

The Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) Approved a Resolution Condemning the U.S.-Israeli Military Aggression Against Iran in June, Alongside Adopting a Separate Unanimous Resolution Supporting Palestinian Rights

# IRAN NEWS

Iranian National Football Team Has Been Drawn in Group G of the 2026 World Cup Finals Alongside New Zealand, Belgium and Egypt as the Competitions Will Kick Off on June 15, 2026 in the U.S. Canada and Mexico

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## Iran Warns UN of Humanitarian Impact of Unilateral Coercive Measures



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations has warned that unilateral coercive measures constitute a clear violation of international law as well as a violation of human rights and the right to development.

"Unilateral coercive measures are among the daunting challenges that constitute a flagrant violation of the fundamental principles of international law and the principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, in particular, sovereign equality and non-intervention," Amir Saeed Iravani said in a statement read at to the UN General Assembly.

"Such illegal measures also violate and impede the realization of human rights, including the right to development, while negatively affecting the overall enjoyment of human rights," he said.

Iravani said that the Assembly has consistently voiced concern over the harmful effects of unilateral coercive measures on international relations, trade, investment, and cooperation, and had condemned them as unlawful.

The unprecedented spread of such unlawful measures has caused severe suffering, depriving countries of basic rights and hitting civilians hardest, he added.

"The unprecedented and alarming intensification in the extent and magnitude of promulgation, application and implementation of such unlawful measures has caused severe economic hardship and human suffering, depriving many independent countries of their inalienable and basic rights, including the right to development.

## Lebanon Faces Dangerous, Expansionist Israeli Aggression



BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Hezbollah Secretary-General Sheikh Naim Qassem has stressed that Lebanon is facing a "dangerous, expansionist Israeli aggression" that should be confronted "by all means."

The Hezbollah chief made the remarks in a televised speech during a ceremony paying tribute to martyred scholars on Friday.

Qassem stressed that Israel's actions are "expansionist", noting that the occupying regime didn't abide by the ceasefire agreement reached last year, although Lebanon and its resistance movements did.

The aggression doesn't aim to disarm the resistance but to occupy Lebanon and start implementing the so-called "Greater Israel" vision, he noted.

The so-called "Greater Israel" vision, which includes the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories as well as parts of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, was described by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in August as "a historical and spiritual mission." He told Israeli media that he feels a deep connection to "this vision."

Noting that the Beirut government opted to pursue a diplomatic solution to end the Israeli aggression, Qassem stated that Hezbollah has supported efforts made by the Lebanese authorities in this regard.

## Iraqis Expand Investments Across Iran's Key Sectors

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Secretary-General of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce has revealed new details about the growing scope of Iraqi investment in Iran, noting that Iraqi nationals have increasingly entered sectors ranging from real estate and tourism to fuel distribution and small-scale industries. At the same time, Iran continues to be one of the most economically influential foreign investors in Iraq, with a wide footprint in the energy and infrastructure sectors.

In an interview with ILNA, Jahanbakhsh Sanjabi Shirazi, Secretary-General of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, discussed the current landscape of bilateral investment and the expansion of cross-border economic ties. He emphasized that Iraqis not only travel to Iran in large numbers—particularly for medical tourism—but also invest heavily across several Iranian provinces.

According to Sanjabi Shirazi, Iraqi nationals have dramatically increased their level of investment in Iran over the past decade. Cities such as Mashhad, Qom, and Tehran have become leading destinations for foreign investors from Iraq. Real estate remains the most significant domain of Iraqi capital inflow.

"Iraqis have purchased apartments, land, commercial units, and have funded construction projects tailored particularly to Iraqi pilgrims," he said. These investments are notable in urban centers with strong religious and tourism links to Iraq, including Mashhad—home to the Imam Reza shrine—Qom, Tehran, Urmia, and the island of Kish.

Citing data from Iran's Ministry of Economy, the Secretary-General stated that Iraqis have held the top position in foreign property purchases in Iran for several consecutive years.

The second key area of Iraqi investment has been the tourism sector, especially religious and medical tourism. Over recent years, there has been a noticeable rise in partnerships to build hotels, guesthouses, and pilgrim accommodations. Iraqi investors have also shown growing interest in Iran's health tourism market, which includes cosmetic procedures, orthopedics, infertility treatments (IVF), and other specialized medical services in cities such as Mashhad, Qom, Shiraz, and Tehran.

According to Sanjabi Shirazi, Iraqi patients currently constitute the largest segment of foreign medical tourists entering Iran.

Beyond real estate and tourism, Iraqis are increasingly moving into Iran's small and medium-sized industries. Their investments include clothing workshops, packaging facilities for dates and raisins, food production units, and joint ventures in plastic and polymer manufacturing. Additionally, Iraqi stakeholders have helped establish joint import-export companies aimed at



facilitating cross-border trade.

While Iraqi engagement in Iran's energy sector remains relatively limited, Sanjabi Shirazi noted that it is expanding. Iraqi investors have begun putting capital into fuel stations, fuel transportation networks, and distribution channels for petroleum products within Iran. Although still at an early stage, he said this form of investment has been growing steadily.

In the field of technology and services, Iraqi investors have registered companies involved in IT services, logistics, customs clearance, and online commerce. According to the Secretary-General, Iraqis have shown interest in supporting Iranian startups and small-scale digital businesses.

When asked whether any major joint state-led Iran-Iraq projects exist inside Iran, Sanjabi Shirazi explained that most Iraqi investments

have been private. However, government-level collaborations do exist, particularly in industrial zone development and energy exchange.

"These include plans for joint industrial parks along the border, agreements on shared free-trade zones such as Shalamchah and Parvizkhan, and cooperation in electricity, gas, and overall energy exchange," he said. Other joint initiatives involve transportation infrastructure, including rail and road networks like the Shalamchah-Basra railway project.

While Iraq's investment presence in Iran is growing, Iran remains one of the most dominant economic players inside Iraq. Sanjabi Shirazi highlighted that energy is the largest sector in which Iran has invested in Iraq. This includes electricity exports to central and southern regions of Iraq, gas supplies for power plants in Baghdad and Basra, and extensive participation in constructing and repairing Iraqi power plants.

Iranian companies have also been active in Iraq's construction and engineering sectors. These projects range from building roads, bridges, and hospitals to developing water and sewage networks and constructing schools.

Major Iranian firms operating in Iraq include subsidiaries of well-known engineering conglomerates such as Khatam al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters, Sanir, MAPNA, Keyson, and Jihad Nasr.

In addition, Iran has a significant presence in Iraq's food and fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) market. Iranian products—including dairy, clothing, detergents, ceramics, cement, steel, and household appliances—have gained wide distribution throughout Iraq.

As economic ties between the two neighboring nations deepen, both Iranian and Iraqi private-sector investors continue to expand cooperation across energy, infrastructure, tourism, and manufacturing, reflecting a dynamic and increasingly interdependent economic relationship.

## Persian Gulf Water Transfer Project Officially Launched to Supply Central Iran

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The national project to transfer water from the Persian Gulf to Iran's central plateau was officially inaugurated today, December 6, with participation from Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian and Minister of Industry, Mining, and Trade Mohammad Atabak. The initiative, implemented with the collaboration of Mobarakeh Steel Company, is expected to reduce the reliance of central Iranian industries on the Zayandeh-Rud River and enhance Isfahan's resilience against drought.

The virtual inauguration highlighted the significance of sustainable water supply for the central plateau.

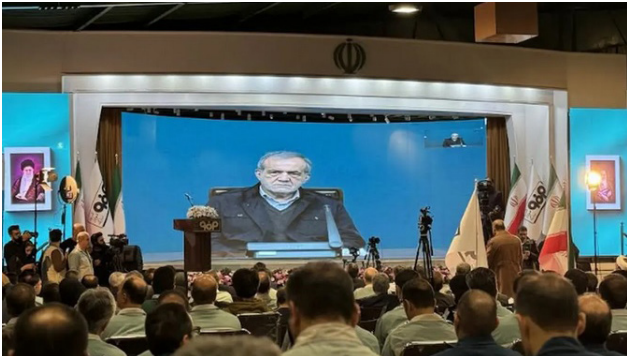
President Pezeshkian underscored that the project will help redirect water from the Persian Gulf to Isfahan, reducing industrial dependence on underground resources and Zayandeh-Rud waters. "Addressing the water challenges in the region remains a priority, and expert consultations with universities and academic institutions will continue to ensure long-term solutions," he said.

President Pezeshkian added that the Persian Gulf water transfer to Isfahan's industrial sector represents a major step toward securing both environmental and industrial sustainability in the region.

Minister Atabak described the project as one of the country's most important infrastructure achievements. "The commissioning of this transfer line guarantees a sustainable water supply for critical industries in the central plateau," he said. He emphasized that the project contributes to addressing surface and underground water shortages while ensuring the continuity of national production.

The minister also noted that Mobarakeh Steel aims to eliminate its consumption of Zayandeh-Rud water entirely, a move reflecting a broader commitment to environmental preservation. He praised engineers, workers, and managers involved in the project and stressed that future industrial development should prioritize sustainable water resources, particularly from the sea.

Saeed Zarendi, CEO of Mobarakeh Steel, explained that the water project was initiated to reduce industrial dependency on Zayandeh-Rud, under the slogan: "From the salinity of the sea to the



sweetness of production." Despite consuming less than 1.5% of the river's water, Mobarakeh invested in this 35 trillion-rial project to relieve pressure on limited surface water resources.

The project includes more than 800 kilometers of pipelines, of which 530 kilometers operate through gravity flow, eliminating five pumping stations and significantly reducing energy consumption. Mobarakeh produced 610,000 tons of API X65 steel specifically for the high-pressure pipelines. Over 42 contractors and more than 3,000 personnel contributed to the project, which was completed in just two years—setting a national record.

Zarendi highlighted that the project lessens industrial water withdrawals from Zayandeh-Rud, increasing Isfahan's drought resilience. Mobarakeh has also dramatically reduced its water consumption per ton of steel from 16 cubic meters in 1992 to approximately 2.5 cubic meters today, positioning it among the world's most water-efficient steel producers.

The company is simultaneously advancing energy projects, including the first phase of its solar power plant, which became operational in July and will add an additional 400 megawatts by year-end. Negotiations with the Ministry of Oil have concluded for operation of the "Madar" gas field, and a seawater desalination initiative further supports energy self-sufficiency and industrial reliability.

Zarendi emphasized that Mobarakeh has begun investing in digital water management solutions, including sensors and monitoring systems, aligning with Iran's Seventh Development Plan. While leading global steel companies average four cubic meters of water per ton of steel, Mobarakeh has reduced consumption to 2.2–2.5 cubic meters per ton.

Officials described the Persian Gulf water transfer as a critical milestone in securing industrial water supply, reducing dependency on limited surface water sources, and supporting employment and production continuity. They also framed the project as a strategic measure to mitigate water scarcity and promote sustainable industrial development in central Iran.

## LPG, a Substitute for Gasoline

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

The crisis of gasoline imbalance and the government's new plan to use LPG as an alternative fuel is an important opportunity, but one accompanied by fundamental challenges. Most people know that LPG stands for Liquefied Petroleum Gas, which is also called liquid gas. This gas is mainly composed of a mixture of the two hydrocarbons propane (C<sub>3</sub>H<sub>8</sub>) and butane (C<sub>4</sub>H<sub>10</sub>), and it becomes liquid under low pressure to make transportation and storage easier.

Using the domestic surplus of LPG instead of exporting it in raw form can reduce the financial pressure of gasoline imports and, at the same time, significantly help diversify the country's fuel portfolio.

Its lower price, domestic availability, and lower pollution compared to gasoline are the main driving factors behind this plan. The most important part of the decision is the direct reference to the risks which—if neglected—can turn the entire plan into a new crisis in the social, safety, environmental, and economic domains.

The distribution network, refueling stations, and standard installation systems are, of course, not ready, and they are costly. In a situation where the government has to think about every single rial it spends, this will also be time-consuming.

It must be acknowledged that neglecting non-standard vehicle conversions—which pose a major threat to public safety—will undoubtedly create serious problems. In Iran, it has already been experienced that without precise and continuous supervision, standards either remain only on paper or are implemented incompletely according to group interests and, at times, even individual ones.

In summary, I must emphasize that the fate of this plan—exactly as mentioned—depends on "precise energy governance." Its success requires an immediate and decisive operational program.

Building standard LPG refueling stations for vehicles and developing a safe transportation network will be the key to success.

Setting precise technical specifications for parts and installation, and granting permits only to qualified conversion centers, is also important.

The next point is establishing a strong regulatory body to inspect the sources of converted vehicles and the fueling stations. Educating citizens about the benefits, risks, and safe usage is the essential first step.

If the government pursues these requirements seriously, transparently, and rapidly, LPG can play an important role in reducing dependence on gasoline and overcoming the current multifaceted crisis. Otherwise, the risk of turning this opportunity into a new and more complex problem will be very real.

## Enemy Seeks to Create Division Between People and Officials Through Media Warfare



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian military and media official has described the recent 12-day conflict as a turning point in the history of the Islamic Revolution, warning that hostile powers are intensifying efforts to sow discord between the Iranian people and state institutions through sophisticated media warfare.

Speaking Friday evening at the Seventh Basij Digital Content Production Event in Sari, Brigadier General Ramazan Sharif, head of the Sacred Defense Documentation Center, emphasized that one of the most challenging arenas of confrontation between the Islamic Republic and its adversaries is the domain of discourse and media.

He noted that opponents of Iran have long attempted to halt or derail the Islamic Revolution through a range of covert and overt methods—among them political conspiracies, coup attempts, the fomenting of insecurity in border regions, and even the eight-year imposed war. "The enemies of the Islamic system have used every tool available, including media platforms and psychological operations, to create doubt, insecurity, and instability," Sharif said.



# IRAN NEWS



## Iran, Germany Envoys Discuss State of Bilateral Ties

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's ambassador to Germany said he has held a "good discussion" with Berlin's new envoy to Tehran, focusing on the current state of long-standing relations between the two countries.

Majid Nili said on Friday the meeting with his counterpart, Ambassador Deitmann, included an exchange of views on the trajectory of bilateral ties.

Nili added that he wished the German diplomat success in his mission.

## Tehran's Dams Hold Only Half as Much Water as Last Year



### IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Tehran's five main water-supplying dams currently contain just 170 million cubic meters of water — less than half of last year's 380 million cubic meters and far below the long-term average of 509 million cubic meters, according to regional water officials.

The sharp decline underscores the urgent need for careful consumption and water savings, said Rana Habibi, Director of Water Resources Protection at the Tehran Regional Water Authority, speaking on the sidelines of the 21st International Water Industry Exhibition.

Habibi stated that Iran has endured five consecutive years of drought, and rainfall since the beginning of the current water year (starting in late September) has been extremely low. "Since early October, precipitation has amounted to only 1.9 millimeters, compared to 48 millimeters in the same period last year and a long-term average of 75 millimeters," he noted.

Overall, rainfall has dropped 96% compared to last year and 97.5% compared to long-term averages, he added — a decline he called "highly significant."

Habibi explained that throughout the five-year drought, outflow from the dams has consistently exceeded inflow, severely reducing reservoir volumes. "Tehran's dams have now reached strategic storage levels, and we must pay special attention to managing water resources and improving consumption efficiency," he said.

## Iran, Russia Sign Cooperation Agreement on AI and Cybersecurity



### IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The fifth meeting of the Iran-Russia Joint Working Group on Communications and Information Technology concluded in Moscow on Friday with the signing of a cooperation memorandum aimed at expanding bilateral ties in the digital and technological sectors.

The memorandum was signed Friday evening by Meysam Abedi, Iran's Deputy Minister of Communications and Information Technology for Technology and Innovation, and Alexander Shvytov, Russia's Deputy Minister of Digital Development, Communications, and Mass Media.

The agreement covers cooperation in several strategic fields, including artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, smart government, blockchain and fintech, regulatory frameworks, and technology and postal parks, while also strengthening collaboration between the private sectors of both countries.

Speaking to reporters after the signing ceremony at Russia's Ministry of Digital Development in Moscow, Abedi said the agreement underscores Iran and Russia's determination to deepen governmental-level cooperation in the communications and IT sector.

He noted that the memorandum addresses areas such as data transit, e-government development, and the exchange of experiences and technical capacities between the two sides. Abedi highlighted ongoing research and practical projects related to AI in both Iran and Russia as a key component of the agreement.

Referring to the fifth round of joint ICT working group meetings, Abedi said that mutual understanding of each other's capacities "is growing day by day," adding that new opportunities for cooperation are emerging not only in the private sector but also at the governmental level. Both sides, he said, are eager to leverage one another's strengths and advantages.

Abedi expressed hope that bilateral cooperation would lead to higher-quality products and improved services for both nations. He also voiced optimism that face-to-face meetings between Iranian and Russian companies, held on Thursday and Friday, would pave the way for serious new business partnerships beneficial to both countries.

# Top Iranian and Russian Tech Firms Sign Five Cooperation Agreements



### IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Leading technology companies from Iran and Russia signed five cooperation agreements in Moscow following a series of joint meetings held between the two sides.

Representatives of five Iranian tech firms formalized their bilateral agreements with Russian partners during a ceremony on Friday evening attended by Iran's ambassador to Russia, the Iranian Deputy Minister of Communications and Information Technology for Technology and Innovation, and the Russian Deputy Minister of Digital Development, Communications, and Mass Media.

The private Iranian tech companies traveled to Moscow as part of the fifth meeting of the Iran-Russia Joint Working Group on Communications and Information Technology. After two days of negotiations and bilateral sessions, several of their understandings were finalized in the form of cooperation contracts.

Earlier in the day, government officials from both countries had also signed a memorandum of understanding at the ministerial level.

Iran's Ambassador to Russia, Kazem Jalali, described the current period as a "golden era" in relations between the two countries. He referenced the comprehensive strategic treaty signed by the presidents of Iran and Russia in January 2025, emphasizing that the leaders of both nations have outlined major goals requiring the expansion of cooperation across multiple sectors.

Jalali praised the strong initiative of Iran's Ministry of Communications and the various technology companies involved, noting that both nations possess significant capabilities and that such partnerships will undoubtedly benefit both sides.

He highlighted the active presence of young Iranian specialists in the delegation, noting that many talented youth work in fields such as IT, ICT, and artificial intelligence — with some even contributing to major global tech firms. Increased exchanges and face-to-face meetings, he said, not only advance mutual interests but

also strengthen understanding between the two nations.

Alexander Shvytov, Russia's Deputy Minister of Digital Development, Communications, and Mass Media, expressed satisfaction with the successful conclusion of the joint working group's fifth meeting. He said the agreements reached were the result of years of sustained effort.

"Today we were able to celebrate the achievements of years of work alongside the companies partnering with us, and we can confidently say that cooperation is continuing in a definite and structured way," Shvytov stated.

He noted that although Iran and Russia have signed numerous agreements in the past, new areas of collaboration continue to emerge — sectors that serve the interests of both nations and their people.

Iran's Deputy Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Meysam Abedi, said the contracts and understandings signed reflect three years of continuous follow-up between the two ministries and private-sector firms.

He called on Iranian and Russian companies to actively pursue the implementation of the agreements and to address any obstacles in coordination with government bodies in both countries.

Abedi added that Iran and Russia have the capacity to develop new joint market strategies in third countries, expressing hope that additional agreements in this area would be signed by next year's sixth meeting of the joint working group, scheduled to be held in Tehran.

The fifth round of Iran-Russia joint ICT cooperation meetings concluded earlier on Friday, December 4, with the signing of a bilateral memorandum.

The Iranian delegation, headed by the Deputy Minister of Communications and accompanied by government officials and representatives from 16 leading Iranian technology companies, traveled to Moscow to participate in the working group and hold face-to-face sessions with top Russian tech firms.

# ECO's New 10-Year Vision Document Nears Completion

### IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) is entering the final phase of preparing its new 10-year strategic vision, according to a senior official at Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The document, which will outline the organization's long-term regional development agenda from 2026 to 2035, is expected to be completed within the next six months.

Behzad Azarsa, Director of ECO and Multilateral Economic Organizations at Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, announced the progress in an interview with ISNA. When asked about the key elements shaping the new vision, especially in light of Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi's recent remarks that the next ECO roadmap must adapt to global transformations, Azarsa confirmed that these priorities have been central to the drafting process.

"Certainly, this is the case," he said. "The ECO Vision Document covers a very wide range of cooperation areas—many of them economic in nature. However, the foundation of these economic issues inevitably rests on political developments occurring within member states, as well as bilateral, multilateral, and regional dynamics."

The 10-year vision is one of ECO's most significant long-term planning tools. It is being developed collectively by the organization's ten member states: Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The document aims to define patterns of economic, commercial, and regional cooperation for the decade ahead, focusing on enhanced integration, increased trade flows, and more effective use of shared resources.

The upcoming edition of the vision will cover the years 2026 to 2035, replacing the current framework that guides ECO's existing projects and policy priorities.

Iran's Foreign Minister, Abbas Araghchi, recently underscored the importance of updating the document in accordance with contemporary geopolitical and economic shifts. He stressed that the next ECO agenda requires "paradigm shifts and structural redesign" in order to remain relevant and effective in the face of new global realities.

Azarsa emphasized the organization's broader significance beyond



cooperate with Iran through ECO." This, he said, gives the organization a unique capacity to enhance regional connectivity and align economic interests.

According to Azarsa, ECO has enabled Iran to expand ties with countries in its vicinity and identify previously missing links in regional cooperation. "Through ECO, we have managed to broaden relationships with neighboring countries and identify gaps that hindered closer cooperation. We have invested in addressing those missing links and worked toward their completion."

Among the most prominent areas of focus within ECO's evolving agenda are transportation corridors and regional connectivity projects. Azarsa highlighted ongoing efforts to strengthen the network of air, land, rail, and maritime links among member states.

"This includes regional corridors and transportation connections among ECO countries," he said. "These range from aviation routes and overland highways to rail networks and cooperation across the Caspian Sea."

Such infrastructure development is considered essential for boosting regional trade, facilitating energy exchange, and enabling member states to better integrate into global supply chains. The new vision document is expected to place significant emphasis on these areas, as they remain central to ECO's long-term economic ambitions.

Azarsa reiterated that the drafting process is nearing its conclusion. "The 10-year vision document is in its final stages," he confirmed. "We hope that within the next six months, the document will be fully completed."

Once finalized, the vision will serve as the organization's primary roadmap for a decade, guiding cooperative initiatives across economic, trade, infrastructural, environmental, and social domains.

## Iran to Participate in UN Environment Assembly



### IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran will participate in the upcoming seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7), scheduled to convene next week in Nairobi, Kenya. According to Shina Ansari, Vice President of Iran and Head of the Department of Environment, the Iranian delegation intends to raise two key issues: the growing problem of dust storms affecting West Asia and the need to separate environmental matters from what Tehran describes as "unfair international sanctions."

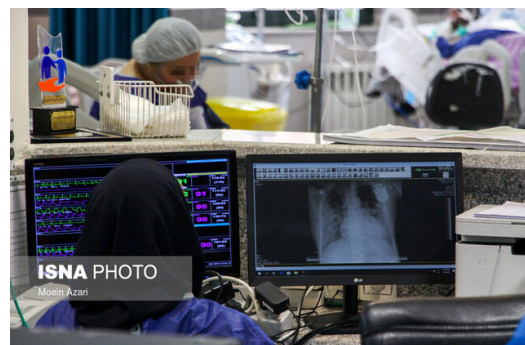
Speaking to Iranian media, Ansari emphasized the significance of UNEA as the world's highest-level decision-making body on environmental affairs. The Assembly plays a central role in shaping global environmental policies and guiding international environmental law. She noted that given the increasing global sensitivity to climate and environmental challenges, Iran views its presence at this year's Assembly as an important part of the country's environmental diplomacy agenda.

Ansari stated that Iran plans to use its platform at UNEA-7 to present a focused discussion on the intensifying dust storms that affect southwest Asia, including Iran. These transboundary dust storms—often originating from degraded lands in neighboring regions—have caused severe air pollution, health risks, and environmental degradation across large parts of the country. The Iranian delegation will deliver a formal address on the issue and pursue the matter in relevant specialized sessions, she confirmed.

"The Islamic Republic is among the countries most affected by cross-border dust storms from the West Asian region," Ansari said. "We will raise the topic in a specialized manner and follow it through in all the relevant segments of the Assembly."

In addition to dust storm mitigation, Iran will introduce a second major theme: the growing impacts of climate change within its borders. Ansari highlighted rising temperatures, shifting rainfall patterns, declining precipitation, and intensifying droughts as clear indicators that Iran is experiencing the consequences of global climate change. These climate-related challenges, she said, will form another core component of Iran's discussions at UNEA-7.

## Flu Transmission Can Last Up to 7 Days After Onset



### IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Dr. Mohammadreza Salehi, head of the Microbial Resistance Research Center at Tehran University of Medical Sciences, has warned that Iran is entering a seasonal influenza epidemic, noting a sharp rise in confirmed cases over the past week.

Speaking to ISNA, he said the trend clearly indicates that "the time has come to declare an influenza epidemic." He urged the healthcare system to activate epidemic-based protocols, primarily by increasing public education on prevention and safe management of symptoms.

Salehi emphasized that individuals infected with influenza remain contagious for up to seven days after symptoms begin, making it vital for symptomatic people to avoid public spaces, classrooms, and public transportation. He particularly urged parents to keep sick children at home, warning that school attendance accelerates transmission within families.

Mask-wearing, frequent handwashing, avoiding handshakes, and limiting close contact or visits to crowded places remain the strongest preventive tools, he said. Influenza spreads easily through respiratory droplets that contaminate surfaces, making hand hygiene especially important—yet often neglected.

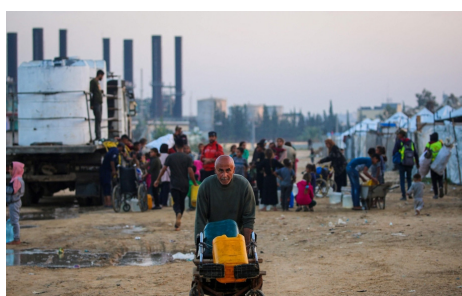
Salehi highlighted that high-risk groups—including pregnant women, the elderly, young children, people with obesity, cancer patients, and those with chronic heart or lung diseases—must exercise heightened caution. If infected, these groups face a higher likelihood of severe illness, hospitalization, and complicated treatment.



## Egypt, Qatar, Others Concerned About Israel Opening One-Way Gaza Exit

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Gaza mediators Egypt and Qatar and six other Muslim-majority countries said they were concerned about Israel stating it would open a one-way crossing for Palestinians to exit the Strip.

The foreign ministers of Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates "expressed their deep concern regarding the statements issued by the Israeli side concerning the opening of the Rafah crossing in one direction with the aim of transferring residents of the Gaza Strip to" Egypt, they said in a joint statement. The ministers voiced "their absolute rejection of any attempts to expel the Palestinian people from their land" and said they were against "compelling any resident of the Gaza Strip to leave".



## U.S. Sets 2027 Deadline for Europe-Led NATO Defense



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States wants Europe to take over the majority of NATO's conventional defense capabilities, from intelligence to missiles, by 2027, Pentagon officials told diplomats in Washington this week, a tight deadline that struck some European officials as unrealistic.

The message, recounted by five sources familiar with the discussion, including a U.S. official, was conveyed at a meeting in Washington this week of Pentagon staff overseeing NATO policy and several European delegations.

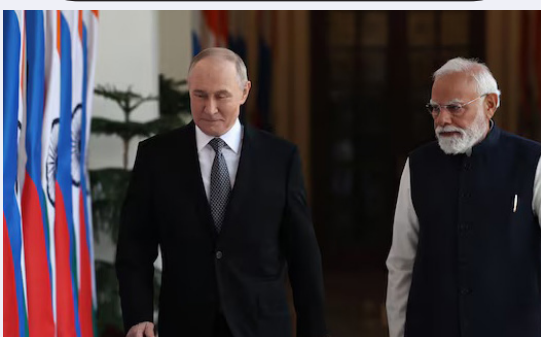
The shifting of this burden from the U.S. to European members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization would dramatically change how the United States, a founding member of the post-war alliance, works with its most important military partners.

In the meeting, Pentagon officials indicated that Washington was not yet satisfied with the strides Europe has made to boost its defense capabilities since Russia's expanded invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The U.S. officials told their counterparts that if Europe does not meet the 2027 deadline, the U.S. may stop participating in some NATO defense coordination mechanisms, said the sources, who requested anonymity to discuss private conversations.

Some officials on Capitol Hill are aware of and concerned about the Pentagon's message to the Europeans, one U.S. official said.

## Putin, Modi Agree to Expand and Widen India-Russia Trade



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Russian President Vladimir Putin offered India uninterrupted fuel supplies on Friday, eliciting a cautious response even as he and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed to expand trade and defense ties between countries with decades-old ties.

India, the world's top buyer of Russian arms and seaborne oil, has rolled out the red carpet for Putin during his two-day state visit, his first to New Delhi since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

But New Delhi is also in talks with the U.S. on a trade deal to cut punitive tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump on its goods over India's purchases of Russian oil. India's energy imports are expected to fall to a three-year-low this month following U.S. tariffs and sanctions. Deputy U.S. Trade Representative Rick Switzer is still slated to travel to India on Monday, two U.S. officials said on Friday.

Russia has said it wants to import more Indian goods in an effort to grow trade to \$100 billion by 2030.

Putin said Moscow was ready to continue ensuring "uninterrupted fuel supplies" to India, following up on comments on Thursday questioning U.S. pressure on India to curb oil purchases from Russia.

India appeared cautious about the offer.

# Trump Scraps Global Dominance in New Security Strategy, Warns of Europe's Civilizational Erasure

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Donald Trump laid out a radical realignment of US foreign policy, shifting the longtime superpower's focus from global to regional, brutally criticizing Europe as facing "civilizational erasure" and putting a top priority on eliminating mass migration.

The national security strategy, meant to flesh out Trump's norms-shattering worldview, elevates Latin America to the top of the US agenda in a sharp reorientation from longstanding US calls to focus on Asia to face a rising China.

"In everything we do, we are putting America First," Trump said in a preamble to the long-awaited paper.

Breaking with decades of attempts to be the sole superpower, the strategy said that the "United States rejects the ill-fated concept of global domination for itself."

It said that the United States would also prevent other powers, namely China, from dominating but added: "This does not mean wasting blood and treasure to curtail the influence of all the world's great and middle powers."

The strategy called for a "readjustment of our global military presence to address urgent threats in our Hemisphere," starting with migration.

"The era of mass migration must end," the strategy said.

The strategy made clear that the United States under Trump would aggressively pursue similar objectives in Europe, in line with far-right parties' agendas.

In extraordinary language in addressing close allies, the strategy said the administration would be "cultivating resistance to Europe's current trajectory within European nations."

Germany quickly hit back, saying that it does not need "outside advice."

The strategy pointed to Europe's slide in share of the global economy — which is the result largely of the rise of China and other emerging powers — and said: "This economic decline is eclipsed by the real and more stark prospect of civilizational erasure."

"Should present trends continue, the continent will be unrecognizable in 20 years or less."

As Trump seeks an end to the Ukraine war that would likely favor Russia gaining territory, the strategy accused Europeans of weakness and said the United States should focus on "ending the perception, and preventing the reality, of NATO as a perpetually expanding alliance."



Israel used even in the first Trump administration.

On China, the strategy repeated calls for a "free and open" Asia-Pacific region but focused more on the nation as an economic competitor.

After much speculation on whether Trump would budge on Taiwan — the self-ruling democracy claimed by Beijing — the strategy made clear that the United States supports the decades-old status quo, but called on allies Japan and South Korea to contribute more to ensure Taiwan's defense from China.

The strategy predictably puts little focus on Africa, saying the United States should transition away from "liberal ideology" and an "aid-focused relationship" and emphasize goals such as securing critical minerals.

U.S. presidents usually release a National Security Strategy in each White House term.

The last, released by Joe Biden in 2022, prioritized winning a competitive edge over China while constraining a "dangerous" Russia.

## EU, G7 Weigh Ban on Maritime Services for Russian Oil Exports

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The Group of Seven countries and the European Union are in talks to replace a price cap on Russian oil exports with a full maritime services ban in a bid to reduce the oil revenue that helps finance Russia's war in Ukraine, six sources familiar with the matter said.

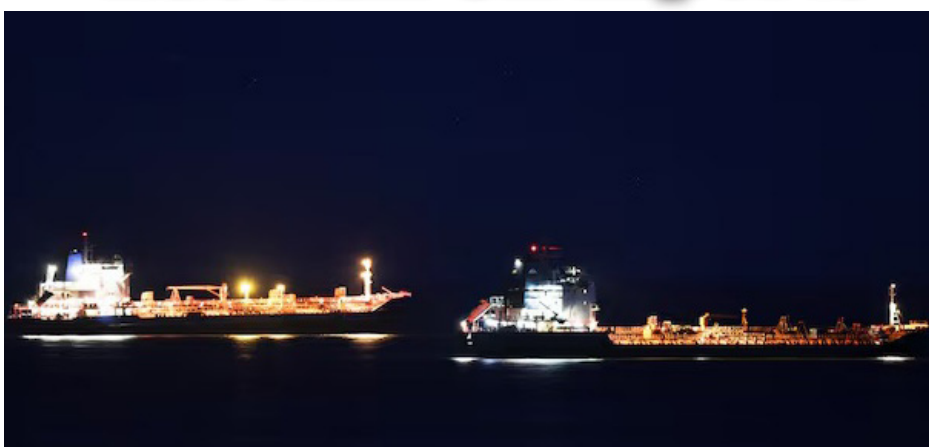
Russia exports over a third of its oil in Western tankers - mostly to India and China - with the use of Western shipping services. The ban would end that trade, which is mostly done through the fleets of EU maritime countries including Greece, Cyprus and Malta.

The other two thirds of exported Russian oil goes out in a fleet of hundreds of tankers operating outside Western scrutiny and maritime standards, known as the dark or shadow fleet. Russia would need to expand that fleet if the G7 and the EU impose the maritime services ban.

The ban could be part of the EU's next package of sanctions against Russia, slated for early 2026, three out of the six sources told Reuters. The 27-nation EU would like to approve the ban together with a broader G7 agreement before proposing the ban in the package, two of the six sources said.

The sources declined to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter.

British and American officials are pushing forward the idea in technical G7 meetings, the sources said. Any final U.S. decision would depend on the pressure tactics President Donald Trump's administration chooses amid ongoing peace talks it is brokering between Ukraine and Russia, four



sources said.

While the G7 and EU have almost fully cut imports of Russian oil since 2022, the new measure would mark the closest they have ever come to a total ban on dealing with Russian crude and fuel not only at the level of imports but also transportation and maritime services.

The U.S. State Department, the White House, Cyprus's shipping ministry, European Commission, Britain's foreign office and Canada's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Greek government officials were not immediately available for comment.

The G7 imposed a price cap for Russian oil in 2022 after Russia invaded

Ukraine to curb the Kremlin's income while allowing third countries to buy Russian oil using Western services - but only if buyers paid Russia less than the price cap.

To avoid the cap, Russia re-routed much of its oil to Asia on its own ships, many of which have since been sanctioned by the West. These vessels are old, their ownership is opaque, and they sail without Western insurance cover.

The administration of former U.S. President Joe Biden argued that if Russia spent more money on tankers it would have less money for waging war in Ukraine.

The Trump administration has been more sceptical about the price cap and declined to support Britain, the EU and Canada when they agreed to lower the cap on crude from \$60 per barrel to \$47.6 per barrel in September 2025.

Russia exported 44% of its oil in sanctioned shadow-fleet tankers in October, according to analysis from the Finland-based independent Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air.

Some 18% of oil sailed in non-sanctioned shadow fleet tankers while tankers with links to G7 countries, the EU and Australia transported 38% of Russian oil.

The overall fleet working with sanctioned oil from Russia, Iran and Venezuela encompasses 1,423 tankers, of which 921 are subject to U.S., UK or EU sanctions, according to maritime data specialist Lloyd's List Intelligence.

## Ukraine, U.S. to Meet for Third Day

MIAMI (Dispatches) - Ukrainian and U.S. officials will hold a third straight day of talks in Miami, with Washington saying the two sides agreed that "real progress" would depend on Russia's willingness to end the war.

President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner have been meeting top Ukrainian negotiator Rustem Umerov and Andrii Hnatov, the chief of staff of Kyiv's armed forces.

The talks come after Witkoff and Kushner met Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin on Tuesday to discuss a US plan to end the conflict, but Moscow rejected parts of the proposal.

"Both parties agreed that real progress toward any agreement depends on Russia's readiness to show serious commitment to long-term peace, including steps toward de-escalation and cessation of killings," said a readout of the Miami talks posted on X by Witkoff on Friday.

The US and Ukrainian officials "also agreed on the framework of security arrangements and discussed necessary deterrence capabilities to sustain a lasting peace."

Washington's plan involves Ukraine surrendering land that Russia has not been able to win on the battlefield in return for security promises that fall short of Kyiv's aspirations to join NATO.



But the nature of the security guarantees that Ukraine could get have so far been shrouded in uncertainty, beyond an initial plan saying that jets to defend Kyiv could be based in Poland.

The US plan has been through several drafts since it first emerged late last month, amid initial criticisms that it was too soft on Russia, which invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

Witkoff, Trump's former business partner-turned-roving global ambassador, and investor Kushner had hoped to persuade Putin to play ball but came away from Moscow without a deal.

Still, Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov said the five-hour late-night Moscow meeting on Tuesday was cordial and he praised Kushner joining the talks, which have been going on since spring.

Putin and Witkoff "had a genuinely friendly conversation and they understand each other perfectly," Ushakov said on Russian state TV on Friday.

"A new person has joined us, and I would say that he has turned out to be very useful," he said of Kushner.

On the Ukrainian side, Mykhailo Podolyak, an advisor to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, wrote on social media Friday that "the diplomatic process takes place mostly behind the scenes."





WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Friday's FIFA World Cup draw at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC put top teams Argentina, Spain and England in seemingly favourable groups for the 2026 competition which will take place in the United States, Canada and Mexico. However, France will face tougher matches against Senegal and Norway.

Holders Argentina and leading contenders Spain and England were all handed kind draws for the 2026 World Cup in a star-studded ceremony on Friday which saw US President Donald Trump receive FIFA's new peace prize.

The event in Washington started the final countdown to the tournament, six months out from the first-ever 48-team World Cup, with much-fancied France among those receiving a harder task.

Lionel Messi's Argentina will begin their defense of the trophy they won in Qatar in 2022 against Algeria, and will also face Austria and debutants Jordan in Group J.

Heavily-fancied Spain, the European champions, will kick off against first-time qualifiers Cape Verde before also taking on Uruguay and Saudi Arabia in Group H.

Thomas Tuchel's England will meet Croatia, Ghana and Panama in a kind-looking Group L.

Two-time winners France, meanwhile, face awkward tests against Senegal and Erling Haaland's Norway in Group I, which will be completed by an intercontinental play-off winner from either Iraq, Bolivia or Suriname.

The 2026 tournament will be held across the United States, Mexico and Canada from June 11 to July 19, with 16 more teams added to the global showpiece, up from the 32 nations involved in Qatar in 2022.

That means a total of 104 matches, compared to 64 games last time.

While the US will host the majority of matches, including the final at the MetLife Stadium outside New York, three of the 16 venues will be in Mexico and two in Canada.

"We've worked closely with those two countries, and the coordination and friendship and relationship has been outstanding," Trump said at the Kennedy Center after receiving his prize from FIFA President Gianni Infantino.

"It is truly one of the great honours of my life. It is such an honour to be with Gianni. He has done such an incredible job," he added.

"The world is a safer place now. The United States a year ago was not going too well but now it is the hottest country anywhere in the world."

Trump seized the limelight, but Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum were also in attendance.

While snow fell outside amid freezing temperatures in the US capital, some of the biggest stars in the American sport and entertainment world appeared on stage inside.

The event was co-hosted by supermodel Heidi Klum and American actor and comedian Kevin Hart, and featured performances by the Village People, Robbie Williams and Andrea Bocelli.

NFL legend Tom Brady, ice hockey icon Wayne Gretzky and former NBA superstar Shaquille O'Neal were among the stars helping to conduct the draw.

Elsewhere in the draw, co-hosts Mexico will take on South Africa in Group A in the opening game of the tournament at the Estadio Azteca in Mexico City on June 11.

## Durant 8th to 31,000 Points as Rockets Sink Suns

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Amen Thompson and Kevin Durant combined for 59 points to pace a blistering shooting effort, and the Houston Rockets rolled to a 117-98 victory over the visiting Phoenix Suns.

Durant scored 17 of his 28 points in the second quarter to turn the tide, while Thompson scored 31 points on 12-for-17 shooting from the field. The Rockets excelled despite the absence of Alperen Sengun (illness), who leads the team in rebounds and assists and is second behind Durant in scoring.

Durant added eight assists to his ledger and became the eighth player in NBA history to eclipse 31,000 career points.

Dillon Brooks paced the Suns with 23 points while Collin Gillespie chipped in 13. Phoenix was without leading scorer Devin Booker (groin) and shot 39% from the field, including 5 for 36 on 3-pointers.

Brooks keyed a hot start for the Suns, and his



three-point play at the 4:17 mark of the first quarter lifted Phoenix to a 20-15 lead. Brooks scored 14 points on 6-for-8 shooting in the opening period to help the Suns carry a 31-24 lead into the second.

The Rockets committed six turnovers and shot 40.9% in the first. Halfway through the second quarter, Durant almost singlehandedly reversed the hosts' fortunes by converting back-to-back three-point plays that fueled a 17-2 rally.

When Durant completed his second three-point play, the Rockets grabbed a 46-44 lead with 5:47 left in the first half. Durant fed Thompson for a dunk that extended that advantage to 54-46, and when Durant assisted a Josh Okogie baseline dunk that closed the first half, the Rockets led 68-58. Durant missed only one of eight shots in the second period and added three assists as the offensive linchpin for the Rockets, who shot 78.3% in the quarter.

## Norris Quicker Than Verstappen in Abu Dhabi Practice, Piastri Lags



ABU DHABI (Dispatches) - McLaren's Formula One leader Lando Norris made a perfect start to the title-deciding Abu Dhabi Grand Prix weekend with the fastest laps in both practice sessions while Red Bull rival Max Verstappen was second.

The Briton, 12 points clear of the four-times world champion after 23 of 24 rounds, was 0.008 quicker in an unrepresentative afternoon session and then 0.363 faster in the second at night under the Yas Marina floodlights.

Verstappen was noted by stewards for impeding Norris in an early misunderstanding after being fed wrong information by his race engineer, but they decided not to investigate further.

"What's this guy doing? I almost crashed," exclaimed Norris. "Obviously, from the times, things look good at the minute," said Norris. "I still want a bit more from the car. I'm not completely happy or completely confident."

"We all know it gets a lot closer going into quali. So nothing to smile about just yet."

Teammate Oscar Piastri, the third title contender but four points behind Verstappen, was 11th on the timesheets after sitting out the first session with Mexican IndyCar driver and F1 reserve Pato O'Ward getting track time.

The Australian looked strong on long runs, however.

"Oscar is not totally dialled in yet but he will get there," said McLaren boss Zak Brown. "I've been impressed with both of our drivers coming into the weekend, they seem more relaxed than normal."

Mercedes' George Russell, who could play a disruptive role in the title battle on Sunday, was third in practice two with Haas's Oliver Bearman fourth and Nico Hulkenberg fifth for Sauber ahead of his 250th start.

"The car is insane. I don't know how the car is so good," exclaimed Bearman over the team radio.

Last year's race winner Norris was one of only 11 race regulars taking part in a first session otherwise handed over to young prospects and development drivers.

## Duplantis, McLaughlin-Levrone Named World Athletes of the Year



LONDON (Dispatches) - Sweden's pole vault sensation Mondo Duplantis and American 400 metres World champion Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone were named World Athletes of the Year.

Duplantis, along with retaining his gold medal at the World Championships in Tokyo in September, continued his dominance of the event, breaking his own world record another four times and was undefeated in 16 competitions.

The 26-year-old also won a fifth consecutive Diamond League title.

"I hope to keep pushing it. I hope to keep irritating everyone who has to vote for me for years to come," Duplantis said.

"It's really important for me to win this for the field eventers. It's very special, I'm going to really cherish this one."

McLaughlin-Levrone, like Duplantis, is also undefeated for two years, in both the 400m flat, her main event in 2025, and in the 400m hurdles.

Her winning time of 47.78 in Tokyo was the second-fastest 400m of all time and the 26-year-old became the first athlete to have ever won world titles in both the 400m flat and 400m hurdles.

She also formed part of the U.S. 4x400m gold medal winning relay team at the World Championships.

"Wow, I'm honestly blown away to win this. Thank you so much, World Athletics, for this honour and recognition," McLaughlin-Levrone said.

## Kriechmayr Wins Weather-Hit Beaver Creek Super-G

LONDON (Dispatches) - Austria's Vincent Kriechmayr won a weather-hit World Cup super-G race in Beaver Creek but admitted it felt a little hollow due to the more unfavorable conditions faced by later skiers as Swiss favorite Marco Odermatt only managed fifth.

Kriechmayr was one of the earliest starters after a delay and produced a superb run in poor visibility to take the lead before action was interrupted by snowfall and gusty winds following a nasty crash for Franjo von Allmen.

With 30 racers needed for a result it looked as though the 34-year-old's leading time might be wiped off but with Swiss Von Allmen unscathed and organisers finding enough weather windows they managed to get 31 racers down before calling it off.

Kriechmayr clocked 1:06.77 to beat Norway's Fredrik Moeller by 0.56 seconds with fellow Austrian Raphael Haaser third.



It was Kriechmayr's second victory at Beaver Creek, having won the super-G there in 2017 for his first World Cup win.

"Of course my skiing was pretty good but it was pretty tough," he said.

"The first 14 racers had similar conditions but after the break because of the crash and the weather it wasn't very fair any more. You want similar conditions for everyone. I'm happy but I wanted to have a different sort of victory."

It was the 19th World Cup win of Kriechmayr's career, but he said it did not get any easier.

"It's totally different to when I won the first time here," he said. "It's harder to find the limit and to push from the start to the end and I'm getting a lot of grey hair."

Odermatt, the four-times reigning overall World Cup champion who won Thursday's rescheduled downhill, could not add a fourth win of the season as his run appeared to be hampered by the fickle weather. He still leads the overall standings though.