donald Trump's steep new tariffs, warning that a larger-scale trade war could have negative consequences.

Georgieva, speaking to reporters at the annual meetings of the IMF and World Bank, mapped out a sober view of a global economy that was doing better than feared when IMF and World Bank members last gathered in Washington in April, but still faced many risks, including inflation, high debt and growing unrest in countries around the world.

The IMF is predicting global real GDP growth of 3.2% for 2025, down from 3.3% in 2024, but up slightly from a July forecast of 3.0% and a more severe April forecast of 2.8% that came after Trump imposed tariffs on nearly every country in the world, triggering a tit-for-tat escalation with China.

The relative calm of recent months was shattered last week when China imposed new export controls on rare earth metals needed for the technology sector, and Trump responded by imposing new 100% duties on Chinese imports.

Georgieva, the IMF's managing director, noted that so far only three countries - the United States, China and Canada - had raised tariffs, and she was urging countries to exercise restraint to avoid fallout such as higher inflation, lower growth and employment effects.

"If there is a flare-up of trade tensions, that would, of course, have a negative impact," Georgieva said. "This is why we are saying ... please don't do that. It is not a healthy action."

## Millions Expected at Anti-Trump 'No Kings' Demos Across U.S.



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - From New York to San Francisco, millions of Americans are expected to hit the streets to voice their anger over President Donald Trump's policies at nationwide "No Kings" protests.

The last day of rallies by the "No Kings" movement — which unites some 300 organisations — drew massive crowds on June 14, as Trump staged a military parade in Washington on his birthday.

It was the biggest day of demonstrations since the Republican billionaire returned to the White House in January to begin his second term as president.

Four months later, organisers have planned more than 2,600 demonstrations coast to coast, with millions of people expected to participate again, a movement spokesperson said.

Deirdre Schifeling, chief political and advocacy officer for the American Civil Liberties Union, told reporters yesterday that protesters wanted to convey that "we are a country of equals."

"We are a country of laws that apply to everyone, of due process and of democracy. We will not be silenced," she said.

Leah Greenberg, the co-founder of the Indivisible Project, slammed the Trump administration for sending the US National Guard into cities, cracking down on undocumented migrants and prosecuting political opponents.

"It is the classic authoritarian playbook, threaten, smear and lie, scare people into submission. But we will not be intimidated. We will not be cowed," Greenberg said.

## Israel, Hamas Trade Blame Over Truce Violations



CAIRO (Dispatches) - Israel said it was preparing for the reopening of Gaza's Rafah crossing with Egypt to let Palestinians in and out, but set no date as it traded blame with Hamas over violations of a U.S.-mediated ceasefire.

A dispute over the return of hostages' bodies held by Hamas threatens to derail the truce and other unresolved elements of the plan, including disarmament of militants and Gaza's future governance.

Israeli government spokesperson Shosh Bedrosian told reporters Israel remained committed to the agreement and continued to uphold its obligations, demanding Hamas return the bodies of the 19 deceased hostages it had not handed over.

The Islamist faction has handed over 10 bodies but Israel said one was not that of a hostage.

Hamas said it remained committed to the Gaza agreement and to handing over all the remaining bodies of hostages, but that returning the remains may take time as some were buried in tunnels destroyed by Israel and others were under the ruins of buildings that Israel had bombed.

The armed wing of Hamas said the handover of more bodies in Gaza, reduced to vast tracts of rubble by the war, would require the admission of heavy machinery and excavating equipment into the Israel-blockaded Palestinian enclave.

On Thursday, a senior Hamas official accused Israel of flouting the ceasefire by killing at least 24 people in shootings since Friday, and said a list of such violations was handed over to mediators.

"The occupying state is working day and night to undermine the agreement through its violations on the ground," he said.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to the allegation of violating the ceasefire. It has previously said some Palestinians have ignored warnings not to approach Israeli ceasefire positions and troops "opened fire to remove the threat".

After local health authorities said an Israeli airstrike in Khan Younis in southern Gaza killed two people, the Israeli military said its forces fired at several individuals who emerged from a tunnel shaft and approached troops, describing them as posing an immediate threat.

Palestinian local health authorities said at least seven people were killed by Israeli fire across the Gaza Strip on Thursday. People in Gaza reported seeing drones and warplanes in the skies over the southern Gaza Strip with sporadic gunfire heard from

time to time.

Israel has said the next phase of the 20-point plan to end the war, a blueprint engineered by U.S. President Donald Trump's administration, calls for Hamas to relinquish its weapons and cede power, which it has so far refused to do.

Hamas has instead launched a security crackdown in urban areas vacated by Israeli forces, demonstrating its power through public executions and clashes with local armed clans.

Trump repeated his threats against the militia group, saying in a post, "If Hamas continues to kill people in Gaza, which was not the Deal, we will have no choice but to go in and kill them."

Asked about his recent threats toward Hamas, Trump told reporters in an Oval Office event, "If they behave, good. If they don't behave, we'll take care of it."

He added that action would not involve U.S. forces, but be carried out under U.S. auspices.

Twenty remaining living Israeli hostages were freed on Monday in exchange for thousands of Palestinians jailed in Israel.

The Gaza health ministry said on Thursday Israel had released 30 bodies of Palestinians killed during the conflict, taking the number of bodies it has received since Monday to 120.

Longer-term elements of Trump's plan, including the make-up of an international "stabilization force" for the densely populated territory and moves towards creating a Palestinian state - rejected by Israel - have yet to be hashed out.

In a statement on Thursday, Israel's military aid agency COGAT said coordination was under way with Egypt to set a date for reopening the Rafah crossing for movement of people after completing the necessary preparations.

COGAT said the Rafah crossing would not open for aid as this was not stipulated by the truce deal at any stage, rather all humanitarian goods bound for Gaza would pass through Israeli-controlled Kerem Shalom after undergoing security inspections.

With famine conditions present in parts of Gaza, U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher told Reuters in an interview on Wednesday that thousands of aid vehicles would now have to enter Gaza weekly to ease the crisis.

## Trump, Putin to Meet in Budapest After Progress on Ukraine Talks



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Donald Trump said Thursday he will meet Russian leader Vladimir Putin in Budapest after a "great" call aimed at ending the war in Ukraine. The announcement comes as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky visits the White House to seek US-made Tomahawk missiles.

President Donald Trump said he would meet Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Budapest after making "great progress" in a call Thursday, just a day before Ukraine's leader is due at the White House to push for U.S.-made Tomahawk missiles.

Trump added he expected the meeting would take place within the next couple of weeks. "I would say within two weeks or so, pretty quick," Trump told reporters at the White House. The meeting would be his second with Putin since returning to office. The pair met in Alaska in August without a breakthrough on ending Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"I believe great progress was made with today's telephone conversation," Trump said on his Truth Social network.

Trump said he and Putin would "meet in an agreed upon location, Budapest, Hungary, to see if we can bring this 'inglorious' War, between Russia and Ukraine, to an end".

Top U.S. and Russian officials including U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio would hold "initial meetings" next week in an as yet to be decided location, Trump added.

Trump's comments represented the latest wild swing in his relations with Putin, after he recently expressed growing frustration with the Kremlin leader over his refusal to reach a peace deal.

There was no immediate reaction from the Kremlin - or from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who is due to meet Trump on Friday to push him to increase pressure on Putin.

During Zelensky's meeting with Trump at the White House on Friday "the main topic of discussion is Tomahawks", a senior Ukrainian official told AFP.

Trump is considering a request from Ukraine for American-made Tomahawk cruise missiles, which have range of around 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometres) and could strike deep into Russia.

Trump had warned at the weekend that he would likely raise the issue first with Putin, who has warned that the supply of Tomahawks would be a "whole new level of escalation".

"I might talk to him, I might say, 'Look, if this war is not going to get settled,

I'm going to send them Tomahawks.' I may say that," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One en route to the Middle East.

"The Tomahawk is an incredible weapon, very offensive weapon, and honestly, Russia does not need that."

Trump added on Wednesday that the Ukrainians "want to go offensive" and that they would discuss Kyiv's request for the cruise missiles.

The U.S. leader has also said he wants to up pressure on Moscow following the ceasefire agreement he brokered in Gaza between Israel and Hamas last week.

Relations between Trump and Zelensky have meanwhile warmed since February, when they sparred during a now infamous televised meeting at the White House in which the US leader told his Ukrainian counterpart: "You don't have the cards."

But it remains to be seen how Zelensky will react to Trump's latest apparent rapprochement with Putin.

Tomahawks would be a major addition to Ukraine's arsenal, consolidating Kyiv's long-range strike abilities with a missile that can fly just above the ground at near supersonic speed to avoid radar.

The United States has used Tomahawks for more than 40 years and in some of the country's most high-profile conflicts, from the 1991 Gulf War to this year's US strikes on Iran's nuclear programme.

Senior Ukrainian officials visiting Washington this week met with representatives of US weapon manufacturers, including Raytheon, which produces Tomahawk missiles.

With the war now in its fourth year, Russia launched fresh attacks on energy facilities in eastern Ukraine, repeating the pattern of focusing on Kyiv's power network that it has followed every winter.

## Peru to Impose State of Emergency in Capital after wave of violence

Lima (AFP) - Peru's new government said Thursday that a state of emergency will be declared in the capital Lima, after weeks of anti-government protests over corruption and organized crime.

It comes after a man was shot dead by police on Wednesday and more than 100 people were injured after protests turned violent near the capital's Congress building.

The South American country has been rocked by protests for weeks, and lawmakers voted last week to impeach then-president Dina Boluarte, who critics blamed for a surge in crime and accused of corruption.

The youth-led demonstrations have brought thousands of Peruvians, frustrated by the authorities' failure to address the worsening crime crisis, onto the streets in Lima and several other cities.

"We are going to announce the decision to declare a state of emergency at least in Metropolitan Lima," head of the cabinet Ernesto Alvarez told press after a leadership meeting.

Peru's police chief said Thursday that an officer from the criminal investigation directorate was believed to have fired the bullet that killed 32-year-old rapper Eduardo



Ruiz on Wednesday.

The officer, who was attacked by the crowd, has been detained and will be dismissed from his job, General Oscar Arriola said.

Ruiz was the first person to die in the protests led by the youth collective Generation Z.

At least 113 others -- 84 police officers and 29 civilians -- were injured when thousands of demonstrators took to the streets of Lima Wednesday.

The protests began with a peaceful march, but clashes broke out after some protesters tried to breach the security barrier around Congress as night fell, an AFP correspondent said.

Others in the crowd hurled stones and lit fireworks, to which police in riot gear responded with tear gas.

The National Coordinator of Human Rights, an NGO, had earlier said that Ruiz may have been shot dead by a plainclothes police officer.



## Djokovic Has No Plans to Retire, Inspired by Ronaldo, LeBron and Brady

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic has no plans to retire from tennis with the 24-times Grand Slam winner citing NBA great LeBron James, former NFL player Tom Brady and veteran footballer Cristiano Ronaldo as his inspiration to keep playing.

The 38-year-old's last Grand Slam win came in 2023, but the Serbian shows no signs of slowing down having reached the semis of all four majors this year and is currently ranked number five in the world.

Djokovic is in Saudi Arabia where he faces Italian Jannik Sinner in the lucrative Six Kings Slam exhibition event for a place in the final against world number one Carlos Alcaraz.

"Longevity is one of my biggest motivations. I really want to see how far I can go," Djokovic said at the Joy Forum in Riyadh.

"If you see across all the global sports, LeBron James, he's still going strong, he's 40, Cristiano Ronaldo, and Tom Brady played till he was 40-something years old.

"I mean, it's unbelievable. They're inspiring me as well. So I want to keep going and that's one of

the motivations I have."

Djokovic was also eager to be a part of his sport's evolving future.

"I want to also live to see, live meaning still keep on playing professionally, to see the change that is coming for our sport," he said.

"And I'm super excited about it. I feel like tennis is a sport that can be greatly, and will be greatly transformed.

"I want to be part of that change. I want to be not just part of that change, but I want to be playing when we kind of rejuvenate our sport and set the new platform that is going to go on for decades to come."

Djokovic, who won his 100th career title in Geneva this year, was asked whether the younger players, the likes of Sinner and Alcaraz, will need to beat him into retirement.

"I'm sorry to disappoint them, it's just not happening," he said.

## Shapovalov Tops Borg, Son of Swedish Legend, in Stockholm

STOCKHOLM (Dispatches) - Canadian Denis Shapovalov overcame Leo Borg, the son of tennis legend Bjorn Borg, and the partisan crowd to advance to the quarterfinals of the BNP Paribas Nordic Open in Stockholm.

Third-seeded Shapovalov, who won in Stockholm in 2019, defeated Swedish wild card Leo Borg 6-2, 5-7, 6-1. Borg, seeking his third career ATP Tour victory, saved 11 of 18 break points and converted 3 of 7 on his opportunities.

Second-seeded Casper Ruud of Norway opened his tournament with a 7-6 (2), 6-4 victory over Marin Cilic to improve to 4-0 against the Croatian in this series. American Aleksander Kovacevic upset eighth-seeded Camilo Uga Carabelli of Argentina 4-6, 7-5, 4-0 (retired).

Other winners were Sebastian Korda, Hungary's Marton Fucsovics and Italy's Lorenzo Sonego.

Third-seeded Jiri Lehecka had an 11-0 advantage in aces in dispatching Belgian Gilles Arnaud Bailly 6-3, 6-2 and advancing to the quarterfinals in Brussels.

Lehecka of the Czech Republic recorded his 27th win on hard court this season -- fifth-most on the ATP Tour. A finalist at this event in 2024, Lehecka is ranked No. 17 in the world, while the 18-year-old Bailly is a career-high No. 247.

Fourth-seeded Alejandro Davidovich-Fokina of Spain overcame



a slow start to eliminate American Marcos Giron 6-7 (5), 6-1, 6-4. Wild card Raphael Collignon, playing in his home country, outlasted Argentina's Francisco Comensana 7-5, 3-6, 7-6 (10).

Other winners were France's Benjamin Bonzi, Georgian qualifier Nikoloz Basilashvili, Bosnia-Herzegovina's Damir Dzumhur and German qualifier Yannick Hanfmann.

Third-seeded Flavio Cobolli snapped a two-match losing streak with a successful debut at this event, defeating Australian Rinky

Hijikata 6-4, 7-5 in Kazakhstan.

The Italian, who won titles this year at Hamburg and Bucharest, advanced to the quarterfinals against Australian qualifier James Duckworth, who upset seventh-seeded and 2024 finalist Gabriel Diallo of Canada, 7-6 (3), 6-7 (3), 6-4.

Sixth-seeded Alex Michelsen ended a personal five-match losing skid by ousting the host country's Beibit Zhukayev 6-2, 6-3. Hungary's Fabian Marozsan upset fifth-seeded Brandon Nakashima 7-6 (5), 6-1.

Other winners were Japan's Shintaro Mochizuki, eighth-seeded Corentin Moutet of France and Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff, who next faces top seed and defending champion Karen Khachanov of Russia.

Meanwhile former U.S. Open champion Emma Raducanu will end her season prematurely after pulling out of her final two scheduled events in Tokyo and Hong Kong amid physical issues, British media reported.

Raducanu was beaten 3-6 6-4 6-1 by China's Zhu Lin in her Ningbo opener on Tuesday after receiving treatment for a back issue, a week after the 22-year-old retired from her meeting with Ann Li while trailing 6-1 4-1 in Wuhan.

The Briton had looked to carry her encouraging showing at the U.S. Open into the ongoing Asian swing.

## Australia May See Last of Kohli, Rohit in ODI Series



MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Australian cricket fans may have their last chance to see India batting stalwarts Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma in action when the pair tour in the one-day international series starting in Perth on Sunday.

Boasting almost 600 ODIs between them, both 36-year-old Kohli and 38-year-old Rohit are active internationally only in the 50-overs format but their future beyond the three-match series is uncertain.

Head coach Gautam Gambhir was tight-lipped when asked this week whether the duo might continue on under new captain Shubman Gill, who leads the ODI squad for the first time in Australia.

Rohit and Kohli last played for India in the Champions Trophy final in March in which they beat New Zealand.

If Australia is to be their last taste of international cricket, it will be in front of crowds packed with fans from the country's booming Indian communities in Perth, Adelaide (October 23) and Sydney (October 25).

A number of test players in the Australia squad, including batter Travis Head and veteran pacemen, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc, will use the series to loosen up for the Ashes.

It will Starc's first start in international cricket in the Australasian summer, having retired from T20s.

Marnus Labuschagne, a late call-up to replace injured all-rounder Cameron Green, will hope to convert his hot red-ball form into white-ball runs to continue building his case for an Ashes recall.

## Hamilton Refuses to Entertain Distracting Ferrari-Horner Speculation



AUSTIN (Dispatches) - Lewis Hamilton said rumours linking former Red Bull boss Christian Horner with Ferrari were 'distracting' for the Formula One team and he did not know where they came from.

Ferrari have yet to win in 18 rounds of the 24 race season and despite team principal Fred Vasseur being handed a contract extension in July, the talk about the Frenchman's future has failed to die down.

The latest speculation, in Italy and England, suggested Ferrari had held exploratory talks with Horner -- one of the sport's most successful bosses of all time but sacked abruptly in July.

Horner and Ferrari have not commented, although Aston Martin boss Andy Cowell said at this month's Singapore Grand Prix that Horner had been in touch with team owners across the paddock.

"I don't know where the rumours have come from, so I can't really shed much light on that. It's a little distracting for us as a team," Hamilton told reporters at the US Grand Prix yesterday.

"The team have made it clear where they stand in terms of re-signing Fred. Fred, I, and the whole team are working really hard on the future. These things aren't helpful," added the seven-times world champion.

"Everyone back in the factory is working incredibly hard, focused, and these sorts of rumours can sometimes be distracting."

Vasseur was instrumental in signing Hamilton, 40, from Mercedes but the sport's most successful driver has yet to stand on the podium in Ferrari red since he joined in January.

Asked again whether he knew if there was any truth to the reports and whether he thought it was a good idea for Horner to become principal, Hamilton replied: "I don't, and I'm not going to entertain rumours."

It was not clear which part of the question the 'I don't' referred to.

## Ronaldo Beats Messi to Top Forbes Football Rich List

PARIS (Dispatches) - Portugal great Cristiano Ronaldo once again topped the Forbes highest-paid footballers list for the 2025-26 season, as one of three members of the top 10 plying their trade in Saudi Arabia.

It is the sixth time in the last decade that Ronaldo has topped the Forbes list and comes just over a week after Bloomberg announced that the 40-year-old had become football's first billionaire.

With on- and off-field earnings of an estimated US\$280 million, Al Nassr's Ronaldo will earn more than double that of second-placed rival Lionel Messi, whose US\$130 million estimate is made up of more off-field earnings than those from playing for his US club Inter Miami.

Next up is French former Ballon d'Or winner Karim Benzema, who earns US\$104 million a year thanks to his huge contract at Saudis Al Ittihad.

The third member of the top 10 playing in Saudi Arabia is Senegalese forward Sadio Mane, a teammate of Ronaldo's who earns an estimated US\$54 million in eighth.



The number of players from Saudi clubs in the top 10 compared to a year ago has dropped by one as Brazil's Neymar left Al Hilal in January to return to his boyhood club, Santos in Sao Paulo.

He had been third on the list with US\$110 million in 2024-25 but now apparently earns a paltry US\$38 million, mostly from off-field contracts.

Despite the power and wealth of the English Premier League -- whose clubs spent a record £2.6 billion on transfers in the summer window -- only two players from that competition make the top 10 with Manchester City's Erling Haaland fifth and Liverpool's Mohamed Salah seventh.

But it is Spain's La Liga that has the most representatives in the top 10, including three Real Madrid players in Kylian Mbappe (fourth), Vinicius Jr (sixth) and Jude Bellingham (ninth).

While the fourth player from Spain is Barcelona's teenage starlet Lamine Yamal, who is 10th with US\$43 million.