IRANWATCH DAILY | October 30, 2025

Brief Notes

United Kingdom Sanctions IRGC Financier: The UK has announced new sanctions against Ali Akbar Ansari, an Iranian banker and businessman known domestically for his connections to the Supreme Leader's son, Mojtaba Khamenei. The designation's Statement of Reason reads, "Ansari has facilitated and provided support to hostile activity by the Government of Iran, namely by providing economic resources to the IRGC and individuals engaged in actions intended to destabilize the United Kingdom or other countries." The move comes after last week's dissolution of Ansari's bank, Ayandeh, due to poor performance, and this week's subsequent reporting on Ayandeh Bank's dubious financial dealings.

United States Grants Chabahar Port Sanction Waiver to India: India announced that it has received a six-month U.S. sanctions exemption for operations at Iran's Chabahar Port, allowing Indian trade to bypass Pakistan more effectively. Indian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the waiver will last until April 2026.

Testing Begins for Domestically Built Aircraft: The Islamic Republic has started test flights for the HESA Simorgh, a domestically designed and manufactured cargo plane based on the Antonov An-140. On October 28, Civil Aviation Organization head Hossein Pourfarzaneh said that the Islamic Republic has now "joined the group of 20 countries with the capability to manufacture aircraft."

Tehran and Ankara Sign Border Security Memo: Tehran and Ankara have signed a new memorandum of understanding to boost security cooperation along their shared border to combat "terrorism, trafficking, and organized crime." Deputy Interior Minister Ali Akbar Pourjamshidian said the 12-point agreement was reached during the seventh meeting of the "Joint Security Working Group."

Senior Officials Urge 'Unity' Amid Recent Infighting

During a speech to commemorate the Islamic Republic's "Passive Defense Week," Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Abdolrahim Mousavi said that only nations with strong "national unity" can survive long-term.

Mousavi stated that the 12-Day War "once again showed that threats can emerge in complex and combined forms, with speed and intensity, and that only nations with public preparedness and national unity can withstand and maintain stability."

Meanwhile, Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Larijani echoed this sentiment. At the "Meeting of Humanities Scholars" yesterday, Larijani said, "Some of the country's political leaders have still not grasped the sensitivity and gravity of the current situation and are carelessly quarreling with each other. This situation calls for forgiveness and magnanimity [on both sides]. I'm not saying they don't have rights, but forgiveness only has meaning when there is a right at stake. In these circumstances, we must move past our differences and strive to strengthen national unity."

These comments come during a period of factional infighting among the regime's elite.

On the Radar

- Tehran's embassy in Kabul released a video announcement that most of Iran's future exports to Afghanistan will move via the Khaf–Herat railway. The video noted that Iranian tank cars, carrying fuel, are now entering Afghanistan by rail for the first time, calling the development "an important event in trade and economic cooperation between Iran and Afghanistan." This fuel will presumably continue beyond Herat, eventually reaching China.

- Ahmad Vahidi, interior minister from 2021 to 2024 and defense minister from 2009 to 2013, has reportedly been appointed Deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces.

- The Statistical Center of Iran reported the country's population to be 86.5 million, lower than the UN's estimate of 92.4 million. Officials dismissed the UN figure as a "miscalculation based on incorrect fertility data," with Mohammad Javad Mahmoudi saying that Iran's current fertility rate is 1.6 children per woman, while other agencies like the World Bank still use higher UN-based projections. The UN expects Iran's population to peak in about the year 2040 and then decline to around 80 million, even as Tehran enforces strict anti-abortion and "population rejuvenation" policies.

- Yesterday, during a visit to Minsk, Deputy Foreign Minister Saeed Khatibzadeh said that "Iran is committed to developing and expanding comprehensive relations with the Republic of Belarus and removing any obstacles in this path." He highlighted plans for a "strategic partnership agreement" and closer cooperation through upcoming high-level visits and joint economic projects. Belarusian Foreign Minister Maksim Ryzhankow replied by saying his country has a "strong commitment" to deepening ties with Tehran, following President Pezeshkian's August trip to Minsk, where the Islamic Republic and Belarus signed 12 cooperation agreements.

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