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Brief Notes

Perplexing Fires, Explosions Continue: Two major fires happened in Tehran yesterday, with both described as accidents, one at a waste depot, and the other as a "privately owned oil and petroleum storage" by authorities. Following the 12-Day War, explosions and fires have become a source of heated debate, with many speculating a connection to Israeli covert operations, while others dismiss the speculation as hysteria caused by media overreporting. For more background, see NUFDI's joint report with the FDD: Mapping a Shadow War.

Tehran Open to Talks, But Sees 'Offense as Best Defense': First Vice-President Mohammad Reza Aref said yesterday that "our strategy is to pursue negotiations and reach a diplomatic settlement" in the nuclear standoff with the West, but questioned "whether the other side even believes in dialogue." Aref warned that if a new war breaks out, "the ending will be up to [Iran]." He dismissed the current pause in the conflict with Israel, saying, "It is merely a suspension of fighting." A day earlier, Yahya Rahim-Safavi, adviser to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, told Nour News that he believes the possibility of another war is high and that "offense is the best defense."

Three Major Water Reservoirs Run Dry: The water scarcity crisis in Iran is deepening, with major reservoirs held behind dams in Shimil-Niyan, Hormozgan Province, Rudbal, Fars Province, and Voshmgir, Golestan Province now completely dry, and at least 12 other key dams operating with their reservoirs at less than 10% capacity.

Russia Receiving Arms From Iran via Caspian Sea: According to a report released today by exiled Russian outlet Meduza, data indicate that Russia may be receiving large quantities of arms from the Islamic Republic via the Caspian Sea, with up to 5,000 tons of ammunition potentially moved by rail from the Caspian port of Olya to arsenals in southern Russia. The port, sanctioned by the U.S. and repeatedly targeted by Ukrainian drones, is linked to bulk carrier vessel Port Olya-1, which regularly travels to the Iranian ports of Amirabad and Fereydunkenar. Container shipping data for the period of November 2024 was reportedly provided by an anonymous source in the Russian transport and logistics sector to the U.S.-based global security organization C4ADS and analysed by Meduza.

Pezeshkian Arrives in Armenia, Heading to Belarus Next

President Masoud Pezeshkian today arrived in Armenia for a two-day official visit, where he was received at the airport by Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan.

A joint business forum will be held in Yerevan tomorrow as part of the trip, after which Pezeshkian will travel to Belarus.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran–Yerevan ties are "bright" and "no one can derail" them ahead of the visit.

Spokesperson of the Foreign Ministry Esmaeil Baghaei said Tehran is "monitoring the developments in the South Caucasus with eyes wide open" and warned that "foreign interference is our red line," adding that "Armenian authorities explicitly informed us that the reconstruction of this railway route will be carried out with the participation of Armenian companies and one American company registered under Armenian law, and that no foreign forces will be stationed along the borders."

Souvenirs From Larijani's Visits to Iraq, Lebanon

Secretary Ali Larijani of the Supreme National Security Council has confirmed the renewal of a security pact with Iraq, saying the agreement commits both sides to the prevention of "any third individuals, movements or countries" from using one nation's territory to destabilize the other.

Larijani added that the agreement was prompted by the 12-Day War, during which, regime officials claim, the "airspace of some countries was used" for operations against the Islamic Republic. Larijani said, "Some states may struggle to fully comply with certain obligations."

Meanwhile, Iraqi National Security Adviser Qasim al-Araji briefed Chargé d'Affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad Steven Fagin on the Iran–Iraq border security memorandum, saying it would "contribute to supporting the security and stability of the region and preventing smuggling and infiltration." Al-Araji stressed that Iraq is pursuing "balanced relations with regional and global countries."

In the meantime, the Islamic Republic has started transferring advanced weapons manufacturing technology to Hezbollah in Lebanon and Shia militias in Iraq. Reporting suggests the groups reached different agreements to obtain more advanced weapons during Larijani's recent visits to Baghdad and Beirut. They also reportedly agreed to establish a tripartite coordination cell bringing together the Islamic Republic, Hezbollah, and Iraqi militias.

On the Radar

- Widespread labor protests took place across Iran yesterday. About 500 workers at Razi Petrochemical in Mahshahr, Khuzestan Province, demonstrated for the release of two detained colleagues and the reinstatement of banned workers. In Gachsaran, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, contract workers of the National Iranian Oil Company protested overdue wages and poor safety conditions, citing the workplace death of a colleague. In Isfahan, steelworkers demanded fair pensions, removal of wage caps, and improved healthcare, while pensioners of the Social Security Organization protested in Tehran, Gilan,

and Khuzestan provinces. In Tehran, employees of the IRGC-controlled Iran Marine Industrial Company demonstrated over unpaid salaries, and truckers gathered at the Ministry of Industry against the seizure of their vehicles due to new regulations.

- Iranian Space Agency (ISA) chief Hassan Salariyeh said two domestically built satellites, Zafar and Paya, will be launched via Russia's Soyuz rocket in autumn, following delays earlier this year. The "research" satellites, built two years ago, will provide spaceborne imaging. Salariyeh added that the Islamic Republic may attempt further domestic launches in the future due to the postponement experienced during this project. Salariyeh said the Nahid-2 satellite will be launched with the Iranian Simorgh vehicle by March 2026, and confirmed ongoing work on the Chabahar spaceport, with a solid-fuel launcher to be completed this year and construction of medium-class liquid-fuel launchers to begin soon.

- According to state media, law enforcement raided a house on central Tehran's Nosrat Street, where drones were allegedly assembled for Israel's Mossad. An intelligence source said the operation followed local tips and surveillance, leading to the seizure of several small drones and quadcopters "prepared for use by Mossad operatives." Authorities have reported multiple such discoveries since the 12-Day War.

- The General Staff of the Armed Forces issued a statement warning the U.S. and Israel to end their "plotting and malevolence," saying Tehran showed restraint in the "imposed 12-Day War," but that any repeat "miscalculation and evil action" would be met with "new surprises and actions far more severe and crushing than before." The statement said Iran, under "wise, learned and brave leadership," has shown that "no power can speak the language of force and threats."

- Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov said "strengthening comprehensive cooperation with Iran is one of the priority areas of Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy" during talks with the Islamic Republic's First Vice-President Mohammad Reza Aref in northern Kyrgyzstan's Cholpon Ata.

- Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein has warned that the government cannot disarm IRGC-backed paramilitary factions by force, calling instead for "rational dialogue" and urgent "Shia–Shia dialogue" before any national consensus. In an interview with Shams TV, Hussein criticized the timing of the draft Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) law as "inappropriate" given Iraq's fragile position amid the Washington–Tehran rivalry, warning that it could spark internal conflict. While stressing Iraq still needs the U.S.-led coalition to prevent an ISIS resurgence, Hussein admitted the stalled PMF bill has deepened political divides.

- The IRGC reportedly dismantled two "terrorist teams" in the southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan Province, killing several individuals in separate operations. The IRGC Quds Base, located in Sistan-Baluchestan Province, announced yesterday that its forces "destroyed two terrorist safe houses" that were used for "planning suicide and sabotage operations" and seized over 50 pounds of "explosives and ready-to-detonate bombs" in the port city of Chabahar. In a third, separate clash in Zabol, northern Sistan-Baluchestan Province, the local governorate, in a now-deleted piece published by state-run IRNA,

said seven members of the Sunni armed group Ansar al-Furqan were killed while plotting attacks on "sensitive centers and military and police bases."

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