

Iran says its seven-day plan to reopen Strait of Hormuz still on table

Araghchi: Lebanon's internal affairs a matter for Lebanese themselves

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Sunday that Tehran's offer to Washington to reopen the Strait of Hormuz within seven days is still on the table.

Araghchi made the remarks in an interview with Iran's official news agency IRNA on the sidelines of the 52nd session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's Council of Foreign Ministers in the Iraqi capital Baghdad. He said Iran's conditions for ceasing hostilities and reopening the strait were "completely clear" and had been submitted to the United States under the seven-day plan.

Washington has presented its views on the plan, which Tehran is reviewing, he added.

"Iran's plan is still on the table," Araghchi said. "If they (the United States) meet those conditions, the Strait of Hormuz will be reopened on the sixth day, and negotiations will resume on the seventh."

He said that Iran's conditions are neither extraordinary nor unusual, adding

that they are the same commitments "the United States had already accepted in the memorandum of understanding and other negotiations."

The US and Israel launched an unprovoked aggression against Iran on February 28, killing thousands of Iranians, Iran's Leader and several senior military officials.

Iran retaliated with attacks on the US military bases in regional countries and Israel's positions in the occupied territories.

An April ceasefire put an end to the most intense fighting after Tehran and Washington signed a 14-point Memorandum of Understanding brokered by Pakistan and Qatar.

However, the US began attacking Iran in July after it violated the terms of the agreement under the pretext of Iranian strikes on vessels in the Strait of Hormuz.

The US also recently shifted toward a campaign of what it calls "economic asphyxiation" of Iran, imposing sanctions on various sectors in Iran.

Araghchi reiterated that Iran will not bow to threats and is prepared to



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (c) looks on during the family photo during the 52nd session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers in Baghdad on October 17, 2026.

● AFP

defend itself, while remaining ready to pursue diplomacy.

Relations with Lebanon

Araghchi also pointed to his meeting with Lebanon's Foreign Minister Youssef Raji in Baghdad, saying that talks had been respectful but frank and serious. Araghchi also acknowledged significant differences in outlook between Tehran and Lebanon's current government over how to resolve outstanding issues.

He said, however, that both sides agreed on the need to focus on expansion on government-to-government ties, as well as relations between Iran and Lebanon as a whole.

Iran's top diplomat underlined that decisions on Lebanon's internal affairs belonged to the Lebanese people and



that Tehran would not oppose decisions made by Lebanese groups, including Hezbollah, which he described as one of the country's most important political forces and an established reality in Lebanese society.

"Lebanon's internal affairs are also a matter for the Lebanese themselves," Araghchi said. "Naturally, whatever

decisions they wish to make, Lebanese groups, including Hezbollah, one of the most important of them and an undeniable reality in Lebanese society, have a role to play in those decisions."

Araghchi stressed that Iran wants to establish comprehensive political, economic and cultural relations with Lebanon as a country.

France rocked by nationwide protests, clashes, blazes

International Desk

France woke up Sunday to devastated streets after clashes between police and protesters, mass looting and fires erupted nationwide as marches against rising costs of living degenerated into "extreme" violence.

Violence broke out across France on Saturday during the latest day of demonstrations against hardship in schools and the cost of living.

Tens of thousands of protesters, mostly young people, rallied at the heart of the French capital on Saturday in the latest act of a movement that has been rocking France to the core for more than a month now.

The demonstrations were spearheaded by students demanding education reforms but quickly swelled to channel mounting anger over failing public services, rising living costs and a future that feels increasingly out of reach.

The protests come just six months ahead of elections to replace President Emmanuel Macron.

France's Yellow Vest movement, which staged street protests eight years ago against Macron's government over planned fuel tax hikes, had called for Saturday's "yellow and youth" demonstrations.

The principal grievance was the cost of living, pushed up in part by the war in the Middle East, especially the US aggression against Iran, that has helped send inflation soaring in Europe as elsewhere.

"We're sick of slaving away for poverty wages while our rents keep going up," teacher Regine Monfroid told AFP in the eastern city of Strasbourg. But there were other issues.

High school student Kamil Alahyan, 18, said he was protesting "for so many reasons – the elections coming up in 2027, politicians who lie, the ultra-rich who've been taking more and more wealth over the past 10 years".

'It's the Revolution'

Several protesters sought to draw parallels with the French Revolution of 1789.

"It's the Revolution – we're taking the Bastille!" some shouted in Marseille as they forced their way into the mayor's offices.

Whole streets in Paris "have been devastated", the city's mayor Emmanuel Gregoire said as groups of masked young men torched parked cars and ransacked shops.

1,800 people arrested

More than 1,800 people have been arrested on Saturday, the country's Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said. The Interior Ministry said 550,000 people attended the protests while the CGT union, which took part, said 800,000 people participated.

Police used tear gas and water cannon against protesters who threw projectiles and aimed fireworks.

During and after those demonstrations, gangs of youths roamed city

streets, sporadically confronting police, while setting fires and attacking shuttered stores to break in and empty their shelves.

Scores of shops – supermarkets, pharmacies, luxury boutiques, clothing retailers, opticians, cosmetic vendors and consumer electronics stores – were looted in Paris, Marseille, Nice, Nantes, Bordeaux, Limoges, Lille, Toulouse and Strasbourg.

The looting added to a day of destruction and vandalism, with town halls in several cities targeted.

The town hall in the city of Limoges – more than 140 years old – was largely destroyed by a blaze set by masked protesters who broke in, according to the region's top official. Two others were broken into and vandalized in Marseille and Lille.

A police compound in Bordeaux was also vandalized, while in Lyon protesters set ablaze a tourist office.

The violence has drawn global headlines – in the United States, Vice President JD Vance blamed immigration for the unrest.

"Western liberals imported the third world into France and other countries in the name of diversity and compassion. They ignored fundamental questions of assimilation and compatibility," he said on X.

President Macron said that "those who carried out vandalism, attacked administrative offices or businesses, or carried out looting – even in our town halls, will be prosecuted and punished".

Parliament approves Akhlaghi as new defense minister

International Desk

Iran's Parliament approved Mehrdad Akhlaghi as defense minister with lawmakers voting by a large margin to confirm his appointment.

The Parliament reviewed Akhlaghi's qualifications and plans during its Sunday session, chaired by Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, before putting his nomination to a vote.

Akhlaghi received 237 votes in favor and 15 against, with no abstentions, out of 277 votes cast, becoming the new defense minister, Press TV reported.

President Masoud Pezeshkian nominated Akhlaghi for the position on October 5, submitting his name and professional record to parliament for approval.

During Sunday's session, lawmakers heard reports from the parliamentary committees on national security and foreign policy, as well as industry and mining, which had examined Akhlaghi's proposed plans.

Pezeshkian also addressed parliament in support of



the nominee, while lawmakers who opposed and supported his plans presented their views before Akhlaghi defended his proposed program.

Akhlaghi succeeds Aziz Nasirzadeh, who was martyred in US-Israeli attacks on Tehran at the beginning of the 40-day aggression, after which Pezeshkian appointed Brigadier General Seyyed Majid Ibn al-Reza as acting defense minister.

In remarks to parliament before the vote, Akhlaghi emphasized that Iran would deliver a strong response if its adversaries launched another attack against the country.

"If the American-Zionist enemy once again makes a miscalculation, the

response of the Iranian nation and the fighters of Islam will be surprising and extensive," he said.

Akhlaghi also warned that Washington and its allies would bear responsibility for the regional and international consequences of any renewed aggression against Iran.

Following his approval by parliament, Akhlaghi said the enemy is facing a strategic deadlock because "changes are underway in the nature of threats, the logic of military power, the technological environment and the regional order."

Iran's defensive strength depended not only on its operational capabilities but also on its understanding of the strategic environment, He added.

Iran-Pakistan border ...

Could Pakistan take steps to reduce this dependence? Certainly, expanding trade with China would help.

However, this would be a lengthy, long-term process and is unlikely to have any significant impact on Pakistan's policies in the short term. This is the reality that must be acknowledged.

Pakistan has played a mediating role in recent diplomatic efforts related to

tensions between Iran and the United States. If the border disruption continues, how could this affect Tehran's confidence in Islamabad's role in regional developments?

The Supreme National Security Council should make the decision on this matter. However, if I were to offer my own assessment, I would say that Pakistan was never a particularly suitable mediator from the

outset, given its financial dependence on the United States and its limited political and geopolitical weight internationally.

Qatar's capacity to mediate between Iran and the United States is limited, as is Oman's. Iran should instead look to members of the UN Security Council that are at least broadly aligned with its position, such as Russia and China. Russia, however, is also constrained by its own problems with the

United States, which makes it a less suitable option. That leaves China as the only viable choice.

China could have served as a mediator, helping secure more tangible guarantees from the United States while genuinely fulfilling the role of a neutral intermediary. If the border closure is the result of US pressure, it would clearly show that Pakistan had failed to uphold the principle

of neutrality expected of a mediator in the international system. From a legal standpoint, it would then have little standing left as an intermediary between Iran and the United States.

As explained earlier, Pakistan's capacity to mediate was already quite limited. But if the closure is indeed the result of American pressure, that would make the problem conclusive.